

PROBLEMS IN HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION:
AN IDEALIST APPROACH

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Summary

An idealist approach to history construes what historians do in terms of coherence, unity and individuality. An outline of the historical thought of Dilthey and Croce in chapter one signposts the major concerns of Collingwood and Oakeshott. Both approach history from an idealist perspective yet, their conclusions differ radically for Collingwood the historian re-thinks the thoughts of past individuals, inferred from evidence, in answer to a question. The object of historical thought is not dead actions but living thoughts. The limits of historical thought reflect the boundaries of our mental faculties, and the identity of subject and object in historical re-enactment becomes the model for all genuine knowledge. Oakeshott rejects this identity. History is a particular understanding of objects left-over from the past, governed by organising postulates, and logically distinct from other "modes" of understanding. It has no privileged subject-matter, neither a real past of events, nor an every-increasing archive of authenticated evidence. The past is constructed within historical thought.

Chapters four and five are spent tracing the implications of an idealist understanding of history. I argue that analytical philosophy's interest in explanation and truth in history is never "second-order", there is always a prior idea of what it is that historians try or fail to explain and make true statements about. I pay particular attention to those thinkers who have accepted, rejected or modified the idea that history is something constructed and not transcribed, and to the fragile border between description and prescription in the philosophy of history.

An idealist critique of the realist assumption inherent in history urges, a re-think about the nature of historiographical conclusions and defences of history's legitimacy. It is not an invitation to

scepticism. The attempt, however, to ground the autonomy of history upon a priori postulates and so secure its role in our self-understanding cannot be sustained.

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Introduction

Idealism contends that a mode of enquiry, or universe of discourse, is the world seen and understood within a determinate context, governed by postulates, presuppositions or articulated rules, and given expression within an appropriate idiom or language. More than this, a mode of understanding creates an object appropriate to itself.¹ Thus history creates its own object, the past, and endows it with a conditional intelligibility. In different guises this is the argument of Dilthey, Croce, Collingwood and Oakeshott. In this sense an idealist approach to history is precisely the investigation of the nature of history as a form of analysis and practice: of the way it bestows intelligibility upon present objects. One common aim is to illuminate, even expose, the unquestioned presuppositions of an historical mode of enquiry. For Collingwood this involved asking the question how history came to be an organised and coherent form of understanding. For Oakeshott it is a question of laying bare the tentative constructions of an historical past built upon 'limited and unquestioned postulates'.² One approach is composed of different "phases" or levels which are dialectically related; lower forms of experience being taken up and transformed by higher ones. An investigation of the idea of history is an exploration of its evolution and transformation over time and in different contexts. Experience is a unity and interrelation of all facts: there are no isolated or discrete particulars. Oakeshott argued that in experience the world is understood within distinct, exclusive models or universes of discourse. In his early thought the interrelation of all facts is revealed only by philosophy which convicts the various modes of experience of being partial and arbitrary 'arrests'. An analysis of history involves revealing the logic of its underlying presuppositions.

What is common to both approaches, the guiding theme of this thesis and reason for reaffirming the word idealist, is the contention that history is mind-constructed. Whatever else it might be, our knowledge of the past cannot be described in terms of discover, recovery or the validation of models and hypotheses. Ontologically the historian is presented from engaging in repeated experiments or detailed comparisons. The non-existence of the past is a truism and its implications are reflected in all systematic enquiries. Perhaps, in history, it has been considered more ruinous because, in history, a claim is made to study the past and to arrive at truthful conclusions about it. Yet the scepticism generated by the second-hand, indirect nature of history is misplaced and inappropriate. It is also entirely without relevance. History, as written by historians, is not touched by this sense of loss. Indeed it comes into existence precisely on the assumption that the past has no substantive existence. There would be little excuse for the diverse interpretations of single events which characterise historical writing if the past had a determinate shape and form to which disputes could be referred. This thesis is concerned with the epistemological problems involved in trying to give the past a shape and form, and with different descriptions of this activity.

The philosophical problems of writing history revolve around the relationship between subject and object - historian and the past. What kind of knowledge can the historian have of the past? How far does individual perspective affect the way his object is seen? How truthfully can it be captured in narrative? Can the historian explain it? All of these questions presuppose an idea of what constitutes the object of historical enquiry. Here again an idealist approach provides an important organising concept. All knowledge, the idealist

argues, is a unity of the knower and the known, experience and what is experienced, subject and object. But how, with history, can any such unity be achieved when the object is a dead, irretrievable past? Croce and Collingwood argued that the unity of historical knowledge is found in the re-enactment of the thoughts of past agents. History is always the history of thought and historical understanding is also the historian's own self-understanding as he thinks for himself, past thoughts interpreted from evidence. Oakeshott disagrees. The unity of subject and object involves no sense of identification between historian and historical agent. It is achieved only in the rigorous adherence to the logic of the historical mode of enquiry. The presuppositions prescribe and separate off an historical past from all other modes and the interest in the past which they entail. In both cases history is conceived as a present activity, an intellectual confrontation with the deposits from the past, and historical understanding as something won and not given. There is, however, a clear difference in the way the object of enquiry is understood.

One commentator has argued that an idealist approach to history 'concerns one particular aspect of the problem of time'.³ With the passing of time 'myriads of things happen and change'. Since it is impossible for the human mind to take in more than a minute fraction of these events, to have any meaning history is dependent upon 'the mind's capacity to select and to link the selections'.⁴ This is another way of saying that history is mind-directed. I will examine those thinkers who have accepted this as the salient feature of historical understanding. In one sense this thesis concerns the importance of the historian puts it, it could not have existed. A past of historical events is, in Munz's term, a particular shape which historians place upon time. The linking together of occurrences into events and of events into narrative

interpretations is entirely the product of intellect - it owes nothing to a search for the past-as-it-really-was. Towards the end of the thesis I will look at the implications for history, and the legitimacy of separating "analytical" from "speculative" philosophy of history, of the idea that not only historians' narratives but also the historical record itself (evidence in all its manifest forms) is already a selection, an interpretation, an artifact, and not the dusty remains of a past reality.

The first chapter comprises of discussion of Dilthey and Croce which serves as a scene-setter for the exegetical chapters on Collingwood and Oakeshott. It is my contention that, in the historical thought of Dilthey and Croce, one can find both the essentials of an idealist approach to history - the central importance of the enquirer, the interrelatedness of facts and conclusions, the presentness of historical understanding - and also an interpretative context in which to understand the strategies and direct of twentieth century philosophical interest in history. They also provide an opportunity to explore the diversity within an idealist position. In this sense Dilthey's attempt to disclose the Kantian categories of historical reason - the underlying, common presuppositions through which the mind confronts the human-historical world - can usefully be seen as the first systematic effort to reveal the postulates of "critical history", postulates which both define and determine the activity of historians. This project, however, prompts a recurring question "are the postulates of history fixed and unchanging?", indeed are they susceptible to rational study at all? This under the problem of relativism, is one of the most important concerns of the philosophy of history. Do these presuppositions afford the possibility of truth as the coherent application of them, or do they determine, in an a priori sense, the constructions of historians? Croce's belief in the unity of historical

thought (the identification between the thoughts of past agents disclosed in evidence, and the historian who, in re-thinking them, understands his own mental limitations) was taken up and extended by Collingwood. An idealist belief in the inseparableness of subject and object seems to give history a moral force. History is self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-understanding. It allows us, with the "trained eye of a woodsman" to detect the tiger in the long grass, to unravel social and political problems, to understand how the present came to be the way it is. History it seems, is heuristic. Yet this, as I will show, leads to the question of who establishes the moral imperatives of history, and how they are preserved from contamination by less altruistic interests. In Oakeshott's extreme rejection of the idea of history as a source of practical examples and moral lessons we will see a clear dichotomy in the idealist approach.

In the second half of the thesis I attempt to trace some implications of an idealist approach to history. My organising concept is, once again, the idea (in many different guises) that history is, to a greater or lesser extent, dependent upon selections, connections and interpretation: that it is mind-directed. This idea is explored in relation to the leading concerns of post-war philosophical interest in history - explanation, narrative, objectivity, relativity, construction versus discovery - and through the thought of several of the most important contemporary philosophers of history. With the latter I attempt to identify rejections of concessions to, or affiliations with an idealist approach. Thus, for example, I devote a good deal of space to showing how the philosopher's obsession with the "scientific" legitimacy, or otherwise, of the explanations historians give, is always based on a prior idea of what it is that is being explained. Walsh and Dray deny that historians make tacit

or explicit use of general laws when explaining past occurrences precisely because they do not see the historical past as something fixed and finished on which different explanatory models may be tested out. In an important sense, the object which historians study is constituted by the values and techniques of analysis which they bring with them to that study. To talk about historical explanation as if it were a question of applying laws or models of causal connections to something already settled and concluded is, for Walsh and Dray, a misconception of the character of an historical past.

I also argue that idealism occurs, in recent philosophy of history, as a (largely) rhetorical extreme around, or against which other positions have been taken. In this sense an idealist approach to history has helped to set an agenda. At the same time it provides a clear conceptual means to analyse this agenda.

If, however, this thesis concentrates on philosophical analysis of the importance of the historian in constructing knowledge of the past, it is also an investigation of the limits and restraints on the free capacity of the mind to direct itself towards its object, the past. There are different ways to construe these restraints: the problem of relativism, the opaqueness of language, the influence of structural controls.

It is my contention that emphasis upon the absolute autonomy of historical understanding places a heavy burden upon an idealist belief in the enquiring subject. The important spiritual and practical role of history in the life of individual and society in the thought of Dilthey, Croce and Collingwood necessitates its cordoning-off from partisan, poetical and positivistic intrusions and its protection as an autonomous form of knowledge. But this is achieved at the cost of defining truth in tautological and a priori terms. With Oakeshott, on the contrary, history is to be protected from all calls to be practical,

instructive or useful. The tentative, conditional conclusions which historians arrive at are without any moral significance because the historical past cannot be understood in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, since these terms enter history from a practical universe of discourse which is the world seen under different postulates: inter-discourse co-operation is excluded on logical grounds. To defend a legitimate, if difficult and obscure, interest in the pastness of present objects, Oakeshott falls back upon the logical and structural presuppositions of a mode of enquiry: again autonomy is gained at the price of incommensurability. In both cases establishing truth in history seems, at first, to rest in the hands of the historian (provided he be sufficiently critical and aware). Yet, when the philosopher asks what it is about historical truth which differs from that of science or everyday the conclusion seems to deny the free exercise of thought and responsible judgement. This definition of the autonomy of history as something spiritual, logical or structural creates a tension which leads to, or indeed is based on, a loss of confidence in the knowing subject - the historian. I want to examine its basis in an idealist epistemology and how it affects a conception of the role of history in the world.

My initial reading revealed that any attempt to present the historical interests of Collingwood and Oakeshott in the light of British idealist philosophy would not have been illuminating. It was my intention to write a thesis examining descriptions of the philosophical problems involved in writing history and, as Collingwood wrote in an incisive comment in 1931,

...the 19th century idealist in England were not, in general, historically minded: there are traces of the historical point of view in Bradley and Green, and Caird - but they are not very strong, and in Bosanquet they vanish

entirely, and the relics of that school in Oxford are quite out of touch with history.

An epistemological influence, on the other hand, is very strong and since the ideas of coherence, interrelatedness and unity are, when applied to an analysis of historical thought, precisely what make an idealist approach so interesting, I have attempted to provide an account of their role in the philosophy of Collingwood and Oakeshott. To Bradley and Joachim Oakeshott owes much, but what is new in his thought is the application of idealism to history (Bradley's "The Presuppositions of Critical History" is a work indebted to Hume and empiricism).

My reading of Bergson and James suggested certain shared approaches and some strong rejections but I did not want to overstretch the idea of interpretative influence. For the same reason I do not include a specifically philosophical account of Husserl's work in phenomenology even though it is, conceptually, very pertinent to the idea of history as a critical construction. Indeed, when history is understood as something written by historians, our knowledge of the past is entirely phenomenological. I decided to concentrate upon Dilthey and Croce to the exclusion of other candidates because both, as idealist thinkers (admittedly of very different persuasions), confronted history and extended historical thought. Furthermore their influence upon Collingwood and Oakeshott is textually as well as interpretively demonstrable. The opening chapter is one of sign-posting what follows.

It remains for me to clarify my own interests and intentions. This thesis is a work in the history of ideas: the idea in question is that of history. It is a history of the idea of history in the last one hundred years or so. The circularity here is fitting. It is fitting because, as an historian, I want to focus on what philosophers have said that history is. This is to reverse the usual flow of traffic. I also believe that

the respectful distance at which certain philosophers claim to be working - analyses of history without implications for its practice - is largely untenable. In the identification of its salient features, of its comparability or not with the natural sciences, post-war analytical philosophy of history has, in fact, offered a critique of what history actually is, and what it should aspire to whether historians realise it or not. To put this another way (in the form I have used to make clear my own interests), there exists an idea - assumed or explicit - of what history is all about. I am interested in the philosopher's idea of history. I want to explore the supposedly neutral ground between philosophical interest and the workforce of historical activity, to map it out, follow its contours and ask if its borders are legitimate. Are there genuine reasons for believing that analytical philosophy of history is a wholly distinct concern to a "speculative interest in the shapes and patterns of the past, when it is understood that the interpretations and narrative orders of historians are precisely shapes and patterns, that they are the product of inference and not of transcription.

My "primary" materials, or sources, are the writings of philosophers and historians - reflections on the nature of history. My subject-matter is not historiography unless it is cited and used to support an analysis of history, which has not been frequent. My own selection from these works has been guided by the idealist theme outlined above - its proponents, its rejectors and those whom I have identified as having contributed to the continuation or extension of an idealist approach. The identification of the latter is largely a conceptual one; that, within the context of an idealist approach to history it makes sense to see such and such an idea as related. Unless otherwise stated I am not arguing for explicit influence nor certainly for the presence of a

school of thought. Nor am I engaging in the sociology of knowledge. It is, however, certainly the case that an idealist analysis of history has been one of the most persistent and important voices in the philosophy of history. What I hope to show is that its persistence is still felt and shown in many different guises, and that it presents history with its most incisive critique.

Chapter 1

i) Wilhelm Dilthey: The Realm of Objective Mind

By referring to a common sphere of mind we can bridge the gulf between men of different ages or cultures who are divided by different beliefs and ideologies.

Theodore Plantinga has argued that Dilthey's writings post 1900 demonstrate that his elaboration of the concept of Verstehen had undergone an 'objective turn'.¹ Dilthey shifted the focus of attention away from knowledge as an inner experience, Erlebnis,² attained either through introspective identity or psychological reflection, to what he called the 'world of objective mind'. Plantinga's argument is well supported by the writings collected together in volume VII of Dilthey's Gesammelte Schriften, in particular by the unfinished manuscript "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies".³ In this section I want to concentrate on Dilthey's description of this realm of 'objective mind', its constitution and how it can be an object for knowledge, and its implications for historical thought. Above all Dilthey's attempt to fuse a neo-Kantian conception of the 'categories of historical reason' with an emphasis on the importance of empirical data in history suggests a way forward for the philosophy of history. It is also, from the perspective of this thesis, an interesting anticipation of Collingwood's idea of the re-enactment of past thoughts expressed in action and embodied in evidence, and perhaps helps to clarify the absence of reliance upon intuition as the means of getting at past events. On the other hand the attempt to spell out the categories of historical reason which mind imposes on experience, gives rise to the same relativist implications as Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions. Finally, Dilthey's emphasis on the hermeneutical approach to history, which distinguishes

between the "cultural" and natural sciences in terms of the way in which objects are "read" within a particular context or 'mode' of understanding to reveal a particular, meaning points the way forward to Oakeshott's division of a practical from an historical past.

Dilthey's work, Ermarth has suggested, may be seen as the attempt to mediate between a 'dream idealism'⁴ populated by metaphysical suppositions which have no bearing upon, or implications for, life, and a barren empiricism which made mind and the "spirit" a function of sense-data, and accepted the exact procedures of the natural sciences as the only legitimate path to knowledge. Ermarth uses the term 'Idealrealismus'⁵ (a 'philosophical middle informed by a sense of history')⁶ to characterise Dilthey's position' a fusion of the positive elements in the idealism of Kant and the German historical school - the one asserting that epistemology begins with the knowing subject and asks how it acquires knowledge, the other refusing to see transcendental causes determining human history and demanding that each epoch be understood in its own terms - with the empirical methods of scientific research, which grounded concepts in rigorous testing and application and often sprang from the demands of practical experience. It was Dilthey's contention that we must always begin with the datum of experience, but that experience was a concrete thing which consisted of a reciprocal relation between individuals and their environment. Rickman expresses this idea in the following way:

...we know the world through our feelings and strivings as well as through our sense impressions and thinking. The real cognitive subject is the whole human being conditioned by the functioning of his body and by social and historical conditions, who not only perceives objects but knows and evaluates them in terms of the concepts he has learned.⁷

Dilthey's conception of experience as something 'richly varied'⁸ includes the contention that the external world does not write itself upon a passive mind.⁹ Like Bergson¹⁰ and James¹¹, Dilthey stresses that experience and the 'psychic life' are continuous and immanent, and that philosophical analysis must begin with life itself rather than substituting an 'emasculated' conception of experience solely in terms of sense-data, or of posited absolute coherence which is transcendental, against which our lives are imperfections, shadows, or failures. The affinities of Dilthey's thought with that of pragmatism has been emphasised by certain commentators,¹¹ as has the implications of his concentration upon the experience of living for the existentialism of Heidegger and Jaspers. But he should nonetheless be distinguished from both of these philosophical strains because of his belief that man is an historical being, that he inhabits an historical world pervaded by meaning, and that through the careful application of concepts he can understand the patterns and structures inherent in the history within which he comes to know himself.

Like Vico and Croce after him, Dilthey argued that history was a proper subject for knowledge because it was the sphere of human activity; 'The spirit understands only that which it has created'.¹² Although Dilthey did not, as both Croce and Collingwood were to do, resolve all knowledge into historical knowledge he did represent history as 'the accumulated experience of what man and his world is like'.¹³ As such it provided the basis for the wider human studies which Dilthey hoped to co-ordinate into a systematic study of the 'whole man'¹⁴ in what he called 'anthropology'.¹⁵ This accounts for his acknowledged debt to Ranke and the philological method of the historical school. He pointed out in his Introduction to the Human Studies,¹⁶ however, that the historical school lacked a 'healthy relationship to epistemology and

psychology'.¹⁷ If history was not to be the "bare recitation of surface detail" it needed to be analysed for what it presupposed. This was the project which Dilthey set for himself in his uncompleted critique of historical reason. His intention was to supplement Kant's categories of understanding - the structures of the knowing mind - in terms of which we experience the physical world, by adding an analysis of what is presupposed in knowing the historical world.¹⁸ Yet although he took from Kant the important idea that 'experience itself was the product of mind's activity which shapes and structures the data it receives',¹⁹ he did not believe that the structures of the knowing mind could be established in any a priori or absolute sense. Dilthey wanted to historicise the presuppositions involved in knowing the past since he believed that the 'categories' of history were themselves the product of change and development.

Dilthey's defence of the Geisteswissenschaften against naturalism and the belief in the supremacy of positivistic methods of enquiry, places him alongside other German thinkers, such as Windelband and Rickert,²⁰ who attempted to establish a "science of the individual". His final position, however, is more sophisticated than an appeal for the autonomy of history as knowledge of the individual distinct from science as the study of the universal.

Plantinga has noted that whereas Windelband 'proposed a division of the sciences on the basis of modes of knowledge, rather than on the basis of subject matter', so that the real opposition 'is not between nature and "Geist" but between laws and events'²¹, and Rickert contended that the element of universality, or generality, is introduced by the scientists' concepts, Dilthey insisted that the 'two kinds of science are based on two kinds of experience'.²² That is to say, not distinct parts of reality, but the products of looking at reality

with different interests and using different methods; for the one speech is a physical movement, for the other a mode of communication and meaning. Dilthey himself expressed his division of the Geisteswissenschaften from the Naturwissenschaften in this statement:

...the way in which their subject-matter is formed that is to say, in the procedure which constitutes these disciplines. In other one a mental object emerges in understanding; in the other a physical object in knowledge.²³

Dilthey's idea that the Geisteswissenschaften are founded upon 'inner experience' initially led him to concentrate upon knowledge of historical actions as a kind of "inner echo".²⁴ He later rejected the intuitionist and subjective connotations of this approach and raised up psychology as the means of access to the mental world; finally in a last attempt to ground the human "sciences" upon an objective foundation, he turned to the concept of the objective mind. Plantinga has argued that this three fold division of the development of Dilthey's thought may be seen as corresponding to the three works, the Einleitung (1883), Ideen (1894), Aufbau (1910).²⁵ From our point of view the shift in Dilthey's thought may also be considered in terms of an answer to the question "how can the human past become a stable object for knowledge?".

The initial formulations of 'inner experience' could be interpreted as advocating intuition, the attempt to apprehend by introspection the experience of others. Although certain statements support this interpretation - 'we understand only that which we allow to happen over again in ourselves',²⁶ understanding is 'dependent upon a degree of sympathy' - it is not correct to treat Dilthey's notion of Verstehen as a peculiar, heuristic device. It is interesting that Collingwood, in The Idea of History, accuses Dilthey of conceiving the 'living past in history' as the 'immediate experience of the present'.²⁷ It is somewhat ironic that Collingwood's own theory fo re-

enactment was subjected to exactly the same criticism by certain critics including Gardiner and Walsh,²⁸ the latter who interprets Dilthey's 'inner experience' or Erlebnis as suggesting immediate identification bereft of all inferential thinking.²⁹ Collingwood himself, though commending Dilthey - 'a lonely and neglected genius'³⁰ - for the idea that documents or evidence offer the 'occasion for reliving in his own mind the spiritual activity which originally produced them',³¹ mistakenly assumed that Dilthey's final position equated Erlebnis with subjective or immediate experience, therefore reducing historical re-enactment to a species of psychological speculation.³² In fact Dilthey emphatically rejected the elevation of intuition in the romantic idealism of Herder, Goethe and Schelling. He failed, however, convincingly and consistently to explain what he intended by Erlebnis and so the suspicion that it refers to some 'private psychical sphere' remains. Although Dilthey's writings of the 1890s help to clarify his position, they do so at the expense of subsuming our knowledge of the human past under psychology.

The 'inner experience' with which the Geisteswissenschaften are concerned is Dilthey's way of referring to awareness of the mental content of an action. Though the primary object is given in 'outer experience' or perception - a document or facial gesture - we move from this sensory awareness through reflection to the mental content which it expresses. This idea is made more familiar in Collingwood's distinction between an action's 'outside', physical movements, and its 'inside', the thought it expresses.³³ It is this distinction which allows Dilthey to divide history, and the human sciences, from the physical sciences: 'we explain nature, but we understand mental life'.³⁴ Inner experience is reached through understanding, Verstehen, and it is both an element in everyday living and something which has been

consciously developed in the study of human expressions. Plantinga has pointed out that, in its early form, Dilthey's conception of concrete experience (which recognises no distinction between experience and what is experienced, a unity of content and apprehension) linked to the notion of Verstehen as a psychical realm of mental content entailed a preoccupation 'with the idea of basing the Geisteswissenschaften on direct observation and apprehension of mental states'.³⁵ The new discipline of psychology, with its empirical pretensions, seemed to offer the way to co-ordinate and objectify these 'direct observations'. The misleadingly dualistic metaphor of physical-thing-perceived and mental-content-embodied, lends itself (as with Collingwood) to an interpretation of understanding the past as the method of direct acquaintance with other thoughts through introspection of our own. In addition Dilthey talked of the need to re-live and re-experience the other's thoughts as a form of empathy or projection - Nacherleben³⁶ - so that, as Ermarth has remarked, he sometimes 'implied that Verstehen accomplished an actual repetition or reproduction of mental process or mental life going on in the mind(s) manifest in expression'³⁷: a kind of 'social science seance'. But Ermarth goes on to argue that Dilthey's reasoned position relies on a crucial phenomenological distinction between 'mental acts and contents' so that Verstehen 'operates with representations of mental content, not psychological acts'.³⁸ Furthermore Dilthey appeared to realise the difficulties involved in basing our knowledge of the world of mind, or spirit, on the psychological search for hidden motivations.³⁹ This is why it is accurate to depict his later writings as an objective turn. In a later work he wrote of inner experience, 'it is a common error to identify our knowledge of its with psychology'.⁴⁰

In "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies" Dilthey reaffirmed that 'the realm of mental reality...is the subject matter of the human studies'.⁴¹ However this realm of mental reality is now fixed in objective form. By 'objective mind' Dilthey meant 'the manifold forms in which what individuals hold in common have objectified themselves in the world of the senses. It is a medium in which the understanding of other people and their expressions takes place.'⁴²

At birth a child learns to understand gestures and facial expressions, movements, and exclamations, words and sentences, only because it encounters them always in the same form and in the same relation to what they mean and express. Thus the individual orientates himself in the world of objective mind.⁴³

Understanding these expressions is called interpretation and its methodology hermeneutics.⁴⁴ The world of objective mind, or 'realm of "Geist"' is a shared world; no longer a private psychical sphere of experience but 'a common world of meanings and objects regarded as expressions or objectifications of life and mind'.⁴⁵ This idea of objective mind is Dilthey's attempt to overcome the difficulties of subjective idealism: it refers differences in interpretation to a fixed object. The cultural realm, composed of languages, social and political institutions, and moral conventions, is where we meet and express ourselves; it also provides access to the minds of others. We can interpret gestures, expressions, and evidence of past events in terms of their meaning.⁴⁶ This requires the active participation of the intellect and the imagination, but, above all, it involves the assumption that understanding is the 'rediscovery of the I in the Thou'⁴⁷, the humanistic belief in "the ultimate community of all persons".

On one level Dilthey hoped that the various human sciences would supply the methods, techniques, and data

which would raise hermeneutics to an absolute criterion of understanding. But he also realised that the shared sphere of mind was bound on all sides by historical change.⁴⁸ To refer an historical interpretation back to documents, or evidence, and thus a concrete and share object, was one way of making the past stable in historical research. It was also the case that the object of historical research had first to be constituted as such, it had no definite and translucent character confirmed beyond debate. Interpreting documents or evidence as manifestations or expressions of meaning was a handy way of describing one central presupposition of history - the category of inner and outer - and of resolving some of the difficulties of a subjective idealism, but it provided only a partial solution to the problem of how we can know that we are "reading" the documents correctly.

Dilthey expressed the problem of the (historical) interpretation of expressions which originate in 'cultural realms' far removed from our own, by distinguishing between 'higher' and 'lower' understanding.⁴⁹ Lower or 'elementary' understanding relies on 'common connections'⁵⁰, a fixed order between expressions and the mental content or meaning they embody. Language - the 'meaning of words...as well as the significance of syntactical arrangements'⁵¹ - is the primary example of elementary understanding which is 'common to a community'.⁵² With 'higher' forms of understanding the relation between an expression and its mental content - the assessment of the appropriate historical and cultural context - must first be established by inference.⁵³ Dilthey described this by arguing that the 'greater the inner distance between a particular given expression and the person who tries to understand it, the more often uncertainties arise'.⁵⁴ The ideal of understanding is one 'in which the totality of mental life is active - re-

creating and re-living'.⁵⁵ Dilthey believed, however, that hermeneutics must recognise that the 'historical-social world' is composed of a complex of patterns and structures,⁵⁶ shifting and changing, so that 'we always find ourselves in the middle of complex situations which we try to disentangle by making then revising, provisional assumptions'⁵⁷: 'circularity pervades our whole intellectual life'.⁵⁹ The hermeneutics of higher interpretation is implicitly dialectical and circular in character, based, as Rickman has suggested, on the assumption that 'reality is a whole of interrelated parts' and 'philosophy must make us aware of that unity'.⁶⁰ The description and analysis of a past event entails an 'anticipatory determination'⁶¹ of what happened and its place in a wider context or whole. Ermarth writes,

...interpretation begins with a provisional and "shiftable" hypotheses and a constant shuttling takes place between the initial predetermination and the results of closer investigation.⁶²

It was Dilthey's conviction that one fundamental category implied in our knowledge of the human world was that of part and whole.⁶³ In any enquiry there are no self-evident starting points and no final conclusions. Our knowledge, the concepts we employ, the language we express ourselves in, are constantly changing, and so any expression will be relevant to its particular context. With history this means that 'the past appears different to every age and requires a different presentation'.⁶⁴ It is this interrelationship between individual and general, between expression and context, which characterises the human historical world. History's 'ideal object'⁶⁵ is the individual, but not the isolated and unique. In as far as an individual person (Schleiermacher in Dilthey's biography)⁶⁶ inhabits, reflects upon, and evaluates the world in which he lives, he or she provides our 'means of access to the large structures, connections...that make up

the social historical world'.⁶⁷ Biography, in Dilthey's thought, is a perfect model for our understanding of this interrelation between part and whole. It illustrates the patterns and connections of Leben,⁶⁸ and the fundamental 'inner coherence' - Zusammenhang - of our experience. Bismarck, Dilthey argued, is not to be understood as some 'inward essence' but as a 'pattern or relations'; a 'point of intersection' for family, state, religion, class, culture, etc.⁶⁹ History then, rather than being a succession of events, is a 'structure of overlapping coherences'⁷⁰ which is why relating part to whole, individual to social context, is the appropriate way of accounting for historical change.

Dilthey rejected the use of impersonal theoretical entities, or metaphysical embodiments, to account for change in history, just as he rejected scientific causality. But his position is not unambiguously that of a methodological individualist. He speaks of tracing back to a 'common mind',⁷¹ and of 'the historical spirit of an age'.⁷² His approach in fact reflects a faith and confidence in the use of concepts and the inevitability of abstraction. Above all, his emphasis upon part and whole reflects a belief that experience is constituted within a common and shared historical world. Man has a history rather than a nature and is thus an 'undetermined type'.⁷³ Ermarth expresses this succinctly, '...our experience is constituted not within the private confines of pure consciousness but within the cultural medium of the objective mind'.⁷⁴ In this way an individual may be taken to be "representative" of his age.⁷⁵

The categories of historical reason (including those of inner and outer, part and whole, and value or meaning) illustrate Dilthey's belief in certain universal features involved in cognition. Although these categories are claimed to be derived from experience and not deduced a priori, and despite the fact that they are themselves

subject to historical change, they form the necessary support for the common realm of 'Geist' which allows for the re-discovery of the I in the Thou.⁷⁶ The interpretation of expressions requires precision and rigour, but it presupposes the existence and embodiment of mental content.⁷⁷ This is precisely the assumption made by Collingwood. In the next chapter I will argue that the absolute presuppositions introduced by Collingwood to act as a final ground and arbiter of what can be thought or presupposed do not rescue his theory of history from relativism, and instead introduce a more pernicious form of determinism which perhaps threatens the humanistic basis of his approach. Dilthey seems to have grappled with a similar problem. Although, as Plantinga has argued, Dilthey believed that the notion of contextual relativity was more liberating than sceptical in implication, it is difficult not to see his categories as an attempt to place limits upon the scope of this relativism.⁷⁸ The objective turn in his thought clarifies the relationship between past events and present evidence. Stuart Hughes is unpersuasive in arguing that, by marrying history with psychology Dilthey contradicted his claim that 'historical scepticism can be overcome only if the (historian's) method does not need to rely upon on determination of motives'.⁷⁹ The post-1900 writings show a clear rejection of this kind of psychologism. If there is an element of truth in Hughes' criticism it is that, in order to describe Geist as a third, cultural realm of existence, the common inhabiting of which allows us to understand the minds of others, Dilthey has to posit a fixed link between expression and mental content; a link which is a quality of the expression itself, ascertainable in interpretation.⁸⁰ The objective basis of hermeneutics is the assumption of common categories which constitute human rationality.⁸¹

Patterns and structures of history, and the relation of individual to a wider social and cultural context, raise ideas which tread a delicate line between free-will and determinism. Dilthey never renounced his idealist faith in the primary importance of the experiencing subject, but it was important for him to establish the nature of the relationship between the knowing mind and the concrete data of experience. His answer to the problem of how the individual was shaped, or influenced by his or her environment was, as Bulhof has pointed out, to stress how a given period could produce or condition certain thoughts or expressions while excluding others. In this way it created a 'horizon for its members that could not be transcended...regulated and determined by the interlocking cultural systems of a period'.⁸² It is not clear whether Dilthey conceived this determination as conscious or not, though his analogy of the cultural environment as a language which we not only learn to speak but also analyse its words and syntax,⁸³ suggests that a degree of self-awareness is possible. History may recognise that human behaviour is "conditioned" on the humanistic assumption that 'man lives in an objectively existing, interpersonal cultural world, into which each person is born'.⁸⁴

The idea that the relationship between an individual and cultural environment is reciprocal and dialectical has important repercussions for the philosophy of history. For Dilthey, history provides us with a way of 'grasping the world': it is practical and it is the realm of value and meaning - 'In history man comes to know himself'.⁸⁵ In this sense his thought leads on to Croce's idea of 'contemporary' or 'ethico-political history',⁸⁶ and Collingwood's more careful formulation of history as the self-knowledge of the present. Dilthey applauded the attempt to understand a particular period in its own terms, but at the same time he allowed for the possibility

that an historian could transcend that understanding. The possibility of understanding an historical event or individual better than it was understood at the time - Besserverstehen⁸⁷ - is simply a matter of recognising that at any given time the interlocking patterns and structures (the coherence of lived experience) are infinitely complex. History, Plantinga comments, is a 'complex web of patterns, connections and relationships that can never be properly comprehended by a single mind'⁸⁸; a more complete account of the relevant forces and circumstances allows for progress in historical knowledge. In this way Dilthey combines an idealist faith in the integrity of the individual, understood in his or her own terms, with a belief in the importance of social and cultural influences. Unlike Croce, Collingwood, and Oakeshott, in the writings of Dilthey the sciences (natural and social) are not employed as a rhetorical fiction; an epistemological opposite against which to establish the autonomy of history.⁸⁹ Dilthey had a healthy respect for exacting empirical research; his objection was not to science but to scientism, to any 'approach that fails to acknowledge the centrality of the life of the spirit'.⁹⁰

Dilthey's later writings have been accurately described as 'objective' idealism.⁹¹ The idealism is evident in the firm belief in the reality of the mind. It is objective in as far as he attempts to fix mind in a third realm of existence. Consequently his tentative conclusions leave open two points of departure for historical thought. The first, taken up by Collingwood, is to focus upon the epistemological conditions of interpreting evidence for past actions as the expression of thought; to probe further into the mind of history this entails, and to expand upon the nature of truth or certainty that history can achieve. Significantly Collingwood rejected psychology as a 'pseudo-science', and placed the critical re-enactment by the historian at the

centre of our knowledge of the human world. The second direction, pursued by Oakeshott, is to concentrate solely on the interpretation⁹² of 'survivals' from the past by an enquirer who constructs rather than discovers, as the function of a particular 'mode' or 'discourse' of the present. What falls out of Oakeshott's theory altogether is the presupposition that evidence embodies mental content or thought. For him there is just no way of connecting an inferred historical past to a "real" past of events; this is an assumption without implications for the activity of history. On the one hand, history is directed at life by life. It is knowledge of how the present came to be what it is; perhaps even the possibility of predicting, in a very general sense, future outcomes. On the other, history is an inferential argument, protected against the intrusion of practical interest only by strictly eschewing moral judgements and the idea that the past teaches lessons. In both cases the spectre of relativism (a rupture between past and present which corrodes the notion of truth in history, as distinct from a belief in the importance of "appropriate" contexts to assess knowledge claims) is very apparent. The first attempts to escape it via a distinction between what is conditional and what is absolute in our judgements. The second to isolate a proper interest in the past through a modal division of experience.

ii) Benedetto Croce: Living History

Once the indissoluble link between life and thought in history has been effected, the doubts ...as to the certainty and utility of history disappear altogether in a moment...(it is)...a knowledge that has come from the bosom of life.¹

Croce's assertion that 'all history is contemporary history' involves three related ideas. The first is that, with history, the 'point of departure is the mind that thinks and constructs the facts'.² Epistemologically, the

historian's enquiry arises out of, is directed at, and culminates in, an understanding of the past in the present. The second point is that, 'only an interest in the life of the present can move one to investigate past fact'.³ Historical work is 'an act of comprehending and understanding induced by the requirements of practical life'.⁴ The primary importance of the knowing subject in the construction of past fact means that, 'however remote in time events there recounted may need to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations'.⁵ Past events 'vibrate' in the consciousness of the present. The relativist implications of the second are embodied in the third idea, which is an affirmation of the 'spiritual' integrity of an historicist outlook. Historicism for Croce is both the 'science of history' and the belief that 'reality is life and history'.⁶ Awareness of the historicism of life banishes transcendental metaphysics or 'illumination' from historiography through the recognition 'of the manifold complexity of human life',⁷ but at the same time it reveals that all knowledge must be historical knowledge which in turn is 'not only superior to philosophy but annihilates it'.⁸

It is in history that the 'spirit' (Croce's favourite deus ex machina) manifests itself in all forms of conscious activity. self-consciousness of the spirit in its concrete, living actuality, is attained only in historical understanding. There is a certain similarity between Croce's sustained attack against positivism, naturalism and any attempt to 'contain the complexity of human life and history in verbal generalisations',⁹ and Oakeshott's rejection of a rationalist understanding of the past, of politics, law and education. In both there is criticism of rationalist 'system-mongering', of the elevation of one area of human understanding (scientific method, economic relations) to a sovereign position, and of the failure to appreciate the slow, indeterminate, and

ceaseless movement in self-consciousness, expressed in tradition and patterns of conduct rather than in rules of formula. But, on the other hand, Croce's faith in the 'intimate link between the impulses of practical and moral life and the problems of historiography'¹⁰ is anithetical to Oakeshott's sharp division between a 'practical' and 'historical' awareness of the past, and is, in fact, inverted in Croce's thought as 'chronicle', dead history, and 'history' proper,¹¹ the living past, which is more resonant of Dilthey's "philosophy of life". Finally, the relation between Croce's theory of history and Collingwood's is marked. In particular Croce's belief that historical knowledge involves an act of re-enactment by an historian, and that the activity of the historian is an autonomous one, sanctioned not by appeal to the natural or social sciences, nor to any accumulated factual information about past happenings, but to the authority of historical thought itself.

Croce, as Collingwood was to do later (and with greater clarity) resolved philosophy into history and, as a result had to contend with the implications of a thorough-going relativism. His solution was an attempt to distinguish between moral and historical judgements and, in this way, lay the basis for historical truth and certainty by distinguishing different attitudes towards the past. Consequently (along with Dilthey and Collingwood) he has been accused of advocating an intuitionist theory of historical knowledge. We have seen how Dilthey's mature elaboration of Verstehen can be understood as an attempt at objectifying 'historical reason' through the disciplined and empirical exegesis of expressions of mind. In the next chapter I want to support an interpretation of Collingwood's re-enactment doctrine as the elucidation of certain necessary conditions involved in "knowing" past thoughts, rather than being a strange and esoteric method of clawing back

the past. Yet, it must be acknowledged that, with Croce, the intuitionist charge fixes itself with greater force.¹² In this section I want to examine the nature of 'living' or 'contemporary' history and question whether the division between moral and historical judgement is sustainable. Croce's conjunction of practical life with the problems of historiography ensures that history has, potentially, a vital, ethical role to play in the life of the present, but the price he pays is a fragile distinction between 'partisan' or 'poetical' history on the one hand, and 'ethico-political' history on the other.

Croce's strong reaction against positivism and the minute antiquarian research of his youth in the archives in Naples,^{12B} prompted him to make, in Collingwood's words, a 'bold move' in defence of the autonomy of history. In the essay of 1893, "La Storia Ridotta sotto il concetto Generale Dell'Arte"¹³ Croce argued that history, as the narration of individual and concrete occurrences, dealt with the representation and presentation of individual facts. This allies it with art: 'Historical writing does not elaborate concepts, but reproduces particular events in their concreteness; and for that reason we have denied it the character of a science'.¹⁴ Science deals with general truths by employing abstract and classificatory concepts. Collingwood warmly approves of the identification between history and art - 'the spectacle of the completely determined individual'¹⁵ - because it involves a clear rejection of any attempt to assimilate it to the sciences. It also renounces the efforts of German thinkers, among them Dilthey, Rickert, and Windelband, to arrive at a 'science of the individual'. This, for Croce, is a muddying of the waters, since, in history as in art, the individual is known not through an act of external apprehension, but through the effort of internal comprehension. Although, as Croce's writings on

aesthetics make clear, art is not intended to be thought of as a recreational exercise of imagination and fantasy, and is itself a form of knowledge, his subsuming history under it appears to have largely been a rhetorical move, one that clearly rejects any notion of a community of 'human sciences' which Dilthey identified with the Geisteswissenschaften. The advantages of this move was to focus upon history as "reproduction", or determination of individual events, itself the outcome of a creative engagement by an historian, instead of any conception of history as accumulation and classification of discrete facts. The disadvantage, as Dextler has pointed out, is a 'complete relativist theory of history'.¹⁶

In his Aesthetic (1902) Croce stuck with this original definition of history, and made more explicit a division in knowledge between the intuitive and the logical. Intuitive knowledge is concerned with the individual and particular; logical with the 'universal'. The first 'produces images in the mind, is essentially imaginative, and forms the basis of art',¹⁷ and consequently of history. The second is developed by the intellect and is the basis of science. Now the implication of this position is an enthusiastic subjectivity. At this time Croce seemed little concerned with the difficulties of establishing and communicating subjective images of the past, because he had achieved a description of 'living' or 'contemporary' history,¹⁸ an occupation unfit for "eunuchs" and for antiquarian of 'philological',¹⁹ history which he had come to despise. Living history answered to the needs of life, to the value schemes and aesthetic preferences of historians and to their own "culture". It provided, in Dextler's words, a 'unique freedom in historical writing from prevailing, objective scientific standards'.²⁰ History had to be written from a 'determined point of view' with 'a personal conviction of his own regarding the facts whose history he

has undertaken to relate'.²¹ Yet if the idea of living history "vibrating" in the soul of the present was an attractive one to a philosopher whose monistic approach²² opposed the dualism between theory and practice, it also concerned the humanist who had, under the guidance of Labriola,²³ greeted Marx with great enthusiasm only vehemently to reject 'its crudity', its deification of matter, and as a 'bitter enemy of liberalism'.²⁴ This is an essential tension at the heart of Croce's approach to history. On the one hand there is a profound faith in the possibility of growing human self-consciousness, and the role of history in sustaining and 're-educating' Europe into a lost sense of historicism²⁵ - 'the creating of appropriate actions, thoughts, or poems, by moving from present awareness of the past'.²⁶ And on the other we find an anxiety over all forms of transcendence and the corrupting influence of 'illuminism'.²⁷ Much of his work may be seen as an attempt to reconcile a faith in history (its humanist antecedents) with a fear over its potential misuse. In the Aesthetic the only qualification imposed upon the vitality of living history is the 'moral duty'²⁸ of scholarly respect for facts. In this way, Croce hoped, the subjective criterion was compatible 'with the utmost objectivity, impartiality and scrupulousness in dealing with the data of facts'.²⁹

In his Autobiography (which, along with his study of Vico, was translated into English by Collingwood) Croce wrote of how, in 1905, he plunged into the writings of Hegel.³⁰ The importance of Hegel in Croce's thought (along with that of the Italian idealist Gentile) has been well attested.³¹ Stuart Hughes has commented upon an Hegelian influence in Croce's decision to 'recast' his Aesthetic and the Logic (1909) as the first two volumes of his "Philosophy of Spirit".³² Whatever the extent of the influence, and it is a selective influence (hence the title of Croce's study What is Living and what is Dead in

Hegel)³³ given his rejection of transcendental metaphysics and the 'cunning of reason',³⁴ Croce's view of history had shifted by the time the Logic³⁵ was written, and this new understanding of history took full shape in his Theory and History of Historiography.³⁶ The intrinsic comprehension afforded by historical understanding is resolved into a judgement which is a unity of subject (the intuition of an historian) and predicate³⁷ (a conceptual or "universal" category). This identity of 'the universal and the individual',³⁸ of 'intellect and intuition' is the basis of a judgement which is truly historical. On the one hand it raises the act of cognition involved in 'living' history above a subjective projection of images, and so frees it from subjection to art;³⁹ on the other it challenges the idea that history is concerned solely with the individual as a unique entity. An historical judgement, Croce argued, contains two inseparable elements: universal truth in the form of a conceptual category (a right decision, a good man, a just piece of legislation), and a contingent or individual truth (the execution of Charles I was, on balance, a just act). This is 'intuition converted into thought',⁴⁰ an idealist synthesis of the individual and universal, and Croce's own version of the Hegelian concrete universal.⁴¹ It also marks the "liquidation" of philosophy into history; a constitutive element within historiography: 'philosophy is the methodological moment of historiography', it is an 'elucidation of the categories constitutive of historical judgement, or of the concepts that direct historical interpretation'.⁴² Furthermore it is the assertion that the individual judgement of history is the only "true" judgement. There is indeed only one proper judgement and it is both individual and universal, referring to an individual state-of-affairs (the individually determinate) but understood through an idea or concept which is "universal". The universal is true only as realised in

particular instances. The particular is only fully understood when seen in its context. Collingwood, in an essay written in 1930 commends Croce's conclusion:

The individual judgement of history contains within itself, in the shape of its own predicate the universality of science; history is shown to be, not something which falls short of scientific accuracy, rationality and demonstrativeness, but something that possesses all this and, going beyond it, finds it exemplified in an individual fact.⁴³

In the statement 'All S is P', which is a 'scientific judgement' we must have some notion of a 'this S'. As Collingwood put it, 'the rationality of science lies not in the form "All S is P" but in the predicate P, which is a concept, a universal idea properly thought out'.⁴⁴ Science is 'history with its individual referent neglected'. The ideal political state of Hobbes' Leviathan involves a universal idea or category, but at the same time it includes an individual judgement based on the political arrangement of a seventeenth century absolute monarchy. Now, this idea is an affirmation both of the ability of historical research to reconstruct what is individual in a particular historical situation⁴⁵ - a determinate context - and also to refer this to interpretative concepts which are more general and enduring, if not universal in a timeless sense. Ultimately it is an emphatic commitment to historicism. Common to both Croce and Collingwood is an attempt to establish history not merely as an autonomous form of knowledge, but as itself primary and sovereign: a significant inversion of positivism's model of scientific method.

The best way to assess the role of this particular historical judgement - which converts the intuitive and empathetic identity of living history into thought, and thus is preparatory to moral action⁴⁶ - is to examine two distinctions which are central to Croce's theory of

history. The first, a contemplation and reverence of a dead past, which Croce imputes to the "taxidermist"⁴⁷ approach of Ranke, and also at the naturalist conception of facts as a steady accumulation, is a distinction between 'chronicle' and 'history'.⁴³ The second is aimed at easing the anxiety involved in maintaining historiography in the service of the 'spirit', that is, of preserving a truly non-partisan approach which stands 'ideally' above the turmoil of contemporary political disputes and the insidious intrusion of propaganda; a distinction between living history on the one hand, and 'poetical'⁴⁹ history and illuminism on the other.

Croce expresses the difference between chronicle and history in terms of 'different spiritual attitudes'.⁵⁰ He argues that history is 'living chronicle, chronicle is past history'.⁵¹ The distinction here is not one of subject-matter; it is asserted of the approach of an historian. The hallmark of 'philological history'⁵² is an antiquarian respect for the dead "reality" of the past; it manifests itself in painstaking compilations, transcriptions, and summaries of extant evidence. Although it has 'a scientific appearance' it lacks a 'spiritual tie'⁵³ without which it fails to 'nourish and keep warm the minds and souls of men'.⁵⁴ Croce's poetic condemnation of chronicle is echoed, with equal scorn, in Collingwood's attack on the mentality of the 'scissors-and-paste' approach to the past.⁵⁵ In both there is a contention that the paradigm of the apprehension of an external object - an external reality - which is held to animate scientific research, has intruded itself into history. The respect for 'anthologies of information...notes, annals',⁵⁶ of 'empty chronicles', or of 'authorities', is not enough to guarantee history either as 'contemporary' or 'scientific'. A scholarly approach to the past for the past's sake may result in narratives which are 'correct but not true'.⁵⁷ For Croce

truth in history answers to present practical, and ethical needs. It is the 'critical exposition of a document'⁵⁸ in the full consciousness that an historical enquiry is constituted by historical thought (in Croce's terms, the demands of the spirit), and not by reference to any external arbiter or authority. Commenting on Ranke and the German historical School, Croce concedes the 'excellent standard of editing and criticism'⁵⁹ but he denies that the notion of objective insight, or of 'pure historiography'⁶⁰ is the highest idea of historians. The essential failing of Ranke's approach is that it 'lacks an historical problem';⁶¹ a problem which answers to the present and is animated by contemporary interests. The result is that Ranke 'seems to be engaged...in the fine art of embalming a corpse'.⁶²

In both The Theory and History of Historiography and the later History as Thought and Action,⁶³ Croce maintained that there was a rigid division between history and chronicle.⁶⁴ This division supports his belief that 'Historical science and culture' was central to the 'purpose of maintaining and developing the active and civilized life of human society'.⁶⁵ The practical and ethical vitality of history lay in its promotion of the self-consciousness and self-awareness of the 'origin of contemporary dilemmas'⁶⁶ and of the transient nature of all political solutions. This awareness of the historicity of past and present was a consequence of an active engagement with ideas, not of their passive recitation nor assimilation. To this end he advocated that an historian must re-enact the experience of past agents,

Do you wish to understand the true history of a Ligurian or Sicilian neolithic man? First of all try if it be possible to make yourself mentally into a Ligurian or Sicilian neolithic man.⁶⁷

Unlike Collingwood, Croce is not at all clear as to how re-enactment is achieved. The thrust of his argument, however, is quite lucid: history as 'ideally' contemporary and present seeks as 'interior verification'.⁶⁸ As opposed to science, history deals, as Haddock has pointed out, with a 'world which appears intelligible to agents',⁶⁹ and it must be understood in terms of this rationality. Croce advocates analysis and classification of past events only when interior verification has failed.⁷⁰ The ideal of living history remains self-enactment, the capacity for living again, so that a relic from the past 'does not answer to a past interest, but to a present interest, insofar as it is unified with an interest of the present life'.⁷¹

I have emphasised the dimension of Croce's thought which focuses attention upon the central importance of the enquirer in the constitution of the historical past, and, through the historian, upon the wider practical and ethical demands of the present. This addresses the positivistic notion of knowledge as correspondence to an external reality, the phantom of the "thing-in-itself",⁷² which erects a false and unattainable criterion of truth. For Croce the "thing-in-itself" or "real past" induces only frustration and corrupts genuine 'idealistic' history⁷³ through the temptation to fall back upon the 'philosophy of history' (in its speculative sense) or the 'magic want of finality'.⁷⁴ In both cases awareness of how limited and ignorant our knowledge of the past is must first be conceded in order to dignify the fragments that we possess. But there is a tendency to appeal to an overarching purpose - the cunning of reason - and to believe that our limited knowledge reflects, however imperfectly, a transcendent scheme.⁷⁵ Croce urges us to reject the allure of transcendence and of universal history and all utopian dreams'. In his Autobiography Croce wrote,

...the concept of truth as history tempers the conceit of today and opens up hopes for tomorrow; for the despairing sense of struggling in vain to pursue a quarry that always flees and hides, it substitutes the consciousness of always possessing a wealth that always increases.⁷⁶

There is however, a negative side to the vitality of living history; it may be that a reaction from the 'pale and bloodless'⁷⁷ philological history will be driven into a free exercise of 'poetic imagination'.⁷⁸ To avoid this Croce attempts to distinguish between the 'intimate link between the impulses of practical and moral life and the problems of historiography', from that between 'practical ends and historical narratives' which give rise to '"tendentious" or "party" histories'.⁷⁹ Again the difference is one of the approach of an enquirer rather than subject matter. Croce's description of a partisan approach, which sees the images of past persons, actions, or events in terms of their use and efficacy to 'reaffirm or defend the end being pursued'⁸⁰ is similar to Oakeshott's practical past, as is the assertion that its influence is pernicious and widespread, even in the 'genuine history books',⁸¹ written by historians such as Droysen and Treitschke - defenders of a strong, military state - and Macaulay, Grote, and Carlyle who all exhibit party tendencies.⁸² We must, Croce urges, rise to the level of the 'historical judgement' which 'liberates the spirit from the pressure of the past', is 'pure and extraneous to conflicting parties' and 'maintains its neutrality'.⁸³ It is an essential aspect of living history that we enjoy 'the vivid experience of those whose history we have undertaken to relate...their re-elaboration as intuition and imagination'.⁸⁴ Yet, though imagination is 'inseparable from the historical synthesis', it must be imagination 'in and for thought', radically distinct from a 'free poetic imagination'.⁸⁵ To this end Croce demands, as Butterfield was also to do,⁸⁶

that we eschew all moral judgements, because they are anachronistic and a historicist. Historians should not play at being hanging judges since historical individuals have 'already appeared before the tribunal of their day, and cannot be condemned or absolved twice'⁸⁷: 'they belong to the peace of the past'.⁸⁸ In other words, the thoughts of historical agents, re-enacted in the present, are the objects of an historical judgement which respects the context in which they thought and acted, and which does not aspire to assimilate them to present value-schemes. The historian must 'judge' but not 'condemn'.⁸⁹

It is Croce's belief that any statement about the nature of past events involves a judgement; that this is a duty from which the historian cannot abstain and should indeed be 'energetically' involved. The historical judgement which unites subject and predicate is the bond between past and present which cannot be broken without falling back into either chronicle or speculative metaphysics. But history must not be judgemental, in the sense of allowing one's personal values to intrude into the writing of history. To do so is to confuse the dimension in which judgement is legitimate, the determination, through 'critical exposition' of documents, of the value of past thought and action to present concerns, with the illegitimate projection of our values into past 'deeds and personages'. "Good and evil", "decadent periods", are not ontological entities: there are no such things as 'good and evil facts in the world'.⁹⁰ Good and evil, the characters of periods and epochs are the products of historical interest which is inseparable from thought.

Croce's rejection of 'natural necessity'⁹¹ and all forms of transcendency is an attempt to make way for what he calls 'idealistic' history. Idealistic history involves a recognition that,

...no historical event has ever been the result of deception or misunderstanding, nor accidents...that the explanation of a fact is always to be sought in the entire organism and not in a single part torn from other parts; that history could not have developed otherwise than it has developed...⁹²

And yet, in his own histories, Croce employs 'quasi-metaphysical' entities - the 'spirit' or the 'Goddess Liberty'⁹³, (which Stuart Hughes has characterised as a guiding thought, a 'projection of man's spirit toward self-realisation, the unending struggle against natural and human obstacles to organise a free society').⁹⁴ Croce wrote about 'liberty', that it 'is the external creator of history; and itself the subject of every history...the explanatory principle of the course of history, the moral ideal of humanity'.⁹⁵ His tetralogy of histories written between 1925 and 1932⁹⁶ are excessively judgemental, and one commentator has described them as being 'more properly designated as moral tracts than pure scholarship'.⁹⁷ How are we to reconcile this flouting of the naturalness of historical thought?

Croce's idealist approach exemplifies a humanistic belief that history is concerned with 'thoughtful, that is to say purposive and, as such, free action. In this sense history is about what man does, not what happens to him'.⁹⁸ In his theory, as in Collingwood's, natural events enter historical narrative only as constituents of consciousness: They may be reacted to but cannot themselves determine, in a straightforward cause and effect sense, human action. Similarly, though Croce does not deny the role of the "irrational" in human history, he refuses to assign it a determining place, calling it a 'negative aspect of...reality'.⁹⁹ Hayden White has described Croce's position in the following way:

...the historian must be able to recognise the degree to which man is a slave to animal passion and animal necessity, but his ultimate interest will always be individual persons, or events in

so far as they manifest the capacity for morally responsible actions.¹⁰⁰

It appears that by 'spirit' - in his later formulations 'liberty' - Croce intended to include all the manifold aspects of human activity which are conscious and free. This is the basis of the vita morale and of 'ethico-political' historiography,¹⁰¹ which raises a narrative of political events onto a plane of moral guidance by encapsulating the whole area of man's highest aspirations, as expressed in art, religion, ethics, or political principles.¹⁰² Croce conceived living history as preparatory rather than determinate to action. By 'drawing aside a veil from the face of the real' historical thought could 'achieve an orientation in the world in which one lives and in which one's own mission and duty has to be accomplished'.¹⁰³ The writing of history in a fascist regime had a more specific moral duty to accomplish, and perhaps this is why Croce replaced the neo-Hegelian spirit with the more humanistic liberty, the 'external creator of history'.¹⁰⁴

The great flaw in Croce's philosophy of history is the imprecision and impressionistic terms in which he describes the conversion of intuition into thought - the distinction between an historical and a value-judgement. Above all, as Stuart Hughes has asked, are we to treat Croce's own notion of historical truth as unconditionally valid, or as historically determined.¹⁰⁵ He seems to have thought that the historicity of all knowledge is, potentially liberating, but did he accept that his faith in liberty and his rejection of transcendence was only a relative judgement?

'Philosophical history', in Croce's thought, is a condition of maturity, fit only for the enlightened and tolerant. The zealot finds little comfort in history because it is full of contradictions and exceptions to rules, governed only by continual change. For those who

can accept that history is finite and always provision,¹⁰⁶ who resign the search for a recoverable past reality, who have the courage to reject the solutions of final ends and general laws, and have the integrity to remain faithful to the resolution of a particular historical problem, then history may be the royal road to self-knowledge. But Croce himself does not provide us with the best example of 'idealistic' history. His use of the 'spirit' and 'liberty' as the guiding forces and explanation of human behaviour verges on a schematic rationalism, and his own historical judgements are overtly moralistic and partisan.¹⁰⁷ In his condemnation of the detachment of philological history he opens the way for assimilating the past to the present.

Croce's approach to history is a fusion of an idealist epistemology with a quasi-Enlightenment faith in reason. In his Autobiography he claimed to have dispensed with the intuitionism of Bergson and the pragmatism of William James,¹⁰⁸ and that his thought dealt in precise logical concepts. His theory of history, however, centres on the translation of intuition into thought through the exercise of an historical judgement; an imprecise description compounded by the nebulous idea of communing with the desires of the spirit: 'history becomes present as the development of life demands'.¹⁰⁹

History, in Croce's thought, bears too many responsibilities. As knowledge of the past from the perspective of the present it is epistemologically secure; as awareness of the relative and transient nature of our conclusions it is a caution against the conceit of final solutions; as the self-conscious application of "felt-needs" to historiographical problems it is ethically vital; as the way to self-knowledge and understanding of the development of the spirit it transcends the abstraction inherent in naturalism and positivism. The tension which is a consequence of the attempt to ground

historical knowledge in the morally responsible and logical historical judgement, is a humanistic solution to the relativism which his own historicist outlook had let in.¹¹⁰ It is, in the end, not an acceptable solution.

Collingwood, facing up to the uncertain and shifting nature of historical understanding, introduces presuppositions which are 'absolute' and stand somehow outside a reality which is through and through historical. Oakeshott, on the other hand, roundly rejects any notion of living history; an idea he describes as a piece of 'obscene necromancy'. His historical past is constituted by an engagement to infer the existence of a past which has not survived into the present; a dead past. Yet in both cases history begins with the knowing subject and is, as it was for Croce, knowledge of the past is it is (re-)constructed in the present.¹¹¹

Chapter 2 - R G Collingwood: History as Self-knowledge of Mind.

Introduction

T.M. Knox in the editor's preface to The Idea of History¹ divides Collingwood's published writing into three periods. In his opinion the second group comprising, The Essay on Philosophical Method,² The Idea of Nature,³ and The Idea of History, should be seen as the higher water-mark of Collingwood's philosophical achievement.⁴ Thereafter, and in particular in his Autobiography⁵ and the Essay on Metaphysics,⁶ Knox regards Collingwood as lapsing into an illness-induced 'historicism' and 'scepticism'⁷ which is an irrational blemish on his reputation. This judgement indicates Knox's own philosophical commitments: it is not a particularly convincing assessment of Collingwood's work. The scheme of 'absolute presuppositions' which was worked out in the Essay on Metaphysics and the vitriolic condemnation of realist logic, epistemology, and moral philosophy to be found in the Autobiography, have relativist, but not necessarily sceptical, implications. That this should be represented as a falling away, or degeneration, is even less credible given his early rejection of realism and the metaphysics of pure being. To locate the source of this "decline" in a cursory description of Collingwood's illness, which began as early as 1932 - at the time he was working on what Knox rates as his finest book⁸ - is not particularly illuminating. Nonetheless Knox's assessment finds its home in the posthumous publication of Collingwood's philosophy of history. As such it reads like an extended obituary notice. What is disturbing is the implications for the editorial policy pursued by Knox in sifting through the unfinished manuscript of The Principles of History,⁹ the project Collingwood had looked forward to being his 'chief work'.¹⁰ Knox believed himself justified in including only three 'excerpts' from that manuscript (some half of its length) which subsequently perished. His principal

objection to the rest of it seems to be that it was 'written in Collingwood's later manner'.¹¹ It is to this excessively judgmental editorial policy that one may refer some of the confusions of interpretations surrounding Collingwood's thought as it appears in The Idea of History, a collection of essays, lecture notes and fragments of manuscripts which had not been intended for publication in the form in which they appeared in 1946.¹²

It would, however, be grossly unfair to lay the infelicities of expression, the inconsistent application of key words and concepts at the feet of its editor; yet Collingwood has been unfairly judged on the assumption that The Idea of History forms, and attempts to be, a consistent whole. This assumption was reinforced by Knox's assessment that The Idea of History should be slotted, as a finished work, into Collingwood's "mature"¹³ philosophy, despite the fact that it contains ideas fully worked out as early as 1928, and formulations not completely developed until 1940. As a consequence, and once the initial chorus of criticism condemning Collingwood's idea of history as overtly intellectualistic, ascribing strange and esoteric methods of penetration into the past, had subsided into a more balanced assessment of his philosophical analysis, commentaries have been dominated by efforts to disentangle the 'real' Collingwood from The Idea of History. Collingwood, as he appears in exegesis - beginning with Knox's preface - must be saved from himself.

Publication in 1965 by William Debbins¹⁴ of seven of Collingwood's essays in the philosophy of history helped to clarify the relation of The Idea of History to the development of his thought on history. The opening up of a Collingwood archive containing some 3,000 pages of manuscripts,¹⁵ has gone further in this direction. The attempt to place Collingwood's theory of history in the wider context of his philosophical preoccupations -

pioneered by Donagan¹⁶ and followed, most notably, by Mink¹⁷ and Rubinoff¹⁸ - have emphasised that some of the central doctrines in The Idea of History have far from pellucid application. William Dray's influential exposition of Collingwood's re-enactment theory, and his deployment of a Collingwoodian explanatory scheme against the "covering law" model of explanation for history, has both clarified and limited what Collingwood was contesting.¹⁹

Several commentaries and critical works have offered an interpretative unfolding of Collingwood's thought as a whole. Most have sought to resolve the internal tensions by reference to his broader philosophy of mind, stressing the inappropriateness of treating The Idea of History as the final version of Collingwood's philosophy of history. Donagan argues in The Later Philosophy of R G Collingwood²⁰ (against Knox's judgement) that the later books should be seen as a consistent working out of the programme laid down in The Essay on Philosophical Method. Debbins and Harris²¹ both conclude that there is no major change in Collingwood's understanding of history from the essays of the 1920s to that expressed in The Idea of History. Perhaps the most successful (certainly the most ambitious) is Louis Mink's attempt to reconcile the fluctuations and interpretative difficulties under the guiding concept of the dialectic. Mink's synthesis is masterfully developed in Mind, History, and Dialectic²² in which he argues that Collingwood's last book, The New Leviathan²³ is seen as the culmination and summation of ideas that are mainly 'recessive'²⁴ in The Idea of History. Mink's book is a contribution in its own right to the critical philosophy of history, it is also the apogee of efforts to save Collingwood from himself, from the epigrammatic tone of his later writings and the confusion surrounding his theory of absolute presuppositions and its relation to the possibility of historical knowledge. W.J. Van Der Dussen in his

detailed search through Collingwood's approach to history.²⁵ His main contribution to Collingwood criticism (through copious references) is the contention that Collingwood's philosophy of history is marked by a fundamental shift from a 'realist' to an 'anti-realist' position culminating in the "Die manuscript" of 1928. Van Der Dussen's scholarly march through the extant literature is a valuable compendium, but it lacks the purpose of an interpretative synthesis and one is left with a wealth of detail about the various aspects of Collingwood's numerous intellectual activities.

It is my intention in this chapter to reaffirm Collingwood's idealism but in the process to clarify what this signifies. As a result it will be argued that his thought marks a significant departure from the idealism of T.H. Green's 'school'. Collingwood stated that his 'reapprochement' between philosophy and history was in opposition to both realism and idealism. In his Autobiography²⁶ he writes, with contempt, of a review of his early work, Speculum Mentis, in which he is accused of turning out the 'usual idealistic nonsense'. Collingwood's idealism was far from usual. It marks a new departure in British philosophy: an idealism which has confronted the philosophical problems posed by the study of the past. Why, if it is such a departure, do we persist in calling his position idealist? Would it not be better to refer to Collingwood's philosophy of history a sustained anti-realism?²⁷ There are three main reasons for reasserting Collingwood's idealism. Firstly I want to refer to the different direction taken by idealism on the continent, in particular that developed by Gentile, de Ruggiero,²⁸ and Croce in Italy, which had a far greater influence on Collingwood's thought than the idealism at Oxford, dominant at the end of the 19th century. Secondly because I believe anti-realism implies a negative or destructive approach which does not do justice to the crusading zeal with which Collingwood championed a philosophical reckoning with

history. There is a comprehensive philosophical enterprise built upon his central axiom, that 'all history is the history of thought'. The final reason relates directly to the interpretation of this thesis. Collingwood's idealism, in its reception, is, par excellence, the position around which, or against which, post-war analytical philosophy of history developed.²⁹ The reception of Collingwood, placing him towards one end of a conceptual spectrum, has been of major importance in establishing an agenda. The significance of Collingwood's position, understood as an idealist approach to history, is its emphasis on the constructive role of an enquirer.

In so far as this chapter propounds a schematic interpretation of Collingwood's philosophy of history, it does so in answer to a problem that is raised, but not solved, in Speculum Mentis.³⁰ The problem concerns the relation between subject and object in history which answers both to a (revised) idealist epistemology and to the practice of historians.

The Problem Raised in Speculum Mentis

Rubinoff and Mink have both pointed out the importance of Speculum Mentis in correctly assessing Collingwood's philosophy of mind. Rubinoff goes so far as to contend that all of Collingwood's subsequent work may be seen 'as a projection of the programme outlined in Speculum Mentis'³¹ Mink finds it 'in certain ways the most illuminating of his books'.³² For our purposes it is his description of history which is of interest. History promises, according to Collingwood, to resolve the subject-object division in knowledge which gives rise to abstraction. However, in Speculum Mentis, it fails to deliver that unity and is exposed as an 'error in self-knowledge'.³³

History, as Collingwood presents it in Speculum Mentis, is a form of experience or thought, and as such is dialectically related to other, lower forms of experience, revealing and transcending their 'errors'.

History reveals the error of scientific thought in its pursuit of the "abstract universal" by directing mind to a world of "concrete" fact.³⁴ The summit of history's achievement is the 'concrete universal'³⁵ in which each individual fact implies a world of related facts so that to know any fact is to reveal its place in a coherent whole.

The question Collingwood posed himself in Speculum Mentis is, "how can mind come to know its object?", under what conditions can a unity of subject and object, which is "true" knowledge, be achieved. In answer he attacks the epistemology of "realism" which he was later to characterise in the formula, 'knowing makes no difference to what is known'.³⁶ Each of the forms of experience aspires to true knowledge of its object,³⁷ and each falls short of the ideal of unity because it misconceives its object as other than the knowing mind,³⁸ which is Collingwood's definition of abstraction. History suffers the same fate. Though it is accorded the highest status on the scale of forms it cannot have 'actual' knowledge of its object. Its object, Collingwood argues, is a world of integrated facts which must be known together as a completed whole, or not at all. That is to say, the context of any individual fact is essential to our understanding of it, and yet the appropriate context is none other than the entire world of related facts, the whole human past.³⁹ To be ignorant of any part of this context is to abstract an event from its "living" actuality and to mutilate its individuality. Since the historian cannot, given the limits of his intellect, be anything other than a specialist, he must always remain ignorant of the appropriate context of his field of enquiry, and so, 'if history exists its object is an infinite whole which is unknowable and renders all its parts unknowable'.⁴⁰ The inevitable conclusion is that history 'as a form of knowledge cannot exist'.⁴¹

History, then, despite appearing to present mind with an accessible object, the concrete universal which is a perfect symmetry between part and whole, turns out to be illusory: 'history is the crown and reductio ad absurdum of all knowledge considered as knowledge of an objective reality independent of the knowing mind'.⁴² Only philosophy can reveal the error and contradiction implicit in historical experience and in so doing transcend it. It provides the solution to the division of subject and object in knowledge by revealing that the 'world of fact which is explicitly studied in history is...implicitly nothing but the knowing mind as such'.⁴³

Philosophy is the 'self-consciousness of experience in general'.⁴⁴ It reveals that the 'map of knowledge'⁴⁵ charted in Speculum Mentis is a map not of the independent territories of knowledge, but of the knowing mind itself. In a passage which is strikingly similar to Oakeshott's 'arrests' in experience, Collingwood describes the forms of thought - art, religion, science, and history - as 'philosophical errors'. The error is one in self-knowledge. The philosopher 'knows what the historian does not know, that his own knowledge of facts is organic to the facts themselves, that his mind is these facts knowing themselves and these facts are his mind knowing itself'.⁴⁶ Although this provides a clue to the direction of his later formulations, at this stage in Collingwood's thought philosophy should not be considered as complementing history. In superseding history philosophy destroys it as a form of thought.⁴⁷

In Speculum Mentis Collingwood was convinced that the epistemology of the realist 'school' was fatally flawed. His account of how mind comes to know itself through explicit self-consciousness resembles a neo-Hegelian phenomenology of mind. However, his account of the object of historical thought failed to satisfy him. His work as archaeologist and historian (which he argued fed directly into his philosophical reflection)⁴⁸ was distinctly at odds with the conclusion that historical

knowledge is impossible. Furthermore he had, in an early, unpublished work called Truth and Contradiction,⁴⁹ given expression to a rudimentary version of what developed into his 'logic of question and answer',⁵⁰ and his theory of presuppositional analysis. This argument indicated that the question posed by an enquirer - philosopher or historian - had a significant bearing upon the nature and direction of the enquiry. This did not chime in with the description of history given in Speculum Mentis. It seems that, in that book, Collingwood was chiefly interested in history as a form of experience illustrative of the dialectical scheme of Speculum Mentis, and deployed in an argument against realism. In order to do this he accepted a realist description of history as objective spectacle: 'The historical consciousness asserts concrete fact';⁵¹ history 'rejoices in their (the facts') hardness and finds its satisfaction in their very diversity and uniqueness',⁵² 'an historian must state the facts as they happen'.⁵³

It may have been that, in Speculum Mentis, Collingwood used history in a rhetorical role. However, given the efforts he expended after 1924 to find a more satisfactory description of historical thought, one must conclude he had not at that stage found a way of including history within an idealist epistemology. In Speculum Mentis he had set history an impossible task. To be true knowledge history's object must be "organic" to it, yet its ideal object is an infinite world of facts existing independently and outside of the knowing mind. Its contradiction is implicit in Collingwood's definition.

The problem which Collingwood attempted to overcome after 1924 was: how the past can be an object of knowledge. His solution involved a metaphysical reversal: he first had to redescribe history's subject matter before answering questions about what kind of knowledge could be had of it. In so far as the writings

which compose The Idea of History do not make explicit the attempt to ground history in a secure relation with an ideal object of knowledge, the statement that all history is the history of thought needs to be referred to the development of Collingwood's "idea" of history in the 1920s.

There is present in Collingwood's reflection on history in the 1920s both a "philosophical" and "empirical" concept.⁵⁴ By a philosophical concept of history he meant a form of thought or experience as in Speculum Mentis. In this sense history is 'a universal and necessary form of mental activity',⁵⁵ and 'historical thought is one among a number of attitudes taken by by the mind towards the objective world'.⁵⁶ His interest in a philosophical concept of history is with the logic of understanding that it implies, and with its relation to the other forms of experience. In his early writings Collingwood had contrasted history with natural science. Though he detected differences between them in terms of their respective interests he opposed a rigid division along the lines of Geisteswissenschaften, with their study of the individual, and Naturwissenschaften, with an interest only in the universal.⁵⁷ Instead, he argued, both history and science deal with facts (instances) and generalities. Both forms of experience are concerned with the reality of 'concrete fact'. At this stage in his thought Collingwood felt no pressing need to defend the autonomy of history as a distinct form of knowledge; a need which dominated his later formulations. At the time of Speculum Mentis and shortly afterwards, history was understood to be transcended by philosophy, 'history is included in philosophy, while philosophy is excluded from history'.⁵⁸

Collingwood reaffirmed the conception of history expressed in Speculum Mentis in an essay of 1925.⁵⁹ He did though, make a significant concession to historical knowledge. In 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of

History'⁶⁰ he argued that 'the real plot of history is coincident with universal history omit any part and you mutilate the plot and misrepresent its general significance'.⁶¹ However, he concedes that historians can, and do attain a 'qualified' knowledge which is part of an intelligible communication. Nonetheless history is eventually pronounced an abstraction, and knowledge of the past impossible.⁶²

The solution to Collingwood's dilemma - how can the past become an actual object for knowledge, rests, it has been suggested, in the overturning of a realist notion of an objective, discoverable past of finished facts. His criterion of true knowledge (achieved by philosophical reflection) is idealist, yet his description of history is realist. The two produce the contradiction that is manifest in Speculum Mentis. History's abstraction lies in its failure to comprehend a 'world of fact independent of the knowing mind...not constituted by the knowing mind'.⁶³ History though it is a 'necessary form of thought' is not true knowledge because it is not self-knowledge. Its object is other than mind, a world of pre-existing facts which cannot be grasped in their entirety and so must make do with 'a world of half-ascertained fact'.⁶⁴

This position is resonant of the dismissal of history by British idealists summed up in Bosanquet's remark that it is 'the doubtful story of successive events'.⁶⁵ Collingwood later castigated this "outside" view of history, and in his Autobiography, spoke of the 'total neglect of history as an example of knowledge' which was a 'discredit to English philosophy'.⁶⁶ Yet history seen as a form of experience in Speculum Mentis fails to achieve an "inside" understanding of history, that is, it fails to reconcile its practice with an idealist criterion of knowledge, at once immediate and organic. Collingwood's subsequent supersession of the "outside" view to include history within an idealist theory of knowledge, whilst altering its criterion of

"actual" knowledge is the positive side of his rejection of a realist idea of the past. However, in the early 1920s, Collingwood found himself astride the horns of a dilemma which, in The Idea of History, he traced back to Bradley:

Either reality is the immediate flow of subjective life, in which case it is subjective but not objective, it is enjoyed but cannot be known or else it is objective and not subjective, it is a world of real things outside the subjective life of the mind and outside each other.⁶⁷ The dilemma was supported, he was to argue, by a misconception of the very nature of experience. As early as 1924 Collingwood's programme of philosophy as the dialectical development through the forms of experience to a state of self-knowledge, was an attempt to resolve the paradox of "mere" subjectivity and "abstract" objectivity. In terms of history, however, the paradox remained.

It would not be accurate to argue that the resolution of the problem posed in Speculum Mentis occurred in a single flash of inspiration. There are indications in his early work that the problem is not far from solution. In an essay on "Croce's Philosophy of History"⁶⁸ Collingwood affirms Croce's statement that 'all history is contemporary history'.⁶⁹ History, Collingwood concurs, 'goes on in the mind of the historian: he thinks it, he enacts it within himself';⁷⁰ history is 'thought: there is here a perfect synthesis of subject and object, in as much as the historian thinks himself into the history and the two become contemporary'.⁷¹ His argument in this essay appears to be midway between a stringent philosophical concept of history, and an empirical concept - what historians do - on which he focused later. He is not explicitly demanding that history must know a totally integrated world of facts or nothing at all.⁷² On the other hand, he concludes by stating that historical understanding is entirely relative to a point of view.⁷³ The

understanding achieved by historians is of mutually exclusive 'monads'.⁷⁴ Only the philosopher, the 'monadologist',⁷⁵ can transcend the monadism of historical thought because he sees what the historian does not, that each perspective is a 'world...of thought related to its thinker'.⁷⁶ Collingwood is emphasising the subjective nature of historical experience. He criticizes Croce's contention that 'history always justifies, never condemns', insisting instead that 'rethinking involves reliving, passing judgment again' because history (necessarily and desirably) is written from a particular point of view.⁷⁷ This is a function of the limited, because partial, knowledge which history can achieve. He could not see (as he was to with such clarity a few years later) that Croce's paradoxical statement refers not merely to the subjective dimension of historical thinking, but also to the object of that thought, existing as a result of a "living" interest in material evidence which understands it as the expression, or embodiment, of past thought. Collingwood himself had not yet found a way of reconciling the subjective enactment of past thought with the objective ideal of history as a world of related facts.

The 'empirical concept of history', Collingwood wrote in 1927,⁷⁸ 'arises out of actual historical work'. The relation of philosophy to this empirical concept is as 'the methodology of history'.⁷⁹ By 1928 the philosophy of history had become 'the idea of a philosophical science of historical thought'. In his early work, as Van der Dussen has pointed out,⁸⁰ Collingwood's main concern is with a philosophical concept of history (although the two concepts were not intended to be exclusive categories). Collingwood saw 'the science of history'⁸¹ as the highest embodiment of history as a form of thought. Increasingly after Speculum Mentis Collingwood turned his attention upon history as a special form of activity. One of the significant consequences of this shift was his need to

emphasise the differences, in theory and practice, between history and the physical sciences. This is characterised in Collingwood's thought by a pronounced hostility towards positivism which, in The Idea of History he called 'philosophy acting in the service of natural science'.⁸² More significantly, it was through his attempt to reconcile the achievements of the 'science' of history with the formal description of history as a form of experience which led to a new definition of the object of historical thinking and to a profound change from the idealism of Speculum Mentis. By 1928 Collingwood was writing,

...the past as past has no existence whatsoever...events can be historically known not through anything in the least analogous to perception observation or..."apprehension", but by their re-enactment in the mind of the historian...if history is ideal it cannot be a single self-contained body of fact awaiting discovery, it must be a growing body of thoughts, decomposed and recomposed by every new generation of historical workers...⁸³

Van der Dussen has charted the course of this fundamental change in Collingwood's approach to history in great detail. My own reading of the relevant essays and manuscripts suggests similar conclusions to his, though I would want to place more emphasis on the tensions that led up to the overthrow of a "realist" idea of the past, and on certain areas of continuity underlying the change. Above all, and for the purpose of interpretation, I want to argue that the change is better understood as the accommodation of history to idealism, that is to his idea of 'actual' knowledge, which he had given expression in Speculum Mentis. History becomes, in Collingwood's later philosophy, precisely what "philosophical history" was in that book: self-knowledge of mind. The continuity of the idealist quest for a unity of subject and object in knowledge is unbroken in Collingwood's thought. What changes is that it becomes history, rather than philosophy, which best illustrates this thesis. As a result of reflecting on

the practice of history Collingwood developed an "inside" view of history. This enabled him to reformulate his question about the possibility of knowing the past, the answer to which would be the solution he offered to the problem of 'mere' subjectivity and 'abstract' objectivity.

The elements of this reformulation were present in the essays of 1921 and 1922,⁸⁴ in which he had seen that the object of history must be thought alone. What was needed was a description of historical thought which placed it outside of the destructive flow of immediate, subjective experience. Its place as thought in the flow of subjective experience guaranteed the anti-realist proposition that knowing makes a difference to what is known (the subjective points of view of historians), but it was also necessary that its removal from that flow, from the "real" and appropriate context of facts, should not mutilate and distort its true individuality and hence our understanding of it.

The Ideality of the Past

In "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History"⁸⁵ Collingwood had drawn attention to the problem of the shifting nature of historical facts. He argued, that 'no given fact can ever be completely stated'.⁸⁶ Showing the influence on his thought at that time of a notion of the past as a given whole of related facts, he writes, 'the battle of Hastings is a label for something which, no doubt, did happen in that year; but no one knows, no one ever has known, and no one ever will know what exactly it was that happened'.⁸⁷ Although his conclusion is that 'fact in its reality is unknowable'⁸⁸ (the philosophical concept of history), he mitigates this by introducing certain 'rules of the game' by which historians arrive at, and determine the success of their various accounts (the empirical concept). These 'rules' are described by Collingwood as implicit 'qualifications...assumed by historians'.⁸⁹ They are essential to, and indeed allow for, an

intelligible process of ascertaining historical facts. Such qualifications are the often unexpressed basis for communication among historians, and compose the limits to what they claim for their "hypotheses". Collingwood is concerned at this point to counter the challenge of 'scepticism' which, in its most extreme form, implies that, in our knowledge of the past, 'no one opinion is preferable to another'. 'It is', he argues, 'certainly possible to choose between different historical views'.⁹⁰ As examples of 'qualifications' he points to the disclaimers, 'in my opinion', or, 'as far as the available evidence goes'.⁹¹ This would appear to be a clear indication of the kind of intelligibility to be had under the empirical concept of history. He goes so far as to say, 'If there is to be a philosophy of history it can only be a philosophical reflection on the historian's efforts to attain truth, not on a truth which has not been attained'.⁹² History, as a form of "scientific" activity, operates successfully with its own standard of 'truth which has not been attained' is in fact demanded of history, in Collingwood's own scheme, by philosophical criticism.

Several post-war philosophers have been quite satisfied with the notion of truth or certainty in history as it has emerged within the rules or "controls" of the discipline:, a criterion of truth relative to the aims, methods, and achievements of historians.⁹³ However, though reference to these 'qualifications' quite clearly illustrates Collingwood's faith in the actual practice of historical research, they could not support his theory of historical knowledge. History, as it develops in Collingwood's thought has too much work to do, too many assertions to defend, to be satisfied with a shifting consensus of aims and methods. At the very least historical knowledge had to be, on its own terms, as demonstrably and self-evidently true as that attained in the pure sciences.⁹⁴ If not its autonomy as a form of knowledge (which Collingwood develops above

all in The Idea of History) is threatened. Most important of all, history had to be "actual" knowledge of its object rather than approximation to, or reflection of, a world of integrated facts ultimately beyond our grasp. The philosophical concept of history remained to be worked out.

This early description of a relative understanding of truth in history is important, and it is a persistent theme running through Collingwood's work. It gives a glimpse of the tension which developed within his theory of history and which is most apparent when we come to the relation of the exact re-enactment of past experience to the theory of the 'absolute presuppositions' of different epochs. As far as his earlier thought is concerned there is another significant conclusion to be drawn. If facts can only be conditionally stated, 'interim reports' open to constant renewal, then they must be in part dependent upon the questions asked by historians, or, more generally, the current state of historical opinion. If this is so then the object of history cannot be described, philosophically or empirically, as a given world of objective facts existing outside of the knowing mind. Instead historical knowledge has to be conceived as the condition of historical thought down to the present, and a statement about the Battle of Hastings will necessarily be a statement about its place in our present knowledge. The distinction between history as a world of past fact and our knowledge of past events begins to look very fragile. By 1926 Collingwood had come to the conclusion that 'no historical problem about any past event can be settled until we have settled the problem of the history of its history'.⁹⁵

The breakdown of this dualism is most noticeable in Collingwood's revision of his 1926 lectures on the philosophy of history: the Die manuscript of 1928. In order to complete the transition in Collingwood's thought from the reality to the 'ideality' of the past

it is necessary to address the other half of the Bradlean paradox. Knowledge of the past considered as a reconstruction of an ideal object rather than a dip into a fathomless 'reservoir of facts'⁹⁶ provides the subjective identity of enquirer with his object which enables history to overcome abstraction. But how can this identity become an activity of self-consciousness? How, that is, can it be known to be "objectively true"?

In 1928 Collingwood denied the realist notion of an objective, discoverable past of facts. History if it was a name for anything, was a process of enquiry and not an objective project. However, the past, in order to be 'known as an object must exist'. In the lectures of 1926 the subjective and relative nature of historical knowledge was in the ascendent in Collingwood's thought:

Our knowledge of the past is...not knowledge of the past as an actual object, and therefore not true knowledge; it is only the reconstruction of an ideal object in the interest of knowing the present.⁹⁷

But the 'ideal' object of historical knowledge is no longer present as a world of related facts awaiting fuller, although never complete, description. It is nothing other than historical thought as it changes and enriches itself. Thus 'the past has become the present...The past and the present are not two objects...The purpose of history is to grasp the present'.⁹⁸

The past in its 'ideality' exists in the present in relation to the thought that thinks it. But the past is still not an "actual" object for knowledge. Furthermore if the past as an ideal object is part of present experience how can we know ourselves to be thinking past thoughts rather than present. Collingwood later criticised Oakeshott (and also an imaginary idealist objector) for arguing that our knowledge of the past is necessarily knowledge of the present and that history is in fact present experience organised under the postulate of the past: the idea that the historian in thinking

that the present is past is committing the 'philosophical error which makes him an historian'.⁹⁹ In 1926 Collingwood himself had not found a way of objectifying the subjective experience of the past-in-present. Interestingly, despite his affirmation of the 'living' and contemporary dimensions of history and its relation to present activity, he was most anxious to eschew moral judgments of past events (just as Croce had been): 'there is nothing to be done...The dead must be left to bury the dead and to praise their virtues and lament their loss'.¹⁰⁰ Collingwood, at this stage, seems to be clinging on to a dualistic belief in the dead reality of the past which can be distorted and misrepresented when judged subjectively, or by the standards of the present. Subjectivity excludes objectivity, threatens the true and appropriate context of an event, and has overtones of private and arbitrary judgements.

In the Die manuscripts, entitled "Outlines of a Philosophy of History" Collingwood finally overcame the dualism in his approach to history.¹⁰¹ 'The past event', he argued, 'ideal though it is, must be actual in the historian's re-enactment of it. In this sense, and in this sense only, the ideality of the object of history is compatible with actuality and is indeed inseparable from actuality'.¹⁰² He goes on to state that the object of historical thought is an event; not a partial and always fragmentary reflection of an event, but an event as it exists in our knowledge of it.¹⁰³ The past as objective spectacle is replaced by the idea of an event as a process of enquiry, and historical knowledge as something that is developing or becoming. 'The object of thought, then, while having no existence at all apart from thought, and being so far idea, is actualised by that thought which thinks it'.¹⁰⁴ The "real" past as criterion and standard against which to judge the partiality of an ideal reconstruction is

exposed as an assumption without application in history. In an important passage, Collingwood writes,

The only sense in which the object of historical thought is actual, is that it is actually thought about...Not only is the history of thought possible but, if thought is understood in its widest sense, it is the only thing of which there can be a history...All history, then, is the history of thought, where thought is used in the widest sense and includes all the conscious activities of the human spirit...¹⁰⁵

Anticipating the next section of this chapter, it may be stated that the re-enactment doctrine, as Van der Dussen has correctly pointed out, is not a 'proposal for a historical methodology, a sort of methodological device for arriving at reliable knowledge of the past'.¹⁰⁶ The correct background to a discussion of Collingwood's re-enactment theory is as a response to the question how historical knowledge is possible, and 'not to a different question how we can arrive at it'.¹⁰⁷ It is also important to emphasise that when Collingwood talks of 'thought' he is talking of a possible object for an enquiry into the past, and not the subjective experience of the historian alone. This is what he has in mind when he states that 'thoughts are not private property';¹⁰⁸ they are objects for knowledge precisely because they have been given expression in activity which has left a physical imprint (in the form of evidence). The statement that all history is the history of thought should not be seen, in its early formulation, as an attempt to circumscribe the scope of historical interest to the merely reflective actions of "rational" individuals.

In The Idea of History Collingwood incorporated his understanding of the ideal-actuality of the past in a solution to Bradley's dilemma.¹⁰⁹ Henceforth experience was not to be conceived as either merely subjective and immediate on the one hand, or abstractly objective or mediate, on the other. Experience, Collingwood argues repeatedly, includes thought which is both subjective

and objective. To remove a thought, or fact, from its place in a flow of experience does not falsify its true nature, as it did for Bradley. Thought is given objective existence by Collingwood as an activity which carries with it its own context, from which it arose or to which it was a response. It remains to apply this idea to historical re-enactment but its early expression with reference to the "public" dimension of thoughts leads credence to interpreters, most notably Dray, who have taken the re-enactment theory to be a necessary component, or goal, in the interpretation of actions within the practical deliberation, or problem situation of their appropriate context.¹¹⁰

By 1930 Collingwood was able to dispense with the 'hypercriticism' demanded by his earlier philosophical concept of history, as a misconception both of the object of historical thought and the aim of historical enquiry. The 'rules of the game' when analysed by the philosopher-historian reveal not a falling short of an ideal, universal history, but the consistent working out of a genuine form of knowledge which is autonomous of all others.

Intuition versus Inference

To an important extent the ideas expressed in The Idea of History are themselves 'interim reports' in the development of Collingwood's thought. Taken as a finished whole the book contains several internal contradictions, most notably concerning the range of human activity susceptible to being re-enacted, and the status of historian's conclusions. These inconsistencies are hardly surprising given that (as has been pointed out) The Idea of History contains excerpts from unfinished manuscripts, lecture notes, and published articles, written for different audiences at different times. In this light Knox's achievement in presenting these diverse writings as a completed book is an editorial achievement. It is also an exegetical minefield. To give a cogent assessment of Collingwood's

main ideas as they appear in The Idea of History depends to a large extent on knowing when to refer them to the wider context of his philosophy. The importance of reconstructing (in deference to his own 'Baconian'¹¹¹ logic of question and answer) the particular question which Collingwood is addressing at any one time is vital.

Mink has drawn attention to the 'recessive'¹¹² nature of certain key doctrines in The Idea of History. He argues that these doctrines must be interpreted in such a way as to do justice to their place in Collingwood's later thought. His argument centres on the role of "thought" in the theory of re-enactment which, he argues, should be understood as a 'quasi-technical term in the theory of the mind'.¹¹³ Mink believes that what Collingwood intended by the concept of thought is given fuller expression in The Principles of Art and The New Leviathan,¹¹⁴ where it is clear that thought refers to a dialectically related order of consciousness, in which the fourth and highest level, inferential thinking (the reflective level to which re-enactment is confined by most interpreters of The Idea of History) is shown to carry the 'freight' of lower levels, including emotions. Mink's argument, which is perhaps the most successful attempt to make Collingwood speak with a single voice, urges the reader of The Idea of History to reject a "received interpretation", or caricature, of Collingwood's theory.

Dray, on the other hand, has developed a defence of Collingwood's re-enactment theory because (particularly when translated into what Dray called 'rational explanation') he believes it to make, on the whole, excellent sense of what historians are about when they claim to have understood a past event. Dray's articles are based mainly on a reading of The Idea of History and attempt to show that Collingwood's arguments are quite intelligible if interpreted as dealing with the 'conceptual' problems associated with knowledge of the

past.¹¹⁶ Dray does not attempt to reconcile all the anomalies found in Collingwood's pronouncements. But he, like Mink, tries to rescue Collingwood from a "received" interpretation.

The received interpretation of Collingwood's position in The Idea of History which is rejected by Mink and Dray, along with Donagan, Rubinoff, Debbins, Martin, and Van der Dussen,¹¹⁷ comprises two main charges. The first is that Collingwood was expounding an 'intuitionist' theory of historical knowledge. The second and related charge accuses him of advocating a curious and esoteric method of arriving at facts about the past which drastically limits historical interest and colludes with a wilful subjectivity. The intuitionist charge, though itself a caricature of a range of detailed criticisms, is a useful way of referring to a chorus of criticism which met The Idea of History in the two or more decades after its publication. The criticism was initially voiced by Walsh, Gardiner, and Toynbee and has been echoed, with diminishing cogency, by Renier, Fischer, leff, Elton, Marwick, and Carr.¹¹⁸ The methodological charge encompasses a continuing debate which is altogether more complex.

Interpretation of The Idea of History is further complicated by the continuing presence of both philosophical and empirical concept of history. In The Essay on Philosophical Method, published in 1933, Collingwood had argued that a concept embodies a scale of forms.¹¹⁹ In The Idea of History the concept of history is present both as a transcendental analysis of a universal and necessary idea, part of the furniture of all our minds, and as a "scientific" activity. In some passages the concept of history is discussed in both its "phrases", nowhere clearer than in the rethinking of past thoughts.¹²⁰ The empirical concept is uppermost in his discussion of the interpretation of evidence, the decline of 'scissors and paste'¹²¹ historiography, and

aspects of "The Subject Matter of History".¹²² The philosophical concept is foremost in his tracing of the "idea" of history as a reflection of human rationality or self-consciousness;¹²³ the nature of experience implied by the possibility of thought revival,¹²⁴ and the identity between the thought of an historical agent and that of the historian in rethinking it.¹²⁵ Both phases of history contribute to the various arguments for the autonomy of history as a self-justifying form of thought. This is testimony to the imminent reapprochement¹²⁶ between philosophy and history in Collingwood's thought.

The development of Collingwood's philosophy of history up to 1932 supports the interpretation of the re-enactment theory as a response to the question, "on what conditions is present knowledge of the past possible?". The alternative interpretation, that Collingwood's approach advocates intuition and immediate identity as the methodology of history, sees re-enactment as the essential component in his reply to the question "what is history?" According to the latter the re-thinking of past thoughts and the re-enactment of past experience is an attempt to solve the problem of how the historian gets at his subject matter. Since, on Collingwood's own admission, the object of historical thought is thought itself, the historian's re-thinking must be the device by which he penetrates into a past composed of 'queer objects':¹²⁷ the 'invisible engines',¹²⁸ which are the minds of historical agents. The communication attained must, it follows, be a kind of intuitive identification between historian and the minds of the past; 'a telepathic communication with the past',¹²⁹ achieved by 'exquisite symbiosis'.¹³⁰ Some of Collingwood's statements can be used to support this view. The historian 'looks not at but through the events to discover the thought within them';¹³¹ 'the gap between past and present being bridged...by the powers of past thought to reawaken itself in the present';¹³²

'I plunge beneath the surface of my mind, and here live a life in which I not merely think about Nelson but am Nelson'.¹³³ What Collingwood was trying to do, Gardiner argued, was to re-work history as a form of knowledge by direct acquaintance, in this case by 'transporting' the thoughts of the past in to the present where they may be apprehended by the historian.¹³⁴

The charge of intuitionism has not held up under critical scrutiny. The conviction that Collingwood was proposing a methodological device by which the historical past may be composed has proved more persistent. The related criticisms, that re-thinking implies a stringent methodological individualism, is overtly intellectualistic, and thus severely restricts the range and a scope of "legitimate" interest in the past,¹³⁵ have all been challenged.

In Speculum Mentis Collingwood had identified history with perception as an objective spectacle. The past as a world of facts was, in its totality, unknowable. Historical knowledge could only be fragmentary, and since, as Bradley had shown, thought was organic and immediate, a thought would be falsified and mutilated unless it occurred in its true context, a world of integrated facts, or universal history. To know the past was to know it at once and all together, or, in abstracting, to destroy its concrete reality. In the years after 1924 Collingwood had overturned this conception of history which saw it as an error in self-knowledge, and in the process arrived at a theory of knowledge which broke with aspects of the idealism of Green's 'school'.¹³⁶ The object of history became, for Collingwood, thoughts embodied in evidence, and not in a finished whole of facts given to perception but never fully apprehended.

Donagan has argued that Collingwood preserved the idealist contention that thought must be grounded in an appropriate context, but that he rejected the idealist belief 'that only one context could be appropriate',¹³⁷

and by doing so he denied that thought is immediate. At the same time, his rejection of a realist notion of the past as a world of related facts, meant that the 'appropriate' context for historical thought was supplied by a question posed by the historian. To avoid the pitfalls of solipsism, Collingwood argued that past thoughts existed in the present only in their embodiment in the concrete record of human activity, an idea which is close to Dilthey's "realm" of objective mind.

By "thoughts" Collingwood did not mean 'introspectible'¹³⁸ phenomena, nor the private antechamber, or mental causes of actions. Thoughts have no existence apart from the actions which express them. The 'inside' of an action (a misleadingly dualistic metaphor) is not, as Gardiner suggested, spatially removed from its 'outside',¹³⁹ but given expression by it: they are inseparable aspects of the same activity.

There is substantial evidence in The Idea of History (even when it is considered separately from Collingwood's wider philosophy of mind) that Collingwood did not rely on an "entity" view of mind - the realm of mental substance - and instead considered that mind could only be known through its activities. He writes, 'mind is what it does, human nature...is only a name for human activities'.¹⁴⁰ We can only gain access to thoughts by placing meanings on actions, other peoples or our own. Dray has clarified Collingwood's position by suggesting that the 'inside/outside' metaphor might be better expressed as 'whatever thought is express'/'whatever event expresses it'.¹⁴¹

Collingwood certainly made bold claims for the status of historical re-enactment, but he did not advocate the exercise of intuitive, sympathetic imagination in place of critically examining and reconstructing from evidence.¹⁴² Indeed the discussion of re-enacting past thought contributes, although it does not define, a perfectly sensible description of the interpretation of evidence, which in turn depends upon

careful preparation and inference: 'facts in history are arrived at inferentially by a process of interpreting data'.¹⁴³ But the theory is not the method of historical research; it is the elucidation of the conditions upon which it is possible to make knowledge claims about the past. As such it forms the central part of Collingwood's answer to his own question, "How, or on what conditions, can the historian know the past?".

The subject matter of history is the product of human activities, existing in the present and recognised as evidence for past actions. In The Idea of History Collingwood writes: 'the subject matter of history is not the past as such, but the past for which we possess historical evidence'.¹⁴⁴ Interpreting evidence as expressing 'conscious' thought is, for Collingwood, one of the distinguishing features of historical study since, unlike the archaeologist with a fragment of pottery, it makes no sense to ask the geologist what this particular rock signifies by way of intention or purpose.¹⁴⁵ The historian's re-thinking of the conscious activity, or thought, expressed in evidence is an integral part of critical inference; to 'certify'¹⁴⁶ for himself whether the reasons he has ascribed to the agent, or agents, in performing an activity are valid as a means of understanding the resulting action. Re-thinking, according to Dray, is the 'formulation of a condition which must be satisfied for understanding to be claimed',¹⁴⁷ or, as Van der Dussen puts it, a 'theory describing what is logically implied by historical knowledge'.¹⁴⁸ This is made clearer when it is understood that Collingwood had explicitly rejected both the idea that knowledge of the past was knowledge of an object external to the knowing mind, left untouched by thought, and the idea that thought, or experience, was "mere" immediacy. This much Collingwood had worked out before the writings which make up The Idea of History. The "objectivity" of history rested on treating thoughts

not as mental causes of actions but as themselves expressed or embodied in activities. Throughout The Idea of History Collingwood condemns the concept that experience is subjective and immediate, arguing instead that conscious experience is always thought and judgment.¹⁴⁹ Experience is neither "merely subjective" and therefore carried away in the flux of life, nor entirely "mediate" and external to the knowing mind. Thought, Collingwood argued, was at once subjective and objective, both Caesar's own experience and the objectification of that experience in action.

Donagan has suggested that Collingwood's later philosophy of history cannot be reconciled with either realism or idealism: it draws from both. From realism, Donagan argues, Collingwood took the idea that 'thoughts are objective or "mediate", and not necessarily altered by the context in which we think them'.¹⁵⁰ But the "objective" existence of thoughts, in Collingwood's formulation, should not be confused with the dualism of subject and object, against which he railed in his Autobiography.¹⁵¹ The "objectivity" of thoughts is, for Collingwood, a device to ensure at least the possibility of historical knowledge; to ensure, that is, that although 'knowing makes a difference to what is known',¹⁵¹ it is not a falsification of the original. The appropriate context in which to re-think a thought is supplied not by its place in an objective whole of facts but by a question asked by an historian.

Collingwood's expression of the re-enactment theory is far from consistent, and it is quite possible, as Mink has pointed out, to see Collingwood, in The Idea of History, engaging in 'a philosophical analysis of historical method'.¹⁵² As such the discussion of re-thinking the thoughts of Caesar crossing the Rubicon,¹⁵³ of the Theodosian code,¹⁵⁴ and of the murder of John Doe,¹⁵⁵ read like examples of how re-enactment leads to the discovery of facts about the past. This does not support the charge of intuitionism since, in all three

cases, the historian is interpreting "evidence".¹⁵⁶ In the example of the murder in the vicarage¹⁵⁷ Collingwood shows just how widely an historian may cast his net for potential evidence, and reveals that the explanatory deliberation involved in certifying the plausability of a certain course of action from the standpoint of an agent (the agent's situation and the way it is perceived), is not restricted to reflective thought alone, if this means the expressed intention of an individual. Collingwood goes so far as to suggest that 'the historian can rediscover what has been completely forgotten. He can even discover what until he discovered it, no one knew to have happened at all'.¹⁵⁸ By reflective thought Collingwood means to exclude all theories which assert the determinate influence of natural or psychic causes. For him it is a presupposition of history that such "influences" do not determine human actions in a straightforward cause and effect sense.¹⁵⁹ They form the 'proximate environment',¹⁶⁰ within which actions take place; environmental forces "enter" history in terms of how they are perceived, reacted to, and overcome, but this is ultimately a matter for consciousness.¹⁶¹ Similarly the idea of the irrational as determinate of thoughts and actions falls outside of history's subject matter.¹⁶² This is not to suggest that all actions are rational in the sense of being reasonable or pre-planned; an action or past event may, for Collingwood, be entirely unreasonable.¹⁶³ The rationality of a past event is supplied by the historian in his understanding of it, and the question as to whether human activity is ultimately free is, in a sense, shelved while historical research proceeds on the assumption that past actions may be understood from "within" as instances of conscious, though not necessarily intentional or purposive, thought rather than exemplars of classes or types of responses.¹⁶⁵

In the example of Caesar crossing the Rubicon¹⁶⁶ the historian has the record of an action which, having assessed, he intends to treat as something to be explained. The resulting explanation, that Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon was a challenge to, and defiance of, republican law, is achieved by a process of deliberation.¹⁶⁷ The historian reconstructs the 'problem situation' - the situation in which the action occurred - and the possible alternative courses of action open to Caesar. Having decided upon the thought, or reason, most plausible relative to the problem situation, the historian then re-characterises the action complete now with its 'thought side' in answer to his original "why" question. This is what Dray has called discerning the practical argument contained within a past action: rational explanation from the standpoint of an agent or agents. This practical argument assumes a conscious awareness - the defiance of republican law - of a particular situation, but it is itself something inferred by an historian from evidence. It is not the discovery of 'something that cannot be gotten at through evidence,¹⁶⁸ in this case an explanatory thought.

A good deal of confusion has arisen over the explanatory dimension of re-thinking past thoughts, in particular Collingwood's inside/outside metaphor, and the paradoxical statement, 'when the historian knows what happened he already knows why it happened'.¹⁶⁹ There are, however, adequate examples in The Idea of History to conclude that re-enactment is not a vehicle for discovery.¹⁷⁰ Firstly, as Martin has pointed out, the historian 'reconstructs' from evidence: he characterises the action, or actions, under investigation according to the focus of his attention and the condition of current historical "opinion". The role of 'empathetic imagination',¹⁷¹ Martin argues, 'is simply to put the investigator into a position where he can understand what the agent did, given his

reconstruction of the agent's thought. The function of empathy is to suggest alternative courses of action by considering the situation in which the agent stood'.¹⁷² If it is to be considered as explanatory, the re-enactment of past thought should be restricted to the "empirical" phase of history, where it takes its place alongside the belief that the object of history are actions expressing thoughts.¹⁷³ What these thoughts are, whether they are intelligible, is a matter for the historian.

The identification of an agent's thought with the thought re-enacted by an historian is a notion particularly susceptible to confusion. When Collingwood discusses the possibility of thinking over again the exact same thought of Euclid,¹⁷⁴ so that the historian's thought is not merely of the same kind but literally identical in terms both of act and content, both the philosophical and empirical phase of history are present. In its philosophical sense thought-revival supports the argument that experience is not mere immediacy and that thought, as conscious activity arrests and transcends the flow of subjective experience, and thus may be revived in a different, though always appropriate context.¹⁷⁵ This is an epistemological point, a contribution to Collingwood's solution to the problem of present knowledge of the past: 'I am considering how history, as the knowledge of past thoughts (acts of thoughts) is possible'.¹⁷⁶ In the empirical sense, thought revival refers to the kind of relationship between the thought or reason ascribed by an historian to an action, and his own "certification" of that thought as intelligible relative to the situation in which it occurred. Dray has clarified the issue by stating that the identity in Collingwood's theory is not one of sympathy, nor necessarily of empathy, 'what is literally identical in the thought of historian and agent is the rational force of the argument',¹⁷⁷ which is 'a discovery of

reason'.¹⁷⁸ The rational force of an argument is not a curiously inaccessible dimension to which the historian must, but dint of imagination, penetrate. Re-enactment does not lead the historian out of his present concern with interpreting evidence. Rather, it is a condition of that inference and a description of its goal. Dray, writes, that thought is activity, enquiry, and not 'mere spectacle', 'seeing whether we can re-think it as our thought will raise the question of its cogency'.¹⁷⁹ The importance of attending to the "phases" of history in Collingwood's thought is to prevent the re-enactment theory being interpreted as a device for getting at the past or for bringing the past into the present.

Collingwood, in his Autobiography talks of the 'laboratory'¹⁸⁰ of his historical researches in which he could compare and contrast his theoretical ideas with his empirical results, and where his activity as both historian and archaeologist would suggest new philosophical problems. He castigated the realist separation of theory and practice. Several commentators including Donagan, Mink, Goldstein and Van der Dussen¹⁸¹ have urged that more attention be paid to Collingwood's historical and archaeological writings in order to resolve conflicting interpretations, most specifically, relating to the scope of history's subject matter: how broad, or narrow, does the statement 'all history is the history of thought entail'? Van der Dussen has shown comprehensively that Collingwood's historical writings reveal the cross-over of several important philosophical ideas.¹⁸² From his historical writings it may also be concluded that he did not hold, or at least employ, an extreme form of methodological individualism,¹⁸³ nor did he restrict history to instances of expressed intention.¹⁸⁴ Above all they indicate that evidence, understood as the record of conscious activity, is "created" by a 'scientific' interest in the past and is not intended to restrict the scope of historical research by defining its subject matter.

It is important to stress that Collingwood's re-enactment theory is not identical to his 'Baconian' logic of question and answer. The latter, which Collingwood claimed to have developed as early as 1918¹⁸⁵ is indeed a methodology of research, or rather, it is a general description of a critical attitude attained in 'scientific' history. It is a theory which, in The Idea of History appears side by side with re-enactment and, in criticism, has often been confused for it.¹⁸⁶ They should, however, be kept separate. In The Idea of History Collingwood argues that the critical approach exemplified by putting evidence into the witness box and demanding what it means, of the historian constituting himself the sole authority and court of appeal is (although he overstates it), the hallmark of the newly-emerged scientific history.¹⁸⁷ Much of his defence of the autonomy of history from the natural sciences is built upon this definition of history as itself a 'science'. In his Autobiography Collingwood claimed that it was his experience on archaeological digs which had first suggested how historical enquiries are question-led.¹⁸⁸ Subsequent reflection prompted him to conclude that the question was put not to external data but to the historian himself.

This "scientific"¹⁸⁹ attitude is undoubtedly related to the re-enactment theory, not least in its emphasis upon critically restructuring the 'question' to which a certain action (understood as the expression of thought) is a response. But they are, however, logically distinct. Re-enactment deals with the conditions, the possibility and the goal of historical understanding, while the logic of question and answer refers to a process of investigation. Questions concerned with the truth, the subjective or objective dimension of history, should be related not to the re-thinking of past thoughts, but to the critical interpretation of evidence. The fact that it is

possible to know what Caesar was up to in crossing the Rubicon depends upon the assumption that his action (embodied only in record) expresses a conscious awareness of his 'problem-situation'. This assumption, in Collingwood's theory, provides history with a presently existing object. But an historical account, what actually took place and why, is the work of inferring from evidence. Dray has argued that the re-enactment of past experience is the effort of putting oneself in the position of an agent and attempting to conceive the situation as he or she did.¹⁹⁰ It only makes sense to talk of this as a process of explanatory deliberation since, otherwise, 'How does a person who does not yet know what an agent's thought was go about discovering what it was by re-thinking it'.¹⁹¹

Goldstein has argued that the theory of re-enactment concerns 'how the historical past is known in historical research. It has nothing to do with explanation at all'.¹⁹² To demonstrate this he introduces several examples from Collingwood's historical writings: the building of the Antonine wall, Emperor Severus' fortification campaign, and the presence of an Irish tombstone in Silchester. In all cases, he argues, Collingwood uses re-enactment to determine what the historical action actually was, that is, to explain the presence of evidence by postulating an historical event. The question 'why that sort of thing could happen' he considers to be 'something else again'.¹⁹³ The significant part of Goldstein's argument is that it emphasises that much of Collingwood's history was not concerned with the actions of named individuals, but with walls, fortifications, artistic traditions, etc. To interpret these objects as evidence in terms of the thought they express must be the work of inference and not of identification. Furthermore Dray has noted that, although Collingwood's most notorious examples of re-thinking mention named individuals - Caesar, Plato, Nelson - this may well have been better to illustrate

his theory. There are other examples of group actions, of long term, even "unconscious" traditions,¹⁹⁴ and of sympathy with the holistic tendencies of certain philosophers, most notably Vico.¹⁹⁵ The thoughts in question here could not have been 'before the minds' of a single individual although group actions might be reducible to the anonymous individuals. This prompts Dray to conclude, unlike Donagan, that Collingwood was a methodological holist but ontological individualist.¹⁹⁶ It also, I would suggest, shows that for Collingwood, the statement 'all history is the history of thought' belongs to the epistemological conditions of historical knowledge. Concrete historical thinking assumes only that evidence is evidence for 'the products of human actions. The question whether these products should be seen as individual or collective is undetermined. If this is so then the characterisation of history as being concerned with thought does not exclude any branch of 'historical scholarship'.¹⁹⁷ The re-enactment theory is not a description of the subject matter of history; it is an elucidation of the conditions which make historical knowledge possible.

Goldstein, however, confuses re-enactment with the logic of question and answer. Collingwood's enquiry into the Silchester tombstone is an excellent example of his 'scientific' approach. It is a concrete instance of the procedure followed by the inspector in his murder story. Collingwood's question is, why is there a tombstone bearing an inscription in an Irish form of Celtic at a time when no Irish community is thought to have settled in that area? Goldstein believes that the answer - the postulated existence of an Irish colony - is the outcome of 'the working of the historical imagination...the techniques and autonomy of history in the reconstruction of the historical past'.¹⁹⁸ This statement refers to Goldstein's broader thesis that history is a matter of 'constitution' and owes nothing to a correspondence or "realist" theory of historical

truth, which will be examined in chapter 5. He argues that the 're-enactment of thought results in historical constitution, and historical constitution has the function of explaining evidence'.¹⁹⁹ This much is reasonable, but he goes on to assert that the explanation of evidence achieved by historical constitution is a different thing from the explanation of past events.²⁰⁰ Now, either he is confirmed in his view that knowledge of the past as the correspondence between an historian's account and a past event has absolutely no implications for history, in which case historical constitution is the only possible knowledge of past events; or he is not, in which case the idea of history's explaining evidence is mere semantic nonsense. He cannot have it both ways and contend that the historical past explains one thing while explaining the "real" past is another. Certainly Collingwood did not allow this dualism. Re-enactment was developed in response to the problem of an "actual" object for historical knowledge. Evidence for Collingwood, is evidence of past thought which, though it may be an assumption, enables the historian to proceed as if his interpretation is not merely of evidence but of thoughts inferred from evidence. Indeed the assumption of this 'encapsulated' past is perhaps, for Collingwood an absolute presupposition, neither true nor false but the guarantor of a level of intelligible communication.

Goldstein is also implausible in assuming that the only 'why' questions in history must refer to background or situational causes of events. There is already a 'why' question implicit in the historian's interest in the Silchester tombstone; a 'what' question might conceivably be satisfied with a description of the physical details of a piece of stone. Once again Dray puts it clearly when, in a discussion of Collingwood's what/why paradox, he writes that it 'only makes sense if the "it" refers to the action as characterised before the explanation begins; and the "what" refers to the

action as re-characterised when...the thought said to explain it is incorporated into a re-description of what was done'.²⁰¹ What I think Goldstein is contending is that the process of historical constitution establishes the 'thought side' of an event which thus renders it intelligible. Any further process of explaining the thought side - why an agent actually did conceive the situation in the way that he did - is a distinct and separate question. This seems to me to be correct. But it is not re-enactment which establishes what happened. Re-enactment provides the possibility of thoughts; what the various thoughts were is a result of critical inference, of a process of question and answer.

The understanding achieved in the re-enactment of past experience is conceptual: re-thinking should be seen as a necessary, although not a sufficient, condition of historical knowledge. Historical evidence, in The Idea of History, is represented as "a problem to be solved". The past is 'encapsulated in the present'²⁰² because Collingwood has substituted the idea of a finished spectacle with the idea of process and "becoming". The question remains, what is the status of an historical re-enactment?

There are passages in The Idea of History where Collingwood seems to be claiming that history can achieve a level of truth and certainty which is final and complete. He argues, for example, that 'the proof of a point in history can be as conclusive as a demonstration in mathematics'.²⁰³ His idea of the 'self-determining' and self-justifying, innate 'a priori imagination' is another point in case. And yet the prevailing tenor of his argument is a recognition of the "historicity" of our knowledge of the past. He writes, 'in history no achievement is final...every new generation rewrites history'.²⁰⁴ The kind of truth to be had in history is only achieved 'inferentially, arguing...from accessible evidence'.²⁰⁵ The 'a priori' imagination is, as Donagan has suggested, better

described as a presupposition of historical thinking; an imagined picture of past events, localised in time and space which is presupposed by an historian, and, in this sense, is neither "true" nor "false".²⁰⁶ What follows from the historian's particular picture must, however, be 'coherent and continuous...one which makes sense',²⁰⁷ and is most certainly a matter for debate. The framework for these debates is defined by the "qualifications" which we have met before. In 1928 Collingwood had written,

The game is won not by the player who can reconstitute what really happened, but by the player who can show that his view of what happened is the one which the evidence accessible to all the players, when criticised up to the hilt supports...(there is)...no way of knowing what is "correct", except by finding out what the evidence, critically interpreted proves...The realist account of knowledge as apprehension of an independently existing object does not apply.²⁰⁸

In The Idea of History Collingwood reiterates this notion of historical truth when he writes, 'what we mean by asking whether an historical statement is true is whether it can be justified by an appeal to evidence'. And evidence, for the 'scientifically' minded historian is, 'everything...which the historian can use as evidence'.²⁰⁹

Collingwood in fact, overstates the difference in approach between the 'scissors-and-paste', and the 'scientific' historian. There will always be 'questions of fact' which, for the purpose of a particular enquiry, are treated as having been settled.²¹⁰ To deny the operation of "focuses" of interest is to reintroduce the spectre of universal history, with the notion that to exclude any aspect of the context or background of a past event is to falsify and distort. When Collingwood says that 'scientific history includes no ready-made statements at all',²¹¹ he is referring to a critical approach which refuses to recognise 'authorities',²¹² but he seems also to be suggesting that each historian

is working alone and in a vacuum; constructing anew the entire historical past. And this is a point which Oakeshott also 'stumbles over. In both cases it is a consequence of pursuing the implications of present knowledge of the past and the absence of all correspondence, even with the work of other historians. Collingwood might usefully have added to the list of his 'qualifications' assumed by historians an awareness of historiography. It was, however, his intention to distance history from positivism, which he characterised as the call to collect facts (events as instances of types) and then frame general laws, and also from the 'logicician's conspiracy',²¹³ which he linked to the 'bankruptcy'²¹⁴ of realism. The latter conceived knowledge as a system of judgments, involving the asserting of propositions and the apprehending of facts. This conception, Collingwood realised, was fundamentally ahistorical and hostile to his own view of knowledge as a ceaseless and 'active process of questioning':²¹⁵ 'the dialogue of the soul with itself'.²¹⁶ History, according to Collingwood had, in its critical treatment of evidence and in its rejection of authorities and the primacy of direct testimony, undergone a 'Coprenican revolution';²¹⁷ a revolution every bit as important for human self-understanding as that achieved by the natural sciences in the seventeenth century. The self-reliance of historical thought gave history the right to be recognised as an organised and systematic enquiry; an autonomous "science". However, it is to be distinguished from other sciences because, uniquely, it deals with human actions, res gestae,²¹⁸ and as such with the expression of past thoughts. Natural science, Collingwood argued, was interested in an event only as an instance of a generalisation: it goes 'beyond' the event to compare and classify.

Essentially science plays a rhetorical role in Collingwood's theory. His main target for attack in The Idea of History (as he made clearer in his

Autobiography) was the dominance of an epistemology which had arisen with the ascendancy of the natural sciences in the nineteenth century, and which, he argued, was uncritically accepted by "realists" as the only correct description of how knowledge is arrived at. In the Autobiography Collingwood protested that this positivistic mentality, while excellently suited to dealing with material objects, was woefully unable to comprehend human affairs.²¹⁹ It treated "human nature" as an unchanging substance and so failed to penetrate to the complexity of particular, potentially unfamiliar situations. Even more damaging, in the hands of realist philosophers, was the idea that the process of our questions and answers; that the 'problems with which philosophy is concerned were unchanging',²²⁰ and this had resulted in the teaching of ethics and politics as spectacles to observe rather than activities to engage in. This led Collingwood to the tendentious conclusion that the 'minute philosophers' of his youth, 'for all their profession of a purely scientific detachment from practical affairs, were the propagandists of the coming fascism'.²²¹ Collingwood's alternative, of course, was 'living' history which recognised that, 'the past, its ostensible subject-matter, was encapsulated in the present and constituted a part of it not at once obvious to the untrained eye...history stood in the closest possible relation to practical life'.²²² This belief is reminiscent of Croce's 'ethico-political' history but not at all what Oakeshott intended by an historical reading of the present.

A Decline into Relativism?

Collingwood's "liquidation"²²³ of philosophy into history occurred sometime between 1932 and 1939. In the Essay on Philosophical Method he argued that philosophy is 'a distinct and living form of thought, and not an appendage of natural science or a part of history'.²²⁴ In the Idea of History he drew a distinction between 'philological history', which confuses history with

'just scholarship or learning', and history proper.²²⁵ The first inquiries into 'what Plato thought...without enquiring "whether it is true"'.²²⁶ Yet in a passage in his Autobiography (written in 1939) discussing the history of changing presuppositions, he argued that, 'It is not their', (the metaphysician-historian), 'business to raise the further question whether, among the various beliefs on this subject that various people hold, this one or that one is true'.²²⁷ Now Knox, as we have seen, represents this as Collingwood's decline into scepticism. It has also been pointed out that, during the years of this shift in Collingwood's thoughts he was immersed in historical studies,²²⁸ and that this exacerbated the tendency, already present, to elevate the model of historical research above all others. This, however, is only a partial explanation of Collingwood's later "historicism". There are also reasons to believe that Collingwood's position in his Autobiography and the Essay on Metaphysics is not a complete break with his earlier thought.

History, for Collingwood, exemplified the thesis that knowing makes a difference to what is known. History became the ideal of a subject-object unity in knowledge. Furthermore history is knowledge of the past 'encapsulated'²²⁹ in the present; it asks the question "how has the present come to be what it is?" The subject matter of history is past human actions, it is, as Collingwood would put it, knowledge of what mind has done in the past. But, as Collingwood also argued, reality is itself historical, a constant process of change and becoming. As such history - its concepts, methods and criteria of rationality - are also under constant review: History cannot be made to square with theories according to which the object of knowledge is abstract and changeless, a logical entity towards which mind may take up various attitudes.²³⁰ The historical past is a never ending process of questioning and answering. It is never finished because, fundamentally,

it exists only in relation to a present critical concern. And more than this, history is self-knowledge;²³¹ the 'value of history...is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is'.²³² What man is, is not an act of mere apprehension, it is an engagement to infer; to-think critically. This calls attention to the importance of present interest in determining which past will be re-constructed (Collingwood gives the example of Enlightenment historians' dismissive attitude to the Middle Ages).²³³ In a passage discussing the goal of historical re-thinking, he writes:

...historical knowledge is not either knowledge of the past, and therefore not knowledge of the present, or else knowledge of the present and therefore not knowledge of the past; it is knowledge of the past in the present, the self-knowledge of the historian's own mind as the present thinking and reliving of past experiences.²³⁴

In the Autobiography the same point is translated into more heuristic terms:

In re-thinking what somebody else thought, he thinks it himself. In knowing that somebody else thought it, he knows that he himself is able to think it. And finding out what he is able to do is finding out what kind of man he is. If he is able to understand, by re-thinking then, the thoughts of a great many different kinds of people, it follows that he must be a great many kinds of man. He must be, in fact, a microcosm of all the history he knows. Thus his own self-knowledge is at the same time his knowledge of the world of human affairs.²³⁵

History is epistemologically licit, and it is, for Collingwood (as for Croce) ethically important. As an autonomous form of thought it reveals the impotence of the positivistic claim to explain "human nature". Collingwood denies any division between theory and practice, and supports the idea of the 'gloves-off'²³⁶ philosopher.

It has been argued that Collingwood's theory of presuppositional analysis is in fact the method of

historical reconstruction. Skagestad has contended that presuppositional analysis of question and answer "chains"²³⁷ is the method of re-enactment,²³⁸ and that the theory of presuppositions provides the 'epistemological moorings for the re-enactment doctrine'.²³⁹ This assessment runs foul of the non-methodological interpretation of re-enactment, and it also fails to connect the theory of presuppositions with the 'rapprochement' between history and philosophy. This latter is achieved by the resolution of metaphysics into an historical inquiry into general beliefs about the world.²⁴⁰ The metaphysician becomes a 'special kind of historian'.²⁴¹

One of the main elements in the theory of presuppositions is that, in order to know what a statement, or action, means, one must know the question to which it is an 'answer';²⁴² this means it owes to the earlier 'logic of question and answer'. In the Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood wrote,

If the meaning of a proposition is relative to the question it answers, its truth must be relative to the same thing. Meaning, agreement and contradiction, truth and falsehood, none of these belonged to propositions in their own right, propositions by themselves, they belonged only to propositions answering a question strictly correlative to itself.²⁴³

To find out what a particular 'proposition' meant - be it a potsherd or philosophical theory - is to reconstruct a 'complex of question and answers', a process which is historical. The answer to a question becomes the presupposition of the next question and so on in linear fashion. To trace an intellectual tradition involves following a chain of questions and answers.²⁴⁴

The idea of presuppositional analysis is Collingwood's attempt to do justice to the assertion that history 'is concerned with processes not events, and processes are 'things which do not begin and end but turn into one another'.²⁴⁵ It also characterizes the

provisional and shifting nature of historical knowledge. 'There is no finality in any knowledge whatever. There is nothing about which we have any knowledge at all, about which there is not more to know'.²⁴⁶

The difficulty with the theory of presuppositions is that Collingwood was not content to emphasise the point that all actions have contexts and that, in order fully to understand them we must reconstruct the problem situation in which they occurred and made them intelligible. Above these 'relative' presuppositions which "give rise" to questions, he postulated the existence of 'absolute' presuppositions which are neither true nor false,²⁴⁷ do not have propositional form, and are never themselves "answers to questions". A complex, or chain, of question and answers presupposing each other in a relative manner is grounded not in an infinite regression, but on certain general and shared principles or beliefs about 'the world's general nature, the presuppositions of all their "physics", that is, their inquiries into its detail'.²⁴⁸ The existence of these absolute presuppositions, such as 'God exists', the Newtonian principle of continuity, and the Kantian principle of universal causality (all of which appear to have, despite his claims to the contrary, propositional form), in Collingwood's thought, have led several commentators to the conclusion that he succumbed to 'charms of an historical relativism'.²⁴⁹ Rotenstreich, Toulin, and Krausz share this conclusion;²⁵⁰ Donagan and Skagestad believe that any attempt to force a rigid distinction between relative and absolute presuppositions is doomed to failure.²⁵¹ Dray, on the other hand, regards the theory of absolute presuppositions as 'primarily a theory of certain limits to the possibility of Collingwoodian explanation in history'.²⁵² Mink is perhaps alone in endorsing Collingwood's theory in its entirety. He sees it as Collingwood's way of confronting conceptual change:

Collingwood's final answer to the question - what is the validity of philosophical arguments which belong to a history in which the criteria of validity have their own history of change...Historicism is itself a kind of Copernican revolution which dissolves the egocentric conviction that history pivots on the present.²⁵³

For Mink the analysis of presuppositions and the transition from one 'constellation'²⁵⁴ of absolute presuppositions to another helps to clarify the role of collective and institutional factors in Collingwood's theory of history.²⁵⁵ Absolute presuppositions are supposedly, a widely shared basis for communication, and that may also be 'coercive in their relation to individuals'²⁵⁶ in the sense of defining the limits of rationality. Mink argues that the 'discernible patterns of imagination, belief and action in historical epochs'²⁵⁷ should not be taken as 'causally explicable',²⁵⁸ but 'intelligible as exhibiting the complex structure of the world and themselves'.²⁵⁹ In spite of the brilliance of this interpretation of absolute presuppositions as the culmination of Collingwood's dialectical concept of thought, Mink fails to explain why Collingwood needed to place them beyond verification, beyond truth and falsehood, and even beyond conscious awareness. How can absolute presuppositions, Dray asks, be 'explanatory thoughts in the Collingwoodian sense?'.²⁶⁰ To be so they must be thoughts which have been 'ascribed to the agent, thoughts he actually "had"'.²⁶¹ Yet Collingwood denied that absolute presuppositions can be thought in this way. Most importantly of all, the postulation of presuppositions which are absolute and a priori, threatens the entire structure of his re-enactment doctrine. Skagestad has aptly summarised the assumption which underlies Collingwood's theory: 'the realm of presuppositions is bounded by a common rationality, every corner of which can be invaded given sufficient imagination and goodwill'.²⁶²

The assumption of a common human rationality is important to Collingwood's theory of history; not a timeless, unchanging human nature, but a continuous chain of questions and answers which links out presuppositions to those of preceding generations.²⁶³ The presence, in different epochs, of presuppositions which determine our "sciences" - 'any body of systematic or orderly thinking about a determinate subject matter'²⁶⁴ - threatens to rupture the unbroken chain of presuppositions, and turn certain fundamental statements about the world into relations holding within a single self-enclosed context. Historical relativity, as Toulmin has pointed out, is all too quickly converted into historical relativism. But this is not the 'necessary and inescapable consequence of a cultural diversity and relativity of intellectual concepts'.²⁶⁵ As Collingwood provides us with no criteria for identifying absolute presuppositions,²⁶⁶ and since they are not acquired through argument, it is difficult to see how one person can share the same thoughts of another if their absolute presuppositions differ, a problem compounded by the fact that 'no one person can be aware of his own absolute presuppositions'.²⁶⁷

If one ignores the more extreme relativist implications of the theory,²⁶⁸ then it could be argued that Collingwood was attempting to describe the relation of specific statements, or questions, in a conceptual system, to more general doctrines. General doctrines or principles of a 'science' would, in this sense, be assumed and would guarantee the intelligibility of lower-level questions.²⁶⁹ This as Mink has pointed out,²⁷⁰ would place Collingwood's theory in proximity to Kant's categories of understanding, and to Wittgenstein's analysis of language games, both of which attempt to describe the determination of what is conceivable. It might also suggest possible similarities with T.S. Kuhn's model of 'scientific revolutions' in which certain "paradigms" guarantee, and

to an extent determine the course of 'normal' scientific activity.²⁷¹ "Breakdowns" and large scale theoretical or conceptual shifts occur at the level of paradigm "failure"; failure to predict and control the course of scientific discovery. This interpretation of Collingwood's theory illuminates its positive aspects, in particular its account of conceptual systems may not necessarily be the consequence of conscious decision-making. Furthermore it helps to clarify his own investigations into the changes in the concept, or idea, of history and of nature. His examples in the Essay on Metaphysics²⁷² are mainly drawn from the development of the natural sciences and the way in which a dominant presupposition of an age - Newtonian, Kantian, Einsteinian - have given rise to a particular cosmology. But one can also apply this notion to the idea of history, with its development through distinct phases - Greek, Christian, Enlightenment, 'scientific'. In each case the particular concept of history, of the relation of past to the present, was embedded in, and entailed certain general conceptions about human nature. The break-through of Vico,²⁷³ and the beginning of "modern" historiography, involved the recognition that so-called human nature was itself only a product of human activities, subject to constant change. Yet there is nothing in The Idea of History or The Idea of Nature to suggest that these large scale conceptual shifts - these cosmological changes - are anything but rational and conscious developments,²⁷⁴ susceptible to statement in propositional form and, above all, matters which are to be judged as good or bad, progressive or stagnatory. Toulmin has argued that Collingwood might have done better had he distinguished between theory and 'disciplinary aims', so that a change in fundamental concepts need not be from one self-enclosed universe of discourse to another, and could be intelligible provided there 'exist a body of intellectual ambitions, and rational methods, common disciplinary principles,

criteria of adequacy which guarantee a continuity of methods...if not of theoretical principles'.²⁷⁵

In the Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood resolved the last remaining aspect of philosophy into history; metaphysics becomes a 'kind of cultural anthropology',²⁷⁶ 'a study of different world views entertained in the course of history by individuals and groups of individuals'.²⁷⁷ The problem for this kind of metaphysical study of changing constellations of absolute presuppositions, is that it must assume the independence of the mind which enquires into historically-conditioned conceptual systems from any such determination. This is the dilemma of any sociology of knowledge, or of 'conceptual relativism'.²⁷⁸ And yet Collingwood was neither a determinist nor a sceptic. In his theory of history he declares the freedom of human action from natural or psychological causes. Why then, the attempt to ground human rationality in presuppositions which are not consciously held?

The increasing stridency of Collingwood's historicism was undoubtedly a reaction to what he took as the moral bankruptcy of theories which separated the knower from what is known,²⁷⁹ and which did no justice to the historical dimension of all human activity. The theory of presuppositions warns us not to attempt to familiarise the unfamiliar through anachronism and assimilation.²⁸⁰ But Collingwood's theory of history is built upon the present engagement of an historian, on the authority of historical thought and on the autonomy of its conclusions.²⁸¹ The empathetic deliberation which completes an historical re-enactment must, in the final analysis, be justified by the sense it makes to the historian himself or herself. A re-enactment relies for its credibility upon coherent extrapolation from evidence and its relation to other historical writing. History then, as a 'science', has developed certain procedures for dealing with evidence. It presupposes -

as other disciplines presuppose - that its conclusions refer to an external reality: past events. But this external object, this thing-in-itself, is an object composed within the enquiry itself (an historical past) rather than approximated to or corresponded with. History, in Collingwood's later philosophy is reality itself and so the conclusions of historical enquiry are themselves dissolved in a ceaseless process of question and answer. Historical re-enactment are relative to particular questions which form links in a chain of historical research. In his Autobiography Collingwood clarifies this idea by talking of 'right' answers in relation to questions are those which help one to proceed in an investigation;²⁸² truth relative to present interests.²⁸³ The introduction of absolute presuppositions which are neither true nor false makes a nonsense of "interest" as being a matter for selection and conscious adoption.

Furthermore to take seriously the implications of the absolute presuppositions of an epoch is to limit historical re-enactment to individuals who share the same conceptual categories as our own. Absolute presuppositions - it it is possible to identify them in the thoughts of past agents - it if is possible to identify them in the thoughts of past agents - provide a way out of infinite regress, and a closed system in which to re-construct a particular action. But this is bedrock certainty bought at the price of incommensurability. Above all it is an arbitrary delineation of the history of conscious activity founded on certain fundamental principles which Collingwood seems to employ as the unconscious determinants of thought.

The implications of the theory of absolute presuppositions are, as Knox suggested,²⁸⁴ sceptical if interpreted as an attempt at system-mongering. This interpretation does, however, contradict the development of Collingwood's theory of history. Rather, I think, we

must attempt to understand them in the way suggested by Mink; as large and shared concepts which are the basis for communication among individuals, and which allows the historian to direct his efforts at relating a particular thought or action to its "appropriate" matrix. In this way the theory is a conceptual or interpretative formulation of the principle that 'how we think is inseparable from the question in what terms we think'.²⁸⁵ To view his later position as advocating formal, self-enclosed systems is to reintroduce an idea that Collingwood himself rejected when he re-worked the idealist belief in the subjective immediacy of all thought.

Absolute presuppositions, taken quite literally, would be the assertion of the absolute nature of certain relative values and concepts, which would be a contradiction in itself. I believe that Collingwood, in defending both the autonomy of history and the historicity of all our judgements (even of philosophy) overstretched his position and attempted to define certain boundaries which would mark out the shifting conclusions attained in history:²⁸⁶ the limits of an historicist understanding that would leave space for the attainment of "true" knowledge about the past.

Chapter 3 - Michael Oakeshott. History: Conversation or Discourse?

Mr Oakeshott's thesis...is so original, so important and so profound that criticism must be silent until his meaning has been long pondered...the chapter on history is the most penetrating analysis of historical thought that has ever been written...(R.G. Collingwood)

Introduction

Oakeshott's contribution to the philosophy of history is substantial, yet his reception has been patchy, and sometimes hostile. His approach is perhaps, amongst our idealists, the most systematically lucid. His conclusions are, somewhat ironically, the most destructive to the possibility of history. Whereas Collingwood presumes a reality of past actions and events that may be reconstructed through the critical interpretation of evidence,¹ Oakeshott discards altogether the comforting assumption that this historical account must have been, more or less, how things actually were. He does not deny that the past was once present, but that the ontology of past, present, and future is entirely irrelevant to history as a form of thought or experience. The epistemology, or logic, of historical understanding is Oakeshott's sole professed concern. To the extent that his investigation into the nature and activity of history pursues, with relentless rigour, what it means to know now what happened in the past, he pushes to the limits the assertion of both Croce and Collingwood that historical thought is a present engagement with the world.

History, in Oakeshott's phenomenology, is a particular "modal" reading of present objects to "evoke" the past. There is no trace of any desire to recover or even discover the "truth" of the past lying behind present evidence, nor of the attempt to re-enact the experience of past individuals. The past of historians is, for Oakeshott, one way, among many, of 'attending' to the constituents of a present 'world of ideas'. At the

outset, then, his position may be characterised as understanding history as construction, not as reconstruction. The past of history neither lives in the present, nor has it any substantive existence to which the use of carefully honed methods may penetrate.² The 'historical past', composed of 'contingently related events' exists as the outcome of an enquiry. it is an inferred past, 'an invitation to imagine'.³

Oakeshott's theory has been described as advocating the study of the past for its own sake,⁴ and, in this way, identified with that of others - most notably Butterfield and Elton⁵ - who have emphasised the importance of scholarly detachment, a recognition of the dissimilarities between past and present, and the rejection of a practical orientation as the proper way of investigating the past.⁶ Yet Oakeshott's assertion that the historical past is concerned with a past that is dead and irretrievable is only a distant relation of the ideal of disinterested scholarship.⁷ Oakeshott shares a repugnance of anachronism, towards all attempts to assimilate the past to the present⁸ and demand that it teach lessons or offer guidance, and against any notion that past events are of a type to be classified into regular patterns exhibiting law-like relations. But there the similarity ends. Oakeshott's position rests on his conclusion that the past which the historian is interested in has not, because it could not, have survived. The detachment, the respect of the historian for the past he investigates, is not merely a cautionary exhortation or an intellectually responsible approach; for Oakeshott it is the inescapable condition of all our knowledge. All knowledge is experience, all experience is present experience and so the historical past is itself present, the historian's 'world of ideas'. A past-for-the-past's sake approach is a sensible distinction only with regard to keeping apart a practical from an historical interest in present objects which are

recognised to have 'survived' from the past. It does not serve to delineate two worlds: the world of past events lying beyond the intrusion of historians' value judgements and the methods of social scientists, enshrined for ever in its complete integrity, and the world of historians' efforts to account for, represent, claw back, or reflect this past reality. For Oakeshott, history is what historians make, or infer, not what they dig up or describe.

Oakeshott has also been labelled an idealist,⁹ and thus an extreme exponent of the autonomy of history. His approach has been regarded as highly sceptical - possibly even nihilistic¹⁰ - towards the possibility of knowledge of the past, with the consequence that he reduces history to whatever the historian spins out of his head. I want to examine the nature and extent of this scepticism, and also focus on the differentia of Oakeshott's idealism. Dray has criticised Oakeshott's idea of 'continuity' and 'discontinuity' as an explanatory postulate of the 'historical' past.¹¹ He questions whether the categorial rejection of 'cause' as an irrelevant intrusion from the scientific mode is defensible and, as a result, whether Oakeshott has really achieved what Collingwood praised him for doing, establishing that the 'historian is master in his own house'.¹² Walsh has asked whether Oakeshott's rigid division between a practical and specifically 'historical' past is sustainable, noticing how severely it circumscribes historical interest and the use of organisational hindsight.¹³ I want to assimilate these various criticisms and refer them to the wider context of Oakeshott's philosophy. In relation to history this argument will extend discussion by including an account of the first three essays of On History,¹⁴ which Oakeshott has referred to as 'the only work of mine that matters'.¹⁵

The three essays On History are the culmination of Oakeshott's reflection on the activity or engagement of

history. The remarkable semantic intricacies which he weaves reflect his efforts to specify the conditions, the content, and the status of an historical past, itself, necessarily, a reading of the present. It is with Oakeshott's attempt to delineate an historical past distinguished from a practical, scientific, or poetic past, that this chapter is primarily concerned. But I do not want merely to describe its outlines and determine its structural weaknesses. In order to understand what Oakeshott means by a specifically historical past we must raise the question of why he goes to such extraordinary lengths to define both its autonomy and its conditional nature. In his work form is inseparable from content;¹⁶ the dimensions of the historical past are indistinguishable from the objects which furnish it: the objects of this world are constituted in relation to ourselves. Oakeshott's ideas, Cowling has argued, are 'inseparable from himself'.¹⁷ The very fragility, transience, and conditional nature of an historical past is reflected in the array of sub-clauses and qualifications which he employs:

By an historical event I mean an occurrence or situation, inferred from surviving record, alleged to be what was actually happening, in a certain respect, then and there, and understood in terms of its emergence; that is, understood as an eventus or outcome of what went before.¹⁸

And these qualifications do not merely confirm Oakeshott's precision in formulating the character of the historical past, they are testimony of an attitude or understanding which is elusive, difficult to sustain, and a 'holiday excursion',¹⁹ from the more pressing demands of practical existence. I want to ask, then, not only what is Oakeshott's historical past, but what he intends by it, and whether, in the end, he means it to be an achievable accomplishment.

Philosophy and the 'abstract' Modes of Experience

In Oakeshott's first book Experience and its Modes (1933) history appears as a mode of experience, a partial and abstract 'world of ideas', which, in asserting reality (which is present through and through) in the form of the past reveals itself to be an 'arrest' in experience and a renunciation of the concrete whole of experience which accepts no modification in its search for a completely coherent, unified world of ideas. In this extraordinary restatement of the first principles of idealism²⁰ it is philosophy, 'the determination to remain unsatisfied with anything short of a completely coherent world of ideas...experience sought and followed for its own sake',²¹ which is able to criticise the various modes of experience (history, science, and practice)²² for their various abstractions and for their attempt to conceive the whole world of experience from the perspective of their own organising postulates (past, quantity, and change). Philosophy exposes their inherent contradiction; their qualification and representation of a world of ideas which is a seamless whole, and in so doing supersedes them from the standpoint of experience as a whole. However, as Fuller has pointed out, the 'philosopher is caught between the insufficient and the infinitely removed'.²³ That is to say, although Oakeshott contends that philosophy is the ground and aim of all experience, the only fully coherent way of understanding our experience, it is an attitude extremely difficult to attain and sustain: it is 'useless to men of business'²⁴ and, in one sense, it is the 'denial of life'.²⁵ It is not surprising then, that the 'sweet kisses of abstraction'²⁶ entrap us, and that 'most people most of the time are content to understand the world within the framework of a particular modes' construction of the world'.²⁷ Oakeshott gives this explicit recognition by asserting that, though philosophy may supersede the modes of experience it cannot take their

place. Within the particular modes there is a certain 'level' of achievement of coherence in experience, the attainment of truth 'in so far as it goes'.²⁸ This may be represented as the consistent organisation of its subject matter according to the postulates or assumptions of the particular modal understanding. Oakeshott writes, that the 'differentia in a form of experience may be taken to lie in the degree of thoroughness with which the criterion is applied'.²⁹ Fuller aptly characterises this understanding in the following way:

A 'mode' of experience is not merely a perspective on things. A mode is a disciplined, if ultimately arbitrarily founded, account of experience proceeding from certain assumptions about the way in which the world is to be explained and which develops over time peculiar methods of inquiry that will create a body of organised knowledge and identifiable manners of conduct that will portray our world of experience as, implicitly, the practitioners learn to look: the historian's past, the scientist's nature, the politician's project for progress, the poet's world of images...³⁰

Philosophy can separate the modes of experience but not abolish them. The constant demands of practical understanding on our attention indicates just how "useless" philosophy is to our day to day existence.³¹

Yet, if philosophy provides no extrinsic goal, and no particular and superior kind of knowledge, it is able to identify the modality (and thus abstraction) of all attempts to define reality as one thing rather than another; reality as history, or a world of quantifiable relations. Precisely because philosophy entails, according to Oakeshott, no presuppositions or postulates,³² it can reveal how each mode of experience attempts to flow out of the confines of its modality and colonise experience as a whole. Each mode, however, in arresting experience at a particular point is governed by its own fixed system of postulates within which its

pursuit of understanding may be coherent and self-sustaining,³³ and each mode of experience is utterly autonomous and independent of any other. The modes are not tracts in experience, not separate fields of knowledge which may be combined to form a whole; they embody the attempt to conceive reality as a whole in a categorically-defined way.³⁴ As such they are mutually exclusive: they cannot converse or co-operate with each other. Any attempt to move from one modal understanding to another without recognition of the dominion of their organising presuppositions, results in a fundamental contradiction, a hybrid form of experience, or to what Oakeshott calls ignoratio elenchi.³⁵ A science of history is an example of ignoratio elenchi, the forcing together of the category of cause and effect with the contingency of the historical world.

Cowling refers Oakeshott's argument in Experience and its Modes to the intellectual climate of Cambridge in the 1920s and the 'proliferation of areas of academic study'. In this light, Oakeshott's position is 'polemical indeed'. Cowling writes:

What theoretical innocence had done was to forget that the worlds of experience were abstractions, and to claim for particular abstractions a power either to disclose reality or to deploy reality in relation to worlds other than their own.³⁶

Oakeshott attacks the idea of rationalistic, social-science programmes (such as anthropology) for learning, which attempt to patch together a coherent form of enquiry out of the different and incompatible modes of thought. These ventures mistake what Oakeshott holds to be the essential conception of learning as an 'adventure' in 'self-enactment' and understanding; they forget that 'knowledge is experience organised according to the postulates of a world which the mind has established',³⁷ and they also separate subject from object, or experience

from experiencing. In a recent work Oakeshott has urged us to recognise that an adventure in self-knowledge is an inescapable 'ordeal of consciousness',³⁸ and that, as Fuller puts it, 'the human condition is a predicament, not an itinerary'.³⁹ To an extent then, as Cowling has pointed out, Experience and its Modes contains a 'recognition of the unsatisfactory but unavoidable nature of partial experiences and understandings'.⁴⁰ All understanding is modal, and modality is abstract. Oakeshott attempts to limit the damage of this partiality by defending these "abstractions" as 'autonomous 'levels' within experience and at the same time, to expose their presuppositions and, in this way, prevent any one particular mode from being held up (as empirical research was by positivism) as the model of all that is true in knowledge. They are all alike conditional, and, from the standpoint of experience as a whole, arbitrary 'backwaters' and 'mistakes'⁴¹ which have only the satisfaction of their own partial organisation of reality.

The thesis of Experience and its Modes is intangible and circular and the commentator has called it 'down right mysterious'. Above all it is extremely unclear whether Oakeshott believes that the effort of philosophy to remain unsatisfied with anything but a completely coherent world of ideas can 'come to completion'.⁴² On the one hand philosophy is itself the 'criterion of all true experience' and serves as a caution to all ambitious abstractions, positivism among them. In this role it is a reference back to the "Absolute" in Bradley's thought; the beginning and end of all thought; the interrelationship of facts and the principle of coherence. It does not lie behind nor ahead of experience: it is experience made concrete, unitary and whole. Oakeshott does, however, handle this monistic concept with extreme care. Though philosophical experience reveals the contradictions inherent in maintaining the dualisms of subject and

object, mediate and immediate, experience and reality, it cannot be consulted or appealed to, and philosophy has no practical consequences: it cannot provide a "philosophy of life". In Oakeshott's thought this "Absolute" in experience acts as a negative and limiting block upon our faith in reason. Philosophy thus serves a sceptical function; it 'raises the spectre of incoherency, and hence insecurity':⁴³ it is the 'philosopher's sceptical disease'⁴⁴ which threatens the certainty that practitioners might have in their various modal procedures. Philosophy can, as Collingwood wrote in his review of Oakeshott in *The Idea of History*, show that we are, for example, 'at liberty to be historians', and that historians can 'play their game according to its own rules...tolerate no interference, and listen to no analogies from any outside quarter'.⁴⁵ But philosophy will also show that history is only a game, made up of its players and the rules to which they subscribe.⁴⁶

Fuller has suggested that Oakeshott's scepticism in Experience and its Modes is 'in the manner of friendly detachment, not of hostility'.⁴⁷ This assessment is accurate to the account of the various modes of experience when they are minding their own business, but Oakeshott is extremely hostile to rationalistic schemes (reflected in his writings on politics and education),⁴⁸ to the idea of co-operative exchange between the modes of experience, and to any attempt to divide subject from object in knowledge and make truth a matter of correspondence or approximation to some external standard. Cowling's conclusion that Oakeshott, at this point, is 'less conservative than bohemian and nihilistic'⁴⁹ is far more apposite.

History as a World of Ideas

The most striking feature of Oakeshott's 'historical experience'⁵⁰ as it appears in Experience and its Modes, is how exactly it conforms to an idealist epistemology.

In his later writings Oakeshott makes the claim that he is attempting to elicit the 'logic'⁵¹ of historical understanding as it is implicit in the enquiry of historians. In Experience and its Modes his first concern seems to be to illustrate the thesis that all reality is experience, all experience is thought, and all thought is a present 'world of ideas'. He acknowledges that 'the historian is engaged in the attempt to establish truth or coherence in the world of history itself'⁵², whereas his point of view is that of philosophy, the 'standpoint of the totality of experience'.⁵³ Collingwood has argued that, in Oakeshott's scheme, it is unclear why experience is arrested to become history, and Oakeshott nowhere gives a clear explanation of this, preferring to contend that modality is a condition of our partial understandings of the world. Experience is then arrested, and history 'asserts' reality under the category of past: sub specie praeteritorum.⁵⁴ This exclusive concern with the pastness of the present is, according to Oakeshott, the most basic and important of history's postulates.⁵⁵

Oakeshott argues that experience - the inseparable and 'concrete whole which analysis divides into "experiencing" and "what is experienced"',⁵⁶ - is a unity of subject and object. Experience is not immediate consciousness, 'the mere flow of sensations and feelings, it is also and always thought, judgment and assertion of reality'.⁵⁷ If history is to be a genuine form of experience it must be thought and thus a unity for the historian and his object, the past. But the past as such is something outside of experience, a world of external events, and something outside of experience is something not known: a non-entity.⁵⁸ To be known the past must be a part of the historian's present experience (all experience being necessarily present, a here and now). Oakeshott achieves this unity with little difficulty. He writes:

...the distinction between history as it happened (the course of events) and history as it is thought, the distinction between history itself and merely experienced history, must go...it is meaningless. The historian's business is not to discover, to recapture, or event o interpret; it is to create and construct. Interpretation and discovery imply something independent of experience, and there is nothing independent of experience.⁵⁹

Like Croce and Collingwood, Oakeshott criticises the notion of a real and recoverable past reality.⁶⁰ The history that historians write is not to be equated with a "time series";⁶¹ like 'every other form of experience' history 'must make its material as well as determine its methods, for the two are inseparable'.⁶² Every 'historical event',⁶² Oakeshott argues, involves an historical judgement, which is an act of thought or inference on the part of an historian and not an act of recall or recovery.

For Oakeshott history is an 'organisation of present consciousness',⁶³ it is the historian's critical experience,⁶⁴ and as such the 'historian's world of ideas'. But this is not to condone subjectivity, since an historical construction is an act of thought, not of unrestrained imagination: it is a judgment founded on the "reading" of evidence.⁶⁵ At the same time an historical construction is not objective 'in the sense of being untouched by thought or judgement',⁶⁶ as this would place history outside of experience.⁶⁷ As an act of construction history can make no use of a correspondence notion of truth, there being nothing external to the historian's present experience with which to correspond. The principle of truth in history, as it is for all our experience, is coherence. History Oakeshott continues, begins with 'a homogenous world of ideas'⁶⁸ (which I take to mean a provisional understanding, or sketch, of a past 'occurrence') and 'the work of the historian consists in the transformation of this world as a whole, in the

pursuit of coherence'.⁶⁹ The 'process in historical thinking is never a process of incorporation, it is always a process by which a given world of ideas is transformed into a world that is more of a world'.⁷⁰ The idealist principle of coherence and interrelatedness confirms the movement in history from provisional hypothesis to more complete description;⁷¹ this movement is a movement in our present thought, in the pursuit of a more intelligible account of evidence,⁷² from which the historian infers⁷³ the existence of past events.

One immediate consequence of Oakeshott's position is to dissolve any distinction between history and historiography, between res gestae and historia rerum gestarum: 'history', he writes, 'is made by nobody save the historian; to write history is the only way of making it'.⁷⁴ There have been several strong objections to this conclusion. According to Walsh,⁷⁵ it is one thing to acknowledge that historical evidence must be present, quite another to believe that the events it refers to are themselves present. Gardiner has argued that Oakeshott (like Croce and Collingwood) is wedded to the ideal of knowledge by direct acquaintance⁷⁶, and, concerned about the pastness of history's object, and anxious over the second-hand condition of its conclusions, attempts to re-work an acquaintance theory of truth by dragging the past (events in the mind of the historian) into the present. Meiland, on the other hand, approves of Oakeshott's scepticism and 'constructionist' approach, believing him to be denying the possibility of historical knowledge altogether.⁷⁷ These criticisms are, however, swiftly dispatched when one realises that Oakeshott's concern is not (here) with the ontology of past events. His interest is with the phenomenology of present experience. Oakeshott, as Atkinson has pointed out, challenges a distinction between 'idea and object, thought and thing, phenomena and noumena'.⁷⁸ Furthermore (as is made clearer

in the essays On History) Oakeshott's point is that the events with which history is concerned are themselves the answer to an historical question, the outcome of an historical enquiry. The past of history is composed of events which are the product of thought and, in this sense, they never existed. The logic of history entails that history is a present, constructive exercise, and this remains the case no matter what comforting assumptions of correspondence are added.⁷⁹ Oakeshott draws his conclusion with a relentless force: 'the past in history varies with the present, rests upon the present, is the present'.⁸⁰

History, for Oakeshott is autonomous not because it investigates a particular subject matter, nor because it employs its own peculiar methods and procedures. History, in Dray's words, is what 'the historian constructs in accordance with the categories of historical thought',⁸¹ or as Oakeshott puts it himself, the 'character and status of history as a form of experience is determined by the character of its postulates'.⁸² Oakeshott employs this idea of structural categories to free history from the intrusion of 'science'.⁸³ His dismissal of explanation in terms of cause and effect (from history) is on account of fits belonging to the modal postulates of scientific experience. His account of change in terms of the continuity and discontinuity of historical 'individuals' is one of the least satisfactory aspects of his theory of history.⁸⁴ Dray, in particular, has criticised the attempt to show that history carries with it its own explanation.⁸⁵ But, it is not enough to examine the substance of his argument; we must also explore its form: the role it plays in Oakeshott's idealist thesis.

'The historical past', Oakeshott writes, 'does not lie behind present evidence, it is the world which present evidence creates in the present'.⁸⁶ As a constructive activity, historical experience does not (as Collingwood's

'scientific' historian did not) recognise any authority external to historical thought. Yet Oakeshott's argument is not merely designed to establish the legitimacy of historical interpretation; he wants to explode all lingering dualisms, between a "then" and a "now", between an event and an idea, and between the truth of 'what happened in the past' and the 'judgement we make, based upon, and guaranteed by our entire world of experience'.⁸⁷ The presentness of historical knowledge then, is not merely circumstantial and an unfortunate but unavoidable hindrance: it is logical and it is absolute. History is what present experience establishes in the present, and this means that historical facts and historical events as historical (the result of an historical enquiry) are present facts and events. Oakeshott's intention, in dwelling on the presentness of what the historian postulates as past is to reveal its central contradiction, its abstraction and hence modality, but it also protects history from all efforts to treat history as if it were a fixed and finished world, a world which can be mapped out, divided into causal sequences, or seen as the revealing the determinant influence of a particular overriding factor - God, the economy, or geographical conditions. What Oakeshott is arguing is that the past in history simply cannot be outside of the experience of historian's; 'without historical experience there is no historical world, no course of events from which gather the principles of historical knowledge'.⁸⁸ All notions of "great" historical events, of history teaching lessons, of evolution and teleology imply that there is a past out there, external to a present enquiry, which can be consulted, which can be made to speak to us, and which exists independently of the thought that thinks it: 'the course of events, Oakeshott argues, 'is...the result, not the material of history', 'history ends, and does not begin, with facts'.⁸⁹

Cause and effect are postulates of scientific experience, and the scientific mode asserts the whole of reality under the category of 'quantity'. Its world is a world of instances and not events, and as such it organises experience in terms of relations between abstract concepts. It is, Oakeshott writes in a later work, 'the exclusion of whatever is private, esoteric, or ambiguous'.⁹⁰ Science recognises the existence of necessary and sufficient conditions because it "makes" its world on the presupposition that there are law-like relations between facts. The attempt to explain change in history in terms of causal laws represents a 'monstrous intrusion of science into the world of history':⁹¹ ignoratio elenchi. Historical events, which are the product of inference, are not however unique or isolable. They are always known in terms of a system, or a 'world of homogenous ideas'. Each event implies the existence of a 'world' of others. This is an echo of both the "oneness" of all experience in Bradley's thought, and of Collingwood's position in Speculum Mentis. But Oakeshott is not subscribing to an ideal of universal history, since this is itself an abstraction. The historian's hypothesis requires an organising concept, or historical 'individual' (the Reformation, a history of Naples, Cambridge or of Christianity), although these individuals can never be fully defined.⁹² The principal postulate upon which an historical individual is constructed by historical thought is continuity, and continuity, Oakeshott argues, is something intrinsic to events. The Roman empire is an historical individual established by means of the 'discontinuity, the relative break which seems to precede it; and its capacity for maintaining its individuality lies in the continuity or relative absence of break, which it can show'.⁹³ In the same way an 'historical person' is marked off by birth, 'the discontinuity which establishes their individuality; death the discontinuity which

shatters it'.⁹⁴ There is nothing solid, absolute, or permanent about the character of historical events which compose an historical individual; they are 'designated' by an historian in terms of questions of 'scale'.⁹⁵

Oakeshott's idea of historical continuity, or unity, which he restates in On History, marks his effort to describe the fluidity and interrelatedness of an historical series. It is a vital component in his argument to show that the historical past has no predetermined shape in advance of, or as a result of, an historical enquiry. In Experience and its Modes, he contends that the presupposition of continuity excludes the idea of cause and effect, which implies that a single historical event may be abstracted from the world of history, made free from all its relations and connexions, and spoken of as the cause of all that followed it or of certain selected events which followed it'.⁹⁶ On the contrary, history is an interrelated world of ideas in which a particular historical event is constituted as it is by the character of antecedent events. As a result of this internal coherence Oakeshott states that there are no events in history which are non-contributory,⁹⁷ that is there are no 'accidental' events (though of course there are in the 'practical' mode) because, 'in the scientific sense there are no inevitable events'.⁹⁸ In an illuminating account of Bury's argument for contingency as the vehicle for explaining change in history,⁹⁹ Oakeshott criticises the idea of hypothetical constructions which postulate how different everything would have been without the "accident" of a particular event (the length of Cleopatra's nose, the invasion of the Huns in the collapse of the Roman Empire), or of the presence of a particular personality (the "madness" of George III in the events leading up to the American War of Independence).¹⁰⁰ The difficulty with Bury's model, Oakeshott writes, is that 'Inevitable events are those which have place within any

one of these causal sequences' (a causal series of events governed by what Bury called its 'natural development') 'which is permitted to follow its own course of development unhindered; accidents or contingent events are the product of any conflux of these independent causal sequences'.¹⁰¹ But this is an extremely arbitrary division, and there is not one 'causal sequence'¹⁰² which may not be broken up into further subsidiary events themselves belonging to other series. Bury confuses cause with contingency and compounds the situation by purporting to derive this model from a study of history itself. Yet, as Oakeshott continues,

History knows nothing of the fortuitous or the unexpected; in history there is nothing extraordinary, because there is nothing ordinary. The hard winter of 1812 which ruined Napoleon's expedition to Russia, the storm which dispersed the Armada - these, from the standpoint of the participants were distressing mischances...But the attitude of the historian is not that of the eyewitness or the participant. Where they see mischance and accident he sees fact and event.¹⁰³

We must, Oakeshott urges, see that the 'only explanation of change relevant or possible in history is simply a complete account of change. History accounts for change by means of a full account of change...no lacuna is tolerated'.¹⁰⁴

Dray has commended Oakeshott for his 'step-by-step' approach to explaining change in history,¹⁰⁵ but he has questioned exactly what relation there can be between 'continuous' events once 'spatio-temporal and causal' relations have been excluded.¹⁰⁶ He also notes that Oakeshott's admission that historical thinking cannot proceed without at least the 'designation' of 'individuals', 'breaks up' the continuity of the historical world in exactly the same way as cause and effect.¹⁰⁷

The most unsatisfactory aspect of Oakeshott's contention that history is not an explanatory exercise is the argument that this is the case because it is a presupposition of the historical mode, and, in this way, places it outside of debate. Yet why is the inner continuity of events a postulate of history? Why are all generalisations beyond enumerative ones (all Reformation parliaments were packed)¹⁰⁸ excluded? It is difficult to see how Oakeshott can defend these categorial exclusions when he has stated that there 'is no course of events until it has been constructed by thought', and no relation between events 'unless we have first put it there'.¹⁰⁹ Oakeshott's historical past postulates unity as the "explanation" of a course of events, not because it finds unity inherent in the events, but presumably because it puts it there. There are times when Oakeshott seems to be arguing that the postulates of history, in this case continuity and discontinuity, are modally determined, prior to the historian's experience of actual research, and in this way somehow determinate of, and outside reflective thought. This uneasy relationship between the self-conscious pursuit of historical understanding as an engagement or activity in self-understanding, and the modal conditions 'in terms of which he is conscious of whatever comes before him'¹¹⁰ remains a constant tension throughout Oakeshott's writings.

It should be stressed that the conception of history in Experience and its Modes supports a philosophical thesis. History is a world of ideas with its own organising principles, and its own specific level of coherence within experience, but, from the standpoint of concrete experience it remains a 'backwater' and a 'mistake'. It is an abstract world of ideas which philosophical thought exposes as an enormous contradiction:

The historical past is always present and yet historical experience is always in the form of the past. And this contradiction must remain unresolved as long as we remain in the world of historical ideas...History, because it is experience, is present, its facts present facts, its world a present world of ideas but because it is history, the formulation of experience as a whole sub specie praeteritorum it is the continuous assertion of a past which is not past and a present which is not present.¹¹¹

In other words, the 'form' of history contradicts the 'nature of its content',¹¹² where form is an enquiry into the past, and content is the world of the present. The past in history is not 'merely contemporary'; it is not the present subjective experience of a particular historian, 'whatever enters the historian's head'; it is thought and judgement, 'what he is obliged to believe'.¹¹³ The presentness of history is emphasised in contrast with 'what cannot be in experience'. It is, as Collingwood puts it, not a 'mistake qua historian' which entails that history is an arrest in experience, but a 'philosophical mistake of arranging in the past what is actually present experience'.¹¹⁴ Philosophy, as Walsh expresses it, is concerned with the 'past as it is in history', and not the 'past as it is for history'¹¹⁵ which is the responsibility of the historian. Whether in fact Oakeshott finally allows for such a neat division of responsibilities is something to which I want to return. Here, however, it is important to realise why, from the standpoint of experience as a whole, history is pronounced an abstraction:

...to suppose this world of history actually to lie in the past, to accept it (that is) in a form in which it is satisfactory in historical experience involves us in a radical contradiction. It obliges us to suppose a world which is not a world of ideas, to suppose facts which are not in experience, truths which are not true, reality which is not real. For no fact, truth or reality, is, or can be, past.¹¹⁶

In Experience and its Modes, philosophy, though not a distinct kind of knowledge, is judge and arbiter of the modes of experience. Essentially, philosophy establishes the limits of modal competence and their autonomy from one another, and, in this sense, as Cowling has pointed out, is 'the affirmation of the necessity of error if life is to be conducted'.¹¹⁷ There is a striking continuity in Oakeshott's thought from this first book to the essays On History (published in 1983), and in particular his constant revision and restatement of the idea that present experience includes distinct 'voices', 'utterances' or modes of perception. Yet one element which appears to drop out of Oakeshott's thought is the possibility (however remote) of ultimate philosophical 'satisfaction'. He continues to define a specifically historical approach in the severest terms which make its attainment thoroughly uncertain, but philosophy no longer awaits to convict all such efforts as mistakes in knowledge. One suggestion for this shift is that Oakeshott's profound hostility to rationalism meant that he believed the primary task of thought was to separate and keep apart the modes, or "discourses", of the present; to distinguish the 'utterances' and conditions of their 'utterance', and, in this way, to direct the 'ordeal of consciousness' - the 'voice of liberal learning' - towards the multiple 'invitations' which are offered to understanding, and not allow philosophy to subvert the whole process by posing as itself the system to end all systems, the world to end all worlds. In an essay entitled 'The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind',¹¹⁷ he writes,

...the image of a meeting place for the diverse idioms of utterance...is not an inquiry or an argument, but a conversation...There is no symposiarch or arbiter...voices which speak in conversation do not compose a hierarchy.¹¹⁸

The Practical and Historical Past

In 'The Activity of Being an Historian' (written in 1955, and published in the essay collection Rationalism in Politics in 1962) history is described as an activity which has 'gradually emerged' and has begun to acquire specific identifying features.¹¹⁹ The activity of history, as with all other activities, comes to be 'specified' in practice;¹²⁰ it follows no predetermined course, nor is it enacted as a programme. Oakeshott declares it his intention to 'consider the manner and achievements of current reflection about the present condition of the activity of being an historian',¹²¹ and to 'discern some special characteristics' which might distinguish an historian from others who share 'an interest in "the past"'.¹²² This is somewhat disingenuous. Oakeshott has no intention of engaging with current analytical philosophy of history, and indeed he quickly dismisses the 'piecemeal' and 'ad hoc' 'exclusions',¹²³ which characterise these 'philosophically naive',¹²⁴ investigations. Instead he proposes to elicit the 'logic' of certain unspecified attempts 'to delineate the field of historical enquiry'.¹²⁵

In the essay the historical mode of experience becomes 'a certain way of reading the present'.¹²⁶ We begin, Oakeshott argues, in a present world to which we take certain attitudes 'to what is happening before us',¹²⁷ and in doing so 'always making something of it for ourselves'.¹²⁸ The most common attitudes are the 'practical', 'scientific', 'contemplative' (later 'poetical') and 'historical'.¹²⁹ Each of these responses imposes a certain character on what we look at. The dominant feature of a practical attitude is happenings understood in terms of their relationship to ourselves; the world that is, in terms of its 'habitableness'.¹³⁰ The practical response understands and values occurrences as 'friendly' or 'hostile', 'useful' or 'useless', 'cheap'

or 'expensive',¹³¹ and it is to this approach that our value judgements and moral assessments belong: it 'admits us to a world of discourse'.¹³² But there is another, an alternative: the 'scientific' attitude.¹³³ This attitude, Oakeshott argues, understands happenings not in relation to ourselves but as independent, what is 'vulgarly' called 'objectives'.¹³⁴ Oakeshott gives an example of heat:¹³⁵ feeling hot is a practical attitude and the statement 'it is a hot day' is in the practical 'idiom' - the world in relation to our feelings of comfort or discomfort. On the other hand the statement, 'the boiling point of water is 100 degrees Centigrade' is in the 'idiom' of science because the 'situation described is hypothetical, and the observation is not about the world in relation to myself'.

One of the significant ideas in this statement is that 'what we see is relative to how we look'.¹³⁶ The 'practical' and 'scientific' attitude understands present events in a particular way. The present is a world we share; it is not a subjective or private sphere, but there are a variety of ways of conceiving it. It is, however, the only world we have. Therefore the 'past' is a 'construction we make for ourselves out of the events which take place before our eyes';¹³⁷ "the past" appears when we understand current happenings as evidence for what has already happened'.¹³⁸

Oakeshott's next move is to argue that there are a variety of attitudes that we may take up towards the past - ways of reading present to disclose past. Of these attitudes the practical and scientific are, once again, the most prominent. The 'practical' attitude understands past happenings in relation to ourselves and to our current engagements. We explain the past in terms of the present and 'make moral judgements about past conduct'.¹³⁹ The 'scientific' attitude does not assimilate past events to our present concerns, its response is 'the past for its own sake'.¹⁴⁰ It is, however, important not to confuse

this "objective" attitude with a specifically historical approach, since the former, Oakeshott contends, makes statements about past events in terms of their exemplifying general laws; its world being a 'timeless world' of 'hypothetical situations'.¹⁴¹ Finally, there is a 'contemplative' attitude towards the past, illustrated by the historical novelist,¹⁴² in which the past is not significantly past at all; the 'pastness' of an object is 'ignored',¹⁴³ and instead its past is a 'storehouse of mere images'¹⁴⁴ of which 'factual' questions are irrelevant. Oakeshott's conclusion is that, 'whatever attitudes present events are capable of provoking in us may also be provoked by events which appear when we regard present events as evidence for other events - that is, what we call "past" events'.¹⁴⁵ As a consequence, there is 'not one past because there is not one present'.¹⁴⁶

It is Oakeshott's contention that each of these different attitudes implies a distinguishable 'universe of discourse'¹⁴⁷ (his new expression for modally conditioned 'worlds of ideas') which are logically exclusive of each other. This is a significant point, for, if there is to be a specifically historical past - the attitude of "historians" - then it must itself be a particular way of 'regarding' present events. By describing these cognitive approaches as 'universes of discourse' Oakeshott intends it to be clear that no approach patched together from the different attitudes can add up to an historical past. An 'historical approach' cannot borrow "objectivity" from science, contemporary political dilemmas from practice, and imaginative images from contemplation, in order to achieve an historical reading of the present. Oakeshott (as in Experience and its Modes) deliberately excludes this kind of co-operative endeavour. Indeed his description of an historical past is avowedly tendentious, to 'loosen the tie between the past and the "practical present"'.¹⁴⁸

If there is an historical way of 'provoking' past from present happenings, where is it to be found? The vast bulk of statements made about the past are, Oakeshott argues, in a practical or 'artistic' idiom, and this is true even of so-called 'histories'.¹⁴⁹ To look for a consistently historical attitude in the writings of historians is, on the whole, to be disappointed since, as Oakeshott puts it, 'History is a miscellany of utterances about the past in which the practical and contemplative idiom is predominant'.¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, it has to be conceded that the activity of history has 'emerged gradually' and has only recently acquired a specific character',¹⁵¹ in just the same way that astronomy emerged from a contemplation of the heavens to discern what they foretold, to become a 'scientific' activity, and thus we may, Oakeshott concludes, resist the temptation to judge too severely. Furthermore, Oakeshott continues, we are 'not looking for the necessary and sufficient conditions of the activity of being an historian, our analysis begins and ends with what has been achieved'.¹⁵² He appears at this point to be suggesting an empirical approach; an enquiry into the 'new techniques' developed by historians for the 'critical treatment of sources of information, and their selection of 'general organising concepts'.¹⁵³ Yet Oakeshott has no intention of specifying an historical past in terms of techniques or procedures, but rather in terms of underlying presuppositions which exist prior to any enquiry. Although these presuppositions may be elucidated from the 'achievements' of historians, they function as fundamental categories of organisation and approach of which, it appears, an historian may not be conscious. The activity may have emerged gradually but it seems that these presuppositions have existed, fully formed from the outset, and do indeed represent criteria of achievement against which a particular history may be

assessed, at least by one who is interested in their underlying 'logic'.

There is an 'historical' reading of present objects, and it is to be found only, although not 'consistently', in the writings of historians.¹⁵⁴ Unlike the 'practical man' the 'historian' does not 'read the past backwards from the present or look to the past for an explanation of his present world'.¹⁵⁵ The past although it is present in the form of a particular approach and understanding, is not 'treated' as if it were the present.¹⁵⁶ Oakeshott lists various ways in which the historical past differs from the practical and scientific past. It does not, he argues, search for 'origins',¹⁵⁷ because this is a way of reading the past backwards from a present perspective, and it imposes an arbitrary teleological structure which, in its 'Whig' conception of the past culminating in the triumphs of the present, reveals an 'incursion of a practical attitude'.¹⁵⁸ Histories titled 'The origins of the French Revolution', 'The evolution of parliament',¹⁵⁹ are not "properly" historical: they are in fact instances of ignoratio elenchi. The historian does 'not inquire into the moral value of past conduct',¹⁶⁰ not because this may lead him into partial or subjective judgements, but because all such judgements of approval and disapproval, moral appraisals, and the 'categories'¹⁶¹ of 'right' and 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad', 'justice' and 'injustice' relate to 'the organisation and understanding of the world in respect of its relationship to ourselves'.¹⁶² Repeating an argument from Experience and its Modes, Oakeshott argues that, in history, 'nothing is non-contributory',¹⁶³ which means that history (unlike practice) does not recognise accidents, in precisely the same way that it does not recognise 'inevitable' or 'necessary' events.¹⁶⁴ History, unlike science, knows nothing of the necessary and sufficient conditions of an occurrence - war for example. The historian 'knows only

of a set of happenings which, when fully set out, make the outbreak of this war seem neither an 'accident', nor a "miracle", nor a necessary event, but merely an intelligible occurrence'.¹⁶⁵ Indeed any attempt to follow science and isolate general causes of events ends up as a 'relapse' in to a practical 'idiom':¹⁶⁶ it is an attempt to assimilate the past to our present understanding and make it speak in the voice of induction or prediction. Above all, Oakeshott states, history must eschew a vocabulary which belongs to practical "utterance": 'He died too soon'; 'He dissipated his resources in a series of useless wars'; 'The Boer war was to make clear the necessity for radical reform in the British Army'; 'The Pope's intervention changed the course of events'.¹⁶⁷ He writes,

In 'history' no man dies too soon or by 'accident'; there are no successes and no failures and no illegitimate children. Nothing is approved, there being no condition of things in relation to which approval can operate, and nothing is denounced. The past is without the moral, the political or the social structure which the practical man transfers from his present to his past. The Pope's intervention did not change the course of events, it was the course of events and consequently his action was not an 'intervention'. X did not die 'too soon'; he died when he did.¹⁶⁸

Both Walsh and Dray have been critical of this rigid division between a practical and historical past. Walsh argues (in defence of his idea of colligation) that 'Every historian will read history backwards, in so far as he identifies continuing trends or processes',¹⁶⁹ and he believes the historian justified in making use of his 'advantage', the benefit of hindsight.¹⁷⁰ The act of specifying not only what happened but also what was intended, and the extent to which it succeeded, is, Walsh argues, an essential feature of history.¹⁷¹ Oakeshott's entirely 'theoretical'¹⁷² approach removes history from

any 'living context of enquiry'.¹⁷³ Similarly, Dray believes Oakeshott to have overstepped his point, particularly in the assertion that the 'place of an event is not determined by its relation to subsequent events'.¹⁷⁴ It is one thing to avoid a teleological perspective which sees everything culminating in the present, but quite another to regard as 'unhistorical...all tracing of consequences and explanation of a later in terms of an earlier event'.¹⁷⁵ In what way, Walsh asks, would the organising concept 'the Rise of the Gentry' be an intrusion of a practical attitude;¹⁷⁶ it is not being asserted that the events grouped together under this heading make sense because they led on to what is happening now. Ironically one of Oakeshott's few examples of history, which has emancipated itself from the practical idiom, is a passage in which Maitland describes the system of holding land, in the name of the King, at the time of the Domesday Book.¹⁷⁷ In this passage Maitland makes use of a teleological structure and an explanation of earlier events in terms of a subsequent, when he writes, 'Towards such a theory English law had been tending for a long while past, very possibly the time was fast approaching when the logic of facts would have generated this idea'.¹⁷⁸ In another passage Oakeshott appears to make the concession that certain expressions - 'ancient', 'modern', 'renaissance', 'enlightened' - which began life as practical terms have now acquired 'limited historical usefulness'.¹⁷⁹ But these expressions are organising concepts and as such help make tangles of events lucid from a thematic point of view ; they can hardly be said to exist in the (contingent) relations of events distinct from the interest of an historian. Dray is also concerned that Oakeshott's dismissal of evaluative judgement from history excludes even those judgements made from the standpoint of the period under study, even though this 'has often been taken as the mark of a specifically

historical approach'.¹⁸⁰ The thrust of his argument, and of Walsh's, is that Oakeshott's criteria of the truly 'historical' are too severe and unnecessarily restrict legitimate "historical" interest.¹⁸¹

The substance of these criticisms may, I believe, be conceded. Oakeshott's 'historical' past is too sharply divided from the present in which it emerges to be sustainable. In an essay of the same period he seems to have recognised this when, in criticising the 'rationalist's' approach to political reform, he writes, that 'All sense of what Burke called a partnership between present and past is lost'.¹⁸² But I am more concerned with the contention that an historical 'reading of the present' is a categorically distinct 'universe of discourse', and the way that this begs the question how the 'activity' of history has assumed the shape it has, and whether its presuppositions are themselves open to further change and specification - a conception of a changing "idea" of history which Collingwood insists upon. I must insist upon approaching Oakeshott's position from the angled question, what does he mean?

It is vital, for Oakeshott, that an historical attitude, which has emerged in 'the face of many hindrances',¹⁸³ be distinguished from 'practical' activity if it is to resist subsumption under the demands of utility and instruction. This is why he represents it as 'the product of a severe and sophisticated manner of thinking about the world'.¹⁸⁴ The 'activity' of history, if it is to be an engagement in 'self-enactment', must be kept separate from all attempts to conceive the past as an independent source of information, whether it be heuristic - philosophy teaching by example - or empirical - the social science approach. The historian's past is, for Oakeshott,

...a complicated world, without unity of feeling or clear outline: in it events have no over-all

pattern or purpose, lead nowhere, point to no favoured condition of the world and support no practical conclusions. It is a world composed wholly of contingencies...¹⁸⁵

Historical understanding is an 'achievement'¹⁸⁶ pursued for no other end than its own. It is an achievement of inferential thinking, which is a denial of any notion of an existing past, of an 'already specified occurrence', to which thought must approximate or explain. The idea of a living past (espoused by Croce and Collingwood)¹⁸⁷ is anathema to Oakeshott; it is a 'piece of obscene necromancy'.¹⁸⁸ The past the historian 'adores' is 'dead'.¹⁸⁹

The 'enemy'¹⁹⁰ of the historian's theoretical interest in the past for its own sake is, above all, the practical attitude. It is the most basic and constant way in which we respond to the world, yet it is not the only way, and 'addiction to practice'¹⁹¹ must not be allowed to provide the sole impetus to learning. The past, for this practical attitude is an interest 'only in retrospective politics',¹⁹² and because of this 'the past is now more than ever a field in which to exercise our moral and political opinions, like whippets in a meadow on Sunday afternoon'.¹⁹³ We must, Oakeshott urges, recognise that past events appear first in the 'idiom' of practice which must be 'translated' into the historical,¹⁹⁴ and this is why we should avoid writing about past events which 'circumstantially provoke a practical interest', particularly those which are more recent or are in some way 'related to the present'.¹⁹⁵

However unsupportable Oakeshott's modal division between a practical and historical past, it should be understood as a plea for the possibility of "genuine" learning, and for departures from a practical present: 'excursions into a foreign country'.¹⁹⁶

Oakeshott's concentration on the scholarly disinterestedness and on the break between past and

present in history, might have been secured through emphasis upon the exacting procedures and controls of historical enquiry. But he does not pursue this path: indeed he cannot. he is committed not only to the radical independence of the past from present interests, but also to the assertion that past events cannot exist independently of an historical construction. On the one hand the historical past is a 'dead' past, without lessons to teach, known only through a 'sophisticated' process of inference from evidence. But on the other, the historical past is that which is "made" or written by historians in the present. I take this to be the central, unresolved and irresolvable tension at the heart of Oakeshott's theory of history. His idealism contends that understanding is a unity of subject and object, and hence that all thought is present thought. History is an engagement in present understanding. But he wants to define this present understanding in terms which will exclude "subjective" or practical intrusions and separate it from other ways of understanding exactly the same objects. To do this he reasserts the pastness of the historian's object of interest; he throws it back into the form of a dead past where it can serve no practical purpose. Yet this is precisely the abstraction which he characterised as implicit in historical experience in Experience and its Modes. The "pastness", or independence of the historical past is confirmed, according to Oakeshott, by a postulate of historical 'discourse'. All his attempts to specify the 'logic' of these underlying presuppositions (which reaches its apogee in On History) are efforts to make sense of the idea that the historian's past, though present, is not merely present; is not the subjective experience of a particular historian. It must be a present which 'speaks only of past'.

The three essays which compose On History form an extended and intricate defence of the thesis that an historical past is a specific 'reading' of present objects, modally distinct in terms of the 'conditions which constitute it a distinct kind of enquiry'.¹⁹⁸ The essays are a relentless search for the correct expression of an understanding of the past which, though grounded in the perception of objects existing in the present, is 'logically distinct' from, and irreducible to, the languages of other modal understandings. Again Oakeshott claims to be attempting to 'distinguish and take hold of a current manner of enquiry', which is 'the invention of historians'.¹⁹⁹ His interest is with 'its theoretical postulates as reflected in a piece of historical writing',²⁰⁰ but this does not entail a concern with the methodology of historical research, nor is it an attempt to define history in 'terms of its so-called subject matter'.²⁰¹ Oakeshott's concern is with the 'logic of historical enquiry...a concern not with the truth of conclusions but with the conditions in terms of which they may be recognised as conclusions'.²⁰² History as a 'current and contingent manner of enquiry' is an activity which has 'acquired a recognisable shape'²⁰³; to identify the 'conditions' which announce it an 'historical mode of understanding',²⁰⁴ one must discern the texture of its significant features. This is extremely ambiguous. On the one hand the historian chooses his enquiry²⁰⁵ and historical thought confirms whatever authority and validity it may achieve, which would seem to allow an 'historical' awareness of the past²⁰⁶ to be a matter of self-conscious deliberation. But on the other hand the modal postulates of the historical past are such that they may only be discovered in terms of the underlying "logic" of an approach: an approach sustained by 'conditions' of understanding which themselves 'specify what is to be

understood'.²⁰⁷ Although Oakeshott denies that he intends to 'prescribe'²⁰⁸ any legitimate interest in the past, that 'he is not composing directions for the conduct of an historical enquiry',²⁰⁹ he goes on to state that the engagement of the philosopher is not a matter of 'observing' and 'recording' the practice of historians, and that his conclusions do 'not seek confirmation in their work'.²¹⁰ Now, any attempt to circumvent the 'ordeal of consciousness' is plainly antithetical to Oakeshott's conception of learning and knowledge as must be any attempt to formulate the "rules" or "techniques" of history. But his description of historical understanding is so severe, contingent and conditional; so hard to sustain, that it is, in effect, a caution to historians. In its negative assertion of what an historical past is not, he reduces the scope of historical interest and, by implication, the achievements of historiography.

The addition to Oakeshott's theory of history in the three essays is his theoretical description of the 'procedure' whereby 'past' may be evoked from present. A modally distinct past, Oakeshott argues, is the counterpart of a particular reading of the present, and this reading of objects is a procedure in which we derive a past. The discussion of the 'present-past' in the first essay, "Present, Future and Past",²¹¹ is a brilliant elaboration and reassertion of the idealist unity of subject and object in knowledge. We begin, Oakeshott writes, with a present, and,

...what I mean by a present is a universe of discourse composed of a subject (that is, a reflective intelligence identified in terms of a mode of perception) related to objects (that is, things identified in terms of certain conditions): a subject and objects which correspond to and define one another.²¹²

But our relationships to this present is neither immediate nor intuitive. There are various different ways of

understanding an object (Venice,²¹³ the Magna Carta, Robin Hood) but each is not therefore subjective or esoteric.²¹⁴ Our various understandings 'may exclude one another but they do not deny one another'.²¹⁵ 'Every such object is the perception of a subject, but none is "subjective" in the sense of being outside discourse or impervious to error. "Subjectivity" is not an ontological category'.²¹⁶ The way Oakeshott tries to exclude "subjectivity" from these distinct understandings is by arguing that each can be specified as a particular and exclusive approach. For the person who uses Hume's Treatise to keep out a draught the object is useful, but the argument of the Treatise cannot perform such a function.²¹⁷ Oakeshott represents these exclusive understandings as a 'transaction' between subject and object, and since 'no object is unconditionally recognisable'²¹⁸ each such transaction can be specified in terms of its conditions. Again he contends that the 'practical present' is the one which we occupy most often, in which objects are understood in terms of their worth to us in our present activities. Nonetheless the practical present is not 'emancipated from modality'.²¹⁹ It is an autonomous universe of discourse;²²⁰ a 'coherent self-sustaining understanding of the world in which a single formal character is imposed on everything that receives attention', and yet it is still a conditional understanding. The relating of an object to our current purposes may be an understanding which has circumstantial priority,²²¹ but it cannot be represented as an act of immediate perception.²²² There are other modes of understanding which we may engage in than this 'present-future' of practical engagement',²²³ and room must be created for them.²²⁴

As the practical-present is the most prominent mode of understanding its counterpart (since the present 'determines what particular past shall be sought')²²⁵, the practical past, is the most common way of evoking past.

Oakeshott identifies several different kinds of past all of which are understood in relation to ourselves: a remembered past, an encapsulated past, and most importantly a recollected or consulted past.²²⁶ This latter emerges when objects are recognised to have 'survived' from the past which may be consulted, 'listened to', 'neglected or ignored'.²²⁷ The recorded past provides us with an enormous wealth of analogies and metaphors ('he met his Waterloo', the 'touch of Midas', 'the wisdom of Solomon',²²⁸ 'Luther at Worms'²²⁹) and it forms what Oakeshott calls a 'living past', a 'current vocabulary for self-understanding and self-expression'.²³⁰ The contents of this giant 'storehouse'²³¹ of preserved objects are names, images, dates, buildings, charters etc. Their salient feature is a readiness to be employed in the present, as emblematic, in nostalgia, for political purposes etc. It is what Oakeshott describes as a 'didactic' past,²³² recalled in terms of unproblematic images which are held to teach lessons, prove that current projects are sanctioned by past authority, or that '"history is on our side"'.²³³ Although this past is understood to have survived it is not the result of critical enquiry, indeed it is not 'significantly past at all'.²³⁴ The procedure of evolving this past is one of recall.

An 'historical' understanding must begin in a shared present, and its objects may well be the same as those which compose a practical past. However, the procedure of evoking past is altogether more 'sophisticated'²³⁵ and 'difficult to achieve'.²³⁶ The subject (historian) is 'exclusively concerned with past',²³⁷ and he treats the fragments of a conserved past as 'survivals',²³⁸ that is objects of which the appropriate question is not 'is it true or false', 'fake or forgery', but 'what is its authentic character?'.²³⁹ A 'survival', in other words, is not a self-contained, unproblematic image or emblem,

but an object which demands further inquiry; it has survived but is a 'not-yet-understood object'.²⁴⁰ The historian is concerned to 'relate it to its provenance and understand it in terms of its occasion'.²⁴¹

Oakeshott calls these 'survivals' utterances, artefacts, performances or exploits; res gestae. The first task of the historian is to find out about their 'authentic character'. It is not a question of whether or not they provide direct evidence of what happened:

such reports and descriptions are not read by an historian as informative utterances testifying (correctly or incorrectly) to what they report; they are constituents of the performative utterances (addressed, not to posterity or to some future historian, but to contemporaries) in which their authors were responding to their current situations...²⁴²

The evidence which an historian interprets is, for Oakeshott, already the outcome of inference; 'authenticated survivals from the past are dissolved into their component features in order to be used for what they are worth as circumstantial evidence from which to infer a past which has not survived'.²⁴³ This is a crucial phenomenological distinction. Survivals from the past may be translated into 'circumstantial' evidence, but they cannot (as they could, when interpreted as the expression of thoughts, for Collingwood) provide access to a past of events. The objects of historical attention are 'bygone performances',²⁴⁴ which may be understood in all their complexity and interrelationship, but they refer only to themselves, that is, to their 'performance' and to their record. The res gestae of the historical past are the recorded 'exploits' of past human beings. Past events, as events, have not survived. This point is similar to that made by Munz²⁴⁵ when he argues that historical evidence is evidence not of events as they actually happened (of a time series), but of events as they have been recorded, and this record is itself an artefact, something made

rather than transcribed. the historical series is not the same as a time series, and an historical past composed of related events exists only as the outcome of an enquiry, in response to a question. Not only can the historical past not be dug up, in an important sense the historian's past was never present²⁴⁶ - 'In the sense of being observed to have happened or of being recognised to have happened',²⁴⁷ Oakeshott writes,

The character of these surviving utterances as informative reports about human performances or about other kinds of happening is subordinate to their character as themselves the performances of their reporters; it merely specifies their artefactual idiom, the performative utterance of its reporter.²⁴⁸

Oakeshott has to insist upon this initial stage of inferential enquiry (the ascertaining of the 'authentic character' of a survival) because the historian shares the same present with the practical-present-past. It is only in the approach of an historian to his object as a not-yet-understood thing, valuable for what it may disclose by way of evidence, which distinguishes the two attitudes. Oakeshott's historical past is thus a construction, and it is authoritative within its own 'discourse'. Indeed the historian 'creates his present, his so-called sources, and endows them...with authenticity'.²⁴⁹ He seeks to understand survivals by establishing their relations to one another and, in this way, to make 'recorded exploits interpret and criticise each other'.²⁵⁰ Having done this he is interested in what may be inferred from them: the understanding achieved at this stage in an enquiry is of what Oakeshott calls an 'historical occurrence'.

An historical occurrence is a conclusion of inference, it is an 'identified condition of human circumstance', in a 'certain respect chosen by an historian',²⁵¹ and it is not to be equated with any 'artefact or recorded utterance which has survived'.²⁵²

An historical occurrence is 'an anatomised fragment',²⁵³ and it is the conclusion of an enquiry into the 'character' of a survival: it cannot itself have survived. Oakeshott is unclear as to how precisely 'survivals' may be translated into evidence, but his contention seems to lie beyond methodology. It is his belief that the evidence from which historians construct an account of a past occurrence and infer what 'did in fact happen',²⁵⁴ must not be understood as a permanent record of past events which may be consulted, or ignored, at one's leisure. Evidence exists as the conclusion of an enquiry, and it cannot be gathered together as though it were itself the past existing in the present. As Oakeshott points out, a complete record of 19th century legislation can never constitute a history of parliament in that century.²⁵⁵ There is no such thing as historical evidence existing independently of an interest in the 'authentic character' of 'survivals'.

Historical occurrences, Oakeshott continues, can never be identified singly or in isolation, 'each being what it is in relation to other occurrences',²⁵⁶ and so the next level of historical enquiry is 'exploring and anatomizing the characters of situations of various dimensions'.²⁵⁷ Dimensions are decided according to what an enquiry 'finds to be appropriate to the characters it has attributed to their component occurrences'.²⁵⁸ Again the emphasis here is upon the historian's designation and criteria of 'appropriateness'. Oakeshott writes, 'An historical occurrence is a rudimental historical situation, and an historical situation is a composition of notionally contemporaneous, mutually related, historical occurrences'.²⁵⁹ Historians denote the 'situations' they 'undertake to explain'. Examples he gives are, 'Alexandrian Platonism', 'The formal structure of English feudal Society around A.D. 1200', 'the Civilization of Renaissance Italy', 'logical positivism',²⁶⁰ etc. But,

importantly, these situations are not intended to refer to the 'designs, purposes or exploits of assignable agents', that is, they do not refer to the 'self-understandings' of persons who occupied these situations'.²⁶¹

This last conclusion represents a clear break between Oakeshott and a past-for-the-past's sake position, and its concern with the past as it understood itself. These past situations are constructed in answer to an 'historical question'. It is Oakeshott's point that the past made up of these occurrences or situations have not survived because they could not have survived. It exists in an historical series, the conclusion of an enquiry, and there is not independent past (including a past encapsulated in record) to which they could be compared.

Oakeshott's hostility towards the notion of correspondence with the past "as it actually was" involves an intense effort to describe the circumstantial and conditional nature of evidence, and the emphasis, at all levels of historical research, on the primary importance of the approach of an historian and the question raised by an enquirer.

Oakeshott acknowledges that any past situation identified by an historian will necessarily be an abstraction from 'the flux and inconsequence of all that was going on then and there',²⁶² and that this 'procedure of abstraction is recognised when an historical past is specified as an answer to an historical question'.²⁶³ However since one of the postulates of history is 'change', a past which is 'constituted in terms of its situational immobility',²⁶⁴ must be transformed in to one which is an assemblage of 'historical events and the conjunctions of historical events';²⁶⁵ and this for Oakeshott is an 'historical enquiry properly speaking'.²⁶⁶ This past of events is a 'past of which there can be no record'; it is one which is 'necessarily unknown in default of such an enquiry'.²⁶⁷

To capture the flavour of Oakeshott's historical past one should attend to the caveats and qualifications in some of his characteristic statements: 'By an historical event I mean...an uncovenanted circumstantial²⁶⁸ ...confluence of vicissitudes'.²⁶⁹ This sense of historical events as 'a somewhat tentative construction'²⁷⁰ accurately reflects the dilemma of Oakeshott's position. In order to break the link between history as the present organisation of experience, and the present of our practical activity, Oakeshott argues that historical events, though not themselves contingent, are related to one another in a manner which is entirely contingent; they have no fixed shape and no predestined outcome. But Oakeshott transfers this indeterminacy into the present of historical enquiry and attempts to make the whole historical construction a conditional exercise. A particular historical event cannot, he argues, be known or understood in advance of its emerging as the conclusion of an historical enquiry: 'what they are is how they come to be woven'.²⁷¹ The whole array of efforts to deduce the occurrence of events; teleology, dialectical shifts, covering-laws, cliometrics etc.²⁷² - as somehow necessary or inevitable, mistake the fundamental nature and conditions of the historical past which is the attempt to infer from surviving record a past which has not survived.²⁷³ History, for Oakeshott, is not an explanatory exercise but an engagement to understand discursively, and all efforts to classify events into types or kinds, to quantify and deduce, rely on the notion of an 'empirically observable past'²⁷⁴, a past which has survived, which is "given" to understanding, and so assume to be 'already known what it is the purpose of an historical enquiry to ascertain'. Cause and effect are inappropriate to the historical past precisely for this reason, a 'cause may be sought only for an already known and understood effect'.²⁷⁵

Oakeshott's criticism of Hempel's covering law model of explanation in history²⁷⁶ is altogether different from that pioneered by Dray. He argues that it is not a question of whether or not we possess enough reliable information about the past in order to deduce generalisations or laws about the occurrence of past events, but, that such an approach involves an 'unresolvable categorial distinction'.²⁷⁷ Laws relate only to 'model-situations' and these contradict the character of historical events as not-yet-understood occurrences.²⁷⁸ We cannot account for the occurrence of an event as though it were something resolved, fixed and made an object for empirical study. But, in addition, an historical event is 'not a happening or situation which occurred or could have occurred'.²⁷⁹ For Oakeshott an 'assemblage' of historical events is an answer to an historical question, and any such passage or series must be understood as a 'circumstantial' gathering, not the display of an underlying logic. In a passage discussing causation he argues that cause has acquired a place in historical 'discourse', but that it is an ambiguous 'rhetorical expression'. When an historian writes of the 'causes of the French Revolution', he means to identify its 'noteworthy antecedents', and as such, cause is a 'loose insignificant expression'.²⁸⁰

The question remains, what is the nature of relations holding between historical events? Oakeshott argues that the historian is interested in the 'character' of an event, not with the question, 'what did this event or those events, cause? but only with their non-exclusive relationship with some subsequent event in terms of which the character of that subsequent may be understood'.²⁸¹ The character of a subsequent - the abolition of the Slave Trade - is what it is in respect of its relation to antecedent events.²⁸² Although these relations are established in an inferred passage of events in answer to

an historical question, Oakeshott denies that they are exclusively conceptual; the abolition of the British Slave Trade in 1806 was the 'unintended eventual' by-product of contingently related events, some of which 'had nothing to do conceptually with slavery or the trade'.²⁸³ Thus an historical event is a 'convergence of significantly related historical events'.²⁸⁴ Oakeshott employs the metaphor of a dry stone wall²⁸⁵ to indicate the way in which antecedent events 'in touching' constitute a consequent or 'eventus'. This is narrative history in its most extreme linear and continuous series form.

This notion of relations between events being their 'unintended', circumstantial proximity is extremely difficult to sustain, not least because, at no point in Oakeshott's argument are we permitted to have the vaguest sense of what shape a passage of events will assume, nor any impression of the 'character' of a 'subsequent'.²⁸⁶ There is, Oakeshott contends, 'no explanans of a different character from an explanandum',²⁸⁷ and this refers not merely to the illusory idea of a real past, but also to the activity of historians in constructing an historical past. How, then, is a passage of events to be assembled; how are 'significant' connections established? Surely any historical question specifies, if only in very general terms, the object or occurrence it intends to investigate, and this projected occurrence is, however vaguely, an already specified outcome. Oakeshott, in arguing against all notions of correspondence, also rejects the possibility of comparison between different historian's conclusions; the study of historiography. He writes, 'An historian is never in a position to look back from an already understood historical situation or event and to conclude what must have been its components or significant antecedents...'²⁸⁸ Teleological schemes are rejected as 'inherently impossible',²⁸⁹ since an historian 'remains ignorant' both of beginnings and endings.²⁹⁰ Oakeshott

seems to concede some ground when he writes that an historical enquiry is 'concerned to understand what has somehow been identified but the character of which is not yet understood'.²⁹¹ Such "identification" as is possible is limited to the formulation of an historical question, but Oakeshott leaves unanswered what kind of question this might be. He argues that an historical enquiry must always begin with a question addressed to an existing object - a survival - and then proceeds through searching for its 'authentic utterance' - the anatomizing of a situation which has not survived - and concludes with a provisional understanding of an event which could not have survived.²⁹² Yet it is not an option open to him to break up these various stages of an enquiry, calling them, research, monograph, history; or even "chronicle" (the first stage only) and "true" history. The historical past exists, if at all, as a coherent, modally distinct approach to the present, which, although it may be investigated and elucidated, cannot be divided up into separate concerns. The study of historiography, as a record of the conclusions of historical enquiries is itself ruled out in the following statement, 'The engagement of an historical enquiry cannot be that of learning to distinguish between the relative credibility of different accounts of the past'.²⁹³ The radical division between an historical and practical past may support the possibility of historical knowledge as a present reading of objects, but, it must also dispense with that area in which correspondence does seem operative, the comparing and contrasting of different interpretations. Perhaps what Oakeshott intends is to make a distinction between the study of different accounts of the "same" past and diverging "historical" pasts which, by their nature, cannot be compared or contrasted but only juxtaposed.

Since, for Oakeshott, history must not be thought of as heuristic, comparisons with other historical situations, even in 'respect of detail', becomes 'merely a distracting irrelevance'.²⁹⁴ And this is 'not because such likenesses may not be observed, but because conceptual likenesses or identities cannot themselves constitute significant relationships between historical events'.²⁹⁵ But what can constitute a 'significant' relation? Oakeshott's answer, as it was in Experience and its Modes, is that relations between events cannot be imposed from outside, they must be sought in 'some intrinsic quality...its own coherence'.²⁹⁶ But we have already seen that historical events and 'the differences which compose a passage of historical change',²⁹⁷ are joined contingently; they have no intrinsic, predetermined shape, and are what they are only in their assemblage by an historian. It is the historian who is responsible for establishing the coherence of the historical past, for assembling significantly related antecedent events, and for revealing their intrinsic continuity. The three essays On History are, however, devoted to limiting the scope of the historian's creative freedom, while, at the same time, arguing for the categorial autonomy of historical thought. In the end Oakeshott shows himself to be thoroughly suspicious of the historian's prerogative, and this is why the historical past is so tenuous and shifting: 'a continuity of divergent tensions'.²⁹⁸

Oakeshott believes that a specifically historical awareness of past is something which is still emerging, side-tracked as it is by the 'insinuating voice of practical understanding'.²⁹⁹ The philosopher's disinterestedness means that he is concerned to elicit what is consistent and distinguishing in this approach, but also to recognise that the 'present in historical understanding' is 'difficult to sustain'.³⁰⁰ He writes,

And what I have said does not require that there should anywhere be found a piece of writing which exactly reflects an imagination so relentlessly concentrated upon relating a passage of historical events to an historical question about the past that it never diverges...to speculate upon the intentions of a philosopher or the motive of a politician, or never utters a practical judgement.³⁰¹

This is not, however, a concession to the exigencies of writing history, nor is it a reason to conclude that Oakeshott's description of history is perhaps not as severe as I have been arguing. It is meant only to acknowledge the demands of the practical mode. He continues,

I am not dismayed when I find both kinds of past represented in a history book, because it is not to be expected that any book will avoid being somewhat miscellaneous...we are concerned solely with the "history" in history books.³⁰²

Oakeshott's confidence that the 'historical past' is the understanding which all "history" aspires to, goes beyond the terms of his investigation into the activity of being an historian: it suggests criteria by which an historical approach may be assessed. This mixture of the descriptive and prescriptive reflects the ambiguity of Oakeshott's theory of history. On the one hand history, par excellence, an 'adventure' in self-enactment, an opportunity to enquire and to construct; an essential element in the 'ordeal of consciousness', which, in a recent essay, he describes as an 'adventure in which the individual confronts the world he inhabits'.³⁰³ This notion of 'becoming' through learning, of freedom being the ability to express one's understanding in statements,³⁰⁴ and 'also in the world's being for him what he understands it to be',³⁰⁵ accords with the thesis of his book On Human Conduct. Here he argues that understanding is a resolve 'to inhabit an ever more intelligible - less mysterious world'.³⁰⁶ This is an 'unsought and inescapable freedom',³⁰⁷ and it involves,

above all, assuming responsibility for the meaning of our 'utterances'. History, divorced from any notion of a fixed and finished past which teaches lessons, of submission to a scientific paradigm of causal deduction, provides us with the opportunity to 'imagine'. And yet, on the other hand, because it is independent of a practical, assimilationist urge, it is clearly 'useless', potentially 'positively misleading to our present circumstances'.³⁰⁸ No other reason, Oakeshott concludes - moral, political, or financial - can be adduced for studying the historical past than a curiosity about the presence of survivals, and even this interest is, as we have seen, attenuated. This may be the past-for-the-past's sake approach, the attitude of the scholars, but it is purged of any lingering faith that his efforts will slowly, incrementally, approximate (ever more faithfully) to the reality of "what happened". An historical event is a 'tentative construction' subject to constant 'revisions'.³⁰⁹

At the heart of Oakeshott's theory of history is the demand not to misconceive the nature of historians' conclusions. Referring to the 'names' given by the historian to their continuities of 'change' - 'the Carolingian Empire', the 'protestant Reformation', the 'Intellectual Revolution of the Seventeenth Century' etc. - he makes the following plea,

...we must understand him to be begging us not to place too much weight upon these identifications...not to confuse his tentative, multiform historical identities with the stark monolithic products of practical and mythological understanding which these expressions also identify.³¹⁰

But, by excluding all practical interest, Oakeshott excludes too much, and, in effect, leaves the historian stranded in a present with no facility event to make use of his own previous conclusions. There is just nothing

for the historian to look back upon and everything is dissolved in the continuum of a present form which there is no escape.

Since Oakeshott's idealism explodes any notion of correspondence, and of facts outside of experience, he has to distinguish "pasts" in terms of present interests. In On Human Conduct, Oakeshott expresses the prerogative of the historian. 'His', he writes, 'is an engagement...not to re-enact in his own imagination the performance of an agent...(but)...to take hold of a performance and endow it with a conditional intelligibility of which he is the author'.³¹¹ This creative dimension, the self-certifying aspect of historical thought, was recognised by Dilthey, Croce, and Collingwood. Yet, for them, the past of historians' is, to varying degrees, linked to the life of the present. The present-past for Croce is a form of vital ethical awareness, for Collingwood, a condition of self-consciousness. But Oakeshott does not follow this humanistic conclusion; it is anathema to him, and to his sense of freedom: deliverance from a past which, though it is profoundly silent, can nonetheless be forced to speak in the language of practice.

Oakeshott's account of historical change is far from satisfactory. To argue that the past possesses no determinate shape is one thing;³¹² to deny that historians can establish conceptual or thematic descriptions of events is quite another. But once again we must return to Oakeshott's rejection of the idea of an external arbiter, in this case an historically established past, the conclusions of historians. Instead he throws their conclusions into the same melting pot with the relations between events, and the historian is left to occupy, in Croce's contradictory phrase, an 'eternal present', a present not only cut off from the past as it really was, but also from the past as it has been inferred in record. Such is his concern that history should not be represented

as a growing body of attested facts and agreed upon interpretations, that an historical past seems to exist as a question, but not an answer; a series of undertakings to 'assemble past events' in a continuum of forgetting.

With the exception of a passage from Maitland,³¹³ an approving mention of De Tocqueville, and an array of other history books introduced as examples of "denoted"³¹⁴ historical 'situations', Oakeshott gives no encouragement that the historical past, as a sustainable approach, is achievable. His own writings provide no examples of what he describes as an 'historical enquiry properly speaking'. Must we conclude that the historical past is the ideal goal of understanding but that its iron logic prevents its attainment? This appears to contradict his notion of the 'conversation of learning' in which we learn to distinguish 'utterances' in terms of their 'voices'. Conversation, however, implies conversing with others, and yet Oakeshott explicitly ruled out the possibility of translating from one 'language' to another. Significant communication only occurs within a particular modal understanding. Indeed, despite Oakeshott's libertarian conviction that understanding is an activity to be engaged in, the severity of his historical past opens the way for any number of "failures" and "distortions" posing as history. The structuralist implications of On History, with its talk of 'universes of discourse', of modally distinct 'utterances', of 'tropes', are revealing. The logic of historical understanding appears to be placed between the subject (historian) and his object (survivals from the past) and entails that a certain kind of past will be understood. The postulates of the historical past are, in Oakeshott's final analysis, placed outside 'conversation'.

PART II

An Idealist Legacy

Introduction

In the preceding chapters I have attempted to describe an idealist understanding of history. It has not been a precise delineation of agreed concerns and shared approaches; there is considerable distance between Croce's rejoicing in the conjunction of contemporary concerns and historical problems, and Oakeshott's separation of the practical present from the pursuit of a specifically historical past. However, if it is a decent likeness, this description of an idealist understanding of history stands against a distinction between positivism (commonly cast in the form of a demand for greater scientific rigour in historical explanations) which recognises no frontiers or boundaries, and an equally extreme defence of the autonomy of historical knowledge in terms of its intuitive reliving of past thoughts: the idealist manifesto. This chapter will be spent analysing the nature of this 'perceived' idealist position and on the broader implications of Collingwood's and Oakeshott's work as it has been received by post-war philosophy of history.

Placing an idealist approach to history in opposition to the 'epistemological hegemony' of positivism is a correct estimate of the background against which to set the development of Collingwood's and Oakeshott's thought. In as far as both thinkers articulated a conception of historiography radically distinct from the methods and practice of science, they helped set the agenda for a new, analytical philosophy of history. From W.H. Walsh's An Introduction to the Philosophy of History¹ onwards philosophers of history have trod a careful line of compromise between 'positivist' or the deductivist - in Hempel in particular and to a lesser extent Popper - and the idealist position. Where they have placed themselves

along this conceptual spectrum has largely depended on their analysis of explanation in history. Thus, while Gardiner and Mandelbaum have tended towards a qualified acceptance of the proposition that historians inevitably use explanatory laws of one type or another, Dray and Walsh have been more persuaded that historians explain through the contextual appraisal of human actions. One could elicit a similar pattern of response to the problems of historical objectivity, truth and fact, and the peculiarities of narrative.

It was Walsh who, in 1951, announced the scope and range of a post-idealist philosophy of history. There are earlier contributions,² but with this publication came recognition of the second-order nature of the philosophy of history: the study of the study of history.³ In order to salvage academic respectability and accommodate philosophical interest within a wider historical community, Walsh made explicit a distinction. Henceforth philosophy would eschew speculation about the overall course of history, res gestae, indulging in discerning patterns in time; indeed it would cease, on the whole to pass judgement on the merits of particular historiography⁴ and instead pay attentive interest to the demands of a flourishing academic discipline,⁵ asking questions related to the historian's pursuit of historical understanding. Walsh distinguished between 'critical' and 'speculative' philosophy of history⁶ and this division has been preserved, for the most part, every since.⁷ On the one hand the distinction is confirmation of the two-fold meaning of the word 'history' which was recognised by Oakeshott (1933),⁸ and on the other an assertion that history, as a discipline, was not awaiting intellectual maturity, nor rites of passage into the ranks of the sciences, but already had recognisably specific aims and organising principles and, to that extent, could be treated as a something given. Thus for most post-war

philosophers of history the conceptual space created between history's practitioners (historians) and its consumers (a readership) is the legitimate territory of those interested in investigating the study of history. 'Speculative' philosophy of history, that 'submarine monster, dredged up from the deep waters of 19th century metaphysics, its jaws occasionally opening to emit prophecies in a dead (or at any rate a foreign) tongue - the language of the Hegelian dialectic',⁹ now becomes subject-matter for analysis by 'critical' or 'analytical' philosophy of history.

By and large critical philosophy of history has tended not to be confrontational. Occasionally individual historians are stung into countering a theoretical intrusion into his or her perceived domain.¹⁰ Indeed, although again there are exceptions, much of the debate over explanation has been conducted at a distance: abstracting and comprising 'models' from the sciences and from history. In reaction to the claims for sovereignty on behalf of law-based explanation (in particular those expressed by Popper¹¹ and Hempel¹²) analytical philosophers have emphasised the incompatibility of these claims with historians' intentions of understanding what is individual and even perhaps unique. Further they have highlighted the lack of specific and applicable examples offered by the 'proto-science'¹³ position. This complex and intricate debate is perhaps only now beginning to subside. The outcome has been inconclusive. William Dray has directed his attention towards the examination of concrete instances of causation in historiography,¹⁴ while notions of a science of history have found a home in the statistical history of the cliometricians and certain factions of the Annales school. For the purpose of this chapter historical explanation will be indicativeless of a series of detailed exchanges than of an occasion for affirming a positive role for critical philosophy of

history. It may well be true that, in focusing so much attention on this particular problem, many philosophers and theorists have obscured a position, the true nature of which is far more at odds with the actual practice of history than most will allow. If this is so we must ask whether the distinction between critical (or analytical) and speculative philosophy of history is as rigid as has been maintained.

An idealist approach to history is commonly seen as one extreme in a polar argument over the nature of historical knowledge. This itself is reason enough for talking of a 'legacy'. In addition to this reading of idealism we also have testimonies of acknowledgement to the stimulus and importance of Collingwood.¹⁵ Whether in terms of influence or opposition Collingwood is widely acknowledged as the point of departure for critical philosophy of history. The extent of the commentary upon his writings is adequate indication of his continuing importance although for our purposes much of this work has been used as secondary material in the preceding expository chapters. Yet, despite this acknowledged influence the tracing of an idealist legacy is not a straightforward interpretive exercise. One is not dealing with a 'school of thought'. There are no explicit advocates of an idealist understanding which had shed the trappings of rationalist system-mongering and is already, firmly, in the analytical mode. To an extent this is not surprising since the espousal of identifying labels has often been considered antithetical to original philosophical insight.¹⁶ However this does not prevent us from noting that, for example, W.H. Walsh has sympathies and Goldstein at times seems to teeter on the edge, and yet their readings of idealism deny them the opportunity of a closer identification. This denial takes the form of a partial miscuing of idealism in which much that is overstated in Collingwood and, to a lesser extent

Oakeshott, are taken as glaring ontological errors.¹⁷ In addition this received interpretation fails to account for the fact that the position of the later Collingwood and of Oakeshott is already, in an important sense a post-idealism. Much of what is interesting in Collingwood's 'absolute presuppositions' and Oakeshott's modal divisions within knowledge is that it represents the crystallizing of a position which has undergone a 'crisis of faith'. The unity of the all-embracing 'absolute' has fractured, and splintered into separate 'worlds of ideas'. Despite his allowing philosophy to appear as 'knowledge without presuppositions' or 'arrest' there is not, in Oakeshott's writings, any clear conviction that such 'experience' is attainable. Instead one is left with rigidly distinguished modes of experience which cannot communicate one with another, nor be translated from without loss and distortion. Collingwood's 'absolute presuppositions' similarly render the historical continuum full of rupture and disjunction and do damage to his faith in the reliving of past experience. As with Croce the historian, entrapped within the presuppositions of his own time, he is left only to celebrate his relative and personal understanding of the past.

Here, then, we have the tension implicit in a confrontation of idealist epistemology with a developed historical "science", with the latter's emphasis on change, context and difference, and it is this, I have argued, which led Collingwood and, more especially, Oakeshott to devote so much attention to the notion of a specifically historical way of understanding the present. This position, though it has the appearance of an ontological commitment, is in fact an attempt to salvage knowledge of the past as a legitimate 'form of experience', distinct from the aims and methods of the sciences. Cut loose from its own distinguishing subject matter (past reality) the emphasis on history as a 'way of

knowing'¹⁸ has, for the most part been seen as a negative tendency. Negative because it is said to isolate history, in an a priori sense, from a wider community of knowledge. History, it is countered by those who have defended it as a "rich, intellectual field", is marked by procedural and methodological differences, but it shares a common world of experience with the sciences, natural and social.¹⁹ Therefore one line of investigation will be to pursue those thinkers who have worked with an epistemological description of history,²⁰ while recognising that, on the whole, philosophy of history has become the analysis of practice divorced of any such speculation.

In Quentin Skinner's 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' we are reminded of the dangers of ascribing influence where we cannot demonstrate it textually, of searching for coherence where there is disparity and contradiction and of applying schematic interpretations which are anachronistic. Skinner highlights the pitfalls involved in tracing the 'morphology of some given doctrine'²² and warns us, 'the fact that ideas presuppose agents is very readily discounted, as if the ideas get up and do battle on their own behalf'.²³ Since this chapter does seek an interpretive coherence and treats the "post-idealism" of Collingwood and Oakeshott as a 'received doctrine', it is hoped that it will not slip into any of Skinner's exegetical 'mythologies'. By concentrating on a perceived version of an idealist historical understanding, we must acknowledge that this is not a comprehensive 'doctrine' in the sense of a presuppositional orthodoxy within which interpretations are formulated (in a sense similar to that explored by Maurice Cowling in his multi volumed Religion and Public Doctrine).²⁴ As I have mentioned, the rejection of idealism provided an opportunity and occasion for a critical realignment. Therefore "influence" is here taken to mean a certain agenda for analytical philosophy

of history and the development of a conceptual middleground between the claims of covering - law theorists and those for possible alternative descriptions of historical knowledge. Questions as to whether this reading and rejection of idealism reflects the concerns of Collingwood and Oakeshott must be kept separate from speculation as to "anticipations" or hidden influences.

Chapter 4 - Explanation and Causal Analysis: The Primacy of the Historian

i) Introduction

The course of the debate over explanation in history may be traced schematically. Its origins go back into the late nineteenth century and the ascendancy of a post-Kantian distinction between the natural and human 'sciences'. This distinction, hammered out against a background of a positivist programme for the advancement of knowledge,²⁵ was crystallised by Wilhelm Windelband into a conceptual division between nomothetic thought (the direction of knowledge towards the permanent and universal: the search for 'laws') and idiographic thought (knowledge of the individual and unique: exemplified in history). A similar division between the sciences of the physical world and Geisteswissenschaften, cultural sciences or the sciences of the mind is fundamental to the thought of Wilhelm Dilthey.²⁶ To a certain extent this rigid division (formulated in terms of subject-matter or cognitive interest) was an artificial creation to give intellectual breathing space to those disciplines and thinkers who rejected the more determinist, straight-jacketing effects of a positivist conception of knowledge. One need not equate this distinction with a realist - idealist divide, and yet the idiographic focus of attention on the cognitive subject, the emphasis on interpretation and intuition in acquiring knowledge of the individual, are all conducive to an idealist epistemology. Moving centre stage, both Collingwood and Oakeshott arrived at this position though both had reasons for amending and extending it. For Collingwood, history is knowledge of past thought expressed in action and therefore historical knowledge is self-knowledge: inferential identification with the perceptions and reasoning of past agents acting within the context of particular "problem-situations" social milieus. Such historical 're-thinking' from present evidence, though empirical, is founded, however, on the historian's

experience qua historian. That is to say, the determination of the 'logic' or rhythm of past actions is not in the end reducible either to common-sense generalisations nor to calculations of probability based on laws abstracted from the natural or social sciences.²⁹ Historical knowledge becomes in Collingwood (as it did for Croce, though for broader humanistic purposes) a separate species of knowing, which has developed over the last century and a half into a fully formed, critical 'category' of mind, and which has its own standards of judgement, its own methods and goals, and its own explanatory procedures. Collingwood's version of the distinction outlined above rests its case both on points of methodological differences and on the pursuit of different ends, and his later work allows for history to 'subsume' philosophy because it is self-knowledge of mind in its development. History is therefore no poor relation of the sciences, it does not focus on the individual and particular because it lacks reliable data and experimental techniques to proceed towards classification and the universal. Critical historiography represents that unity of subject (historian), and object (the past) which Hegel sought and lost on a transcendental scale.

Oakeshott has less to say on the subject of method than Collingwood but his epistemological position is more consistent. In its severity and uncompromising hostility towards a rationalistic community of knowledge he has far more in common with other inter-war philosophers who also dealt in divisions and disjunctions: with the language games of the later Wittgenstein,³⁰ and with the post-phenomenological position of Heidegger.³¹ History, for Oakeshott, is a mode of experience, a 'universe of discourse'³² separated from all others in terms of its logical presuppositions. The distinction between scientific and historical explanation is thus something fundamental, not a matter of precision or clarity, but a function of

a primary division in the way in which the world is regarded. It is a division of apperception. Indeed explanation - a category of scientific understanding - has no place at all in historical practice. This is not to say that historians have no sense of connection between events, but that, Oakeshott contends, such connections are exemplified in the unified "constitution" of past events. They are not, or should not, be the result of applying one or other of various explanatory models. I will, therefore, look for the implications of Oakeshott's constructionist approach in the debate over the peculiarities of historical narrative, the metaphor of story-telling as an organising principle, and to the particular question it addressed, can the narrative form in which historians' characteristically express their conclusions itself be an explanation of why something occurred?

Interpretation of Collingwood's work has provided the occasion for countering a sophisticated version of positivism in the form of "covering-law" theory. To do justice to this influence I will look at the work of William Dray who has presented a very plausible interpretation of Collingwood's notion of re-enactment and re-thinking, and created an account of what historians might mean when they claim to have explained something. It was Dray who coined the term "covering-law" in his book Laws and Explanation in History (1957),³³ and by examining his arguments it is possible to recognise the polarity of the perceived idealist and positivist positions without getting hopelessly bogged down in minutiae of what is a very intricate and complex debate. The importance of Dray's arguments is the way in which (after a sympathetic hearing) he has used Collingwood as emblematic of a position he would not want to defend, a belief in the absolute autonomy of historical knowledge, yet short of that extreme to define a conceptual space conducive to the aspirations

of historians (and indeterminists), one which offers an alternative account of historical explanation.

Certain aspects common to both Collingwood's and Oakeshott's descriptions of historical knowledge are critically examined by W.H. Walsh³⁴ who, amongst post-war British philosophers of history, is perhaps the most sympathetic to an idealist position.³⁵ A concern with the relation between part and whole and the interaction of the cognisant subject and his object of knowledge are taken up by Walsh in a discussion of what he terms "colligation". What is interesting in Walsh is that one can detect a similar tension to that which underlies (and perhaps undermines) an idealist description of historical knowledge, yet because Walsh has shed the "metaphysical" commitment which divides up experience (or at least makes the attainment of a unified experience a virtual impossibility) and the restrictions of an epistemological a priori.

ii) W.H. Walsh: Colligation and Historical Wholes

In his Introduction to the Philosophy of History³⁶ (1951) Walsh comments on the difficulty of dividing his subject into neat conceptual compartments. In dealing with his idea of colligation³⁷ we have a good working example of this difficulty. On the one hand it is an analysis of a common historiographical procedure, the ascription of significance to certain events and the identification of themes or developments. Colligation, it is argued, involves finding an appropriate concept under which to group diverse happenings and so to see them as some kind of unity or whole. As such it is an examination of an interpretive device which aims at organising and clarifying in order to facilitate understanding. But, on the other hand, if one asks where these appropriate colligatory concepts are to be found, and how their appropriateness is to be assessed, we move away from a question ostensibly dealing with practice, and towards the theoretical problem of the role of the historian in the construction of historical

knowledge. Indeed Walsh intends just such a shift of focus. In emphasising the participatory role of the historian Walsh contends that it is a task of history to provide guidance through a tangle of disparate events, to identify continuing process by looking not only at the intentions of agents (in a Collingwoodian sense) but also at the results of their actions, and thus to make creative and instructive use of hindsight. In vivid contrast to 'the past for the past's sake' idea of historical enquiry,³⁸ Walsh condemns the deceit involved in the avoidance of descriptive names and labels³⁹ (the characterising of periods and developments) and concludes that the ultimate justification of colligation is if it helps to make the past intelligible to us. This approach is, I shall argue, a reassertion of indeterminism⁴⁰ and moral agency, and a demand that history has 'living' interest, in a Crocean sense.

It could, with some justification, be argued that Walsh's idea of colligation belongs in a section discussing the problems of objectivity/subjectivity in history, particularly in terms of the notion of significance it employs and the possible anachronism it encourages. In the third edition of his Introduction, Walsh states, 'Dray and I are...more concerned with interpretation than explanation',⁴¹ and that after colligation further explanation may well be necessary to provide a full answer to "why" questions.⁴² I want to preserve this discussion in this chapter for two main reasons. Firstly because colligation makes clear reference to one aspect of the idealist programme, the notion of unity in diversity, or intrinsic relations between separate events; what Hegel called a 'concrete universal' and Oakeshott an 'historical individual'.⁴³ Explanation becomes an exercise in establishing (in a sense to be examined) intrinsic connections rather than 'external' links of cause and effect. Secondly, that colligation taken as a way of responding to an

historical question, embodies certain assumptions about what there is to be explained, and why. In other words it reveals the presence, of presuppositions about the nature of historical understanding. With Walsh, such presuppositions are either explicit or very near to the surface. We may also mention that the colligatory notion of describing what happened under the 'guidance'⁴⁴ of an organising concept, the grouping together of separate events in a thematic way, has affinities with a definition of narrative explored in the fourth section of this Chapter. Could it be as Mink argued, that tracing out a configuration of events in a narrative is itself a mode of understanding, an adequate response to an historical question?⁴⁵

In an article written in 1967, Walsh describes how his earlier formulations of colligation had 'tended to treat it as an explanatory process'.⁴⁶ He continues, 'My interest in it at the time arose out of an attempt to find a plausible version of the idealist theory of history'.⁴⁷ Elsewhere he characterises this idealist theory in the following way: history is properly 'concerned with human thoughts and experiences' (with which he agrees); 'historical understanding is of a unique and immediate character'⁴⁸ (with which he disagrees); therefore history is a manifestation of mind (with which he is in partial agreement only). This presumably is the idealist theory of history according to Collingwood. His conception of an idealist philosophy of history also involves a clear rejection of Oakeshott's 'historical' past.⁴⁹

Before examining Walsh's interpretation of an idealist philosophy of history and thus the context for the development of his idea of colligation, it should be said that, along the lines of his critical/speculative division, Walsh's own work is of a second-order nature only to a limited extent. It continues to interest itself in the logic and presuppositions underlying historical practice, and, if it does not criticise

specific historiography, neither does it hesitate in drawing conclusions as to the role of the historian in both an ethical and heuristic sense. However, if we attend to Walsh's use of the word 'critical' to define his interest in history, there is little cause to be surprised at the lack of olympian reticence in his work. Taken in its Kantian sense, 'critical' is precisely that interplay of presupposition and analysis which animates Walsh's own interest in history. This is really not the same, almost apologetic, attitude taken by certain other philosophers of history towards the object of their interest.

Walsh announced in an article of 1967⁵⁰ his failure to find a plausible version of an idealist philosophy of history, and also in an addition to the third edition of his Introduction.⁵² This does not involve a rejection of his idea of colligation, but refers to his conclusion that idealism unnecessarily restricts its range and scope. He became increasingly critical of Collingwood's historical explanation through the rethinking of past thoughts.⁵³ Whereas Walsh accepts that there is a need to see past actions as expressions of thoughts or ideas for the sake of interpretation, and such thoughts from the standpoint of agency, he concludes that we must move away from the notion of individual, self-sufficient minds.⁵⁴ He wants to retain human actions as the essential unit of historical study yet, in a 1963 article, he accuses Collingwood of impoverishing the historian's 'causal apparatus'.⁵⁵ It proves inadequate for the 'modern' historian who is interested not only in the question 'who caused what?', but also in 'what caused what?'.⁵⁶ which accounts for such factors as political and economic conditions which, at the very least, restrict the range of choices open to the individual. The "modern"⁵⁷ historian in addition seeks to account for individuals acting not in isolation but as 'members of complex organisations'.⁵⁸ Overall Walsh seeks a 'reduction...in our estimate of the significance

of individuals in history...'⁵⁹ although this must not be equated with a commitment to social wholism.

In two separate essays Walsh criticises Oakeshott's 'theoretical'⁶⁰ version of historical understanding: the 'historical' past. Walsh argues that history is not just description but 'assessment', it should 'provide guidance',⁶¹ and that a desire to make comparisons between the past and present animates our historical studies. Ultimately history is the 'sphere of the practical', and it cannot be understood in terms which seem to exclude the practical. He argues that historians' use of the 'standpoint of the agent'⁶² refutes Oakeshott's fear of an intrusion of interest which is unhistorical, in that it allows him to speak 'from a point of view without embracing that point of view'⁶³ that of a general in a battle, for example. If this approach were not possible then we would be forced to agree with Oakeshott, who in Walsh's words, reduces history to 'truths which are not merely independent of persons, but independent of any living context of enquiry'.⁶⁴

Walsh then is concerned to increase the range and scope of historians' causal explanations, and also to defend a legitimate interest in the past. In many ways this is a rejection of one version of idealism, which has undergone a "crisis of faith", by an appeal to a more expansive version represented by Dilthey and Croce. Dilthey with his emphasis on hermeneutical understanding and its ascription of meaning and significance to actions, and his notion of the part-to-whole analysis. As Walsh writes of his own colligatory scheme it attempts to deal with groups of actions, and 'tries to find unity by looking for some unity of thought'⁶⁵ by seeking for 'intrinsic relations between separate events'⁶⁶. And Croce, with his emphatic belief in the vivacity and instructiveness of 'living' history. Walsh is much impressed with Croce's distinction between history and chronicle, the latter being the "mere"

recital of disconnected events. Walsh's concept of colligation emphasises the ethical dimension of the historians' activity. In this, as in many other things, his position is close to Dray's; the belief in the indeterminism of human actions,⁶⁷ and also in the participatory function of the enquirer in a historical construction. Whereas Dray finds expression for these beliefs in his model of rational explanation, Walsh focuses on the 'characterising of...historical wholes'.⁶⁸

Walsh's colligatory scheme runs something like this: the historian colligates by 'placing events in their context by tracing a myriad of connections between them and other events'.⁷⁰ First though he must find an appropriate concept. Appropriate, in this sense, is largely the result of organisational efficacy, and can be seen, on one level, as an organisation of "fact": 'The Greek Age of Enlightenment',⁷¹ or 'The Rise of the Gentry'. Walsh argues that the choice of colligatory concepts 'must fit the facts not be straightjacketed'⁷² on them. The test of this will always be existence of evidence. In this way colligatory concepts might be understood as summarative generalisations that both encapsulate and give form to 'low-level'⁷³ factual statements based on evidence. Colligatory concepts must aptly characterise the 'facts' that they hold together, they must provide a means of making sense of separate 'events' when seen in a particular thematic order. Presumably in some cases a colligatory whole will compose a single historical event - a battle, an election - revealing, by the selection and ordering of facts, its significance. In other cases, as in 'the Rise of the Gentry', it is separate events taken perhaps as background knowledge or as somehow already "constituted", which are colligated.

Walsh stated that 'history can be called a science' if what is meant by this is its success in establishing 'what in particular occurred'⁷⁴. The "facts" of history

may, he believed, have a stable and detachable character, but how they are taken, in what form and order they are put together is far from being a neutral affair. In history there must be judgements of importance,⁷⁵ and these are reflected in the process of colligation, which does not pretend to cover all facts, but only significant ones.⁷⁶ The criterion of significance, he argues rests on the notion of what is intelligible to us: 'readers want not just a bare recital of what happened...but also guidance as to what it amounted to'.⁷⁷

One of the assumptions which underlies Walsh's idea of colligation, is the assertion that history is not nor cannot be a science if what is meant by this is 'a body of established truth which holds without distinction of person'.⁷⁸ History is not objective in this extreme sense. Instead every history is necessarily partial and selective, and 'contains an account of the facts as seen from a particular point of view...every narrative is someone's narrative, told to some other party'.⁷⁹ In the next chapter I want to turn to Walsh's rather confused and doubtful hope in the possibility of a 'science of human nature'⁸⁰, or set of criteria, by reference to which historians resolve, or at least are able to suspend their basic, presuppositional differences and in this way overcome charges of subjectivity and bias; more generally the conclusion that historical truth is a matter of perspective and thus is ultimately relative in nature.⁸¹ Here I want to concentrate on the explanatory structure and direction of understanding which colligation implies.

Walsh, as we have seen, argues that history is not just description, the historian must reveal the significance and importance of past occurrences. The very act of colligating is premised on this belief, since the historian must exercise a judgement of importance in the selecting and ordering of his material. He writes 'the primary task of the historian

is the identification of continuing processes'.⁸² These 'processes' or themes are the product of the historian's search for intelligibility; they are organisational schemes to 'illuminate the facts',⁸³ and their existence is sanctioned by their reliance on evidence and their efficacy in producing understanding. This looking for 'unity in diversity'⁸⁴ - the holding together of disparate events under a colligatory concept - is similar to what Mink, in an article in 1966, called a 'synoptic judgment'.⁸⁵ The presence of such a judgement, or historical synthesis, is indicative of a difference in the direction of understanding to be found in history. For, as Mink points out, the synoptic judgement is both a procedure of history and its goal.⁸⁶ Elsewhere Dray has noted that the historian's synthesis which is expressed by means of an organising, colligatory concept, may be seen as 'the essence of historical enquiry, not an artistic ornament', and that (as opposed to the covering law model) the relating of part to wholes is not "a search for necessary and sufficient conditions".⁸⁷ Walsh himself is more reserved about the implications of colligation in history. For him it is mainly a vehicle for expressing a certain belief in the important role of the historian, and the nature of his subject matter. He argues that colligation explains only to the extent of showing how an event fitted into a continuing process⁸⁸. Yet insofar as 'showing how' involves the "appropriateness" of the organising concept, and 'continuing process' could be understood in Gallie's sense of locating historical meaning in the context of a story, it is possible to argue that Walsh's schema has explanatory potential, at least in response to Dray's 'how-possibly' question, or Gallie's 'following a story'. It might however, still be contested that the explanatory force of colligation resides in an assessment of the relationship between the colligatory concept and the

'facts' included under it. How is this relationship to be assessed?

We have already seen how the 'low-level'⁸⁹ statements of colligation must have their basis in evidential observations, resting on that "concrete" part of historical knowledge which has established what happened in the past. If it is allowed (as Oakeshott never would) that there is nothing problematic in 'observing' evidence in a way which is value-neutral, it is possible to follow Walsh in his belief that the interpretation of facts is the realm where notions are ingredients in the process of colligation. The presence of this assessment of significance, far from being an obstacle to the development of a "scientific" history, is an essential and valuable aspect of the historian's activity. The historian justify the choice of concept and the selection of facts through writing 'a narrative of the individual events of his period showing them to be intelligible in the light of the dominant concepts he has discovered'.⁹⁰ And if such a judgement does "illuminate" events and help us to see them as forming a "coherent" whole, then their worth, for Walsh is assured, be they the 'Rise of the Gentry' or the 'Goddess Liberty'.⁹¹

There is a further question as to the legitimacy of concepts which 'were not used or understood by agents at the time',⁹² of relating past actions to the ideas they expressed when the ideas could not have been understood by the agents, or which specify the workings of unconscious motivation, collective, and physical factors. Walsh answers, 'concepts need not be those available to past people', they are 'legitimate if they depict a proper description of certain states of affairs'. Dray concurs with this answer: 'When is it justifiable to interpret past actions in terms of ideas their agents did not and could not have had?...when it makes them intelligible to us',⁹³ and, 'Colligation must - in the end - always be understood from the point of

view of the historian.⁹⁴ This would appear directly to contradict Skinner's thesis, being riddled with 'exegetical mythologies'. Yet both Walsh⁹⁵ and Dray⁹⁶ deny that they are condoning deliberate anachronism. Colligatory concepts are, after all, to be founded on "acquaintance" with evidence, and, as Dray argues, 'retrospective colligation' need not be in the service of present utility, instead it may refer to 'a coherent synthesis of what is presently known about the past'.⁹⁷ It is an attitude which characterises historical knowledge as a search for meaning or significance, and in history, one could argue that such and such an event is significant in an interpretive sense without committing oneself to any speculation as to what agents "really" meant or were "really" doing.⁹⁸ It is a position which reflects a difference in emphasis: historical knowledge is ultimately worthwhile in terms of its 'living' worth, and not as a coincidental by-product of an enquiry into the remnants of a dead past. It is also an affirmation of the belief that it is the historian's responsibility actively to engage in making decisions as to value and significance. In a passage exposing the scholarly detachment of the "past for the past's sake" view of history Dray writes: "...using our terms does not commit us to a practical orientation towards the past, using theirs does not protect us from it".⁹⁹ Taken in this light colligation makes the important point that prior to explaining (however that is conceived) there will be a process of designating areas of interest and, within this, of significant events to be studied.

Walsh's idea of colligation is essentially a teleological one. It involves the configuration of a 'surface rationality',¹⁰⁰ the order of separate events held together in terms of relations of expressed ideas. In the sense that 'actions are the translation of ideas' it is a new version of an 'idealist emphasis on understanding past actions from the inside'.¹⁰¹ We have

noticed how, in its later formulations Walsh widens the causal net so that ideas are not limited to being the product only of rational reflection; social, physical, and emotional factors enter the agent's calculation or perception of his situation. However, actions remain to be understood as the realisation of some purpose by which Walsh means, 'that events widely separated in time' can be treated 'as parts of a single development, whenever we have to do with processes which can be initiated, forwarded, or impeded by human efforts'.¹⁰² Colligation as it were, provides the glue to hold such events together so that we may recognise 'internal' connections among 'an agent or group of agents pursuing a long term policy over a period of time'.¹⁰³ The historian, in this way, is primarily concerned with the 'pattern, and relationships into which individuals enter',¹⁰⁴ which itself reflects Walsh's 'belief in continuing themes in diverse materials', and that men can actively seek general aims because 'attitudes can...be shared by large groups'.¹⁰⁵

It should be emphasised that the entire teleological direction of historical understanding advocated by Walsh rests on the belief that 'some historical events are intrinsically related'.¹⁰⁶ One wonders whether, given the centrality of the historian relating events together under an appropriate concept, this statement would be clearer if it said 'interpretively related'. Walsh's use of 'intrinsic' is resonant of an idealist notion of coherence. Historical understanding proceeds through identifying relations between thought and action, of actions to expressed ideas; it then attempts to further comprehend the action, or event, by placing it in a designated context or whole. The connections between events within this context may be seen as intrinsic to it, and similarly, the "surface rationality" of events will form a pattern, a theme, or a development. Colligation seeks just such historical wholes, the 'unity in diversity'¹⁰⁷ of

persons, collectives or institutions. By colligating separate events under an organising concept history may reveal the 'concrete' identity of the particular and individual by placing it in a wider context.

iii) William Dray: A Plea for Humanistic Historiography

Maurice Mandelbaum has characterised Dray's position on historical explanation as 'reactionist',¹⁰⁸ by which he means that he is among those who share an 'assumption that a proper analysis of explanation in history must conform to the statements which historians actually make in their attempts to explain particular occurrences'.¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to see how Dray would disagree with this characterisation. Much of his writings on the problem of historical explanation have been in "reaction" to what he termed covering-law theorists, and he has continually exemplified that strand of analytical philosophy of history which demands close attention be paid to the actual practice of history as conducted by historians. His principal objection to the 'Popper-Hempel'¹¹⁰ position - the 'hypothetico-deductive'¹¹¹ model of explanation¹¹² - has been the disparity between it and what 'historians usually mean in offering an explanation of a human action'.¹¹³ However Mandelbaum intends more than simply to account for this "reaction": it is a reversion to a neo-idealist position. Walsh, he contends, demonstrates just how close the reactionist and idealist positions are.¹¹⁴ Mandelbaum accepts and affirms the polarity of the debate over explanation, when the truth of the matter is that it is essentially an argument over the middle-ground.

Few philosophers or for that matter historians, have wanted to accept Hempel's rigid description of what form historical explanation must take in order correctly to answer "why" questions. Popper himself in The Poverty of Historicism,¹¹⁵ in attempting to demonstrate, logically, that studies of the past cannot reveal the universal laws of historical change, and that any such

search is both misguided and morally wrong, is concerned to elucidate a hypothetico-deductive model of explanation which the social sciences may aspire to, but also to limit the free-play of causality and teleology the search for historical laws. Other philosophers of science, in particular T.S. Kuhn¹¹⁶ have argued strongly for a recognition of a certain relativism even within the physical sciences' supposedly hard world of facts, and therefore of the difficulty of abstracting a methodological principle from the context in which it operates. Those who have wished to defend the proposition that, in explaining why something happened in the past historians make explicit or implicit reference to general laws,¹¹⁷ be they physical, statistical, classificatory or common-sense generalisations, have been concerned either with the logical structure of historical explanation (as is the case with Mandelbaum and to a lesser extent Gardiner),¹¹⁸ or to assimilate history, its practice and understanding to the wider community of the social sciences.¹¹⁹ In addition there has been a continued attempt to dismiss the notion of historical understanding as the study of individual, or unique events via the mediation of empathetic imagination or synoptic judgement: the position which demands (to a greater or lesser extent) that history be recognised as a distinct way of "knowing".¹²⁰ This itself is a legacy of the nomothetic/idiographic divide, cited by Mandelbaum as that against which covering-law theorists have reacted.¹²¹ Yet it is also witness to an interpretation of an idealist "manifesto" which, in the context of a debate over historical explanation, is, for the most part, a conceptual fiction.¹²²

Dray is one among a group of post-war philosophers¹²³ interested in the particular problem of historical knowledge who have been concerned to analyse what historians do and to explicate the logic of the procedures underlying this practice. Dray himself, in

two separate examinations of historiographical controversies has focused his attention on historians' use of causality.¹²⁴ From this he attempts to elicit common assumptions about the nature of explanatory causal relations, instances of disagreements, and conclusions of the extent to which judgement of relations between cause and effect, and larger explanatory assertions, implicate or contain value-judgements. Dray's foray into historiography can be taken as evidence of a belief that history, as a way of enquiring into past happenings, has identifying characteristics and recognisable (if not shared) procedures. His theoretical study has provided him with sufficient reason to conclude that, when historians claim to have understood why something occurred in the past, their claims may rest upon a particular explanatory structure which need not appeal to general laws for its validity or intelligibility, even though the explanation remains explicitly causal. It is not, as Mink pointed out in an article of 1966, that Dray is claiming to exclude on principle covering-law explanations of events, what he is arguing for is at least the logical possibility of alternative modes of explanation.¹²⁵ He argues for a certain understanding of the historians subject-matter - rational and purposive human actions¹²⁶ - and urges the historian to describe, interpret and explain on the only premise which would distinguish this activity from deduction, induction, and prediction, indeterminism.¹²⁷ Thus, for Dray, when an historian claims to have understood the occurrence of a past event, what is being asserted is that, through an examination of all the evidence considered relevant to the question raised, within the context of an historiographical debate, he or she have assigned meaning and significance to the action, or actions, from the standpoint of agency and from the privileged position of the historian who is able to assess the event in a wider context and in the light of

the outcome.¹²⁸ It is this sense of explanation as the assigning of significance to human actions, and the direction of interest it entails, which places historical explanation in a different "universe of discourse" from that employed in natural science. What is of particular interest to our present concerns is Dray's concept of the "rationale" or "intelligibility" of human actions. Through this it is possible to map Dray's position along the conceptual spectrum which he himself helped to identify. Such a position is occasioned by his rejection of the covering-law model of historical explanation as inadequate and wayward description of the kind of understanding historians' aspire to; it is a dismissal of the "proto-science" conception of history whereby the discipline is supposed to have got stuck in the adolescence of its scientific development and cannot pass over into adulthood because it lacks precision tools of analysis, consensual practices and canons of verification and discrimination.¹²⁹ However this description, while perhaps conforming to the Hempelian version of covering law and to the aspirations of some social-scientists minded historians, by no means exhausts the arguments for the importance of laws and generalisations in historical explanations and Dray attempts to do justice to their variety.¹³⁰

Dray's central contention, first developed in Laws and Explanations in History¹³¹ and subsequently reworked in a series of articles¹³² (many of them taking the form of critical exegesis of Collingwood's thought) is cast under the heading of 'rational' explanation. In order to repel the implicit contention of covering-law theory, that history would remain an unstable affairs, dealing in half-truths plundered from other disciplines,¹³³ unless it sought out empirical regularities and hence laws of connection between events which, in turn, could establish "types" of situations to be matched up with deduced (and indeed predicted) actions, Dray needed to

establish that historians sought for, and often found, a different kind of connection between events. Any such connection would have to accord with the integrity of the subject-matter of history: purposive human actions. here the influence of Collingwood is crucial. Dray's analysis of Collingwood's belief that historical explanation is carried out by re-thinking the thoughts of those under study,¹³⁴ involves an interesting dichotomy. On the one hand he presents a persuasive reading of a much misunderstood contention, and in so doing develops his own version of "rational" explanation which clarifies and then extends the application of what, in Collingwood, is confused. In this Dray is the careful textual commentator, concerned less with the content of historical explanations than with questions of their logical structure. But on the other hand he is also making a point about the nature of the historian's subject matter and a proper attitude toward it.

In Laws and Explanations Dray attempts, and succeeds in a rebuttal of the central thesis of the covering-law theorists that, to properly account for an historical occurrence (Dray's favourite being the French Revolution)¹³⁵ the historian must link together an initial description of what is to be explained with an empirically validated law, or laws, which make the subsequent explanation deducible and therefore, from these specified conditions, predictable. This is, as Dray points out, a statement not only of what constitutes a correct historical explanation, but about the structure of verification.¹³⁶ The covering-law model deals in the notion of 'implicit' law,¹³⁷ that is to say that historians, whether consciously or not (and successfully or not) appeal to laws in formulating their explanations. Now, whether there are specifically historical laws - a point on which Hempel confesses himself neutral¹³⁸ but which both Popper and White deny - is a moot point. However, the failure to recognise and make explicit this appeal to covering laws is said

to stem either from difficulties in precisely formulating them or to the fact that the causal connections covered by laws in historical explanations are often so well-known and established that they are not mentioned.¹³⁹ On the one hand then, this contention urges history to become more rigorously scientific in its procedures, and on the other it is the belief that the common-sense generalisations relied on by historians are the inarticulated offspring of physical and social scientific laws.¹⁴⁰ Thus historians are to be seen as dealing in laws, whether they know it or not, which is itself the implicit recognition of the academic sovereignty of the covering-law model. Dray writes,

That judgement of particular cases, without knowledge of covering laws actually takes place in history, perhaps few exponents of the model would want to deny. The doctrine of implicit law is really an attempt to convince historians that such judgements ought to be replaced, or be replaceable under fire, by deduction from empirically validated laws.¹⁴¹

There are two prongs to Dray's counter to the covering law theorists "imperialistic" claims, a counter which is also intended to remedy the lack of clarity and precision inherent in their rejection of idealism. The first is a lucid examination of the 'logic' of question and answer found in historiography. Dray concludes, after an extremely fair hearing of the case for covering laws, that, even if it is possible to cover an event by a law, this may not be required in the process of historians' explanations.¹³³ Included within this argument is an examination of the 'logically' different questions 'why-necessarily' and 'how-possibly'.¹³⁴ Both may be legitimately asked and answered within an historical enquiry, but it is quite possible, Dray contends, to argue that "how-possibly" questions arise from a different interest than that which provokes a search for necessary and sufficient conditions, and demand an answer to a particular type of puzzlement: 'How could that have happened in the light of so-and-

so? ¹³⁵ Such questions would, in other words, require answers which fulfilled their own terms. This, if Dray is persuasive (and I believe that he is) strikes an important blow for a (limited) form of autonomous historical explanation; of an understanding immanent in a kind of intellectual puzzlement, and not an external criterion of intelligibility, a suffix to an 'unstable' and sketchy understanding.

Dray's second prong, concerns a particular conception of the historians subject matter, which explicitly denies that explanation and understanding are interchangeable terms, as the covering law theory argues. Dray's first counter to the covering laws position involves an examination of the (logical) structure of verification. Here in the second, he is concerned less with how historians go about explaining, than with what it is that they attempt to understand. His argument is, he writes, an attempt to 'rehabilitate' a doctrine of idealist philosophers of history,

...that the objects of historical study are fundamentally different from those of, for example the natural sciences, because they are the actions of beings like ourselves... 'free' actions... (which)... do not fall under law at all... even if they do fall under law, discovery of the law would still not enable us to understand them in a sense proper to this special subject matter'. ¹³⁶

Here, if anywhere, we may locate Dray's 'reaction'. For him, as for Collingwood, an historical event is composed of the actions of individuals (acting singularly or in groups), and the 'rationale' of such events calls for a certain kind of understanding involving its own sense of intelligibility. Dray's position on the question of freewill is dependent on this conception of history's subject matter, and not, as he makes clear, ¹³⁷ on the logic of verification. That is to say, he is attempting a logical distinction which is not itself dependent on an evaluation of the content of explanation which accords with a "certain sort of puzzlement", and only then inquire into the direction of this puzzlement or

the referent of this, particularly historical, interest. And it is for this reason that Dray's model of rational explanation takes the form of a (partial) reworking of Collingwood's 're-thinking' of past thoughts or, in this case, the assessing of the "appropriateness" of actions in a determinate context and from a particular standpoint. It is precisely because the subject matter of history is free (in a sense to be defined) human action and not actions taken as instances and examples of the operation of universal laws, that history demands its own explanatory model. In other words, it is the direction of interest implied in the historian's concern with the individual, the particular, the difference between this event and that (The French Revolution and not the French revolution qua revolution)¹³⁸, which ultimately distinguishes the nature and function of historians' explanations to those employed in the natural and social sciences. Autonomy, for Dray, is not a category of historical knowledge, but it is present and is to an extent presupposed in the direction of interest; an interest in the individual, which classifies only in order to investigate further, detailed differences.

Dray's reputation of the covering law argument makes plain that historians do make use of the concept of explanation, of classification and causal analysis. However these concepts do not constitute and determine the historian's enquiry: they are tools to aid an understanding specified by a distinct interest and subject matter. Before we look further at this 'understanding' it should be noted that Dray's focus of attention ('free' though determinate actions) is less an argument for causal priority of individuals in historical explanations, than an attempt to highlight, through an analysis of a legitimate historical interest, a procedure which conspicuously does not fit the covering law model. Thus, individual actions to counter the idea of 'covering' with a law, and understanding to

oppose the belief that only by working with this 'scientific' structure of explanation can history, as a discipline, make and know itself to be making progress.

Once we move away from a discussion of the logic of verification, and towards an analysis of the historian's subject matter we are in a world of moral choices. One of those choices is to see this subject matter as composed of "free" human actions.¹³⁹ The sense of "free" here is of actions not-yet-understood and to be determined. Historical events, if not subsumed under laws, must take their place in an account which answers the query as to why this and not that occurred. Such events, understood as a concatenation of actions, must, to be explained in a properly historical sense, be rendered somehow intelligible. The decision then, is to recognise the moral integrity of the historian's subject matter. Which involves an admission of the active, participatory role of the historian in assessing the rationale of events in the constitution of explanations. For Dray, as for Collingwood, the human past is to be understood from the standpoint of agency¹⁴⁸ which at least for Dray, (since Collingwood did not recognise a distinction between past thoughts and the historian's re-thinking them) includes that of the enquirer. In other words the notion of free and intelligible actions does not exist independently of the form of historical interest outlined above.

In a passage from his Philosophy and History¹⁴¹ Dray examines Oakeshott's description of explanatory events as intrinsically related.¹⁵² He commends Oakeshott's insistence that 'historical understanding depends upon the reduction of sequences to a detailed series of understandable steps',¹⁴³ and the sense in which this particularising direction of explanation is indicative of a particular interest not satisfied by a search for extrinsic patterns or laws. Dray himself wants to contend that an historical narrative establishes connections between events which are

integral to the story being told, which are, in some sense, intrinsic.¹⁴⁴ However, he rejects Oakeshott's notion of 'continuity' as an adequate description of the historians relation of connected events as too vague and indefinable. What then is to provide a criterion of cohesion between events in historical explanations? Dray finds it in Collingwood's linking together of thought and action. With a deft rhetorical twist Dray replaces the 'inside/outside' metaphor with one more conducive to analytical moderations: the following of an agent's 'argument'.¹⁴⁵ For Dray then, the plausibility of empathetical understanding, of Nacherleben, sidesteps the distractions of an argument over whether such notions belong to ontology or epistemology,¹⁴⁶ and finds its significance when interpreted as belonging to the problem of historical explanation. It is also an idea which rather neatly mirrors the two (moral) choices outlined above. The first, the recognition of the integrity and indeterminism of the human past,

The only thoughts that will be explanatory...are thoughts we have reason to believe the agent did think; and if Collingwood is right to hold that an ascribed thought to be explanatory, must actually be thought by the historian, he is right to say also that it must be re-thought...he must consider the agent's situation the way the agent did.¹⁴⁷

The second, an assertion of the right of the historian to understand past actions in a particular sense,

...our understanding of his (the agent's) action may arise out of our perception of a rational connection between an action and the motives and beliefs we ascribe to the agent...(we may)...(then) ordering these ingredients in the form of a practical conclusion.¹⁴⁸

Dray is sensitive to the criticisms that have been levelled at Collingwood's account of explanation/understanding, in particular that it restricts historical study to instances where individual agents have rationally expressed their intentions, Dray,

along with a few other writers (most notably Louis Mink),¹⁴⁹ has attempted to salvage what is important in Collingwood from the confusion of some of his more paradoxical statements.¹⁵⁰ The 'rational' in Dray's explanatory schema refers not to an interest only in actions that were reasonable or self-conscious enactments of pre-planned intentions, as opposed to irrational, emotive actions which may have been influenced and (partly) defined within a social and physical context. Rational explanation, in his argument, 'tries to make clear its [the action's] point or rationale.'¹⁵¹ It is in fact an argument for close scrutiny of background and context; the search for the rationale of an action involves understanding it as "free" (the action of an agent) in this restricted sense. Delimiting the scope and significance of an action by relating it to a determinate context involves a to-ing and fro-ing indicative of the process envisaged by Dilthey as the play of part and whole in interpretation. An historian then, Dray contends, may claim to have understood why an action occurred when he can 'see the reasonableness of an action, given the beliefs and purposes referred to...his action can then be explained as having been an 'appropriate' one'.¹⁵² Appropriate suggests a response to circumstances as envisaged from the standpoint of agency, the discerning of reasons must be from that point of view;¹⁵³ it is a word employed to eschew the notion of intentionalism, or, that what the historian must do is to affirm the 'correctness' of the actions he is studying: actions, though "appropriate" to the perceptions and beliefs of agents, may be 'mistaken' in the sense of producing unwanted and unforeseen outcomes.¹⁵⁴

This is a characterisation of historical explanation which attempts to describe both the process of interpretation and the explanatory form which such an interpretive account might take. The historian attempts to 'discover' the calculations¹⁵⁵ of agents as expressed

through actions within a determinate context. He then sets out his findings in the form of a practical argument which has readers are invited to consider and follows.

The emphasis in Dray's argument is upon the ascription of interpretive significance, or meaning, to a past action through the conceptual connection between understanding that action and discerning its rationale. The resulting 'rational explanation' is a formula within which such understanding may be expressed. Dray is not making a claim for a privileged form of historical insight, nor for a particular kind of historical experience. He is concerned to elucidate a structure for historical explanations which reflects a distinguishing interest in detail and difference and the enquiry into past events themselves composed of human actions. For the most part (remembering that this historical interest is exemplified in historiography, it is not to be specified a priori) historians do not search for sufficient conditions.¹⁵⁶ A condition may, however, be 'rationally necessary', 'not in the sense that without it the action could not have been performed...(but)...in the sense that without it there would not have been good reason to perform it.'¹⁵⁷ Thus the explanatory process is one which seeks to eliminate 'reasonable alternatives'.¹⁵⁸

Dray's concentration on the explanation of individual actions serves, then, the purpose of accounting for a particular historical interest and enforces his argument for regarding actions from the standpoint of agency. His is the cautious claim that the criterion of rational appropriateness is "sometimes found to be applicable". Before going on to look further at the role of evaluation in history and his understanding of an idealist position which he has not wanted to 'rehabilitate', I want briefly to consider Dray's understanding of the historical individual.

In a generally sympathetic examination of Watkins' rejection of social wholism¹⁵⁹ Dray commends what he takes to be an accurate anatomy of movements, collectives and societies; that is to say, it is an accurate description and useful reminder that the components of these social entities are distinct, countable individuals. Yet Dray, having identified Watkins' position as primarily methodological, a 'theory of what constitutes good explanation in history and social inquiry generally',¹⁶⁰ wants to limit its application. Dray himself is not a methodological individualist. For him, there is at the centre of Watkins' thesis, an ontological argument, 'a certain view...of what social things really are',¹⁶¹ and thus his position supports a 'constitutive rather than "causal" or "productive" form of explanation'.¹⁶² Dray supports the particularising direction of Watkins' argument, of the ascription of reasons to persons to render their actions more understandable, but criticises him for not distinguishing 'between what a thing is and explaining why it came to be'.¹⁶³ Watkins' is held to lack an understanding of the productive sense of explanation. What this charge amounts to, is that there is, in methodological individualism, an adequate analytic for the constitution of a state of affairs, but less than adequate account of how it came to be that way. That is to say, it cannot fully account for movement and change, particularly in the synoptic sense of what an action amounted to, or contributed towards. Methodological Individualism, after analysing into constituent parts, can make no use of a part/whole estimate of contextual significance.

I have already noted how Dray includes impersonal, collective influences as ingredients in a rational argument. The important point is that they should be understood from the perspective of the time, in terms of how they were envisaged by the particular agent. We may recall Collingwood here, and his argument about how

physical events enter history by provoking responsive actions ('actiones'). However Dray also agrees (in this case with a 'self-styled social holist' like Mandelbaum)¹⁶⁴ that the individual actions with which historians are interested are by definition social, that is to say, that they 'enter history insofar as they have societal significance'.¹⁶⁵ Nonetheless this does not contradict the particularising direction of the historians interest:

...even those who insist that the unit of historical study is a social rather than human individual, would seldom deny that explanations at the level of talk about nations, institutions, and movements usually involve the historian in explaining the actions of particular men and women. It is a characteristic of historical inquiry to explain social occurrences piecemeal.¹⁶⁶

In Laws and Explanations Dray wanted to keep separate an analysis of the logical form of historical explanations from an understanding of the kinds of things there are to be explained.¹⁶⁷ However, it is doubtful if this distinction is watertight. Dray has contested all along that his rational explanation schema is just one, possible way of explaining past events, although it has the advantage of closely resembling the practice of historians and the form of a particular interest which does not seek to render events predictable, and nor content itself with mere description. It is also the assertion of an explanatory procedure and goal which, more than adequately, encompasses Dray's belief in the moral dimension inherent in a certain attitude towards the human past. Whether this belief precedes Dray's interest in historical explanation or not, it is apparent how well they go together. Indeed in a later article Dray acknowledges this when he writes,

...(the)...rational model of explanation...shows a way in which explanation can be given in history which is logically compatible with indeterminism regarding human actions. The incompatibility of representing actions as both free and explicable has often

been asserted...(but this)...holds true only for explanation on the covering law model.¹⁶⁸

I want now to look briefly at Dray's commitment to 'understand and evaluate human life from the standpoint of agency',¹⁶⁹ and here we move away from a thesis concerning the explanation of past events to focus on the active, evaluative role of the historian, and the composition of causal judgements.

After examining a sample of historiography dealing with the causes of the American civil war Dray concludes, that "cause" is used in such a way that historians' value judgements are relevant to their causal conclusions, to the extent that those 'conclusions logically depend on them'.¹⁷⁰ What he has in mind here is that, given that historians do not intend 'cause' to mean sufficient condition, there must be some reason for singling out one relevant condition from another, and this reason appears to 'derive from the standpoint of moral appraisal'.¹⁷¹ We have seen how, following the 'rationale' of actions involves the ascribing of reasons from the standpoint of agency, that is, relative to the situation as envisaged by the agent. This 'relativity' of causes (of affording an agent with the motive or intention for acting as he or she did) operates on the level of history res gestae, but also because they are the outcome of the historian's causal judgement, of history rerum gestarum. The causal connection between agency and action is relative to the nature of influence, fear, ambition, intention, given shape within a determinate context. Yet the ascription of importance and significance within that context, the determination of that context itself, will, in the end, be relative to the standpoint of the historian.¹⁷² This is not to say that Dray's ultimate position is historicist or subjectivist (although it may well lend support to one form or other of the argument for relativism). His language is not a vindication of the passive form; agency and the ascription of reasons embody in belief in the active, participatory role of an

enquirer who accepts a fundamentally indeterminist world. It must also be said that a relative description of causal judgement does not, necessarily imply a subjectivist interpretation of historical truth; in fact it does not specify anything significant about the content of a particular account. The "correctness" of a causal assertion may be quite independent of the 'moral' standpoint which informs it. However for this to be so there must be both a principle,¹⁷³ or consensus, by which different and conflicting accounts can be resolved, and the possibility of extruding (as Butterworth hoped)¹⁷⁴ "moral" commitments from an inquiry, or of declaring one's position so that such allegiances may be taken into account. In other words the relationship between an historian's standpoint and the nature and validity of his conclusions remains to be worked out in more detail. To this and to an analysis of the operation of consensus, disagreement, validity and verification, I will turn in the next chapter. The important point is that, historical explanation, along Dray's lines, involves a nexus constituted by his idea of 'evaluation': that of the agent and that of the historian. In addition, historians deal with a subject matter which is already quasi-evaluative. Historical facts signify human actions, and because historians do not, Dray argues, use cause in its sufficient sense, the very selection of this fact rather than that indicates a criterion of importance or significance.¹⁷⁵

Dray, as we will see later, is not a moral relativist,¹⁷⁶ and the structure of his rational explanation suggests a way for the historian, as moral agent, to express his interpretive ascription of significance to particular conditions in a formulae which evades a charge of subjectivity. Two historians who do not share the same standpoint, who actively disagree over the significance of the particular 'ingredients', may nonetheless accept the plausibility of each others account of the same action. The notion

of agreement here is similar to what Dray meant by following a practical argument. Donagan has expressed Dray's schema in the following way:

A was resolved to achieve the end E at all costs
A judged his situation to be C
A judged that E could only be achieved in C if
he did X
Therefore A did X.¹⁷⁷

However this marks a return to the logic of explanation. The agreement involved would only amount to an acceptance that the argument is a coherent progression from premises to conclusion. Now Dray's point about the logic of explanation was made to clear space for a legitimate question and answering in history which does not appeal to the covering law criterion of intelligibility. Everything that has been said in connection with his model of rational explanation has contradicted the idea that, in history, form is somehow more important than content. Indeed our two agreeing historians would not let the matter rest there but would return to the assembled evidence and argue over the significance of this or that assertion. The search for the resolution of historiographical disagreements is rarely a matter of attending to the logical texture of a work. As we will have reason to notice in a section on narrative, the whole idea that it is possible to keep entirely separate descriptive form analytical or explanatory passages in an overall account, or "story" has been strongly contested.

Finally we must return to Dray's characterisation of an idealist approach to the problem of explanation in history. We have seen how Dray wants to retain the notion of history as the study of human actions, themselves (given constraints that need to be accounted for) the outcome of thoughts, reasons, perceptions, prejudices etc. History, that is, which is the self-conscious attempt to assume the various 'calculations' of past agents. However Dray imposes an important qualification. The process of 're-thinking' is neither

intuitive, nor a means to penetrate to the inside of an action which is, at once, its explanation.¹⁷⁸ Whereas Collingwood was set on using his 'what/why' paradox to illustrate the unity of historical knowledge (the inferential identity of subject - historian - with object - the past - through overcoming the distinction between describing what, and explaining why), Dray discards this metaphysical commitment. The 'what/why' paradox becomes, in Dray's account, a methodological proposition. He writes, 'that sensibly demanding and accepting an answer to a "why" question requires the recognition of a distinction between what is explained and what explains it.'¹⁷⁹ This distinction serves to quash any mystical sense of the 'inside' of actions as somehow self-explanatory. In Dray's schema it is the historian who supplies the explanatory connection between events.

The qualification outlined above does not remove Dray's position from its proximity to Collingwood's principle contention, that history involves a distinct (although in Dray, not a priori) direction and approach based on an idea of agency and a belief in indeterminism. Yet, in the end, Dray does not think that an idealist approach can adequately account for the peculiarities of historical explanation. His reason for this conclusion is that he characterises an idealist approach as one which emphasises the pursuit of a myth: the past-for-the-past's sake.¹⁸⁰ Here the reference is particularly to Oakeshott, a similar criticism to that made by Walsh.¹⁸¹ Both Dray and Walsh criticise the abstractness of Oakeshott's 'historical past', which, if not unobtainable, unnecessarily limits the scope and interest of historical enquiries. If for Dray the idea of "a theoretical" enquiry into the remnants of a dead past contradicts his account of history as an investigation composed of different, evaluative perspectives, in this sense, at least, it plays into the hands of covering-law theorists:

"My chief complaint against the acceptance of the covering law doctrine in history is not the difficulty of operating it, in either full deductive or mutilated form. It is rather that it sets up a kind of conceptual barrier to a humanistically orientated historiography.¹⁸²

But as I have already argued Oakeshott's historical past is a radically different notion than Ranke's or even that of Elton, and it loses much of its interest when taken to be in the same tradition. Oakeshott's past-for-the-past's sake reflects both an epistemological statement concerning the very presentness of all knowledge, and, far from reflecting a complacent belief in the value of historical scholarship, is intended to "rescue" history from the intrusion of interests from other, contradictory, 'worlds of ideas'.

Dray's covering law/rational explanation opposition, by concentrating on a structure of explanation and verification employed in the natural sciences, and the problems of their applicability in history, takes its place as a new version of the nomothetic/idiographic conflict. It owes very little to the apriorism and metaphysical commitments which influenced earlier articulations. There is however one sense in which Dray's analysis of historical explanation is closer to one strand of idealism than he might allow. In focusing upon the active, participatory standpoint of the historian, the practice of history has become a construction, albeit a construction within a definite framework. Attention to the constructing role of the historian has been taken as a common feature in the work of idealist philosophers of history; a construction within different constraints and varying dimensions. Their demands for the autonomy of historical knowledge were provoked by the pursuit of a wider philosophical coherence. The coherence sought for by Dray is of a more limited nature: to find a description of what historians believe themselves to be doing when they explain things.

iii) Narrative as Explanation

The aim of historical knowledge is to discover the grammar of events, whereas in the proto-science view it is the logic of events (Mink)¹⁸³

I want to conclude this chapter on explanation with a brief look at the argument over the use and value of narrative in historiography. As with the debate over covering laws, I am not concerned to provide a commentary on the detailed exchanges which occurred in a series of books and articles published in the 1960s. The protagonists can be listed for the sake of reference: on the one side the so-called "narrationists" Danto, Gallie, and Morton White,¹⁸⁴ with some measure of theoretical support from Dray, Mink, and Walsh,¹⁸⁵ and the concurrence of the historians Elton and Hexter;¹⁸⁶ on the other side a semi-fictional scientism which aspired to reduce the peculiarities of history to instances of inaccuracy, failings of methodological imprecision and terminological rigour. The latter position, if articulated at all, finds qualified support in the criticisms of Mandelbaum.¹⁸⁷ The background and context of the argument can be specified in terms of a renewed attempt to provide an account of historical understanding, distinct in terms of practice and irreducible to the language of scientific method. What is elevated for attention here is the significance of narrative in the writing of history. As with Dray's 'rational' counter to the covering law position, the advocates of closely examining narrative as a distinct feature of history, use the double edge of praxis, identifying an important element of historical practice, and then arguing for its special theoretical importance.

The interest of the question of narrative in this argument is three-fold. First because both Collingwood and Oakeshott are committed (though for differing reasons) to a description of historiography as narrative; second as an argument symbolic of the new alignments within analytical philosophy of history;

third because the direction of the debate illustrates the fragile division between theory and practice, presupposition and analysis in this "second-order". In addition the contours of this argument provide useful signposts to a position developed by Mink, Hayden White, Fain, Munz, and, contiguously, Michel Foucault,¹⁸⁸ where attention has shifted from the idea of narrative as explanation to narrative as the vehicle for the "construction" or "employment" of historical events within a story. Much of this is present, in a narrower context, in the work of Danto and, in particular, Gallie.

I want to limit the scope of this discussion in order to avoid falling over into other problems which, for conceptual purposes, will be examined later under separate headings. The question with which I am concerned (as answered in the responses of the 'narrationists') is "can the ordering of events in a narrative structure itself be an answer to an historical question, without the prior, intermediate, or later necessity of distinct, explanatory summation?" Put in another way, can the following of what happened, expressed in a narrative order, also be a satisfactory answer to the question of why did such an such occur? And, it might be asked, with what implications for historical understanding? To this question both Collingwood and Oakeshott would have responded in the affirmative.

By treating Collingwood's statement 'when an historian knows what happened he already knows why it happened', as central to an argument for inferential understanding by way of contextual interpretation of actions, he can be seen as advocating a step-by-step analysis of an event: context, action, result. Dray has characterised this procedure as following a rational argument.¹⁸⁹ The premises would contain an analysis of an agent's (agents') position, perceived and actual (given the historian's knowledge of outcomes and a wider

context); a judgement of the options, influences, and limitations, open to and circumscribing action. The conclusion of a rational argument would, in Collingwoodian terms, see the resultant action (actions) and change as the embodiment of the thought - the interpretive calculation - contained in the premises. What is important here is the motion of "following" an account so that the conclusion may well confirm that the action was the "right", or "appropriate" thing to have done in the circumstances.¹⁹⁰ The historian must facilitate understanding so that his readers can follow his 'rethinking' of past thoughts. To the extent that this is a matter of proceeding from a preconceived, selective point of view, it has something of the flavour of what Popper meant in a passage on 'situational logic'¹⁹¹, but it also goes beyond an argument for the articulation of historical interests. Emphasis on narrative as the vehicle which allows a reader to follow the story being told by the historian, was developed by W.B. Gallie in highly original article published in 1964.¹⁹² Whether Gallie's understanding of narrative, which makes room for including background conditions, circumstantial restraints, and the perceptions of agents, would satisfy those critics, such as Mandelbaum¹⁹³ and Ely,¹⁹⁴ who have argued that the essence of narrative, if it is to be considered as an explanatory medium, must be the sequential relation of antecedents to consequents, remains to be considered. For the moment let us notice that, as Rolf Gruner¹⁹⁵ has pointed out, narrative in the more general sense, does seem to satisfy the sense and order which we expect from and find in certain conventions of literature.

Oakeshott supports narrative history, but for rather different purposes. He is not interested in the participant pleasures of "re-thinking" or "re-living". The very idea of seeking for vicarious historical experience is, in Oakeshott's view, misconceived, either because the terms of thought-revival are neologisms for

correspondence with a past reality, or because they operate on the level of standpoint, of perceptive, of focus of interest, which are themselves indicative of a practical attitude. For Oakeshott then, the narrative ordering of events is not secondary to the unfolding of a story in an explanatory sense, it is the apotheosis of the historical past. What the historian's narrative reveals is the actual process within which past events are "constituted". Such an account is both the goal and only referent of an historical understanding of the past. He writes, "Historical events are themselves circumstantial convergencies of antecedent historical events; what they are is now they come to be woven".¹⁹⁶

The narrative is then the texture and shape of an historical construction: form mirrors content. In an argument for the existence of a special kind of synoptic judgement in history, whereby the historian tries to understand a complex process by "holding" or "seeing" together disparate events and their interrelationships, Mink contends:

Significant conclusions are ingredient in the argument itself...in the sense that they are represented by the narrative order itself...Articulated as separate statements in a grand finale, they are not conclusions but reminders...of the topography of event to which the entire narrative has given order.¹⁹⁷

This is an argument for a distinction between the direction of meaning and understanding exemplified in history from that found in the sciences. Concerning narrative as a possible model for historical explanation, Mink believes that, 'we may understand an event by locating it correctly in a narrative sequence...from a narrative answer to the question "what happened then?" Although this may form a 'sequential explanation' it is not necessarily a 'satisfactory answer to the different question "why did it happen"'.¹⁹⁸ This is an interesting point. Oakeshott would not admit that this is a legitimate distinction. Mink wants to emphasise that there are different

explanations possible of a fact or set of facts and thus allow for a genuine narrative answer to a specific historical interest, Oakeshott's divisions are modal and rigid. The historian does not describe past events from various different perspectives: past events are ontological nonentities. He must infer their existence by responding to historical interest in the constituents of the present: 'survivals' from the past. Similarly these inferences or constructions out of "evidence" have no referent other than themselves, they exist as answers to specific historical questions. Therefore the whole notion of explaining historically is false because it implies that there is something to be explained, something to which an explanatory model may be compared or imposed on, something fixed and known in advance, a pattern to be discerned or a datum to be categorised. The sense in which a narrative builds up and composes an historical account is, for Oakeshott, a complete account of understanding and responding to 'why' questions. Without pursuing further the essential tension underlying his position we must notice that his version of narrative 'understanding' (since Oakeshott would not allow the word 'explanation') is a rigid form of the continuous series model. It is only through the contiguous relation of one inferred antecedent event to another, with no preconceived sense of what the narrative will amount to, that we may follow the unfolding of a story.

If Gallie, Danto and White were primarily concerned to analyse narrative as a prevalent feature of historical discourse, then Oakeshott's interest is to specify the logic of historical understanding,¹⁹⁹ and thus narrative becomes the only appropriate response to his presentist conclusions. In an article on the narrative debate Richard Ely comments on White's position, which he characterises as a belief in events 'forming a linear sequential series: A leads to B, B to C, C to D, and so on...causal effectiveness within such

unitary strands of history is solely the property of antecedents.²⁰⁰ In On History Oakeshott puts forward much the same argument with two important differences.²⁰¹ Causal efficacy is replaced by a 'non-exclusive relationship with some subsequent event in terms of which the character of that subsequent may be understood'. And secondly a logical difference, which is also an important epistemological point, the position D cannot be spelt out in advance, its character is indistinguishable from the 'circumstantial' relations established within the narrative. What the significance of D or X is, is how we come to understand it, as unfolded in an historical enquiry. Whereas White's position is essentially analytical²⁰² Oakeshott is interested in unfolding a coherent metaphysic. There is here evidence of a realignment within philosophy of history.

J.H. Hexter, in his article "The Rhetoric of History" makes the following statements,

the writing of history...its rhetoric...affects not merely the outward appearance of history, its delight and seemliness, but its inward character, its essential function-its capacity to convey knowledge of the past as it actually was...And this implies that in the rhetoric of history itself there are embedded assumptions about the nature of knowing, understanding, meaning and truth...²⁰³

What these embedded assumptions are Hexter does not spell out in detail. However the thrust of his article is quite plain, the use of narrative (the syntax and vehicle of expression) is a special distinguishing feature of history, and the existence within historiography of rhetorical strategies highlights a difference in direction to the ostensibly value-neutral language of science. The choice of words, of fitting descriptions, the omission of cumbersome lists, the footnoting of important detail so as not to diminish the force and impact of what is said, are all witness, according to Hexter, to history's intention of imparting

the reality of the past through vivid images and imaginative and creative phrases, all of which might sacrifice 'generality, precision, exactness to evocative force and scope'.²⁰⁴ In Hexter's argument rhetoric indicates the strategies of an historian, narrative a means of conveying these strategies. Narrative is not considered a special feature in itself but only in terms of how it is composed. What can be inferred here is a notion of narrative as a central organising feature, a function which has been compared to the employment of theory in the sciences. To do justice to this idea we must turn to an understanding of narrative which equates it with a "story". Although Hexter provides some interesting methodological pointers for the aspirant historian, his position has little to do with the debate over narrative as explanation. It is a sophisticated reworking of the old argument as to whether history is literature (art) or science. Hexter is not suggesting that history is fiction, but that the best history is just so because it is conveyed through creative and intelligent use of language; that is to say, it is literary. Perhaps Collingwood meant much the same thing in expounding on the nature of an historical imagination,²⁰⁵ and similarly Walsh in his surprising homage to 'genius'.²⁰⁶ It is a venerable tradition but for the purposes of this thesis it serves only to stimulate a further question. Given that the medium of expression which historians 'characteristically employ seems to have more in common with the language of literature than the precision and impersonal terminology of science, what can we infer about the nature of understanding which history seeks to impart?

What are the presuppositions involved in the idea that, what is central to history, and to an examination of narrative, is an understanding of "story"? Here are three statements of intent by the "narrationists":

Narrative is the form which expresses what is basic to and characteristic of historical understanding. Granted that every genuine

work of history is also a work of reason, of judgement, of hypothesis, of explanation (Gallie)²⁰⁷

...narrative is...the typical form of discourse employed by the historian (White)²⁰⁸

...all history 'presupposes' narrative...it is the organising scheme for the historian (Danto).²⁰⁹

These statements appear to be moderate assertions, the results of comprehensive analyses of historiography. Yet on a second reading they could equally be taken as specifying something of importance about the nature of historical knowledge. They are in fact a mixture of the two, indicative of a dichotomy between description and prescription prevalent in analytical philosophy of history. If they are premises for an argument concerned exclusively with narrative as the vehicle for historical explanation then they are plainly inadequate and Mandelbaum's criticisms are well made. A narrative model which represents causal efficacy as being solely the property of singular, factual statements does no justice to the answering of what and why questions about the past. In particular, though explaining what happened may well involve the tracing of linear chain of sequences or events, it also may include an analysis of a complex interrelationship between both change and stasis. Mandelbaum writes,

The task of the historian is not one of tracing a series of links in a temporal chain, rather it is to analyse a complex pattern of change into the factors which serve to make it precisely what it was. The relationship which I therefore take to be fundamental in history is a relationship of part to whole, not a relationship of antecedent to consequent.²¹⁰

Similarly Gruner has noted that there are histories which do not have as their primary organising aim the tracing of the fortunes of a subject through time.²¹¹ And Dray has stated that there are other kinds of importance in history than just what is 'consequential'.²¹²

None of the above removes the obvious presence of narrative passages in most historical writings. It does however lead us to conclude that narrative, understood in its restricted explanatory sense (the causal efficacy of sufficient antecedents), is not a complete account of historical explanation, nor a very vivid insight into historical practice. It is narrative understood in a broader sense, a sense found in the positions of Gallie and Danto (if not White) which has far more significance: the conveying of understanding in the form of a story.

Danto's concept of narrative, a "presupposition" of history, embodies his conclusions on the nature of historical knowledge. In his book of 1965 he sets out to establish certain distinguishing features of history. He argues that our knowledge of the past is predicated to our acquisition and use of language, with its past-referring words and tenses.²¹³ Further he contends that the direction of historical understanding is hermeneutical, historians make use of a concept of "meaning" and "significance"; that the meaning and significance of an event, in the historical sense, can only be assessed in the context of a story; that determining the correct context can only be done retrospectively, and that this process may be compared to the meaning of episodes in a novel which, to be fully understood, must be referred to the entire work, in other words a designated context or whole. Narrative as explanation takes its place within this story-telling schema. Significantly Danto conflates the teleological dimension of discerning stories with the actual construction of a narrative. he writes, 'If an earlier event is not significant with regard to a later event in a story, it does not belong in that story'.²¹⁴ His sense of the significance of events to a story is not then, merely a function of their being antecedents or consequents in a linear chain. The determination of which events are to 'participate' in a beginning-middle-

end narrative might be said to derive from the 'demands' of coherence, or of literary aspirations, and yet the final arbiter of their inclusion is the historian. To this extent Danto's story-telling may be usefully compared with Walsh's search for appropriate colligatory concepts.

In the end Danto's is an argument for the importance of narrative to history in a broad sense. In an attack on Croce's separation of living history from chronicle,²¹⁵ he argues that we mean much more by narrative than simply a list of disconnected facts set out in chronological order. Historical facts are given form by being constituted in a story.²¹⁶ To this extent Hexter is right in demanding attention be paid to the actual ordering, arrangement, and juxtaposition of facts, for such activities are never merely embellishments upon an historical enquiry. In Oakeshott's terms, they are that enquiry. Goldstein makes a similar point²¹⁷ by distinguishing between what he called history's 'infrastructure', the processes of historical "knowing", and its 'superstructure', the final literary product, and arguing that the problems presented by treating history in the second sense, as something complete, detached and stable, distracts us from the really interesting and philosophically demanding aspect of historical knowledge: the way it comes to be known or "constructed". To this we will return in the next chapter. What I wish to emphasise is that the idea of narrative as explanation, the focus of attention on an aspect of historical practice, should not obscure the fact that this is really a debate about the nature of historical understanding.

Narrative, in its broadest sense, is organisational, the vehicle for the "emplotment" of facts. Taken in this sense there are two, important conclusions for this enquiry. Firstly it emphasises the story-telling role of the historian, the active engagement of presenting arguments in a certain order

and context. Secondly it provides a useful metaphor for the futility of attempting, in any final sense to divide off the explanatory from the descriptive in an attempt to convey knowledge of the past. The form of the narrative - the designation of a subject, the configuration of context, the order of events - will determine the way in which the content - the unfolding of events - is taken and understood.²¹⁸ Narrative arrangement is based on evidence, it is in fact the ordering of evidence to further an argument. The explanatory force of a narrative will thus depend upon the ordering of facts, and this even if facts are understood to be value-neutral, the mere instances of an already formulated conclusion. If it is still contested that explanation is something which ultimately falls outside of a narrative description of what happened, it will be a matter of judgement as to what stage, what position, and in what capacity to enter an explanatory aside or summary.

We may have to conclude that the whole argument over narrative as explanation is, in the end, reducible to semantic differences. This is not to say that it is a debate conducted at cross-purposes. The acceptance, for example by White, of the need to produce an explanatory model countering the precision and structural uniformity of a scientific model, constructed on the basis of necessary and sufficient conditions (in White's terms, antecedents and consequents), which at the same time recognises that there exists some peculiar logic within history, some difference in interest and goal, reflects the ambiguous conclusion that science is the final criterion of rationality, that historians do make (implicit) appeal to general laws, but that there is in the narrative form an adequate vehicle for a methodologically aware history. Mandelbaum and White²¹⁹ share a similar approach to the presence of laws in historical explanations, and yet Mandelbaum strongly contests the idea that narrative is a sufficient way of

answering 'why' questions. The very fact that they disagree indicates that their definition of terms are similar. Here narrative is understood in its restricted sense, as explanatory model. But there are, as I have argued other ways of defining narrative. In Hexter's rhetorical sense narrative is a function of literary ability. We could also mention Elton's concept of 'thickened narrative',²²⁰ which is in part an argument for the possibility of expressing 'the results of analysis' in narrative form, but which is also a "political" point, the reaffirmation of the centrality of an aspect of the historian's craft in the face of what he takes to be unwelcome approaches from the social sciences. However the definition of narrative in its broadest sense is appropriate to the intentions of Gallie and Danto, and it is with this definition in mind that we can see the inapplicability of Mandelbaum's criticisms.

Mandelbaum was arguing against the causal efficacy of narrative explanation, that is, narrative in its limited sense. Dray has pointed out that Mandelbaum's main reason for 'disposing of narrative as non-fundamental is that the demands of...other tasks necessarily interrupt the elaboration of the story line: the narrative, as it were, bogs down.'²²¹ If we are to salvage the significance of the argument over narrative as explanation we must get rid of the notion of a strict, unbreakable, continuous-series explanatory model, in which there is no room for a 'cross-sectional breather', and replace it with the ideas of storytelling and organisation. Only by doing this, by replacing an ostensibly logical argument with one reflecting epistemological premises, can we recognise that the conflicting positions are disagreements about the nature of historical understanding. It is significant that, in rejecting the narrative position, Mandelbaum emphasised the importance of part/whole analysis, an idea often employed to differentiate

historical understanding. If the argument for the importance of narrative is taken, in Gallie's sense, as renewed emphasis on the story constituting role of the historian, and on a certain "logic" of organising information, then there is room both for the part to whole understanding of detail and context, and for the "following" of descriptive analysis. Gallie turns Mandelbaum's criticisms on their head by allowing that explanations in historiography can 'have the effect of enabling one to follow when one has got stuck'. He goes on to say that:

...in narratives explanations are inserted simply in order to enable the writer to get on with his primary and essential business - the unfolding of a followable, though never predictable whole.²²²

Thus, for Gallie, it is narrative which determines the role of explanation in history, and not the other way round. Taken together, they are a clear indication of a difference of interest between those subjects concerned to "increase the range and accuracy of our generalisations and studies in which our predominant interest is how things actually went, actually developed".²²³

There is a final point of interest in Mandelbaum's criticisms of the "narrationists" by way of a signpost to the following chapter on historical truth. At one stage in his article Mandelbaum draws a distinction between the historian's finding out what happened, through enquiry and research, and presenting the results in a manner 'clear and intelligible' to the reader.²²⁴ The second part of the historian's task, the literary "recounting" is seen as a possible distortion of results achieved in quite a different order. The difficulties involved in this embellishment on top of results would, however, also apply to the process of explaining causally. More than this Mandelbaum's comment reveals an emphatic belief in the separation of form and content, object and thought, history's expressive

frailty and the 'reality' of the past, which is so unpalatable to Hexter, Gallie, Goldstein and Oakeshott alike. History rerum gestarum lacks a way of presenting its results without in some way altering the concreteness of its subject matter. This position, which presumably seeks its contrast in the idea of a neutral, value-free medium of expression, will be examined in the section on objectivity and relativism, particularly in relation to T.S. Kuhn's conclusions as to the nature of scientific understanding. Mink, argues for an opposite conclusion to Mandelbaum's:

...in history conclusions are seldom detachable; not merely their validity but their meaning refers backward to the ordering of evidence in the total argument. 'Significant' conclusions are ingredients in the argument itself, represented by the narrative order itself²²⁵...

Chapter 5 - Historical Truth:

i) Introduction

...the realisation that the past is literally nowhere comes from some people - including myself...- like a bolt of lightning which illuminates the entire landscape. And in the darkness following the lightning, and until it strikes again we try to reconstruct bit by bit the complex picture which was illuminated briefly but powerfully. 'My God' we say, 'It's really true, the past isn't there at all. There's no there for it to be. 'Whatever the history signifies, it's not anything that we can conceive being placed side-by-side with the history 'to observe the degree of resemblance'. Meanwhile the historian gets on with his work, humming Ranke under his breath. (Louis O Mink)¹

In the last chapter I looked at three responses to the problem of explanation in history. Each response embodied certain propositions and assumptions concerning the nature of the problem under study. Does historiography attempt to identify the sufficient or necessary conditions of an event having taken place? Is causation a category of the physical world, and if so, to what extent can it be applied to the rational or irrational actions of human agents? Does history provide its own vehicle for organising its subject matter and describing change, and if so, can narrative itself be a satisfactory explanatory answer to an historical question? Each position in the arguments we have examined explicates, and assumes, something of the nature of what is to be explained. From the deductivist perspective it is something solid and monolithic, for the non-deductivist it is something much more transient and dependent upon the interest of an enquirer. The centrality of explanation to analytical philosophy of history can be regarded as reflecting two important assumptions. The first is that, with explanation, historiography can, for the moment, be treated as a datum, as something ready-made and available for analysis. Attention is focused upon

what Goldstein has called the 'superstructure' of history.² Secondly, if it be granted that historians do attempt to explain (in one way or another) then an examination of their efforts can itself be compared and contrasted with the explanatory models, procedures, and successes of the natural sciences. This comparative tendency - to see how history fares in the light of...- provides evidence of the prevailing importance of 'proto-science' paradigms. More importantly it raises the question of the role of scientific knowledge as that against which history must be contrasted. In such comparisons science very often becomes the "significant other", an other whose paradigmatic achievement of secure and objective knowledge is taken for granted, or (more likely in recent analytical philosophy of history) whose distinct aims and methods are emphasised. One intention of this chapter will be to notice the differing ideas of scientific knowledge which emerge out of reflections on the nature of truth in history. Interest in explanation is very appropriate to the "programme" of a post-speculative, analytical philosophy of history. As a specified ingredient of historical practice, an inquiry into the nature of historians' explanations may be regarded as a "second-order"³ study, and, since the inquiry often involves the elucidation of a logical structure it falls within the purview of professional philosophy, thus doubly insuring it against again charges of meddling. When we turn to the problem of historical truth such detachment is less secure. Why this should be so, with what consequences, and the continuing importance of arguments over the definition and possibility of truth in history, will occupy us in this chapter.

Several of the more comprehensive introductions to the analytical philosophy of history have employed similar organisational schemes.⁴ They have divided their subject into component parts which usually include sections on,

why a philosophy of history?, problems of objectivity, subjectivity and relativism, fact and interpretation, explanation and causal analysis. This compartmentalisation is, quite obviously, an ordering device used in the pursuit of convenience and clarity; the exemplification of the analytical approach. However, neat divisions should not mislead us as to the true complexity and interrelationship of the problems relating to the study of the past. Even if, as has been argued by Collingwood and Oakeshott and others,⁵ historiography is the result of a distinctive mode of understanding, the outcome of a particular kind of knowledge, it nonetheless exists only in the attempted unity of a finished piece of work. It may well be that no amount of analytical dismembering will accurately recapture the interplay of context, research, values and commitments, expressive and persuasive abilities, that are embodied in the end product.

The starting point for an enquiry into the nature of historical knowledge marks one of the more significant differences between an idealist and analytical approach. For, whereas Croce, Collingwood, and Oakeshott are, in their theoretical writings, concerned with historia rerum gestarum and thus, along Walsh's schema are not speculative philosophers of history, theirs is an epistemological interest which involves a varying degree of metaphysical apriorism. Post-war analytical philosophers of history have, on the whole presupposed little more than that history is a rich and interesting field of inquiry which attempts to contribute towards an organised body of knowledge about the human past. Their divisions may then be an attempt to see just how organised history is. However it must be said that the division into tidy compartments is not entirely a neutral and pragmatic affairs. They of course indicate something about the interest of the particular philosopher, but

beyond this may signify more general presumptions. If, as for example is the case in R.F. Atkinson's Knowledge and Explanation in History,⁶ the sections dealing with the logic of historical explanations and causal analysis occupy a large amount of space towards the end of the book, coming after the author has dealt (to his satisfaction) with the problems of knowledge and objectivity, then a certain "realist" or common-sensical approach to the possibility of making 'true', or meaningful statements about past events might be inferred. The problems related to our knowledge of the past, and of the truth conditions and reference of historians' accounts, are not, after consideration, thought to be a hindrance to the further discussion of explanation.⁷ In other words, Atkinson's organisational scheme entails the conclusion that, in historical enquiries, there is an object, accessible and settled enough to be analysed into its causal components and examined in terms of different explanatory models. This indeed is the presumption of most analytical philosophy of history: first clear away epistemological difficulties so that one can then turn to the logical status and explanatory force of historians' assertions. Explanation becomes the central issue of the philosophy of history.

This organisational strategy is a perfectly adequate response to the need artificially to divide the seamlessness of historical practice and to account for the finished literary product. It need not be the case that sections on causation and explanation supersede the discussion of other problems, and Dray's Philosophy of History illustrates a more pragmatic, section by section approach. What I want to stress is that organisational schemes can be conceptual prefigurations which are never merely neutral vehicles of analysis and expression. Indeed there will be occasion to notice at the end of the chapter how the equation of philosophy of history with the

analytical approach is a way of attempting to preserve the distinction between 'critical' and 'speculative' interest.

For both Collingwood and Oakeshott, an examination of the problem of explanation in history is not to be taken as a conciliatory gesture in the direction of a wider academic community, nor a weighing up of the 'scientific' component or potential inherent in historical practice. The intelligibility of historians' assertions is properly understood, so it has been argued, in response to a particular and distinct interest, and so the category of explanation, if it is to have significance for the philosopher's enquiry, should find its place as one element in the argument for autonomy.

Their conclusions are quite consistent with those of several analytical philosophers of history, most notably Dray, Gallie and Mink. Each has taken seriously the arguments for a more scientifically precise delineation of what would constitute good explanations in history. Each has argued against them both on their own terms and from the position of the historian. For these philosophers it has been of great importance to meet the challenge of the positivist, covering-law approach, so that the possibility of an understanding, coherent and consistent on its own terms, may be entertained. There is no a priori dismissal of the 'proto-science' position here. Rather, through analysis of the logic of explanation and verification, the inclusion of values and meaning, and an appeal to the aims and intentions of practice, space is created for an examination into history qua history.

I have attempted to reflect these conclusions in the structure of this thesis. For this reason I have placed the chapter concerned with responses to the problem of explanation before turning to different descriptions of 'truth' in history. In doing so I want to contend that it is one of the important implications of an idealist, that the questions relating to historical truth are treated as

not having been answered in an analysis of explanation. This is not to argue that they are completely independent of such analysis: explaining "why" entails some notion of "what" it is there is to explain. Atkinson accepts this is attempting to clear away unnecessary epistemological debris before turning his attention to causal and explanatory judgements.⁸ In contrast however, what interests us here are the assertions that these judgements are not detachable from the narratives which carry them,⁹ explanations are not tagged on at the end of an historical enquiry, but are constitutive of that enquiry, and that they are as interesting for what they presuppose about the nature of what is to be explained as they are for the scope and credibility of their causal connections.¹⁰

"Historical truth" is a composite term which includes the problems of objectivity and subjectivity, fact and value, event and interpretation. It is the lack of a really plausible "internal" criterion of truth which remains one of the most serious barrier to a fully coherent idealist, or constructionist account. And the search for an adequate definition of historical truth (a possible criterion for deciding between different historical 'constructions') reintroduces what both Collingwood and Oakeshott failed to finally dismiss from philosophical discussion, a "real" and recoverable past reality. The 'real' past in this case is not the assumption of correspondence between an historical account and its object, not a stable and monolithic referent external to the enquiry into the existence of survivals from the past, or to the interpretive exercise of empathy, but merely some way of breaking in to the defined insularity of the historian's 'experience' and 're-enactment'. The central difficulty of Collingwood's and Oakeshott's position is that it seems to have bought an epistemologically secure unity of subject and object at the price of incommensurability. If, as Collingwood

argued, it is possible for two or more historians to re-think and re-live the exact thoughts and experiences of past agents - provided they have both reasoned 'correctly' from evidence - and yet still come up with conflicting accounts of the rationale of a particular event, how are they to be compared and contrasted, how is one to be decided better or more accurate than the other? And if, as Oakeshott contends, history be defined as a particular reading of present objects with the intention of inferring a past which is dead and gone, we must demand greater clarity as to the 'proper' constitution of past events than is provided in the formula, "what the evidence obliges us to believe".

Both Collingwood and Oakeshott, in attempting to establish the intellectual coherence of our knowledge of the past from the perspective of historical autonomy, bequeath us a lucid description of the peculiarities and limitations of this knowledge but one which lacks a means by which (in any collective sense) we could know that it had been achieved. The alternative to an adequate set of criteria or description of the process by which the historical past might be assessed, compared, rejected or approved (in part or in whole) is as I have hinted at, a 'loss of faith' in a shared, communicable experience. The delineation of this 'experience' into presuppositions, modes, or structures (variously defined) which operate both behind and above the cognitive subject may be seen as symptomatic of such a loss.

I want, in this chapter, to examine some of the responses to the problem of historical truth which are sensible to the 'logic' of historical knowledge, that is to say, somehow immanent to historical practice, and which also allow for the possibility of verification, comparison, and communication. Insofar as several philosophers of history have addressed themselves to the possibility of historical knowledge sui generis,¹¹ these

problems arise out of a similar context to that of our idealists, although in most cases they are seen as problems to overcome rather than testimony to the epistemological autonomy of such knowledge. It is essentially the same conceptual spectrum which informed much of the debate over explanation. In this case the polarity between 'positivist' (empirically testable knowledge of an objective and stable subject matter), and idealist (the denial of any practical meaning to the division of the past res gestae from historia rerum gestarum) is once again affirmed, in particular by the idealist position being closely identified with the 'constructionist' approach of J.W. Meiland and L.J. Goldstein.¹² Whether this identification is correct will occupy us in section three.¹³

If it is accurate to describe the argument over explanation as, essentially, a contest for the middle-ground then, in this chapter, we begin at an intermediate point and move towards the supposedly idealist end of the spectrum. We begin by looking at the idea of objective knowledge in history, move towards a possible relativist answer (attending in particular to the implications of T.S. Kuhn's idea of academic 'community'); towards a full blown version of history as construction. The final section, which is in one sense, an epilogue, dwells on that moment of a loss of faith in a certain kind of historical knowledge, its emergence in the guise of a philosophy of history (Hayden White, Peter Munz, and Louis Mink) or its possible outcome in "anti-history" (Michel Foucault).

ii) Historical Truth: An Idealist Perspective

'The most important and most baffling point in the critical philosophy of history'.¹⁴ So wrote W.H. Walsh in 1951 of the problem of historical objectivity. What I want to do in this section is to review the problem of

'objective' knowledge in history from an idealist perspective, and ask what difficulties remain once the traditional referent of historical statements, res gestae or a given past reality, has been dispensed with. This is an initial statement in an attempt to locate the referent and truth of historical descriptions. It is a search which will invoke, in various forms and guises, a spectrum of opinion, ranging from belief in the hard and fast, objective condition of historical knowledge, accessible to the historian through 'correct' reasoning or careful application of critical techniques, to the belief that historical knowledge is the product of thought or judgement, the casting of disparate events in the form of a story and so, actively 'constructing' meaning and intelligibility. Such a spectrum of opinion cannot, without remainder, be substituted with the distinction between positivism and scepticism, nor between "scientific" and "historical" objectivity. It will not prove possible to hold one end constant in order to isolate and examine the presuppositions of the opposite. Their relationship is symbiotic and dialectical.

There is an importance in the emphasis given to the epistemological question, "in what sense can historical statements be said to be true or false, accurate, inaccurate, representative or unrepresentative in reference to their ostensible object, the past?". Dismissal of this problem as a non-question¹⁵ may involve, the translation from epistemology, "given the particular cognitive situation of the historian, what is the nature and status of truth in history?", to ontology, "does the past exist?".¹⁶ Such translation is illicit and the ontological question is an irrelevance. To reason that, since we cannot be directly acquainted with the past, we cannot know it existed, is to misunderstand both the discursive nature of historical thought and the kind of knowledge that is to be had in history: it is the

uncritical adoption of a particular paradigm of knowledge which has long since proved inadequate as a description of the process of enquiry in the natural sciences. But this is not the argument of this chapter, it was not Oakeshott's, and it is not what I mean by a "crisis of faith".

Neither Collingwood nor Oakeshott believed that objectivity was a separate, detachable problem for the philosophy of history. In the epilogue to his The Idea of History Collingwood discusses the theoretical niceties associated with reenacting past experience but he does not allocate space to the difficulty of eliminating 'subjective' influences. We must go back to his earlier work Speculum Mentis to understand his position. Similarly with Oakeshott the rejection of subjectivity, is embedded in an idealist philosophy. Their understanding of historical truth, though they are conveyed through very different descriptions of the process of enquiry, rest upon two shared principles.

Firstly, there is the residual belief in the unity of experience, the inter-connection of all facts and assertions. It is a belief which invokes the more baroque metaphysic of the 19th century idealists: the "Absolute".¹⁷ And yet it is precisely this belief in the union of part and whole and the significance of the concrete universal which is threatened by the modal division of experience into separate, self-sufficient monads (Oakeshott), and by the presuppositional delineation of the structure of the mind into historical periods (Collingwood). Here then is the implicit tension within an idealism which attempts to reckon fully with history and with the idea of 'historism'.¹⁸ The disruption to the historical continuum by emphasising the transformational aspects of historical construction is close to a 'crisis of faith'.¹⁹ I want, however, at this

point to turn away from these broader implications to what Peter Munz has called 'idealism writ small'.²⁰

By falling back upon an idealist metaphysic Collingwood and Oakeshott in effect protect themselves against having to address the problem of objective knowledge of the past. Under a metaphysic of experiential unity there is no such thing as knowledge which is objective if this means outside of, or external to, experience. What then begins as a penetrating analysis of our acquisition of knowledge of the past, risks degenerating into a tautology. The tautology is in the form of the following: when an historian has inferred correctly as to what the "evidence obliges us to believe" (Oakeshott), or has reenacted the thoughts of a past agent (Collingwood), the following historical account will be 'objective' in the only sense in which this has any meaning, that is it will be true.

All knowledge, it is argued, is the identity of the enquirer with his object, and history, to meet this requirement, must be a unity between historian and the past. Since this unity cannot be represented as a direct acquaintance with res gestae it follows that historical knowledge can only emerge out of the process of critical examination of remnants of the past. History becomes historical thought, the reflection on objects understood as evidence. For Collingwood this process is best envisaged as an effort to transform evidence into an intelligible unit of meaning: to treat it as the expression of an agent's thought. For Oakeshott, history exemplifies a particular approach, a particular kind of interest which is curious enough in the "survivals" of the past to construct or infer an account by which one may explain their present existence. All this is by way of recapitulation. What is important, is that this attempt to see history as the thought of the historian is, in part, an attempt to rescue it from a particular

understanding of objectivity. Historical knowledge is not, nor can it be, objective if objective means correspondent with an external reality. The historical past is not something to be surveyed and classified; it owes its very existence to a process of thought which vivifies it (Collingwood) or to an inferential construction which gives it a particular shape (Oakeshott).

History, res gestae, is the end product of the historian's configuration; it is not his starting point - a body of fixed, factual knowledge - in any significant way. In addition the process of historical enquiry can be seen as exemplifying the interconnectedness of experience. It is impossible to write a definitive historical account since any events connections with antecedent events and division into subevents is infinite. But in order to avoid charges of abstracting an event from its real context, from its flux and duration, it is contended by the idealist, that, "the separate bits of our knowledge, in fact, form part of a system and however little we realise it, the whole system is implicit in any part of it".²¹ This provides a sense of unity and purpose for the most esoteric monograph and, more importantly, it denies that, in history, there is a pressing need to relate causally temporally separate events. Events are linked in the continuum of thought; they are held together in the mind of the historian.

The notion of objectively true in relation to an independent and stable object of enquiry is entirely absent.²² History must then be saved from objectivity. This is an inversion of a particular conception of scientific knowledge. The autonomy of history as the pursuit of the particular and individual is held to be diametrically opposed to the tendency of the natural sciences towards classification and general laws. When we turn to the problem of relativism and the position of T.S.

Kuhn we shall have occasion to notice just how unsatisfactory such a distinction is, and how artificial is this idea of science. Indeed 'objective', in Collingwood's and Oakeshott's definition, is a characteristic of scientific knowledge and thus cannot be applicable to history as it represents an entirely different set of presuppositions.

This dismissal of objective, understood as correspondent to an external reality, entails the attempt to get rid of the idea of subject understanding. In chapters two and three I have argued how important it is for both Collingwood and Oakeshott to deny that the empathetic reenactment of past experience, or the present construction of an historical account, might be the personal property of a particular historian. This effort is animated by the constant referral to a "significant other", the supposed paradigms of natural science and the hostile tendencies of a positivist mentality.²³ This is almost always to the differentiae of understanding. When it comes to eliciting the 'logic' of historical understanding the tendency is to hold scientific knowledge as a constant while noting the lack of identity with the aims of the historian. And yet, on an epistemological level, it was recognised, in particular by Oakeshott, that science, just as history, knows its object (the natural world) mediated through the methods of its enquiry. It is the interest, the particular way of looking at and organising its subject matter which distinguishes the two. If this is so, objectivity may not be an absolute criterion and standards of objectivity may vary. Yet both Collingwood and Oakeshott write as if the very conception of objectivity is hostile to the autonomy of historical knowledge. In fact it is only hostile if one accepts that a positivist criterion of objectivity (itself a rhetorical fiction) is identical with, and an exhaustive definition of, truth. It is, for example, quite apparent, in the age

of quantum physics that objective knowledge cannot mean knowledge by direct acquaintance with an external object. One no more "knows" a sub-atomic particle than a past event.²⁴ The question of objectivity, if it is to have any meaning, must be a concern with the media of an enquiry in different disciplines. A concentration on the way in which the 'data' of experience are transformed into historical knowledge is in fact the main contribution of Oakeshott to the philosophy of history.

If the first principle (the belief in the unity of experience) involves the rejection of a certain understanding of objectivity, the second allows for its reintroduction in a different form. The rejection of a correspondence notion of objectivity and the paradigm of knowledge by direct inspection, is a way of exposing the inadequacy of a common assumption. This assumption - a belief in the "real" past - is one which I want to examine more closely in a section dealing with the "constructionist" description of history.²⁵ It is an assumption that what the historian is aiming at is truth-likeness to the past as it actually was, and that the ultimate guarantor of the legitimacy of history is when an historical account accurately depicts past reality. It functions on many levels, is undoubtedly common-sensical and pragmatic, and yet, the question remains, can it be made operative in an historical enquiry.²⁶ The questioning of the nature of our knowledge of the past need not be a negative turn as has been pointed out persuasively by Peter Munz.²⁷ For the moment we must note that the second principle is rooted in the space left vacant by the dismissal of the traditional referent of historical enquiry. It is that the truth of any assertion is a function of its coherence with other assertions.

If the truth of an historical account is described in terms of the coherence of its assertions with the evidence it instances, plus such other conditions as the "present

state" of historical knowledge, then the distinction between res gestae and historia rerum gestarum disappears. History becomes what historians write and historical truth will be intimately bound up with the procedures of overcoming or resolving historiographical debates. Objectivity, in this formulation of truth, becomes something dependent not on a relation with an external reality, but rather capable, in principle, of being resolved by any rational person. This definition might help to clear up many problems in the search for a description of truth in history, but it can hardly be said to be the line taken by Collingwood or Oakeshott. Why not? In the case of Collingwood the answer seems to be related to a confused terminology and a preoccupation with the way in which historical understanding is arrived at as an individual and isolated exercise of interest in the past. Far from examining the implications of a coherence theory of truth, it would seem that Collingwood was trying to bridge the gulf opened up by the denial that historical knowledge relies upon perception or acquaintance. I have argued, in chapter two, that Collingwood's equating historical enquiry with the thoughts of past individuals reflects an anxiety over the validity and truth conditions of historical statements. In order to defend history as a secure form of knowledge Collingwood defines the process of rethinking thoughts to reveal the rationale of past actions as exact. The reenactment of past experience expressed through an historical narrative, would seem to have the curious advantage of being impervious to error. If one disagrees with an historian's reenactment one must try and follow his process of historical thinking to see how he arrived at the conclusions he did. If one reasons correctly (provided we have asked the same question and address the same evidence) it should be possible to understand exactly how the first historian reasoned to his conclusions. History proceeds, according to this scheme

as a series of separate reenactments. In one sense each successive reenactment (of the same actions) supersedes the other, but in another sense each is addressing itself to a different problem. Each reenactment contribute to the historical experience of the 'community' of historians and so helps shape new questions and interests. In short the supposed referent of historical statements, the thoughts of past individuals, do not have the solidity that Collingwood ascribes to them, and the "truth" of historical thinking will vary endlessly depending on the position of the particular historian. And even if the thoughts of past individuals were, somehow, not dependent on how they are rethought, how could two historians who had both reenacted the "inside" of the same action and yet produced conflicting accounts as to its rationale, overcome their disagreement? Here then is the crux of the matter and though Collingwood explores, with great clarity, the peculiarities of historical understanding, he did not examine the consequences of a coherence theory of truth for the resolution of conflicting interpretations. In the end he preferred to rely on a notion of the "ideal" judgement, the correlation of objective fact with judgement as such rather than with any actual judgements,²⁸ but this, in effect, links objective knowledge in history with a criterion of truth arbitrarily cordoned off from rational discussion.

In a statement from On History Oakeshott writes, 'subjectivity is not a category of existence...not a quality of objects...there are perspectives, and ways of looking which are quite distinct but not outside of communication'.²⁹ This sounds more optimistic; distinct ways of understanding which may, nonetheless, be discussed and contrasted. However it is to the word 'distinct' which we must pay most attention. For the distinctness of a perspective or way of looking is a function of modality,

and the modes of experience are self-contained and irreducible to any other. Therefore the communication or discourse into which a particular understanding of an object may enter is the limited intelligibility of a mode of experience. Its possible truth conditions must be related to the presuppositions of its modality. In this way, though an historical construction may be saved from being merely the personal understanding of the present), its very modality prevents it from being any more than a partial organisation of experience. Truth in history then is of a very restricted kind, it is truth in as far as it goes, and we have already noticed how stringent Oakeshott's definition of historical is, how very hard to attain.³⁰ The only possible meaning of objective knowledge that would be available to an Oakeshottian position, would be coherence with the presuppositions of the historical mode. That is to say, if an account is consistent with the enquiry into the historical past that is all we may hope for.

If we substitute Oakeshott's division of experience into modes with the notion of different organising schemes, a less rigid conception of the particular perspective and interests characteristic of different approaches emerges. It is a notion which has affiliations to Gallie's idea of the story-narrative³¹ and Mink's 'synoptic judgement'.³² As Danto writes,

the difference between history and science is not that history does and science does not employ organising schemes which go beyond what is given. The differences has to do with the kind of organising schemes employed by each. History tells stories.³³

As we had occasion to notice in the last chapter, whatever explanatory force is mobilised by a succession of singular statements, there is another sense which the historian's narrative may be said to carry intelligibility. The casting of separate events together in a narrative serves

both as a description of the active engagement of the historian and of a particular kind of understanding, what Gallie has referred to as following a story. Now the question remains, if it is not a linear chain of antecedent events, if the narrative is not to be seen as a transcription of a temporal sequence, then how exactly should we envisage the connections between events and the composition of a narrative? It is to this which I want to return at the end of the chapter, to the arguments of Munz, Hayden White and Louis Mink. It is possible that Oakeshott's historical past employs a similar notion of intelligibility to that of the "story-narrative"?

Oakeshott argues that evidence is itself the product of inference, a particular present object looked at from the perspective of an interest in its 'survival' from the past, and that evidence is therefore dependent upon, and composed by an historical past. But he then proceeds to say that evidence 'obliges' us to reach certain conclusions. Now the technical aspects of editing sources (Elton's historical 'craft') are sometimes instanced in the defence of the intellectual credibility of what historians do. Such a defence is addressed to arguments over methodological precision and presumably accepts that a sophisticated, perhaps "scientific" discipline is marked off by an array of technical skills. However Oakeshott does not want to contend that the historical past is different from all other understandings of the past solely because it has developed techniques which give it privileged access to its object of enquiry. His presuppositions are logical and primary and guide the formulation and use of particular methods and approaches. The 'logic' of historical understanding is the logic of modality and apperception, not the consistency of the historian's techniques with the peculiarities of his subject matter. When evidence becomes something that 'obliges' we must question whether he, like Collingwood,

is not searching for an object referent which historical descriptions rest upon: res gestae of the present.

Oakeshott's historical past suffers from the same isolation and incommensurability as Collingwood's reenactments. Indeed Oakeshott can make little use of the only sense in which correspondence might be operative in history, the comparing and contrasting of different explanations and interpretations, narrative with narrative, portrait with portrait. In his version, the current state of historical scholarship and opinion is an ingredient in the individual historian's experience, and it does not appear to be something to which he can appeal or know himself to be contributing towards. The historical past, he argues, may not be specified in advance. In order completely to destroy any possible idea that there may be a "real" past existing outside of thought or behind the historian's argument, which might serve as a source of parallels to present experience, or guidance in political dilemmas, Oakeshott's historical past is thoroughly contingent.³⁴ The historical past is an inference, a construct of critical thought, and it has not substantive shape or form which might be classified into taxonomies or analysed into its causal components. But Oakeshott is driven too far in trying to establish the dependence of res gestae upon a particular kind of interest, so that an historical account appears as an almost circumstantial by-product. He seems to conflate the idea that the historical past is a present engagement, with the actual moment of enquiring, as though history only exists in the twinkling of an eye. Once constructed, once woven together, Oakeshott is so concerned that it should not be thought of as part of an established body of knowledge of the past (should not be confused with the contents of the storehouse of objects which constitute the practical present past), but merely as possible evidence in another enquiry, that the historical past reminds one

of a negative photographic image which has not been properly fixed and so dissolves and fades away. It exists as an answer to a particular interest or question, and not as part of a corporate attempt to investigate the past. Its truth is a truth on its own terms; a limited and dangerously solipsistic coherence. The presuppositions of the historical past - the parameters of the historical mode - bear the entire weight of truth and objectivity. Without them as the guarantor of communicable and shared experience the historical past would indeed (as Munz has argued it must)³⁵ resolve itself into an infinite regress of subjectivities.

Oakeshott leaves us with a similar problem to Collingwood. What ways are there of distinguishing between the merits of different, possibly conflicting constructions? Can the supposed presuppositions of historical understanding provide a criterion, or set of criteria, to be used in settling conflicts of interpretation? If not what kind of knowledge are we left with? History, from an idealist perspective cannot be a compilation of accredited facts, nor a body of established generalisations or hypotheses, and in an important sense there is no court of appeal.

iii) Relativism and the Standpoint of the Enquirer

An idealist understanding contends that history - what historians do - is a particular kind of understanding composed of objects seen in a certain way and perhaps guided by the idea of a story. History, it has been argued, is not, because it cannot be, the description of a temporal sequence. It is the construction out of records of linkages between events, and to this extent history is critical thought, the construction of a plausible narrative, and the study of thoughts recognised to be embodied in evidence. In this chapter questions have been raised over the truth conditions of historical statements.

We have, in other words, sought for an adequate description of the relationship between enquirer and his ostensible object of enquiry, the past. I want now to remove the cloak of neutrality from the enquirer.

Despite his central position in an idealist understanding, the historian has remained largely anonymous. In this section I will deal with a range of arguments which draw attention in which the historian with his own values (individual and collective), commitments and prejudices, may be said to impinge on the notion of historical truth. From an idealist perspective the perception and thought of the cognitive subject is a 'necessary precondition for the configuration of existence',³⁶ and this is a premise of knowledge in general. What concerns us here is with the way in which value schemes are thought to be particularly significant, or particularly limiting, in the study of the past. We turn then, the problem of relativism.

Relativism in history is, on one level, the radical contextualisation of the object of study. In this sense it is synonymous with the development of a 'mature' historiography which has, as one of its guiding principles the recognition of an all pervasive historicity. "Historism" - the relation of thoughts and actions to their complex matrix - understands change to be a peculiar combination of identity and difference: there must be an identifiable object which remains constant enough to be said to have changed. Now the historicity of the historian's subject matter raises two important questions. In what sense can distinct (often very distant) past milieu be intelligible to an enquirer, who is a part of this pervasive "historism"? If relativism is a condition of cognition then the historian's own sense of significance, importance, and perhaps even intelligibility will necessarily shape his understanding of past events. But if this is so, then is the "truth" of any historical

account ultimately reducible to the values of an historian, to his time and place?

In their most simplified form, these questions are not of particular interest.³⁷ It can be conceded, for example, that relativist position, in the form which Mandelbaum has called 'subjective relativism'³⁸ is a tedious example of irrationalism. If all statements are relative to, and only intelligible for an enquirer there would be no possibility of discussing or evaluating anything let alone the problem of relativism.³⁹ The very statement that all understanding is relative to subjective values, or to the linguistic, social, economic, or ideological condition of the individual entails, if it is true and is to be acknowledged as such, that not all statements are bound to the solipsism of a subjective relativism. Furthermore the two questions above assume that the problem of relativism is only a problem for (or at least is particularly acute in) history. When we turn to T.S. Kuhn we will see that this is an idea which has been seriously called into doubt.⁴⁰ Above all the questions assume a certain criterion, knowledge of an objective past reality. Recognition of how elusive this concept is, introduces an air of anxiety and fatalism. But this criterion is, as we have seen, itself open to question.

The idea of relativism has not always provoked anxiety in historical thought. Croce, in both his theoretical and historical writings, celebrated the idea of 'living history', of history being 'contemporary' and problem-solving.⁴¹ The fact that the historian's interest in the past would always be animated by present concerns was precisely why history, at its most vital and instructive, assumed an ethical dimension. Yet though he accepted that historical understanding was, in this way, relative, Croce was concerned not to debase a more absolute notion of historical truth or to limit it to

subjective values. To this end he relied upon an idealist epistemology, and the notion of identity between the concrete or individual, and universal judgement. We have had occasion to notice the tension that results from this attempt to retain the universality of truth in the judgement of the individual historian. Croce substituted the metaphysical and amorphous 'spirit' with 'liberty' as the guiding concept under which history should be written.⁴² The writing of history under a fascist regime had a job of work to do: to provide moral guidance and an historically instanced alternative. This is rather the opposite experience of the American historian Carl Becker⁴³ it should be at the service of 'Mr Everyman'.⁴⁵ Mr Everyman's understanding of the past concerned itself little with the niceties of historical accuracy or overmuch with any distinction between truth and falsity. What is important is what is remembered and what, from this remembered past, might be useful. In this way 'Living history...enlarges and enriches the collective specious present of Mr Everyman'.⁴⁶ Historians ought then to be correcting and rationalising 'for common use Mr Everyman's mythological adaption of what actually happened'.⁴⁷ However by 1941, chastened by the thought of a Nazi Mr Everyman,⁴⁸ and the idea that relativism not only destroyed truth but made morality the hand maiden of whoever could establish it, Becker had changed his tune.⁴⁹ History, he wrote, 'cannot be practically applied, and is worthless to those who have made it...'.⁵⁰

Charles Beard, writing at the same time as Becker, called for historians to make a 'great act of faith' and assess the past as a movement towards 'collectivist democracy'.⁵¹ But his position represents an intense anxiety about the nature and status of the historian's knowledge of the past, an anxiety which led Beard to conclude (as Dray mentions in an incisive article)⁵² that facts are 'very much at the disposal of the historian'.⁵³

What is of particular interest in Beard's anxieties is the way in which historical knowledge, the truth of historians' conclusions are assumed to compare so unfavourably with those in the natural sciences. For example, as Dray points out, much of Beard's concern about the problem of how we can come to know the 'past as it actually was'⁵⁴ is centred around the ideas of partiality and selection. That is to say, that not only must the historian "see" the actuality of the past through the medium of documentation' but that, even at this mediate point, there must be a 'partial selection...of the partial record of...the actuality'.⁵⁵ There is, as Dray and Danto have noted, an important assumption at work here. In supposed contrast to scientific knowledge, Beard assumes the poverty of historian's knowledge by observation or direct acquaintance.⁵⁶ The historian's knowledge is judged defective when implicitly referred to its "significant other". Here the "significant other" is the idea of the 'coolly dispassionate'⁵⁷ scientist, unburdened by values or commitments, observing and reobserving a physical world without any interference from mediate and partial data. Given this idea of objective knowledge, no wonder Beard is anxious over the status of his knowledge of the past. But of course his idea of scientific objectivity dissolves under close scrutiny. All disciplines are necessarily selective, they select what is of interest and importance to them. And the notion of observability also turns out to be a fiction since, as Danto notes, scientists make use of theories, hypotheses and techniques precisely because 'what they often deal with is unobservable'. He continues:

the fact that the most highly developed sciences are concerned specifically with unobservables shows...that the unobservability of subject matter is not an overwhelming disadvantage.⁵⁸

There are other disciplines, geology among them, which cannot 'observe' the past events to which they refer. Beard does however raise some interesting doubts about the various criteria of selection employed, and the role of value judgements in the actual construction of historical accounts, to which we must return. We can, though, dismiss his anxieties which are centred on a comparison with the direct enquirer-to-object relation assumed to be operative in the natural sciences: it labours a vacuous contrast.

There is another distinction which has been made often and in various forms. The distinction is premised upon a general acceptance of the argument for relativism. It is a distinction between fact, establishing when and what happened in the past, and interpretation, providing plausible reasons for why it did so. On the side of fact, history is defined in terms of its technical expertise, its 'professional standards of respect for the truth testing of evidential material'.⁵⁹ For some, including Elton, this technical side is what best characterises the independence of the historical "craft", and the editing of charters should be seen as a basic apprenticeship. Others have forced the distinction for different purposes. Aaron talks in an optimistic way of the established facts of history which allow the historian, prompted by his own interests and values, to seek different and revealing interpretations of past events.⁶⁰ Relativism, though a basic condition of historical understanding, is mitigated by a reliance on the recognised bed-rock of information, and different and conflicting interpretations will be of historiographical interest for what they reveal about the historian and his time. Goldstein, who writes that there is 'substantial agreement among historians on the nature of the techniques of historical researches and on the character of large segments of the historical past',⁶¹ has a different reason for affirming the distinction. In

order to provide a secure foundation for history understood as a construction he appeals to the "controls" of the discipline.

The idealist cannot allow this distinction to stand. It is based on a false separation between "independent" historical facts and their employment, joined together in a narrative. The idealist argues that the facts of history emerge at the end of an enquiry. In other words, they are constituents in an argument or elements of what Mink calls a synoptic judgement,⁶² a kind of "seeing together". This represents a different conception of history which understands it to be thought and construction as opposed to compilation and classification.⁶³ Mink writes,

the researches of historians, however arduous and technical, only increase the amount and precision of knowledge of facts which remain contingent and discontinuous. It is by being assigned to stories that they become intelligible.⁶⁴

This does not imply historical scepticism, it does not deny that the "facts" of the past may be so firmly established as to be (for any practical purpose) beyond dispute. What it indicates is a different sense of intelligibility, not that of the handbook or 'storehouse' of valid and accredited historical knowledge, of discrete facts and detachable conclusions, but the intelligibility of the story and the framework of organisation it provides. Beyond this there is reason to doubt the idea of the concrete atomic fact, since, as Dray has argued, historical facts are a structured network of relations, covering even 'the most "brutish" fact'.⁶⁵ Since these structures are known as such, rather than discovered in the nature of past occurrences, they must be imposed upon the facts. It is this discursive ordering and juxtaposing of historical 'facts' which is an essential characteristic of historia rerum gestarum. And the complication and

classification of facts from evidence cannot be opposed to the intrusion of the subject, in the construction of a narrative account, as the paradigm of impartial analysis and scholarship; the editing of charters presupposes organisational 'strategies' not to be found in the sources. More importantly, as Peter Munz has so clearly illustrated, the historian, in sticking to the neutrality of editing and detective work, is not secure in the knowledge of the unadulterated data of the past, the raw material of history. Evidence, or as he prefers, "record", is already artifact,⁶⁶ someone's record of an event, someone's thought. It is not nor does it constitute, a transcript of a temporal sequence. It comes to us already in the form of a construct of "mini-narrative".

At the centre of historiographical disputes are often different interpretations of the significance of this or that pivotal fact, of its importance or non-importance in a sequence of events,⁶⁷ even to what will count as a fact. Such disputes perhaps point to the slippery nature of facts and to the difficulty in appealing "the facts" as the ultimate sanction and appeal. As Danto has noted, 'historian's differences arise over historical statements which are equally as acceptable'.⁶⁸ The established-body-of-facts argument may in the end, far from allowing for a consensual understanding of the human past, give rise to a healthy plurality of different accounts. It will not support the thesis that, at the level of fact, the standpoint of the enquirer is absent, while at that of interpretation necessarily intrusive. What is more, as we shall see in the next section, too close identification of historical facts with the reality of the past as it actually was, is fraught with problems. If historical facts are not themselves recognised to be fully within a narrative, dependent for their significance and intelligibility on their place in an argument, but rather

are seen as the remnants of past reality and the means of transportation back to that reality, then the past becomes entirely dependent on our present factual knowledge in a way that the realist would never allow and which Elton would deride as arrogance. Facts are overturned, demoted and promoted; historical knowledge changes and enriches. Does this mean that the past is constantly altering? The more sensible conclusion is that it is our knowledge of the past which shifts and that facts are a product of historical inference. In this way we may account for their slipperiness without impugning their truth status for that knowledge, and without swapping an epistemological insight for an abortive attempt to ground historia rerum gestarum on a bed-rock of factual certainty and in this way bridge the ontological divide to the past.

Since an absolute distinction between fact and interpretation cannot be made operative, we must look for another way in which the implications of relativism in history might be mitigated. Following Mandelbaum's three-fold division, we turn from the anxieties of Charles Beard and the lack of significant contrast between his notion of historical and scientific truth, to the position described as 'objective relativism', or to give it another name, perspectivism.

'Objective relativism', Mandelbaum argues, states that 'the truth of what is asserted cannot be judged independently of the context in which the assertion is made'.⁶⁹ This coincides with the description of historicism given above. But if this idea applies equally to history res gestae, and to historia rerum gestarum, then, unless we can understand the context in which an historical enquiry is conducted, we have little chance of finding it intelligible. To this end the idea of "perspectivism"⁷⁰ arises. The truth of an historical account, since it is tied to a context which must include the particular values and interests of the enquirer, becomes truth relative to a

certain perspective. In order to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings it is important to specify as exactly as possible this particular approach. This is the argument of Karl Popper which he describes as 'situational logic'.⁷¹ He starts from the conclusion that, 'undoubtedly there can be no history without a point of view; like the natural sciences, history must be selective unless it be choked by a flood of poor and unrelated material'.⁷² The historian then, should 'consciously introduce a preconceived point of view'⁷³ which reflects his particular interests. This is not to be taken as a license to 'twist the facts until they fit the framework of preconceived ideas, or that we may neglect the facts that do not fit'.⁷⁴ Rather, 'all available evidence which has a bearing on our point of view should be considered carefully and objectively'.⁷⁵ The idea here, is that specifying a point of view in advance allows us to follow the historian's argument and judge it in terms of its coherence from its point of view. Disagreements may then arise over whether all the facts or evidence relevant to that particular perspective have been included in the history. However, though we may not share the point of view, we may, nonetheless, find the account completely comprehensible and intelligible.

From the argument point of view of this 'situational logic'.⁷¹ He starts from the conclusion that, 'undoubtedly there can be no history without a point of view; like the natural sciences, history must be selective unless it be choked by a flood of poor and unrelated material'.⁷² The historian then, should 'consciously introduce a preconceived point of view'⁷³ which reflects his particular interests. This is not to be taken as a license to 'twist the facts until they fit the framework of preconceived ideas, or that we may neglect the facts that do not fit'.⁷⁴ Rather, 'all available evidence which has a bearing on our point of view should be considered

carefully and objectively.⁷⁵ The idea here, is that specifying a point of view in advance allows us to follow the historian's argument and judge it in terms of its coherence from its point of view. Disagreements may then arise over whether all the facts or evidence relevant to that particular perspective have been included in the history. However, though we may not share the point of view, we may, nonetheless, find the account completely comprehensible and intelligible.

From the argument point of view of this 'situational logic' raises two important questions: is it possible to specify the particular values and interests of the enquirer (those values and interests which, entangled and enmeshed within a history, may cut us off from the context in which they arose) by stating them in advance and so making historical understanding a matter of following an argument from a given set of propositions? Secondly, can a series of specific points of view contribute to a cumulative understanding of the past?

The first question falls foul of Mandelbaum's razor. If the answer is yes, and if points of view can be specified so exactly as to make them entirely comprehensible to others, then objective relativism is not all pervasive, and some statements - in this case the principle of situational logic - are to be interpreted in a non-relativistic sense, that is to say true no matter who asserts it and in what context. Further more Popper's points of view appear to be conscious, rational and reserved; a framework of enunciated commitments. Situational logic aspires to be the ideal of intellectual arbitration. In fact Popper has recognised the essential problem of criteria of selection, but his solution is unrealistic. As Walsh points out, 'given a set of presuppositions historical work can be done more or less well', but 'what is a fact on one interpretation will not be one on another'.⁷⁶ Popper's ideal is too detachable,

too uninvolved with the process of selection and ascription of significance. R.F. Atkinson doubts whether questions can be so exactly specified as to have completely determinate answers'.⁷⁷ The second question will have to be answered in the negative precisely because we have no means of deciding between different accounts. It is possible that divergent accounts will complement each other but if they do conflict in argument and interpretation of evidence it cannot be resolved: each will be 'appropriate' from its own point of view. The question remains, where is the criterion for deciding between different points of view?

The idea of perspectivism, however, is not without its importance, though we may have to take it in a softer form than that outlined above. It is important to accept that the clear distinction between interest and values, and the intelligibility of a history cannot be maintained. As Morton White has written,

'Value judgements - the extra historical element in...(history)...is dominated by the idea of memorability or worthiness to be recorded in chronicle, and I know of no way of eliminating this factor in the construction and assessment of a history...moral judgements may not be detachable.'⁷⁸

Furthermore, we must concede to Mandelbaum that no significant progress has been made in replacing the solipsism of "subjective relativism" with the determinate, but incommensurable, points of view of "objective relativism".

Dray has outlined a softer version of perspectivism in which he states that, 'telling the "whole truth", in context, means telling those which one has the right to expect in that context'.⁷⁹ He goes on, 'selection makes historical accounts relative to the value schemes which is brought to them by the historian'⁸⁰, but this is 'not to say that selection per se necessarily falsifies. Why

shouldn't the historian's account of the past be true as far as it goes?'⁸² The important difference between this position and 'situational logic' is that Drays must be seen as a response to the question, 'can a less-than-complete account of any historical object of study claim to be the truth about it?'⁸³ The notion of truth in context is, for him, a consequent of what is 'a condition of human knowledge generally'⁸⁴, that is to say the intrusion of value and selection. Far from being (as it appears in Popper's argument) a prescription for historical practice, perspectivism is merely a correct account of one important aspect of historical understanding. To complete a "correct" description, Dray, along with Danto, Walsh, Morton White, Mink and others, would argue that the 'entire mode of organising the past is causally involved with our own local interests'⁸⁵; that 'every history is written from a certain point of view and makes sense only from that point of view'⁸⁶, and that written history is "a quasi-evaluative notion: the significant past".⁸⁷ If we are to accept these statements, if as Hagel put it, 'Value judgement is logically ingredient in the very idea of historical inquiry' then, 'it would make no sense for historians to aspire to be objective'.⁸⁸

Before despairing of finding any place for "truth" in history we must turn to the notion that the proper sense of contextualisation, or relativism, must be understood in reference to the intelligibility of assertions arising out of historical practice. This is the notion that the resolution of conflicting interpretations calls for a 'theory of presuppositions'.

The idea that historical understanding involves certain presuppositions and that a full account of historical truth or intelligibility must involve an examination of what is presupposed in the actual construction of the historian is a common theme in

idealist approaches. Applied to other disciplines, or to cognition in general, the analysis of presuppositions has been a major theoretical enterprise of the twentieth century. The common theme is that there are, embedded in the matrix of linguistic systems, intellectual communities, cultural milieux, and "scientific" disciplines, complicated and often hidden codes of signification and meaning, which both guide, and to an extent, compose the study of objects and their representation. If these presuppositions are located within the (possible) experience of an enquirer we have not departed from a neo-Kantian idealism. If, on the other hand, they are placed between the enquirer and the object of his enquiry (in a deterministic and over-arching sense) then we have a form of structuralism or sociology of knowledge. This distinction is important for doctrinal reasons, although less so in implication. Though the calling into question of standards of objective rationality can be traced back to Kant, Hegel and Marx, the collapse of pragmatism into existentialism and the fragmented systems of knowledge, expressed most vividly in the language games of the later Wittgenstein, and, concurrently, the intense specialisation of academic disciplines (taken perhaps to guarantee the scientific credentials of a field of enquiry) from which history has not escaped, is largely a phenomenon of this century. In the last section of this chapter I want to return to certain ideas about the way in which presuppositions govern or even control the construction of the historical past. Our interest at this point is with the possibility that, by attending to the presuppositions of historical understanding - put less forcibly as the assumptions and approaches which may bond together historians into an intellectual "community" - we may find a way to mitigate the more corrosive implications of relativism, and resolve the problem of conflicting interpretations. In other

words, can relativism be understood as a relationship between a particular, but shared, approach and its object of enquiry, the historical past, and should historical 'truth' be defined, in some sense, as the mechanics of this relationship?

This third attempt to find a correct description of relativism in history corresponds quite closely to the third of Mandelbaum's definitions, that of 'conceptual relativism'. For the conceptual relativist, he writes, it is,

'not the individual purposes or interests, nor the particular relationship in which he stands to the object with which his judgements are concerned; rather, what is relevant is taken to be the intellectual or conceptual background which the individual brings to his problems from the cultural milieu to which he belongs.'⁸⁹

Mandelbaum is intent on exposing the logical contradiction in this position, which he takes to be a form of ideological determinism, dealing in the idea of false consciousness. He accuses the conceptual relativist of indulging in a 'self-excepting fallacy', 'that is, the fallacy of stating a generalisation that purports to hold of all persons but which, inconsistently, is not then applied to oneself'.⁹⁰ Although this may accurately describe certain theories of cultural hegemony and the closed-systems of structuralists (in particular the random 'epistemic' divisions of Foucault), it is not a particularly useful way of addressing T.S. Kuhn's theory of paradigms.

Kuhn wanted to 'historicise' an understanding of scientific development, and to drive out the "Whig" interpretation of history'⁹¹ from the philosophy of science. It is not his intention to so relativise scientific knowledge that all claims to "objective" truth by scientific disciplines must be dismissed, though it certainly is his purpose to deny that there is an

absolutely objective scale against which all truth-claims may be measured. Kuhn asks a series of questions about the mechanisms by which shared theories become established as paradigms, which in turn influence the kind of research undertaken, and how one paradigm is replaced by another. The interest of Kuhn's thesis is substantial, not least because of its concentration on the media through which scientific discoveries are arrived at and substantiated. Far from being a progressively more complete transcript of the physical world, scientific knowledge is represented as 'a dialogue between traditions and contingent experience'.⁹² The criteria of scientific intelligibility are not, we learn, absolute or eternal, but have their own history. It is important not to over-emphasize the parallels between Kuhn's idea of scientific knowledge and history. One would, at the very least, need to question whether history is governed by shared (though not necessarily articulated) paradigms, and whether, as a discipline, it constitutes a "scientific community".⁹³ I want to address a question raised by D.A. Hollinger, 'can Kuhn's sense of validity help...historians to clarify what they mean by 'objective'?⁹⁴ Does his idea of truth as a function of agreement among a "community" reveal the true implications of relativism for history, and provide a correct description of the way in which conflicting historical interpretations are resolved?

Can the practice of history provide its own criteria of rationality and its own sense of validating claims about the past? F.H. Bradley argued that there are means for the historian to assess the likelihood of a reported past occurrence;⁹⁵ it must be analogous to something that has, or could have, happened in our present experience. This however, is not a license for subjective empathy, because our present experience is guaranteed as well-grounded by appeal to scientific rationality. It is the laws of science and their common-sense derivatives that

enable the historian to confirm or deny the accuracy of recorded events. As Danto has point out, Bradley is seeking a criterion of empirical impossibility.⁹⁶ However, this leaves him a selection among an array of possible interpretations. Not only are his presuppositions very general, but what is possible is not necessarily true. Bradley focuses attention on the presentist dimension of historical study and on the active role of the enquirer in constructing and determining an intelligible account of past events; but ultimately history is dependent, for its coherence, on scientific laws. The task of history is represented as establishing the accuracy of statements contained in evidence. It is reduced to 'detective' work, to a calculus of probabilities, to what Munz calls 'documentary positivism'. Collingwood, of course, rejected this reliance on scientific laws. He declared that it was the historian's experience qua historian by which alone he determined the cogency of a reenactment, and rendered his enquiry autonomous. Even leaving aside the vagueness of the criteria provided by his historical "experience", and the impressionistic flavour of his 'historical imagination', Collingwood's re-enactments can, I have argued, be seen as incommensurable. His historical presuppositions are premised on a wider philosophical coherence, and the validity of particular thought-revivals are tied up with a metaphysical programme which, if not transcending, certainly precedes any analysis of historical practice.

W.H. Walsh, in the first edition of An Introduction to the Philosophy of History held out some hope that we might eventually arrive at a 'science of human nature'⁹⁷, by reference to which, all hermeneutical problems might be resolved. By the third edition we find a footnote declaring that his earlier position had been 'seriously confused'.⁹⁸ In fact his overall approach is far more

sceptical: 'historians do not know any absolutely certain acts about the past...all historical statements are relative'.⁹⁹ At another point he writes that understanding 'involves the judgement of evidence by principles whose truth is independently assumed'.¹⁰⁰ Are these principles the same as Bradley's presuppositions? In discussing perspectivism, Walsh talks of the 'presuppositions'¹⁰¹ of points of view, but here he means ideological commitments which are consciously held, articulated, and open to discussion and evaluation. Such ideological commitments resemble, in their plurality, Kuhn's description of the 'competing-schools' which are indicative of the lack of consensus over definitions and the correct way of resolving problems in the pre-paradigmatic period of a science. On an absolute level the evaluative notion of conflicting presuppositions lacks an external arbiter. On the more local level discussion of the plausibility of different presuppositions goes hand-in-hand with the evaluation of historiography; the continuing arguments over the contribution of a Marxist perspective being only the most obvious example. There is a further, anti-deterministic point to be made. Danto writes,

the fact that there should be causes for a belief is utterly independent of the question as to whether that belief is well grounded, and that question we can decide in utter ignorance of the causes which may have operated on the man who held it.¹⁰²

But Danto goes on to say that, 'differences of a more ultimate sort...the very criteria in accordance with which...(we)...could adjudicate between theories', which includes even 'general philosophical theories', or 'disagreements of principle', are not 'made in accordance with any criteria, for they determine, finally, what are to be the criteria we shall accept'.¹⁰³ Walsh arrives at a similar conclusion, 'we cannot settle the dispute by

reference to a body of unassailable fact - what is fact on one interpretation is not necessarily fact on another'.¹⁰⁴ And Mink has drawn our attention to the way in which a particular 'methodology' will determine what will count as a fact.¹⁰⁵

R.F. Atkinson has denied that there exists an 'articulated body of presuppositions in history',¹⁰⁶ and contrasted this unfavourably with science where, 'the criteria of selection are more fully determined'. Mink, on the other hand, argues that such comparisons are misleading and accept a 'proto-science'¹⁰⁷ characterisation of historical understanding. He points out the the 'division of labour in research', in the sciences, 'requires that concepts have a uniformity of meaning, and the methodological problem of definition therefore becomes central'.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps then, the very idea of an absolute and rigid set of presuppositions imports into the flux of historical disputes an alien and unworkable idea. In a related discussion of the ubiquity of value-judgements in historian's narratives, Dray argues, that to 'exclude explicit value judgements from the historian's language would not extrude them from his enquiry'¹⁰⁹, and this because the subject-matter of history is itself 'value-constituted'.¹¹⁰ That is to say that the historian must actually bring with him to his enquiry "certain metaphysical presuppositions" in order to see it as having a certain character (political or religious for example); 'simply to characterise human actions and experiences as belonging to such fields may require a value-judgement...(to)...recognise actions as falling into classes of activities'.¹¹¹ This for Dray, is merely a way of stating that the past is a 'quasi-evaluative notion: the significant past'.¹¹² It is an ingredient of historical enquiry and not something that can be eliminated, nor, if we remember Dray's commitment to a humanist historiography, would he wish these

interests and values to be excluded. 'The past "as it actually was" will coincide with the past as it must appear from the standpoint of a certain scheme of values.'¹¹³ If Dray is correct, and the historian past is in fact constituted by values, interest, and a sense of significance, then the search for uniform presuppositions, or a set of criteria by reference to which interpretive differences may be resolved, will prove to be a misconception of a fundamental aspect of historical understanding. This is the point that I want to pursue and there will be occasion to notice some implications in the next section.

The problem of arriving at a set of criteria with which to validate accounts of past events is also a misunderstanding of the concept of historical truth. It reintroduces the notion of truth as correspondence, in this case correspondence with a set of rules or principles by which one can know oneself, qua historian, to have reasoned correctly about past events. But it has been the contention of an idealist approach to history that the truth of statements is their coherence with other statements, the 'sole criterion of truth available to us, in history as in other branches of factual knowledge is the internal coherence of beliefs we base on evidence'.¹¹⁴ Peter Munz makes this point most effectively by citing an observation of Henri Poincare's,

...there is no time over and above the various clocks we have. We can compare one clock to another clock; but we cannot compare any clock to time and it makes no sense to ask which of the many clocks is correct.¹¹⁵

What we must do then is to get rid of the notion of static and fixed points of reference and attend to the way in which the 'truth' of an historical account, far from appealing to an external criterion of validity, resides in how favourably it compares with other accounts. This returns us to a semi-autonomous position on resolution of

historical disputes (semi-autonomous because the arbiters of merit are drawn from a wider circle than history's "professional" practitioners) and truth becomes relative to a whole array of cultural and intellectual standards; the current state of historical scholarship and opinion, prevailing research interests, and the particular interests of historians. The important point is that historical truth is not a progressively more accurate picture, or series of photographs of res gestae, and the corporate enterprise of understanding the past does not evolve towards a more accurate and complete approximation to past events. It can have no such goal:

The facts of history...are the conclusions to which the best informed historical opinion is prepared to commit itself at any one time...Truth, fact, and knowledge will lose their total independence and become relative in part at least, to the conditions of particular cognitive situations.¹¹⁶

In this case Kuhn's idea of the 'scientific community' as the arbiter of standards, practice, and validity, might be applicable to history. However there are some striking differences. The paradigm which, at any one time is said to guide the practice of 'normal science'¹¹⁷ involves a shared "commitment to the same rules and standards for scientific practice".¹¹⁸ Within this paradigm-governed community the "scientist is working only for an audience of colleagues that share his own values and beliefs".¹¹⁹ This degree of consensus and stability is quite obviously absent among the 'competing schools'¹²⁰ of historians, which make up a plurality of different perspectives: ideological, methodological, and idiosyncratic. And yet, in spite of this range of perspectives 'each of which constantly questions the very foundations of the others'¹²¹, the difference of consensus in the two 'communities' is only a matter of degree. In The Structure of Scientific Revolutions Kuhn illustrates

(with copious examples from the development of different sciences), that a 'scientific revolution - the recognition of anomaly and the failure of current theories in solving outstanding problems and their replacement by a new paradigm - 'changes the standards by which the profession determined what should count as an admissible problem or legitimate solution.¹²² In Kuhn's version the absolute standards of scientific rationality are replaced by historically grounded organising principles. Hollinger comments:

Kuhn's notion of 'paradigm' embodies the sense that activities are defined and controlled by tradition, and that tradition consists of a set of devices, or principles, that have proven their ability to order the experience of a given social constituency.¹²³

What is common to the developed sciences is a degree of consensus and commitment to shared principles, which allows 'normal science', at any one time, to proceed unburdened by any epistemological uncertainties.

In Kuhn's schema success in solving problems involves a 'Recognition of a uniquely competent professional group and the acceptance of its role as the exclusive arbiter of professional achievement', who are 'the sole possessors of the rules of the game', the 'unequivocal judges'.¹²⁴ It is this sense of socially-grounded objectivity¹²⁵, of truth as agreement among enquirers, which is so helpful. Danto has point out that scientists have interests and predictions, but that this is not incompatible with their 'finding truth'¹²⁶; why then not history? It is also important because it helps to destroy a false comparison between history, as distant, indirect knowledge of its object, and science as direct transcript of the natural and physical world.

In reviewing the importance of Kuhn's idea of validity in science, Hollinger writes:

To the extent that that what historians do has a claim to knowledge this claim is based on the existence of a community, however amorphous, that evaluates the various 'perspectives' of its members, as well as the relation between a given perspective and what is allegedly 'discovered' with it. The community distinguishes among points of view that are comprehensive, parochial, and incoherent...Community sanction is thus essential to knowledge, even when imperfect.¹²⁷

This description is altogether preferable to Popper's situational logic because the context is extended beyond the articulated interests of the individual enquirer. It is not an exact nor ultimate arbitration but at least it extends the coherence of a historical construction onto a more corporate dimension. It also refers the philosophy of history back to historiography and to the history of historiography, for as Munz has illustrated¹²⁸, agreement or disagreement emerge out of a comparison of different histories: references to a past reality external to the writings and evidence of historia rerum gestarum are conspicuously absent.

Historical thought is a fluid notion, a series of exchanges: conversations with the past addressed to a third party. The theoretical search for external criteria of validity will cause a breach in what is an intelligible conversation. However, the tendency to replace the regress of different accounts with the idea that historians deal only with the established facts embodied in evidence is misconceived. As soon as history is recognised to be less a recitation of 'semi-autonomous name-and-date facts'¹²⁹ (an inventory of Oakeshott's storehouse of the practical past), than the linking together of sub-events into events, and events into a narrative; as soon as evidence is understood to be somebody's record and therefore somebody's thought, and that evidence does not stand to event as a transcript or mirror, then the essentially discursive and literary

character of history is revealed. The past-for-the-past's sake attitude, if it embodies the professional standards of textual criticism, scholarship, and sensitivity to anachronism, will presumably find favour in the evaluations that go on within the discipline. These are the "controls" and standards widely shared and respected by the historical "community". If what is meant by this attitude, is the desire to eliminate the standpoint of the enquirer and let the past speak for itself, it nevertheless ignores the importance of how significance and "truth" are constructed within written history. The problem of relativism in history is best understood as relative to a particular narrative organisation, rather than a particular relationship between an enquirer and the past.¹³⁰

iv) Construction, Scepticism, and the Truth of a Portrait

Our incapacity, which is granted, to observe the past, is not a defect in history itself but a deficiency which it is the precise purpose of history to overcome, ... history owes its existence to the fact that we do not have direct access to the past. (Danto)¹³¹

The idealist argues, that, for there to be knowledge there must be a possible unity between an enquirer and his object of study, and that such unity is characterised by thought or judgement. In this chapter we have looked at various ways in which this relationship might be relative to the standpoint of the historian. The only meaningful sense in which a particular account may be accurate, representative, or correspondent is as a result of its coherence with other accounts (including 'primary' records), and that validation may be a matter of "community" sanction. However unfamiliar these ideas are, they are nonetheless consistent with a position that denies there is an ultimate reality (res gestae) behind a multitude of appearances (historia rerum gestarum). They are also consistent with history understood as a

construction. Reference to the historian's construction of an account of past events has been made in order to emphasise the presentist dimension of historical thought, and to examine the creative role of the enquirer in arriving at a narrative of past events. The idea of constructing sits more comfortably with a coherence sense of truth. It has contributed to an argument that history should not be understood as the recovery or transcription of temporal sequences. What I want to do now is add theism to construction.¹³² What is the status of constructionism in the philosophy of history? Is it a description of the way historians arrive at knowledge of the 'historical' past, and therefore primarily an argument within philosophy of history over what historians should be regarded as doing, and thus methodologically neutral. Or should it be viewed as the outcome of a (misplaced) scepticism in regard to the particular cognitive circumstances of the historian? Is the instability of a constructed 'historical' past, where it seems at times that the historian is charged with actually creating past events, hostile to the status and achievements of historical practice? Have we, in other words, with constructionism, arrived at that point in which philosophy of history loses its second-order discreteness and becomes prescriptive: what historians should understand themselves to be doing if only they were not so weighed down by realist paraphernalia.

In this section I want to argue that there are different kinds of constructionist approaches. Meiland's constructionism is indeed an attempt to establish scepticism in regards to historical knowledge, in order to reveal that the historian cannot be doing what he is traditionally held to be doing, contributing to our knowledge of the past.¹³³ Goldstein's 'constitutionism',¹³⁴ (a term borrowed from Husserl) resembles Oakeshott's historical past in many aspects;

however, its plausibility is diminished by clinging onto a model of truth as direct inspection, and its narrow interpretation of idealism. Finally there is the notion of historical truth which emerges from Munz's argument that history is the configuration of subevents into events, and events into stories.¹³⁵ It is one of the contentions of this chapter that Munz's position is the only consistent application of the 'philosophy' of constructionism to history.

Before turning to the different varieties of constructionism it is important to establish some common ground. It may be that this position - as in the musings of Charles Beard - is the outcome of what Dray has called a 'certain metaphysical anxiety about the task of coming to know what literally does not exist'¹³⁶, but it is also quite consistent with an enquiry into the "logic" of confirmation in history. History, it is contested, is an enquiry into the existence of certain objects in the present. In order to account for the presence of these objects (documents, institutions, coins etc...) the historian constructs a theory or hypothesis which infers the existence of past events.¹³⁷ As Murphy puts it, 'an explanation of the state of the present object requires the postulation of events in the past'.¹³⁸ Historical knowledge becomes a theoretical construction directed at understanding objects seen as evidence. This, as we have seen, is Oakeshott's position. Though it calls for semantic changes, so that the historian should be understood as 'inferring' the existence of past events, as opposed to finding or discovering them; as constructing an hypothesis to explain parts of the present rather than the past, it has, as Atkinson points out, 'no implications for the practice of history'.¹³⁹ But this is only the beginning of the matter. For constructionism not only emphasises that history is present knowledge of past events, but that the conclusions of historical hypotheses

or accounts, cannot refer to anything outside their present context. In other words, in history past events not only 'rest' upon the present, but, in an important sense, are present. This idea is radically antagonistic to the common-sense assumptions which make history the study of the past in the belief that historians' conclusions, when well grounded in evidence, are true in the sense that they tell us about past reality. It is a conclusion which causes embarrassment to certain philosophers (Atkinson among them)¹⁴⁰ and appears arrogant to historians like Elton.¹⁴¹ History becomes what historians write and the past will change endlessly according to how we think of it.

It is important to limit and clarify the extent of what the constructionist is arguing before examining some criticisms. Common to the different versions of constructionism is the desire to expose the illusory nature of the "real" past.¹⁴² In some accounts this appears to be the only aim and therefore the thesis seems driven by a destructive urge to tear down castles in the air. This only encourages the conflation of constructionism with scepticism. The inappropriateness of scepticism applied to historical knowledge is a results of its focusing on the indirectness and inaccessibility of the historian's object of enquiry, while ignoring the possibility that mediation is a condition of all knowledge claims. In this way scepticism raises an old distinction between historical and scientific truth, and at the same time establishes a universal scepticism stretching far beyond the particularities of history.¹⁴³ This is true of Meiland's Historical Scepticism but not, I shall argue, the intention of Goldstein's Historical Knowing.

Scepticism, just as much as naive realism, treats knowledge claims along a scale of the directness of subject to object.¹⁴⁴ For the sceptic¹⁴⁵, knowledge is judged defective if it cannot be grounded in the co-

existence of fact and assertion. This however, would dismiss as unfounded the historical aspects of the natural sciences; geology, biology, and the repetition of experiments. It is an argument which is bland and unsustainable. It completely misses the point that it is not the question of proximity between enquirer and object¹⁴⁶ of study which differentiates history from the natural sciences, but different interests and different organisational schemes. As Goldstein has argued, such mediation is a fundamental fact of knowing, not an apology for scepticism.¹⁴⁷

The realist assumption, which may indeed animate historical studies, is certainly unfounded, but the sceptic is not addressing himself to the really inter-question of what could replace it. Instead he exposes the illusion of the real past and then condemns history because it fails to have knowledge by direct acquaintance.¹⁴⁸ For this reason we should not equate scepticism with the constructionist position. Time and again - whether in relation to explanatory models or the presence of value judgements - the tendency to contrast history with an absolute standard of veracity (scientific truth, the disinterested observer, or the past as it really was) is itself dependent on an illusory "other".

Whether the description of historical enquiry as a construction has any 'practical' implications (and Munz puts forward a strong case that it has) it is certainly a problem for the philosophy of history. Atkinson has denied that questions over the referent of historical descriptions are of any importance, either to philosophy or to history¹⁴⁹, this after having asserted that the whole of analytical philosophy of history lies outside the "professional" concerns of historians.¹⁵⁰ Both Atkinson and McCullagh¹⁵¹ seem to conflate a constructionist approach with a full-blown scepticism towards historical knowledge, and feel the need to make a common-sense

rebuttal: 'Against (scepticism)...the sovereign remedy is firmly to remind oneself that we all constantly and confidently, accept and reject particular statements about the past¹⁵²; 'Scepticism is warranted from an intellectual point of view, but is not practice'.¹⁵³ However this intrusion of pragmatism completely misses the point. No philosopher of history (with the possible exception of Meiland) denies that, in history, there is an effort to 'characterise an independent reality'¹⁵⁴, or that historians' narratives contain a 'high degree of particular actuality'¹⁵⁵, that is to say, that the events they compose did actually occur.¹⁵⁶ But we are concerned with history as thought or judgement, and so the question how it "characterises" and "refers" is vital. Goldstein has shown that, though fact and assertion are conceptually distinct, there is no way of making this distinction operative in history: epistemologically there is no such distinction.¹⁵⁷ Though Elton authoritatively demands on a measure of humility from the historian in the face of the integrity of complete actions¹⁵⁸, 'events of the past happened quite independently of the existence of he who now looks at them'¹⁵⁹, it would be quite wrong to insist that knowledge of these events is completely independent 'of he who now looks at them'. And since Elton would not want the historian's 'craft' reducible to compilations, classifications, and inventories of the contents of a storehouse of authenticated objects from the past, he would have to concede that critical thought is ingredient in "looking" at past events. A fear of amateurishness, anachronism, and imprecision is close to the centre of his argument for the independent, dead reality of the past. However the past-for-the-past's sake approach no more eliminates 'men...in the search for truth'¹⁶⁰ than history understood as a construction condones bias and "subjectivity". Nowell-Smith has added a philosopher's support to this strident realism: if a statement is true

at all, it is true no matter who makes it or when it is made, and its truth is independent of anyone's knowing it to be true and of how anyone comes to know it.¹⁶¹ But if this is correct then this concept of truth cannot be applied to history. Historical conclusions change constantly; interests and methods rise and fall; evidence may be enriched in scope and clarity. But it need not be concluded from the instability of historical knowledge that the past to which it refers must also be changing constantly. This is sceptical nonsense.¹⁶² The dead reality of what once happened can be allowed, but we must, as Walsh has pointed out, 'choose between a past which is independent and one which can be known'.¹⁶³ That decision is made in historia rerum gestarum.

How past events are understood and linked together most certainly does depend on the thought of an observer. The idea that the highest achievement in history is sought in a mimetic relationship between narrative and past events must be severely qualified. Further (as we saw in the last section) an appeal to the "established facts of history" will not take us out of the "present state of knowledge".

The array of arguments used to demonstrate that we have an inbuilt, linguistic awareness of the past¹⁶⁴, to demonstrate that Russell's 'five minute' paradox¹⁶⁵ only multiplies difficulties and contradicts our entire mental apparatus¹⁶⁶, are directed against a self-defeating historical scepticism. History, for the idealist, recognises, in its very essence, the force of the sceptics argument that it cannot have direct knowledge of the past, and that it cannot verify its conclusions by comparison or correspondence. This is why history is better described as an inferential and critical activity of thought, indeed, why it is philosophically interesting at all. By understanding history is this way one exposes the

impotence of the question "how can we know that the past existed?".¹⁶⁷

Goldstein has argued that an unmediated "real" past is not a constituent in the kind of knowledge historians claim to arrive at. It is curious then that philosophers of history should eschew a concern with the nature of these knowledge claims, and show embarrassment in pointing out that they do not involve transcribing a sequence of events. The problem of historical knowledge is indeed a problem for the philosophy of history. When it is not, as it is not for Atkinson, one should look carefully at the conception of history held by the philosopher, and the presumption that talk about the referent of historical descriptions is automatically sceptical and hostile in tendency. Not only is a concern with historical knowledge not necessarily sceptical, it is integral to a consistent account of the 'logic' of historical understanding. The distinction between analytical (licit) and speculative (illicit) philosophy of history is not a distinction between those philosophers who abstain, and those who do not, from asking questions about historical truth.

Goldstein contends that history is 'a way of knowing'¹⁶⁹ which emerges from a particular 'epistemic background'.¹⁷⁰ His account of the 'methods which define the discipline of history'¹⁷¹ and of the constitution of 'the human past'¹⁷² is extremely challenging and is, in many ways, resonant of Oakeshott's description of an historical past. Ultimately, however, it lacks the philosophical coherence of Oakeshott's position, and is undermined by what Walsh has identified as an attempt 'to combine an idealist theory of history with a realist theory of perception'.

Goldstein argues that, in history, there is first a 'way of knowing'¹⁷³ and that the historical past is constituted in 'historical research'.¹⁷⁴ That is to say, it is to the mediation of historical experience and the

'framework of investigation'¹⁷⁵ that we should attend if we want to understand the way in which historians arrive at knowledge of their object of study, and validate their truth claims. Goldstein is concerned to define the historical past with the complete absence of any role for the 'real' past. The latter is an assumption which he calls a 'habit of mind'.¹⁷⁶ First and foremost then, he attempts to show that in the history which historians constitute there is no 'logical distinction between a description and its referent', that this is an epistemological point which entails that 'the real past...does not seem to enter the work of historical investigation at any point'.¹⁷⁷ The importance of this claim (as we have seen on several occasions) is that it denies any implications to a correspondence theory of truth and focuses attention on the kind of truth and intelligibility to be had within historia rerum gestarum. So far so good. However, Goldstein fails to do anything with this assertion, and instead, as one of his critics has pointed out, seems to be satisfied with a 'correct account of historical methodology'.¹⁷⁸ Instead of attempting to come to terms with the implications of a 'cultural' relativism implicit in his notion of the historical past, in which 'truth, fact, and knowledge will lose their total independence and become relative, in part at least, to the conditions of particular cognitive situations'¹⁷⁹, Goldstein attempts to replace the concreteness of an acquaintance with res gestae with the stability of the historical discipline; so much so, that its 'growing body of established truth'¹⁸⁰ seems to be thought of as detached from a ceaseless process of question and answer, to become a bed-rock of truth, and a 'reality' to correspond with. What we witness here is a similar anxiety to that which drove Oakeshott into the tangled linguistic circles of On History. The traditional referent of historical descriptions, res gestae, is

exposed as illusory. The next step is to argue that the historian constructs not only 'the statements which refer' but also the objects to which they refer'.¹⁸¹ Next comes the conclusion that history, understood as critical thought, will be synonymous with what historians write. Now in order to preserve history from degenerating into a mire of subjectivities, the discipline of history, it is argued, exhibits a particular kind of interest or approach; is characterised by a distinct way of knowing. This way, or mode, of knowing is actually implicit in the cognitive situation of the historian; it is a function of the media through which he knows, or experiences the past. Since this way of knowing is common to the pursuit of the historical past rather than the particular approach of an individual historian, we have arrived at a description of a stable relationship between enquirer and object. However Goldstein's position is less consistent than Oakeshott's. Oakeshott made his historical past a component in a broader "logic" of understanding. History, for him, is merely one way of making sense of present experience. On the other hand, Goldstein wants to make historical knowledge different in kind. The historical past, he argues, is distinct from perceptual knowledge of the present; our understanding of the past must be intellectual since we cannot observe past events: it is because they are not available for observation that past events raise problems that present occurrences do not, not because of anything that has to do with the nature of the past as such.¹⁸²

In an article critical of Goldstein's constructionist approach, Nowell-Smith points out that we really 'cannot draw a sharp distinction between what is known by perceptual awareness and what is historically known.'¹⁸³ The reason why this is so is that our knowledge of the present by no means always conforms to the paradigm of direct observation. It is by contrast with this paradigm

that Goldstein has concluded history employs a different kind of understanding. However what he fails to realise is that any difference in the kinds of understanding does not follow from our not being able to perceive past events. He has argued (in a way similar to a sceptic like Meiland)¹⁸⁴ that history is necessarily mediated knowledge, but he then seems to accept that it is disadvantaged because it cannot perceive past events. Nowell-Smith writes, 'an historical construction, Goldstein sometimes seems to suggest is a kind of second-best, because direct observation of what happened is unfortunately not available'.¹⁸⁵

Goldstein berates other philosophers for paying too much attention to the idea of narrative in history. He argues that such preoccupation focuses too much attention upon the 'superstructure'¹⁸⁶ of history - the finished literary product - while ignoring the all important 'infrastructure' - how historians actually arrive at their conclusions. But this only indicates that he has identified the problem of narrative with its explanatory potential, and not in its broader 'story-line' form. Hence he pays little attention to the discursive nature of the historical past, to the way in which events might be linked together, or to the form in which historical "knowing" could be expressed. As Walsh, in a more favourable article¹⁸⁸, has pointed out, Goldstein over-concentrates on the establishment of facts; that is, on the corporate and consensual areas of agreed-upon-results. It is in the establishment of "what happened" in the past, by historians, that Goldstein invests so much faith. This achievement, he contends, demonstrates that the historical past is not to be understood as a range of different, incommensurable interpretations. Yet if we are to accept this argument seriously, we reach a point in which strings of accredited facts, existing quite independently of the historian's construction, become themselves a "real"

referable past. Secure traces of the past replace past events as 'the only fitting objects worthy of historical attention'.¹⁸⁹ This, we will see when we turn to Munz's thesis, is a misunderstanding of the very nature of historian's subject matter.

As Nowell-Smith has quite rightly pointed out, the 'less extreme realist' need not be committed to a knowledge by direct observation paradigm, or believe 'only what is observable is real'.¹⁹⁰ Goldstein's use of this paradigm in its most extreme and inapplicable form, in order to establish that historical knowledge must be something different, something intellectual, is similar in intent to an idealist inversion of so-called scientific objectivity. Essentially it is a rhetorical fiction. But even then, Goldstein finds it difficult to shake off its supposed priority. It has been pointed out by Walsh and others¹⁹¹ that it is not the unobservability of past events that make them a special case. Could the historian, in any sense, observe a long-term development, or a complex large scale event, even had he been a witness to them? The notion of the time machine seems to haunt his historical past. The problem is further compounded by a false comparison of our knowledge of present objects with our knowledge of past events¹⁹³: to what extent are all present events observable?

One of the ways in which Goldstein might have avoided these difficulties is by contrasting the "real" with the "historical" past in terms of the kind of intelligibility sought for. This is basically the argument of Oakeshott of Mink, and of Munz. In Oakeshott's schema, an historical interest in objects understood as 'survivals' from the past is one way of understanding, of giving shape and form to the past. There is also a more pervasive, and compelling practical interest. In this sense, and bearing in mind Mink's 'synoptic judgement'¹⁹⁴ and Munz's 'shapes of time', we should conclude that the mediation which

Goldstein refers to as a condition of knowing, is not the distance between enquirer and his object - between historian and the 'real' past - but is better described in terms of the kind of interest in, and shape given to the object of enquiry. This, I believe is where Goldstein misses a more coherent 'constructionist' philosophy. There are too many occasions in his argument where one is led to believe that it is a peculiarity of the historian's position that he, alone among enquirers, has somehow to piece together, to constitute the object of his enquiry. He does, at one point in an article, say that, had he the space, he would hope to show how all knowledge claims are 'tied irrevocably to a way of knowing and the adequacy of our accounts are determined within a framework of knowing', and this even with respect to 'presently presented objects'.¹⁹⁵ Against though, we must emphasise that this 'framework of knowing' is not something that stands between us and our seeing things as they really are, but rather is something which allows us to see certain objects as evidence for past events, as opposed to a pile of stones (Danto's historically illiterate Sicilian peasant)¹⁹⁶, or as a 'delphinium in my garden' (Nowell-Smith)¹⁹⁷ or a brightly coloured weed. Goldstein, then, labours a false distinction between an unmediated, perceptual understanding and historical knowledge, when the truth of the matter is, not as Murphy argues, that what distinguishes history is 'that its statements refer to events and objects in the past'¹⁹⁸, but that history signifies a particular (though not necessarily exclusive) interest, approach and organisation. To place the differentia of history back into the past is to contradict the whole purpose of suggesting that history should be understood as a present construction.

Since Goldstein is so convinced of the utter disparity between historians' conclusions and the realist's acquaintance with present objects, he appears to

suggest that historians, in constituting the objects to which their statements refer, are actually creating past events¹⁹⁹; in this way the past is dragged into the present in an unseemly manner. In fact, as Walsh has pointed out, historians construct accounts of past events.²⁰⁰ Once again, Goldstein's language seems to have been seduced by the imagery of a realism which he wants to reject. In this case it is an image of a historian constructing a three-dimensional object. The force of the constructionist argument is that the kind of object to which historical statements refer are other statements or narratives: object here is an object of knowledge. Nowell-Smith²⁰¹ has illustrated the danger of suggesting that the historian actually creates past events, by arguing that the difficulties of resolving conflicting constructions will be multiplied considerably if what are being contrasted are not differing accounts but different events: how can an event be false? The problem of incommensurability reappears when Goldstein conflates the ontological non-existence of past events with the role of the historian in constituting historical knowledge. Such confusion is manifested in the following statement: 'history isn't interested in the past as such but in the constitution of past human events'.²⁰² Given the rest of his thesis, what possible form could an interest in the past as such - in an unmediated past reality - take²⁰³

It is in the attempt to replace the permanence of the "real" past with the stability of an historical construction resting on "established facts" that Goldstein's argument is so unsatisfactory. As a description (with detailed historiographical examples²⁰⁴) of the actual process of construction it is most illuminating, and is not, I suggest, challenged by McCullagh's Justifying Historical Descriptions²⁰⁵ which forges a distinction between the 'truth conditions' of historical statements (past realities), and their

'justification conditions' (reasons for thinking them to be true).²⁰⁶ Such a distinction, though conceptually desirable, is not 'operative'²⁰⁷ within historical enquiry (as Goldstein has clearly illustrated), and nor is it a useful way of describing any process of validation. Goldstein should also be defended from aspects of Nowell-Smith's article which rely on a rather bland realist approach: 'what happened happened whether or not anyone found out that it happened'.²⁰⁸ And we certainly need not agree with his conclusion that two 'incompatible accounts' of the origins of the 2nd World War 'cannot both be correct'²⁰⁹, unless we are to understand by 'correct' a standard more absolute and definitive than we have considered applicable to the idea of truth in history. Ultimately, though, Goldstein's position suffers from many of the same structural weaknesses to be found in the idealist approaches of Collingwood and Oakeshott. Moreover he lacks a broader constructionist philosophy. His faith in the discipline of history rebuts charges of scepticism, but in the end, it cannot bear the weight of his argument.

With Munz's arguments in (The Shapes of Time)²¹⁰ we return to an explicitly idealist understanding of history. But his idealism is of a "secular" kind, that is to say, it has confronted the relative nature of historical truth and seeks a coherent approach by attending to 'portraits of the past'.²¹¹ Historical knowledge is the tracing of the 'appearances' of the past as they are recorded in documents and historical narratives, and there is no 'dark core'²¹² of truth beyond this phenomenology. There is no need to pronounce history an arbitrary arrest of experience because there is no Absolute lying behind appearances. For Munz it is the connections between events which characterise historical understanding. The way that events which characterise historical understanding. The way that events are seen or held

together is the outcome of thought. But this thought is not sanctioned by categories of "knowing", and knowledge is not the outcome of modal divisions within perception of judgement. Historical knowledge is best described as configurational, that is, dependent upon the shape we give to appearances.²¹³ The appearances of the past (as they appear in records or narratives (are, in history configured in the form of a story. It is to the media of this transformation, to the way in which time is shaped in history, that we ought to look in harder to understand the peculiarities of historia rerum gestarum.

There is much of interest in Munz's position - the return of an idealist philosophy of history to Hegel²¹⁴; the existence of abstract and concrete universals in thought²¹⁵; the use of "covering laws" in the construction of a narrative²¹⁶; the collapse of distinction between (speculative) philosophy of history and the narratives of historians.²¹⁷ However, I want to confine our attention to two important ideas. The first involves the extension of 'constructionism' to the so-called raw materials or "sources" of history. And the second, the notion of truth which follows from a broader understanding of historical construction.

All events, Munz argues, are constructions. This is an idea we have met several times before. However, Munz means something more radical than an emphasis on the presentist, inferential argument from evidence. What he means is that all events are dependent on the thought of an observer. The thought in question he calls a 'mini-narrative'.²¹⁸ By mini-narrative Munz means the way in which different occurrences, - the sub-events -, are joined together by the thought of an observer (or an agent) into an event or sequence of events; the resulting record will contain an account of how things appeared to the observer. This, it is argued, is a basic condition of historians' 'sources'²¹⁹, and it is also why history is

properly described as the history of thought. Thus history understood as a construction refers not only to the activity of an historian but to the way in which 'time is transformed into history by consciousness'.²²⁰ That is to say, that the direction of historical understanding is not in the effort to pierce thought he thought contained in evidence to the actual action or event itself (as it is for Collingwood), rather it is to see the event recorded in evidence as already a construction the outcome of thought which has linked two or more happenings together. The task of historical understanding is therefore the attempt to follow the way an agent or observer produced a mini-narrative. In all cases we are dealing with somebody's record, hence somebody's thought or construction; 'without an observer, there would be no configuration known as Alexander the Great, let alone a story of his campaigns and their relationship to the rise of Hellenic Civilisation'.²²¹

Applied to Goldstein's position this thought might suggest that his idea of historical constitution is inadequate because it limits itself to the construction of the historian without coming to terms with the nature of his subject matter. In doing so he raises all sorts of anxieties about the absence of a "real" past, the unobservability of past events, and the mediation of evidence. Munz's argument is altogether more incisive. History he argues, is 'not what happened but what people think happened'²²²; it is therefore the study of 'somebody else's historia rerum gestarum'.²²³ Though Goldstein is quite right to argue that, in the process of enquiry, the historian can make no use of a notion of how things really were, according to Munz this is not specifically a feature of the historical past. It is a condition of configuration in general. In other words Goldstein has only gone half way towards banishing the idea of the real past from history. The second half is provided by Munz in

exposing the illusion of there being any stage in an historical enquiry when one is dealing with a transcription of a temporal sequence. The "real" past, as something from which the historian is distanced by time, by the dust and corrosion of documents, by the partiality of his record, is not only inoperative but vast rhetorical fiction. A past of events existing independently of historical interest, or an observer's thoughts has no implications for the study of history because it never had any implications. How things really were is a notion subsumed by how they appeared in the thought of an observer, an actor, a chronicler, or an historian. It is 'not just our knowledge of the event that depends on record, the existence of the event itself depends on somebody's record of it'²²⁴, and such record will be only one of the 'infinitely possible appearances of res gestae;²²⁵

Each event (Munz's favourite being Caesar's crossing the Rubicon) may be broken down into an infinite number of smaller events, or sub-events which might be reassembled to form a different record.²²⁶ This merely illustrates that history 'is not the totality of events, but what people thought happened'²²⁷, and that it is these thoughts which constitute events contained in record. It is not 'time or nature' which makes events hang together in history, but the consciousness of an observer and then the narrative organisations of historians.²²⁸ There is no history without configuration because res gestae exist as a multitude of different possible appearances, of different historia rerum gestarum. A past event is already the outcome of thought.²²⁹

If Munz is correct, and I believe he is, the constructionist must abandon not only the notion of a real, correspondent past, but also the idea of a uniform sequence of events authenticated in the historical past. Munz, making a similar point to Oakeshott, argues that

there is nothing solid or permanent about the past of historia rerum gestarum, nothing which exists 'independently so that one can study and probe'.²³⁰ All historical narratives, no matter how densely packed with events, how authoritative or backed by consensus are, in the end, a narrative of the appearances of res gestae, and therefore time given a particular shape. Goldstein's mistake is to make an absolute distinction between an 'observed' past and the historical past of historians, to grade a correspondence with a hard and fast sequence of events in terms of distance from their occasion. What Munz has so clearly pointed out is that, once having embarked on a constructionist critique of historical knowledge, we cannot stop short of recognising that in all cases we are dealing with appearances or 'subjectivities',²³¹ which are, as we shall see, interchangeable. Any attempt to ground history upon a bed-rock of established certainties - whether these be "facts" or controls of the discipline - fails to be fully consistent, since there is 'no truth over and above the truths of how people appear to themselves and others and this is where the matter must rest'.²³² This should not, however, be confused with a form of historical scepticism. It is events which are the constructs of thought and the shapes in which they are configured. No doubts are being cast on the actual occurrence of the constituent actions or sub-events, on the veracity of records or on the reality of appearances. It is Munz's central contention that in history we are dealing with thoughts, because without thoughts there is nothing that we could recognise as an event. A past of events existing independently of thought and record has not, nor ever had, any substantive form.

At this point it is possible to rephrase an objection to Elton's idea of a dead and gone "objective" past. not only does our knowledge of past events depend on present

interests, standards of rationality and value judgements, the events themselves exist as the result of their being constructed in record or narratives. We can also address a point made by Danto, that 'to count as evidence is already to be making a statement about something else, namely that for which it is taken as evidence'.²³³ Following Munz, we can see that the something else is the 'mini-narrative' of the record, the linking together of events, and thus the thought of an observer or agent. But Danto means something rather different: 'we could not see what we see as history-as-record without implicit reference to history-as-actuality'. However 'history-as-actuality'²³⁴ is, according to Munz, the appearances of res gestae in record and thus already historia rerum gestarum. Danto goes on to say that if we want to find out whether a certain account of the past is correct we must make 'an historical observation' and 'check the records'.²³⁵ Yet since these records are not to be seen as a transcript of res gestae but somebody's narrative understanding of them, the reference here is that of a portrait to a portrait, not of a portrait to external reality. This is precisely the sense of accuracy that Munz has in mind: the 'coherence between sources and narratives and between narratives and narratives'.²³⁶ The historical narrative can, he argues, be 'tested and checked by reference to other narratives'²³⁷, though this will, of necessity lead to an 'infinite regress'.²³⁸ This idea of the coherence of portraits, and of a regress of narrative comparisons which cannot be short-circuited by the imposition of a 'way of knowing' or a 'mode of experience', is a fascinating extension of the idealist position of Oakeshott and the historical constitution of Goldstein.

I want, in conclusion, to look at the notion of truth which fits Munz's phenomenology of the past. When he talks of the historian selecting from record, from

'somebody else's historia rerum gestarum'²³⁹ he is making an epistemological point; 'it is configuration not existence which depends on perception'.²⁴⁰ He is also arguing for the importance of a history of historiography. It is by attending to portraits of events as they are "in-figured" in historical narratives that we fully realise the character of a study which shapes and organises rather than mimics or transcribes. The distinction between detection of "facts" and composition of a narrative cannot be sustained.²⁴¹ Only by clinging onto a belief that the "sources" provide us with a mirror-image of past events can history be described as detection; only by forgetting that the so called raw-materials are themselves artifacts, mini-narratives, and constructions, can classification and editing of evidence (the data) be made the goal of historical research. This tendency Munz describes as 'documentary positivism'.²⁴² The documentary positivist overlooks 'the precariousness of the distinction between primary and secondary sources'.²⁴³ Conscious of maintaining standards of professionalism and objectivity, he infers that the historian's subjective understanding intrudes on, and obscures, the pristine truth of records once they become 'digested'.²⁴⁴ Editing becomes an end in itself. Munz deplores this conception: it is not the "sources" which form the primary unit of historical intelligibility - the data of history. The 'real raw material of history is thought...the thought that goes in the composition of the mini-narratives'.²⁴⁵ Since, as Collingwood argued, evidence may be understood as embodying these thoughts, we have ample reason to respect the labour which goes into its preservation and clarification, but not because these efforts keep the dust from collecting on the source of our knowledge of an independent past of events. Emphasis on the stability and concreteness of historical evidence is perhaps indicative of specialisation, but it may also reveal a mistaken

attempt to ground historical truth on taxonomies and the tangible actuality of record; what Collingwood referred to as a scissors-and-paste mentality, and what Munz castigates as a Ph.D. criterion of what makes a good historian. The elevation of the idea that the successful 'Ph.D. candidate is... a qualified historian' is, according to Munz, symptomatic of "narrow and stultifying methods" and an ignorance of the media of historical enquiry through which the historical past is constructed. The Ph.D. candidate is 'nothing but a detective inspector and should seek employment at the local police station'.²⁴⁶

Evidence contains not a record of what happened but what people think happened, and therefore the problem of truth in history is 'not the problem of whether a particular event occurred or not, but whether somebody thought that it occurred'.²⁴⁷ Historical debates, then, are concerned with the appearances of past events as they are recorded in thought, with the phenomenology of res gestae. If this is so, and if history is the following of the way in which events are joined together by thought, and their use as constituents in historian's narrative or story, then 'discussions of historical truth are discussions about different ways of writing history'.²⁴⁸

Munz distinguishes between the explanation and interpretation of thoughts in terms of the 'general laws'²⁴⁹ employed. For our purposes we may substitute "process of reasoning" for general laws since Munz intends by the latter, the way in which single events (or subevents) are linked together by a (general) thought. In addition his general laws are not to be equated with the exact, statistical and explanatory laws that the covering-law theorist has in mind; for Munz they refer to a host of "acceptable" generalisations borrowed at will from a variety of contexts. The important point is that they should be general in the sense that they are capable of

providing a link between at least two separate occurrences. In attempting to understand a past action - Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon²⁵⁰ - if the historian can follow, and find intelligible, the reasoning used by the people he is studying (Caesar 'wanted to gain power in Rome')²⁵¹ then he is giving an 'explanation proper'.²⁵² On the other hand, if he makes use of reasons which, for him, are well grounded, but could not possibly have been available to those he is talking about, (Caesar wanted to assure the ascendancy of his class²⁵³) then he is offering an 'interpretation'.²⁵⁴ An explanation proper should be the initial aim of the historian, 'to explain the past as it explained itself to itself'.²⁵⁵ Yet the explanatory force of these reasons or generalisations depends, in the end, on whether or not they are considered to be true, and 'since standards of what is believed to be true vary, substitutions are necessary and inevitable'.²⁵⁶ By substitutions Munz means the replacing of 'explanations proper' with interpretations. These substitutions can be arbitrary, such as the replacement of 'an explanation in terms of a passion for religious dogma' with an 'interpretation in terms of the class struggle'.²⁵⁷ On the other hand they may be 'typologically related' to explanations proper, in which case they are 'translations'.²⁵⁸ A translation may occur when we replace the explicit assertion of an intention or a rationale with a generalisation available at that time or potentially intelligible to the thought of that time; Caesar, in crossing the Rubicon 'wanted to protect himself from his enemies in Rome'.²⁵⁹ This interpretation would have been intelligible to Caesar or to an observer whether it was part of the explanation proper - in this case the assertions in Caesar's memoirs. A substitution, or pure interpretation might be, Caesar crossed the Rubicon because, unconsciously 'he wanted to ravish his Mother'.²⁶⁰ The important point is, however uncomfortable

this idea may be, that if we did not constantly substitute interpretations for explanations, we would deprive ourselves of the opportunity offered by our better common knowledge to expose many ancient explanations as illusions.²⁶¹ Munz goes on to illustrate this point with a range of examples from historiography and it is difficult, even conscious of Elton's demand for humility, to deny that he accurately captures the way in which historical conclusions are overturned and replaced. Standards of rationality change, and the idea that the past should be respected in and for itself, or that utterances must be understood in context, are themselves recent 'interpretations'.²⁶²

The next step in Munz's argument is to link explanations proper with the idea of objectivity and interpretations with subjectivity. This, he recognises, differs from a more traditional use of the two terms. However, since both an explanation proper and an interpretation may be objective in the sense of free from bias or distortion, Munz's intention is to secure a distinction between explanation and interpretation that rests on the interests of an enquirer and not on "truth" and "falsehood". The "objective explanation" belongs to what actually happened in the sense that the reasoning of the actor or observer, as recorded in a 'mini-narrative' are a constituent of the event.²⁶³ The "subjective interpretation" belongs to the knowledge the historian brings to the enquiry.²⁶⁴ But, we must remind ourselves, in all cases we are dealing with appearances and with thoughts, and so the explanations of Caesar, though a part of what actually happened, are no more a mirror to res gestae - what really happened independent of what anyone thought - than are the historian enjoying the full benefits of hindsight. In the end we must recognise that there is 'no final truth in any of them'.²⁶⁵

If we confine ourselves to explanations proper and to extrapolations from explanations proper we would be at the mercy of what people thought of themselves. It is therefore necessary that we should allow interpretations of this kind...(i.e. subjective)...are objective interpretations because we have confidence in the validity of the knowledge on which they are based. We must therefore accept the possibility that some interpretations, though subjective, are really more objective than objective explanations. If we did not accept this possibility, we should make nonsense of the notion of delusion.²⁶⁶

In Collingwood's version, the rethinking of past thoughts seems to mean that we are stuck with the rationalisations of a past agent, with the way they explained themselves to themselves and to others. But this, according to Munz, gets us no further than the positivist who would have to end his investigations with the "explanations" of the people he is studying, and thus with the 'discovery of what went on'.²⁶⁷ This restricts us to 'less knowledge than we might have'.²⁶⁸ It is knowledge of what 'actually happened', to, for example, how 'people understood themselves in the 12th century'.²⁶⁹ If we limit ourselves to this kind of understanding, even with the added dimensions of 'typologically related interpretations' we are, Munz asserts, indulging in a 'foolish act of self-mutilation'.²⁷⁰ Rankes demand that historians must go out and find out what 'actually happened and all other forms of positivism become self defeating'.²⁷¹ If the historian wants to find out what really happened: we cannot necessarily be satisfied with the explanations that Caesar would have offered, because we have every right to presume that he was ignorant or capable of delusions or dishonest. If we want to find out what really happened, we might have to brush his own explanations aside and substitute an interpretation...Such interpretations tell us what really happened as contrasted to what Caesar thought or wanted to think happened. But by no stretch of the imagination can

we claim that any of these interpretations are part of what actually happened. They are part of what is happening today in the minds of modern historians.²⁷² What really happened will, in the end, be reducible to the kind of intelligibility we can find, along the lines of our criteria of rationality.

Returning to Skinner's exegetical mythologies, it is possible to see that the anachronistic tendencies which he exposes are an illicit imposition of what the historian of ideas believes to have really been the case onto what actually was. The charge, essentially, is that a commentator who does this is lacking in self-consciousness. To describe John Locke as an apologist for the American Revolution makes perfect sense to the modern student of political theory. The historian, Munz argues, along with Walsh, Dray and Danto, is able to construct a coherent narrative containing such an assertion because he knows, as Locke did not, of a sequence of events called the American Revolution future to the event in question - Locke's political theory. What the historian is doing here, according to Munz, is substituting an interpretation for an explanation proper. It is an interpretation because it contains reasons which could not possibly have been available to Locke in understanding the impact of his political ideas. In this sense it is an idea in the mind of the historian, that is, not part of what actually happened. If the historian forgets where this idea comes from, and speaks as if Locke has overlooked something of importance in apprehending the significance of his contribution, or failed to clarify aspects of the division of governmental power, and so made the constitutional deliberations of the Founding Fathers more tortuous, he is committing an indefensible anachronism.²⁷³

Skinner himself, in his programme of contextualisation, engages in "explanations proper" by attempting to understand the author as the author

understood himself. He also goes in for "translations": investigating the kind of rhetorical strategies and linguistic opportunities available within the particular context in which an author was writing. However he considers interpretations (in Munz's sense) external to an understanding of an author's thoughts, as it involves the attribution of significance with hindsight. Skinner's argument is admirably lucid in its efforts to make clear who is saying what, when, and to whom; the latter-day critic is getting it all upside down when he first decides what his theorist really 'meant' to say and the significance of his message for later times, and then tries to indite him for his inconsistencies and lack of foresight. However as soon as it is admitted that in order to find the author's thoughts, expressed in a text, intelligible, we may have to "translate" and suggest alternative strategies or meanings to those articulated in the "explanation proper" (the text), we are in a realm of substitutions, of appearances, and of subjectivities. Indeed, though we may share Skinner's concern for a self-consciousness of anachronistic tendencies, it is nonetheless apparent that there is not an absolute difference in kind between the thoughts of an author and our thoughts in understanding them, in the sense that the former exist in a timeless and self-explanatory state while the latter must always alter, and perhaps disfigure, that pristine condition. "We can" Munz concedes, 'always find out what actually happened by simply contenting ourselves with explanations and by accepting the events in such concatenations and constellations, and sequences as they appeared to people who acted in them, or who first reflected on them, or who first observed them'.²⁷⁴ However to find out what really happened we may have to introduce other reasons acceptable to our sense of intelligibility.

Munz's argument is about the direction of historical understanding and the status of historia rerum gestarum. It is not an apology for dismissing the reasoning of past agents as instances of a false consciousness. Far from it. It is, however, critical of any attempt to found and justify historia rerum gestarum in its respect for the 'authentic' voice of the past which it can detect in its "sources".

The real reason for...respect is that the sources are not really primary but enshrine thought. And since we have no absolute standard as to what would be 'correct' thought about any event, the thought that was thought by the person involved is second best to an absolute standard.²⁷⁶

Munz's distinction between what actually and what really happened is a master stroke. It accurately characterises the shifting conclusions of historiography without making the actuality of past actions depend for their existence on the narrative creations of historians. What really happened becomes relative to cognitive conditions. But, in order to avoid affronting realist sentiments, Munz emphasises that it is historical thought which is constructed and which is relative. Nonetheless, what actually happened corresponds to the way things appeared to an observer and so we cannot contrast the interpretations of historians unfavourably with a 'dark and permanent core'.²⁷⁷ In all cases we are dealing with appearances and therefore we should 'seek equivalences and interchangeabilities'.²⁷⁸ The distinction between objectivity and subjectivity is made so that we are aware of the different status of explanations and interpretations, but it is not a distinction between truth and falsity. At the same time Munz's thesis does not condone the study of the past for all sorts of altruistic purposes, least of all for the "lessons" it might teach. It goes to great lengths in define its "dumbness", and if

one wanted to glean advice from its multiple appearances one would, at the very least, have to be a considerable polyglot. Furthermore though 'substitutions' may be inevitable this is not because modern interpretations are grounded in a more objectively "true" reality. The material criterion of the Marxist is not more objective than a mental criterion (i.e. the testimony of those under study), in fact it is the 'substitution of one kind of thought', the thought that income is relevant as a criterion of classification, 'for another kind of thought'.²⁷⁹ The different narratives of what really happened should not be thought of as evolving towards a completely accurate portrait. There is no such final point even though the weight of consensus at any one time might suggest that what really happened is identical to what actually occurred.

The history of historiography will provide us with an interesting index of changing criteria of intelligibility and standards of truth.²⁸⁰ It provides a phenomenology of the past; the way in which events are constructed, joined together, and configured by thought.

Difficulties remain with aspects of Munz's thesis. In particular it could be asked how sustainable is his faith in the extraction of 'general laws' and 'mini-narratives' from evidence. To argue that the real problem of hermeneutics is 'which substitutions are licit, desirable, and helpful and which are not' seems to assume that there is no problem in determining the meaning, significance, or configurative thought contained in "sources". We must first infer the way things appeared in record before we can begin substituting interpretations. The significance of Munz's contribution to an idealist understanding of history is his extension of the idea of construction to an historical event. In this way he overcomes Collingwood's demand for identification of the historian's thought with that of the past agent in re-

enactment; breaks out of the closed homeostatic system of Oakeshott's historical past; and exposes as illusory the anxieties occasioned by the absence of an observable object or direct transcription.

v) Philosophy and History

"What a philosopher says about the philosophy of history is...shaped by what he believes to be the nature of philosophy and philosophizing"
(Haskell Fain)²⁸¹

The concern of this thesis has been with the analysis of history offered by certain philosophers and theoretically-minded historians. As such it has been an exercise in mapping out border land, and we have seen that territorial boundaries are difficult to draw and often contested. Where, for example, does an "agnostic" interest (taken by Skagestaad as illustrative of the analytical approach)²⁸² in elucidating the form of historical explanations become a "critical" concern with the status of historians' explanations as valid knowledge? Does a deductivist definition of explanation proper imply prescriptions to historical practice, while the non-deductivist provides a rationale for the explanatory "sketches" he finds in historiography? Does the latter imply 'the assumption...that historians are doing their job the way it should be done'?²⁸³ It is also border land for quite another reason. The distinction between analytical and speculative philosophy of history, between a philosophical interest in the "course" of history res gestae and a "properly" historical interest, and between philosophy and history - in general between an "appropriate" and an "inappropriate" interest in the past - is itself under threat. In this final section I want to look at the possibility of a break-down of these distinctions. As we move from logical interest in the form of historical explanations to questions about the nature of historical knowledge we are not merely tracing

different priorities: the ideal of what is under study is also changing. The attempt to isolate an analytical philosophy of history from the working practices of historians is rather disingenuous. We may of course allow for the existence of different interests, so that the analytical philosopher can intrigue himself with logical intricacies over which the historian loses no sleep. Nonetheless, as Fain has pointed out, it is hard to see how anyone could wish to contribute (as Danto aspires to) 'in a significant way to the analysis of historical thought and language' without hoping to make 'history as it happened more intelligible'.²⁸⁴ Since 'history as it happened' is closely related to the activity of historians', an intention to contribute to the clarification of concepts employed in historiography seems difficult to deny. Indeed philosophers who have sought to establish, whether for theoretical or diplomatic reasons, that analytical philosophy of history is unrelated to historia rerum gestarum, are going a stage further than was intended by Walsh in forging his critical/speculative distinction. The distinction of 1951 may be seen as an effort to delineate a range of 'respectable' philosophical questions provoked by the study of history.²⁸⁵ Far from intending a clear distinction between the two, Walsh, following Collingwood, maintained that it was an important task of philosophy to reckon with the "critical" study of history. The implicit concern was to separate off a "proper" philosophical interest in the practice of historians from the speculative system-mongering of individual philosopher-historians, which, it was thought, tarnished theoretical approaches. Yet, however unsatisfactory any absolute division between a speculative and critical division may be²⁸⁶, it is not Walsh's argument that the philosopher should retire to a safe distance. In fact, as Mink has noted, 'Walsh intentionally or inadvertently forged an exclusive

alliance between the critical philosopher of history and the "working historian".²⁸⁷ The legitimacy of the philosophy of history was to be recognised in this alliance. The terms of the alliance does not prevent the philosopher from examining the nature of the historian's activity nor his relationship with his object of study. Dray may be instanced as an example of an approach to history which concludes that, beyond the logical and semantic analyses of explanations, there must be a recognition that history is concerned with human actions, and therefore has a moral dimension. This moral dimension, characterised by the attribution of meaning and significance to past actions, may be explored and clarified, it should not be ignored. Dray's rebuttal of a deductivist covering-law approach not merely contributes to a debate over appropriate explanatory models; it is an assertion of the ingredient role of values in historia rerum gestarum. Past events are, from a humanistic perspective, to be seen as testimony to human willing, whether or not it is frustrated. It is perhaps a little ironic that the emphasis in the philosophy of history over the last four decades has been on explanatory analysis (in which Dray's contribution has been so central). This preoccupation has inhibited much analytical philosophy of history from examining more closely its relationship with its object of study and the implications of its own judgements.

There is in any particular philosophical approach, a sense of what constitutes historical experience, that is to say, as to what is the basic unit of historical intelligibility, and as to the contents of the historians' "archive". If the constituents are thought of as the bricks-and-mortar of established facts, then the problem of establishing causal connections becomes central, and the imposition of explanatory models upon a fixed body of knowledge is unproblematic. This is the vision of the

deductivist. An intermediate position is arrived at by those philosophers who have seen that the 'world' of historical experience is not something given, but something won, and have attempted to understand it from the standpoint of the historian. For the most part they emphasise that historical experience is constituted by human actions, and that it is therefore the realm of judgements, decisions, and values, and that any account of the efficiency of historians' explanations should not overlook the direction of an interest which seeks the significance and meaning of particular actions. A third and final position concentrates on the 'historical work' and envisages it as 'what it most manifestly is..., a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model or icon, of past structures and processes...'.²⁸⁸ Its leading idea is the idea of the narrative and story-line; a sense that what distinguishes history is its discursive form. In order to differentiate this view from a traditional analytical approach we might refer to it as "narrative philosophy of history".²⁸⁹ A concern with the kinds of problems associated with the construction of narratives. History, in this third sense, is understood not as compilation, classification, or establishment of facts, but as a way of organising (employing organisational concepts such as the Enlightenment, the Age of Reform, or the Progressive era) and giving prominence to the idea of selection, of representation, and of the story.

The idea of a narrative philosophy of history helps us to clarify a particular philosophical approach to history. History, from a narrative perspective, is understood as a kind of treatment and not a particular quality of substance, and questions asked concern its mode of representation. This interest in history as "discourse" does not inevitably arise out of a constructionist approach. Goldstein settles for a view of

history which sees it discovering what happened in the past (the steady growth of established matters-of-fact), albeit that this is achieved within the confines of an historical past. His interest in the media of enquiry is with the mechanism by which a description of evidence comes to take its place as an accredited aspect of our historical knowledge. There is some truth in Fain's description of a 'foolish theory' that 'proposes to substitute the traces of past events for the events themselves as the only fitting object worthy of historical attention'²⁹⁰ when we apply it to a constructionism which is wedded to a paradigm of knowledge by direct-inspection, and so attempts to compensate for the second-hand, indirect condition of historical knowledge. However, as we saw in the last section, there is another version of constructionism which examines the idea that the past comes to us in a manner already constituted, and that, therefore, an historian's narrative organisation is merely an extension of his "sources". The narrative organisation of materials - the 'narrative units of reference'²⁹¹ are viewed not as appendages to an enquiry but testimony to the discursive and 'fictive'²⁹² nature of historical thought.

Narrative philosophy of history departs from the concerns of Gallie, Danto, Morton White, and others, with a narrative understanding or the explanatory potential of singular statements. The most significant difference is that, whereas the 'narrationists' see narrative as a leading ingredient in historiography, the narrative philosopher of history argues that history is an instance of narrative organisation. It is not merely that the employment of narrative sequences is one of the rhetorical strategies open to the historian in expressing his findings, the idea of narrative construction captures the entire direction of historical understanding, from the treatment of record as somebody's thought, to the

'emplotting' of a 'story by including some events and excluding others, by stressing some and subordinating others...',²⁹³ to our interest in the way history represents. In other words, a narrative philosophy of history is defined, not merely by an array of questions, nor even by a preoccupation with the media of organisation and expression, but by a comprehensive vision of historical experience. It is this vision which challenges the idea of history that allows for a rigid division between an analytical and speculative approach.

The analytic/speculative distinction has been attacked in three different, but related arguments. The first is put forward by Haskell Fain, who has attempted to redefine a 'speculative' interest in order to limit its association with a damaging 'futurology', while also point out that an interest in the "significance"²⁹⁴ of the past cannot be used to 'characterise the difference between philosopher and historian'.²⁹⁵ The Second is Peter Munz's contention that the difference between 'ordinary' history and speculative philosophy of history is a difference of 'degrees of scale'.²⁹⁶ Thirdly, Hayden White has argued that all history involves a 'fiction-making operation',²⁹⁷ because it seeks the intelligibility of stories, and stories are as much invented as found.

In his Between Philosophy and History²⁹⁸ (with its significant subtitle, The Resurrection of Speculative Philosophy of History within the Analytic Tradition) Fain expresses his intention to 'shatter' a 'stereo-type' which holds that there is a 'sharp distinction between analytical (reputable) philosophy of history and speculative (disreputable) philosophy of history'.²⁹⁹ He attempts to do this by redefining the interests of speculative philosophers of history. In his new definition a 'speculative'³⁰⁰ interest is precisely what I have referred to as narrative philosophy of history, that is to say, an interest in the 'problems associated with

the task of constructing historical narratives'.³⁰¹ By this appropriation of 'speculative' Fain is not condoning the kind of futurist speculation that accompanies Marx's dialectical materialism or Spengler's cycle of civilizations, and he recognises the force of Danto's criticisms of those historian-philosophers who judge events apocalyptically by reading 'into history the message of events which lie in the future, events they are unjustifiably convinced must inevitably occur'³⁰², though he also argues that not all speculative philosophers are 'futuristic'³⁰³, Hegel amongst them. Fain's principal objection is of the use made of the analytical/speculative distinction by certain philosophers in order to avoid confronting the idea that history is a narrative construction, and to defend their analysis of 'ordinary historians concerned with the details of the past'.³⁰⁴ The distinction, he argues, far from being rigid, is secured only by resort to 'metaphor'³⁰⁵, Walsh's characterisation of an illicit philosophical concern with the course of history as a whole, 'i.e. with the significance of the whole historical process'³⁰⁶, rests on its interest in 'the significance of history'.³⁰⁷ But this cannot, Fain argues, be made to sustain the distinction because the 'problem of significance' is faced whenever a historian constructs any history'³⁰⁸; Walsh has admitted as much in his analysis of objectivity and in the formulation of his idea of colligation. A colligatory concept seems to approximate very closely to what Fain has in mind when he talks of an author's 'particular narrative units of reference'.³⁰⁹ These units, or 'key concepts'³¹⁰ have a narrative function, 'they serve as principal elements in the organisation of a historian's storyline'.³¹¹

What Fain is arguing for is a recognition of the ubiquity of 'narrative organisations'.³¹² "Ordinary" historians and "speculative" philosophers alike employ

organisational concepts, and the difference between the two should not be sought for in whether their concepts are, or are not, located in the "actual course of events". Given this conclusion we should seek to eliminate both an analytical complacency in historians' knowledge of 'details of the past', and a speculative projection into the future by acknowledging the legitimacy of 'philosophical history'.³¹³ By philosophical history Fain means 'self-conscious history'; that is to say, history which is conscious of the invention of its 'narrative units of reference', and 'its narrative organisation of historical materials', and is 'at pains to justify'³¹⁴ them.

I want to turn to Munz for further clarification and for a way of moving beyond Fain's semantic reversals. The thrust of Munz's argument is that once we have become 'more sceptical about ordinary history'³¹⁵, recognising it to be not a transcript of a sequence of events, then the difference between it and speculative philosophy of history (or as Munz refers to it, simply 'philosophy of history'³¹⁶) resolves itself into a matter of degree. Armed with Munz's analysis of historical construction, we can see that any attempt to isolate an illicit approach to the past, res gestae, either in terms of scale, or because it is said to falsify the reality of events, will not bear scrutiny. All events, he argues, from the smallest - 'Napoleon brushed his teeth at a certain moment in time' - to the largest - 'the Roman Empire declined from the 3rd century A.D. onwards'³¹⁷ - are composed of sub-events with the help of thoughts. There is no actual course of events which a philosopher of history might be said to have misrepresented or distorted. Munz's radical argument is that single 'the "events" themselves are constructs and ...the philosophy of history, in selecting, merely continues a process of selection already implicit in our very knowledge of the events'.³¹⁸

There are, however, provisos to be made. Firstly, he argues, a philosophy of history does not discover laws of historical development. The idea that there are such laws is as much a fallacy as the idea of being able to predict the future. Both are 'part and parcel of a belief that what we know as history is something that has been copied by the historian from reality'.³¹⁹ Secondly, although a philosophy of history will consist almost entirely of 'interpretations'³²⁰, this does not give free reign to anachronism. Munz condemns an analysis of pre-industrial societies into economic classes as 'excessively interpretive', since 'there is no typological link between the notion of class and any of the notions employed in those societies'.³²¹ Interestingly Marx is disqualified as a philosopher of history. The reason for this is that he 'propounded his philosophy of history and all the lesser narratives it contains as the result of an empirical study of res gestae'.³²² Marx, Munz states, argued that he had 'discovered the real nature of res gestae and had not written another historia rerum gestarum'.³²³ Marx denied that our 'knowledge of the historical past depends on thought and that history is the history of thought'³²⁴ in the belief that he 'could form an absolute and final picture of res gestae'.³²⁵ But, as Munz has pointed out, we cannot, in this sense, know what res gestae look like. Unless we understand Marx's materialism as one amongst many possible interpretations - something he strongly denied - instead of an ultimate explanation we do not, according to Munz, have a philosophy of history. A philosophy of history is conscious (as Hegel was) of the 'a priori assumptions that have to go into the construction of narratives'³²⁶; it is not mimetic of a course of events on a grand scale. For Munz, as for Fain, a philosopher of history is characterised by this high degree of self-consciousness. Thus philosophy of history may be instructive because, in

its pervasive use of interpretations, it is illustrative of the kind of understanding which history seeks, and because it displays the artifice and invention of narrative construction. Munz writes,

'No historical narrative can be written without selecting events from the totality of everything that has happened. The ordinary historian is more cautious and modest. He selects what the sources suggests to him and he considers himself bound in an important sense by the general laws contained in or implied by the sources. The philosophy of history goes beyond the sources in the sense that it deals freely with interpretations and does not allow the sources to dictate. The difference is again a difference in degree. The mere fact that a philosophy of history is highly selective does not distinguish it from an ordinary narrative.'³²⁷

The fact that the human past cannot be endowed with a single permanent shape or character does not give free license to the application of random interpretive schemata. If, as Christopher Hill contends, 17th century England is characterised by a 'change from traditional Christianity to Lockean Liberalism'³²⁸ challenges can be raised against this description. But the question "is this an accurate description of everything that happened in 17th Century England?" is misconceived. Rather we should ask 'who first saw it in that shape. Is this shape an explanation or an interpretation? What contemporary narratives does it correspond to?'³²⁹ In other words we may question the criteria of selection, but not the fact of selection per se. In all cases it is important to be aware of what, in an historiographical dispute, is being argued over.

Finally it must be emphasised that Munz actively supports the activity of the philosopher of history. Philosophy of history exposes the hollowness of the analytical philosopher's idea of history; it challenges the positivistic mentality of the monograph; it

recognises, in its essence, the implications of a cognitive relativism in its employment of substitutions, translations, and interpretations.³³⁰ It takes the wider view, attempts to relate single events to a wider series of events³³¹, and so returns history to the story, and an analysis of historia rerum gestarum to the importance of narratives and their construction.

Hayden White's thesis brings into close focus the assumption that the literary dimension of historiography is merely the gloss and finish on established findings. On the contrary, White considers the "plotting" of events in a story the most salient feature of historical understanding. He argues that 'no given set of causally recorded historical events in themselves constitute a story, the most they offer to the historian are 'story elements'³³². Mink, in support of what he has called the 'synoptic judgement', or 'configurational mode', in which a complex of events are seen together in history, has made a similar point: 'the researches of historians, however arduous and technical, only increase the amount of precision of knowledge of facts which remain contingent and discontinuous. It is by being assigned to stories that they become intelligible'.³³³

One of White's strategies is to consider the 'fictive capabilities'³³⁴ of historians which bear witness to the way in which historical conclusions are conveyed through a literary medium. He mentions, for example, the 'non-negatable' aspects of 'historical classics'.³³⁵ As compared to the conclusions of scientific research, a history cannot be so easily disconfirmed and disregarded, it may have value as evidence for a future enquiry, or be preserved for its literary qualities. This non-negatable aspect testifies to the literary dimension of history. White also notes the way in which,

'explanations of historical structures and process are...determined more by what we leave

out of our representations than by what we put in. For it is in this brutal capacity to exclude certain facts in the interest of constituting others as components of comprehensive stories that the historian displays his tact as well as his understanding'.³³⁷

But his central idea is that there are a number of different ways in which the historian can employ 'historical sequences'³³⁸, and each will provide a different interpretation and endow the events with a particular meaning. Michelet construed the French Revolution as a romantic drama; Tocqueville as an ironic tragedy. Can we ask which was a more accurate account? White answers in the negative. 'Neither can be said to have had more knowledge of the 'facts' contained in record; they simply had different notions of the kind of study that best fitted the facts they knew...They sought out different kinds of facts because they had different stories to tell'.³³⁹ White's aim is to reveal the part that invention plays in the historian's operations: 'The death of a king may be the beginning, or ending, or simply a transitional event in three different stories.'³⁴⁰ Thus, in an important sense, a historical narrative is a 'symbolic structure', it 'tells us in what direction to think about the events'.³⁴¹ There is then, in history, a 'translation of "fact" into "fiction"'.³⁴²

White emphasises the importance of selection, narrative organisation, and representation in history. His thesis is not a denial of historical narratives as a kind of knowledge, but an assertion that it is to be sought for as much in the intelligibility of the way it represents and organises as in the factual quality of its contents. In this case understanding follows from perceiving the kind or 'type'³⁴³ of story to which what we are reading belongs.

White's writings form a brilliant critique of history as 'a kind of archetype of the realistic pole of

representation'.³⁴⁴ He urges us not to look on the activity of historians as model-making; the attempt to 'reproduce' original 'structures and processes'.³⁴⁵ In addition he contends that what animates an historical enquiry may not be, perhaps should not be a desire to assimilate and render familiar but through an intrigue with the 'very strangeness'³⁴⁶ of the past as it appears in record.

His description of history as an occasion for the 'invention of ingenious melodies'³⁴⁷ marks the extreme point of a narrative philosophy of history, and sits in total immersion in the media of representation. His position may also be seen as that moment of a loss of faith. To conclude section and chapter I want to look at the nature of this loss of faith in the knowing subject and ask how it is related to an idealist understanding of history.

A loss of faith refers to the nadir of the "transcendent" subject. Specifically it refers to an anxiety over the quality of the subject's - the historian's - knowledge of past events. As we have moved along our conceptual spectrum we have noticed the idea of what constitutes historical experience shifting. This change is most apparent in the philosopher's search for the 'object' of historical enquiry and the way in which historians' descriptions may be said to refer. And yet, dispute the distance between a positivist and constructionist position, in terms of the kind of knowledge and understanding to be had within historia rerum gestarum, there exists a prevailing faith in the rationality of the subject - object relationship, however it might be conceived. This rationality may simply amount to a belief in the methodological continuity of the 'human sciences', or in the opaqueness of 'common language'. Above all it describes a faith in a communicable experience in which, for example, one may recognise and

evaluate different approaches or relate the employment of key concepts to the context in which they occur. However, this faith is not boundless and we have noted several attempts to delineate its scope. Indeed the understanding of history as narrative construction and the emphasis on historian as "maker" of meaning and intelligibility may occasion doubts as to the status of his conclusions. Ironically it is the attempt to ground the historical past in modality that is indicative of a loss of faith, far more than any exploration of the "subjectivities" of different interpretations. It is the attempt to reintroduce an absolute criterion of truth and intelligibility, so inappropriate to historical practice, which destroys a common (if not always articulated) rationality. Knowledge of the past is, in this way, wrenched away from the standpoint of the enquirer and located in the operation of mental categories.

In a general sense the transfer effectively removes the important distinction between an idealist enquiry into the mental operations of an observer and the structuralist search for hidden, unconscious determinations of thought. Hayden White, who has strong sympathies with aspects of the structuralist programme, allows for the breakdown of this distinction. His categories are the limited number of 'plot-structures'³⁴⁸ available to the historian in telling his "story". Though the historian has a certain amount of choice about the way he wants us to think about the events in question, it is a choice that is governed by 'the generic plot-structures conventionally used in our culture'³⁴⁹, whether they be 'tragic, comic, romantic, or ironic'.³⁵⁰ White's thesis may be understood as transitional between a constructionist description of history and a structuralist critique of the determining medium of language. His oscillations between the historian's chosen narrative, and 'the story type or mythos'³⁵¹, is illustrative of his intermediate

perspective. The subject still plays a recognisable part in the construction of historical understanding, but, though self-consciousness may help define that role, it is not seen as a free-ranging choice among multiple different rhetorical strategies or interpretations, as it is for Munz. The significant difference in White's position is that the plot-structures are not merely relative to the conventions of culture but somehow determinative of consciousness, of the historical imagination. But this, we have seen, is also the implication of Oakeshott's modal division of experience. Here too, ways of seeing are more than just directed by particular interests, they are determinative of how objects are understood; they are apperceptual so that seeing is always seeing as.³⁵² In a less extreme form this is also the contention of Kuhn's analysis of paradigms, though the Kuhnian categories are placed firmly within the history of science and are determinative in the more limited sense of directing and justifying the conduct of "normal science". Importantly, in Kuhn's schema, there is an adequate account of the breakdown of one paradigm and its replacement by another.³⁵³ In the divisions within consciousness - the epistemes - of Michel Foucault, there is no such mechanism of change, and no possibility of comprehending the primary nature of their operation (how then Foucault's?³⁵⁴). There is no account of change because he is essentially uninterested in history, and no allowance for self-conscious deliberation because he despises the notion of a primary, transparent consciousness; pledging to cleanse history of all 'transcendental narcissism'.³⁵⁵ It is Foucault's intention to destroy the idea of history; its attempt to represent "the order of things" in the right order of words.³⁵⁶ He claims to be interested only in 'ruptures' and 'discontinuities'³⁵⁷ against history's interest in continuity and the seriality of events.³⁵⁸ History, in its effort to give a uniform shape to past,

displays its subservience to the false ideal of language as representation, and to knowledge as the handmaiden of power.

I have no intention of entering into disputation as to the originality of Foucault's thought, nor of attempting to minimise the extent of his historical and epistemological nihilism. For our purposes we may take the epistemic divisions of his anti-history as illustrative of the extreme consequences of a loss of faith in the knowing subject and in a communicable historical experience. In the case of Foucault the structures of knowing are primary and absolute, they determine all efforts to comprehend and represent, and expose the human sciences as captives of language and of a 'mode of discourse', which 'at once provides its access to "reality" and delimits the horizon of what can possibly appear as "real".³⁵⁹ His efforts are directed against the idea that historical knowledge is knowledge of the past. In Oakeshott's schema these categories of knowing are intended to preserve the possibility of historical knowledge in the present, and to secure the unity of subject and object. However, despite an enormous distance between their philosophical and political commitments, there is nonetheless a conceptual relation between the two positions. Foucault dismisses out of hand the 'founding, grounding subject'³⁶⁰ and makes it the creature of a knowledge-power struggle. Oakeshott defends the unity of our experience but has to resort to the stringent limitations of an historical mode in order to do so. In both cases the result is to make knowledge the outcome of a "discourse" which interposes between subject and object and which, more than this, entails the kind of knowledge to be had. If Foucault's structures are arbitrarily imposed, deterministic and omnipotent, while Oakeshott allows for the possibility of self-conscious selection among them, this is a difference in degree, not in kind.

Finally we might notice the employment by Oakeshott in On History of the phrase - 'universe of discourse' instead of the 'world of ideas' which figure in Experience and its Modes. This terminological shift is so evocative of the ideas outlined above. The parameters of his modal understandings have grown from the comprehensive 'world' to the exclusive 'universe', while 'ideas', with their connotations of the personal and contestable, have crystallised into 'discourse' with its (structuralist) overtones of closed systems.

Conclusion

It is apparent that the idealist's conception of history is used in the service of a wider philosophical position. In Collingwood's later work historical thought subsumes philosophy. It is the unity of the individual and general in critical thinking, and the route to self-knowledge in re-enactment. Scientific history provides the basis, the rationale and the method for all organised thought. Oakeshott defends history for different reasons: against reduction to laws and lessons, and as the clearest indication that human understanding is an engagement in and for itself, without 'practical' consequences and irreducible to programmes or systems. I take both of these broader philosophical positions to include a moral viewpoint. They are extensions - perhaps implicit extensions - of an idealist analysis of history, but we are not obliged to accept them in the form of moral imperatives. An idealist analysis of history per se is largely convincing: Collingwood's account of the rise of 'scientific' history; Oakeshott's critique of the role of the past-as-it-really-was; Munz's attack on the equation of historical events with a time series. The application to history of the ideas of coherence, unity and context result in an illuminating description of historical knowledge - particularly of what it cannot be. It remains to ask, what idea of history survives an idealist critique.

It is clear, epistemologically, what history is not and cannot pretend to be. It cannot be defended as the discipline which, uniquely, studies the past. What makes history different from other disciplines is not the particularity of its content. History does not inhabit a particular field or area of the map of knowledge and it cannot claim an array of objects as its own rightful property with history, as with all other enquiries, a particular direction of interest proceeds the organisation

of its materials. Oakeshott's argument seems to me persuasive: an historical past is the organisation of present objects looked at in a certain way, with a certain kind of puzzlement. Historical interest transforms present objects into evidence from which past events may be inferred. What is important is that the same objects, seen in terms of different interests, are put to work for quite different ends. The same manuscript which interests an historian for what it reveals of systems of land - tenure in the Middle Ages, interest an art collector for the beauty of its calligraphy or the price it might fetch at auction, or an American attempting to trace his genealogy. Unlike Oakeshott I cannot see these interests as logically exclusive (though they may well be mutually exclusive for professional reasons), but they do form a vital element in an analysis of how we acquire knowledge. Since, in idealist terms, knowledge entails a relationship between subject and object, only different, organised directions of interest can account for the proliferation of systematic enquiries.

History, then, is a relationship between historian and his object (objects recognised as deposits from the past) under the guidance of a particular kind of interest. But this relationship cannot be analysed into two separate halves for without one the other would not exist. Just as history is not a particular kind of content so it is not an array of techniques or tools of analysis, which can be learnt, passed-on and represented as the advantage of "doing" history at university. Any functional analysis of history ignores the way in which the relationship between historian and "evidence" is reciprocal. Change the historian and one changes the evidence. What is an important document for one might be left out of a narrative by another. Indeed the idea of evidence as a fragmentary record or representation of past events, and its conception as so many lists and archives fails to see

that evidence is itself the result of prior organisation dependent on questions. The idea that one can go and check whether a particular interpretation is true or not by simply consulting the records is jejune, and is not supported by the discursive nature of historiography. Facts, as an idealist approach has made plain, are never merely detachable from a narrative. They are dependent for their significance on the order, texture and direction of a narrative: facts are conclusions not empirical building blocks for permanent structures.

The idea that different conceptual techniques can be tested out on history needs to be qualified. At the very least the process of sharpening analytical tools is never neutral in its implications for the study of the past. Statistical analysis of crop yields or demographic changes provide a useful organisation of potential sources, but any amount of numerical lists, no matter how uniform, will never add up to a history: they are organisations of evidence, an early stage in the transformation of present objects into a narrative, and must then find their way into interpretations. The important point is that statistical analysis should not be seen as the empirical dimension of history, pushing it ever closer to the social sciences. Any such analysis is dependent on prior questions and selections. Furthermore, detailed enumerations and empirical generalisations are, in Munz's words, a particular shape placed upon the past, one, among many, ways of making sense of past events. There should be no confusion that they were ever a part of how things really were. Computers may take massive chunks out of the time spent compiling and analysing the "data" of evidence, but, once again, their role in historical construction should be spelt out. They are sophisticated organising devices dependent upon a prior question which determines the kind, and order, of information which is put onto a disc, and, it might be added, the order it is read off,

suggesting, perhaps, that computer data-bases are not value-neutral in the teaching of history.

Our idealists have argued consistently that history, which is not a social science, is not susceptible to causal analysis, does not generate laws and, in no sense, is deducible from hypotheses. They have defended this contention on epistemological grounds (the particularizing, individualizing interest of history enquiries into detailed differences); on logical grounds (the presuppositions of history entail that prior identification of cause and effect is a contradiction of the nature of the historical base which lacks shape and form until it is constructed in the narrative of historians). To identify an event as the cause of all that followed is, in Oakeshott's words, to pre-empt what it is the entire purpose of an historical enquiry to establish. Finally there is a moral argument. History is not a nascent science, but is rather autonomous and provided us with a special kind of understanding. Of these arguments I take the first to be essentially convincing, the second to be in need of further clarification and the third to have only a contingent relationship with the first two.

An idealist approach to history urges the historian to be self-aware: to be self-conscious of how he or she writes history; to realise that this is always a matter of selections and interpretations for which the historian is intellectually responsible; to see clearly that history is not mimetic precisely because there is nothing from which to copy and describe from different angles; and to recognise that history teaches no lessons and has no voice unless first put there. This implies a sharp critique of comparative histories, of attempts to establish criteria of relevance in terms of the antiquity or modernity of the "history" being studied, and finally of holding up a revisionist monograph as the academic highpoint and

justification for studying history. It is quite clear that definitions of legitimate research topics and accurate scholarship cannot rest upon the size and density of stretches of the past. Even a history of the tiniest, most back-water mediaeval manor, is the result of selection, organisation and narrative interpretation: its historian is no more dealing with a hard chunk of past reality than one who, in writing a history of the concept of democracy in the 19th century, is imposing his own conceptual framework on that reality.

I have, however, some reservations over the argument that history can make no use of hypotheses or of causal interpretations on the ground that logically, they are excluded from the historical mode of understanding. As I have attempted to show; there is a suspicion that, Oakeshott is continually unhappy with the direction of his argument. If history, the study of the past, is finally only what historians write (a phenomenology of the past) then why should not historians decide amongst themselves whether certain hypotheses and causal analyses are valid? Oakeshott takes away this possibility of consensus, not merely because historians may be philosophically naive (which indeed many are) and thus unaware of what their agreements confirm. Oakeshott rejects this, distances himself from any charges of meddling, and seals off his arguments by talking of logical exclusions. It is precisely the use of logical postulates to confirm both the autonomy and the insularity of history which seems vulnerable. Since what historians operate on is evidence of past occurrences (albeit themselves the result of inference) why should organisational and empirical hypotheses relating to particular interpretations of evidence not be a valid way of conducting historiographical arguments? Oakeshott's anxiety over the misuse of history leads to a picture of what historians do as something shifting and intangible. This seems apposite

to the way in which questions provoke research which in turn produce new interpretations and new questions. It also highlights the fact that it is just not the case that history proceeds by discovering and establishing past events beyond doubt.

But why should we conclude that historical accounts are necessarily incommensurable to the extent of being completely isolated activities? Undoubtedly interests and values are constitutive elements of the historical past, yet, historians can acknowledge and even discuss their differences, without having to conclude that their accounts are logically distinct and so refer to two entirely different things. A phenomenological description of historical knowledge shows quite clearly that historiographical disagreements are disagreements about how history should be written, how evidence should be selected, interpreted and incorporated, and certainly no amount of consensus amongst historians will alter the fact that it is constructions of the past which stand or fall. All of this has been conceded to Oakeshott. Why, then, the anxiety which seems to allow the thing-in-itself - the noumenon of past reality - to convict the historian's work of being tentative and partial? If this is all we have then presumably it may be true insofar as it goes, and the arbiter of truth become comparisons of different accounts, discussions of interpretations, and judgements on the relative appropriateness of evidence.

History, as an intellectual engagement, exists precisely because past events have to be inferred and established discursively. For the most part historiographical disputes reflect the fact that history is all about selections and interpretations. To this extent the idealist's point is confirmed in practice. It seems, however, that history will always be subject to invitations (even intimidation) from other disciplines to establish common-fronts, enter into joint projects, or

demands to provide an new defence of its use and value. This seems to be inevitable. It would - as I hope I have shown - be both intellectually dishonest and self-defeating to claim that its association with the past, and its methods for pursuing this relationship, confirm history's legitimacy. Philosophical analysis has made this apparent and by revealing what history is not, supports, I believe, a traditional, humanistic defence of its rationale. History is critical, literary and discursive. But this definition does not entail the conclusion that history studies only individuals or purposive actions. These are judgements an historian brings with him to this enquiry and they form an important element in the selection of materials. Although value-judgements are constitutive of the resulting narrative we do not have to think of them as determinant, undetectable and beyond discussion. What it does suggest is that histories are always and necessarily individual: indeed this is a feature of the shifting interests and consensus of historiography. Large tracts of the past are, for mainly practical reasons, always treated as fixed or understood in any narrative (which obviously needs to begin somewhere and so assume a certain given context), but this is not because they have been established beyond all possible doubt. In the sciences, certain important generalisations permit the activity of scientific research to proceed unhindered by doubts about first principles or the need to establish, as a first step, the underlying laws of physics. So perhaps, in history, certain important "facts" or "events" are treated as, for all practical purposes, beyond dispute, while research goes on around, between or beyond them. In both cases there is an element of operating under an established rule or consensus until one, or a number of findings to the contrary force a re-think. And, in both cases, these established matter-of-facts tend to illustrate the

interests and priorities of research within the discipline at a particular time, suggesting that its practitioners are less than entirely free to pick and choose what they will investigate next.

Is this notion of consensus and restraint what Collingwood and Oakeshott meant by the presuppositions of historical thought - those common, organising features which underlie and bind together historians' interest in the past? I think not. As outlined above, these common areas of agreed-upon "results" are too rational and debatable; only metaphorically do they owe anything to the idea of mental categories through which the mind encounters the world. Collingwood's absolute presuppositions, though historical in the sense of changing over time, are absolute because they are beyond discussion: they entail what and how we think and cannot themselves be the object of any of our questions. Oakeshott's modes of experience exclude absolutely any mixture of different interests being represented as a genuine enquiry. When the argument of this thesis talked of the practical nature of holding certain historical conclusions constant, it was hopping between universes of discourse in a way entirely forbidden by Oakeshott for only ignoratio elenchi could follow. But, as I have mentioned, Oakeshott's own position involves just such modal mixing. The division of experience into distinct organisational interests may well be the result of epistemological analysis, but the contention that genuine history - a rare and tentative thing - will only be found by keeping wholly within a modal understanding that determines what kind of past will emerge involves a moral, even a political, position. The idea, developed by Croce and Collingwood, that history offers a living, autonomous form of understanding similarly involves a moral position. It was used to counter a positivistic conception of knowledge, to challenge the demand that history become

more scientific, and to prepare the way for the assumption of philosophy by history in the one true judgement both particular (the historical individual) and universal (the interpretative concept). Perhaps, most importantly, a definition of history as autonomous in terms of its approach and understanding, and the absolute right of the historian "to be master in his own house", appears to be an attempt to establish historical truth on more certain grounds than any analysis of its practice will confirm.

The claim that history is an autonomous form of knowledge protected by logical postulates is one that can be rejected without destroying the important critique offered by an idealist analysis of history. What remains is an idea of history which has its own interests, organisations and ways of conducting (if not definitely concluding) arguments over the truth of different interpretations. History is, however, certainly eclectic in its choice of materials, relative to the selections and values of historians, and provisional in its conclusion. And since history rests on selections and choices, and on their limits and restraints, philosophy must remain an essential and permanent critical element in any self-analysis and definition: to detect similarities, common approaches, and critical differences in the way words and concepts are used, and to ask how and whether these choices affect what the historian writes. Meanwhile the historian might feel enholdened to ask the philosopher exactly what it is he means by history.

Notes

Part I Idealist Approaches to History

Chapter 1 i) Wilhelm Dilthey: The Realm of Objective Mind

1. Theodore Plantinga Historical Understanding in the Thought of Wilhelm Dilthey, (1980) p56.

In this short study of Dilthey I owe much to the fragmentary translations of diverse Dilthey critics (see Bibliography) and the fuller translations of the following:

H D Rickman Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Writings (OUP 1976).

H D Rickman Meaning in History (London 1961).

R M Zauer and K L Heiger Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding (1977).

P Gardiner (Ed.) Theories of History (New York 1959) for "The Understanding of Other Persons and their Life Expressions" translated by J Knehl.

R Aaron (Ed.) Introduction to the Philosophy of History (1938) for a translation of "The Dream".

For a more complete bibliography of Dilthey's works in translation see Rickman Selected writings p267ff.

2. Plantinga, op. cit. p6. Understanding only takes place if expressions of mind are possible.
3. See Rickman Meaning in History, op. cit., and Selected writings p168ff. For a breakdown of the gesammelte schriften see the latter work pp264-7.
4. M Ermarth Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason (Chicago 1978) p25. Ermarth writes: 'philosophy wandered among abstract ideas, history loitered in isolated facts'.
5. R Mackreel, in a review of Ermarth's book in History and Theory vol.XIX 1980, p355ff, points out that this word is Ermarth's and not Dilthey's, and is intended to 'distinguish Dilthey's thought from subjective and absolute 'idealism' p354.
6. Ermarth, op. cit., p345.
7. Rickman Selected Writings Editor's Introduction, p15.
8. Dilthey himself writes in "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies" that, 'The environment acts on the subject and is acted upon by him. It is composed by the physical and cultural surroundings'. Rickman Selected Writings p.203.
9. Rickman, Ibid., p21.

10. A pointed noted by Mackreel in his introduction to the 1977 translation of Dilthey's Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding p9.
11. Ermarth, op. cit., p347, Rickman Selected Writings p15.
12. Ermarth, op. cit., p87ff, Rickman Selected Writings p21.
13. Dilthey Aufbau p148. Quoted by Plantinga, op. cit., p72.
14. Rickman Selected Writings quotes in his Introduction: 'it is in history that man comes to know himself' Dilthey fortsetzung p259, see also Plantinga, op. cit., p27.
15. Rickman, Ibid.
16. Dilthey in Rickman, Ibid., pp240-1.
17. Dilthey: Enleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften (An Introduction to the Human Studies) first published 1883. As Rickman points out: 'the systematic part of the work was never written', Ibid. p157.
18. Rickman, Ibid., p160. For a discussion of Dilthey and the historical school see Ermarth, op. cit. p58ff.
19. Rickman, Ibid. Introduction p22.
20. See Plantinga, op. cit. p23ff, Ermarth, op. cit. p258.
21. Plantinga op. cit. p23.
22. Rickman Selected Writings p168.
23. "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies", in Rickman Ibid. p175.
24. For a discussion of this point and the related view that Verstehen constitutes the 'sole and exclusive method of the human sciences' and therefore condones intuition and subjectivity, see Ermarth op. cit. p241ff, and Rickman Selected Writings p29.
25. Plantinga op. cit. p60.
26. Dilthey Vol.9 GS p258, quoted by Ermarth op. cit. p250 and Vol.6 GS p74.
27. R G Collingwood The Idea of History (OUP 1946) p175.
28. See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
29. W H Walsh An Introduction to the Philosophy of History (OUP 1951) p50.
30. Op. cit. p171.
31. Ibid. p172.
32. See Ermarth's lucid description of the fluctuating forms and fortunes of German Idealism in the first ninety pages of his book, op. cit.
33. See Chapter 2 of this thesis.
34. Dilthey Ideen ppl43-4. Quoted by Plantinga op. cit. p32.
35. Plantinga Ibid. p102.
36. Understanding, in Dilthey's famous phrase, 'is a rediscovery of the I in the Thou', Vol.7 GS p265, in Rickman Selected Writings p208.

37. Op. cit. p256.
38. Ibid. p257. Ermarth also points out that Dilthey condemned what he saw as 'the great Nietzschean malady of exaggerated subjectivity' Vol.9 GS p210, in Ermarth op. cit. p85.
39. Dilthey in Rickman Selected Writings p175.
40. Stuart Hughes has noted Dilthey's comment, 'Historical scepticism can only be overcome if the (historian's) method does not rely upon the determination of motives'. Aufbau (Vol.7 GS) p260, in S Stuart Hughes Consciousness and Society (London 1959) p199.
41. Rickman Selected Writings p211.
42. Ibid. p221.
43. Ibid.
44. Rickman defines his "method" in the following way: 'Dilthey called the process by which we comprehend the meaning of an expression... "understanding"... The systematic co-ordination of elementary acts of understanding in order to comprehend the meaning of a complex permanent expression "interpretations" and its methodology "hermeneutics".'
45. Plantinga op. cit. p42.
46. As Plantinga puts it: 'to grasp something meant, no to probe or sympathise with events and processes in someone else's mind' op. cit. p6.
47. Dilthey in Rickman Selected Writings p268. 'In lived experience (Erlebnis) all the mental processes work together' Ideen p172, quoted by Plantinga op. cit. p32.
48. 'The past appears differently in every age and requires a different presentages' Vol.XV GS p178, quoted by Plantinga op. cit. p105.
49. Dilthey in Rickman Selected Writings pp222-3.
50. Ibid. p222.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. There is a certain resonance here with Heidegger's idea of our coping with the world "in experience" (lower understanding, or, for Heidegger, primary and direct experience) and a second-order analysis of our coping in the world. In Dilthey's terms, however, both levels are conceived as intellectual activities which have to be learned. Heidegger, on the other hand, said that we begin in and with experience in an essentially unreflective way.

In a specifically historical sense I do not accept (and the same applies to criticism of Collingwood) that Dilthey consigned historical research to written manuscripts, which express the thoughts and intentions of a witness of or participant in an historical "event". Rather, I take him to be exploring the epistemological grounds of historical

inference and the direction of an activity in which an historian questions his evidence as the expression of thought, be it clearly formulated (a diary or chronicle, fashion and architecture - testimony to the requirements and imagination of time and place) or reactions to physical occurrences, such as the abandonment of arable land, migration and defence against plague.

54. Ibid. p223.
55. Ibid. p226.
56. See Plantinga op. cit. p36. He refers to Dilthey's use of the word Zusammenhang which he translates as 'inner coherence and structure', qualifying the individual by his place and relation to an historical-social context. Rickman translates Zusammenhang as 'hanging together'. He argues in W Dilthey: Pioneer of the Human Studies (Cambridge 1979) that Dilthey assumed 'that reality is a whole of interrelated parts...philosophy must make us aware of that unity'. p.10. See also Ermarth op. cit. p266.
57. Rickman Selected Writings p11.
58. Ibid.
59. Rickman Pioneer of the Human Studies p10.
60. Ermarth op. cit. p256.
61. Ibid.
62. See Dilthey in Rickman Selected Writings p211.
63. Dilthey Vol.XV GS p178. Quoted by Plantinga op. cit. p165.
64. See I N Bulhof: Wilhelm Dilthey: A Hermeneutic Approach to the Study of History and Culture (Boston 1980). Bulhof writes that Dilthey's hermeneutic approach, founded on the belief in the interconnectedness of the human historical world entails that 'structural systems' (religious and economic organisations - cultural structures) 'are the "ideal" or "logical" subjects of history'. Vol.VII GS p134ff, 283. In Bulhoff p23. Interestingly, these structures are 'not imposed afterwards on history...they were part of history itself'.
65. See Dilthey's life of Schleiermacher written between 1867 and 1870.
66. Plantinga op. cit. p36.
67. He chose, as Plantinga points out, 'an undisputed individuality - the human being' Ibid.
68. Dilthey Vol.VII p316. Quoted by Ermarth op. cit. p252.
69. Ibid. p260.
70. Plantinga op. cit. p112.
71. Ibid. p38, from Poetik p230.
72. Plantinga op. cit. p132.
73. Ermarth op. cit. p255.

74. Plantinga describes this as a representative figure or 'working hypothesis', a 'pre-understanding of a background', op. cit. p113.
75. See Rickman Selected Writings Introduction p15ff.
76. Rickman argues that the 'cognition of mental contents...presupposes that the knowing subject snares with his object of knowledge, i.e. other human beings, common, fundamental features... In this sense he assumed a common human nature, but with the historical school, maintained the variability of man'. Selected Writings p15.
77. See Plantinga op. cit. p102ff and Ermarth's discussion of Nacherleben p255ff. Ermarth mentions 'the crucial phenomenological distinction between mental acts and contents' which 'establishes a kind of objective referent to mental life, so that one can say one understands the meaning of another's wish without wishing along with him' p257. This is precisely the way I understand Collingwood's historical 're-enactment'.
78. See Plantinga op. cit. p20, 105, 117-8, 120, 133, 135, 137. Rickman in Pioneer of the Human Studies op. cit. writes 'As long as our common human nature makes us all experience in the same way...our knowledge will be relative to the knowing-mind...subjective - but also objective - something in which we could all agree'. p141.
79. Stuart Hughes op. cit. p199 (quoted from Vol.VII GS p260).
80. See Dilthey in Rickman Selected Writings p228.
81. As Rickman puts it, we 'need to disentangle the core of truth from the temporal guise imposed by the fact that the human nature on which they rely is itself historically moulded' Pioneer of the Human Studies p142.
82. Bulhof op. cit. p24 (from Vol.VII GS p209). See also Rickman Selected Writings Introduction pp13-14: 'we must decide what the facts are in terms of our theoretical frame of reference just as much as we modify our theories in the light of facts'. This is very much the argument of both Oakeshott (see Chapter 3) and Kuhn (Chapter 5 section III).
- Makreel op. cit. (1977) writes that expressions, 'are as much a function of social cultural situations...as they are reflection of the mind of the expressor' p13.
83. See Dilthey in Rickman Selected Writings op. cit. pp221-2, 237.
84. Bulhof op. cit. pp25-6.
85. Quoted by Plantinga op. cit. p22 from fortsetzung p250. See also p17: 'historical reason...equated with the "capacity" of man to know himself and to know the society and "history" which he has created'.

86. This has been noted by S Hughes op. cit. p198.
87. For a discussion of Besservestehen see Plantinga op. cit. p117ff.
88. Ibid. p120.
89. See Ermarth's discussion of Dilthey's reaction to positivism and to its challenges, op. cit. p60ff.
90. Plantinga op. cit. p132. Haddock op. cit. p152 has pointed out that 'empathetic understanding was only deemed possible because of a basic identity between the historian and his subject-matter which did not obtain in the world of natural science'.
91. Plantinga op. cit. p145.
92. A project undertaken by Husserl.

ii) Benedetto Croce

1. Theory and History of Historiography transl. D Ainslie (London 1921) p15. Hereafter Theory.
2. Ibid. p75.
3. Ibid. p12.
4. History as the Story of Liberty transl. S Sprigge (New York 1941) p17. An alternative title History as Thought and Action seems more appropriate both to Croce's intentions and to the Italian title. Hereafter H.L.
5. Ibid. p19.
6. Wildon Carr "'Time' and 'History' in Contemporary Philosophy; with special reference to Bergson and Croce" Proceedings of the British Academy Vol.VIII (March 1918).
7. Hayden White "The Abiding Relevance of Croce's Idea of History" Journal of Modern History (1963).
8. H.L. p35.
9. H White op. cit. p119.
10. H.L. p179.
11. Theory p19ff.
12. H Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society op. cit., has written of Croce's 'conviction of the radical subjectivity of historical knowledge' and the 'exercise of sympathetic intuition in Croce's neo idealistic theory of history' p65. See also p124 and 206.
- 12B. See Benedetto Croce An Autobiography (Bari 1915) Transl. R G Collingwood (Oxford 1927).
13. Croce Primi Saggi (Bari 1919) pp1-46. The essay was written in 1893.
14. Ibid. p24.
15. Collingwood IH p193.
16. C M Dextler "The Crocean origin of Becker's Historical Relativism" History and Theory XIV 9(1975) pp335-42. p337. Dextler refers to Croce's theory of history as it appears in his Aesthetics as Science of Expression and General Linguistic transl. D Ainslie

- (London 1909). See also D A Roberts B Croce and the Uses of Historicism (Boston 1987).
17. Dextler op. cit. p338.
 18. Theory p14, 19, 53, 136.
 19. Theory p27ff.
 20. Op. cit. p339.
 21. See Aesthetics pp221-23.
 22. See R A Pois "Two Poles Within Historicism: Croce and Meinecke" Journal of the History of Ideas 31 (1970) p260. Pois describes Croce as 'almost aggressively monistic'.
 23. See Hughes, op. cit., account of Croce's philosophical development p86ff. See also E Jacobitti Revolutionary Humanism and Historicism in Modern Italy (1981) p62ff.
 24. Croce History of Europe in the 19th Century Transl. Henry Furst (London 1934) p353.
 25. White op. cit. p114. See H.L. p83.
 26. Ibid. p315. Croce continues: '...historical culture is the acquired habit or Power of so thinking and doing; historical education, the formation of this habit'.
 27. Theory p67ff. H.L. p31, 34, 65ff.
 28. H.L. p16.
 29. Aesthetics p22.
 30. Autobiography op. cit. p96. His study of Vico is The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico transl. R G Collingwood (Oxford 1913).
 31. Hughes op. cit. p267, Pois op. cit. pp258-9, Haddock An Introduction to Historical Thought (London 1980), Autobiography pp95-101.
 32. Hughes op. cit. p154. Logic as the Science of Pure Concept transl. D Ainslie (London 1917). What is Living and what is dead of the philosophy of Hegel transl. D Ainslie (London 1915).
 33. Op. cit.
 34. See Pois op. cit. p258.
 35. Op. cit.
 36. Op. cit.
 37. Theory p60, H.L. p21.
 38. H.L. pp265-6.
 39. See Collingwood's discussion of this point in IH p193ff.
 40. H.L. p265.
 41. See Pois op. cit. p259.
 42. Theory p151.
 43. The Philosophy of History An Historical Association leaflet no.79 (London 1930). Reprinted in W Debbins ed. R G Collingwood: Essays in the Philosophy of History (Texas 1965) pp121-39, p136.
 44. Ibid.
 45. P Gardiner is critical of what he takes to be Croce's reliance on the intuitive apprehension of 'the Unique' in history. He argues that this is an

- attempt to reintroduce knowledge by direct acquaintance as the paradigm for historical knowledge. The Nature of Historical Explanation pp40-6.
46. H.L. p187.
 47. Theory p19.
 47. H.L. p95.
 48. Theory p19. H.L. p16.
 49. Theory p37ff. H.L. p65ff.
 50. Theory p19.
 51. Ibid.
 52. Ibid. p27.
 53. Ibid. p28.
 54. Ibid.
 55. See Chapter 2.
 56. H.L. p16. Theory p29.
 57. Ibid. p24, 91, 29, 110, 136. H.L. p17, 18, 69, 83, 99, 179, 181, 186, 187, 315.
 58. Theory p14.
 59. H.L. p88.
 60. Ibid. p85.
 61. Ibid.
 62. Ibid. p95.
 63. The work I have been referring H.L..
 64. Ibid. p16.
 65. Ibid. p18.
 66. Ibid. p187.
 67. Theory p134.
 68. Ibid. p136.
 69. Haddock op. cit. p156.
 70. Theory p134.
 71. Ibid. p12.
 72. Ibid. p55 and 63.
 73. Ibid. p72.
 74. Ibid. p101.
 75. Ibid. p76. H.L. p65.
 76. Autobiography p107.
 77. H.L. p183.
 78. Theory p39. 'Philological history' p27ff.
 79. H.L. p179.
 80. Ibid.
 81. Ibid. p180.
 82. Ibid.
 83. Ibid. p48.
 84. Theory p.39.
 85. Ibid.
 86. See H Butterfield "Moral Judgement in History" in H Meyerhoff ed. The Philosophy of History in Our Time: An Anthology (New York 1959).
 87. H.L. p47.
 88. Ibid.
 89. Ibid.

90. Theory p86: 'A condemned fact, a fact that is repugnant, is not yet a historical proposition...' p90.
91. Theory p94.
92. Ibid. p101.
93. Ibid. p81.
94. Op. cit. p217. He criticises the 'tendency towards a schematic rationalism' in Croce's thought, p208.
95. H.L. p59.
96. A History of Italy 1871-1915 transl. C M Ady (Oxford 1929). History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century transl. H Furst (New York 1933, London 1934) and A History of the Kingdom of Naples (London 1935).
97. H White op. cit. p121.
98. Atkinson Knowledge and Explanation in History (New York 1978), p24.
99. H.L. p163.
100. White op. cit. p118. In H.L. Croce seems to accept the important vitality of the irrational - a "raw material" of history: 'Historicism accepts the "irrational" and understands it within the framework of its own activity and thereby reveals its rational light...' p66.
101. H.L. p224ff. See S Hughes op. cit. p217. See also Croce Philosophy of the Practical: Economic and Ethic transl. D Ainslie (London 1913) pp27-28.
102. H.L. p224. See also p18 and Theory p122. Pois, op. cit. p258, talks of Croce's belief that the '...spirit unfolds itself in particular forms'.
103. H.L. p186. Croce maintains, however, that: 'The link between historiography and practical activity, historical knowledge and action...[is not] causalistic or deterministic [but] the solution of a particular theoretical difficulty'. p187.
104. H.L. p59. History, Croce argued, 'must always be energetically subjective' Theory p86. This accords with his favourable judgement of Burckhard, H.L. p100, a historian who has stories to tell. See also Hughes op. cit. p221. He concludes that Croce provides not 'satisfactory' ground for historical truth, '...one is once more reduced to an "act of faith".' p227.
105. Op. cit. p225.
106. Theory p55, 63, 91, 139.
See Wildon Carr op. cit. p18: 'The reason why we can have no final history is the reason why we can have no final philosophy. Reality is life and history'.
See Haddock An Introduction to Historical Thought (London 1980).
107. See, for example, his judgement of 19th century Italy as sublimated into the purest exemplification of the liberal ideal, and of the Baroque era as decadent. See Hughes op. cit. p225.
108. Autobiography p98.

109. Theory p24. See H.L. p.17.
 110. See Dexler op. cit.
 111. Theory p75: The 'point of departure' in history is 'the mind that thinks and constructs the fact'.

Chapter 2 R G Collingwood: History as Self-Knowledge of Mind

1. The Idea of History (Oxford 1946) I.N. Editor's preface pp.
2. An Essay on Philosophical Method (Oxford 1933) E.P.M.
3. The Idea of Nature (Oxford 1946) I.N. like I.H. published posthumously.
4. Knox 14 pXX.
5. An Autobiography (Oxford 1986). All quotations and references to this work are to the 1944 edition.
6. An Essay on Metaphysics (Oxford 1940) E.M.
7. Op. cit. pXI.
8. Op. cit. ppXX-XXI. Van der Dussen has pointed out that Collingwood's illness began much earlier than Knox suggests. It started, he claims, with Collingwood contracting chicken pox in April 1931 and a subsequent period of illness which lasted a whole year and which forced him to take leave for the first term of 1932. W J Van Der Dussen History as Science: The Philosophy of R G Collingwood (Boston 1980).
9. The Principles of History, an unfinished manuscript of about 90 pages which was written between October 1938 and April 1939. Although Knox used parts of the manuscript in compiling I.H. - "Hegel and Marx" I.H. pp113-126, "Historical Evidence" I.H. pp249-82, "History and Freedom" I.H. pp315-20, it was subsequently lost.
10. Quoted by Knox op. cit. pIV.
11. Ibid. pVI.
12. For a summary of Knox's editorial selection see Van der Dussen op. cit. p61 and 64. See also Knox "Notes on Collingwood's Philosophical Work: With a Bibliography". Proceedings of the British Academy (1943) pp469-475.
13. Knox op. cit. pVII.
14. W Debbins ed. R G Collingwood: Essays in the Philosophy of History (Austin 1965).
15. The archive is located in the Bodleian Library Oxford. A smaller archive is housed in the Pembroke College Library.
16. A Donagan The Later Philosophy of R G Collingwood (Oxford 1962).
17. L O Mink Mind, History and Dialectic. The Philosophy of R G Collingwood (Indiana 1969).
18. L Rubinoff Collingwood and the Reform of Metaphysics: A study in the Philosophy of Mind (Toronto 1970).

19. W H Dray Laws and Explanation (Oxford 1957). For a list of Dray's other writings on Collingwood see the bibliography of this thesis.
20. Donagan op. cit. p5, 6, 9ff. Donagan recognises a conversation to 'historicism' occurring 'perhaps' in 1935 or 36 (pp10, 11) possibly as a result of an 'absorption in history' during this time (p14) but he calls for a less radical view of this change than the "fall" outlined by Knox. He believes I.H., IN, The Principles of Art, and The new Leviathan from a 'largely consistent whole' (p18) which 'should not be divided into historicist and non-historicist groups'.
21. Debbins op. cit. ppXXXI, XXXII. E E Harris "Collingwood's Theory of History" The Philosophical Quarterly No.7 (1957) p35.
22. Mink op. cit.
23. The New Leviathan Oxford 1942.
24. Mink makes this particularly clear in an essay "Collingwood's Historicism: A dialectic of Progress" in M Krausz ed. Critical Essays in the Philosophy of R G Collingwood (Oxford 1972). Mink lists three 'recessive' doctrines in I.H. p157ff.
25. Op. cit. p11ff. Dussen, unlike Knox, Donagan or Mink, believes that Collingwood's development is consistent with the account he gave himself in his Autobiography. See p157ff.
26. Autobiography p41. See Collingwood's own account his break from British idealism in his Autobiography pp18, 19, 41. In Speculum Mentis (Oxford 1924) Collingwood writes: 'in abolishing the notion of an external world other than the mind we do not assert any of the silly nonsense usually described by unintelligent critics as idealism...' p311.
27. This is infact the thrust of Van der Dussen's argument with respect to the essays and manuscripts of 1926-28: a conversion to an anti-realist approach to our knowledge of the past, op. cit. p32ff.
28. Van der Dussen op. cit. makes extensive use of the correspondence between Collingwood and De Ruggiero. See, for example, p14.
29. See chapters four and five of this thesis.
30. I owe much of the following discussion to a reading of Van der Dussen, op. cit. Whereas, however, he argues for the existence of a shift in Collingwood's historical thought from realism to anti-realism, I am more specifically concerned to retain the label idealist as the leading characteristic of his idea of history.
31. Rubinoff op. cit. p27.
32. Mink Mind, History and Dialectic p20.
33. Op. cit. p249, along with the other forms of experience: art, religion and science.
34. Ibid. p220.
35. Ibid.

36. Cf Autobiography p22. Collingwood quotes Moore talking of the "transparency" of the act of knowing'. See also Speculum Mentis (S.M.) p283.
37. S.M. p41. Each of the forms of experience is believed by those engaged in them 'to afford truth and indeed absolute truth concerning the nature of reality'. In this they are 'competitors for one prize, the prize of truth'. Passages like this are remarkably similar intone to Oakeshott's account of the 'abstraction' inherent in the 'arrests' or 'modes' of experience in Experience and its Modes. See chapter 3.
38. See S.M. p311.
39. Ibid. p231.
40. Ibid. p234.
41. Ibid. p238.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid. pp245-6. See also p295.
44. Ibid. p256.
45. Ibid. p309. He writes: 'The various countries on our initial map...turn out to be variously distorted versions of one and the same country...'
46. Ibid. p252 and 295.
47. Although history, as a dialectic, is capable of 'dialectical development' (p253) and philosophy takes up 'much belonging to the historical frame of mind', what is destroyed is history's pretension to know a concrete reality of fact: this turns out to be 'an illusion...perfectly unknowable' (p238).
48. Autobiography p22.
49. Written in 1917. See Collingwood's own account in the Autobiography p33.
50. Ibid. p29.
51. S.M. p208.
52. Ibid. p210
53. Ibid. p216. This realistic view of history was first articulated in Religion and Philosophy (Oxford 1916): 'History is that which actually exists, fact as something independent of my own or your knowledge of it' p49.
54. See, for example, the 1927 document, "The Idea of a Philosophy of something, and in particular, a Philosophy of History" (attached to 1926 lecture notes). On pXXV he writes that, philosophy of history is 'the exposition of the transcendental conception of history, the study of history as a universal and necessary form of mental activity'. Or again, 'the empirical concept [of history] is nothing but the prima facie application of the transcendental concept'.

Rubinoff, op. cit. p113, has made the point that, throughout Collingwood's work, it is 'left to the reader to decide on which occasions he is referring

- to history as a general habit of mind and on which occasions he is referring to it as a special discipline'.
55. "The Idea of a Philosophy of something..." pXXV. See also "The Philosophy of History" in Debbins op. cit. pp121-39.
Van der Dussen links this in the theory of philosophical concepts discussed in E.P.M.
 56. "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History" first published in The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society XXV (1924-5), reprinted in Debbins op. cit. pp151-74.
 57. See for example "Science and History" The Vasculum 9 (1923) pp52-9. 'History and science both deal with reality - the only reality in existence - concrete fact'. In "Croce's Philosophy of History" Hibbert Journal XIX (1921), in Debbins op. cit. pp3-22. Collingwood actually attacks the distinction between science (abstract classification) and history (concrete individual thought) arguing that both historians and scientists generalise and both reconstruct particular events. See Debbins pla. And in "Are History and Science different kinds of knowledge?" Mind XXXI (1922), in Debbins pp23-33, Collingwood argues against the distinction between history as knowledge of the particular and science as knowledge of the universal, arguing that there is only knowledge of the individual (Debbins p29). This false distinction is based on an 'inside view of science' and 'an outside view of history', Debbins p33.
 59. "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History" p49.
 60. Ibid.
 61. Ibid. p39. "Such mutilations and misrepresentations ...are...explained by the limits of the historian's intelligence".
 62. For much the same reason as instanced in S.M. History 'assumes that there is a world of fact independent of the knowing kind, a world which is only revealed and in no sense constituted by the historian's thought'. (p46). Thus the historian is 'always a spectator of a life in which he does not participate...' (p47).
 62. Van Der Dussen charts this contradiction in the first chapters of his book.
 63. S.M. p46.
 64. S.M. p44: 'a world in which truth and error are at any given moment inextricably confused together'.
 65. Bosanquet The Principle of Individuality and Value (London 1912) p79.
 66. Autobiography p59.
 67. I.H. pl4lff.
 68. "Croce's Philosophy of History" op. cit.
 69. Ibid., Debbins p4. Collingwood is not entirely sympathetic towards Croce - the "amateur" philosopher

- and in particular (p8ff) he criticises the tension implicit in Croce's thought generated by the presence of an unresolved materialist-idealist dualism.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid. p7.

72. As he did in both S.M. and "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History".

73. Collingwood enthuses over the relative nature of historical understanding: 'History, to be, must be seen, and must be seen by somebody, from somebody's point of view'.

74. He makes this point again in "The Nature and Aims..." p54: 'The various "perspectives" of historians are arranged in a "space of perspectives", each historian is a monad which mirrors the universe from a point of view which is irrevocably not another's point of view'.

75. Ibid. p55. 'The historian can never get outside his own point of view and see it as a monad among monads...he is a victim of the "egocentric predicament" which holds good for all people'.

76. Ibid. p56. Just why the historian is unable to transcend his own particular perspective is unclear. Collingwood seems to be suggesting that it is in the nature of his subject-matter, its partiality and abstraction. The idea of a philosopher-historian who writes history in the self-consciousness of its intimate relation to the 'Knowing mind' is ruled out because Collingwood believes the subject-matter of history is a world of related facts which cannot be organic to a present enquiry: they belong to a dead "reality". Philosophical judgement upon the activity of historians alone seems feasible.

77. Ibid. p14ff. This is particularly interesting since Collingwood argues that history involves 're-thinking' or 're-living', passing judgement again, and, in this sense, 'a past agent is not dead, not beyond judgement' in the way Croce believed. The proximity of past to present is a function of the partial and relative understanding of historians. Collingwood calls for full awareness of this. He does not, at this time, however, believe that historical re-thinking offers a way towards a reapprochement between philosophy and history. It illustrates the inevitable distortion involved in any attempt to describe past reality.

78. "The Idea of a Philosophy of something..." op. cit. ppXII-XIII.

79. Ibid. See also the letter written to Croce on 5 January 1928: 'I have learnt from you to regard philosophy as primarily the methodology of history'. Quoted from Donagan The Later Philosophy p315.

80. Van Der Dussen op. cit. p35ff.

81. Ibid.

82. IH p126. See also the 1930 essay "The Philosophy of History" in Debbins op. cit. pp121-139.
83. "Outlines of a Philosophy of History" written in April 1928 at Die in France, pp12-13. It is in this document that Collingwood argues: 'All history, then, is the history of thought, where thought is used in the widest sense and includes all the conscious activities of the human spirit'.
84. See Bibliography.
85. Op. cit.
86. Ibid. p43.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid. p55. This clearly illustrates the dualism present in Collingwood's thought: 'The more the historian knows, the more accurately he becomes aware that he will never know anything'.
89. Ibid. p43.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid. p44.
93. See Chapter 5.
94. An idea which Collingwood pursue to the limit in IH. See, for example, "The Historical Imagination" p232.
95. "Lectures on the Philosophy of History" (75 pages) written between 9 and 13 January 1926 and delivered from January to March of that year, p21.
96. Ibid. p42.
97. Ibid. pp53-4.
98. Ibid.
99. IH p155.
100. "Lectures on the Philosophy of History" op. cit. p51.
101. Van Der Dussen op. cit., has noted that this manuscript is a complete revision of the 1926 lectures, p143.
102. "Outlines..." p4.
103. See ibid. p6.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
106. Op. cit. p143.
107. Ibid.
108. "Outlines..." p14. At this point Collingwood makes a distinction between past 'thoughts' and feelings or emotions which 'cannot be re-enacted by the historian'.
109. IH p141ff.
110. In the Die manuscript Collingwood made it clear that the 'identity of a past thought with the one re-thought by the historian must be seen as conceptual'. p14.
111. See the Autobiography p57 and IH p269.
112. Mink "Collingwood's Historicism: A Dialectic of Progress" in Krausz ed. p155. Mink also makes the important distinction between the 'empirical' and

- 'philosophical' concept of history (p158, 160) and refers the reader to EPM p35.
113. Mink op. cit. p165.
 114. Mink op. cit.
 115. Ibid. p155ff.
 116. See Bibliography for a list of Dray's articles.
 117. See Bibliography for relevant works.
 118. See Bibliography. A sample of criticisms is provided by Van Der Dussen op. cit. p81ff.
 119. For a useful discussion of this idea see Van Der Dussen op. cit. p259ff.
 120. See IH pp282-302 and Index under 're-enactment, conception of' p338.
 121. See pp 36, 125-6, 143, 257-66, 269-70, 274-81, 319.
 122. Ibid. pp302-315.
 123. The analysis of the "idea" of history in the central theme of the first four parts of IH.
 124. Ibid. Index p338.
 125. See in particular the intricate discussion of 'numerical difference and specific identity' p285ff.
 126. See Autobiography p54.
 127. Gardiner, P. The Nature of Historical Explanation p47.
 128. Ibid.
 129. Ibid. p39.
 130. Renier G.J. History: Its Purpose and Methods (London 1950) p48.
 131. IH p214.
 132. Ibid. p294.
 133. Autobiography p77.
 134. Gardiner op. cit. p36: '...the suggestion of some sort of telepathic communication with past thoughts is too insistent to be entirely disregarded. What is at least fairly clear is that in much of Collingwood's work the desire to assimilate the past to the present so that the requirement of an acquaintance theory of knowledge may be satisfied is in evidence'.
 135. See for example Renier's demand: 'What warranties are there for this limitation of the idea of history' op. cit. p45.
 136. Collingwood charts the course of his disillusionment in the Autobiography pp34ff.
 137. Donagan The Later Philosophy... op. cit. p227. See also Collingwood's discussion IH p301.
 138. Gardiner "The Objects of Historical Knowledge" Philosophy 27 (1952) pp211-220. p216. Here Gardiner rehearses the theory that Collingwood was aiming at some kind of acquaintance theory of knowledge. See Dray's comment on Gardiner's views and their links with Gilbert Ryle's "dispositional" view of mind in "RGC and the Acquaintance Theory of Knowledge" Review Internationale de Philosophie 11 (1957) pp420-32.

139. Gardiner *ibid.* p213. Collingwood makes this plain in IH p115: '...history is not history unless it presents us with a series of acts...only knowable...as the outward expression of thoughts'.
140. IH p226. See also Autobiography p76.
141. Dray W.H. Perspectives on History (London 1980) p14.
142. See "Historical Evidence" IH pp249-282 and p246: 'What we mean by asking whether an historical statement is true is whether it can be justified by an appeal to the evidence...'
143. IH p133.
144. *Ibid.* p202.
145. See Collingwood's account of his experience on Archaeological excavations in his Autobiography pp83ff and Van Der Dussen's helpful chapter on "Collingwood as Archaeologist and Historian" pp202-241 *op. cit.*
146. This is a word used by Dray to express the idea of historians seeking a rational explanation of a past occurrence: 'What Collingwood is claiming when he says the thoughts must be "re-thought", is that they are only explanatory if the historian is able to certify for himself their sufficiency as reasons for doing what the agent did.' RGC and the Acquaintance Theory of Truth p432.
147. *Ibid.* '...a criterion of intelligibility'.
148. Van Der Dussen *op. cit.* p312.
149. IH see pp2-3, 20-1, 28, 64-6, 134-41, 151-9, 188 etc...
150. Donagan The Later Philosophy *op. cit.* p222.
151. This reaches a particularly vitriolic pitch in his condemnation of 'the "realist" dogma' that 'moral philosophy' studies a 'subject matter which it leaves wholly unaffected by that investigation' (p111), a 'detachment from practical affairs' which the older Collingwood sees directly related to a 'coming fascism' (p111).
152. Mink "Collingwood's Historicism..." *op. cit.* p157.
153. IH p213.
154. *Ibid.* p283.
155. *Ibid.* pp266-8
156. Van Der Dussen insists that the re-enactment doctrine is not involved in the question of subjectivity and objectivity, they must be looked at in terms of an interrelation between the historian's 'questioning activity and historical evidence' *op. cit.* p352.

In the Die manuscript Collingwood wrote: 'The only knowledge that the historian claims is knowledge of the answer which the evidence in his possession gives to the question he is asking...The certainty in history, then, is the certainty that the evidence in our possession points to one particular answer to one particular question we ask of it'. p36.

157. IH pp266-8.
158. IH p238. Dray argues that Collingwood's theory of mind provides us with this possibility. "Historical Understanding as Re-thinking". University of Toronto Quarterly 27 (1958) pp200-215, pp204-5.
159. See Donagan The Later Philosophy op. cit. p204: "...pure physical force, e.g. a push, can produce only a pure physical effect, e.g. a fall, but not an action, e.g. a walk or a run..."
160. IH p231.
161. See Collingwood's examples IH p317. See also the Autobiography p86, fn, where Collingwood distinguishes between actiones and passiones, the latter being 'instances of being acted upon', e.g. the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79, which only 'becomes an "historical event" in so far as people were not merely affected by it, but reacted to this affection by actions of various kinds'.

The criticism that Collingwood ignored the importance of physical changes in the environment has been levelled by J A Roberts, among others: '...natural changes cannot possibly be explained in terms of human motives or intentions'. History and Christian Apologetic (London 1960) p13. But W H Walsh, "R G Collingwood's Philosophy of History" Philosophy 22 (1947) p155, Donagan The Later Philosophy op. cit. p204, and Mink Mind, History and Dialectic op. cit. p171-2, have all supported Collingwood. Mink writes: that natural facts 'are relevant to history only to the extent that they enter the consciousness of men'.

162. The important point, clarified in "History and Freedom" IH p315ff, is that the rationality of an agent's position consists in his ability to think about his situation 'rightly or not' (p317). 'When an historian says that a man is in a certain situation this is the same as saying that he thinks he is in this situation', but he is not free at all with regard to the situation in which he stands which is his 'master, his oracle, or his god' (p316). The 'hard facts of the situation' will always be the way an agent conceives his position (p317).
163. In IH, p231, Collingwood does indeed dismiss 'irrational elements' - the 'subject-matter of psychology' - from history. These 'blind forces' form the 'proximate environment in which our reason lives', and this is their importance.
164. In an essay of 1938, "Kind Arthur's Round Table: Interim Report in the Excavations of 1937". LW (1938) pp1-31, Collingwood writes: '...history can only demonstrate its own right to exist by demonstrating the rationality of its subject-matter ...by showing that a tangle of facts, patiently unravelled, makes sense.'

165. IH p213.
166. Rex Martin provides a good account of this 'practical deliberation' on the part of an historian. See Historical Explanation: Re-enactment and Practical Inference (Ithaca 1977) pp50-52. See also p149: 'When we explain by re-enactment we simply exhibit certain specified connections as holding between particular thought factors and between these and the particular deed we are explaining'.
- See also P Skagestad Making Sense of History: The Philosophies of Popper and Collingwood (Oslo 1975) and his example of Columbus' crossing of the Atlantic, p18ff. He argues that both Collingwood and Popper believe that an historical problem must be understood as the attempt to solve a problem. For a penetrating account of the shortfalls of Skagestad's argument see Nielsen, M H and Shearmus, J C G "Making Sense of History: Skagestad on Popper and Collingwood" Inquiry 22 pp459-89. See Dray Perspectives op. cit. p23.
168. See Martin op. cit. p52.
169. Dray Perspectives op. cit. p11.
170. The argument between a 'methodological' and 'non-methodological' interpretation of Collingwood's re-enactment theory is well charted by Van Der Dussen p100ff. Dussen lists Donagan, Dray, Schoemaker ("Inference and Intuition in Collingwood's Philosophy of History" The Monist 53 (1969) pp100-15), Martin and Mink as proponents of the non-methodological interpretation. Against them we might range Goldstein, Gardiner and Skagestad.
171. Martin op. cit. p52ff.
172. Ibid. p53.
173. In this sense re-enactment of past thought is, in Donagan's words, 'not a precondition of historical knowledge, but an integral element in it', Donagan "The Verification of Historical Theses" The Philosophical Quarterly 6 (1956) pp193-208. Schoemaker puts it in the following way: 'Re-enactment is not an explanation of how the historian arrives at knowledge of past thoughts, but rather, it explains how or on what conditions knowledge of the past is possible'.
174. IH 263, 284-5, 287-8, 298, 299.
175. IH p287, 300.
176. Ibid. p280.
177. Dray "R G Collingwood and the Acquaintance Theory of Knowledge" op. cit. p431.
178. Ibid. Dray argues that Collingwood's theory attempts to 'elicit the criteria of intelligibility in employed in historical studies', p432.
179. Dray Perspectives p23.
180. P56.

181. See Donagan The Later Philosophy, Goldstein "Collingwood's Theory of History" History and Theory 9 (1970) pp3-36, Mink "Collingwood's Historicism..." op. cit. see p154, Van Der Dussen op. cit. see Chapter 5 "Collingwood as an Archaeologist and Historian" p202ff.
182. Op. cit. See in particular Van Der Dussen's account of Collingwood's theory of 'Romanization' p24ff and p260, 271. He argues that the idea of Romanization, expressed both in Roman Britain (Oxford 1923, 1932) and Roman Britain and the English Settlements (1936) exemplifies the theory of a 'scale of forms' which 'are dialectically related to each other, in which their generic essence is realised in varying degrees'; and idea Collingwood developed in EPM.
183. This is the view held by Dray, but not by Donagan who argues that Collingwood was a methodological individualist in the 'strongest sense of that disputable term' The Later Philosophy p206. In defence of the opposite view see Collingwood himself IH p219, "A Philosophy of Progress" The Realist 1 (1929), in Debbins ed. pp104-20, and my discussion of Goldstein's interpretation of Collingwood on the following pages.
184. The clearest example of Collingwood's belief in the importance of "unconscious action" in history is his account of the survival of Celtic art during the period of Roman Occupation of Britain, see Roman Britain op. cit. p247, and Goldstein's comments in "Collingwood on the Constitution of the Historical Past" in Krausz ed. pp241-67. See also the Autobiography p92ff. This idea is given philosophical underpinings in The New Leviathan (Oxford 1942) NL see section 38.
185. Autobiography p25.
186. See for example A Toynbee A Study of History Vol.9 pp717-37 where he speaks of Collingwood's 'rule', 'instruction' and 'prescription'.
187. See IH "Historical Evidence" pp249-81.
188. See Autobiography pp56-7: 'The historian has to decide exactly what he wants to know'.
189. IH 237, 252-6, 269-74, 280-1, 311-12.
190. See Dray's excellent account in Perspectives op. cit. pp9-26.
191. Ibid. p21.
192. Goldstein "Collingwood on the Constitution of the Historical Past" op. cit. p244.
193. Ibid. p262
194. Dray "Collingwood's Historical Individualism" op. cit. p3.

Dray mentions the long chapter Collingwood contributed to Frank's Economic Survey of Ancient Rome (Baltimore 1937) as scarcely citing an

individual agent. Instead there are examples of the survival of a Celtic style of art, changes in patterns of town and country life. See also the example of a strike at a factory IH p310 and NL p283 and the argument that 'civilisation is something that can only happen to people collectively, not individually'. Mink's elaboration of Collingwood's theory of presuppositions in the understanding of institutions is also illumination, Mind, History and Dialectic p176ff.

195. IH p65.
196. Op. cit. p20. The important point made by Dray is that since 'even my knowledge of my own mind is achieved by interpreting my activities as expressions of thoughts', and not a case of 'privileged access' then 'a group mind, if it existed would be "accessible" to historians in precisely the same way as any mind is accessible to them'.
197. Goldstein "Collingwood on the Constitution..." op. cit. p248. See also Van Der Dussen for the same point, p324.
198. Op. cit. pp262-3.
199. Op. cit. p266.
200. Ibid. p262.
201. Dray Perspectives p19. See IH p215: 'cause...[is] ...the inside of the event itself'.
202. Autobiography p73.
203. IH p262, 249, p231ff.
204. Ibid. p248.
205. Collingwood argues that although '...evidence changes with historical method, principles of criticisms change...questions change' this is 'not an argument for historical scepticism'.
206. Ibid. p251. See also p133.
207. Donagan The Later Philosophy op. cit. p210ff.
208. "The Limits of Historical Knowledge" Journal of Philosophical Studies 3 (1928) in Debbins ed. pp90-103, pp97ff.
209. IH p280. See also p246. Collingwood considers this himself.
210. See IH p244. This suggests that Collingwood's 'historical imagination' the 'innate' idea of an historical landscape is really something rather pragmatic: It is important to see his division between 'scientific' and 'scissors and paste' history in terms of both range of enquiry and critical status of enquires.
211. Ibid. p275.
212. Ibid see p256ff.
213. Ibid. p274.
214. Autobiography p34.
215. IH p274. See also Autobiography p22ff.
216. IH p274.
217. Ibid. p236.

218. Ibid. p9, by which, of course, he means 'thought expressed in events', p214.
219. Autobiography p37, 63, 99.
220. Ibid. p22.
221. Ibid. p111.
222. Ibid. p73.
223. See the manuscript "Notes on Historiography" written on Collingwood's voyage to the East Indies 1938-9, p11.
224. Op. cit. p34.
225. IH p300.
226. Ibid.
227. Autobiography p48.
228. See Bibliography for a list of Collingwood's historical publications between 1932 and 39. See also Van Der Dussen op. cit. Chapter 5.
229. Autobiography p73.
230. IH p234.
231. See IH p10: 'History is "for" human self-knowledge'.
232. Ibid.
233. Ibid. pp76-81.
234. Ibid. p175.
235. Autobiography pp78-9.
236. Ibid. p102. This is how Collingwood describes Manz.
237. Skagestad op. cit. p71: 'An intellectual tradition is made up of such a chain of questions and answers, each answer serving a a presupposition of logical ground for the next question'. See EM p23: 'Every statement that anybody ever makes is made in answer to a question'.
238. Skagestad op. cit. p91, a theory which he believes is outlined in the Autobiography and EM. Skagestad argues that the theory of absolute presuppositions is a later addition to defend metaphysics against 'the attacks from logical positivists'. In a review discussion of Skagestad's argument Nielsen, op. cit., argues that this connect of Collingwood's two concepts - re-enactment and the theory of presuppositions - far from being new, may be said to be 'the received' interpretation, p485.
239. Nielsen op. cit. p485.
240. Autobiography p48.
241. EM p62.
242. Skagestad, op. cit. puts this well: '...every rational, and hence intelligent action performed by an historical agent has an intelligent content. The Agent was faced with a problem, and his action was his attempt to solve that problem. The problem can be expressed as a question, and the action embodies a particular answer'. In the Die manuscript Collingwood uses the example of a game of chess - an horizon which places limits on actions and a determination which is not causal but creates new situations within which 'a free and intelligent

- agent' acts and 'exercises his freedom and intelligence' p41. See also IH p316.
243. EM p62.
244. Crucially this assumes, as Skagestad points out, a 'common rationality' (op. cit. p73) which can be 'invaded given sufficient imagination and good will.
245. Autobiography p67.
246. "Reality and History" written December 1935: 'An experimental essay designed to test how far the thesis can be maintained that all reality in history and all knowledge historical knowledge' (Bodleian Library) p20.
247. EM p32 with regard to absolute presuppositions 'the idea of verification is an idea which does not apply...'
248. Autobiography p48.
249. An introductory comment by S Toulin in his essay "Conceptual Change and the Problem of Relativity' in Krausz ed. Critical Essays op. cit. p201ff.
250. N Rotenstreich "Metaphysics and Historicism" in Krausz ed. op. cit. p179ff. Toulin op. cit. M Krausz op. cit. "The Logic of Absolute Presuppositions" p222ff.
251. Donagan The Later Philosophy Ch.IV. S2.

Skagestad, op. cit. p84ff. Donagan, Skagestad and Toulin point out that Collingwood's attempt to account for the change of one absolute presupposition into another, which is not a matter of conscious choice but of 'strains' (see EM p48fn) is not satisfactory. Toulin comments that the problem of 'conceptual dynamics' is unanswered, pp209. Rotenstreich op. cit. p198, points out the inconsistent application of the relative nature of absolute presuppositions in The Idea of Nature pp29-30.

52. Dray "Collingwood's Historical Individualism" op. cit. p15.
253. Mink Mind, History and Dialectic p149.
254. Ibid. p146, 'a prior conceptual systems' which are 'a yardstick by which experience is judged'. See EM pp193-4 and Mink "Collingwood's Historicism" p172.
255. Mind, History and Dialectic p141. It is, Mink argues 'possible to speak of the absolute presuppositions of a society'.
256. Ibid.
257. Ibid. p156.
258. Ibid.
259. Ibid.
260. Dry "Collingwood's Historical Individualism" p14
261. Ibid.
262. Op. cit. p73.

263. This is, of course, the scheme of the historiographical sections of IH, the tracing of different ideas of history.
264. EM p4.
265. Op. cit. p217.
266. See EM p96.
267. Krausz op. cit. p226.
268. In particular the placing of absolute presuppositions in the realm of unconscious causes.
269. See Toulmin op. cit. and his argument for a distinction between 'consideration of theory and of disciplinary aim' p214ff.
270. Mink Mind, History and Dialectic p146ff.
271. See Ch.5 section 3.
272. Toulmin op. cit. accuses Collingwood of choosing bad examples from the history of science, p207.
273. See IH pp63-71.
274. Not in the sense that they were actually argued over and chosen by historians or scientists at the time, but that they are susceptible to analysis by us now even though we operate under different absolute presuppositions.
275. Toulmin op. cit. p214ff.
276. Rotenstreich op. cit. p199.
277. Ibid. See also the Autobiography p48ff.
278. See Ch.4 section 3.
279. Autobiography p34.
280. A point made by Donagan The Later Philosophy p241.
281. See IH p202.
282. Autobiography p48. The metaphysician-historian inquires into beliefs, 'presuppositions of question': 'the distinction between what is true and what is false does not apply'. He had previously argued (IH p300) that it was a mistake of 'philological history' to inquire into 'what Plato thought, without inquiring "whether it is true"'.
 283. This is where truth or falsity applies since the statements metaphysicians make or refute are 'certainly true or false; for they are answers to questions about the history of these presuppositions'.
284. IH pXI.
285. Toulmin op. cit. p208.
286. IH p248 '...in history no achievement is final'.

Chapter 3 Michael Oakeshott: History Conversation or Discourse

1. See IH p158 where Collingwood presents this "third" alternative as a way out of Oakeshott's "dilemma".
2. See Experience and its Modes, EM (Cambridge 1933) pp109-10.
3. On History and other essays (OH) (Oxford 1983) p58.

4. See, for example, R F Atkinson Knowledge and Explanation in History (New York 1978). Atkinson's reaction to Oakeshott is, on the whole, one of bafflement and bemusement. See pages 10-11, 23, 24, 25, 32, 37, 40, 96, 111, 124, 158, 222. See also W H Walsh - a more sympathetic commentator - An Introduction to the Philosophy of History (London 1951) p193.
5. See for example "Moral Judgement in History" in The Philosophy of History in our Time ed. M Meyherhoff (1959). G R Elton The Practice of History (1967).
6. See W H Dray "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" p32, in P King and B C Parekh ed. Politics and Experience: Essays presented to Michael Oakeshott (Cambridge 1968) pp19-42.
7. See EM p106: 'History is the past for the sake of the past'.
8. The attitude which understands the past as 'unassimilated to ourselves is, in "The Activity of Being an Historian" in Rationalism in Politics (London 1962) pp called "Scientific". Oakeshott goes on to say, p165, '...it is precisely the task of "the historian" to loosen the tie between the past and the practical present'.
9. See P Gardiner The Nature of Historical Explanation (Oxford 1952) p58, Atkinson, op. cit. p23, W H Dray Philosophy of History (New Jersey 1964), p7, D Bebbington Patterns in History (1979) p150, M Cowling Religion and Public Doctrine Vol.1 (Cambridge 1981) p256. See also the identification of Oakeshott with the idealist position of Dilthey, Croce or Collingwood in G V Renier History: Its Purpose and Methods (London 1956) and M White Foundations of Historical Knowledge (New York 1965) p3, Fischer, D H Historical Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought (New York 1970) and P Winch The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy (London 1958).
10. See Gardiner and Atkinson op. cit.
11. Dray Philosophy of History p8ff.
12. Collingwood IH p155.
13. Walsh "The Practical and the Historical Past" in King and Parekh op. cit. pp5-18.
14. The three essays are "Present, Future and Past" p1-48, "Historical Events" pp45-96, "Historical Change" p97-118.
15. Oakeshott wrote this in a letter answering a general enquiry of mine, December 6 1986.
16. Oakeshott has written this of Hobbes in his editor's introduction to Leviathan (Cambridge 1946) pXIII: '...style and matter, method and doctrine are inseparable'.
17. Cowling op. cit. p281. Cowling gives the example of the 'a-moralism which he associates with philosophy'.

18. OH p62.
19. Ibid. p26.
20. EM p7: '...what seems to be required is not so much an apology for idealism as a restatement of its first principles'. Oakeshott, in his only concession by way of bibliography, cites the influence on his thoughts of Bradley's Appearance and Reality and Hegel Phenomenologie des Geister.
21. Ibid. p82.
22. The division of EM is along these lines.
23. T Fuller editor's introduction to The Voice of Liberal Learning. Michael Oakeshott on Education (Yale 1989) p8.
24. EM p355. As early as page 1 Oakeshott writes: '...philosophy is without any direct bearing upon the practical conduct of life...'
25. Ibid. p356. (please change the quotation to 'empty kisses of abstraction').
26. Ibid. p355.
27. Fuller op. cit. p8.
28. Oakeshott writes, EM p118: 'The ultimate reference of historical judgement...is reality' and the 'criterion of reality' in history, as it is in 'all forms of experience is the criterion of self-completeness or individuality'.
29. Ibid.
30. Fuller op. cit p8fn.
31. See EM pp355-6.
32. EM p2.
33. Ibid. pp87, 88.
34. Ibid. p145.
35. Ibid. p5. Defined by Oakeshott as 'the most fatal of all errors', 'it occurs whenever argument or inference passes from one world of experience to another'. The impression, Cowling has noted, is that ignoratio elenchi 'was rotting the fabric of intellectual activity', op. cit. p258.
36. Cowling op. cit. p258 and 257.
37. "A Place of Learning" in The Voice of Liberal Learning p23, see also the footnote on page 19 of OH.
38. Fuller op. cit. p11.
39. Cowling op. cit. p258.
40. EM p148.
41. Dray "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" op. cit. p20.
42. Fuller op. cit. p8. Fuller thinks not.
43. Ibid. p9.
44. Ibid. p10.
45. IH p159.
46. This metaphor is resonant of Wittgenstein's exploration of "language games". In the feschrift presented to Oakeshott - Politics and Experience op. cit. - W H Greenleaf, in an essay entitled "Idealism, Modern Philosophy and Politics", argues (p43) that

- there is a 'certain affinity between philosophical idealism and modern linguistic philosophy'.
47. Fuller op. cit. p10.
 48. See in particular the political essays in Rationalism in Politics and other Essays op. cit. On Human Conduct (Oxford 1975) and the essays in The Voice of Liberal Learning op. cit.
 49. Op. cit. p268.
 50. EM p86ff.
 51. See "The Activity of being an Historian" p142, and OH p5.
 52. EM p86.
 53. Ibid. p87.
 54. Ibid. p111.
 55. Ibid. p101. The other postulates are 'the ideas ...of fact, of truth, and reality and of explanation'.
 56. EM p8. See also the Introduction to Leviathan pIX.
 57. EM p9ff. In this way, Collingwood argued (IH p151). Oakeshott had overcome 'Bradley's dilemma'.
 58. EM p93.
 59. Ibid.
 60. Ibid. p95. Oakeshott argues that, it '...may be convenient for the historian to think of his work as the discovery and interpretation of a past course of events, to think of historical truth as the correspondence of his ideas with a past fact, but it is the first business of anyone who undertakes to consider the character of history as a form of experience to criticise these notions'.
 61. Ibid p90.
 - 62A Ibid p91.
 - 62B Ibid.
 63. Ibid. p94.
 64. Ibid. p93.
 65. This "reading", as becomes increasingly clear in Oakeshott's reflections on history, is subject to what the 'historian as such is obliged to think'. p100.
 66. Ibid. p93.
 67. '...a fixed and finished past, a past distorted from and uninfluence by the present, is a past divorced from evidence (for evidence is always present) and is consequently nothing and unknowable'. p107.
 68. Ibid. p98.
 69. Ibid. Although this particular argument relates to a coherence theory of truth, it also has certain affinities with Collingwood's idea of the 'historical imagination' in the sense that, 'no historian begins with a blank consciousness' EM p97.
 70. Ibid. p99.
 71. An echo of Dilthey's idea of shuttling to and fro between past and whole. See Chapter one.

72. Early on Oakeshott makes it quite clear that even evidence - the tangible remains or 'survivals' from the past - 'can never take us outside our own world of experience' p117.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid. p95.
75. Walsh Introduction to the Philosophy of History (1967) p88.
76. Gardiner The Nature of Historical Explanation p36ff. It is, he argues, a 'dissatisfaction with the past for not being present'. In fact Gardiner's caricature of Oakeshott's position is very similar to Oakeshott's own description of the 'past as it really was' (p106), the assumption of a '...complete and virgin world of past events, which history would discover if it could, but which it cannot discover on account of some radical defect in human knowledge'.
77. See Meiland's chapter on Oakeshott in Historical Skepticism op. cit.
78. Atkinson op. cit. p10.
79. See EM p108.
80. Ibid. p107.
81. Dray "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" op. cit. p21.
82. EM p101.
83. Ibid. p126ff. See Dray's discussion of this in The Philosophy of History p8ff and "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" p21ff.
84. EM p140ff.
85. "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" p27ff.
86. EM p108.
87. Ibid. p118.
88. Ibid. p125.
89. Ibid. p99.
90. "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind" written in 1959 and reprinted in Rationalism in Politics op. cit. p215.
91. EM p129.
92. Ibid. p144.
93. Ibid. p122.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid. p129.
97. Ibid. p142.
98. Ibid. p140.
99. Ibid. p133ff.
100. Ibid. p135.
101. Ibid. p136.
102. Ibid. p138.
103. Ibid. p140. Both of these two sentences, despite Oakeshott's protests, are causal judgements. The actual order of words entails some form of cause and effect relationship.

104. Ibid. p143. This passage is resonant of Butterfield (Oakeshott's contemporary at Cambridge) in The Whig Interpretation of History (Cambridge 1931): 'In the last resort the historian's explanation of what happened is not a piece of general reasoning at all. He explains the French Revolution by describing exactly what it was that occurred; and if at any point we need further elucidation all that he can do is to take us into greater detail, and make us see in still more definite concreteness what really did take place' p72.
105. Dray Philosophy of History pp9, 10.
106. Dray Ibid. p33. See also "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" p31ff.
107. Philosophy of History p37.
108. EM p161.
109. Ibid. p137.
110. Ibid. p97.
111. Ibid. p111.
112. Ibid. p146.
113. Ibid. p110.
114. Collingwood IH p155.
115. Walsh Introduction to the Philosophy of History op. cit. p88.
116. EM p146.
117. Cowling op. cit. p268.
118. Op. cit. p198. On p200 philosophy is described as a 'parasitic activity'.
119. "The Activity" p137. See also "The Voice of Poetry" p197.
120. "The Activity" p137.
121. Ibid. p139.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid. p142
124. Ibid. p140.
125. Ibid. p142.
126. Ibid. p147.
127. Ibid. p143.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. Ibid. p144.
132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid. p145.
135. Ibid. p146.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid. p147.
139. Ibid.
140. Ibid. p148.
141. Ibid. p149.
142. Oakeshott instances Tolstoy's Napoleon. Ibid. p149.
143. Ibid.

144. Ibid.
145. Ibid. p150.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid. p165.
149. Ibid. p151.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid. p152.
153. Ibid.
154. Ibid. pp152-3.
155. Ibid. p153.
156. Ibid. p154.
157. Ibid. p160.
158. Ibid.
159. Ibid.
160. Ibid. p164.
161. Ibid. p144.
162. Ibid.
163. Ibid. p154.
164. Ibid. p157.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid. p148.
168. Ibid. p154.
169. Walsh "The Practical and Historical Past" op. cit. p11.
170. Ibid. p11.
171. Ibid. p9.
172. Walsh Introduction to the Philosophy of History p193.
173. Ibid. p195.
174. See "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" pp31-32 and Walsh "The Practical and Historical Past" p10.
175. See "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" p32.
176. Walsh "The Practical and Historical Past" p10.
177. "The Activity" pp157-8.
178. Ibid.
179. Ibid. p162.
180. See p166 ibid.
181. Dray "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" pp31-2.
182. "Rationalism in Politics" in Rationalism in Politics op. cit. p23.
183. "The Activity" op. cit. p158.
184. Ibid. p166.
185. Ibid.
186. Ibid. p159.
187. Indeed in IH, p158, Collingwood offers Oakeshott a way out of his supposed dilemma: '...the disjunction that the past is either a dead past or not past at all but simply present'. There is a 'third alternative' that the past should be a living past. Oakeshott's allusion to body-snatching is a firm rejection of this offer.
188. "The Activity" p166.

189. Ibid.
190. Ibid. p165.
191. Ibid.
192. Ibid.
193. Ibid.
194. Ibid.
195. Ibid.
196. "The voice of Poetry" op. cit. p212. See also QH p26: "...all other engagements may be recognised as holidays, enjoyed from time to time, from which we are recalled to the business of life and death and dinner and the mode of understanding these entail'.
197. QH footnote p19.
198. Ibid. p19.
199. Ibid. p6.
200. Ibid. p3.
201. Ibid. p5.
202. Ibid. pp4-5.
203. Ibid. p6.
204. Ibid.
205. Ibid. p5.
206. Ibid. p7.
207. Ibid. p5.
208. Ibid. p34.
209. Ibid. p118.
210. Ibid.
211. Ibid. pp1-44.
212. Ibid. p27.
213. Ibid. p11.
214. Ibid.
215. Ibid.
216. Ibid.
217. Ibid.
218. Ibid. p25.
219. Ibid. p10.
220. Ibid. p20.
221. Ibid. p23.
222. Ibid.
223. Ibid. p20.
224. See p23 ibid.
225. Ibid. p9.
226. Ibid. p15ff.
227. Ibid. p17.
228. Ibid. p18.
229. Ibid. p40.
230. Ibid. p19.
231. Ibid. p39ff.
232. Ibid. p37.
233. Ibid. p43. On p42 Oakeshott talks of the "emblematic tropes" contained in the storehouse. This is yet another distinctly structuralist term employed by Oakeshott in these later essay.
234. Ibid. p37.
235. Ibid. p28.

236. Ibid.
237. Ibid. p27.
238. Ibid.
239. Ibid p32 and 35.
240. Ibid. p35.
241. Ibid.
242. Ibid. p30. This forms a central part of Oakeshott's argument that there is 'nothing that may properly be called "direct" evidence of a past which has not survived' (p56). A 'survival is not a witness to an occurrence' (p55), it 'speaks only of itself'. This could be taken to imply a "documentary" understanding of history - the study of written 'survivals' - but this perhaps pays too much attention to Oakeshott's use of the metaphor of speech 'language' or 'utterance'. Nor do I believe that Oakeshott is confining history to the study of solely rational responses to situations. His point is that evidence is not evidence for something else, a reality it obscures through partiality and decay. Evidence, in history, is the past, the only past in which historians can interest themselves. A sixteenth century dress, an Anglo-saxon cooking instrument, is as much a response to a situation as parliamentary records or private diaries, and, for Oakeshott, they are to be read in this way. They are artifacts, in Peter Munz's words 'mini-narratives' (see chapter 5 section IV), that is, a past which comes to us already structured, shaped or written. I take Oakeshott's point to be, once again, an epistemological one, to drive home his contention that the historical past seeks to understanding the present existence of 'survivals'.
243. Ibid. p33.
244. Ibid. p32.
245. Ibid. p40. See Chapter 5 section IV.
246. Ibid. p93 and 63.
247. Ibid. P93 footnote.
248. Ibid. p47.
249. Ibid. p52.
250. Ibid. p50.
251. Ibid. p53.
252. Ibid.
253. Ibid.
254. Ibid.
255. Ibid. p32. Oakeshott seems to suggest that historical interest cannot, by itself, "guarantee" evidence. At the very least this interest assumes the concept of project - a much more specific and directed sense of interest.
256. Ibid. p53.
257. Ibid.
258. Ibid.
259. Ibid.

260. Ibid. pp53-4.
261. Ibid. p254. That is to say they constitute a record of res gesta.
262. Ibid. p62.
263. Ibid.
264. Ibid.
265. Ibid.
266. Ibid.
267. Ibid. p62. Ranke's dictum comes in for criticism, p66 footnote, because it suggests that the 'historian already knows what happened...'
268. Ibid. p64.
269. Ibid. See also p67.
270. Ibid. p67.
271. Ibid.
272. Pages 68, 73ff, 91.
273. See p80.
274. Ibid. p81.
275. Ibid.
276. Ibid. p76ff. Oakeshott tackles Popper's 'marginally different formulation' p79. The two were colleagues at the London School of Economics.
277. Ibid. p75.
278. Ibid. pp79-80.
279. Ibid. p93: 'In the sense of being observed to be happening or of being recognised to have happened' footnote. See also p63.
280. Ibid. p85. Oakeshott dismisses the causal criterion of intentionality - the assignable actions of individuals. He contends that this notion of causality is misplaced since it reads history backwards from the present or from events later in time to that being investigated (see p67). Once again Oakeshott seems to have got wound up in his own phenomenological niceties. Historians, it would appear, after assembling a passage of related events in answer to an historical question, cannot proceed to explore causal relations (of any dimension) between them, and this, even if they remain fully conscious that this activity relies wholly on their interpretations or narratives.
281. Ibid. p86.
282. Ibid. p64.
283. Ibid.
284. Ibid. p92.
285. Ibid. p94. My supervisor pointed out that gravity makes this a bad metaphor.
286. Ibid. see p102 and 94.
287. Ibid. p67.
288. Ibid. p95.
289. Ibid. p102.
290. Ibid.
291. Ibid. p95. "Cause", in Oakeshott's schema, has become so entirely marginalised that it 'refers to...

this contingent, circumstantial relationship of antecedent events to a subsequent whose differences conerge to compose the difference which constitutes the character of the subsequent'.

292. See pp92-95.
293. Ibid. p56.
294. Ibid. p90.
295. Ibid. This is a very important critique of comparative history.
296. Ibid. p114.
297. Ibid. p163.
298. Ibid. p117.
299. Ibid. p28.
300. Ibid.
301. Ibid. pp33-34.
302. Ibid. p46.
303. "A Place of Learning" in Fuller op. cit. p23.
304. Ibid. p19.
305. Ibid.
306. On Human Conduct op. cit. p6.
307. "A Place of Learning" p26.
308. On History p66.
309. Ibid. p117.
310. Ibid. p117.
311. Op. cit. p166. In On History, p118, Oakeshott concludes that, although there have been 'some superb achievements', history 'has remained a somewhat uncertain and confused engagement'.
312. To argue that is, that the activity of being an historian is not that of contributing to the elucidation of a single coherence of events.
313. "The Activity" pp157-8.

Note: Paul Franco's The Political Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott. (New Haven and London 1990) appeared after the completion of my final. I must, therefore, confine it to a cursory note.

Although, on his own admission, Franco's interest in what Oakeshott has to say about history is limited to exploring the 'main theme of philosophy' in Experience and its Modes, his account of historical "experience" is clear and purposeful. He emphasises Oakeshott's description of the philosophical error implicit in what historians do (pp39-40). Philosophical thought reveals that a belief in the pastness of the past is the root of history's abstraction, but, it is a necessary assumption which sustains and encourages the historian. Indeed, the historian cannot transcend this error without abandoning history and accepting philosophy's search for unlimited and complete experience. Franco rightly points out Oakeshott's dual intention: to limit historicist ambitions (of among others Croce and Collingwood and thus reveal the 'error in the half-truth' of history, what it implies but

cannot deliver (a completely coherent world), but also to affirm the truth which history, as a mode of experience, 'partially possesses'. Philosophy supersedes and destroys history only in its pretension to be the true basis of our knowledge, the 'whole of experience'. Philosophy cannot make historical experience more coherent (speculative philosophy of history) since this would be ignoratio elenchi.

Franco concludes his analysis with a brief mention of "The Activity of being an Historian". He does not mention On History, believing that Oakeshott's convictions have remained remarkably unchanged in fifty years. This is true. Yet there is one significant shift. I suggest that Oakeshott's concern with historicism has faded. He seems more concerned to defend a legitimate, if severe, historical interest from the intrusion of practical ends and rationalistic schemes. An historical past as the pursuit of the past for its own sake, without utility or practical reward, is far closer to the conception of philosophy in EM. Of course it is the world organised under logical postulates and therefore its truth is always limited. But an historical part, Oakeshott stresses, is most certainly coherent within its own terms. Thus the philosopher's elucidation of history contributes, despite Oakeshott's denials, to both the defence and the definition of a legitimate historical interest: philosophy of history without capital letters.

Part II An Idealist Legacy

Introduction

1. W H Walsh An Introduction to the Philosophy of History (London 1951). Unless otherwise mentioned reference will be to the amended third edition (1967) throughout.
2. See for example M Mandelbaum The Problem of Historical Knowledge (New York 1938) Renier G J History: Its Purpose and Methods (London 1930).
3. See P Gardiner's Introduction to his ed. The Philosophy of History (Oxford 1974): '...a second order form of enquiry with the aim, not of trying to elucidate and assess the human past itself, but rather of seeking to elucidate the ways in which historians typically describe or comprehend that past'. p3. See also R F Atkinson Knowledge and Explanation in History (Cornell 1978) p6.
4. There is a sense of introducing a disclaimer in Atkinson op. cit. p6: 'Philosophy of history lies outside the professional concerns of historians'. W H Dray's work argues for a closer working relation between philosophers and historians. See his passage on the Causes of the American Civil War pp47-55 in

- Philosophy of History (New Jersey 1964) and Chapter IV of Perspectives on History (London 1980) pp566-96.
5. See Atkinson op. cit.
 6. Walsh op. cit. pp13, 15, 17-26.
 7. A Danto, replaces 'critical' with 'analytical' (philosophy of history) in Analytical Philosophy of History (Cambridge 1965).
 8. Experience and its Modes (Cambridge 1933).
 9. P Gardiner The Nature of Historical Explanation (Oxford 1952) pIX.
 10. See, for example, E H Carr What is History? (Macmillan 1961) and G R Elton The Practice of History (Sydney 1967).
 11. The three works of Popper I have consulted are The Open Society and its Enemies 2 vols (London 1945), The Poverty of Historicism (London 1957) and The Logic of Scientific Discovery (London 1959).
 12. G Hempel "The Function of General Laws in History" Journal of Philosophy XXXIX (1942), "Reasons and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation" in Gardiner ed. The Philosophy of History op. cit.
 13. A useful expression which I have borrowed for Louis O Mink "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding" History and Theory Vol.V No.1 (1965) pp24-47.
 14. Dray op. cit.
 15. See for example the prefaces to the following works: Rex Martin Historical Explanation (Cornell 1977), L J Goldstein Historical Knowing (Texas 1976), R F Atkinson op. cit., and A Heller A Theory of History (1982).
 16. One need only reflect on the in-fighting, splintering and re-naming of French structuralism.
 17. See, for example, the dismissive account in Gardiner The Nature of Historical Explanation op. cit. p3, pp28-33. For a different perspective see J W Meitland Skepticism and Historical Knowledge (New York 1965).
 18. Goldstein "History and the Primacy of Knowing" History and Theory XVI (1977).
 19. See Atkinson op. cit., Gardiner The Nature of Historical Explanation, and P H Nowell-Smith "The Constructionist Theory of History" History and Theory XVI (1977).
 20. This will include P Munz's The Shapes of Time (Middletown 1977), Mink's argument for the existence of a particular synoptic judgement in history - see "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension" New Literary History I, and Hayden White's examination of the "fictionary" of fact - the literary emplotment in historical writings, Metahistory (1973), "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" in The Writing of History ed. Canary and Kozicki (1978).
 21. History and Theory VIII (1969).

- 22. Ibid. p10.
- 23. Ibid. p11.
- 24. M Cowling (Cambridge 1980).

Chapter 4 Explanation and Causally Analysis: The primacy of the Historian

Introduction

- 25. This assessment accurately reflects the feelings of Windelband, Dilthey, Croce and others and is one of the main themes of H Stuart Hughes Consciousness and Society (MacGibbon and Kee Ltd 1959).
- 26. See Chapter One.
- 29. Though this was the conclusion of F H Bradley's 1874 essay "The Presuppositions of Critical History", itself a partial restatement of Hume's essay "On Miracles".
- 30. L Wittgenstein Philosophical Investigations (second edition Oxford 1958).
- 31. M Heidegger Sein and Zeit (1927).
- 32. See the terminological changes between 1933 and On History(1983).
- 33. Laws and Explanations in History (Oxford 1957) p1.
- 34. Although, in the 1967 edition of his Introduction op. cit. and more particularly in his article "Colligatory Concepts in History" in Gardiner ed. The Philosophy of History (1974), Walsh saw certain failings in his earlier assessments: 'My interest... at that time...(was)...an attempt to defend a plausible version of the "Idealist Theory of History"' p134.
- 35. Walsh 1967 pp57-71 and "Colligatory Concepts in History" op. cit.

ii) W H Walsh: Colligation and Historical Wholes

- 37. First outlined in "The Intelligibility of History" Philosophy (XVII).
- 38. A clear reference to Oakeshott.
- 39. See "The Limits of Scientific History" (1961), reprinted in Dray ed. Philosophical Analysis and History (1966). Dray agrees with Walsh and makes a similar point in his "Coligation under Appropriate Concepts" in Dray and L Pampa ed. Substance and Form in History. Essays presented to W H Walsh (Edinburgh 1981).
- 40. "The Intelligibility of History" op. cit. p130: '...except so far as we are dealing with the actions of human beings there can be no history'.
- 41. Walsh Introduction p136.
- 42. See Introduction (1951) p63.

43. See also the "internal connections" discussed by Collingwood in IH "The Historical Imagination" pp231-249.
44. "Colligatory Concepts" p142. See also p139.
45. L Mink "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding" in Dray ed. Analysis and History pp180-1.
46. "Colligatory Concepts" p134.
47. Ibid.
48. Introduction (1951) pp49-50.
49. See Walsh's "The Practical and Historical Past" in P King and B C Parekh ed Politics and Experience: Essays presented to Michael Oakeshott (Cambridge 1968).
50. Introduction op. cit.
51. "Colligatory Concepts in History" reprinted in Gardiner op. cit. 1974: "I want to argue that the ideas of process, movement, and development rather than that of realised policy should be taken as primary in this sector of historical thought, thus allowing for the disparity between men's aspirations, and, their actual achievement'. p134 He also argued for the need to change his previous 'false' assumption that 'a man's mind and actions are private to himself'. p135.
52. See p116 footnote. Walsh refers to his earlier idea of an 'objective historical consciousness'.
53. To the 3rd edition of his Introduction Walsh added the essay "Historical Causation" pp188-206. See also his essay "The Causation of Ideas" History and Theory XIV (1975).
54. Ibid.
55. "Historical Causation" op. cit. p201.
56. Ibid. p198 (my italics)
57. Ibid. p202.
58. Walsh also uses the word 'sophisticated' e.g. p201.
59. Ibid. p204.
60. Ibid. and "The Practical and Historical Past" op. cit.
61. "Historical Causation" p196. "The Practical and Historical Past" p11.
62. "Historical Causation" p197.
63. "The Practical and Historical Past" p9.
64. "Historical Causation" p195.
65. "The Intelligibility of History" op. cit. p133.
66. Ibid. p129. See pages 131, 142.
67. "Historical Causation" p195.
68. Dray "Colligation under Appropriate Concepts" op. cit. p157. Dray goes on to say that Walsh's position is "more a revision of the idealist view than an alternative to it".
69. Ibid. p156-7.
70. "Colligatory Concepts" op. cit. p137.
71. "The Practical and Historical Past" p11.
72. Ibid. p139.

73. Ibid.
74. "The Limits of Scientific History" op. cit. p68. This is rather contradicted by his assessment in his Introduction that the 'sole criterion of truth available to us in history...is the internal coherence of the beliefs we erect on that foundation' i.e. historical evidence. p93.
75. Ibid. p66.
76. "Colligatory Concepts..." p140
77. Ibid. p142.
78. "The Limits of Scientific History" op. cit. p60.
79. Ibid. p61.
80. Introduction p68.
81. Ibid. p118.
82. "Colligatory Concepts" p128 (my italics)
83. Introduction p61.
84. "Colligatory Concepts" p144.
85. "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding" in Dray ed. Philosophical Analysis and History op. cit. p182.
86. Ibid. p185.
87. See section III.
88. "Colligatory Concepts" p136.
89. Atkinson op. cit.: 'Summarising is a matter of compendiously reporting the content of many low-level statements, statements too numerous to specify... involves selecting for emphasis and representation, some from a vastly greater number of possible statements'.
90. "The Intelligibility of History" p134.
91. See Chapter 1 section II on Croce.
92. "Colligation under Appropriate Concepts" p167.
93. "Colligatory Concepts" p140.
94. "Colligation under Appropriate Concepts" p168.
95. "Colligatory Concepts" p141.
96. "Colligation under Appropriate Concepts" p168.
97. Ibid. p167.
98. See Chapter 5 section III.
99. "Colligation under Appropriate Concepts p169.
100. Introduction p62.
101. "Colligation under Appropriate Concepts p163.
102. "The Practical and Historical Past" p11.
103. "Colligatory Concepts" p134.
104. Ibid. p143: "The Ultimate subjects concerned are doubtless individual men and women, but the historian's primary attention is not so much these as on the patterns and relationships into which they enter".
105. "The Limits of Scientific History" p70. See also "The Notion of an Historical Event" Aristotelian Society Supplement (43 1969) p163.
106. Introduction p60. Walsh admits that he (and Dray) are more concerned with interpretation than with explanation ("Colligatory Concepts" p136). His point is that to make sense of a mass of 'largely

unconnected' material the historian has to be schematic and that in engaging in detecting schemes and patterns, a historian is not departing from 'reality'. Any organisation of material amounts to interpretation 'even if it does not make the organising concept explicit'. Walsh's final point is explicitly idealist: 'we find a set of events which can be intelligibly treated as the vicissitude of a single subjects...persons, actions, institutions, movements, process... "unity in diversity" ...' pp143-4. See also "The Intelligibility of History" p136.

When one turns to Walsh's own example of the 'intrinsic relations' between events one finds only very general organising concepts: The industrial revolution, the Age of Enlightenment, the recent history of Europe under a dominant Germany. I conclude that Walsh's point is about the direction of historical interest. Historians should provide guidance in understanding past events, generalisations should not be seen as a departure from correct practice, yet all assertions rest ultimately upon a coherent organisation of evidence. Like Collingwood, Walsh believes that history deals with human actions - individual and group - and that institutions, movements and longer-term processes can be interpreted as the expression of thought, rational or not. Where I think he was confused is in occasionally projecting an interpretative device into the reality of the past. As Oakeshott would have said the past has no structure, pattern or shape until we put it there. Colligation is making sense of past events by searching for themes and as such the epistemological position of the historian is quite clear. And when Walsh argues that the past should make sense to us he is confirming this conclusion.

107. "Colligatory Concepts" p144.

ii) William Dray: A Plea for Humanistic Historiography

108. Mandelbaum: "Historical Explanations: The Problem of 'Covering Laws'" History and Theory Vol.1 (1961) p229.

109. Ibid.

110. I use this term in the sense explored by A Donagan in "Historical Explanation: The Popper-Hempel Theory Reconsidered" History and Theory IV (1965) pp3-25.

111. See Mink "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding" op. cit. p166.

112. 'To give a Causal explanation of an event means to deduce a statement which describes it, using as premises of the deduction one or more universal laws,

together with certain singular statements, the initial conditions'.

Popper The Logic of Scientific Discovery op. cit. p59.

Carl Hempel: '...a particular event - is accounted for by deducing the 'explanandum' statement, which describes the event in question, from a set of other statements, called the explanans. This set consists of some general laws and of statements describing certain particular facts or conditions, which usually are antecedent or simultaneous with the event to be explained'. 'Reasons and Covering Laws in Historical Explanation' (1963) reprinted in Gardiner ed. The Philosophy of History op. cit. p90.

113. Dray "Explaining 'What' in History" in Gardiner ed. Theories of History (Illinois 1959) p68. See also Donagan "Historical Explanation..." op. cit. p24.
114. Mandelbaum op. cit. p229. Atkinson, op. cit., concurs with this judgement, p32.
115. Op. cit.
116. T S Kuhn The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (2nd ed. Chicago 1970).
117. See, for example, M White Foundation of Historical Knowledge (New York 1965) and "Historical Explanation" (1943) reprinted in Gardiner ed. Theories of History op. cit. p357-73, M Scriven "Truisms as the Grounds for Historical Explanation" in the same volume, and May Brodbeck "Explanation, Prediction and 'Imperfect Knowledge' Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science" Vol.III (1963).
118. Gardiner The Nature of Historical Explanation op. cit.
119. See Donagans Criticisms of this position in the conclusion of "Historical Explanation" pp24-5, and a recent article in favour by J Clubb, "History as Social Science" International Social Science Journal 33, and C Lloyd Explanation in Social History (Oxford 1986).
120. See, in particular J W Meiland Skepticism and Historical Knowledge (1965) and L J Goldstein Historical Knowing (1977).
121. Mandelbaum op. cit. p231. He uses the terms Naturwissenschaft and Geisteswissenschaft.
122. See Gardiner The Nature of Historical Explanation and Atkinson op. cit.
123. See Walsh An Introduction op. cit., Danto Analytical Philosophy of History Atkinson op. cit.
124. Dray Philosophy of History (New Jersey 1964) pp47-55, Perspectives on History (London 1980) pp69-96.
125. Mink "The Autonomy..." op. cit. p164.
126. See Chapter 2 and the previous section of this chapter.

127. See Donagan op. cit. p19 for his agreement.
128. See Dray Perspectives p32 and the case "against" writing contemporary history.
129. Mink "The Autonomy..." p168.
130. Both Dray Philosophy of History and Atkinson op. cit. do this well.
131. Oxford 1957.
132. See Bibliography for a list of Dray's works.
133. Dray discusses Hempel's idea of an explanatory-sketch in historical explanation, Laws and Explanations p5.
134. See ibid. chapter 5 and a list of Dray's articles on Collingwood in my Bibliography.
135. Ibid. p47.
136. Ibid. p4 and 51.
137. Ibid. p4.
138. Ibid. p6.
139. Ibid. p4 and 5.
140. See Popper The Poverty of Historicism p62.
141. Dray Laws and Explanations p51.
142. Ibid. pp168-9.
143. Ibid. pp164-9
144. Ibid.
145. Ibid. p168.
146. Ibid. p118.
147. Ibid. p165.
148. Ibid. pp47-9.
149. Ibid. p118.
150. Dray.
151. "The Historical Explanation of Actions Reconsidered" in Gardiner ed. The Philosophy of History p89.
152. Op. cit.
153. Ibid. pp8-10.
154. Ibid. p10.
155. See Dray's assessment of Mink in "Colligatory Concepts in History" op. cit. p166.
156. See the interminable arguments of Meiland op. cit.
157. Perspectives p26.
158. "The Historical Explanation of Actions" p71.
159. See, in particular, Mind, History and Dialectic op. cit.
160. See Chapter 2.
161. Dray Philosophy of History p12. See also Perspectives p58: 'What makes the citation of an individuals beliefs, aims, attitudes, etc... so intellectually satisfying is their enabling us to see his responses as somehow "appropriate".'
162. "The Historical Explanation of Actions" p69.
163. Ibid. p70..
164. Ibid. p72.
165. Ibid. p71.
166. Laws and Explanations p138.
167. Philosophy of History p44. This is a reference to Collingwood.
168. "The Historical Explanation of Actions" p86.

169. Perspectives pp47-66.
 170. Ibid. p48.
 171. Ibid. p53.
 172. Ibid.
 173. Ibid. p66.
 174. Ibid. p65.
 175. Mandelbaum The Problem of Historical Knowledge (New York 1938).
 176. "The Historical Explanation of Actions..." p66.
 177. Laws and Explanations p164.
 178. "The Historical Explanation of Actions" p87.
 179. Ibid. p89.
 180. Perspectives p55.
 181. Ibid.
 182. See "Colligatory Concepts" op. cit.
 183. See Walsh's hesitant belief in the possibility of a 'science of human nature' Introduction 1951 p68.
 184. See, for example, H Butterfield "Moral Judgement in History" in Meyerhoff ed. The Philosophy of History in Our Time (New York 1959).
 185. Philosophy of History p47, 55.
 186. See Dray on Beard in Perspectives op. cit.
 187. Donagan "Historical Explanation..." op. cit. p24.
 188. Perspectives pp16-19.
 189. Ibid. p18.
 190. See his essay on Oakeshott "Michael Oakeshott's Theory of History" op. cit.
 191. See Walsh "The Practical and Historical Past" op. cit.
 192. "The Historical Explanation of Actions" p89.

iii) Narrative as Explanation

193. Mink "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding" p182.
 194. Danto Analytical Philosophy of History op. cit., Gallie Philosophy and Historical Understanding (1964), "The Historical Understanding" History and Theory III (1964), M White Foundations of Historical Knowledge (New York 1965), "Historical Explanation" in Gardiner ed. Theories of History, "The Logic of Historical Narration" in Sidney Hook ed. Philosophy and History (New York 1963). See also A R Louch "History as Narrative" History and Theory (XIV 1985).
 195. Dray "Mandelbaum on Historical Narrative: A discussion" History and Theory VIII (1969), "On the Nature and Role of Narrative in Historiography" History and Theory X (1971), Mink "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding", "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension" New Literary History I (1976), Walsh see section II of this chapter.
 196. Elton The Practice of History op. cit, J H Hexler "The Rhetoric of History" History and Theory VI (1967).

197. M Mandelbaum "A Note on History as Narrative" History and Theory VI (1967), see also "Causal Analysis in History" Journal of the History of Ideas III (1942) and The Autonomy of Historical Knowledge (New York 1977).
198. Mink "History and Fiction" op. cit., Hayden White Metahistory - The Historical Imagination in 19th Century Europe (1973), "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" in R H Canary and H Kozicki ed. The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding (1978), see Bibliography for Foucault.
199. See section III of this chapter.
200. Dray Philosophy of History p44. See also Laws and Explanations p113: '...to give and defend a causal explanation in history is scarcely ever to bring what is explained under a law, and almost always involves a descriptive account, a narrative, of the actual course of events, in order to justify the judgement that the condition indicated was indeed a cause'.
201. Popper The Poverty of Historicism pp149-152.
202. Op. cit.
203. Op. cit.
204. R Ely "Mandelbaum on Historical Narrative: A Discussion" History and Theory VIII (1969).
205. R Gruner "Mandelbaum on Historical Narrative: A Discussion" History and Theory VIII (1969).
206. On History p67.
207. "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding" p181.
208. Ibid. pp172-3.
209. See Chapter III>
210. Ely op. cit. p276.
211. On History p86.
212. It should be remembered that White himself was an advocate of a limited version of the converging law theory. A concern with the peculiarities of narrative entails no particular ideological/epistemological commitments.
213. Hexter op. cit. p11.
214. Ibid.
215. Mink means much the same thing when he argues that in interpretative hypotheses can serve as guides to understanding "The Autonomy..." pp175-6.
216. IH pp231-49, Walsh Introduction p67.
217. "The Historical Understanding" p168.
218. Foundations of Historical Knowledge p4. See also p3.
219. Danto op. cit. p142. See p137.
220. "A Note on History as Narrative" pp417-18.
221. Gruner op. cit. p284.
222. Dray "On the Nature and Role of Narrative..." p293, questions which '...are clearly story generating'.
223. Danto op. cit. pp63-87.
224. Ibid. p134.
225. Ibid. pp116-142. This criticism also encompasses Walsh's approval of Croce's distinction between

'plain' and a 'significant' narrative of the past. The only 'only relates what happened' while the other 'also tries to show why it happened'. "The Intelligibility of History" op. cit. p128.

226. Ibid. p99.

227. Historical Knowing op. cit. p149: '...it cannot be reasonable that the essential nature of the discipline is defined by the literary form in which results are conveyed rather than by the kind of enquiry it is... focus on narrative ignores the infrastructure of history, pays no attention to the epistemic peculiarities'.

228. A colleague pointed out to me that the historiography of Nazi Germany conforms particularly well to this sense of ordering. Not merely the assessment of important antecedent events, but also of direction, purpose and responsibility enter into shaping of this particular past. See I Kershaw The Nazi Dictatorship Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation (Edward Arnold 2nd ed. 1989). See Chapter 1 with its assessment of the shifting conclusions of Nazi historiography. One of Kershaw's "medieval" articles - "The Great Famine and Agrarian Crisis in England 1315-1322" in Past and Present (May 1973) - also illustrates how the historical past alters under different perspectives - in this case the elevation of an event - the agrarian crisis of 1315-22 - to importance for our understanding of the catastrophic impact of the Plague. The contours of 14th century British history alter considerably, and the tragedy of the plague becomes one of sophoclean anticipation rather than unheralded disaster.

229. See "Historical Explanation" op. cit.

230. The Practice of History p138.

231. "Mandelbaum on Historical Narrative" p291.

232. "The Historical Understanding" p196.

233. Ibid. p186.

234. See Dray "Mandelbaum on Historical Narrative" pp292-4, and Mandelbaum "A Note on History as Narrative" p414.

235. "The Autonomy..." pp180-1 'Articulated as separate statements in a grand finale, they are not conclusions, but reminders...of the topography of the events to which the entire narrative has given order'.

Chapter 5 Historical Truth

1. "Is Speculative Philosophy of History Possible?" in Dray and Pompa ed. Substance and Form in History p111-2.

2. Historical Knowing p149.

3. Gardiner ed. The Philosophy of History p3.

4. See, Dray Philosophy of History, Walsh Introduction, Atkinson op. cit.
5. The others include, Mink, Goldstein, Munz and to a certain extent Hayden White. See section III of this chapter.
6. Op. cit.
7. Atkinson writes, pp52-3, that it is, in effect, a non-problem.
8. Ibid.
9. See Mink "The Autonomy of Historical Understanding" p179ff.
10. Any historiographical division between the relative importance of low and high politics; economy, society or influential individuals; structuralist/functionalist analysis; the long-view of the microscopic local-history, supports this contention.
11. Walsh, Dray, Mink, Fain, Munz, Goldstein amongst them.
12. See section III in this chapter.
13. Ibid.

i) Historical Truth: An Idealist Perspective

14. Introduction p94.
15. Atkinson op. cit. pp52-3. See also Elton The Practice of History pVII: '...a philosophic concern with such problems as the reality of historical knowledge or the nature of historical thought hinders the practice of history'.
16. This translation lies at the heart of Meiland's book, op. cit.
17. The 'absolute' finds its classic expression in British philosophy in F H Bradley's Appearance and Reality (Oxford 1930).
18. At this point I feel forced to use the word historicism to refer to the 'sociological dependence of our opinions' (Popper The Open Society Vol.2 (New York 1963) p208, and also to the idea of radical contextualisation. Popper has aggrandised the term 'historicism' for his own purposes in The Poverty of Historicism. P Skagestaad (Making Sense of History Oslo 1975, p36) has pointed out that the word historicism was earlier employed by Mandelbaum as an English equivalent for historismus. One further reason for a distinction is given by Croce's use of historicism to refer to the 'science of history'. See also Mandelbaum History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth Century Thought (Baltimore 1971) pp41-138, 369-70. He defines historicism as 'the widespread belief that a thing can be properly understood only if one views it in terms of the place that it occupies in some larger process of development'.

19. It should be emphasised that by faith I do not mean a belief in the possibility of knowledge of a real past. It is a faith in the kind of relative, discursive and unstable intelligibility of an historical construction. For Oakeshott this knowledge is best represented as a 'conversation' amongst practitioners, for Collingwood something altogether more ethically important.
20. Munz The Shape of Time (Middletown 1977): 'The narrower theory [of idealism] concerns one particular aspect of the problem of time. As time passes, myriads of things happen and change. Not even the most confirmed realist would claim that it is possible for the human mind to encompass more than a minute fraction of these events. Therefore, if the notion of history has any meaning at all, it must be a meaning dependent on the mind's capacity to select and link the selections' p20.
21. Introduction p77: Walsh adds this caveat: 'The coherence theory can be substantially correct even if it cannot be used to support a monistic metaphysics' (p78f).
22. See Walsh *ibid.* p77: "A fact ...is not something which exists whether or not anybody takes any notice of it, it is rather the conclusion of a process of thinking! (my italics).
23. A hostility which Mink notices in "The Autonomy of Historical Knowledge". Referring to May Brodbeck's "Explanation, Prediction and 'Imperfect Knowledge'" *op. cit.* he writes: '...the underlying issue remains the antagonistic confrontation of the scientific cult and the humanistic cult' p164.
24. M Murphey uses a comparison with quantum physics in a rather different way: 'George Washington enjoys at present the epistemological status of an electron - each is ... entirely postulated for the purpose of giving coherence to our present experience, and each is unobservable by us' Our Knowledge of the Historical Past (New York 1973) p16.
25. See section III of this chapter.
26. Goldstein makes this point effectively in Historical Knowing, see pXIX, and also in "History and the Primacy of Knowing" History and Theory XVI (1977).
27. The Shape of Time *op. cit.*
28. Walsh suggests in a curious conclusion to an article discussing Goldstein's Historical Knowing, that we might have to reserve 'objective knowledge' of the past for the 'ideal judgement' so that 'historian's produce no more than a series of more or less well-supported beliefs' ("Truth and Fact in History Reconsidered" History and Theory XVI p68). 'The past as constituted in historical thought' will, he continues, be only a 'presumption'. Given the incisiveness of his preceding comments on Goldstein's

constructionist approach it is difficult to know what to make of this 'ideal judgement'. How exactly is it attained? How can we know ourselves to have attained it? Munz puts forward an altogether more persuasive distinction of the past as it actually happened and the past as it really occurs in historical thought. See section III.

29. On History p11.

30. The idea that the historical mode of experience is a partial and unsatisfactory attempt to see or comprehend the totality of experience is explored in EM; philosophy - experience without presupposition - judges the historical mode to be an arrest in experience. By On History the Absolute of Oakeshott's idealism (the monistic metaphysical commitment to the oneness of all experience) now receded and we are in a world of competing and contradictory discourses. Discourse intervenes between subject and object in knowledge, and the insularity of an historical past becomes dependent upon a particular logic of comprehension.

31. See Chapter 4 section III.

32. "The Autonomy" p184f.

33. Danto op. cit. p11.

34. Munz, op. cit. p296, points out that an absence of contingency is due to the kind of intelligible connections which constitute an historical narrative. The very fact that a narrative is a 'configuration' of events implies that it seeks to eliminate contingencies from its organisation: '...in a properly intelligible narrative there is next to no contingency. This is not the same as saying that there is not contingency in res gestae'. It is one of Oakeshott's difficulties that he overlooks this distinction. He is concerned to deny that the past has any given shape or form from which the historical past might copy, but in denying any substantive existence to past events he does not need to deny that an historical past may have its own logic and necessity, its own way of giving shape and form. A residual belief that our present search to eliminate contingencies actually falsifies and distorts the reality of what happened in the past lies behind the past-for-the-past's sake approach. Yet Oakeshott exposed the idea of an objective reality (let alone a past reality) independent of thought and judgement. He is caught on the horns of an intractable dilemma: a dead, gone and irretrievable past on one hand, and on the other an historical approach which must, though part of our present experience and our attempts to make sense of our world, be severed from all the interests, values, and criteria of intelligibility of the practical present.

35. See Section III.

II Relativism and the Standpoint of the Enquirer

36. Munz op. cit. p184.
37. See, e.g. Charles Beard's "That Noble Dream" American Historical Review 41, (1935) reprinted in Fritz Stern's The Varieties of History (London 1956) pp314-28 and "Written history as an Act of Faith" American Historical Review 39, (1934) reprinted in Meyerhoff ed. op. cit. pp140-51.
38. All references to Mandelbaum in this section (unless otherwise stated) are to his essay 'Subjective, Objective, and Conceptual Relativism', The Monist 62, pp403-28. 'Subjective relativism...(an) assertion is true (or false) for him or her' p403.
39. Ibid. p405.
40. See below.
41. See Section II chapter I.
42. History as the Story of Liberty (London 1941).
43. Carl Becker "Everyman his own Historian" American Historical Review 1933. This was Becker's presidential address to the American Historical Association in the previous year.
44. Ibid. pp252-3.
45. Ibid. pp242-6.
46. Ibid. p253.
47. Ibid.
48. I owe this point to a discussion of Becker's changed position by Hexter in his On Historians (London 1979) p13ff.
49. His new position is expressed in the essay "some Generalities that still Glitter" in New Liberties for Old (1941).
50. Ibid. p41.
51. Beard "Written History as an Act of Faith" p151. E H Carr makes a similar demand of historians in his call to see 'progress' in history. See the final chapter of What is History? (Macmillan 1961).
52. Dray "Charles Beard and the Season for the Past as it Actually Was" Perspectives pp27-46.
53. Ibid. p40.
54. Ibid. p29.
55. Ibid. pp27-8.
56. Ibid. p29. This assumption has been criticised by Danto op. cit. p94ff. Atkinson op. cit. makes a similar point against scepticism p42ff.
57. Danto op. cit. p96.
58. Ibid. p95.
59. Atkinson op. cit. p82.
60. R Aaron "Relativism in History" in Meyerhoff ed. The Philosophy of History in our Time op. cit. p153.
61. See the second chapter of Historical Knowing.
62. Op. cit.

63. See also Beard's attempted distinction between history as 'knowledge' and history as 'thought' (see Dray Perspectives p30). History as knowledge is our grasp of particular facts, something concrete. History as thought refers to the 'larger syntheses' of historians.
64. Mink "History and Fiction..." op. cit. pp545-6.
65. Perspectives p41. Dray's example is 'the price of cotton in Alabama in the 1850s'. His point is to expose the inadequacy of Beard's faith in the 'objectivity' of the historian's knowledge of particular facts as opposed to subjective interpretations. The price of cotton means absolutely nothing devoid of the context or network in which we know it. What is important is how it is taken, used or 'emplotted' in a narrative: its allotted place in a history of slavery or the civil war. Is it to be taken as indicative of economic problems, of the monopoly power of southern growers; or is it to be seen in terms of the psychological impact it made upon national and international politics; or again is it to be taken as illustrative of the cost-efficiency of slave labour? Historical facts are not detachable and historical understanding is not directed at compiling lists of figures.
66. See the next section of this chapter.
67. See Munz's discussion of the "Fischer controversy" in an understanding of the causes of the First World War p282ff and Dray's discussion of the A J P Taylor Trevor Roper argument over the origins of the Second World War, Perspectives pp69-96.
68. Danto op. cit. p108. Atkinson argues that: 'Alternative interpretations will often be compatible with the same data' op. cit. p80.
69. Op. cit. p404.
70. Atkinson calls perspectivism 'objectivity' relative to a point of view op. cit. p81.
71. The Poverty of Historicism pp147-52. Popper had given earlier expression to this idea in The Open Society chpt.25.
72. The Poverty of Historicism p150.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Introduction p114.
77. Atkinson op. cit. p84.
78. M White Foundations of Historical Knowledge p10.
79. Perspectives p34.
80. Ibid. p37.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid. p33.
83. Ibid.
84. Op. cit.
85. Danto op. cit. p33.

86. Walsh Introduction p98.
87. Dray Philosophy of History p28. See also Perspectives p46: '...values are constitutive of the facts the historian is concerned to report. That is, the latter are such that "in their very nature" they involve "ethical and aesthetic considerations"'.
 88. E Nagel "The Logic of Historical Analysis" in Meyerhoff ed. The Philosophy of History in our Time p213. Quoted by Dray Philosophy of History p22.
89. Op. cit. p404. Mandelbaum has in mind the 'later Wittgenstein, Whorf, and T S Kuhn. In the case of the latter Mandelbaum seems to overstate his case. Kuhn's paradigms do not, as Foucault's epistemes do, exist in complete isolation from each other. The mechanics of a revolution (the displacement of one scientific paradigm by another) are clearly grounded in time and place. Despite his lucid analysis of Kuhn's gestalt psychology, Mandelbaum wants to convict Kuhn's theory of anti-rationalism, which I cannot how it is unless the attempt to clarify how knowledge is arrived at within a determinate context is judged sceptical.
90. Ibid. p405.
91. D Hollinger "T S Kuhn's Theory of Science and its Implications for History" American Historical Review 1973 p20.
92. Ibid. p8.
93. See, for example, Kuhn The Structure of Scientific Revolutions op. cit. p162.
94. Op. cit. p11.
95. "The Presuppositions of Critical History" (1874).
96. Danto op. cit. p106.
97. Op. cit. p109: an 'objective historical consciousness...[the] possibility of developing a point of view which would win universal acceptance'. See also p117.
98. Introduction (1967) p68 footnote.
99. Introduction (1951) p90.
100. Ibid. p106.
101. Ibid. p113ff.
102. Danto op. cit. p97. He goes on to say, p100, that: 'a) a theory may be correct or incorrect independently of what caused somebody to entertain it, b) as a general rule we determine whether a theory is correct by making observations, c) nothing is an observation apart from a theory of some sort'.
103. Ibid. pp109-16.
104. Introduction p117.
105. "The Autonomy..." p168.
106. Atkinson op. cit. p80. He also makes the interesting point that the 'criteria of selection are firmly determined by the nature of the particular study among the sciences...in history they have to be imported for outside' p79. We might compare this

- with Dray's contention to the contrary, that is, that the historian's subject-matter is, by its very nature, 'quasi-evaluative' Perspectives Chpt.2.
107. "The Autonomy" p168.
 108. Ibid. p180.
 109. Philosophy of History p28.
 110. Ibid. p26. This is a position which Mandelbaum in The Problem of Historical Knowledge (New York 1938) called 'the fountain-head of relativism', p20.
 111. Dray Perspectives pp44-5: The classification of an action as political or military, e.g. 'are the killings planned and executed by the PLO or IRA political acts or are they just organised murder? Are they simply acts of terrorism or acts of war... values are constitutive of the facts the historian is concerned to report'.
 112. Philosophy of History p28.
 113. Perspectives p46.
 114. Introduction p93.
 115. Munz op. cit. p221.
 116. Walsh "Truth and Fact in History Reconsidered" op. cit. p70.
 117. Kuhn op.cit.p10
 118. Ibid. p11.
 119. Ibid. p164.
 120. Ibid. p162, 163.
 121. Ibid. p163.
 122. Ibid. p6.
 123. Hollinger op. cit. p4.
 124. Kuhn op. cit. p168.
 125. Hollinger op. cit. p23. In a passage which effectively challenges Mandelbaum's criticism of Kuhn's 'conceptual relativism', Hollinger writes that, the Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 'clearly assumes that our ability to make judgements can survive the knowledge of how entangled those judgements are in our psychological matrix and that neither our reason nor our values are inappropriately threatened by a thoroughly historical perspective' p23.
 126. Danto op. cit. p97.
 127. Hollinger op. cit. p19.
 128. Munz op. cit. Munz discusses the debate surrounding F Fischer's Deutschlands Griff Nach der Weltmach (1962) p221ff, and also the Hill-Hexter argument, pp282-3.
 129. Hollinger op. cit. In full the passage reads: 'In so far as historians have produced a body of knowledge that "works" to the satisfaction of everyone who cares, it consists largely of the semiautonomous name-and-date "facts" that take up the pages of standard biographies, and that are only incidental to the questions historians try the hardest to answer'.

130. In the next section attention will be paid to certain descriptions of the break-down of the distinction between history res gestae and historia rerum gestarum. Munz will be the centre of attention:

Historians alone among all scientists still believe that the only reason why truth eludes them is that they show too much bias, or that their sources do, or that there are missing 'facts'. But this is all wrong. The real reason why it must forever elude us is that it is not there. There is nothing the case over and above what people have thought (i.e. the sources) and think (i.e. the narratives), so that we can have no statement of which we can say that it is true if and only if what it asserts is the case. (p221).

III Constructionism, Scepticism and the Truth of a Portrait

131. Danto op. cit. pp94-5. See also Lewis Namier "History" reprinted in Stern ed. The Varieties of History: 'The function of the historian is akin to that of the painter and not of the photographic camera...' p379.
132. Meiland op. cit. equates 'the Construction Theory of History' (p3) with certain idealists, particularly Croce and Oakeshott (p7).
133. His questionable thesis is that historical scepticism can be made to support the "theory" of constructionism.
134. Historical Knowing op. cit.
135. The Shapes of Time op. cit.
136. Perspectives p28.
137. See P H Nowell-Smith "The Constructionist Theory of Philosophy" History and Theory XVI (Beiheft 16), p3. Interestingly Nowell-Smith lumps Collingwood together with Goldstein as the two protagonist of this position. Meiland, op. cit. p7, argues the opposite - that Collingwood should be seen as an opponent of scepticism. See also Elazar Weinryb "Construction vs Discovery" Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 39, pp227-39.
138. M Murphey Our Knowledge of the Historical Past op. cit. p14.
139. Atkinson op. cit. p53.
140. Ibid. Atkinson believes that its only originality is a semantic one and even then it is not an 'improvement on the way we talk', p53.
141. The Practice of History pVII.
142. What Nowell-Smith characterises as the 'philosophical thesis' entwined with the constructionist 'account of

- historical methodology' (p4). The philosophical thesis, so unacceptable to Nowell-Smith, is none other than idealism. Goldstein, stung into response by Nowell-Smith's criticisms, counters by writing: 'Realism is a philosophy of the loss of nerve'. "History and the Primacy of Knowing" op. cit. p31.
143. See J Passmore "The Objectivity of History" reprinted in Gardiner ed. The Philosophy of History pp145-60.
 144. See Meiland op. cit. pp113-120: '...historical knowledge is, by definition, knowledge about the past that is based on evidence, but nothing can serve as evidence about the past, since the required correlations cannot be established...nothing can serve as evidence about the past'. p113.
 145. My sceptic here is Meiland.
 146. See Meiland pp155-72.
 147. Goldstein "History and the Primacy of Knowing" p47.
 148. See Meiland pp142-54 and "The Verification Argument" pp152-4.
 149. Atkinson op. cit. pp40-41.
 150. Ibid. p6.
 151. C Behan McCullagh Justifying Historical Descriptions (Cambridge 1984).
 152. Atkinson op. cit. p52. Atkinson feels strong that questioning historical knowledge challenges our common sense and memory beliefs.
 153. McCullagh op. cit. p235.
 154. Walsh Introduction p90.
 155. Munz op. cit.
 156. Goldstein contends: 'My point is neither logical nor ontological; I am not put off by the thought that things actually took place in long-gone days. My point is epistemological'. "History and the Primacy of Knowing".
 157. Ibid. p51. See also Historical Knowing p42.
 158. The Practice of History op. cit. p57. He attacks E H Carr bitterly because of the latter's arrogance in confusing 'the event and the meaning it acquires in the reconstruction attempted by the historian... those things we discover, analyse, talk about, did actually once happen - to real people'.
 159. Ibid. p54. He goes on to say that 'verifiability is the enemy of objective truth because it consists of the operation of the observer and experimenter upon the subject matter. The historian cannot verify: he can only discover and attempt to explain'.
 160. Ibid. p57.
 161. Nowell-Smith op. cit. p17.
 162. It is, however, Meiland's position see pp173-186 op. cit.
 163. Introduction p81.
 164. See, e.g. Danto's argument concerning tensed, past-referring language - a scar - op. cit. pp63-87. Goldstein has written of this (Historical Knowing

- Chpt 2) that it shows 'that the denial of the past is radically incompatible with strongly entrenched beliefs...History doesn't need this kind of help from ordinary language'. Meiland also attacks the 'false' argument 'about the function of verb tenses' op. cit. pp152-4.
165. Bertrand Russell An Outline of Philosophy (London 1927) p7 and The Analysis of Mind (London 1921) pp159-60.
 166. Murphey, op. cit. pp6-7, takes Ockham's Razor to Russell's argument.
 167. See also Mink "Is Speculative Philosophy of History Possible" op. cit.: 'The inaccessibility of the past is not epistemological (though it is that too) but ontological. But people believe this in more or less deeply entrenched ways'. p111.
 168. Historical Knowing pXIX.
 169. Ibid. pXVII.
 170. "History and the Primacy of Knowing" p44.
 171. Ibid. p47.
 173. Historical Knowing pXIX "History is a way of knowing not a mode of discourse'.
 174. Ibid.
 175. "History and the Primacy of Knowing" p40.
 176. See Goldstein's concluding remarks to the introductory chapter of Historical Knowing.
 177. "History and the Primacy of Knowing" p34-5. 'The real past cannot serve as a touchstone for the truth of historians' claims'.
 178. Nowell-Smith op. cit. p4. He takes the constructionist thesis to Goldstein's theory and argues: 'The realist has a thesis about what historians often succeed in doing, the Constructionist has a thesis about how they do it'. p3.
 179. Walsh "Truth and Fact in History Reconsidered" p70.
 180. Historical Knowing p209, 215: '...because of agreement both with respect to method and achievement, history must surely be a licit way of knowing'.
 181. "History and the Primacy of Knowing" p40.
 182. Ibid. p38.
 183. Op. cit. p23. And if we cannot do this then, he argues, 'the whole of Goldstein's structure, on its metaphysical, anti-realist side, collapses'.
 184. Goldstein, however, is very aware of the dangers of historical scepticism. He charges 'historical realism' with giving rise to scepticism, since, 'it opposes to the actuality of historical practice an ideal it cannot realise'. See chpt.2 Historical Knowing.
 185. "History and the Primacy of Knowing" p22.
 186. Historical Knowing p140ff.
 187. "Truth and Fact in History Reconsidered" p57.

188. See Below.
189. Haskell Fain Between Philosophy and History: The Resurrection of Speculative Philosophy of History within the Analytic Tradition (Princetown 1970).
190. Op. cit. p7.
191. "Truth and Fact..." p60. See also Atkinson op. cit. p45ff, Dray Perspectives p30f, Danto op. cit. p102f.
192. See Nowell-Smith op. cit. p6.
193. Op. cit.
194. Op. cit.
195. "History and the Primacy of Knowing" p33.
196. Danto op. cit. p90.
197. Op. cit. p16ff.
198. Murphey op. cit. p6.
199. An argument of which Nowell-Smith, op. cit., says carries a 'heavy burden of proof' p16.
200. "Truth and Fact..." p58.
201. Op. cit. p20. Goldstein gives him some encouragement for this belief in his account of the dispute surrounding A J P Taylor's version of the origins of the Second World War, Historical Knowing p84.
202. Historical Knowing pXX.
203. See my discussion of Goldstein's interpretation of Collingwood in Chapter two of this thesis.
204. See Goldstein's account of the Controversy over the authorship of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Historical Knowing pp102-24, and his discussion of Holland's argument for the present of Scandanavians in Minnesota in the 14th century, pp52-59.
205. Op. cit.
206. Ibid. p10.
207. Historical Knowing p61.
208. Op. cit. p8.
209. Ibid. p21. At this point it is clear Nowell-Smith has not come to terms with the thrust of Goldstein's argument, that the historical past is a produce of intellect, and that constructionism refers to our knowledge of the past and not to whether we believe the Second World War to have taken place or not. To what extent was there a single, homogenous occurrence called the Second World War, in the light of which an historian's "model" could be pronounced correct or defective. Nowell-Smith need only glance at a bibliography of the 'origins' of the Second World War to see just how inadequate is his demand for truth as correspondence. Neither can he isolate facts from theories or interpretations in which they find their context, as if the latter were mere embellishments. As Danto has pointed out, the problem of historical objectivity is particularly acute when we recognise that historiographical disputes generally arise over statements that are 'equally as acceptable', op. cit. p108. How can the "facts of the matter" arbitrate here?

210. Op. cit.
211. See, e.g. p210 and Munz's discussion of Vico's verum is factum idea.
212. Ibid. p32.
213. Ibid. p38: '...since there is not absolute shape that we could give to time, it might be more appropriate to think of the transformation of time as a process of putting sets of masks over the face of time'.
214. See Ibid. p263ff.
215. See Ibid. Chpt 6 "The Taxonomy of Universals".
216. See ibid. Chpt 4 "Explanation and Interpretation".
217. See ibid. Chpt 9 "The Philosophy of the Story".
218. Ibid. p44f, 164, 270, 343.
219. Munz uses this word although he might have done better to accept Collingwood's criticisms of respect for sources as indicative of a 'scissors-and-paste' mentality. For Collingwood the word 'source' implies a belief in the existence of ready-made statements or testimony from which the historian may choose. See IH p274.
220. Munz op. cit. p19.
221. Ibid. p225.
222. Ibid. p208.
223. Ibid. p209.
224. Ibid. p184.
225. Ibid. p226.
226. See, e.g. p32.
227. Ibid. p231.
228. Ibid. p28. Munz calls this 'historical time'.
229. He refers to this construction as a Sinngebild: 'the simplest constellation of events', i.e. two events joined together by a 'general law' or 'universal', p44ff.
230. Ibid. p224.
231. Ibid. p103ff.
232. Ibid. p225.
233. Danto op. cit. p89.
234. Ibid. p101.
235. Ibid. Passmore makes a related point in discussing conflicting historical hypotheses: '...we can look and see whether the hypothesis "corresponds with the facts" ...as they dug up by the archaeologist or by the archive-ransacker'. "The Objectivity of History" in Gardiner ed. The Philosophy of History op. cit. pp155-6.
236. Op. cit. p213.
237. Ibid. p215.
238. Ibid.
239. Ibid. p209.
240. Ibid. p33.
241. Ibid. p177.
242. Ibid. p158 and 175.
243. Ibid. p175.
244. Ibid.

245. Ibid. p177.
246. Ibid. p247.
247. Ibid. p209.
248. Ibid. p213: '...historical debates... are not debates between historians about what took place, but debates between historians about the plausibility and consistency of their several narratives...'
249. Ibid. p38ff.
250. See p73.
251. On the assumption, p73, that 'Caesar was aware of a general law that stated that ambitious men who want to secure power in Rome have to defy the laws that prohibited Roman armies from crossing the Rubicon'. See also p88.
252. Ibid. p69ff.
253. Ibid. p88.
254. Ibid. p70 and p75ff.
255. Ibid. p78.
256. Ibid. p84.
257. Ibid. p79.
258. Ibid. See also pp87-8.
259. Ibid. p88.
260. Ibid.
261. Ibid. p80.
262. Ibid. p96.
263. Ibid. p84ff. Munz argues that Collingwood's re-enactment doctrine and Popper's situational analysis 'by themselves only help us to find out what actually happened'.
264. See p110 *ibid.*
265. Ibid. Bradley, in his essay "The Presuppositions of Critical History", writes, there is no record of 'unadulterated facts' but only of 'divergent accounts of a host of jarring witnesses' *op. cit.* p5.
266. Munz *op. cit.* p102.
267. Ibid. p110.
268. Ibid.
269. Ibid. p108.
270. Ibid.
271. Ibid. p109.
272. Ibid. pp109-110.
273. Danto, *op. cit.*, makes the same point in the following way: 'An historian might write "the author of Rameau's Newpew was born in 1715'. But think how odd it would be were someone to have said, at the right moment in 1715, "The Author of Rameau's Nephew is just born"'. [sic] p12.
274. *Op. cit.* p84.
276. Ibid. p188.
277. Ibid. p99.
278. Ibid.
279. Ibid. p101.

280. Just as the "Enlightenment" historians skirted round the Middle Ages as a dark interlude in the ascent of rationality.

IV) Philosophy and History

281. Fain op. cit. p281.

282. P Skagestad op. cit. p11. Skagestad tries to insert a third attitude - the 'critical' - which is more directly confrontational with historians' judgements, pp12-13. However, as I argue, the distinction is less one of attitude than of interest in the various "departments" that compose historia rerum gestarum. Though his distinction is a useful way of pointing out the inadequacy of describing philosophy of history as 'second-order', it nonetheless accepts a traditional analytical/speculative division, and seeks to insert his 'critical' approach somewhere between these two poles.

I hardly think, as Skagestad contends, Dray qualifies as 'agnostic' in his judgements of what historians should be seen to be doing.

283. Ibid. p11-12.

284. Danto op. cit. pVII. Quoted by Fain op. cit. p223.

285. Both Walsh's Introduction and Dray's Philosophy of History respect this rigid division. Sections on speculative philosophy of history appear at the end of both books.

286. This is recognised by Gardiner in his ed. Theories of History op. cit. p7, where he writes: '...the boundaries between what is known as 'philosophy of history' and other fields of speculation and enquiry are exceedingly difficult to draw; at some points it seems to shade off into sociology, and at others again into history proper'.

287. "Is Speculative Philosophy of History Possible" p115.

288. H White "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" op. cit. p42.

289. Suggested - though for different ends - by Fain op. cit. p209.

290. Ibid. p117. Fain uses the image of an 'impenetrable wall of documents, coins etc... between the historian and the past' which might be seen as frustrating 'the historian from every achieving an epistemological consumation with the object of his intentions...' See also his criticisms of the 'documents - artifacts theme' p73.

291. Ibid. p233.

292. H White "The Historical Text..." p43.

293. H White Metahistory op. cit. 1973 p5 footnote 6.

294. Op. cit. p218ff.

295. Ibid. p220.

296. The Shapes of Time p285. See also Mink "Is Speculative Philosophy of History Possible?" p114.
297. "The Historical Text..." p48.
298. Op. cit.
299. Ibid. p216.
300. Ibid.
301. Ibid. Analytical philosophers of history, on the other hand are 'primarily interested in the establishment and explanation of historical facts'.
302. Ibid. p224.
303. Ibid. p225. See Hegel Lectures on the Philosophy of History p350: '...in History we have to do with the past'.
304. Ibid. p218.
305. Ibid. p219.
306. Walsh Introduction p27. Fain also quotes from Walsh "Meaning in History" in Gardiner ed. Theories of History op. cit. p301, and Dray Philosophy of History p60.
307. Fain op. cit. p220.
308. Ibid.
309. Ibid. p233.
310. Ibid. p214.
311. Ibid. His examples are: "The Renaissance, The Frontier, The Reconstruction Period".
312. Ibid. p233.
313. Ibid.
314. Ibid.
315. Op. cit. p299.
316. Ibid. p246ff.
317. Ibid. pp286-7.
318. Ibid. p281.
319. Ibid. p254. Munz argues that 'futurolology' has no direct bearing on philosophy of history'.
320. Ibid. p286ff.
321. Ibid. p275. Although, Munz writes, Marx is 'on perfectly safe, explanatory ground when he claims that these [modern industrial societies] are to be explained in terms of class struggle'.
322. Ibid. p273.
323. Ibid.
324. Ibid. p274.
325. Ibid.
326. Ibid. p273.
327. Ibid. p296.
328. Ibid. pp282-3.
329. Ibid.
330. See ibid. p249. The philosophy of history is: '...an attempt to make sense of the observation that in any one society at any one time the values and the knowledge considered binding and plausible differ from societies at other times. Hence, every societies value and knowledge are relative'.

331. Munz argues: 'Unless we can relate the fact that Caesar crossed the Rubicon to a wider series of events and that series of events to a very wide perspective of Rome and its importance, there is no point whatever in solving the question whether he did it or not'. p248. See also Munz's review of D E Luscombe's The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelards Thought in the Early Scholastic Period (Cambridge 1969). Munz writes: 'If one is to take the author's own claim to write as an historian seriously, the failure ... to place the story of Abelard's influence into its proper historical setting is a major weakness of the book'.
332. "The Historical Text..." p47.
333. "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension" op. cit. pp545-6.
334. See my comments on Hexters "rhetorical strategies" in section III of chapter 4. His strategies, however, are conscious opportunities to vivify and clarify.
335. "The Historical Text..." p43.
337. Ibid. p44.
338. Ibid. p48.
339. Ibid.
340. Metahistory p7.
341. "The Historical Text..." p52.
342. Ibid. p53.
343. Ibid. p49.
344. Ibid. p42.
345. Ibid. p51.
346. Ibid. See also H White's "Focault Decoded: Notes from Underground" History and Theory Vol.XII (1973) p50. See also White's "Michel Foucault" in J Sturrock ed. Structuralism and Since (Oxford 1979). This is, indeed, Foucault's project. See also S Bann "Towards a Critical Historiography: Recent Works in Philosophy of History" Philosophy 56 pp365-85. See p380.
347. White Metahistory p372. See also A Megil's "Focault, Structuralism, and the Ends of History" Journal of Modern History 51/3 (1979) p458. Oakeshott in On History uses similar language.
348. White "The Historical Text..." p49 and 52.
349. Ibid.
350. Ibid. p47.
351. Ibid. p52.
352. A point noted by Mandelbaum in "Subjective, Objective and Conceptual Relativism" op. cit. p422. He refers this position to 'Gestalt-Psychology'.
353. Kuhn The Structure of Scientific REvolutions op. cit. p52ff.
354. Michel Foucault The Order of Things (Transl. London 1970). See Mengil op. cit. pp484-5.
355. Foucault, White argues, regards history as 'a symptom of a peculiarly 19th century malaise which originated in the discovery of the temporality of all things'.

p26. Munz gives a fascinating account of how history ceased to tell stories after the onset of the industrial revolution, with the severe break a traditional, uninterrupted, agrarian pattern of existence. As a result of this, Munz argues, interest in the past was no longer in the breadth and force of its stories - philosophy teaching by example - in which the structure of myth reflected the essential lack of concern with difference and actuality. It became a 'scientific interest in the details of an alien landscape, packed with a 'high degree of actuality', and an idea crystallised that time 'actually possesses a shape and that scientific curiosity can be satisfied by the discovery of that shape' (p219). This led to the 'growth of histories with a surfeit of truth', all the more 'reprehensible' because their authors 'thought that their truth-surfeit stories are genuine portraist of time and reflect the shape of the passage of time like mirrors' (p226). Not only has this led to a 'crowding out of meaning' but the overlooking of the way events are composed and joined together, and the overlooking of the way events are composed and joined together, and to a distinction between history and fiction as mutually exclusive categories. Ultimately, the loss of history as story has led to the belief that the seriality of events in the historical past is identical with the actual Shape of Time (p218ff).

359. "Focault Decoded" p34.

360. See J G Merquior Foucault (Fontana 1985) p5.

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