
Some Problems of Historical Knowledge

Author(s): Paul Oskar Kristeller

Source: *The Journal of Philosophy*, Feb. 16, 1961, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Feb. 16, 1961), pp. 85-110

Published by: Journal of Philosophy, Inc.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2022891>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Philosophy*

JSTOR

THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

SOME PROBLEMS OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

I

THE major purpose of this paper will be to defend the objective character of historical knowledge, and to reduce to its proper proportions the case frequently made for relativism or scepticism in the field of history. In the first part, I shall discuss some of those problems which seem to be common to all types of historical inquiry. In the second part, I shall take up a few problems that are peculiar to the study of intellectual history, and especially to the history of philosophy.

If we try to describe the status of history in our present world, and especially in American academic life, we are confronted with a classification of learning which largely dominates our universities, professional societies, and research foundations, and which is generally taken for granted in public discussions on matters of learning and education: we are accustomed to speak of the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. In this scheme, history is usually classed with the social sciences. The origin and validity of this scheme are very much open to question, and, in particular, the position of history among the social sciences presents a number of difficulties. The social sciences are of rather recent origin, and at least some of them are faced with grave problems. They are sustained by public faith, to be sure, but their practical claims and importance seem to have run ahead of their valid theoretical results, and the tendency prevalent in these disciplines to confuse facts and values does not add to their solidity. History is a much older discipline, and does not necessarily share in these difficulties. Moreover, the aim of the historian, at least according to the majority of historians and philosophers, is clearly different from that of the social scientist. While the sociologist, the economist, the practical psychologist may in many instances offer no more than a description of the contemporary American situation, his aim is obviously to discover general laws or rules governing the phenomena of human experience, just as the natural scientist has succeeded in establishing the laws of natural phenomena. The historian, on the other hand,

is trying to ascertain, describe, and interpret the specific events, developments, and situations of the human past, and is obviously employing different methods in attaining his end. The present tendency to group history with the social sciences exposes the historian to the demand that he should conform to the methods and aims of the other social sciences, and to the still more radical demand made by some philosophers, and even historians, that history should be reduced to sociology.

Yet the current scheme is subject to question not only because it ties history to the social sciences, but also because it separates history from the so-called humanities, with which it has many close connections. History as now taught in the departments of history focuses on political and economic history, whereas other important historical disciplines, such as the histories of various literatures, of the arts, of music, of philosophy, as well as linguistics, archeology, and classical philology, are included among the humanities. This separation of political history from the other historical disciplines has had the result that the problem of historical method has been approached by many historians and philosophers exclusively from the point of view of political and economic history, without taking into account those other historical disciplines. Moreover, the status of these other disciplines as branches of history is obscured not only by their separation from the university department of history, but also through their inclusion among the humanities or liberal arts. For the latter are usually praised for their educational value in a rather hazy fashion, and their status as branches of knowledge, and especially of historical knowledge, is often lost sight of. This oversight tends to be strengthened by the recent anti-historical tendencies within such traditionally "humanistic" disciplines as linguistics, literary criticism, and even philosophy.

This precarious state of historical knowledge in our scheme of things becomes even more apparent when we compare it with the very different place it has occupied in the European tradition. Ever since classical antiquity, history has been associated with grammar and rhetoric and treated as a subdivision or appendix of the liberal arts; beginning with the fifteenth century, it appeared among the *Studia humanitatis*, which survive, at least in name, in our humanities, and which gave way, among the French and Italians, to the "moral sciences." From the Renaissance we may also date the close connection between history, philology, and critical method that culminated in the effort of eighteenth and nineteenth century scholarship, especially in Germany, to raise history and philology to the rank of genuine sciences. This de-

velopment had its repercussions among the philosophers who came to treat history as one of the major divisions of human experience, and finally assigned to the historical and philological disciplines the status of separate sciences, different in subject matter and perhaps even in method from the natural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*, *Kulturwissenschaften*), as did Dilthey, Rickert, and to some extent Cassirer. As a consequence, the historical and philological disciplines have had in Germany and most other European countries a much higher standing in academic and public life, and in philosophical thought, than they seem to have at present in this country.

Whether we accept or reject the claim implied in the German notion of *Geisteswissenschaft*, the undeniable existence of the historical disciplines seems to confront the philosopher with a dilemma. Most of us would admit that these disciplines contain elements of valid and verified empirical knowledge. On the other hand, English and American usage does not seem to sanction the application of the term "science" to historical knowledge. Yet I cannot see how it is possible to avoid one of the following alternatives: either we must agree to extend the term "science" to include historical knowledge, and to speak of the "historical sciences"; or we must admit that there is a body of valid empirical knowledge that is not "scientific" in the usual sense of the word. Which-ever solution or terminology we prefer, we must admit that the historical disciplines are of legitimate concern for any epistemology or philosophy of science that claims to be comprehensive.

When we said that it is the task of the historian to ascertain, describe, and interpret particular events, developments, and situations of the human past, we defined a method rather than a unified subject matter, and in fact I have not been convinced by the attempts to assign a more specific content to history. Some scholars want to limit historical study to "important" events; but it is hard to define importance in objective terms, and the most trivial event may under certain circumstances become important for the historian. Some scholars have tried to define historical importance with reference to human societies, and thus speak of social or societal events. Yet the term "social" is much more vague and ambiguous than most people seem to realize: if construed in a specific sense, it will be too narrow to characterize historical events; if taken more broadly, it will mean the same as human, and I see no advantage in substituting it for the latter term. It has been suggested that present events should be included, but I see no justification for that, since the events of contemporary history are not strictly present, but parts of a recent past. On the

other hand, I should insist on including developments and situations in our definition, since the historian is not merely concerned with isolated events. As to the unity of historical knowledge, it is as much a program, or a regulative idea in the Kantian sense, as is the unity of science. The various historical disciplines, just as the various sciences, developed from specific social, historical, and intellectual circumstances, and are sustained by personal, national, religious, institutional, or professional interests. Some of them overlap, and, on the other hand, there are no man's lands not yet occupied by any of them. It is only through a gradual expansion of knowledge, and through an increasing degree of interdepartmental collaboration, that we can hope to come closer to a unified historical knowledge.

When we insist on the historian's concern with particular events and situations of the human past, we are differentiating historical knowledge not only from sociology and the other social sciences, but also from the so-called philosophy of history as it has been pursued from Augustine through Joachim of Fiore, Hegel, and Marx, down to Spengler and Toynbee. The historian may incidentally predict the future, as Tocqueville and Burekhardt did, but it is not his major task, or the test of his historical knowledge. Such metahistorical ideology is as distinct from historical knowledge as speculative cosmology differs from physics, and its assertions are usually as much beyond verification as any statements of traditional metaphysics. The prophets of crisis or of progress derive their strength not from any solid knowledge of the past, but from the desire of the public to know the future, and of the prophet to influence the future. Few people see the paradox inherent in their desire to foresee and to influence the future at the same time. The critical philosopher will do well to realize that in history, as well as in science, what we can know does not always coincide with what we should most desire to know. If he wishes to do for history what the philosopher of science does for science, he will forget about the ambitious philosophers of history, and concentrate on the more modest task of studying the methodological and epistemological problems inherent in the actual work of the real historian.

When we consider the various procedures followed by historians in the pursuit of their work, we must begin with a step that is of crucial importance, but sometimes overlooked in the discussion: the choice of the subject to be investigated. In a sense, we may say that the selection of the topic determines the outcome of the investigation. It is often claimed that a scholar should choose only important topics for his investigation, since historians

are in danger of wanting "to know more and more about less and less." Yet, when it comes to defining the criteria of "importance," they usually amount to what is dictated by the conventions and fashions of the day, or by the policies of leading scholars or influential institutions. Whether a topic is worth investigating depends partly on the curiosity and competence of the individual investigator, partly on the state of scholarship and on the availability of relevant source material. There is a need for freedom of inquiry which will allow a scholar to raise and answer new questions. Whether the inquiry leads to important results depends largely on luck and talent, neither of which can be taught or legislated, a widespread opinion to the contrary notwithstanding.

Since it is often said that selection is one of the characteristic features of the historical method, and that this may involve a basic lack of objectivity, I should like to point out that the term "selection" is used in at least three different senses. Aside from the selection of the topic to be investigated, there is a selection of data or source material used for answering the questions raised, and finally, there is a further selection from these data for the actual presentation of the results obtained. Also, these latter two processes of selection involve judgment and intelligence. Yet the selection of data for a given investigation is not dictated by the preference of the investigator, but by the criterion of relevance which is quite objective and rarely subject to debate. Finally, the selection of the more impressive data for the written presentation of a scholar's results does not affect the validity of these results provided that he has not suppressed any data contrary to his conclusions.

Before mentioning the various steps by which the historian attempts to explore his subject, it might be well to take a stand on the question whether history represents a special kind of knowledge or requires a special kind of logic different from that of the natural sciences. I doubt very much whether anybody could answer this question in the affirmative, at least without considerable qualifications. If there are any general rules for the verification of empirical data or for the interpretation of their evidence, the historian must obviously follow them; and certainly he is bound by the general rules of inference which guide all valid thinking. On the other hand, there are clearly distinctive features of the historical method, which depend on the nature of its data, of its subject matter, and of its purpose. The question whether scientific methods are applicable to history is answerable only if we define what we mean by scientific methods. There seem to be

differences of method and of rigor even among the sciences, and it would seem difficult to bring the mathematical, physical, biological, and social sciences under one common denominator. If we choose to consider the experimental method of the physical sciences as the only model of *the* scientific method, we must say that this method is obviously not applicable to history. Yet it might be possible to define scientific methods in a broader fashion so as to include those of history; and actually the methods employed by the historian are in many ways analogous, though not identical, with those of the sciences. There are general logical procedures often adopted by the historian, such as induction, or the statistical calculus of probability, which might be investigated in their specific application to historical inquiry. There are other procedures which are especially important for the historian (and for the jurist), such as the *argumentum ex silentio*, or the burden of proof argument, which deserve a more careful logical analysis than they have received so far. There is another feature that has been considered peculiar to the historical method, namely, the distinction between data or sources, which are present, and the past events themselves, which cannot be directly experienced, but must be inferred from the given data. This dualism of data and facts might be questioned for certain branches of intellectual history, as we shall see, but it obviously holds for political history and for many other branches of history. However, if there are valid methods through which the facts may be inferred from the data, the distinction between data and facts does not interfere with the objectivity of history. Even if we admit that no historical event is ever immediately given, historical verification still proceeds from its data by various steps of inference, and all indirect or derivative inference must ultimately be reducible to some kind of direct evidence where a historical fact is, though not immediately given, yet immediately inferred from a given piece of evidence.

In discussing the various steps by which the historian proceeds, I shall for the moment treat these steps as separate, and shall afterwards discuss the question to what extent these steps are interrelated and actually inseparable. The problem of historical objectivity is often confused by assuming *a priori* that the various steps of inquiry are inseparable from each other; thus it seems sufficient to show that one of these steps is subject to uncertainty, and the whole structure of the historical method becomes uncertain. Another tendency notable among the defenders of relativism and in many other theorists of history is to take a cavalier attitude towards the more technical aspects of historical

inquiry and to dismiss them as minutiae. It is somewhat ironical that this contempt towards historical minutiae is shared by some of the same thinkers who are most strongly committed to the demands of rigor and accuracy in the mathematical and natural sciences, and who would not even dream of dismissing the minutiae of scientific research as trivial. Actually, the minutiae of historical scholarship are the very foundation of the work of the historian. It is these details on which his claim to provide valid knowledge primarily rests. They are directly subject to the test of being true or false, and their accumulation gives to a historical account those nuances that distinguish it from the hazy picture drawn by the propagandist or by the textbook writer. Curiously enough, this state of affairs is often ignored because some philosophical students of history seem to judge the field on the basis of popular comprehensive books, if not of textbooks. Yet in history, just as in the sciences, the real contributions are found more often in papers and monographs than in general books of a more or less popularizing character. In these specialized papers the details are fully documented and argued out, and it is here that the real method of the historian and his ability to establish his results should be studied and analyzed. If we dismiss the minutiae as trivial, we shall omit from our analysis the most characteristic and most basic elements of the historical method, and the ones that offer the strongest resistance to relativism.

The main phases that are distinguished by the methodologists of history are fact-finding and synthesis or interpretation. Each of them consists in a number of different procedures. The process of fact-finding begins with the finding and collecting of the sources relevant to the investigation. In the case of unwritten sources, excavation is the chief method for the discovery of new sources; whereas, in the case of written sources, research in archives and libraries fulfills the same function. The extent to which this type of work is still needed for such fields as the history of medieval and renaissance philosophy and science is hardly realized by anybody who has not been actively engaged in this inquiry. For it should be obvious that the discovery of the writings of a hitherto unknown philosopher, or of unknown works by a known philosopher, will have an impact on the intellectual history of the period. Where the writings of an author are lost, as in the case of many ancient philosophers, the finding of the relevant data consists in the collecting of fragments and testimonies. This has been done for some but by no means for all ancient philosophers, and, when there is no adequate collection of fragments, the main thesis of an entire book may be refuted by calling attention to one or two

additional fragments overlooked by the author. Once the sources have been located, they must be made available for study, that is, published, or at least photographed or microfilmed. For the material that has been printed or located, and for the secondary material of previous scholarship dealing with the subject, there is only one fundamental auxiliary discipline on which every scholar must rely: bibliography. There is no other way of discovering relevant material insofar as it has been recorded. Of course, there is no merit in a bibliography that merely copies titles from another bibliography, as is so often done. Yet the bibliography on a given topic brought together for the first time is in a way as original as the study that may subsequently be based on it.

Once the source material has been located and made available, the historian must be able to use it for his purpose. At this point, various auxiliary disciplines come into play. Their function varies for different historical areas, and in a sense any of the sciences may become an auxiliary discipline for the historian, just as history may become auxiliary for any of the sciences, especially the social sciences. Primitive history and prehistory will rely on anthropology, ancient history on archeology and philology, papyrology and epigraphy, medieval history on paleography and diplomatics, Renaissance history on the bibliography of early printing, modern history on economics and statistics. Once the historian has found his sources and understood them in an obvious fashion, his next step is that called by the methodologists "external criticism." Each source has to be examined as to its authenticity, its date and place of origin, and its author; where no definite answer to these questions is possible, a suitable approximation must be attempted. Moreover, the scholar must see whether his source has undergone any alteration after it was originally composed, and must employ the methods of restoration and of textual history and criticism to reestablish the original state of the document he is studying. For these procedures, historians and philologists have developed valid and more or less rigorous methods that lead in some, if not in all, instances to solid conclusions. The same is true of another group of procedures often called "internal criticism." The historian must compare his various pieces of evidence with each other, decide how reliable each of them is in relation to the facts he wishes to establish, and identify the sources from which they may be derived.

The second phase of historical inquiry, which is usually called synthesis or interpretation, consists again in a number of different steps which should be clearly distinguished from each other. The term "interpretation" has a number of different meanings which

should not be confused with each other. Interpretation may mean the linguistic or iconographical explanation of a document; this is sometimes called hermeneutics in order to distinguish it from other types of interpretation. This type of interpretation may still be confined to the task of establishing individual historical facts on the basis of individual historical sources or documents. There are other types of interpretation which concern more specifically the synthetic procedures of the historian as distinct from his efforts to ascertain individual facts. Thus, the historian may aim at the interpretation of a document in terms of its intrinsic or spiritual meaning; at the explanation of a historical event in terms of historical agents, whether individuals or groups; at its explanation in terms of some general causes or laws; at the integration of many events into some more comprehensive contexts such as periods, situations, trends, or developments; at the evaluation of historical events in terms of general or specific values; finally, at the presentation of many facts in a narrative or some other literary account. The interpretation of intrinsic meanings seems to be peculiar to intellectual history, and hence we shall reserve its discussion for the second part of this paper. We shall discuss the other procedures as briefly as possible.

Explanation in terms of historical agents has been frequently discussed by philosophers, and the relative importance of individuals and groups has been a matter of debate in this connection. Some thinkers who argue exclusively in terms of political history even seem to believe that it is the essential task of the historian to make us understand why a historical agent chose to do the things he did, and how he felt while doing them. I am not so sure that this kind of explanation is of primary importance for the historian, or even for the political historian. In many instances it escapes our knowledge why a historical character acted the way he did, yet I do not think that our failure to know his motives makes our knowledge of his actions less certain or less valuable. Moreover, such a psychological explanation of a historical event does not become valid because it is vivid or suggestive. As any historical statement not directly inferred from a reliable document, it has the status of a hypothesis and derives its probability from the fact that it is compatible with all available evidence, and from the degree to which it can be directly verified. Consequently, such psychological explanations will be valid only insofar as they are based on personal documents that give direct information about the character of a historical agent, such as letters or memoirs or contemporary biographies.

Another question that has been much debated by recent theorists

of history is the role of causes and of general rules. I have stated before that I do not believe that it is the task of the historian to establish general laws or rules of causality. Those who assign this task to the historian tend to substitute for history a metaphysical philosophy of history, or the science of sociology. I believe that the sociologist may derive general laws from historical instances, but I am doubtful whether the philosopher or theologian of history can derive any genuine historical laws from the study of history. In any case, the task of the ordinary historian is obviously different. He wants to establish particular events or developments, not general laws or rules. This does not mean that there is no place for general rules in the work of the historian. He will constantly borrow such rules from the sciences and from common knowledge to give a plausible explanation of the events he is describing. That is, he will apply general rules to the explanation of particular instances, and his explanation will be just as valid as the general rule he applies is valid on extra-historical grounds, and as the case to which he applies it actually falls under that rule. Yet causal explanation in history, though often justified, is beset with difficulties. Ever since Hume and Kant, the term "cause" has been used to denote both the antecedent event supposedly causing the subsequent event, and the assumed general rule connecting the two events. The historian can obviously establish an antecedent event, but he cannot establish its role as a cause unless the connecting rule which makes it a cause has been established already on extra-historical grounds. Moreover, the historian cannot isolate his factors in an experiment, and since unlike the scientist he is interested in the particular event as such, he will never be confronted with sufficient causes, but always with necessary or contributing causes. This difficulty increases when he is trying to explain not merely a particular event, but a whole historical situation or development composed of many events. For the multiplicity of causal considerations increases with the complexity of the facts to be explained. The claim that certain causes are sufficient can hardly ever be sustained, and even the claim that certain types of causes are more important than others is difficult to prove on strictly empirical grounds, as the attempts of Marxist historiography have shown. It is safer to take all possible causes into consideration, and to make use of those that seem to be warranted in each instance. If in many instances the causes of an event or development escape us, it is better to admit this fact, instead of making false claims, and to be satisfied if the facts themselves, though not explained, have at least been reasonably well established.

Of much more direct concern to the historian is the synthesis of particular facts in a historical context, development, or situation. In such fields as social or institutional history, this synthesis constitutes the real aim of the historian. I should like to maintain that the historian, in trying to establish a certain situation or development, is following a procedure of straight induction, generalizing from whatever particular data are at his disposal. In the case of scanty data, this induction has to be as complete as possible, whereas in the case of numerous data, a selection has to be made on the basis of appropriate statistical methods. The result of such an induction may not always be a clearcut generalization, but it seems perfectly legitimate to state that the majority of instances indicates a prevailing trend of a certain kind, or that the general development shows a certain range of variation. Such statements, if based on adequate evidence, are as solid as any particular fact asserted on the basis of a document. On the other hand, general statements about the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Eighteenth Century, Platonism, or Humanism have no meaning unless these general concepts are clearly defined, the particular phenomena covered by them are clearly indicated, and these phenomena have been thoroughly examined or sampled. In this manner, the historian is able to test his generalizations, to confirm or to refute them. To be a nominalist with reference to general concepts of the type just mentioned seems to be a prerequisite of sound historical scholarship. At the same time, one may very well be a realist or a Kantian idealist in considering as *a priori* categories of historical knowledge such concepts generally employed by historians in their synthesis as context, situation, change, development, continuity, cause, or meaning.

Another problem much discussed by philosophers is the use of values in the work of the historian. I do not believe that the historian must evaluate his facts or relate them to values before he has established them, but it is certainly true that many historians have added value judgments to their factual accounts, and it has been recently argued that it is their duty to do so. I should like to maintain that there are general human values, that is, moral, aesthetic, and cultural (rather than specifically historical) values that seem to be attached to certain historical phenomena and lacking in others. There is a tragic element in human history, since the past cannot be revived or undone, and since many valuable individuals, institutions, and traditions were bound to perish. When the historian praises or blames the events he describes, his judgment may still be generally acceptable if it is based on general values. The matter is quite different when the historian bases his

value judgments on his own preferences, whether they are national, political, religious, philosophical, or merely personal. Here there is clearly the danger of a historical bias that may even influence the selection and interpretation of particular historical facts. This kind of bias will most strongly affect the writing of contemporary history; for the historian, like the art critic, will view a contemporary event not in its settled historical place, but with reference to its possible effects on an unsettled future for which the historian has definite wishes and preferences. For this reason, contemporary history, in spite of the wealth of records and memories available for it, is more difficult to handle than the history of a more distant past, and it is wrong to generalize from contemporary history in an analysis of the historical method. The farther the historian moves away from his own time, the better he is able to emancipate his factual account from his evaluations. In any case, objectivity remains his permanent ideal, and the occasional irresponsibility of famous historians should serve as a warning example rather than as an excuse, let alone as a model.

The last step of the historical synthesis is the actual presentation of the facts in a written account, and most frequently in a narrative. In the Western tradition, history has long been a branch of literature, and a historian is still expected to write a good style, especially in a book addressed to the general public. Yet the literary qualities of a good narrative should not be confused with the scholarly qualities of its content. It is possible and desirable to combine both advantages, but in case of conflict, the scholar should subordinate beauty to truth, not vice versa. The truth or probability of a historical account will rest on the evidence, that is, on the documents used for it. It is the purpose of footnotes, documentary appendices, and other such paraphernalia to make this evidence explicit and to enable the reader and critic to examine the validity of the account. In a popular book which lacks this apparatus the evidence is concealed, and the reader depends exclusively on the authority of the writer unless he can confirm or refute the account from evidence independently acquired. For the scholar and critical reader, a documented presentation is preferable, and the historian will do well to make it plain how much of his account he thinks is supported by evidence and how much he has added through imaginative conjecture.

Our effort to limit the claims of historical relativism will have been vain if we accept the assertion made by many theorists that the different procedures of the historian, which we have discussed one after another, from the formulation of his topic to the final

literary presentation, are inseparable from each other, and that it is especially impossible to separate the processes of fact-finding, essentially trivial and comparatively objective, from those of synthesis, which are more significant but also more subjective. This view does not seem to find support in the facts of historical scholarship. The processes of fact-finding are not trivial, as we have seen, but an essential element of the historical enterprise. The processes of synthesis and interpretation, though more complex and more tentative, are at least in part objective, that is, based on valid inference, and it is quite possible to separate the verified and the conjectural elements in a historical synthesis, and to eliminate or reduce the element of subjective evaluation.

It is true that many steps are often combined in the actual process of inquiry, but they are sometimes separable, and always logically distinguishable. And when it comes to testing the objectivity of knowledge, what counts is the validity of the results in terms of the available evidence and of the modes of inference. The manner in which the inquirer happens to reach his results is irrelevant for this purpose. To be sure, there have been many controversies and disagreements among historians, and this fact has tended to discredit the methods of history and philology among their outside critics. Yet historical controversy can be reduced, if not avoided, by a rigorous distinction of different degrees of probability, and between a core of well established knowledge and a fringe of uncertain opinions. It is the steady task of historical inquiry to advance the frontier of established knowledge and to reduce the area of unverified opinion. In this process, historical knowledge is subject to changes no less than the sciences are. These changes are not arbitrary, but they depend on new evidence and on new methods, and they tend to modify and to supplement rather than to overthrow the knowledge previously attained. The aim of the historical method remains always the same: to establish the events of the human past on the basis of available evidence. The rigor with which this task is being pursued represents a wholesome intellectual and moral discipline, for the scholar engaged in this work, and for the student and reader who becomes an indirect participant in it.

II

I should like to consider now a few problems that are not common to all branches of history, but peculiar to cultural or intellectual history, and especially to the history of philosophy. Above all, there exists a type of historical interpretation which seems to occur only in the various fields of cultural history, and

which consequently has been emphasized only by those theorists and philosophers who were especially interested in this kind of history: the interpretation of the intrinsic meaning of a work of art or of literature or of a philosophical or scientific text. We might think at first that this is just another case where the historian has to infer a "fact," in this case, the meaning of the respective object or text, from a present datum, namely, the object or text itself. Yet this would be somewhat artificial. For the meaning is embodied in the object or text, and in a sense present and immanent in it, not merely past and indicated or pointed to. It seems more natural to consider the text or object and its meaning as a unit directly given to the historian. Thus the cultural and intellectual historian, at least in an important part of his work, follows a procedure that is free from the dualism of evidence and fact and in this sense superior to that of the ordinary historian. In turn, he is confronted with the different problem how it is possible to grasp the meaning embodied in a given work in a valid and objective fashion. This is the problem of hermeneutics that has been formulated, though probably not solved, by such thinkers as Dilthey, Rickert, and Cassirer. I cannot hope to offer a satisfactory solution of this problem, but I should like to restate it, and to argue that it deserves much greater attention than it has received in recent discussions of the historical method.

The terms in which Dilthey formulated the problem are roughly these: in any works produced by the human spirit, there is an original experience which the artist or thinker expresses in a corporeal object, and in some way, the interpreter will revive or relive the original experience through the analysis of the object. The expression of an experience may be either natural or conventional, but in either case Dilthey believes that it is possible for the interpreter to recapture the original experience through a kind of direct empathy, rather than through a vicarious substitution of his own experience. The difficulty in Dilthey's discussion of the problem lies in the fact that he tends to confuse two different aspects, though he occasionally seems to be aware of their difference: the concrete thoughts and feelings experienced by an artist or thinker of the past when he composed the work which we are trying to understand, and the artistic or philosophical or scientific content expressed and present in his work. Dilthey often confused the psychological understanding of an artist or thinker with the interpretive understanding of a work in its meaning. As to the former, we might question the view held by Dilthey and others that there is such a thing as direct empathy that enables us to understand through direct intuition the feelings

or thoughts of another person, through his gestures or verbal expressions. We might well defend the traditional empiricist view and assume that we sympathize with other people's feelings through the analogy of our past experiences. We might still grant that our own experience may be enriched by the understanding of other people's feelings insofar as we are led by our understanding of their expressions to recompose various elements of our own past experience in a novel way, just as the productive imagination has been explained through a novel recombination of elements derived from the memory of past sense experience. In any case, it seems extremely difficult to recapture the thoughts or feelings of an artist or thinker from his works, except when we are aided by biographical documents, diaries, letters, or the like. Yet this is not what we primarily want to achieve when we try to understand or interpret a work of art or a philosophical text. We rather want to understand its intellectual or artistic content as expressed in the work, the irreal meaning of it, as Rickert called it in his critique of Dilthey. We are thus driven to overcome Dilthey's psychologism, but to accept his formula that there is a fundamental category which we may call expression, or, with Cassirer, symbol, and a fundamental capacity of the human mind to give physical expression to spiritual meanings, and, vice versa, to understand these meanings through their physical expressions. There is a realm of essences with which the intellectual and cultural historian is concerned, and I am afraid it is not reducible to sense data. And there is a philosophy of language that is still largely unexplored and that is both broader and deeper than the discipline now practiced and propagated under that name. It is broader since it comprises forms of expression other than linguistic; and deeper because it should be concerned with the basic status, function, and differentiation of meanings in their relation to expressions and with the circle that leads from the meaning through the productive artist or thinker to the expression and back from the expression through the interpreter to the meaning. Such questions cannot be answered by an appeal to the current usage of one particular language which happens to be ours, nor by a discussion of the forms of inference or of the relation between statements and empirical data. In other words, the cultural historian who interprets the content and meaning of a text or work of art presupposes some kind of intelligible relationship between the content or meaning and the work or symbol. If this assumption is correct, he has a more direct and intimate relationship to his objects than the political historian who infers his events from derivative evidence. If the assumption is wrong, no objective in-

terpretation of a work of art or of a text is possible. This latter view I consider to be false, and I think it is refuted by the record of progress in the disciplines of cultural history, which has been guided by the actual content of the symbol-carrying objects rather than by the imagination of more or less ingenious interpreters.

Whereas some methodological features are common to all historical disciplines, and some at least to all branches of cultural history, there are also certain specific differences between these various fields. Thus, a performer may interpret music and a copyist a painting within its own medium of expression, while a historian of art or of music is confronted with the problem of translating, as it were, the non-linguistic expressions of a work of art or of music into ordinary words and concepts. This problem does not exist for the historian of literature, of philosophy, or of science who merely translates from one form of linguistic expression into another. Thus the latter is able and obliged to apply to his subject the methods worked out by classical and other philologists for the interpretation of linguistic documents. In other words, he must understand the vocabulary and grammar, the dialects and history of the language in which his texts are written, and the style and terminology of the authors whom he is studying. He must also have command of the techniques of textual history and of textual criticism that have been developed by scholars for the last five hundred years or so, and that may help him to emend his texts where necessary. He must use the method of explaining obscure or ambiguous passages by referring to parallel or similar passages in the works of the same author or of his contemporaries. He will watch quotations and other borrowings, to discover the sources and background of his author, as well as the influence exercised by him on later writers. In dealing with a scientific or philosophical author, he will pay special attention to the technical terms used by the author or by his sources.

Finally, whereas the historian of literature is still confronted with the problem of translating from a poetic or imaginative language into his own theoretical and critical language, the historian of philosophy and the historians of the various sciences have the additional advantage that they use fundamentally the same language, that of abstract philosophical or scientific discourse, as do the philosophers and scientists of the past whose writings they are trying to interpret. They still have to translate Greek or Latin or German or French into English discourse, and the discourse of the thirteenth or seventeenth century into that of the twentieth, and this does involve certain difficulties; yet it is always basically the same type of theoretical discourse.

Moreover, it is a discourse which claims to be true and appeals to a kind of common experience accessible to the interpreter as it is to the author. Thus the interpreter will be able to understand his texts and to estimate their truth or falsity by referring to this common experience, provided that he possesses the necessary philosophical or scientific training. For these reasons, the historian of philosophy must be trained in philosophy, and the history of philosophy has been mostly, though not always, explored by philosophers, and especially by scholars who combined a training in history and philology with one in philosophy.

The advantage which the historian of philosophy has over other historians by having direct access to his facts and by using the same kind of discourse as do the texts which he is trying to elucidate is balanced by a certain number of difficulties peculiar to his work. The reconstruction of the thought of lost authors from fragments and testimonies has been rightly stressed by Mondolfo, the only author who to my knowledge devoted a special study to the methods of the historian of philosophy. Yet this problem is not peculiar to the historian of philosophy, but exists in one way or another for all historical disciplines. Obviously, this kind of study leaves more room for conjecture and creative ingenuity than the interpretation of those authors who have had the bad luck of being preserved. Yet again, as in other instances, there is a solid core of established knowledge which is smaller than we should wish and which may be gradually expanded, and a fringe of uncertain opinions surrounded by a large desert of complete ignorance.

Another more typical difficulty arises for the historian of philosophy from the literary form in which the thoughts of past philosophers have come down to us. The dialogue as it is used by Plato and others raises the question to what extent the characters actually express the author's own views, and this has given rise to a number of controversies. I am convinced that a careful analysis of the composition of a given dialogue and a comparison between the various works of the same author will enable us in many, if not in all, instances to answer this question, but obviously special allowance must be made for this kind of difficulty. The lecture notes written down by a professor, as in the case of Aristotle or Plotinus, or by his students, as in the case of Hegel and of many medieval philosophers, evidently lack final polish and clarity and introduce a peculiar element of uncertainty that must be countered by carefully comparing the various works of an author and by discounting the possible sources of alteration. Orations and other works composed for a special effect or occasion

must be examined in terms of the circumstances of their composition, and cannot be taken *prima facie* as considered expressions of an author's thought. The form of the commentary used by many Neoplatonists and medieval philosophers always makes us wonder to what extent the author is expressing his own views or merely expounding a particular passage in Plato or Aristotle. Evidently there is no general answer to such questions, and it is equally impossible to ignore the difficulty and to give up the effort to overcome it. In each instance, the task must be faced by starting from those elements that can be established with reasonable certainty, and by trying to eliminate one by one the doubts and uncertainties that arise.

Another difficulty has been much discussed in recent years, especially in connection with certain phases of medieval and early modern philosophy. To what extent can we be sure, it has been argued, that the extant writings of a philosopher express his genuine and complete thought, and to what extent should we rather assume that he intentionally concealed his opinions, mainly from fear of being censured or persecuted? Thus we should not limit our attention to the explicit meaning of a text, but also try to understand what is written "between the lines." Now it seems clear, even aside from cases of intentional reticence, that no thinker or writer has ever been able to give complete or adequate expression to his thought in his writings, and also outside the field of philosophy, there are many instances to remind us, if we ever forget it, that there is a vast gap between the world of written records and the world of human words and deeds. This reminder should serve as a constant counsel of modesty to the historian, and not only to the historian of philosophy. On the other hand, I cannot see how the historian of thought can ever penetrate beyond the written texts, or the thoughts directly expressed in these texts. We may try to supplement or to correct the thought expressed in one text by other texts of the same author, or perhaps by testimonies of others concerning him, although in this latter case great caution must be observed. Yet I do not see how the historian of philosophy can or should ever abandon the textual evidence which is the only ground on which he stands. The mere possibility that a philosopher may have had different thoughts from those expressed in his writings does not lead us any further, and the burden of proof rests with him who makes such an assertion: he must produce evidence for what he is asserting. I am afraid there are no reliable techniques for discovering and interpreting what is written between the lines of a work. If we abandon the standard that our interpretation of a thinker must rest on the

evidence of his written statements, we open the door to much unverifiable speculation that is no better than the allegorical or cabbalistic methods employed by ancient and medieval theologians. I am sceptical about this talk of the secret thought of past philosophers who in the process usually become, against the testimony of their extant writings, the ventriloquists of a completely different philosophy which happens to be that of the interpreter who claims to know the author better than anybody else, including the author himself. For the same reason, I am sceptical about the so-called higher truth to which some historians like to appeal whenever the plain falsity of certain conventional assertions has been proven. These fashionable attitudes are even bolder than those of the allegorists; for the latter merely introduced various supplementary meanings, but never ventured to interfere with the literal interpretation of their text when they were able to understand it.

There are still other difficulties inherent in the very nature of philosophical thought even when it is expressed in writings of unquestioned authenticity and sincerity. Many great philosophers in ancient and modern times have been notorious for their obscurity, and in many instances this obscurity is not intentional, but due to the intrinsic difficulty of the problems discussed by the philosopher. To bring some clarity into the obscure but significant thought of past philosophers, without substituting simple or trivial ideas for more complex and profound ones—this is perhaps the greatest challenge for a historian of philosophy. The obscurity of a philosopher may be due to various reasons: he may try to comprise in his synthesis not only the facts of ordinary observation, but also those of a spiritual or mystical experience that are untractable in terms of ordinary language. He may force his language to express the ambiguities and multiple perspectives of a complex reflective thought. Or he may simply contradict himself in different parts of his writings, or express disparate views difficult to reconcile with each other or with ordinary experience. Sometimes it is possible to eliminate inconsistencies by reinterpreting certain passages in the light of others, or by assuming that a thinker changed his views and underwent an intellectual development. In other instances the inconsistencies remain and must be faced, as a result of the fact that the philosopher was torn between different tendencies. Philosophers usually try, and should try, to be consistent, but they do not always succeed. For the philosopher is confronted with the task of reducing a multi-dimensional reality to a two-dimensional discourse, and his attempt to do justice to many facets of reality may lead to many apparent or real inconsistencies. On the other hand, complete

consistency is usually attained by omitting or disregarding important aspects of reality, at the price of triviality or absurdity or at least of one-sidedness. Moreover, the range of thought of any philosopher is likely to be limited. He will exert his powers primarily on a certain set of problems, and take care of others by merely repeating some ideas inherited from his tradition or from his favorite sources. No wonder if these latter elements turn out to be incompatible with the major tendencies of his thought. Furthermore, the analysis of a specific problem may be conducted by a philosopher either as a separate enterprise without apparent premisses, or as a mere application of a general view previously adopted on different grounds. In the former case, the results obtained might be sound, but difficult to reconcile with the remaining views of the author; in the latter case, the results may be consistent with the author's system rather than with the facts at hand. Finally, the actual sequence in which a thinker expresses his thought, according to the plan and order of his writings, may be at variance not only with the way he discovered his basic ideas, but also with the manner in which they are logically connected. Hence the doxographic method often adopted by historians of philosophy ever since antiquity, which summarizes the views of an author in the sequence which they follow in his writings or tabulates his answers to certain problems schematically arranged by the historian, does not seem to be sufficient for a proper understanding of philosophical thought, though it may be a necessary first step. In order to discover the primary views of a philosopher, we must watch contradictions and repetitions, incidental asides no less than emphatic statements. These primary views, when discovered, must then be used hypothetically for an interpretation of all other views and statements of the respective philosopher. The richness and adequacy of these primary views, rather than surface consistency or surface completeness, determine the rank and quality of a thinker; and it is the task of the interpreter not merely to repeat or to summarize the expressed statements of a thinker, but also to make them understandable in terms of his primary views. This goal of interpretation is, of course, more easily formulated than attained.

In order to confirm the ideal of objectivity and to limit the claims of relativism also in the field of the history of philosophy, I should like to discuss some of the typical defects which have marred this field of inquiry, and to suggest how they might be avoided. In this, as in most other fields of history, there is a tendency to make excessive claims for certain hypotheses, or to pile conjecture upon conjecture. Whenever there is a controversy,

the proper procedure is not to compromise, or to leave the matter undecided, but to examine the various hypotheses as to the evidence on which they rest, and to the degree of probability each of them may claim. The result should be at least a frank admission that one hypothesis is more probable than the others, or that the available evidence does not at present allow a definite conclusion.

Another frequent pitfall is the use of false disjunctions. Historians like to argue that a given passage admits only two or three interpretations, and since all except one of them are obviously false, the remaining one must be correct. I am extremely doubtful about this procedure. There are often more than just a few possibilities, and a historian who follows this disjunctive method may in the end reveal nothing but his lack of imagination. If a passage is really obscure, a given interpretation must be established on more affirmative grounds than merely on the assertion that one or two alternative interpretations are wrong.

Another bane of historical discourse that has had especially devastating effects in the history of philosophy is the careless use of such comprehensive labels as Platonism, Averroism, Humanism, Idealism, and the like. It is not possible or desirable to eliminate such notions altogether from historical discussions. Yet we should carefully define them each time we use them, and not draw from them any conclusions that are not justified by their defined meaning. Otherwise, we may commit a plain *quaternio terminorum*. These terms lend themselves easily to sophistic manipulations. With reference to them, it is best to be an unreconstructed nominalist. "Isms" have no independent reality in the history of philosophy. The only thing that exists are the individual ideas and writings of individual philosophers, and all generalizations derive their validity from their reference to such specific phenomena and must be verifiable through them.

Another difficulty takes us still closer to the question of objectivity in the history of philosophy: the interpreter who reads and explains the opinions of a philosopher can hardly avoid noticing their truth or falsity, especially if he is himself a philosopher; he will tend to evaluate the ideas which he is interpreting, and his evaluation, being based on his own philosophical convictions, will influence the emphasis he puts on certain aspects of the philosophy which he is trying to explain, and even his description of its content. Now the historian of philosophy who is also a philosopher has a right and even a duty to criticize the philosopher whom he reads. Yet it is not impossible for him, as some theorists maintain, to separate the interpretation and the criticism of a given philosopher. In other words, we can and must suspend

the philosophical critique of a text while we are engaged in understanding and interpreting it, with the help of all those tools that philology and other auxiliary disciplines may put at our disposal.

There are two types of argument that have been frequently employed in the history of philosophy and that might better be abandoned because they rest on a confusion between interpretation and criticism. The first argument is of the following type: this opinion as apparently expressed in the text is so patently absurd that a great philosopher such as the one whom we are interpreting cannot possibly have held it. This argument is invalid unless the alternative interpretation which we should like to offer has equally strong support in the text. Any great philosopher is capable of having entertained, for reasons of his own, certain views which for other reasons of my own I may consider false or absurd. The only thing which counts in my interpretation of a philosopher is whether the text of his writings supports or refutes the view that he held the respective opinion. After this has been established, I am free to declare that the respective opinion is false, and I should have the courage to do so even in the case of a great philosopher, or of my teacher or friend, or of myself a few years ago. The falsity of an opinion is no legitimate ground for denying that it was held by a given philosopher, provided that his text suggests that he held it.

There is another type of argument that also rests on a confusion between interpretation and criticism, and that is equally invalid. It runs somewhat like this: this opinion is true, hence it must have been held by a great philosopher who is always right, and whose doctrine I am committed to uphold. This type of argument was used by Neoplatonists to attribute Aristotelian and Stoic views to Plato, and again by many medieval and modern philosophers. A philosopher or interpreter who does his own thinking will never be as orthodox as he may believe himself to be. The orthodox follower who cannot help being original or heretical in some respect will pay the price for his intended orthodoxy by attributing to his master some ideas that the latter could not possibly have conceived. We should not claim that our favorite philosophers are always right, or that they saw or decided all problems that are of concern to us. The only test whether or not they held a view consists in the evidence that they expressed it, not in our conviction that the view is true. I should go even further: we should be careful to distinguish whether certain ideas are central or incidental in a philosopher whom we are studying, and not give undue emphasis to the incidental ideas even though they may seem significant to us and we may wish that they had

been made more central. Moreover, we should distinguish whether certain ideas were explicitly stated by a philosopher or merely seem to be implicit in some of his other teachings. A philosopher would not always approve of the inferences which others may draw from his statements. In the history of thought, credit for the discovery of an idea does not belong to those in whose thought it might seem to be implied, but to those who formulated it explicitly for the first time.

I should like to conclude with a most important and difficult question which I might have taken up much sooner in this paper: what is the proper subject matter of the historian of philosophy? No doubt he should read, understand, and explain the writings of the major philosophers whose influence has remained alive through the history of Western thought, beginning with Plato, or rather with the Presocratics. There seems to be less unanimity as to the attention the historian of philosophy should devote to the large number of less important thinkers who seem to populate the vast plains by which the few mountain peaks are surrounded on all sides. The relative importance or significance of a given thinker may, of course, be a matter of opinion. But aside from this fact, I should strongly insist that the history of philosophy must include the minor as well as the major philosophers. The demands of scholarship should not be confused with, or subordinated to, those of the classroom or of the textbook. Unless the historian misjudges or debunks the major thinkers, nothing is lost and much is gained by his acquaintance with philosophers of a smaller caliber. The minor philosophers not only are often interesting, but they provide the connecting links between the great philosophers and thus help to understand their background and to distinguish between the conventional and original elements of their thought. There are broad currents of philosophical thought that run through the secondary rather than through the great thinkers, just as some highways do not touch the major cities. It seems incumbent upon the historian to become aware also of such currents.

There are still other difficulties connected with an attempt to define the subject matter of the historian of philosophy. It is well known that each philosopher gives a different definition of philosophy. Moreover, we may wonder whether the term "philosophy" should be restricted to the disciplined efforts of professional philosophers, or whether we should take philosophy in a broader meaning which would include the less methodical views held by scientists and theologians, poets and writers, or even the insights and wisdom of everyday life as it appears in popular

proverbs and stories. These non-methodical views often reflect the influence of professional philosophers, to be sure. Yet there are also important instances where ideas originating outside the precincts of professional philosophy had a powerful impact upon its later development. Moreover, philosophy, just as all other terms denoting major compartments of human experience, has itself been subject to changes in its meaning and in its relation to other disciplines. In its long history, philosophy has entered into varying connections with poetry and literature, with mathematics and medicine, with theology and political theory, connections which are very different from those prevailing at the present time, but which should be taken into account by the historian of philosophy who wishes to attain a proper understanding of his subject.

As a result of such considerations, the history of philosophy has recently entered a kind of federal union with such other disciplines as the history of literature, of science, and of religion, and this new union has received a special name and is called intellectual history or the history of ideas. Thus we may well ask whether the historian of philosophy should give up his traditional narrow task and become an intellectual historian who would encompass in his work the entire range of human thought even outside the boundaries of professional philosophy as now understood. I am inclined to think that the historian of philosophy has for his central subject a territory that largely belongs to him alone and that is constituted by the work of professional philosophers whether great or small, and that there is a large borderland of less technical thought which he may cultivate at his leisure, but which he must share with the historians of literature, of the sciences, and of other cultural activities. This borderland might very well be called the territory of intellectual history. In other words, the historians of philosophy, of science, of literature become intellectual historians insofar as they interpret general ideas that occur outside the precincts of technical philosophy.

The term "history of ideas," which has been frequently used in recent years, might be taken to mean the same thing as intellectual history; but it has been variously interpreted, and, in the view of its main proponents, it seems to have a somewhat different and more specific meaning. According to Lovejoy, if I understand him correctly, the historian of ideas is primarily concerned with the history of certain philosophical terms and concepts as they are found in philosophical as well as in scientific, religious, and literary writings. In this sense, the history of ideas is one of the most important and fruitful parts of the history of

philosophy, but it is evidently only a part of it. Besides it, there remains the traditional task of interpreting the thought of individual philosophers and schools in their total complexity. The history of a given term or idea will always throw much light on the thought of a particular philosopher who employs it. Yet, vice versa, only the comprehensive interpretation of that philosopher will tell us how much importance the particular concept or idea possesses for him, and what particular meaning it acquires in the context of his thought. Terms and ideas have no subsistence or history of their own, nor do they remain unchanged once their meaning has been arbitrarily fixed. In the case of each philosopher, the meaning of specific ideas depends on the context of his thought, and on their relation to his primary views. The history of ideas certainly serves a number of valuable purposes. It is an antidote against the naive assumption that terms and ideas as found in past thinkers always mean the same thing as they do in ordinary current speech. It also helps to break down the walls between the various departments or compartments of historical knowledge, and thus makes it possible to understand certain connections which would otherwise remain unnoticed. Whether the history of ideas should be considered as an autonomous discipline by itself, as some of its proponents and critics seem to assume, or rather as a program for a joint enterprise on the part of several historical disciplines, including the history of philosophy, I do not wish to decide in this paper.

I should like to conclude my somewhat disconnected remarks with a personal confession. I am convinced that the concern with history, and especially with cultural and intellectual history, is based on a kind of faith, a faith which I fully share: the works of art and literature, the philosophical and scientific ideas, even the political actions and social institutions that are contained in the human past represent a realm of essences in which we may participate. We are called upon to preserve, appropriate, and transmit it, not because it happens to be there, but because it is valuable and meaningful. In doing so, we become part of a continuous tradition, not only by repeating what has been said before, but also by contributing to it whenever we can. In other words, above the material needs, below the moral and religious needs, beside the strictly scientific needs, there are cultural needs that demand emphasis today because they are so often neglected or forgotten. I hopefully believe that this is meant by the frequently shallow talk we hear about the liberal arts and the humanities. I should like to think that productive historical scholarship is a fountainhead of such educational endeavors. The

true meaning of history does not consist in any sociological laws (though it would be valuable if they could be discovered), nor in the expectation of any future progress or doom (even if it could be predicted on solid grounds), but in the intrinsic significance of the products of the human spirit that we are able to discover and to understand.

PAUL OSKAR KRISTELLER

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

BOOK REVIEW

Words and Things; a Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and a Study in Ideology. ERNEST GELLNER. With an Introduction by Bertrand Russell. Boston: Beacon Press [1960]. 270 p. \$4.95.

This is a critique, devastating in intent, of Linguistic Philosophy or what to some of us is known as the ordinary-language school. Fundamentally, it is tiresome and best left unread. I will say just enough to explain why I think so.

The author's purpose does not require him to follow out the practice—as it were, *in extenso*—of the persons named as sponsors of the Linguistic Philosophy. It is true that there are passages purporting to summarize certain doctrines of the later Wittgenstein. But no attempt is made to trace the reasoning by which, let us say, the idea of the impossibility of a private language is supported. Nor is there any outline given of big or little points in *The Concept of Mind*; or of Strawson's views in his book on logical theory; or of Wisdom or Austin on our knowledge of other minds; or of any of numerous chapters and papers on time, cause, thought, universals, entailment, obligation, etc., etc. Secondary but interesting proposals—the dispositional theory of motives, the performatory use of verbs like 'promise' and 'approve,' the doctrine of avowals as applied to statements like "I am in pain"—are left untouched.

On the other hand, Linguistic Philosophy takes in *more* than the familiar thesis about the role of ordinary language in philosophical analysis: it is no mere strain of thought, for Mr. Gellner, but a complete outlook, containing views on the nature of language, of philosophy, of knowledge, and of the world. These views are for the most part tacit, "insinuated" (a word that occurs perhaps fifty times in the text) rather than stated, but not so cleverly concealed as to elude our author, who knows how to catch