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Georg Gangl

TELLING IT LIKE IT REALLY WAS

ON THE FORM, PRESUPPOSITIONS, AND JUSTIFICATION OF HISTORIOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE

UNIVERSITY OF OULU GRADUATE SCHOOL;
UNIVERSITY OF OULU,
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with historiographic knowledge, with its form, presuppositions, and justification. In the articles that form its backbone I argue that historiographic knowledge often takes the form of causal narratives, and that hindsight is an essential epistemic asset in the forging of those narratives. The articles further argue that historiographic knowledge is best understood through informational epistemology and a coherentist understanding of epistemic justification. The process of justification of historiographic knowledge claims, however, is also an intersubjective process in which different disciplinary practices play an essential role.

The extended introduction of this thesis has three goals that come out of the articles: 1) to elucidate the nature and characteristics of the philosophy of scientific historiography; 2) to argue for an empirical turn in the discipline; and 3) to probe the relationship between historiography and other ways to relate to the past, and with that, the relationship between the philosophy of historiography and the theory of history. On the first issue, I argue for a broadly naturalist understanding of the discipline, and I define its main task as the philosophical reconstruction and explication of the scientific practices of (Rankean) historiography along with their limits. The determination of the reach and limits of these scientific practices is a fundamentally empirical task though, thus the call for an empirical turn. Having established the nature of scientific historiography, I ask what role a rational and truthful relation to the past should play in our individual lives and for society as a whole.

The goal of chapter III is to delineate the relationship between (scientific) historiography and politics, and to defend the discipline against politicist usurpations. For these reasons, I talk about some basic agreement among historians concerning politics and the limits of its influence on their discipline, just as much as I identify the positive influence that politics can have on historiography. The nature and justification of historiographic method is apolitical though; anyone of any political persuasion has good reasons to use those methods, if they want to produce knowledge of the past. The chapter closes with reflections on the (political) limits of historiographic reason.

Keywords: hindsight, historical knowledge, history and politics, narrative, philosophy of historiography, philosophy of history, theory of history

Gangl, Georg, Kerro se niin kuin se todella oli. Historiografisen tiedon muodosta, olettamuksista ja perusteluista
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Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee historiografista tietoa, sen muotoa, oletuksia ja perusteluja. Historiografialla tarkoitetaan historian oppialaa mukaan lukien historiantutkimus ja -kirjoitus. Opinnäytetyön selkärangan muodostavissa artikkeleissa väitän, että historiografinen tieto on usein kausaalisten kertomusten muotoista ja että jälkikäteistarkastelu on episteemisesti hyödyllistä luotaessa narratiiveja. Ehdotan artikkeleissa, että historiografinen tieto on olemukseltaan informaatioepistemologian ja koherentistisen episteemisen oikeuttamisen kaltaista. Historiografisten tietovaatimusten perusteluprosessi on myös intersubjektiivinen prosessi, jossa erilaiset opilliset käytännöt ovat olennaisesti mukana.

Tämän opinnäytetyön laajennetulla johdannolla on kolme artikkeleista kumpuavaa tavoitetta: 1) selvittää tieteellisen historiografian filosofian luonnetta ja piirteitä; 2) argumentoida tieteenalan empiirisen käänteen puolesta; ja 3) tutkia historiografian suhdetta muihin tapoihin lähestyä menneisyyttä, ja sitä kautta tarkastella historianfilosofian ja historiateorian suhdetta. Puolustan laajasti ottaen naturalistista käsitystä historiografiasta. Tavoitteenani on (rankelaisen) tieteellisen historiografian käytäntöjen ja rajojen filosofinen eksplikaatio ja rekonstruointi. Kyseisten käytäntöjen rajojen määrittäminen on kuitenkin pohjimmiltaan empiirinen kysymys, joten se vaatii ”empiiristä käännettä” historianfilosofiassa. Hahmoteltuani tieteellisen historiografian perusluonteen, siirryn pohtimaan, mikä rooli sillä tulisi olla niin laajemmin yhteiskunnan tasolla kuin yksilön elämässäkin.

Kolmannen luvun tavoitteena on kuvata ja rajata tieteellisen historiografian ja politiikan keskinäistä suhdetta sekä puolustaa historiografian opillista olemusta alan politisointia vastaan. Tarkastelen historioitsijoiden yhteisymmärrystä koskien politiikkaa ja sen vaikutusta historian oppialaan. Osoitan, että politiikalla voi olla positiivisiakin vaikutuksia historiografiaan. Historiografisen metodin perusluonne ja oikeutus ovat kuitenkin epäpoliittisia. Tiedon tuottaminen historiografisia menetelmiä käyttäen on perusteltua riippumatta siitä millaisia poliittisia vakaumuksia tiedon tuottajalla itsellään on. Luku päättyy pohdintaan historiografisen järkeilyn (poliittisista) rajoista.

Asiasanat: historia ja politiikka, historiallinen tieto, historian teoria, historianfilosofia, historiografian filosofia, jälkikäteen ajattelu, kerronta

"To the critical mind, neither a providential design nor a natural law of progressive development is discernible in the tragic human comedy of all times" (Löwith 1949: v).

For that reason:

Dem Wahren, Schönen, Guten, und dem Chou

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I am very happy every time I can partake just a little in his overflowing creativity (and car trouble); Aud similarly has impressed me with her radiating enthusiasm, creativity, and wide-ranging interests, if I can ever be half as active as her, I shall be very happy; I really appreciate Tai's down-to-earth attitude and her sense of realism, she is the adult I aspire to be but probably never will be; Thil and I share a sense for transgressive "grapjes" that for many are difficult to understand so with her there are always lols, plus she has always had an open ear for my mental issues. I would like to thank all of them to indulge the nonsense that I mostly talk about when I don't do philosophy, and for the hours over hours of companionship and laughter.

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Oulu, 28.09.2023 Georg Gangl

List of original publications

This thesis is based on the following publications, which are referred throughout the text by their Roman numerals:

I Gangl, G. (2021). Narrative Explanations. The Case for Causality. In *Journal of the Philosophy of History, 15(2)*, 157-181, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/18722636-12341425

II Gangl. G. (2021). The Essential Tension. Historical Knowledge Between Past and Present. In *History and Theory*, *60*(3), 513-533, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/hith.12226

III Gangl, G. (2021). Historia Magistra Vitae? The Role of Historiography in Culture and Politics. In *Faravid – Journal for Historical and Archaeological Studies*, *52*(3), 103-122

IV Gangl. G. (2023). Misunderstandings. Kalle Pihlainen's The Work of History. Constructivism and the Politics of the Past. *Unpublished manuscript*

Contents

1 Introduction: Towards a Philosophy of Scientific Historiography

The purpose of this of this chapter is to offer a meta-level contextualization and broader frame for some of the findings of the articles, which form the backbone of this compilation thesis.[1] The issues that it tackles are in particular: 1) the nature and characteristics of the philosophy of scientific historiography; 2) the need for an empirical turn in the discipline; and 3) the relationship between historiography and other ways to relate to the past, and with that, the relationship between philosophy of historiography and the theory of history. Another central issue coming out of the articles, the relationship between politics and historiography and the defense of historiography against politicist usurpations, is discussed separately in chapter III below.

I take scientific historiography to be about the warranted and reliable production of knowledge of the past (Tucker 2004; Kosso 2001). Accordingly, the purpose of the philosophy of scientific historiography is to elucidate and explicate the processes that create such knowledge. The articles themselves already offer some insights into these processes, namely into the "form, presuppositions, and justification of historiographic knowledge", as the subtitle of this thesis goes. They talk about causal narratives and hindsight—the form of much historiographic knowledge and one of its central presuppositions—just as much as they explicate with the help of informational epistemology and a coherentist account of justification the process of the justification of historiographic knowledge claims by the evidence of the past (articles I and II). They further show the justification of historiographic knowledge claims also to be a discursive and with that intersubjective and communicatively rational process (article III). While I believe all of these issues to be centrepieces of any genuine philosophy of *scientific* historiography, during the writing of the articles it also dawned on me that I needed to reflect more widely on what the philosophy of scientific historiography is and can be. Understanding that notion more fully requires understanding its constituents—philosophy and scientific historiography—and their actual relationship to each other that makes one of them the philosophical "'underlabourer' and occasional midwife" (Bhaskar 2011: 24) of the other as it were. So, parts of this chapter will be about what scientific historiography is (I.3), what I take

[1] This purpose is stipulated in the guidelines of the Doctoral Training Committee for Human Sciences of the University of Oulu.

philosophy to be (I.4), and what the main tasks (I.5) and the right approach (I.6) in the philosophy of historiography are.

Questions about the latter came up when I, again prompted by work on the articles, started thinking about the *reach* of the evidentiary practices that make up scientific historiography, within individual historiographic texts but also in disciplinary debates and in relation to the entirety of the practices that make up the discipline of historiography. These questions led me to the *empirical turn* and the devising of the contours of an *evidentialist research programme* within that turn, which I both also advocate for and sketch to a certain extent in this chapter. Yet, they are no "package deal", one can buy into the former without also having to purchase the latter. The idea behind the former is that many philosophical questions about historiography, such as the one about the reach of the scientific practices of the discipline, can only be answered by an empirical examination of actual historiography, guided by the right philosophical questions and concepts though (Gangl/Lähteenmäki 2023). The evidentialist research programme further is an empirical research programme that takes off from the informational and coherentist reconstruction of the scientific historiography that I give in section I.5 and asks thereupon in it broadest "how far does the evidence get us within the entirety of the scholarly practices of historiography?"

Finally, the last issue I talk about in this introductory chapter, and the issue with which this chapter properly begins in the next section, is the question of the relationship between scientific historiography and the other relations to the past that exist in any given society. This issue stems from my realization, again while working on the articles in this thesis, that historiography is not only about the production of warranted and reliable knowledge of the past—the core of scientific historiography and with that the main object of interest of the philosophy of scientific historiography—but that historians often pursue other purposes with their texts too, purposes that are incidental from the standpoint of scientific historiography but which can be influential down to the individual statements they craft about the past. In one sense, this issue is part of the empirical turn as just described; scrutinizing how and to what extent all kinds of historiographic descriptions and whole historiographic texts are influenced by other issues and considerations than the evidence of the past is an empirical matter, think for instance about the moral and other value judgments that historians often make about the past or past actors or about the question of colligations (on moral judgments, see Gorman 2009; on colligations, Kuukkanen 2015: 97-115). On a broader scale though, this question internal to historiography and its philosophy

also reappears when we think about the discipline as a whole as a social practice among many. The question then becomes what role scientific historiography and historiographic knowledge can and should play in society and in what relationship they stand to the many other relations to the past a society maintains (on this whole issue, see especially article III and IV below). As a subject for academic dispute, this is the issue about the relationship between the philosophy of (scientific) historiography and the theory of history as pursued by scholars such as Herman Paul or Jörn Rüsen (Paul 2015; Rüsen 2008; on the debate, see also Gangl 2021a and Ohara 2022). As a societal matter, it is the fundamental question in what kind of society we want to live in. One in which we relate to the past there where it matters through genuine historiographic knowledge and in this sense through historiography (and other historical sciences), or one in which our relations to the past are governed by other motivations and where they are based on all kinds of falsehoods, ideologies, and passions and feelings about it.

Against the backdrop of this latter topic, section I.1 below analyzes the relations to the past advocated and maintained by three famous figures, though one of them is fictional, another probably delusional, and the third a "long dead white man" as the phrase goes in our identitarian times: Stephen Dedalus, Vladimir Putin, and Friedrich Nietzsche. The main idea here is that as the temporal beings that we are as humans, we cannot not have a past, though we may very well have a past purely of our own making as the case of Putin shows. And not just that, Putin sadly also shows that this "fantastic", or better fantasized, past can be used to destroy the present. The antidote to such fantasies about the past on one level just is historiography with its production of justified (true) belief about the past, i.e. knowledge. Through it and its methods we can show the fantasies to be such, but as the case of Putin also demonstrates, knowledge of the past is no all-powerful panacea to disabuse people from their historical fantasies and ideologies; the need that such fantasies fulfill seems to be mostly other than cognitive, and this is a lesson that might very well extend beyond Putin to many people. However, the section goes even beyond that and asks, pressed by Nietzsche, whether we really need knowledge of the past and with it historiography in society, whether it renders us a service as a community or as individuals that is indispensable, or whether we would not be better off and happier without. While I have no clear answer to this latter question, and in a sense everybody has to answer it for themself, I believe this to be one of the central themes for future discussions between the philosophy of historiography and the theory of history, and it is also a question central to the well-being of our societies as a whole. Can (historiographic) reason stem the tide of

irrationality about the past and beyond that engulfs us? While I do not know the answer to this question, it is felt throughout this text, and by the end of it, I hope to have given a clearer picture of what exactly the offerings of historiographic reason are and at what price they come.

While not yet exactly leaving behind the issue just sketched, the more systematic philosophical reconstruction of scientific historiography begins in section I.2 with some conceptual analysis. In the section, I differentiate five different meanings of history and their presuppositions. The most central presupposition, valid for all of them, is what I call "ontological historicism" (for a similar idea, though not under this name, see Tucker 2022, especially 114-119). There are some things, us humans included, which are fundamentally determined by their pasts, and we all relate to this fact in one way or another via the historical descriptions and historical thinking we engage in on a daily; with the ways in which a whole society relates to the past being that society's "historical culture" (Rüsen 1994). The five meanings of history that I differentiate against this background are: history as the past (history proper), history as scientific research into the past (historiography); history as the academic discipline engaging in that research (historiography as a discipline); history as the individual account of the past of some historian (historiographic accounts); and finally, in a wider sense of meaning, history as in the question "why bother about the past at all?" (history and historiography and their proper place in society). For the sake of clarity, I only maintain the first notion of history, and most of the rest of the introduction chapter, and indeed the thesis as a whole, are about history as the past and about historiography and historiographic accounts (that is the first, second, and fourth meaning of history that I differentiated). This enables us to clearly differentiate between the philosophy of historiography and the theory of history. While the subject-matter of theory of history is all the different relations to the past that a society maintains—in short that society's "historical culture"—the philosophy of historiography aims at philosophically reconstructing the (scientific) practices and practices of historiography, which form only one of those relations (Paul 2015; on the philosophy of historiography in this sense, see Tucker 2001: 48). Having done that, we can ask more poignantly the central question of the last section about which role the truthful relation to the past that historiography establishes should play in our societies; or even more succinctly: What society do we want to live in? While I, again, have no real answer to this central question, the rest of this chapter though concentrates on the philosophy of scientific historiography and the need for the empirical examination of historiography from a philosophical point of view

("empirical turn; the other issues stemming from the articles singled out in this chapter for further study or "meta-contextualization").

Scientific historiography came about, just like other historical sciences, in the 19th century, along with still influential speculative philosophies of history (most famously those of Hegel and Marx), bogus national myths and invented traditions, and a state-sponsored view and "curation" of history (school curricula, museums, monuments, etc.). For this reason, the 19th century is sometimes called the "Age of History", and it indeed brought about the (Western) "historicist historical culture" that we still know and arguably live by today, providing for our "past needs" all the offerings just mentioned. One the one side, there are thus the (historical) sciences with their warranted knowledge and the decentering, processualizing, and secularizing of humans and their world that they brought about with their knowledge. On the other, we find all kinds of nationalist, (pseudo-)religious, and other myths and speculations about the meaning and the goal of past, present, and future and the meaning of life as such, vainly trying to make sense of all the senseless suffering that people have endured since time immemorial. The goal of section I.3, "The Age of History and the Rankean Paradigm of Scientific Historiography", is twofold: to give a "tableau" of the main options of the "historicist historical culture" that is still very much with us, continuing the theme of the relationship of the different relations to the past to each other and the choice we can or have to make between them, and more centrally, to rationally reconstruct Ranke's scientific paradigm which made historiography into a science, making it in this sense an offering about the past of a very special kind.

Ranke, I argue, is the paradigm founder of scientific historiography because of his methodological (or epistemic), discursive, and disciplinary innovations (Grafton 1997). Ranke's methodological innovations consist in the application of informational background theories to documentary sources and in his insistence on primary sources; his discursive innovation revolves around the use of footnotes which made his inferences and judgments intersubjectively checkable and his comments about his own sources; and his disciplinary innovations spring from his famed workshop and the progressive research programme that he founded based on his methodological and discursive advancements. All three together allowed historiography to become a progressive scientific discipline (Tucker 2016a). However, I hasten to add that the purpose of section I.3 is not to study "Ranke the man" or the historical context of his innovations in any depth. His conservative politics, his pious Protestant faith, and the speculative philosophy of history surrounding "universal history" that he developed late in his life all deserve detailed

attention, and I do mention them in section. From the standpoint of the philosophy of scientific historiography though, and the standpoint of philosophical reconstruction of Ranke's innovations, they are of lesser importance, as none of them is closely, i.e. inferentially connected to those innovations that make up scientific historiography, and therefore they also do not take part in their (philosophical) explication or justification. That this is so, is shown in the two following sections, I.4 and I.5, that deal with the nature and tasks of philosophy and the philosophical reconstruction and justification of scientific historiography as defined in this section.

Section I.4 thematically switches from scientific historiography over to philosophy, or more precisely, to metaphilosophy, the field that asks what philosophy itself is and what it is (good) for (Williamson 2007; Petterson 2019). In the section, I take a broadly naturalist position about philosophy in line with what came to be known as empirical epistemology (Kosso 1991). I argue that philosophy, in the words of Timothy Williamson, needs to be "disciplined" (Williamson 2007: 285) in some way, that just like any other intellectual inquiry, it needs evidence, theory, and reason(ing) (Kosso 1998: 7). Philosophy, in other words, justified its statements and hypotheses via theory and evidence, just like the sciences do. For the philosophy of historiography that means that its evidence must come from historiography and its (scientific) practices itself. This is so because there is no "philosophical superhighway" to knowledge of the past or any a-priori transcendental or transhistorical knowledge about it—which properly understood is an indictment to any speculative philosophy of history with grand or not so grand aspirations.

Beyond this, coming to the "theory part" of philosophy, I take philosophy to be about the fundamental principles and presuppositions of all kinds of practices and about the principles and presuppositions of reasoning itself (Bhaskar 2010: 7). For the philosophy of (scientific) historiography, the philosophy of a very specialized intellectual practice, this means that it is mostly about the ontological and epistemological principles and presuppositions of the discipline, the most sophisticated endeavour of relating to the past to date. And given my interest in the scientific core of historiography, it is mainly about the (epistemological) principles and presuppositions assumed by historians in the process of the production of that knowledge, which will be philosophically elucidated in detail in I.5. Finally, in this section I define the fundamental purpose of philosophy to be phronesis. Phronesis, as I see it, is the synthesis of theoretical and practical reason in praxis; we cannot not act, and philosophy aids us in this action in the weighing of the different aspects,

reasons, and goals of these actions (MacIntyre 2009). Coming back to the issue of the usefulness of historiography and knowledge of the past for individuals and society as a whole, the question here is of what use they can be in (ordinary) processes of phronesis.

After having consecutively established what scientific historiography and philosophy are, the task of section I.5 is to philosophically reconstruct and justify scientific historiography. I approach this task by setting up a prototypical difference, with historians on the one side and philosophers of history on the other. Historians have traditionally been complaining that philosophers fundamentally misunderstand their actual disciplinary practices (Marwick 1993; Zammito 2009), and that their reconstructions often have been "emptily prescriptive" (my term), that is that they set up an (epistemic) standard for the discipline that it cannot meet (the paradigmatic example of this is Hempel's covering law model; see for the basic idea Hempel 1942). Historians themselves in their more theoretical pronouncements on the other have often advocated a "matter-of-fact, antitheoretical and antiphilosophical objectivist empiricism", in the words of Peter Novick (Novick 1988: 593). The issue at stake thus is to give a descriptively accurate and normatively compelling philosophical reconstruction of the scientific practices of historiography which avoids the incoherent empiricism advocated by many (traditional) historians (along the lines that the historian should "extinguish" themself when approaching their sources, as in a famous quote from Ranke himself).

In other words, the task ahead for the establishment of a philosophy of scientific historiography consists in the reconstruction of "the relations between historical input (evidence, chiefly primary sources) and historiographic output (written accounts of the past in whatever form they may come)" (Tucker 2001: 51) and in the demonstration that this output is knowledge of the past; something I try to do with the help of informational epistemology and a coherentist understanding of epistemic justification (on the former, see Dretske 2000; on the latter, Kosso 2011). With the help of those philosophical positions, I argue that scientific historiography must employ theory, pace the self-understanding of many traditional historians, but that that this theory mostly consists in informational background theories which account for the reliability and fidelity of the evidence in different media of information. They are the accounting claims that ensure that presumable evidence is actual evidence of the past—that information of the past by which we infer historiographic propositions has reached us in the present. The historiographic descriptions that historians infer via this evidence—and which are knowledge of the past if they do that properly and if there is enough evidence—I call the

explanatory claims or simply the hypotheses of historiography. Within the coherentist understanding of justification that I propose, the main problem is that of circularity. Some beliefs justify others without any foundational beliefs, so we encounter the circular problem that the historiographic hypothesis explains the evidence while the evidence justifies that very hypothesis. In other words, we run the risk that the hypothesis furnishes its own evidence that is then used to prove it. The answer to this problem is the requirement of *epistemic independence while upholding coherence between the different claims*, which comes down to what I have called "independently justified transmission-token independence". When we add to this the more general criteria of the consistency of our historiographic accounts and their wider coherence with everything else that we know to be true, we arrive at "dynamic coherence without collusion" (merging two definitions of Kosso's; Kosso 2001: 79 and 92), as the gold standard for the justification of historiographic hypotheses about the past. While the vocabulary is here is philosophical, I believe this to be an accurate reconstruction of the methods known in historiography as "source criticism" or just the "historical method", which are based on the inference of (true) descriptions of the past with the help of independent evidence which has, where possible, been traced back to its source in the past with the help of informational background theories (Tosh 2010: 88- 146).

Another issue raised directly in I.5 is the *need for an empirical turn* which was mentioned above as one of the central issues coming out of the articles to be discussed in this section. Next to reconstruction of the scientific (evidentiary) practices of historiography, which I take to be the centrepiece of any philosophy of historiography, I believe the philosophy of historiography should turn to *historiographic practices and products* more widely; it should attend in detail to historiographic research, writing, and all other scholarly practices of historiography. This demand comes out of the history of the discipline itself—where the actual (scientific) practices of historiography often have not had the relevance they should have had—just as much as out of the metaphilosophical arguments of the last section about the need for evidence in our philosophical theories and the impossibility of strictly philosophical knowledge of history (for a classic formulation that we need empirical evidence for our philosophical theories, see Laudan/Laudan/Donovan 1988). Similarly have discussions in general philosophy of science shown that the real (epistemic) action goes on on the level of the interaction between the evidence and (background) theories so that we must zoom in on those to get a better understanding of the knowledge-producing practices of the different sciences (Currie 2015; Chang 2021). In this spirit, I also suggest that

the different positions in the field— such as evidentialism, postnarrativism, and constructivism, among others— *create empirical research programmes* around what I call in this section the *evidentiary default position*. There is near unequivocal agreement among philosophers and historians *that* historiography produces *some knowledge* of the past via the discipline's scientific methods that deal with the evidence; what is unclear is how far those methods *reach* within the entirety of the scholarly practices and products of historiography.[2] The idea then is to start from the evidentiary default position as a common reference point for the different research programmes and ask about the reach of scientific historiography within individual historiographic texts, historiographic debates, and throughout the entirety of the scholarly practices of historiography.

Based on this perceived need for an empirical turn and starting from the evidentiary default position, the goal of the next and last section of the chapter (I.6) is to outline my own *evidentialist research programme* which is built around the central research questions "how far does the evidence get us?". Its goal is to determine the *reach* of the scientific practices of historiography, as defined in I.3 and defended in section I.5, within the entirety of the scholarly practices historians engage in. However, the section begins by surveying different positions that have in recent years called for the analysis of historiographic practices, and which in this sense are all part of the empirical turn, and with reflections on which practices and products of historiography are actually relevant for the empirical turn and what the standard for such relevance is (any such ascription is theory-laden). In this context, I also discuss what an empirical research programme in the philosophy is and what it should consists of in terms of hypotheses, expectations, and properly conceptualized empirical research objects. All of this should be of help for those who actually go about crafting these research programmes. (The beginning of the section is in this sense about the philosophy of philosophical research programmes, if you like, continuing the discursive thread from I.4; see also Lakatos 1970 classically on the notion of a research programme, and most recently on the idea of such research programmes in the philosophy of historiography, Gangl/Lähteenmäki 2023: 184-186).

[2] For some positions, it might also be an open question how historiography actually produces that knowledge, in which case they should give their own reconstruction of the "evidentiary default position" first, just as I do in section I.5 with the help of informational epistemology and coherentist epistemology. Likewise should the different approaches in the field, as normal part of the philosophical discussion, scrutinize the different reconstructions of the scientific core of historiography given by other approaches (and the same should also be done by those few who reject the evidentiary default position wholesale and who believe that historiography produces no knowledge of the past whatsoever).

Now, the question about the reach of the scientific practices of historiography that mainly animates section I.6 is a fundamentally empirical issue I believe, which can only be answered by a philosophical examination of actual historiography. I.6 therefore outlines a series of central topics about which the question "how far does the evidence get us?" can be fruitfully asked, namely historiographic texts and their building blocks and historiographic debates and their outcomes.

The issue of the building blocks of historiographic texts comes out of articles and my dissatisfaction with the two levels of text that are usually only differentiated, individual propositions on the one side and whole book-length narratives on the other. In recent years, however, this simple differentiation has been questioned. First by Kuukkanen with his postnarrativism who insists on argumentation for specific theses as the structuring principle of historiographic texts, a principle that cannot be reduced to individual propositions but which also does not determine the text as a whole, the latter point critiquing narrativist holism (Kuukkanen 2015; Kuukkanen 2017a). And most recently and most fruitfully by Wulf Kansteiner with his differentiation between the descriptive, narrative, and argumentative parts of a historiographic text (Kansteiner 2021). I believe that Kansteiner has characterized the textual building blocks of historiographic texts well, though we do not know yet about their *composition and ratio in actual historiographic texts*, which is another fundamentally empirical question (and which probably differs according to the kinds of texts historians write and also according to their historiographic speciality). From the evidentialist point of view, Kansteiner's categories, when properly adapted, can be used as concepts for the empirical analysis of historiographic texts. The adaption here is to make his tripartite textual differentiation into a dual epistemic differentiation between description and argumentation, with narrative being from the standpoint of the evidence of the past a form of description aimed at causal processes (see also article I below where this understanding of narrative is developed). The *evidentialist hypothesis* concerning the building blocks of historiographic texts then is that their descriptive parts thus defined, now including description and narrative, are justified by the evidence to a large degree, though that does not mean that the whole description is justified such, as it could involve a significant value element as in many colligations and moral other judgments that historians make about the past. Conversely, the same is not the case for many of the argumentative parts of historiographic texts because these arguments are essentially about political, ethical or otherwise non-epistemic issues that historians also pursue with their texts, and in this sense they are not covered

by methods of scientific historiography, which does not mean that they are not otherwise (rationally) justifiable.

Concerning the second topic, historiographic debates and their outcomes, the categories for empirical analysis I suggest here are historiographic agreement, historiographic disagreement, and failure of communication, taking a cue from Aviezer Tucker who first differentiated them and suggested a research project roughly along these lines (Tucker 2001). Here, as in the case of the building blocks of historiographic texts, we do not really know about the degree of consensus, dissensus, and failure of communication in historiography, and this is a fundamentally empirical question. The *hypothesis* here though is that, given that historians use the methodologies of scientific historiography, convergent belief change of a heterogeneous group of historians, or "consensus formation" in the words of Larry Laudan (Laudan 1984: 16), can be explained by knowledge of the past and in this sense the evidence. Conversely, as the flipside of this evidentialist hypothesis, disagreement and failure of communication between historians are to be explained by (serious) epistemic underdetermination, ill-formed hypotheses, and non-epistemic factors such as the ethical and political convictions of the historians involved in the debate.

The goal of the evidentialist research programme is to establish the degree of epistemic (under-)determination of historiography, which just is the answer to the question "how far does the evidence get us?". Determining the reach of the scientific evidential practices of historiography ipso facto also means discerning their (current) limits, and this opens up the question about other determinations historiography is subject to, be they political, moral, reverential, or otherwise. In a sense, the evidentialist research programme is therefore to be complemented by an "anti-evidentialist" one that starts from the opposite end, asking about the non-scientific determinations of the discipline and their reach. Whether the twain shall ever meet is difficult to say, but by making all the determinations historiography is subject to explicit, we can weigh them against each other and come to a better understanding of what we can expect and demand from historiography, as individuals but also as society as a whole. Thus, while I believe scientific historiography to be the core and the most important part of historiography—the part this chapter revolves around—I do not want to limit the discipline to it. Just like historiography is not the only relation to the past that modern societies maintain, scientific historiography is not all that there is to historiography. In a sense, there is the outer within, the non-scientific elements within historiography, as there is the inside without, the role of scientific historiography and the knowledge it produces

in wider society, and the future of both, the philosophy of historiography and the theory of history, might exactly lie the elucidation of these relationships within their respective domains. Now, while it is essential for "historiographic reason" (Tucker 2021a: 161) to reflect on its limits, it also comes with a clear promise if I am right in what I argue in this chapter and throughout this thesis: the promise of "telling it like it really was", i.e. the promise of knowledge of the past and with that the prospect of the creation of a (historical) world based on that knowledge and reason. The sleep of reason produces monsters.

Summing up, the point of chapter I is to "meta-contextualize" three central issues that come out of the articles: 1) the nature and characteristics of the philosophy of scientific historiography; 2) the need for an empirical turn in field; and 3) the relationship between historiography and other relations to the past (and with that the relationship between the philosophy of historiography and theory of history). Starting with the last topic, in what follows I first (essayistically) differentiate the different relations people have to the past, with historiography only being one of those relations (I.1). Based on this, I more thoroughly distinguish history, historiography, and their respective philosophies from the other relations to the past that obtain in a given society, and with that, from theory of history (I.2). Since what distinguishes historiography from those relations is its warranted and reliable production of knowledge of the past, I next reconstruct historiography's scientific core as developed by Ranke (I.3). Thereafter, I explicate what philosophy is and what it is for (I.4). Having identified scientific historiography and the point of philosophy, I proceed to the philosophical reconstruction and justification of scientific historiography, i.e. to the idea of a philosophy of scientific historiography as section I.5 is called. Finally, I outline an evidentialist research programme based on this reconstruction, with the main question here being the reach of scientific historiography within historiographic texts, debates, and the discipline as a whole (I.6).

1.1 The Meaning of History: A Nightmarish Opening

"History (…) is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (Joyce 1992: 42), Stephen Dedalus, one of the main characters of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* and his literary alter ego, famously exclaimed. The background of the well-known, and by now also well-worn, saying in the book is as follows: Dedalus is asked by Mr Deasy, the Unionist headmaster of the Dublin elite private school that he is working for, to bring a manuscript that Deasy wrote to the newspaper. The topic of Deasy's

text is the prevention of foot-and-mouth disease in Ireland. Deasy thinks he knows how to confront the disease, and that his proposal would really help Ireland to develop economically, yet he is "surrounded by difficulties, by ... intrigues, by ... backstairs influence, by…" (Joyce 2000: 41). After a short pause, Deasy recovers his voice and continues by saying "England is in the hands of the jews" (Joyce 1992: 41). "Old England is dying" (Joyce 2000: 41), he concludes, because "the jew merchants are already at their work of destruction" (Joyce 2000: 41).

Dedalus tries to answer him by saying "[a] merchant (…) is one who buys cheap and sells dear, jew or gentile, is he not?" (Joyce 2000: 41), but Deasy is having none of it, rushing into another tirade about the Jews who "sinned against the light", which is "why they are wanderers on the earth to this day" (Joyce 2000: 41). After this short "journey" back to stories and the imagery of the Bible, striking the Jews also with their supposed past,[3] Deasy swiftly comes back to his own present and rants about the Jews also controlling "the Paris Stock Exchange" (Joyce 2000: 42). From there he once more leaps back to Bible motives and says of the Jews: "A hoard heaped by the roadside: plundered and passing on. Their eyes knew the years of wandering and, patient, knew the dishonours of their flesh" (Joyce 2000: 42). Here Dedalus makes another faint attempt at rebuttal by asking, in a similarly broad fashion to his first try, about who wouldn't know the "dishonours of the flesh". But being faced with sheer incomprehension from Deasy's side, he quickly relents and resigns by saying: "History (…) is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (Joyce 2000: 42).

[3] "Wanderers of the earth" is a reference to *Genesis* 4, the story of Cain and Abel. According to *Genesis*, Cain and Abel are the children of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, with Cain being their first born. Cain killed Abel because he was jealous about God looking favourably on the offerings Abel made while ignoring what Cain had offered to Him. As a reaction to Cain's killing of Abel God proclaims: "Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." (4:11-4:12). God then sets the famous mark on Cain and exiles him to the land of Nod, but also decrees that anyone who would harm Cain should get it back sevenfold. The figure of Cain has been variously associated with the Jews throughout Christian history, not the least since Augustine of Hippo ("St. Augustine") who called all Jews "Cains" (Michael 2008: 3). The Cain story has also been read as an allegory for the Jews killing Jesus after they had forsaken him (and with that God himself in the Christian view). For that "crime", they were made the "wanderers of the earth" who could not grow crops, which fit the geographic and occupational distribution of Jews, who were living mainly in towns and cities in the European Middle Ages. Since the Middle Ages, there is also the mythical figure of the Wandering Jew ("Ahasver") with structural similarities to the Cain story. In German, the Wandering Jew is known as "ewiger Jude" ("eternal Jew"), which became a stock phrase in Nazi propaganda.

A lot could be said about the scene that Joyce draws up here. Deasy, for instance, who so seamlessly leaps through time to malign the Jews, combines traditional Christian anti-Judaist prejudices that are justified mainly through the Bible story and the doctrines of the Catholic Church with typically modern antisemitic ideologemes of the Jews controlling the world and scheming in the background to bring down the nations (Michael 2008). There is also some irony in the fact that Deasy wants to cure foot-and-mouth disease in cattle in Ireland, that is save animals, while he wants to rid himself of another whole group of humans; the Jews are a "disease" just like foot-and-mouth disease here. This might be read as comment about the Social Darwinism that was already rampant in the late 1910s when *Ulysses* was written.

In any case, what interests us most here is the idea that Dedalus expresses when confronted with Deasy's antisemitic tirades and his lack of insight, his famous sentence about history being a nightmare from which he tries to wake up. What Deasy is doing is to refer to the history of the Jewish people as he (falsely) sees it to justify his antisemitic resentment. Jews are different from everyone else, he answers to Dedalus' interjection that everyone tries to "buy cheap and sell dear", as their history clearly shows. One way to understand Dedalus' following exasperation with history is on a personal level. He is not willing to judge a whole people today by the supposed misdeeds of their ancestors from hundreds or thousands of years ago. Speaking from within the narrative, had he become as resentful as Mr Deasy, Dedalus would never have befriended Leopold Bloom later on in the book, who is partly of Jewish ancestry. Bloom becomes something like a father figure to Dedalus, and his day would have been so much worse had he never engaged with Bloom on a more sustained level due to some antisemitic resentment of his. (Joyce's whole modernist novel famously takes place on a single day in Dublin, June 16, 1904.) Not believing in history, or at least in the account Deasy has given of it, had a positive effect on Dedalus' life.

Yet, the issue at stake extends well beyond the individual level: Does history help us in gaining a better understanding of our fellow humans? Or does it, perhaps exactly through the knowledge it furnishes, fundamentally divide us? Having heard Mr Deasy's antisemitic rants, Dedalus seems to think the latter, and so he (vainly) wishes to rid himself of history altogether. However, I have been imprecise in what I have been asking about "history" in this paragraph so far. It is not so much history as the *past* that divides us in Mr Deasy's rant, it is his *account* of the past that does the job, an account that is fundamentally flawed. Dedalus recognizes this too, and before he announces his exasperation with history, he counters Deasy by saying

that everyone tries to buy cheap and sell dear, not just the Jews. While not in itself a historiographic statement, it gives a different explanation of a behaviour that was allegedly specific to the Jews, if in a very general manner. (Maybe after having turned away from history, Dedalus should take up social science.)

Were we to turn to actual historiography and other historical sciences, we could give more and probably better rebuttals of Deasy. We could throw serious doubt on the truthfulness of the Bible narrative on which he draws, for example, or remark that Christians were often not allowed to lend money in the Middle Ages, leaving this job to Jews and other minorities (Michael 2008: 53-58), and so forth. In other words, we could oppose Mr Deasy with actual *knowledge* and *facts about the past*. This does not (fully) answer the question of whether history fundamentally divides us, as facts about the past might also be used to divide us in the present, but it showcases two main features of this thesis as a whole and of this introductory section in particular: Speaking about history, it is of utmost importance to make clear whether we speak about the past itself, our cognitive accounts of the past, or some other relation to the past that we are accentuating. That is, we should differentiate *history* as the past itself from *historiography* and wider *theory of history* (Tucker 2009a: 2; Paul 2015; Gangl 2021a). Further, I strongly believe that historiographic knowledge can and should make a difference to our wider past relations, after all it is the most warranted and most reliable way to come to knowledge about the past that we have. That is, in the context of Mr Deasy's rant, we should oppose him with actual historiographic knowledge, and not leave the past to his destructive fantasies.

Before we come in the next section in detail to the conceptual distinction between history, historiography, and our other relations to the past, and try to understand the different and sometimes confusing meanings of history head-on, let me give you another example of a destructive fantasy about the past that already went a step further than Mr Deasy's: to the actual destruction of the present in the name of the (fantasized) past. As if he wanted to give Stephen Dedalus another reason to try his best to awake from history, Vladimir Putin, president of the Russian Federation, wrote in his pseudohistorical pamphlet "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians" that was published last year: "To have a better understanding of the present and look into the future, we need to turn to history" (Putin 2021). What sounds like good and well-meaning if slightly contradictory historicist advice ("to look forwards we need to look backwards"), meant for Putin to start a war and attack Ukraine, armed as he was with both real weapons and "history", that is with pseudohistorical claims and arguments (Chotiner 2022). In

the manner typical of all fascists—which the Austrian satirist Karl Kraus when faced with the rise of the Nazis characterized as "persecutory innocence" ("verfolgende Unschuld" in the German original; see Kraus 1967: 15)—Putin blames others for what he himself is doing: to "mythologize and rewrite history" in a "denial of the past", all in an effort to hold on to a deep grudge and nurture his resentment: "Russia was robbed" (Putin 2021). (Resentment and projection are two most prominent mental operations of all kinds of authoritarians, something that can be seen in Deasy too.)

The account of history that Putin produces against this background looks the part. In the first sentence of the whole piece, we read that Russians and Ukrainians are "a single whole" and in one of the last sentences stands "for we are one people" (Putin 2021). This "single whole" is assumed throughout the entire text, no matter if Putin talks about some 17th century peasants or about more recent history. In this setup, ill can befall the united people only from the outside, as scheming foreign forces just won't leave them alone. Traditionally, it would be time to blame "the Jews" here again, as Deasy does, but Putin is content with projecting modern geopolitical interest constellations back into history, so it is states other than (Tsarist) Russia that have been threatening the united people throughout history. And as it was in the past, so it is in the present, though now the time has come to defend oneself against the threat under the leadership of no other than Putin himself—with a war of aggression.

Again, we can seriously doubt here that Putin's "history" does us any good. Actually, it seems pretty straightforward that his resentful account of the past has been harmful to thousands of Ukrainians and Russians over the last months, claiming anything else would be frivolous. We can once again engage in the debunking of his claims, as we have done with Deasy's antisemitic tirades, for example by demanding that he show us how he knows what long dead peasants who left next to no known sources behind actually thought; we could tell him that the notions of nation and nationality that he operates with are, for the most part, an invention of the 19th century; and so on (Chotiner 2022).[4] But would it really make a difference? Not to Putin and his followers I suppose who seem mostly motivated

[4] It would be a worthwhile task to analyze Putin's organicist and nationalist imagery and his victim rhetoric from the standpoint of Hayden White's *Metahistory* (White 1973). For White, 19th century historians that employed these sorts of metaphors had an affinity to conservativism by "mode of ideological implication" (White 1973: 29-31). While conservativism is an understatement for Putin's fascist and totalitarian thinking, there are definite overlaps here. I am tempted to say "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose", and at the same time I am also thinking about Umberto Eco's work on "Ur-Fascism" (Eco 1995).

by other concerns than "getting history right"—from resentment and nationalism in Putin himself and many of his followers to probably sheer opportunism in others.[5] Whatever the case with Putin, just as in Deasy's case historiographic knowledge does make a difference in the grander scheme of things I believe. It might motivate others to act, make us understand how Putin and similar figures came to power and could fortify their authoritarian rule, and it might make other societies more resilient to the threat that fascists and authoritarians like him pose to them from the inside and out.

The main question that we have raised through the example of Mr Deasy was: Does "history" actually divide us? Having next discussed the case of Putin, another related question appears: What can be accomplished by historiographic knowledge and criticism? It is obvious that Deasy and Putin live in historical fantasy worlds of their own making that are very divisive, even violent, and that historiographic knowledge can be used to criticize those "worlds". But does well-founded criticism really make a difference here? Not immediately, at least in the case of Putin. At this point, I would like to introduce a third and last character, one intellectually vastly superior to both Deasy and Putin: Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche discusses our relations to the past in his famous second "Untimely Meditation", aptly titled "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (Nietzsche 1997: 57-125). There he makes an interesting observation about humans, by way of discussing cattle. He claims that cattle does a lot of things during a single day—"they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, and so from morn till night" (Nietzsche 1997: 60)—yet they go about all these things fundamentally unbothered by history, and because of that, they are also free from "pleasure or displeasure and thus neither melancholy nor bored" (Nietzsche 1997: 60).

Now, the important point here is not whether Nietzsche was right about the cognitive (dis-)abilities and the historical consciousness of animals, but what he has to say about human beings in his object lesson on cattle. For him, human culture

[5] I think what Aviezer Tucker says about populists is just as true of Putin, though he is a different kind of (paranoid) authoritarian reared as he was in the Soviet security apparatus: "Populism's idea of truth is emotivist. Truth is what populists feel strongly about. Historiography would be then a narrative representation of strong emotions, wishful thinking. (…) The criterion for historical narrative is then that it feels good, feels correct, in accordance with one's identity and emotional expression." (Tucker 2021a: 160-161). That is also the reason why Putin is impervious to historiographic critique. His values and interests are identitarian, not cognitive, epistemic, or plainly humanist. The sad truth is that probably no amount of factual historiographic criticism could make him change his mind. Whether this is the political lesson that we should draw about all authoritarians and populists, is an open question on which partially depends how we might want to engage with them.

is built upon remembrance—today we would say cultural transmission and "collective learning" are central to the development of human societies (the latter term has been popularized by Big History in recent years; see Christian 2004: 147). As humans, we cannot "learn to forget" (Nietzsche 1997: 61) in a fundamental sense, while such general forgetting would exactly be key to a modicum of cattle-like (or sheepish?) happiness. Happiness, Nietzsche claims, is fundamentally linked to "the ability to forget (…), the capacity to feel *unhistorically*" (Nietzsche 1997: 62, original emphasis). Humans, however, are in this sense rather imperfect beings as they neither fully live in the present nor in the past, which is ineluctably gone by and over with. This relation is the point of departure for the possibility of any human culture, but it also means that the past can become a burden, a burden creatures living fully in the present can never experience. (One could read this as a strange inversion of the saying "quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi".)

Whether Nietzsche was right to define happiness as a momentary and unhistorical feeling, something close to bliss, is of less concern here than his reflection on *the necessity to relate to the past in some way* and, as humans, to *balance remembering and forgetting*. Our personal happiness might just be dependent on the right ratio of the two, and for whole cultures there is likewise a question of what to remember and what to forget, that is, given the brutality of much of the past, to steer a course between historical trauma and historical amnesia. So, while we forget things about the past all the time, we simply cannot forget the past as such and live the bliss or nightmare of the eternal present of Nietzsche's cattle. (As it turns out, not just history but also the present can become a nightmare.) Putin, like everyone else, cannot "learn to forget" in this fundamental sense, but he could rid himself of a past entirely of his own making. For him, as for people and whole societies stuck in historical trauma, some such forgetting would actually be very salutary.

Nietzsche himself tried to solve the problem about the right ratio of remembering and forgetting through his accounts of monumental and antiquarian history, with the gauge for both being what he called "life and action" (Nietzsche 1997: 59). Monumental history spurs great individuals on to do great deeds, so Nietzsche, and antiquarian history preserves identities connecting people to their supposed pasts. The former tends to dissolve into "mythical fiction" (Nietzsche 1997: 70) and the latter to become "a spectacle of a blind rage for collecting, a restless raking together of everything that has ever existed" (Nietzsche 1997: 75). When either of these becomes too dominant, "life" suffers, and we need a third form of history, critical history, which delivers us of both of those views about the

past. Now, it is important that for Nietzsche all these three forms of "history", of relating to the past, are distinguished from actual historiography, the scientific discipline engaging with the past that only came to fruition a few decades before Nietzsche wrote his text (Grafton 1997). If history is supposed to serve life as he understands it then it cannot be in the sense of historiography, Nietzsche believed. Nietzsche's actual solution to the right ratio of remembering and forgetting—his ideas to gauge our relations of the past by an aristocratic understanding of life and culture and what he perceives to be the unhistorical forces of art and religion (Nietzsche 1997: 120)— matter little here; what he helps us to see is that we have *very different options* as to how we relate to the past and that people have *different needs* when relating to it. But relate to it we all must in some way, contra Stephen Dedalus' wishes.

Now, the past that we decide to hold on to against all forgetting might be more of our choosing and fantasy than be our or the actual past. It might yield to wishful thinking and to our resentments, but a past that matters it is. Nietzsche is very much aware of this, as in his strange ways is Putin. Putin's version of history might be nightmarish, especially for Ukrainians and Russians, but history as such is not something we can wake up from. What we can liberate us from in many situations is *false beliefs* and *ideologies* about the past. For Nietzsche that kind of (factual) history was not good enough for the Faustian purposes he envisioned for himself and a select few other *Übermenschen*; Putin and Mr Deasy don't care about it much because they are in need of a past of their own making for their own fantastical reasons. Whether such a truthful and sober relation to the past that would still be replete with all kinds of cruelty and horror were to keep someone like Stephen Dedalus from turning away from history in horror, I do not know.[6] Also, to what

[6] A way to reconcile us to this brutal fact would of course be theology, secularized or not. If there was some goal of History, some form of redemption for all the past horrors, the suffering and dying of all those who came before us might not have been in vain (and in the less secularized versions, they might even await us in heaven, paradise, or any such mythical place of eternal bliss). The most memorable recent image for this idea is Walter Benjamin's "angel of history" from his famous "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (Benjamin 1968). Benjamin writes: "Where we perceive a chain of events, he [the angel of history] sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." (Benjamin 1968: 257-258) In this text, Benjamin famously tried to wed historical materialism to messianism. Today, neither of those seems to be a viable option anymore. The sad and sobering truth is that there is no being or force that can "awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed", and neither is there any goal of history that could somehow justify the "single catastrophe" of all the senseless suffering of

extent such knowledge contributes to *human happiness and well-being* is an open question. What is clear though is that historiographic knowledge has the power to expose falsehoods about the past. Historiographic knowledge is, in other words, a key ingredient for countering all kinds of ideologies about the past, but it is not an all-powerful tool or panacea for disabusing people of their destructive fantasies, and it does not cover all the relations to the past that people might cherish. Our "past needs" might very well be more than only cognitive. Be that as it may, these are the offerings historiography can make and it is them that we are going to explore further in most of this text.

For the moment, we can wrap up our little *tour de force* through some "darker thinkers of history" and begin with our more systematic philosophical study of our knowledge of the past and the discipline of historiography. For a start, we will turn more systematically to the different meanings of the term history and their interrelation. (We will return to the questions raised here in the last section of this introduction part, section III.4 below.). The question of how historiography can produce actual knowledge of the past, as opposed to ideology or fantasy, will concern us throughout the whole of this text, but it will be tackled more directly in the sections that follow the next one (and especially in I.3, I.5 and I.6).

1.2 Five Meanings of History and One Central Question

The ineluctability of history that we tiptoed around and introduced negatively in the last section as something we cannot avoid, I would like to call on a most basic level *ontological historicism*. By this historicism I mean that we all are on several levels fundamentally determined by the past, as individuals, groups, even as a species, and everyone knows about this fact up to a certain extent and *relates* to it in some ways. This fundamental *historicity* of us and many other things around us is conceptualized in our *historical thinking* and *consciousness*; through all the historically specific references and descriptions, inferences, and explanations of the past that we give on a regular basis in different life situations. The ways in which a whole society relates to the past through said historical thinking and consciousness of its members I call with Jörn Rüsen that society's "*historical culture*" (Rüsen 1994; see also Grever/Adriaansen 2017). Now, there are good reasons to believe that our current historical culture in the West is rather peculiar, in the sense that

humans in the past and present. That might be a thought that is too much to bear for some. But what else do we have on offer?

history and historicity have become central to us in ways fundamentally alien to our own past culture and other cultures in the present and the past. In this sense, it might be said that our current historical culture is *particularly historicist* when compared to other cultures (Paul 2015a: 7; Woolf 2019: 183).[7]

History in this sense is ineluctable, for us in the West, paradoxically speaking, perhaps more so than for anybody else. And so it should not make us wonder that references to history appear in nearly everything that we do. If I were asked to explain some behaviour of mine or something that happened, it is likely that I would give you an account that at least incorporates some statements about the past, or I might just straightforwardly give you a story about my behaviour's or the event's emergence (Danto 1985: 201). There is hardly any discourse that is not shot through by such references to or statements about the past, just as many of the concepts that we use on a daily include implicit references to the past. If I talk about a "scar" I have or "ruins" I visited, I make an implicit reference to a past state of affairs and to a change over time, i.e. to a wound that became a scar and a building that has been destroyed for the most part through some past process. And the logical question for both of them is: "what happened?" The latter example highlights too that we are also always surrounded by the visible and not so visible material remains of the past as parts of our historical culture, whether we recognize them as such or not.

[7] A good contrastive example here is once more Augustine of Hippo ("Saint Augustine") and the Christian thinking of his time. While Augustine (354-430 CE) was obviously aware that things around him changed all the time, this did not really matter to his understanding of history. Parallelizing History with the 7 days of creation in the Genesis story of the Bible, he assumed that after Christ's coming to Earth, we would live out day 6 of the creation. All history after Christ's first coming was a "perfectum praesens" (Löwith 1949: 182; original emphasis). The only thing that could really change that and the only event that really mattered in the grand scheme of things was Christ's Second Coming, as it was promised most famously in the apocalyptic Book of Revelation of the New Testament. Christ's return would usher in Day 7, and with it, eternal rest. This was the telos of History for Augustine (Paul 2015a: 4; see also Löwith 1949: 168-173). Nietzsche, again, understood very well that Western "historical culture" had fundamentally changed from such an outlook by the 19th century, and his thinking can be seen as a way of coming to terms with the consequences of the then new historicist culture that we still live in. This is obvious in the text we discussed in the last section just as much as in his later writings. Even his perhaps most famous saying, "God is dead!" (Nietzsche 2001: 120), can be read as a description of the effects of our historicist culture, as describing, or decrying, the abrogation of any absolute in the name of, perhaps, History, or as Nietzsche might have feared even more, in the name of nothing. The famous quote continues as follows: "God remains dead! And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?" (Nietzsche 2001: 120)

Thinking historically is in this sense a *perspective*, one that we necessarily acquire up to a certain extent as we grow up in our specific historical culture, and one whose application we can expand or shrink as we see fit. With basically all things interesting to us on a daily having a history ("ontological historicism"), there is always the possibility to think about and describe them with reference to their respective pasts. Such a historical perspective might even be necessary for accomplishing some of the goals that we have just as it is detrimental to others. While it seems impossible not to relate to the past in some way, as a perspective "history" is still often also *chosen*, and there is no necessity to the individual historical description that we give. Yet what is also clear is that in our historicist historical culture the past is an object of immense fascination to many people, well beyond their immediate lives and the necessity to relate to the past in them in some way. There currently is a genealogy boom afoot, for instance, spurred on by the newest advances in DNA analysis, many people do historical reenactments, and thousands upon thousands flock into historical sites and museums on a daily, to name a few examples (Tosh 2014).

As such all these activities are ways to relate and come to terms with the *fundamental historicity* that characterizes our lives. We are what we are through our personal, group, and species history, and we also only come to know things through historical processes, through the means made available to us by our "historical culture" that we employ in our (historical) thinking (though the process of justification always is a present matter; "Geltung" is not just "Genesis"). This is why history fundamentally matters; we are what we are through history, and we speak and think through it (Little 2010: 4). This is so even if we personally do not care much about the past. However, being ineluctable does not mean that history, historical thinking, and our relations to the past are everything that there is—history and (ontological) historicism are not a new absolute, not the new God of our times after we got rid of, or killed, the Christian God. This is one historical lesson that we should draw from the history of the 20th century, which saw huge atrocities and bloodshed being justified by "history". Also, philosophically it is an open question where ontological historicism ends, and under which conditions a historical perspective is not useful anymore or even actively harmful (see also the comments on historical trauma in the last section). We will return to these questions in more detail and critically in the next section (see also Tucker 2022 very instructively on this issue).

"History" as I used it so far refers to the ineluctable ontological historicism that underpins our beliefs and thinking, our different relations to the past, and to our

(inherited) cultural attitudes and understandings of it. In some sense, it is reasonable enough to refer to all of them as "history" because they are all closely related and enabled and conditioned by our ineluctable historicity. Yet in another, such a blanket notion of history is very dissatisfactory and creates a lot of unnecessary confusion in that one term is meant to cover so many related but still distinguishable issues, and there is always the possibility of semantic confusion and attendant misunderstanding with such a wide and varied usage. There is an obvious difference between *history* or the *past* on the one side and our *accounts* of that past on the other, for instance. This most basic differentiation was already introduced in the last section; without it, we could not have said that Mr Deasy and Putin produced false accounts and fantasies about the past.

Capitalizing on this most central difference between the past and our accounts of it, I will mean with *history* throughout the rest of text *past states of affairs, events, and processes*, and not any account of them, scientific or otherwise, specific stories about the past, or any school subject or university discipline bearing that name (further meanings of the term history that we will discuss below). This is in line with the differentiation Aviezer Tucker suggested between history and historiography, and along with that, the related philosophical fields (Tucker 2009a: 2). However, historiography is but *one way* to engage in historical thinking and of relating to the past. It indicates accounts of the past that are based on historiographic research and the warranted and reliable methods of historiography. If we wanted to, we could further differentiate here between *history* on the one and the *past* on the other side, where history refers to what I have called above historicity and the past only to a temporal location, to something simply being in the past from the vantage point of the present (Currie 2019: 1-2). Historical things would then be such things that are fundamentally defined through their history, while not all things in the past may be such, just as not all our references to things in the past need to be about their historical features. This can be a useful differentiation to mark off historical from other things, or at least to differentiate things whose history matters to us in some situation from things whose history doesn't, but for our current purposes it is not as relevant. For the most part, historiography and other historical sciences are interested in things that display such historical features, furnishing us with descriptions explicating exactly these features. Likewise, it is these features that are also central to many of our other relations to the past. I therefore use history here in reference to things in the past and to their historicity. This is the *first meaning* usually associated with the term history, and the only one that I fully retain.

The *philosophy of history* revolves in this framework around general questions about history and historicity. It might ask about the (ultimate) constituents of past reality, that is, about the "substantive historical ontology" (Little 2010: 3) that we presuppose or perhaps have to presuppose; or it might query whether there is a direction, a goal, or a fundamental meaning to history. Questions such as these motivated such figures as Augustine of Hippo, of whom we now already have heard three times, but also many, many other thinkers throughout history. Truth be told, this form of philosophical engagement with the past is much older than any more regimented (philosophical) thinking about it and our possibilities of knowing it. Before there was any sustained form of writing about history, not to speak about any modern historiography, there were already all kinds of myths about the past, that is some basic stories of usually religious contents that tried to answer questions about the purported meaning, direction, and goal of history (Lefkowitz 2009: 353).

In the more recent history of the philosophy of history and historiography this strand of philosophical or metaphysical thinking about the past as such has been variously called "substantive" or "speculative philosophy of history", and opposed to critical or analytical philosophy of history (Lemon 2003: 7-13). Here I refrain from using most of these terms since they are either imprecise ("critical", "analytic") or simply abusive ("speculative"), with only retaining substantive for certain philosophies of history. When I speak about these questions, I will simply refer to them as questions in the *philosophy of history* or in *historical ontology* and specify where necessary that I speak about substantive positions on these issues.[8]

The next "meaning of history" that I want to differentiate is in the sense of Tucker that of *historiography*. While the past is constitutive for all of us, it is also over with and gone by, which entails that it can't be brought back to life and directly observed anymore. (It is indeed a strange dialectic that we are thrown into here; we

[8] Some other terms, now less common, at least in English, that have been used for the philosophical engagement with history as such are "philosophical history, historical philosophy, (meta)theory of history, theoretical history, logic of history, meta-history, historiosophy, and anachronistic historiography. Some time ago the term *histoire raisonnée* or conjectural history was also popular" (Vašíček 2009: 26. original emphasis). The history of most of these terms, as of the whole field, is still largely unwritten. "Metahistory", with or without dash, might be a particularly well-suited rival candidate for the name of the field because it is modelled after the notion of metaphysics, which since Aristotle is the general theory of being. (The term ontology is a 17th century invention.) However, metahistory is too strongly tied to Hayden White's famous book with the same name (White 1973), and to his narrativist and rhetorical understanding of many of the main issues in the philosophy of history, to take on this more general meaning in the current discourse. I therefore refrain from calling the field metahistory here. On White's programme of metahistory and its main research questions, see also White 1978: 81.

cannot do without a past, but the actual past is never directly and immediately accessible to us. Under these circumstances, it is indeed quite the accomplishment that people figured out how to reliably infer the past from its effects.) What we can observe are the *effects* of the past in our own present, its remnants and traces, which, properly accounted for, become the evidence by which we infer all kinds of true descriptions, that is produce knowledge of the past (Murphey 2009a: 23; Tucker 2004a: 93). Historiography then has two related meanings: in a narrower sense it is a) the written accounts of the past that result from the research process into the evidence that it left behind (and the writing process itself if it needs to be further differentiated); and in a wider sense it is b) the activity of research into that evidence which usually results in the written accounts of a). The narrower sense of historio*graphy* is true to the etymology of the word which literally translates as "history writing", while b) is truer to the original ancient Greek meaning of *historía*, which translates into "inquiry" (Lefkowitz 2009: 353). History as historiography then is the *second meaning* usually associated with the term history. Instead of history, we will use historiography alone for the combined meaning of a) and b).

Anybody who produces a) by means of b) is a *historian*, with a *historiographer* being someone who works on the history of historiography itself by means of the same kind of research practices. In modern times, being a historian (or historiographer) is usually in addition a separate profession, or more mundanely put a job, with historiography in the combined sense of a) and b) mostly being done by such professional historians in the setting of specialized research institutions such as university disciplines or some other form of research institute. The university discipline, along with the school subject, are usually also called "History". This, then, is the *third meaning of history* that the term often assumes, and which I refer to as the *discipline of historiography*. (I do not talk about the school subject in this text, and I have no specific opinion to give here on how it should be named.)

Further, the accounts of individual historians about some episode of history, their a)s from just above, are sometimes also called "history", mostly in the form of "Y's history of x", as in "Jules Michelet's history of the Battle of Wagram". The collective work of historians on a topic is in a similar manner then often called the "the historiography of x", as in "the historiography of the Battle of Wagram". Most of these accounts will be narrative in character, but they do not need to be. I will refer to them in the broadest sense as *historiographic accounts of the past*, and further specify them where necessary as descriptions, explanations, narratives etc.

This is a *fourth meaning of history* that I differentiate and not use when I specifically talk about the work of historians on certain topics.

Historiography understood in this way, as a combination of a) and b), is in principle not constrained to the traditional subject-matter of the discipline of historiography, that is to literate societies and the (documentary) evidence they left behind. The civilizational achievement of writing is often used as dividing line between the disciplines of historiography and "prehistory" (and given what I just argued, it might make sense to call this discipline "prehistoriography", as ugly as it looks and sounds). Sometimes this accomplishment is also used to mark off the disciplines of historiography and archaeology, though archaeology at least often also deals with the material remains of literate societies. Such a differentiation makes sense when we look at the history of disciplinary historiography, as we will do in more detail in the next section. The discipline of historiography became a scientific discipline with the introduction of the Rankean paradigm that allows for the reliable inference of true descriptions of the past. In its original form it was based only on documentary evidence stored away in government archives (Grafton 1997: 56-61).

Today, however, there is no need to restrict ourselves to documentary evidence, and historians infer knowledge about the past via "material remains, artefacts, shapes of landscapes, genetic analysis of present and fossil DNA, works of art, and so on" (Tucker 2009: 4). What we have instead is a common set of issues and methods that unite historiography and other *historical sciences* such as archaeology, evolutionary biology, palaeontology, geology, and even cosmology (Turner 2007; Tucker 2014; Currie 2021). All of these sciences infer descriptions of the past through the traces they left in the present, and they have to do this because, other than the experimental sciences, they cannot reinstate their objects of interest in any meaningful way (Cleland 2002: 475). (Article I below talks in detail about the difference in the explanatory practices and in the logic of explanation between the historical and the experimental sciences.) So, while I keep the name disciplinary historiography for scientific inquiries into the human past, there is no special importance afforded to documentary evidence, just as there are other historical sciences that are historiographic in the sense of comprising of a) and b), because they all have to reconstruct and represent the past from the traces that it left behind in the present. In this wider sense, we can just as easily speak of "Darwin's historiography", "the historiography of nature" that deals with natural history, or even about "Hawking's historiography", with Stephen Hawking trying to give an

account of the Big Bang and the early universe through the effects they left behind in our present billions of years later (Berry 2009: 163).

The *philosophy of historiography* scrutinizes all the relevant aspects of a) and b), of the research and the writing process as well as the written products historians produce. It amounts to the "philosophical examination of all the aspects of our descriptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the past" (Tucker 2009a: 3). It is, in short, concerned with the *epistemology* of all kinds of descriptions of the past that we give, and here especially with the relation between evidence, theory, and the historical objects that we infer based on both of those (Kosso 2009: 9; Kosso 2011: 11-13). (We could call this field, in parallel to above, where we spoke of historical ontology, historical epistemology.) However, given a), the focus on evidence and theory alone would construct the field too narrowly, as it includes just as much the literary and linguistic features that many historiographic accounts of the past exhibit. Actually, as I will argue further down below, one crucial question currently in field is exactly to what extent historiographic texts, as opposite to single descriptions, are justified by the evidence, and in this sense, by the past, and to what extent they contain other (literary, political, ethical, entertaining, etc.) elements not warranted in such a way. Also, given the overlap with other historical sciences, the philosophy of history and historiography understood in this way form part of the broader *philosophy of the historical sciences*, as we shall also see further below.

Differentiating history from historiography the way I did suggests also clarifying the use of the attending adjectives "historical" and "historiographic" that I have been using already throughout this text, especially as there are additionally "historic" and "historiographic" on offer in English. To start with the last term, until now I used historiographic to designate the research process and the finished products historians (and historiographers) produce, corresponding to a) and b) above, and I also used it to refer to the discipline of historiography. This extension might seem natural as historiography as a discipline is centrally about research into the past and about producing written accounts based on that research, that is about a) and b). Thus, unless the context demands otherwise, I will still use historiographic here to refer to both the discipline and its central practices, and I won't use the term historiographical.

Historical, further, was up to now not only employed to refer to features of past things but also in reference to present practices that relate to the past in some way, as in "historical culture", "historical sciences", or even "historical thinking" and "historical consciousness". This usage creates an ambiguity that seems more problematic than the ambiguity in the term historiographic that we just discussed:

"Historical culture", for instance, could refer to a past culture or, as it does in my case, to all kinds of relations to the past maintained in some society *in the present*. The reason I adopt this ambiguous usage in the cases I do is conventional. These terms, and many others that contain the adjective historical, such as "Historical Sociology" or even historical method, are widely employed to designate some present relation to the past, and it would take quite some revision of our conceptual apparatus to purge our language of any such ambiguous use. The same goes for set phrases containing history itself, such as "Cultural History" or "Microhistory", which signify certain historiographic approaches or schools. However, when I am not talking about any such established use, I limit history and historical to refer to the past or to features of "past things" in the way explicated further above.

But let me outline a more consistent use here, making a fourfold differentiation between historic, historical, historiographic, and historiographical, all terms that exist in current English. In everyday use, "historic" usually means something very significant in the past ("this was a historic moment"), by some standard. Historical is used in the ambiguous ways we just discussed, and the less common historiographic and historiographical are mostly used interchangeably for all I can tell. Now, we could extend the use of "historic" from significant past events alone to mean any reference to the past itself, and limit "historical" to designating our relations to the past. We would then have "historic culture" vs. "historical culture" and "historic science" vs. "historical science". And if historic and historical are still deemed (phonetically) too close, we might want to replace historic with an adjectival "past" here, speaking about "past culture" and "past science" instead. In this conceptual system, "historiographic" would be a subset of "historical", referring to such relations to the past and their products that are crafted through scientific research into it, and historiographical would refer to the discipline of historiography. I suppose this fourfold differentiation between historic/historical and historiographic/historiographical would be consistent and find its parallel in equally consistent uses of history ("historic"), relations to the past ("historical"), and historiography as research practice and as discipline ("historiographic"/"historiographical"). (If we wanted, we could still try to further remedy the ambiguity in the term historiography.) What is gained in clarity is obviously lost in simplicity and immediate understandability in this framework. Yet, it might still be useful in more technical discussions about history, historiography, our other relations to the past, and the relationships they all have to each other.

The difficulty to differentiate history as the past from historiography and our other relations to the past stems of course from the close relationship they have to

each other. Making statements about history as such is in one sense just another way of relating to it, as we are still speaking, and there is always the question about how we arrived at the propositions about the past that we put forward. At the same time, the past is so ubiquitous for us, in the language that we use and our surroundings ("ontological historicism"), that there is no difficulty to speak about it in some general sense either, without thinking much about the justification of such claims at all. In other words, there is a close and inextricable relation between the ontology and the epistemology of the past, and our polysemous use of history and historical might just be another case of the very widespread "process/product bivalency or homonymy" (Bhaskar 2008: 5) of our language. As we can only come to judgments (in the Kantian sense) and knowledge about the past through relating to the past and through our historical thinking more generally, it is only too natural to designate the process as well as the product of the process with the same term, "history". This ambiguity can also be seen in the usage of such central a philosophical term as "fact", where facts often denote both something really existing—sometimes called the "furniture of the world"—and our true descriptions of that furniture (Kosso 2009: 12). In any case, once we have established something as fact or past fact, that is history, we are able to referentially detach it from the process, and refer to it as such (Bhaskar 2008: 37). The difficulty does not lie in this process, but in the establishment of the fact in the first place, and of course, in the habit of asserting and "detaching" something as fact without having engaged in this process at all.

Finally, there remains a *fifth and last meaning of history* that I would like to talk about. This is less a meaning of the term history in the semantic sense, as the last four meanings that we distinguished were. It is the meaning of history in the more emphatic and existential sense of the question "why history?", i.e. of "why bother about the past at all?". One some basic level, this question is again answered by ontological historicism and historicity: We are what we are through history, and we must relate to the past in some way. While this explains that we have some relations to the past, it does not give us any specific relation to it yet, let alone our modern historicist "historical culture" or modern scientific historiography.

The question about the different relations to the past a society maintains, and about the interrelation they have to each other, has been focused upon by the relatively new field of "historical theory" or "theory of history" in recent years. Herman Paul, who developed the research agenda of "theory of history" in the main (Paul 2015a; Paul 2015b), defines the field as "reflection on how human beings relate to the past" (Paul 2015a: 3), which just means that the subject-matter of

"theory of history" is what I have called "historical culture", i.e. the different past-relationships a society maintains through the historical references and the historical thinking and consciousness of its members (Gangl 2021a).[9] Paul mentions as such different relations to the past epistemic, moral, political, and aesthetic relations which have different goals relating to the past: knowledge, justice, power, and beauty (Paul 2015a: 34). Further, there are for Paul also material relations to the past which just are and have no goals attached to them; they are the (ontological) "relation of indebtedness and dependency" (Paul 2015: 34) in which the present stands with relation to the past. This is, essentially, Paul's version of what I have called "ontological historicism".

Now, the differentiation between different relations to the past is, as Paul emphasizes, a heuristic, and other relations might be added. He also emphasizes that these relations can be distinguished in theory but cannot be separated in practice, so that usually more than one of them is enacted whenever we relate to the past. This becomes clear when we look, for instance, at the epistemic relation to the past. This is the relation where historiography plays a central role, since it is the most sophisticated and reliable way we have for producing knowledge and understanding of the past. As such, this relation is central to other relations to the past too, such as the political and moral relations in which knowledge of the past is potentially appropriated. Similarly, people might find aesthetic enjoyment in the practice and the products of historiography all the while they also gain knowledge about the past, enacting at the same time epistemic and aesthetic relations to the past.

What is important here for our purpose is what Paul calls the "relative weight of various relations" (Paul 2015a: 37), and the idea that they can be in *tension* with

[9] Paul himself called the field "historical theory". Given what I have said about the many meanings of the term "historical", this is an unfortunate choice. "Historical theory" is, as any other concept using "historical", ambiguous, as it is unclear whether we talk about theories that were held historically or theories about the historical that are currently being held. Additionally, "historical theory" is sometimes also employed for the theories historians use in their research practice (or for the theories they think they use), which are explicitly not meant here by Paul, and this just adds to the confusion. For all these reasons, I talk about "theory of history" instead, another name for the field that is relatively common (see, for instance Ohara 2022). Most precise would be "philosophy of past-relationships" or, accepting the term "historical culture", "philosophy of historical culture" (though the ambiguity of the adjective "historical" is reproduced here). I prefer the term philosophy to theory here because theories are usually defined more strictly as interconnected statements about unobservables on some level of generality. However, there is no clear-cut and widely accepted distinction between theory and philosophy here, with philosophy often being defined as asking questions and inferring statements on the most general of level about some concept or practice. See on this Kosso 2011: xi, Bhaskar 2010: 7, as well as section I.4 below in which we will tackle metaphilosophical questions head-on.

one another (Paul 2015b: 454). In a traditionalist society, for example, the epistemic relationship to the past might be subjected to the political one, which means that its "relative weight" compared to that relation is very light, and that such a society relates to the past mainly for legitimatory purposes, caring little about what actually happened. Putin's pseudohistorical tract on Russian and Ukrainian history that we shortly discussed in the last section can also be understood in this way as a subsumption of our epistemic relation to the past under a political goal. Or we might imagine a (decadent) historical culture that relates to the past mainly through an aesthetic lens, through various products of historical fiction produced for shallow entertainment purposes ("historical Disneyland"), or in the way the Romantics romanticized decay. In such societies, entertainment, pleasure, or sublime goosebumps would be the main goals sought in relating to the past, again at the expense of the other relations and their goals. Or we might imagine an overly "enlightened" society in which the epistemic relation to the past subsumes all other relations under itself. This society might prohibit historical fiction and criminally sanction its members for their idealized accounts of their deceased loved ones.

All of these scenarios, some more realistic than others, depict different options for the organization of our "historical culture" and for historiography's role within it. They are answers, in a sense, to the question of "why history?"; or better maybe if somewhat ungrammatical "how history?", as some form of relation to the past is ineluctable if I am correct in what I have argued so far. After having discussed the different meanings of history in this section, we are in a better position to suggest answers to this question in a differentiated way. Given "ontological historicism", there is no way not to relate to the past in some way. Given our own historicist culture, "the historical gaze" is here to stay, in the option of "History" with some grand meaning and all kinds of bogus fantasies about the past, just as much as in the option of historiography. Given our own temporal positioning and the massive success story that are the historical sciences, we do have the option to relate to large swaths of the past in a truthful way today, individually but also more broadly as a culture as a whole. That this is an offer many people do not find that attractive can not only be seen with the cases of Mr Deasy and Putin. However, on the other extreme, there is also no reason why we should subsume all of our relations to the past to historiography in the sense of overly "enlightened" culture just discussed. The question "why history?" then becomes a question about the relationship of our different relations to the past and about the right mélange between them. And as such, this question is fundamentally dependent on what kind of society we want to

live in; it is fundamentally dependent on the "form of life" we choose for ourselves individually and collectively, to speak with the late Wittgenstein.

Now, given the experiences of the 20th century where totalitarian regimes justified themselves exactly through the allure of bogus history and the "calling" of a History with capital H, through the historical struggles of race and class they saw themselves embodying; but also given Putin's most recent rekindling of some of these topoi, there are plenty of good grounds to value historiography, if we value truth, knowledge, and reason at all. Historiography gives us knowledge about the actual history that the ideologists twist for their purposes, but also about the atrocities that were committed in the very name of History itself in the 20th century. What "historiographic reason" (Tucker 2021a: 161) cannot do is to force people to accept any of its insights, or force them to relate to the past in an epistemically responsible manner where it really matters. (That would entail a performative contradiction, one of the most damning sins, philosophically speaking. Reason is antithetical to force; it cannot deny to others what it presupposes for itself.) This is one aspect of the well-known limits to rationality, and it might explain Stephen Dedalus' exasperation with "history". Frank Ankersmit is probably right then when he asserts that "[h]ow we *feel* about the past is no less important than what we *know* about—and probably even more so" (Ankersmit 2005: 10, original emphasis). The populists and fascists know about this, just as much as they strongly feel it. Is "historiographic reason" good enough an offer to stem the tide and rein the passions in, at least to the degree that there is no cataclysm of the size of the world wars of the 20th century in stock for us in the future (not to speak of the possibility of planetary nuclear annihilation that "progress" brought into realm of real possibility after those world wars of the 20th century too)? I should not know as the future, let alone prophecy, is neither part of historiography nor of its philosophy. What the philosophy of history has shown, though, is that there is no inevitability in history, which means there is no certainty of such a dire outcome either (Ben-Menahem 1997). Even more so, there is no certainty either that things might not become better again through the consistent application of (historiographic) reason, against the tide of irrationalism that engulfed us in recent years. And this is not nothing either.

This thesis makes no pretense to solve this most central question of our (historical) culture. Its more modest goals lie in the combined *philosophy of history and historiography*,[10] and this is the field that I will be concerned with mostly for

[10] Tucker lists "the main problems of the philosophies of historiography and history" as "evidence, confirmation, causation, counterfactuals, contingency and necessity, explanation and understanding,

the rest of this text. In the background though, there will always be the question just raised about the different relations to the past and their right mélange when it comes to human flourishing. The next section will give a short history of historiography, before we turn to philosophy and to the project of a *philosophy of scientific historiography*. In the last chapter of this introduction part (IV), we will return to the question "how history?" and to the relationship between historiography and the good life.

1.3 The Age of History and the Rankean Paradigm of Scientific Historiography

The nineteenth century has been called The Age of History, and it is indeed the century in which our modern historicist culture in many of its facets took hold of society (Paul 2015a: 7). Modern scientific historiography as we know it developed in this century along with other historical sciences—most famously Darwinian evolutionary biology but also historical linguistics, geology, and paleontology—just as much as the general interest in the past rose tremendously among an ever-increasing reading public during that century. Likewise, the nineteenth century is the century of "state-sponsored history", as there was great state support for the creation of a (mythical) national past and the "historical sector" of professionals researching and teaching the past under state tutelage expanded dramatically (Woolf 2019: 174; Chapman/Wylie 2016: 4-5).

As we have seen in the last section, our environment is replete with the remnants and effects of the past, yet what is needed for an appreciation of those is something like a *historical gaze*, some understanding of the fundamental historicity surrounding us and an intention to refer to things through their (surmised) pasts. Some such descriptions are ineluctable for temporal beings like ourselves, but to perceive nature and the human-made environment around us as fundamentally constituted by their histories and to take an interest and delight in that, this is the accomplishment of the nineteenth century. And not just that, from the perspective of this thesis even more importantly, the nineteenth century furnished us with reliable methods to infer true descriptions of the human and natural past that are still very much with us today (Tucker 2016a: 371-383). While the late 18th century,

objectivity, realism, ethics, and narrative" (Tucker 2009: 5). This list of topics does not need to be seen as exhaustive, but it gives a good overview. Many of the issues named in it—evidence, confirmation, causation, explanation, objectivity, and narrative—are dealt with below in chapter II where the articles that form the backbone of this thesis are discussed in detail.

as Reinhart Koselleck has shown (Koselleck 1985: 28-29), created the collective singular of history ("Geschichte" vs. "Geschichten"), it was the nineteenth century that became interested in the history of everything and that sometimes also saw in history (or History) the solution to everything. In the wake of this *historicist impulse*, historiography had become the "'master discipline' of the century" (Woolf 2019: 183) and historians were among the leading public intellectuals of the time.

From today's perspective, it is easy to forget how little actual knowledge about the past many previous centuries possessed for all we know, and how much knowledge about it has been produced since the nineteenth century only.[11] A famous example often used to illustrate this, is the question of the age of the Earth. In the middle of the 17th century, archbishop James Ussher determined that God created the world at 6 pm on the 22nd of October of the year 4004 BCE, which made the world in his times around 5600 years old. This was no little feat on Ussher's part as the establishment of historical chronology was really hard without modern scientific methods, and it was a matter of great importance to him and many others. Newton was engaged in this enterprise too, as was Kepler. This was indeed serious business as all these scholars tried no less than to determine how near the return of the Messiah was and with it the end of the world. Ussher painstakingly tried to reconstruct our planet's age from assertions in the Old Testament, most famous among them that the Messiah should return 6000 years after the creation of the world, and oblique other references to earlier times in that book (Rudwick 2014: 9-20). By the 19th century, however, the belief in the infallibility of the Bible, and with that its status as central document for the inference of the age and the eventual fate of the world, had given way ("God is dead!"), and with the theoretical accomplishments first of Charles Lyell in geology and then of Charles Darwin in evolutionary biology, the age, or "youth" of the world Ussher came up with just

[11] In 1999, Richard Evans remarked that "over the last thirty years there has been an almost exponential increase in the total volume of historical knowledge, occasioned not least by the unprecedented growth in the number of historians that has taken place over this period" (Evans 1999: 153). Now, while the discipline has not grown at a similar pace in the now more than 20 years since Evans made this statement, quite the opposite actually in many Western countries, it still strikes me as fundamentally true that we today know so much more about the past than we did decades ago, or in the nineteenth century for that matter. It would be interesting to know if the diminished numbers of students in historiography that can be observed in many Western countries are offset by enrolments in other historical sciences or by more trained historians in other parts of the world. If this were the case, we would now see most growth of our knowledge of the past in natural historiography and/or in the history of non-Western peoples (if we assume that historians broadly tend to work on the histories of their home country or region). And of course, fewer people in the West producing knowledge of the past does not mean that no new knowledge is added at all there. I am therefore confident that we today, even in the West, know more about the past than we did in 1999, and with that, more than we ever did in human history.

seemed totally wrong-headed, if not ridiculous (Wilkins 2009). The 19th century had discovered and firmly anchored so-called "deep time" and "deep history" (Rudwick 2014), the knowledge that the world is much older than we ever imagined, in our historical consciousness and culture. (Though people did not know yet how "deep" time actually was. Darwin for instance was in his estimation of the age of the Earth off by more than a factor of 10, believing it to be somewhere between 150 and 300 million years old.)

One way to understand this historicist impulse is as a fundamental *decentering* of humans and God and a *processualizing* of their world. The "scala naturae", or "Great Chain of Being" in Arthur Lovejoy's famous formulation (Lovejoy 1936), that derived from Aristoteles's philosophy was for example static, linear, and immutable, with God atop and humans crowning all earthly beings, whatever the other actual "steps" or "links" on the ladder or chain were thought to be. With Darwin, there could be no pretension anymore to such an unchanging nature or to any central standing of humans in "creation". And while humans lost their privileged position, for God was not much space at all anymore, other than being tagged on in a way fundamentally unrelated to the theory for those who were religiously inclined. With God leaving the stage, this process can also be thought of as one of fundamental *secularization* and as the end of any (obvious) absolute(s).

As such, the secularization and processualization were not limited to questions of "creation". Similarly, Augustine's understanding of history that we talked about before was static in the sense that nothing of import would happen before Christ's Second Coming, and so was on this level the cyclical understanding of history of the Graeco-Roman world that precluded such things as real progress in the grand scheme of things (Löwith 1949: 4). And whatever one thinks of their grand theories, Marx's theory of commodity fetishism and Freud's unconscious are such "decentering theories" too, they decenter humans from their society and from their own thinking and agency and give naturalist secular explanations of their objects of interest, and at least Marx also fundamentally processualized human history (though if we are to believe Marx, because of fetishism religion never really left the stage). On this level, it is probably correct to say that nothing but history remained, and no sooner than this insight emerged it was already subverted by Marx and many others in the name of new absolutes ("History", "Progress", a little later, with Social Darwinism, also "Race"). (If we wanted, we could still add Copernicus and Kepler to this little distinguished history of decentering. They were the first

"decenterers" in this respect, removing humans from the centre of the universe; see Cohen 2010: 160-178.)[12]

The case of Marx shows that the newfound interest in and understanding of the past was not limited to the actual sciences, it also included various substantive philosophies of history, and beyond the immediate intellectual discourse, states and civil society. The nineteenth century is indeed also the time of the founding of historical associations, museums, and of the creation of all kinds of historical monuments and other "mnemonic institutions" (Grever/Adriaansen 2017: 74) to make some state-approved account of the past visible in the public sphere. These political initiatives and interests were often intertwined with an unhealthy obsession with (feigned) origins, sometimes spurred on by the same historians that otherwise wrote scientifically about the past. And so it came that the 19th century was just as much the age of the invention of *bogus national myths and traditions* that were supposed to deck out the imagined past of the collective one identifies with in the present. These myths and the fantasies about a collective past were used to give legitimacy to burgeoning nationalisms and national aspirations in many of the empires of Europe (Hobsbawm 1983). The Finnish *Kalevala* falls under this just as much as the German *Nibelungenlied* or the Scottish *Ossian* myth do, among many other bogus myths of the time in Europe. The pattern is always the same: The

[12] Overall, the process of secularization in particular is usually seen as one of progress, as an end of illusions and pretensions in the name of God and other metaphysical entities and as "*man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity*" (Kant 1991: 54, original emphasis) in Kant's famous phrase that he gave as answer to the question "what is enlightenment?". Thinkers such as Nietzsche have already doubted in the 19th century that the more sober image of the human condition that science can deliver is good enough for many people, and many more have joined him since then reflecting on the atrocities of the 20th century. Horkheimer and Adorno, for example, famously wrote in 1944 at the height of the bloodshed of WWII and the Holocaust: "Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity." (Horkheimer/Adorno 2002: 1) The catch here of course is that for them Marx was right on some fundamental level about the "religiosity" of capitalism, even if they, after the rise of fascism and national socialism, did not believe History on their side anymore. Still, they argued that the modern world is less enlightened than it thinks, that capitalism's "instrumental reason" leads to disaster. The conundrum today seems to be that the idea that an enlightened society should get rid of capitalism is debatable, while at the same time we cannot ignore the history of the 20th century either, i.e. the massive failure of the socialist projects of the Communist East, and of course, as already Horkheimer and Adorno knew, we can't believe History to be on our side and to sort things out for us. Philosophically, the question is to give a better account of reason than "instrumental reason" only, which I think in the context of Critical Theory Habermas has already accomplished to a certain degree with his idea of "communicative reason" (on this see also article III below). What is more difficult is to gauge what politically follows from the demands of such reason, that is whether we should strive for the abolishment of capitalism because it is fundamentally "unreasonable".

claims of the myth were soon debunked—the Ossian myth for instance was even revealed to be a forgery from the 18th century—but this did not significantly diminish their popularity with the general public.

The entanglements here were rather complex and they show that historiography, or at least its prestige, can be used for all kinds of political purposes, just as there are other relations to the past that might take precedence over historiography (see the last section on this issue). India is a good and non-Eurocentric example for this (Woolf 2019: 198-201). Modern historiographic methods were quickly imported into India once they had been transferred to Britain itself from Germany under the aegis of Lord Acton (Philipps 2019: 48-56). And no sooner than they had taken hold in India, they were already used *against* the colonizer and the imperial historiography that the British had established, a historiography mostly written by amateurs who were in some official capacity in colonial India, giving them firsthand experience of the country. As "orientalizers" (Woolf 2019: 200), their historiographies looked the part, often going even so far as claiming that India had no real history to speak of at all (a view Marx, in some periods of his life at least, shared just as much as Hegel and many other leading philosophers of the century did; see Said 2003 and Lindner 2022). And truth be told, professional historians were not immune to these views either, with some of them too playing roles in the colonial administration and others influencing colonial policies more broadly (which brings us back to historians being leading public intellectuals throughout much of the 19th century). The homegrown Indian historiography, based on the modern methods of scientific historiography, in turn "helped to manufacture (…) a nationalist sense of India, transcending regional and linguistic variations" (Woolf 2019: 200), though this was not always the prime goal of this historiography and it is as such incidental to scientific historiography, just as non-scientific actors took quite some liberty with those findings themselves when they went about constructing the nation.

The 19th century has brought with it many phenomena that we are still used to in the 21st, even if the "Age of History" in the emphatic sense has faded again: scientific historiography and other historical sciences, an understanding of the "deep history" of our planet and the complexity of human history, and with that, also a fundamental decentering, processualizing, and secularizing of humans and their world. Yet, with the centrality history obtained with a broader public and the powers that be too during that time, there were also new myths created, myths of the nation and a common origin of a people that proved at least as pernicious and violent as earlier myths did. And of course, there were the (superficially)

secularized substantive philosophies of history of such figures as Marx, Hegel, or Comte that were also developed during this century (Woolf 2019: 184-188), only a little later to be joined by the mythology of race, which all proved more than impactful in the 20th century (mostly in the form of a Marxist historical teleology and in the form of race fantasies and the accompanying eugenics, though interestingly, "race mythology", just as modern populism, did not produce any complex theory of history in the sense of Marx or any intellectuals even remotely close in calibre to a Marx or a Hegel; on the development of social Darwinism and eugenics, see Sterelny/Griffiths 1999: 4-5).

In a sense, this is still the world we are living in: There are all kinds of myths and ideologies about the past on offer, just as much as there are historiography and other historical sciences whose voices might be quiet but persistent. And with historiography more than any other historical science, there is also still the political entanglement, as the case of India has also shown (we will come back to the relationship of historiography and politics in chapter III below). This entanglement was already present with Leopold Ranke, the great innovator of historiographic method and founder of the scientific paradigm of historiography, but the use of "his" methods in India against the colonizers also shows that the methods cannot be "Eurocentric" or equated with the man or with the in his case conservative politics. Ranke turned historiography "from an eloquent narrative into a critical discipline" (Grafton 1997: 24) that is able to faithfully transmit its critical methods to future generations of historians and with them to rebuff all kinds of bogus accounts of the past, and there is no intrinsic geographic limitation to either the method or the discipline. Scientific historiography in the Rankean sense is arguably as central a contribution from the 19thcentury to our times as superficially secularized substantive philosophies of history or nationalist myths are, and in contrast to them, the scientific method of historiography and its disciplinary form have survived the 20th century unscathed (though quite a few historians massively failed under the totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century).

Ranke's innovation is therefore twofold: 1) methodological and 2) disciplinary. He was as much an *epistemic innovator* as he was a *paradigm founder* in the Kuhnian sense (Kuhn 1996). Ranke's methodological innovation revolved around theories of *information transfer and information preservation* that he brought to bear on certain remnants of the past, documentary evidence in state archives, which had become available to him (not the least due to his conservative politics) (Tucker 2004a: 82). On this level, he mostly synthesized different methods that were developed in one or two generations before him in the fields of classical philology,

biblical criticism, and comparative historical linguistics (Gil 2009: 384; Tucker 2016a: 378; Hoenigswald 1993).[13] These methods revolve around the tracing of information signals from the events of the past to the historian's present and the separation of those signals from the "noise" that surrounds them and from the contamination of later times (on the account of information that undergirds this method, see also article II below). Once the information has been traced back to the actual past and there are multiple independent units of evidence that bear the same information signal, they can be said to mutually confirm each other in a virtuous way, and one can reasonably infer that things happened in the past in the way suggested by the sources. In the words of Aviezer Tucker:

> "These sciences [historiography, biblical criticism, classical philology, and comparative linguistics] attempt to infer information about an origin from relevant similarities among its putative present effects, the evidence, by inferring the information-causal chains that connected the cause, the alleged source of information, with its effects, the alleged receptors of the information" (Tucker 2016a: 381)

The centrality of these "information-causal chains" in our inferences of the past is also the reason why Ranke was so insistent on primary sources in his methodological injunctions; they are the ones that were in contact with the event in the past the historian is interested in, and the credibility of any secondary or tertiary source is dependent on the prior credibility of the primary source. If someone was not an eyewitness, their own sources of information, and with that their mediated contact with the actual events in the past, needed to be meticulously reconstructed,

[13] The centres for these subjects and enquiries, minus linguistics, where the University of Halle and especially the University of Göttingen in Germany. Göttingen was also the place where the first historical seminar was created by Johann Christoph Gatterer in the 1760s. It was also Göttingen where the so-called "auxiliary sciences of history" ("historische Hilfswissenschaften" in German) were first bundled and systematically taught (Momigliano 1950: 302-304). "Auxiliary sciences" such as diplomatics, the authentication of (legal) documents, paleography, the study of handwriting, or numismatics, the study of historical coins, are all theories about authenticating historical evidence in different media of information and thereby establishing them as genuine bearers of information signals about the past. Also, the centrality of biblical criticism for the modern historiographic method makes one think that the young Marx might have been right when he said: "[T]he critique of religion is the prerequisite of every critique." (Marx 1970: 131). In any case, biblical criticism at least presupposes that the Bible is not the literal word of God, and with that, that it is fallible and that we need to interpret it and weigh its different, often contradictory statements against each other, even if we believe that God's actual message is contained in there on some deeper level. God's information signal, if it is there, has to be extracted out of the noise that accrued to it over time just like with any other information signal, and the Bible was in this sense at best some evidence for His word.

so Ranke, or else one could not be sure that no contamination had taken place or that no noise was added or accrued to the information signal after its original formation. For similar reasons Ranke also preferred sources that were not written for posteriority and such with no immediate (political) gain for their authors to already narrativized and other accounts that were "designed to create an impression of the past" (Tucker 2016a: 380). These methodological rules are based on theories about the faithful transmission of information or the failure thereof. With documentary evidence, as it is written by humans, there is mostly the vanity and the ulterior motives of the people recording the events to account for, they might falsify or embellish their accounts of the past for many different reasons in their present; just as there is the fact that every text must have by definition been written by the literate, through much of history a fleeting minority of elites closely aligned with those in power (Kosso 2009: 13). And there is also the fact that information can always become corrupted in any kind of (textual) information transfer, something that everybody with a little philological training knows and something I can personally attest to if I try to make sense of my notebooks. Such random errors can also only be ruled out if the chain of information transfer is faithfully reconstructed (Tucker 2016a: 381-382). So as to show how information was transmitted and how different authors copied each other, often in their mistakes, Ranke painstakingly excerpted historical accounts and compared them with each other. Taken together, this *method of information evaluation* is the *objective side* of Ranke's innovation. If used properly and if there is enough evidence, it allows us to reliably infer knowledge of the past (on a more detailed philosophical reconstruction of this method, see the section after the next below).

Yet, Ranke also innovated on the *discursive side* of historiographic knowledge production, though in the beginning only hesitantly (Grafton 1997: 67-69). Given how central the tracing and the source of information are for him, Ranke was among the first to produce a "large informative apparatus, a set of juicy footnotes that the next scholar could productively squeeze" (Grafton 1997: 56) in the exuberant words of Anthony Grafton. By making the sources on which he drew for his inferences apparent to everyone who cared to look, Ranke made them intersubjectively checkable. While referencing and quoting in the footnotes ("the German citation style") is not universally accepted today, the idea of transparently giving one's sources for everyone to check for themselves is, throughout historiography and all other sciences. (Ranke even went so far to systematically comment on his sources and their use by himself and other historians in celebrated

extended appendices to his work, something that is today not often done by historians anymore, though it is still sometimes seen.)

Finally, Ranke founded a larger *disciplinary paradigm* in the Kuhnian sense through the institutional anchoring of his methods which in this way could be communicated to and learned by students, which then applied them to different topics and new evidence—Ranke's famous workshop with its "exercises" for students metonymically stand for this (Krieger 1977: 2). And just as he wrote his own books based on his method, Ranke also continuously reflected on it during his lifetime and published shorter methodological reflections and appendices, such as "Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber", which were equally central to the establishment of his paradigm, since these texts allowed students to also learn about Ranke's methods theoretically, next to the practice that was learned in a hands-on way in the workshop (on the centrality of textbooks and such instructions within a paradigm, see Kuhn 1996: 43). Together these aspects form the *disciplinary* and *sociological* side of the Rankean paradigm which enabled his methods and ethos to serve an "entire profession as its distinctive collective identification" (Krieger 1977: 4). Besides, Ranke and his disciples also tirelessly published historical source material that they unearthed in the archives, which in turn became the source material for new historiographic hypotheses and knowledge, created exactly with his very methods (Woolf 2019: 179).

In other words, Ranke founded a *paradigm* and *a progressive research programme* that are still with us today and within which others could go on with the "puzzle-solving" (Kuhn 1996: 35), as Kuhn famously called the drudging daily work within a paradigm. Ranke's paradigm therefore directed his followers to the discovery of new evidence and to the confirmation of many historiographic hypotheses that were unknown or could not have been decided before. As Aviezer Tucker emphasizes, Ranke wrote

> "historiographies that were clearly superior to those that had preceded them in discovering new information or confirming old hypotheses, not just different interpretations as before the scientific revolution in historiography. Ranke was the first to insist on constructing historiography from contemporary sources." (Tucker 2004a: 77)

Historians reared in the Rankean paradigm were therefore set on their way to make new discoveries, further proving the fruitfulness of the method and substantially enlarging the body of historical knowledge. This "success" of the Rankean paradigm is also the reason why it was so quickly adopted first all over Europe but

then also in other parts of the world (see the case of India above) (Woolf 2019: 197), before scientific historiography was stunted again by the totalitarian movements and states of the first half of the twentieth century, which legitimized themselves exactly through the substantive philosophies of history that Ranke rejected but which came into existence around the same time as Ranke's paradigm expanded throughout Europe (Marxism and the mythologies of "race").

While Ranke's paradigm consisting of his objective and discursive methods and their disciplinary anchoring very much stayed with historiography ever since his time, his focus on documentary evidence found in state archives did not, and indeed there is no need for historiography to confine itself to any form of documentary evidence. Ranke's method of information evaluation and his inference of knowledge of the past by independent evidence tokens is not in itself limited to this kind of evidence, as not only the other historical sciences that came into being in the 19th century prove. Already in the end of the 19th century, right around Ranke's last years of his life and his death, appeared other forms of historiography such as the historiography of art ("Kunstgeschichte") or early forms of economic and social science historiography which used artworks, parish records, and early forms of statistics for their inferences about the past (Woolf 2017: 191-192). Also, other than Ranke and the so-called Neo-Rankeans in the generation after Ranke who melded historiography with nationalist thought, his theories of information assessment do not imply any principled epistemic priority for documentary evidence where it is available or, even worse, imply a metaphysical theory about the centrality and priority of the state in all social relations (Tucker 2004a: 82; Krieger 1977: 7-8).

The kinds of evidence historians and other historical scientist use for their inferences about the past have only further expanded since Ranke's times and the late 19th century, just as their theories of information assessment have, and the discipline has seen great methodological innovations in the 20th century. Historians such as Marc Bloch and Carlo Ginzburg, among many others, stand for this (Little 2010: 22-23; Ginzburg/Davin 1980). This is a testament to the productivity of the discipline, and there are good indications that this process of innovation is only going to continue, with many new and exciting discoveries of the 21st century likely to be made thanks to the application of digital methods to all kinds of evidence. (Moretti's "distant reading" that we mentioned further above is a first step in this, as Moretti digitally scrutinizes vast amounts of documentary evidence in an effort to produce knowledge about the history of literature and reading habits. But there is no reason that only documentary evidence should be scrutinized by digital

methods and algorithms, and we can expect other forms of evidence coming into the focus of digital methods too.)

Confronted with the overt bias in many of the scholars that came before him, and looking back at the whole "historia magistra vitae" tradition of history writing that taught history to pass judgement on the past to morally instruct the powerful in the present, Ranke's motto was to write about the past "sine ira et studio", without anger and passion (Gil 2009: 397). Historians had no business in judging the past and moralizing about it, especially at the expense of their prime epistemic goal of "telling it like it really was" ("wie es eigentlich gewesen"), to use Ranke's most well-known phrase. The actual context of the phrase was exactly to protect the autonomy of historiography from facile moralizing, and thereby the threat of seriously disfiguring one's account of the past (Iggers 1983: 67). So, while the actual historiography Ranke produced was mostly modern political historiography, that is political history from the 16th century on, and here especially the history of war and diplomacy, which shows the limitation of the government archives he perused (Krieger 1977: 19), he was very much against the subjugation of historiography under political, moral, or social imperatives of his present (on this issue, see also chapter III, where we will talk about the relationship of historiography and politics in more detail). Actually, there is nothing in Ranke's *method* that would limit it per se to political documents found in state archives, his main form of evidence, or to documents at all for that matter, so that the focus on political history is a contingent matter as far as the method is concerned, and so is that Ranke himself was a lifelong supporter of the politics of the conservative Prussian state and a believer in the Protestant faith. Even Ranke's own theoretical statements about this method have no absolute value here. He might have misdescribed the methods that he applied, just as much as he might not have lived up to their standards in all his works. What counts is the method itself and its (philosophical) justification and that Ranke did apply it consistently in many of this works and that he taught and institutionalized it (Tucker 2016a: 362; Gil 2009: 389). This makes Ranke into the theoretical innovator and the paradigm builder that he is, whatever else he was believing and saying.

Against the background of his methodological innovations, Ranke also criticized the historians that came before him. In his aforementioned text "Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber" ("A Critique of Modern Historians"), which was appended to his first book "Histories of the Romanic and Germanic Peoples", Ranke for example chided Renaissance historians for not using primary sources. He writes: "who, of these many writers possesses information that is really original

with him: who can offer us real instruction?" (Ranke 1824; quoted according to Grafton 1997: 44). Through his emphasis on the tracking of information transmission or the lack thereof, Ranke could also show that many of those historians must have made up speeches of their historical subjects of interest for rhetorical purposes, just as their ancient role models such as Thucydides did (on Thucydides shortcomings from the perspective of modern historiography, see also Kosso 1993: 9-10).

Due to his role as the founder of the paradigm of modern scientific historiography, Ranke is finally known as the "Anti-Hegel", thanks to his historiographic method standing in stark contrast to Hegel's substantive philosophy of history and Hegel and Ranke being for a few years colleagues at the recently founded Humboldt University of Berlin (from Ranke's appointment in 1825 to Hegel's death in 1831). And while Ranke never directly crossed swords with Hegel, he did get into a controversy with the historian and disciple of Hegel Heinrich Leo about his first book "Histories of the Romanic and Germanic Peoples from 1494 to 1514" from 1824 (Iggers 1983: 65-69). Ranke's point against Hegel and Leo was that the general could only be grasped via a meticulous study of the particular, and that the world of the past in all its complexity should not be reduced to a rational principle and goal in the way Hegel did. Hegel, in his substantive philosophy of history, famously claimed that history was rational and governed by Reason (or at least its "cunning"), with history itself being defined as "the development of the spirit's consciousness of its own freedom and of the consequent realization of this freedom" (Hegel 1984: 138). This means that the goal of history was for Hegel the freedom of all as he conceived of it, and that the unfolding of Reason or Spirit towards this goal in and through history could be grasped by (his) philosophy recapitulating the historical process alone (Rockmore 2009: 471-472).[14] It was this

[14] In Hegel's words: "In history, we must look for a general design, the ultimate end of the world, and not a particular end of the subjective spirit or mind; and we must comprehend it by means of reason, which cannot concern itself with particular and finite ends, but only with the absolute. This absolute end is a content which speaks for itself and in which everything of interest to man has its foundation. (…) We must bring to history the belief and conviction that the realm of the will is not at the mercy of contingency. That world history is governed by an ultimate design, that it is a rational process - whose rationality is not that of a particular subject, but a divine and absolute reason - this is a proposition whose truth we must assume; its proof lies in the study of world history itself, which is the image and enactment of reason" (Hegel 1984: 28). On the level of research into the past, Ranke did not assume the truth of this proposition. Quite the opposite, he believed it to be unfounded, and on the face of it, it is nothing else than a vast petitio principii if there ever was one. If anything, world history has shown that it is not governed by spirit or reason towards the preordained goal of freedom of all (which Hegel already saw realized in the constitutional monarchies of Britain and the Prussia of his time, something the "leftists" among his disciples, the so-called Left Hegelians including the young Marx, strongly denounced). That

kind of abstract theorizing and philosophizing about history, along with the imputation of an ultimate goal of history on that level, which Ranke rejected, again not entirely without presenting a substantive philosophy of history of his own, especially late in his life when he worked on a "universal history". But here again, we can buy the method without having to purchase the philosophical wrapping too, i.e. there is no direct relation between Ranke, a devout Protestant, believing that there is a divine purpose hidden in history and his scientific methodology (Gil 2009: 387-388; Krieger 1977: 18-20). In any case, we can surmise that some of the groundwork for the ongoing suspicion that historians often hold to this day against philosophers was laid in this dispute and that one of the reasons for why they often see themselves as explicitly anti-philosophical are the speculative philosophies of history in the 19th century, even if they, as in the case of Ranke, hold substantial philosophical positions about history themselves (Zammito 2009: 66).

The "Age of History" has left us with a spotty legacy: It is the origin of bogus (national) myths and of (secularized) substantive philosophies of history that both still have a wide allure; but it is also the origin of modern scientific historiography and other historical sciences which can serve as an antidote for both the myths of origin and the false promise of an ultimate end to history. The emergence of scientific historiography is inexorably linked with the name of Leopold Ranke and with his epistemic, discursive, and paradigmatic innovations which made historiography into a "critical discipline" (Grafton 1997: 24) that reliably produces knowledge of the past (on the centrality of both the objective and discursive side of Ranke's method, see also Lorenz 2009: 402).

Now, after the *rational reconstruction of Ranke's method* in its time and influences in this section, we will turn for the rest of the chapter to its *philosophical justification, reach, and to open questions* that face an *evidence-centred philosophy of scientific historiography*. A first step in this is to clarify what the contribution of philosophy in all this is, and we why need, against all suspicion of the historians, a genuine philosophy of historiography.

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said, Hegel's philosophy is in no way reducible to its central speculative elements, and even their interpretation and place in Hegel's philosophy has been a topic for debate in the last decades, with traditional metaphysical Hegel interpretations squaring off against the so-called "Post-Kantians". Similarly, Hegel was a perceptive historical thinker and very aware of the vast changes happening around him during his lifetime—from the French Revolution to the expansion of industrial capitalism—trying to apprehend them in thought, as his famous phrase goes. On different interpretations of Hegel's speculative philosophy of history, see Rockmore 2009: 470-472; for an overview over Hegel's wide-ranging philosophical project, see Beiser 2005.

1.4 A Note on (Meta-)Philosophy

In the good ol' days, philosophy reigned supreme. The Ancient Greeks, one of the main sources of our intellectual culture in the West, had no sciences as we know them today, the inquiries into nature, society, and the first principles of the universe they undertook were all deemed philosophy. With the rise of Christianity, the second mainstay of our culture, theology as we know it became a player too, and quite some intellectual energy was spent throughout the Middle Ages to figure the exact relationship between philosophy and theology out. As the received story goes, the difficulty was to make the rationalist thought of Athens compatible with the faith that characterized Jerusalem (Strauss 1967). The kinds of thinking prototypically associated with the two traditions are reverence, piety, and unshakable faith in God and revelation on the one hand and belief in unfettered rationality, knowledge, and human freedom on the other. The archetypes that oppose each other are Prometheus and Job, though many other examples from both traditions could be given too (not least the figure of Christ himself). Prometheus is the titan defying the all-too-human gods of the Greeks in an effort to become more than he ought to be and in full knowledge that he will be punished. Job is God's most humble and faithful servant that does not lose faith in Him in the face of greatest adversity. We have humans aspiring to be like the gods versus humans that fully submit to God and would never dare to judge Him, the ultimate blasphemy, and with that, we have reason that may become hubristic as it demands what is impossible and faith that might turn into dogmatic adherence and meek servility. These are, somewhat simplified, the role models that we have inherited from Athens and Jerusalem, and even today, it is doubtful that we could have one, faith or reason, without at least a little admixture of the other (Sugrue 2020; Löwith 1949: 3).[15]

As is well known, in the 17th century figures such as Kepler and Newton still thought of themselves as doing "natural philosophy" when they tried to figure out

[15] We might also want to add Rome and Alexandria to this metonymic list of the main influences on Western intellectual culture. Alexandria stands for the mathematical sciences that were highly developed by the Greeks too—just think of the Platonic and Pythagorean traditions, also Euclid hailed from Alexandria. The insights of Alexandria were taken up again in Renaissance Europe, often through the transmissions of Islamic scholars, eventually leading to what became known as the Scientific Revolution (Cohen 2010: 10-15). And Rome not only became the "Holy See" and with that the centre of "Jerusalemite thinking" in the 4th century CE thanks to the establishment of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, it also contributed Roman Law and republican ideas of lasting influence to Western thought (Cicero stands as an epitome for both of these).

the laws of the heavens (next to all kinds of astrological questions) (Cohen 1994: 166-169), with our modern understanding of science and the term scientist coming into being in the 19th century only. Likewise, even in the 18th century, Adam Smith, for instance, saw himself as a moral philosopher and his most famous work *The Wealth of Nations* as a contribution to moral philosophy, though he also already used the term political economy.

Then came the "long 19th century" (Hobsbawm 1996), and with it the age of history, science, and industrial capitalism (on the age of history, see also the last section). Throughout that century, philosophy lost its preeminent position among the intellectual pursuits, just as its former companion or competitor theology did. Hegel, who died in 1831, still believed "[t]he True is the whole" (Hegel 1979: 11), and that this whole along with its goal and unfolding could be grasped by (his) philosophy alone. By the end of the nineteenth century this belief was shattered by the sciences, now called such. There was no easily recognizable whole anymore that was the exclusive precinct of philosophy and philosophy was not thought of as foundational for all other pursuits of knowledge anymore (Rorty 1979: 5-6). Philosophers instead had to learn to deal and live with the sciences and their enormous success. Historiography and the social sciences play a role here just as much as the (experimental) natural sciences do. Both stand for the challenge that these very successful empirical ways of knowing pose to a philosophy that is after first principles, or which believes it can reason to certain conclusions in some form of a-priori fashion and in this sense lay the foundations for all the sciences. Historiography in particular also called into question that any of the principles cognized by the philosophers had any universal character to begin with as it became more and more clear that "our" way of thinking and doing things was not the only way (see the controversy between Ranke and Hegel above on this issue too, where Ranke was very keen to emphasize the particular as against Hegel's absolute; and of course, Nietzsche, who as the most sensitive of the "philosophical seismographs" of the nineteenth century understood the problem philosophy was faced with very clearly).

In a sense, this discussion, and the anxiety around it, has never left us in philosophy since the nineteenth century. The sciences study reality directly, they are all empirical and in a wider sense of the term observational. If philosophy were to study reality like that, the thought goes, it would just become one of the sciences; if it does not, the question arises what there is left for philosophy to study and on what grounds it might base its insights and inferences about whatever it studies. This issue, of course, is known as the debate between rationalism and naturalism

(or empiricism) in philosophy (Petterson 2019; Kosso 1991; and for a discussion of the issue within the philosophy of historiography, Kuukkanen 2019). Depending on one's position on these issues, philosophy might be rendered superfluous as the sciences have replaced it as a better way of knowing about the world, a position known as scientism, or philosophy has indeed a contribution of its own to make, but for the latter to be true, difficult questions about the discipline's *subject matter*, *method*(s), and *goals* need to be answered. (The opposite of scientism, a position we could dub "philosophism", in which philosophy has access to some kind of superior knowledge or in which the field synthesizes all other branches of knowledge into a coherent whole is not advocated by many anymore, for all I know, and it reeks of the "philosopher king". The issue is different with theology of course, which has not fully given up on such aspirations.) Properly conceived, these issues concern *metaphilosophy*, or "the philosophy of philosophy" (Williamson 2007: 6), defined as the effort to turn philosophy on itself and to clarify its own premises and presuppositions. This exercise is very much needed as philosophy's position on the "tree of knowledge" has become unclear and for some even doubtful thanks to the success of the sciences, with the discipline's status in the academe becoming more and more precarious too.

I think the best way of approaching this issue is to focus on what philosophy, science, and even everyday thinking all have in common, given that we cannot claim any privileged access to reality by philosophy. This commonality, I believe, is that they are all based on observation (evidence), theory, and reason (Kosso 1998: 7). We have to hitch our philosophical claims somehow to reality (observation/evidence); we have to presuppose some categories to do so (theory); and we have to argue for them (reason) based on both, evidence and theory (this also means philosophical descriptions are theory-laden). So, philosophy, just like science, is about the justification of our claims by way of theory and evidence, with justification coming in degrees and of evidence existing a great different variety. (In other words, philosophy fits the coherentist, informational, and hermeneutic account of knowledge and justification that I outline in article II below.) This means, depending on what philosophy wants to argue about in, say, ontology or epistemology, it has to so under the constraints of evidence, reason, and justification that pertain to the subject. Another way of saying this, is that philosophy must be "disciplined" (Williamson 2007: 285) by something, with this something not necessarily needing to be the practices or results of any science. It could just as well be disciplined by some other social practice that it wants to scrutinize—by language, itself a social practice, for instance—or by being in general as we currently

understand it, which would then become its evidence. However, it does mean that we have to do the necessary thinking and legwork, with very general and extraordinary claims about "being in general" for example needing the sort of general and extraordinary evidence to back them up, just as anywhere else. So, discipline and constraint entail that we actually know about the thing we want to philosophize about and that we take the current state of the art of those fields seriously. In Timothy Williamson's words:

> "To be 'disciplined' by X here is not simply to pay lip-service to X; it is to make a systematic conscious effort to conform to the deliverances of X, where such conformity is at least somewhat easier to recognize than is the answer to the original philosophical question." (Williamson 2007: 285)

This means, for instance, if we want to philosophize about empirical knowledge, we better turn to the sciences, our most successful practice in this respect. Likewise, if we want to know how knowledge of the past is created, we should turn to historiography and "conform to its deliverances", and not slouch down in the armchair. Other things, such as conceptual analysis of ordinary language, we might very well do from the armchair, as such analysis is dependent on our conceptual competency in that language which, once acquired, can be activated anywhere.

From today's point of view, it would therefore seem that "philosophical exceptionalism" (Williamson 2007: 3) more narrowly construed is false. The discipline does not differentiate itself from other fields by having access to some privileged reality, a uniquely philosophical *subject-matter* or a unique *method* or *goal* that would fundamentally set it apart from the sciences and other intellectual pursuits. Most philosophers would today agree that there are no Platonic Forms, special entities such as God or something like this that constitute the exclusive objects of philosophy (Chalmers 2015). Neither is there a set of methods exclusive to philosophy which set it apart from all other sciences. While terms such as dialectics, transcendental arguments, linguistic or conceptual analysis, or intuitions are strongly associated with some approaches and schools of philosophy, they do not qualify as *differentia specifica* of the discipline either. Finally, it does not seem that the goals or the purpose of philosophy distinguish it in any stark sense from other intellectual pursuits, though there is quite some disagreement about what philosophy is actually for. Some see it as creating knowledge just as the sciences do, while others believe its effects to be negative and therapeutic at best, that is to disabuse us from the (linguistic) problems we got tangled up in (on the former, see Williamson 2007; on the latter, for instance, Rorty 1979). So, philosophy is neither

set apart nor unified by any unique subject-matter, method, goal or purpose. While this sounds discouraging, we should remember that no discipline is strongly unified in this way, that is, most disciplines do not distinguish themselves through a unique subject-matter, a unique method or some specific goal or purpose. The worry about philosophy, though, is that it lacks a working *paradigm*, that disagreement is widespread without accepted means to overcome it. Philosophy is therefore not a progressive discipline according to this view (Chalmers 2015; for a somewhat more optimistic stance, see Williamson 2007: 278-280).

One thing philosophy definitely is, though, is an academic *discipline* and with that a form of *tradition* that is institutionally proliferated (though with a diminished rate of success, perhaps). As a subject, philosophy is still taught in universities and students can and do get degrees in it, and if we were to ask modern philosophers in the West who they would consider as the most important figures in the history of their field, they would probably also come up with a similar set of names (this, of course, is not unproblematic in itself, as no tradition is, thanks to its blind spots and the doxography that develops around the big names). In this intellectual tradition, there is a set of *traditional topics*, mostly inherited from Ancient Greek philosophy, around which the subject and its practitioners, ancient and modern, cluster. These are: *metaphysics* or *ontology*, *epistemology*, *ethics* and *political philosophy*, the latter two not always clearly separated especially in ancient times, and slightly more peripherally, *aesthetics*. Or in one term: being, knowledge, the good/right life individually and as a community (ethics and political philosophy), and beauty. This sense of philosophy as an unbroken chain of tradition was encapsulated by Alfred North Whitehead's famous saying: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato" (Whitehead 1978: 39).

Philosophy, then, consists of the "unusually systematic and unrelenting application of ways of thinking required over a vast range of non-philosophical inquiry" (Williamson 2007:3), and while it does not have a subject matter and method exclusively on its own, it tends to focus on all kinds of practices from a very general point of view (ontology, epistemology, etc.). Another way of saying this is that philosophy has two main interests when it comes to its traditional topics and beyond: *fundamental principles, categories, presuppositions* and *reasoning* (we could call them philosophy's content and form). Philosophy is, to quote with Collingwood an actual philosopher of history but many have said similar things, "thinking about the act of thinking" (Collingwood 1956: 307), that is thinking about the fundamental categories and presuppositions that structure our own thinking and

other practices (see for a similar point Williamson 2007: 2). Yet, it is not only that, it is also about scrutinizing the *reasons* that we have for these and for our inferences more generally, and with that, about the reasoning process itself and its own presuppositions. Based on what we have said so far, we can give the following working definition of philosophy:

> "First, it [philosophy] is a disciplinary matrix with a lineage that can be traced back to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Second, it is constitutively dialogical. Third, it is inherently aporetic. Fourth, it is ideally, or at least has been, characterized by an orientation to rationality (as distinct from authority or tradition). It is a requirement intrinsic to rationality that it be accountable, and so self-reflexive. Fifth, it is typically concerned with the explication of what are held to be the most fundamental principles or categories in being generally, some particular domain of being or a form of social life." (Bhaskar 2010: 7)

This brings all the aspects we have talked about so far together and it adds a few more that are worthy of discussion: philosophy is a *discipline* and a form of *tradition* that can be traced back to Greek thought (and Jerusalem, one might add). It is characterized by *rationality*, that is, by giving grounds and being held accountable for them, and with that, it is necessarily dialogical and self-reflexive. The latter two are intrinsic demands of rationality: the *logos* is always also *speech*, it is directed at others, at convincing them. For our speech to be reasonable, we have to give good grounds for the things we assert, and we cannot contradict what we say by the very act of saying it. In this sense reason or logos are always about both, contents and operation, or proposition and presupposition. This means that rationality is not only accountable but that it is also self-reflexive, and this explains how philosophy is about both principle and presuppositions and reason itself. The oscillation between both levels can be seen in some of the founding documents and still greatest contributions to Western philosophy: the Platonic dialogues and their figure of Socrates. (Arguably, the move between contents and operation is more easily visible in the dialogue form, so there are good philosophical grounds for Plato writing in dialogue form, not to speak of the potential didactic effects.) Finally, philosophy and reason are antithetical to mere authority or tradition, to believing something only on faith or caprice, and to force. Someone who reasons, gives arguments for the validity of their points of view and they thereby ask others to assent through the "unforced force of the better argument" (Habermas 1994: 23). They cannot deny others the freedom that they claim for themselves in their own use of reason, that is they must let them reason and argue in favour of their own

position, and with that, potentially contra ours (to deny to others the freedom we presuppose for ourselves would incur a performative self-contradiction).

In this sense, philosophy is fundamentally about the "mapping out of the space of reasons" (Petterson 2019: 21), as the famous phrase that goes back to Wilfrid Sellars goes. Philosophy makes explicit the inferential movements in our thinking, how we reason from premises and presupposition to conclusions and what forms of inference we are thereby employing. This, in turn, allows us to understand "what kind of considerations and arguments speak for or against competing (…) views" and we can thus "assess the costs and values of holding a particular view" (Petterson 2019: 21). This emphasis on the workings of reason also explains the field's closeness to both semantics and logic. Logic is nothing else than the theory of argumentation and inference by (valid) reasoning so that others have grounds to assent to what I say, or more strictly defined, it is a system of rules and inferences to derive true conclusions from true premises. Semantics, in turn, is the theory of meaning, with semantic precision frequently being required for our inferences to hold, and with that, for the distinction of valid from invalid reasoning. In short, without attendance to semantics, we cannot reason carefully, without attendance to logic we cannot reason validly. And of course, without empirical accuracy, we cannot reason soundly. This goes for philosophy as for any other intellectual endeavour, and it is just another way of saying that philosophy needs evidence, theory, and justification for the claims that it makes. (Conversely, however, the centrality of logic and semantics do not entail that philosophy only deals with linguistic problems or confusions, as the late Wittgenstein and Rorty have thought, or that all philosophical questions are only questions of logic and semantics.)[16]

[16] The locus classicus of the linguistic and therapeutic understanding of philosophy is the late Wittgenstein with his "Philosophical Investigations" (Wittgenstein 1986). Wittgenstein (in-)famously wrote that philosophical problems "arise when language *goes on holiday*" (Wittgenstein 1986: sec. 38, original emphasis), and as such they are for him in sense meaningless. They arise when we use words outside their established rules and "language games". From this follows for Wittgenstein that they are no "empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language (…). The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language." (Wittgenstein 1986: sec 109; similarly, Rorty 1979: 11-12). All that philosophy can do on this account is to cure people from their confused language use, and in this sense, it is therapeutic for Wittgenstein, it "shew[s] the fly the way out of the fly-bottle" (Wittgenstein 1986: sec. 309), in his famous formulation (similarly also in Rorty 1979: xiii, 5-6). And therefore, philosophy "leaves everything as it is" (Wittgenstein 1986: sec. 124). This is obviously a very reductive understanding of philosophy concerning all the aspects that we discussed in this section. If this were correct, the subject-matter of philosophy would become "wrong" language use and we could kiss goodbye to ontology, epistemology, etc. in any more substantial sense; philosophy's method would be some kind of linguistic analysis, and its goal would be "therapeutic" in

Overall, I am sympathetic to the idea that philosophy itself only must make two presuppositions of its own to get off the ground: 1) the principle of non-contradiction, and 2) the rejection of the "petitio principii". Without the former, intelligible speech would be impossible and we would arrive at EFQ—ex falso quodlibet sequitur—from contradiction everything and its opposite follows, or in more modern parlance, "the principle of explosion". Contradiction appears in two main forms: a) propositional, and b) as theory/practice inconsistency. The former is asserting a and not-a at the same time and in the same respect, and the latter entails a performative self-contradiction, denying in theory what one presupposes in practice, or vice versa (Bhaskar 2010: 2). In the case of reasoning and argument itself, this latter appears as the potential contradiction between the contents and operation of a locution. What I say stands in contradiction to the way in which I (have to) say it; most famously encountered in self-referential paradoxes such as "This sentence says nothing". "Petitio principii", further, means roughly translated "to arrogate the beginnings" for oneself, to determine for others just as for oneself without any argument or reasoning what is the case and what everyone should believe. This is dogmatic and ends the discussion already before it has begun. In colloquial English, this is known as "begging the question" or "assuming the conclusion" and that describes this dogmatic and arrogant stance equally well (after all arrogant comes from arrogate). Philosophy cannot accept any "petitio principii" as valid at the outset because it is exactly about the principles and presuppositions of speech and all kinds of practices and about the reasoning for or against them, so it cannot dogmatically accept any (Zorn 2017: 18-26, 34-36).[17]

Further, Bhaskar writes that philosophy is about "most fundamental principles and categories in being generally, some particular domain of being or a form of social life". This most general formulation does not tie philosophy to science alone, as science is but one practice or "form of life" in society, and we might ask about the fundamental principles, categories, and presuppositions of other practices too, just as we might engage in introspection, entertain (rational) intuitions, or resort to a-priori reasoning in our philosophical inquiries. In other words, "armchair methods" might count as forms of evidence for philosophical positions just as much as more empirically oriented enquiries into the presuppositions of some social

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the simple sense of curing us from some wrong language use, leaving everything else as is. (On this account, Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy has also been called "quietist".) Most current philosophy obviously does not comply to this reductive programme, and I think this is in itself a good indication that something is not quite right with this metaphilosophical position.

[17] I let others decide whether these principles of philosophy are themselves one final "petitio principii".

practices do, and the point with all of them is that they must stand in a reasonable relationship with what they want to philosophize about and therefore count as evidence and justification for it.

Finally, Bhaskar also calls philosophy "inherently aporetic". In Aristotle's sense, an *aporia* is a puzzle or problem our thinking gets into. When we look at common sense and general discourse, *endoxa* in Aristotle, but also science, we often find that they are ambiguous, ambivalent, paradoxical, etc., in short *problematic*, when it comes to their most basic presuppositions and propositions, which might not be as clear as we thought or even contradict each other (see also Kosso 2011: ix). Philosophy, then, focuses on aporiai on the most general level of propositions and presuppositions, and tries to solve them where possible. In this sense, we can say philosophy focuses on "puzzles about the most basic categories of being and doing" (Bhaskar 2010: 8).

The emphasis on such puzzles, presuppositions and reasoning itself also explains why philosophy is characterized by the "*spirit*" of "unbridled criticism" (Priest 2006: 207, emphasis added)—the famous Descartian and Marxian "de omnibus dubitandum", just not all at the same time—, and why it can produce so much irritation to the unconcerned or uninitiated. Philosophy questions what other fields or forms of life take for granted, and often have to take for granted to get off the ground or accomplish anything, and submits it to critical scrutiny. We cannot not act, but we obviously can act unthinkingly and without questioning the basics of our acting, and there are surely situations where this questioning is not helpful or even actively harmful. Be that as it may, depending on what one tries to do or how committed one is to the premises of one's doings, this questioning can indeed be irritating: philosophy as the Socratic gadfly. (And Socrates' story is also a good reminder about how far those in power might go to rid themselves of philosophical "gadflies"). In any case, philosophy enlarges our *reflective capacities* and makes us into *better reasoners and thinkers*, and through it, we better understand why we might do or believe something and at what cost it comes. Philosophy thus disengages us from the pursuits of our daily lives, from the "unexamined life", and questions its worthiness and significance.[18] This, then, brings me to the last issue

[18] Thinking and "unthinking" indeed make a difference in the overall scheme of things, and so does by extension philosophical (un-)thinking: "*Philosophy matters because it is causally efficacious*, and bad philosophy is, so I shall argue, *regressively* so." (Bhaskar 2010: 13, original emphasis). There are many examples where one can surmise that "bad philosophy", or at least philosophy not fitting to its subject-matter, has done quite some damage. Take philosophy of science, where philosophy arguably has provided scientists with a poor understanding of their own practice; Popperian falsificationism in phylogenetics or in physics come to mind (on the former, see Haber 2009: 237; on the latter,

that I believe to be closely connected to philosophy and in a wider sense its *purpose*: *phronesis*.

Phronesis is another term that was popularized by Aristotle, and it is usually translated into English as prudence, sagacity, or practical wisdom and reflection in a comprehensive sense. Phronesis is about the weighing of the different aspects, reasons, and goals of our actions, in relation to what kind of person we want to be and happiness or the good life itself (ethos and eudaimonia in Aristotle's terms). It is the synthesis of practical and theoretical reason, of the moral and theoretical virtues, in praxis; it means, in the context of the necessity to act, to fundamentally reflect on our goals, the means for attaining them, and the consequences for ourselves and others (Bhaskar 2009a: 262). (And this is not Aristotle anymore, who put contemplative philosophical understanding of eternal truths, *sophia*, above phronesis and any practical concern.) It is exactly so central to human beings because we cannot not act, something sometimes called the "axiological imperative", and because we live in a world full of contingency, with differing degrees of freedom for humans (MacIntyre 2009: 119). Without either, human action as we know it would be impossible and phronesis pointless. Philosophy focuses on the fundamental propositions and presuppositions of our thinking and doing and on the reasons that we have for them, and in this sense, it is a key ingredient in any successful act of phronesis. (A similar argument could be made about historiography or at least historiographic knowledge, in the sense that they are indispensable for acting well, given what I have called ontological historicism further above.)

In this section, I have argued against "philosophical exceptionalism", in the sense that philosophy does not have an exclusive subject-matter, method, or goal of its own that fundamentally sets it apart from other sciences and intellectual pursuits. Instead, philosophy, like any other intellectual endeavour, must build its claims on evidence, theory, and reasoning, and in this sense, it needs to be constrained and disciplined by the sciences or other practices, depending on what

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Hossenfelder 2022). But one does not have to reach so far of course, the same could probably be said about the Covering Law Model or postmodernism in historiography and its philosophy (see Hempel 1942 on the former, and Jenkins 1995 on the latter). As for (guardedly) positive influence from philosophy to science, there is, for instance, the impact Kuhn and Marx had on Stephen Jay Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium (see Turner 2011: 29-31). Kuhn is generally an interesting case here because his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* has exerted influence well beyond its field of origin, the philosophy of science, or even philosophy more generally, at least terminologically (on this "success story" of Kuhn's *Structure*, see Kuukkanen 2021a: 323-324). It would therefore make a good case for scrutinizing the influence, positive or negative, of philosophy on the general public.

it takes as the object of its interest. Beyond that, philosophy is also an academic discipline and an intellectual tradition going in the West back to Athens and Jerusalem (and Alexandria and Rome) and a set of traditional topics associated with this tradition (ontology, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, and aesthetics). When it comes to its actual "contents", I have contended that philosophy is about the fundamental principles, categories and presuppositions of other practices, and the reasoning for them. As it turns out, these most fundamental categories are often aporetic—that is problematic and puzzling, if not contradictory—and philosophy can be of great help in straightening them out. Moreover, given its focus on most fundamental issues, the field is characterized by a spirit of unbridled criticism, in the overall service of phronesis.

In the next section, we will turn to the fundamental principles etc. of one specific practice: historiography, with special attention to the epistemic, discursive, and paradigmatic aspects of this practice as we have differentiated them in the last section. This should give us the outline of the *philosophy of scientific historiography*. In a further step, we can then ask about the actual *reach* of scientific historiography, in the sense of the proportion of those scientific practices within the overall praxis of historians. The section after the next will outline an empirical research programme and formulate some theses in this regard.

Finally, a word on the question of (the lack of) progress in philosophy which I have shortly mentioned in this section without committing to any position about it. I do believe that progress about some issues at least can be made and has been made in philosophy, but this usually requires better evidence and better connection to the evidence than we often have and fewer grandiose and free-wheeling claims. (Plus, withholding judgment where there is insufficient evidence is usually a good strategy too.) This goes for the philosophy of historiography as it goes for many other fields. But the proof is in the pudding, yet I think Timothy Williamson is generally right in his admonition, in the philosophy of historiography perhaps even more so than in other fields:

> "We need the unglamorous virtue of patience to read and write philosophy that is as perspicuously structured as the difficulty of the subject requires, and the austerity to be dissatisfied with appealing prose that does not meet those standards. The fear of boring oneself or one's readers is a great enemy of truth. Pedantry is a fault on the right side." (Williamson 2007: 288)

1.5 The Idea of a Philosophy of Scientific Historiography

"[A] discipline with such an outstanding record of achievement hardly needs the advice and criticism of outsiders (my battle cry!) whose own achievements, by comparison, are both rather modest and somewhat tiresomely repetitive", wrote Arthur Marwick (Marwick 1993: 128), himself an esteemed historian, in the early 1990s. The targets of his "battle cry" were philosophers and theorists of history, especially the narrativists and postmodernists that gained in popularity at that time, in his words the "cultural theorists, the linguistic materialists, the new historicists" (Marwick 1993: 128). Marwick criticized them for not understanding and appreciating what historians were actually doing in their disciplinary practices. Instead, the philosophers and literary theorists were fundamentally *misdescribing* him and his profession, based on some fixed ideas about what the practice must look like and some abstract philosophical presuppositions or even dogmas that they hold, so Marwick. This is not so different from Ranke's complaint about Hegel that we discussed two sections above in I.3, and a long-lasting gripe that many historians have had with philosophers and other theorists entering their field. We remember, Hegel applied a teleological philosophy to history, and he had no patience or use for historiography and its methods in this endeavour. Modern philosophers and theorist are guilty of the same sin, if Marwick is correct, even though they tend to misdescribe the historian's practices whereas Hegel went straight to history itself. Either way, the issue at stake here is the *descriptive accuracy of philosophical (re-)descriptions of historiographic practices*. Marwick believed that this accuracy was fundamentally lacking and that, even worse, philosophers and other theorists have *prescribed* what historians should do based on their own fundamental misconceptions (Marwick 1993: 128-129). In this situation, a "battle cry" was for Marwick in order.[19]

[19] There is, beyond Hegel, a pedigree of philosophers throughout the ages making disparaging comments about efforts to gain knowledge about the past. For Aristotle, for instance, historiography ranks lower than poetry, not to speak of philosophy, because poetry still deals with the universal, in the form of myth, and in this sense it is like philosophy, whereas historiography with its focus on the particular simply fails to reach that more dignified vantage point (Lefkowitz 2009: 356). (A "failure" Hegel also complained about.) Descartes thought equally lowly of historiography because it was, again, too particular and no match for the certain mathematical knowledge based on deduction that he was after (Lorenz 2009: 396). What we can learn from these examples is that the philosophers who are after the first principles of being and knowledge tend to have no patience for history where the particular and contingent seem to reign supreme. Conversely, historiography and its philosophy do not need to heed these philosophers either as long as there are no convincing arguments that the principles they pronounce render inquiries into the past either impossible, superfluous, or pointless. Convincing arguments to that respect do not exist, to my knowledge, so we can go on undisturbed with our business of knowing the

The position on the historian's side that underpins such statements as Marwick's has been characterized as "matter-of-fact, antitheoretical and antiphilosophical objectivist empiricism", in the words of the historian of American historiography Peter Novick (Novick 1988: 593). While probably not as popular these days anymore as it was in previous times, this characterization does describe the *self-understanding* of many traditional historians well, I believe. There are similar quotes from historiographic luminaries such as Marwick, Geoffrey Elton, Langlois and Seignobos, and Ranke himself that all claim in one way or another that historians do not need any theory or philosophy, and that their knowledge of the past is solely created out of their engagement with the sources. Ranke, for instance, advised in a famous quote that the historian should "extinguish" herself when approaching the sources (see Gil 2009: 384); similarly, Elton called the historian a "servant of his evidence of which he will, or should, ask no specific questions until he has absorbed what it says" (Elton 1967, quoted acc. to Newall 2009a: 270). If that were a correct description of historiographic practice, there would indeed not be much left for philosophers to say. The practice of creating knowledge of the past would be a simple one-way road from the evidence to the historian's account that is transparent to the historian herself (or at least some of them). Of course, this cannot be quite right, as the historian, like everybody else, is no "tabula rasa" on which the past only needs to impress itself via the sources (especially with the past, properly speaking, not being able to do anything at all). This is philosophically incoherent and does not square with how scientific knowledge and inference, or any thinking for that matter, work, that much philosophy can say (Kosso 2011: 7-9). The problem though is that traditional philosophy of history did not really address this issue much at all, i.e. the *process of the generation of knowledge of the past by means of both evidence and theory*. So, Marwick's complaint might still be right even if he himself is mistaken about the nature of his own scientific enterprise. (On the fraught relationship between historians and philosophers, see also Zammito 2009 very instructively.) So, it would seem that in the past *both philosophers and historians have fundamentally misdescribed historiography*; the former for a lack of familiarity with and understanding of disciplinary practices and the latter for a lack of conceptual clarity and philosophical sophistication.

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past and of philosophically understanding how we come to know the past. I would not be so sure though, that history is of no consequence for the quest for first principles and firm knowledge, but this is not history's problem.

Traditional philosophy of history indeed confirms this verdict, as it has not been of much help at all in elucidating the *knowledge-producing and truth-conducive practices of historiography* that we described above as the "Rankean paradigm", consisting of epistemic, discursive, and wider disciplinary elements. The most glaring example of this, after Hegel and other substantive philosophies of history that went out of fashion the middle of the 20th century, is Hempel with his "Covering Law Model" (Hempel 1942), with whom modern non-substantive philosophy of history usually begins its tale (Dewulf 2018). Not unlike the "cultural theorists and linguistic materialists", i.e. the postmodernists, Marwick complained about, Hempel imposed an abstract model onto historiography without giving any due to the subject's actual disciplinary practices.[20] For Hempel, an explanation, historiographic or else, was valid only if the explanandum could be deduced from a general law and a description of the initial conditions, or if the specified law and the initial conditions made the explanandum at least highly likely, though Hempel did not give any probability threshold for "highly likely". (Hempel resorted to this less strict probabilistic position in the early 1960s after criticism; see Hempel 1974 on this later twist, esp. 90-92) This also meant that explanation and prediction had the same logical form and were of a piece for Hempel, with the difference between them being philosophically insubstantial (Hempel 1942: 38).

What Hempel in effect did with his Covering Law Model was to subsume historiography under an *a-priori epistemic standard and demand* that he derived from deductive logic and a highly idealized understanding of lab environments and Newtonian physics, where observations are tightly controlled, and many laws are symmetric with respect to time-reversal (Berry 2009: 167). In other words, he "extrapolated from a highly idealized explication of explanation in one setting, of Newtonian physics, and made this a normative requirement on all explanation" (MacDonald/MacDonald 2009: 133). As a result, Hempel was not interested in actual historiographic practices, nothing much in his philosophy of science

[20] One could try to extend the analogy between Hempel and postmodernism even further. Hempel had a formal model about how language *must* relate to reality via observational sentences and deductive logic for it to be meaningful at all, and postmodernists often have a theory about how meaningful language *cannot* relate to reality at all due to some of alleged properties of language. If that indeed was their respective positions, Hempelians and postmodernists should invest their time in the philosophy of language, logic, and semantics in particular, and not in the philosophy of historiography, as these questions cannot be solved in that breadth by a philosophical examination of historiography and its disciplinary practices. Though of course, any solution that implies either of these extreme positions would also have serious consequences for historiography as a practice that is centrally dependent on referential language use.

depended on them since his account of science derived its validity from this a-priori model of what constitutes a proper explanation. It therefore made no difference to him that the main example he gave in his famous paper is that of a burst car radiator, which is at least at some remove of the usual explananda of historiography, as the structure of the explanation must be the same either way if it was to be scientific (Hempel 1942: 36). Also, given this a-priori character, no amount of pleading by historians that they knew of no general laws in their field and that they produced *singular causal explanations* that cannot be subsumed under such laws could sway Hempel (for some such typical rejoinder by a historian, see Murphey 2009a: 48). (On the notion of causality underpinning these explanations and the form they take, see article I and II below.). Hempel's account of science was *prescriptive* as prescriptive gets, and just as *far removed* from any historiographic practice. If historiography did not meet the epistemic standards set, so much worse for it, and it better quickly mend its ways. While already long out of fashion again when Marwick uttered his "battle cry" in the early 1990s, his verdict fits Hempel also to a T: He misdescribed historiographic practice, or better *gauged it by an external standard* that historiography could not meet, as he did not describe that practice much at all. And ironically, soon enough it would become clear that no science could meet Hempel's exacting standard (Danto 1985: x-xiii).

Hempel's account of explanation was of central importance to the philosophy of history for nearly 30 years—roughly from the publication of his famous paper in 1942 up to the appearance of Hayden White's "Metahistory" in 1973 (White 1973)—an era and discussion commonly known as "Analytic Philosophy of History". While philosophically sophisticated, what the contributions to this discussion had in common was that they focused on the philosophical issues at hand as they were conceived by Hempel; they worked within a Hempelian paradigm with their discussions essentially consisting of "bickering over the adequacy of the Covering Law Model" in the words of Arthur Danto (Danto 1985: x), one of the main protagonists of the debates of the 1950s and 1960s. This, again, came at the expense of any philosophical analysis of *actual historiographic practices or products* (mainly texts). Books such as Danto's "Analytical Philosophy of History" from 1965, arguably the high point of the whole debate, did contain some stock examples of historiographic text, which already constituted an advance over Hempel's burst car radiator. Danto analyzed historiographic text in his book in the form of one paragraph vignettes and 3 sentences narratives taken out of real history books (Danto 1985: 233-253), but the debate overall was still at a far remove from actual historiographic practices and from analyzing any bigger chunks of text. More

importantly for the overall development of the field though, with Danto and others, prime among them Morton White and W.B. Gallie, there was a *topical shift* in the philosophy of history. Recognizing that historians centrally produced *narratives*, these scholars brought the question of *narrative form* and *narrative explanations* onto the philosophical tableau, though still couched in the language and categories of Hempel's. And this topic, and some of the contributions from the time, are still very much with us today. (I am particularly thinking of Danto and his pathbreaking analysis on narrative sentences and narrative explanations here; see article I and II below for more on this.)[21]

Though there has not been much overlap or interaction between Analytic Philosophy of History and the narrativism that came after it, inaugurated by Hayden White, the topic of narrative remained. But again, despite narrativism's claiming that the whole of the historiographic text—in their understanding the narrative—cannot be reduced to interconnected (causal) statements and with that to issues of explanation (Ankersmit 2009: 199-200), there was not much empirical analysis of the historiographic (writing) practices and whole texts done by the narrativists either, beyond White's famous initial study of 19th century historians in "Metahistory" (White 1973). Now, a rough 50 years after its inception, narrativism itself has run out of steam in the estimation of many philosophers and theorists of history (Kuukkanen 2021b: 7; Simon 2019: 16-20), perhaps as a function of the theoretical and philosophical staleness of postmodernism, perhaps due to the (generational) passing of its proponents of greatest renown (Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit). Whatever the case, it seems like the time is right for an *empirical*

[21] An external reviewer asked me to relate my position on the shortcomings of traditional (analytical) philosophy of history to the texts found in Gardiner's famous anthology, "The Philosophy of History" (Gardiner 1974). While the texts assembled in the anthology show a wealth of topics and display great philosophical sophistication—next to the Covering Law Model there are discussions on the (rational) explanation of action, determinism, objectivity, and colligation—none of them discusses historiographic practices or texts in any detail. At best, there is a sentence from a book of historiography here or a quote from of a historian there. The criticism levelled at Hempel and the discussions around the Covering Law Model therefore also applies grosso modo to the discussions found in this anthology, though most of them are not as emptily prescriptive and as far removed from actual historiography as Hempel's account is. However, the question remains whether they have anything philosophically interesting to say about actual historiography and its (knowledge producing) practices beyond the general philosophical points they make, which might or might not be applicable to historiography or have any real consequences for it in their generality. The question of determinism, for instance, is interesting but it is unclear how any solution to it has any bearing on actual historiography and, conversely, how the philosophical analysis of historiography might be helpful for answering the question of determinism. In any case, the relevance for and applicability to historiography of the philosophical issues at hand, or the philosophies one holds, need to be shown in detail and for this one should discuss actual historiography.

turn and an *empirically-minded research programmes* in the philosophy of historiography; research programmes that finally scrutinize *historiographic research, writing, and other disciplinary practices in detail*. Neither Hempel and Analytic Philosophy of History nor narrativism did this to any considerable degree, and neither seem historians entirely clear in what they are doing, given the empiricist and antitheoretical stance of many of them. In other words, there is a theoretical lacuna here that an empirically-minded philosophy of historiography should be able to fill.

The time for this seems especially ripe because philosophy of science has made great advances ever since the days of Hempel and even the 1970s. Over are the times of "physics envy" (Doreen Massey), and highly idealized accounts of science modelled on a highly idealized account of experimental physics, such as Hempel's, are no longer seen as the gold standard for scientific practice and explanation. Quite the opposite, in postpositivist and post-Kuhnian philosophy of science (Zammito 2004), there is now a real focus of the actual practices of different scientific disciplines. They deserve close philosophical scrutiny because the real action is to be found in the "epistemic iteration" (Chang 2004: 6) between theory and evidence on that very level, and not on the heights of an a-priori model fueled by deductive logic or within the "prison-house of language" (Jameson 1972). And quite ironically from the standpoint of Hempel, with this development "all of science was brought under history rather than, as before, history having been brought under science construed on the model of physics" (Danto 1985: xi), as Danto wrote critically 20 years after the heyday of Analytic Philosophy of History.[22] [23]

[22] Today we are also seeing first efforts at a historization of Analytic Philosophy of History as an approach and era. See, for instance, Uebel 2019 on Danto's intellectual development, and Dewulf 2018 on the intellectual climate of the early 1940s in which Hempel, a recent forced immigrant to the US from Nazi Germany, formulated his fateful article about covering laws in historiography. These works help us to better understand the debates of the past and they offer us conceptual tools and insights for a better understanding of the nature and the limits of philosophy of historiography. In this sense, any empirical turn in the philosophy of historiography does well not to neglect the history of its own discipline. What we still lack, though, is an authoritative treatment of Analytic Philosophy of History or any other past approach in the discipline such a narrativism (for an early account of the turn to narrativism after Analytic Philosophy of History, see Vann 1995). The history of the philosophy of history is still largely unwritten, to our own detriment.

[23] In the same text, Danto formulates a criterion every philosophy of historiography should be able to meet: self-referential consistency. We could call this the "Danto test" for philosophies of historiography. He writes: "It is always a fair question to put, whether a theoretical work on history can apply its theories to itself, construed now as an historical entity in its own right (…). [A] challenge that scarcely can be declined on principle since, if a theory cannot account for itself when it is part of its own subject-matter, as the writing of a theory must be covered by a theory of writing, there is scant reason to suppose it can count for very much at all. The philosophy of history is after all part of history" (Danto 1985: xiv). This

Most importantly, within this framework of modern philosophy of science, historiography is on the face of it a science just like any other: it is institutionalized, it has its own professional norms and practices, and it produces in the context of those institutional structures knowledge based on the norms and practices. Construed in this way, philosophy of historiography is a form of philosophy of science (Kuukkanen 2014: 616), and the key question becomes how knowledge of the past is produced in the "epistemic iteration" between evidence and theory. This close relationship also means that the philosophy of historiography can avail itself of the tools that philosophy of science produced over the last decades: sophisticated understandings of both the epistemology of scientific knowledge and the differing historical and contemporary practices which produce that knowledge (Schickore 2018). And it should be field-specific wherever necessary given both the *substantial overlap and difference in methods and practices* that we can observe between different sciences (Currie 2015).

The difficulty we are faced with, if it is such, is then as follows: The traditional philosophy of history that we have discussed so far has done a bad job at understanding the actual (scientific) disciplinary practices of historiography. It was either strongly prescriptive through creating an exacting epistemic demand towards historiography based on an a-priori model, without caring much about the discipline's practices at all (Hempel and Analytic Philosophy of History), or it made vast claims about (parts of those) practices that were not empirically substantiated either (narrativism). Either way, philosophy of historiography has so far mostly failed at *descriptive accuracy*, one of the main preconditions for properly philosophizing about specialist practices such as historiography and a necessary step before we can elucidate these practices with the help of philosophical concepts and theories (on this and other demands any philosophical engagement with the past has to meet to be able to "test" its hypotheses, see also Chang 2021: 103-105). At the same time, have we good indications that many historians in their *phenomenological self-consciousness* misunderstand their own practices too,

strikes me as fundamentally correct, as denying it would amount to a performative self-contradiction. Hempel's theory is part of history, and being a theory about explanation in historiography, his theory should be applicable to itself construed as a historiographic explanandum. Thus, we can rightfully ask: Can we give a Hempelian explanation of the historical object that is the rise and fall of Hempel's own paradigm of (historical) explanation? Danto thinks we cannot, and I agree, and this fundamentally speaks against Hempel's theory. The same "test" can and should be performed with any philosophy of history and historiography, which by default is part of its own subject-matter once it has existed for a while. On the issue of why philosophy cannot allow performative self-contradictions, or any contradictions for that matter, see also the last section, I.4 above.

through something like the hard-nosed "empiricism" from above. We are, in other words, in need of both, *accurate philosophical (re-)description of practices hitherto misdescribed by both historians and philosophers and philosophical critique and prescription*. The normative force in this comes from producing a satisfactory philosophical justification for the practices that historians actually engage in, by showing that these practices are indeed appropriate for their goal, i.e. the production of knowledge of the past. This would turn the philosophical (re-)description of practices into the justification of (current) "best practices", and it would allow for the rules that govern those practices to become norms that should be endorsed by historians, if they wanted to produce knowledge about the past (Plenge 2019: 9). In this way, we would get from description to prescription, and at least on the face of it, we would avoid Hempel's divorced form of prescriptivism as the premise here is that the historians already (partially) practice what they (sometimes) misdescribe in theory. (This form of criticism is sometimes called "immanent critique".)

An obvious indication for such a practice existing just is the "Rankean paradigm" that we described, along with the continuous insistence of historians themselves on "source criticism" and the "historical method". Historians are adamant that what distinguishes their doing from fiction on a most basic level is its relation to the *evidence*, along with the *methodical approach* that they have to that evidence, based on which they infer (true) descriptions of the past. This "evidentiary infrastructure" and methodological control are both absent from fiction. This basic belief in the dependence of historiography on evidence I would like to call the *evidentiary default position*. All historians I know of and the overwhelming majority of philosophers of historiography, save some unreconstructed postmodernists such as Keith Jenkins (Jenkins 1995: 9), believe that historiography produces knowledge of the past via its epistemic and discursive disciplinary practices. I further submit that this is the discipline's *scientific core*, making the production of knowledge of the past its *central task*, though this standpoint might not be shared by all philosophers anymore (yet it seems universally accepted by historians). Among the historians, there is some *confusion* as to the *process* of the production of this knowledge as can be witnessed by the statements of Ranke and others from above. Among the philosophers, there is further *disagreement* about the *form* and *reach* of this knowledge—some believe it to be restricted to (boring) atomist and existential facts while others think narratives and other higher-level orderings of historians can also be justified by the evidence; but that there is some such knowledge of the past produced by the interplay of

evidence and theory, just like in any other science, the philosophers usually do not doubt.

What we therefore first need is a *philosophical reconstruction of this process of knowledge production in historiography*, and given the evidentiary default position, the main question here concerns the relationship between "input and output, evidence and theory" (Tucker 2004a: 9). With coherentism, informational epistemology, and inference to the best explanation (Kosso 2011; Dretske 2000; Lipton 2004) I believe we have powerful philosophical theories to make sense of the "evidentiary default position", and with that, to understand how historiography actually produces knowledge. That is, via them we can give a philosophical redescription of historiographic practice that is both accurate and prescriptive in the sense that it gives good justification of those practices given their cognitive goal of producing knowledge of the past. In a further step, we can next ask questions about the actual form and reach of that knowledge, as there is considerable disagreement in the philosophy of historiography on that question. In the section after this one, I will therefore outline a *series of central topics* for discussion based on the evidential default position and the question of the reach of the knowledge-producing practices of historiography, which can serve as a "testing ground" for the different research programmes that are currently being pursued in the philosophy of historiography (on the notion of a research programme, see Lakatos 1970 and the next section). Luckily, there is currently widespread agreement in the discipline that we are in dire need of an empirical turn (Tucker 2010; Kuukkanen 2017a; Paul 2020), and there are a few competing (Lakatosian) research programmes that can be tested against historiographic practices: evidentialism (Tucker 2004a; Gangl 2021a); postnarrativism (Kuukkanen 2015; Kuukkanen 2021c); and constructivism (Pihlainen 2017; White 1987b). (Naturally, other positions and further gradations might be added.)

But first things first, so let's begin with the philosophical reconstruction of the "evidentiary default position" and the scientific core of historiography, with the question here being: Given that everybody agrees that historiography produces knowledge of the past by way of "source criticism", how does that actually work? Pace Ranke and other traditional historians, historiography must employ theory in this process. All scientific knowledge has an empirical basis, it must in some sense be based on observation, but at the same time, it cannot only come from such. Observation itself has presuppositions—an untrained person unearthing some ancient coin from a few centimetres under the ground might not take it for anything but dirt. Also, for an observation to count for something other than itself it must be

relevant with respect to that other. This relevance just as the discrimination of a thing to be of a certain kind ("an ancient coin") can only be accomplished through theories that work in the background of any specific observational act. Observation therefore is, in the terms of postpositivist philosophy of science, "theory-laden" (see Zammito 2004: 36), and the creation of knowledge of the past cannot be a one-way street from observation to knowledge and theory, as Ranke et al. have thought (which also means that simple inductivism cannot be right) (Kosso 2011: 9-11). Without theoretical input and understanding of any kind, we would only have brute sense impressions which could not tell us that the dirt in front of our eyes was an ancient coin with the potential to unlock some secret about the past (and we probably could not even call the unformed brown mass in front of our eyes dirt). In other words, observations alone cannot prop up a theory or warrant any inference by themselves; what we instead need is "the elevation of observation from the brute physical event of sensation to the useful *epistemic event* of evidence" (Kosso 1998: 21, emphasis added), and this can happen only via relevant *background theories*. Only theory *t* can turn sense impression *s* into observation *o* or, more demanding, into evidence *e* for some hypothesis *h*. Evidence thus always describes a three-place relation: *e* is evidence for *h*, given a set of background theories *t*.[24] If evidence *e*, given background theories *t*, makes hypothesis *h* more likely than it otherwise would have been, we can say that *e justifies* or confirms hypothesis *h*. A hypothesis connected to the evidence in the right way and backed by true background theories and assumptions, becomes knowledge and can be considered true (Day/Radick 2009: 88). The key to understanding the scientific core of historiography therefore

[24] The need for theory in any epistemic act is the reason for the failing of both, simple inductivism and simple falsificationism (though both have been developed into more sophisticated forms with less glamorous claims). While we can logically never get to general claims and laws purely inductively, neither can we fault a general theory or hypothesis through singular empirical falsification. Empirical testing of scientific hypotheses is always indirect, meaning we have to assume the normal working of some background theories and assumptions so as to be able to test or justify any hypothesis at all. In this configuration, it might very well be that our background theories or assumptions or the experimental setup were faulty and to blame for the "falsification" of an experiment and with that the disconfirmation of a hypothesis. In such a situation, most scientists will go and check their equipment and their background assumptions first before abandoning a cherished theory. Given the tight interplay of theory and evidence, this is a rational behaviour, at least up to a certain extent, as it is often not at all clear where the mistake lies, in the hypothesis, the background theories, or the experimental setup. And of course there are also confirmation bias and the epistemic, reputational, and monetary costs that come with abandoning a theory one has held dear, sometimes for decades, which add to the "theory conservatism" of most scientists. On the failure of both (simple) inductivism and falsificationism as theories of epistemic justification, see also Chalmers 1999: 41-73.

lies in understanding the "nature of indirect evidence, and the logical relation between evidence and theory" (Kosso 2011: 13).

Observation in this framework is defined as the *acquisition of information about an object* that has been generated through (mediated) interaction with it, given appropriate background theories and assumptions (Kosso 1992: 21). Put in this way, being in the past is not in itself an (absolute) impediment to being observed, as we can interact in our present with the remains of the past which constitute its (presumable) effects (to establish whether or not they are, is exactly the goal of the epistemic acts of historiography). The question therefore becomes what kind of information about the past has survived to our present in the form of evidence, and what we can come to know about it given our background theories and what else we already know. In this sense, historiographic evidence is always "loaded" by *information theories* that vouch for the transmission of information about the past to the historian's present, at the very least; though historians say a lot of things, some of them way fancier, about "theory".

Background theory, next, can be defined as that which is *presupposed* and put to work "in the background" in any epistemic act; without them we could not get off the ground and attempt to gain information about the object of interest. Background theories come in all shapes and forms and range from very general to very specific claims, as their function as presuppositions in specific epistemic acts makes them such, not some special contents or the generality of their claims (Kosso 2011: 7-8). In a further and related sense, theory in general is about unobservables, principles, and abstractions that we cannot apprehend with our bare senses, but which we are justified believing in through the sciences and philosophy. To be able to act as (background) theories, they themselves must have been justified in other epistemic acts first. Justification in this framework comes in degrees and is in principle never-ending, as we will see in more detail further below.

The *theoretical mediation* of all our observations means that we have to distinguish two different *kinds* of claims that make up any epistemic act and which, correctly combined, lead to the justification of our hypotheses about the past, turning them into knowledge: *explanatory* and *accounting claims* (Kosso 2001: 45). Accounting claims vouch for the transmission of information from our object of interest to us; they turn sense impressions into (potential) evidence as it were, by ensuring that contact *with* the object and reliable transmission of information *from* the object to us have taken place; they are theories about the "flow of information" (Kosso 2001: 45). In the historical sciences, due to "ontological historicism" and the lack of the availability of experimental closure, scientists must trace the "causal

information chain" (Tucker 2009b: 229) from the remnants they are confronted with in their present back to the objects of interest, in order to make sure that information about the past object has been relayed to the present. (It is always salutary to remind ourselves that in a stricter sense historians can only observe evidence of the past, not the past itself, and that in this sense they also explain the evidence, not the past, though if successful, by inferring a past state as the cause for the evidence found in the present, and in extended sense we can then say they explain what happened in the past.) Central in this process is to vet the information-causal chain for its *reliability* and *fidelity*. Reliability here means that contact with the object and information transfer have taken place, and fidelity ensures that there was no contamination of the information signal after the initial contact so that the informational chain from the object to the present is unbroken and the information about it is faithfully preserved at the end of the transmission chain in the historian's present (Kosso 2009: 20; Tucker 2016b: 260).

In all this, it is essential to understand the "interactive properties" (Kosso 2001: 46) of the different *media of transmission* of information as they determine how reliably and faithfully an information signal can be transmitted. Historiographic evidence comes in all shapes and forms and there are a great many different media of information transmission such as light, electromagnetic signals, text, material evidence of all kinds (ruins, fossils) etc., all with different properties that affect their reliability and fidelity. Some media of information are in general more reliable in retaining information about their cause than others—textual evidence written in an institutional setting is *grosso modo* more reliable than orally transmitted memory, as Ranke was keen to emphasize (see I.3 above)—, and usually they are only able to reliably relay certain of the properties of their causes, given their own specific properties. Light, under normal circumstances, reliably transmits information about the shape and appearance of people, but it does not convey information about their thoughts very well and only indirectly, say through a person's facial expression that one can see thanks to the reflection of light; sound and text, on the other, do reliably convey thoughts.[25]

[25] In our modern times, light and sound can even be "caught", turned into a different medium of information for storage (bits and magnetic tapes such as on computers and video cassettes, etc.), and replayed whenever needed. While the medium of information changes in such cases, the information about the object is faithfully preserved; we therefore have a process that displays a very high degree of fidelity. We can, for example, see and hear today the speech that Goebbels gave in 1943 to announce "total war", next to thousands of other such historical documents. While the speech itself is irretrievably gone, a lot of information about it has been faithfully preserved through different media, with the result that it can now be watched by everyone who has internet access. Before light and sound could be "caught"

All the historical sciences have developed around such information theories that account for the reliability and fidelity of their preferred media of information, and they are keenly aware of their limitations. Historians mainly use textual evidence, which by default is intentional and must be written by the literate, making it into a very selective sample of the past and introducing the problem of bias and deception. Material evidence, as preferably used in archaeology, is mostly unintentional and can in this sense counter the "elitism" (Chapman/Wylie 2016: 2) of most texts of the past, but it often does not report the same things as textual evidence does and if it does, then more indirectly, for instance when we are interested in the "mental past" of what people in former times thought. Paleontology is for the most part based on fossils, a process of mineralization, and not all parts of a creature and not all creatures fossilize equally well, introducing again a lopsidedness to the fossil record that is difficult to correct (Turner 2011: 20-22); and so on for other historical sciences. The takeaway message of this is:

> "[W]ithout the ability to manipulate suspect conditions, one is at the mercy of what nature just happens to leave in her wake; sometimes she is generous and sometimes she is stingy, but the bottom line is that you can't fool with her." (Cleland 2002: 485)

This is the reason why understanding different media of information, their properties and limitations, is so central to the historical sciences. They are fundamentally at "nature's mercy" when it comes to their evidence, so it is crucial that they make the most out of what was (haphazardly) left behind. Informational theories allow the historical sciences exactly to extract what they need; they furnish the *accounting theories* for their different media of information, and in individual epistemic acts they function as specific accounting claims for the individual evidence tokens.

Next to the accounting claims that vouch for the reliability and fidelity of the evidential transmission chain, there is the actual explanatory claim or the *hypothesis* that is in need of justification. So, while the evidence *justifies* (or contradicts) the hypothesis and we *infer* the hypothesis through the evidence, the

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from the middle of the 19th century on, only texts could effectively store information about the contents of speeches (and to a much lesser degree memory and the visual arts). Thanks to our harnessing of technologies that can "catch" sound and light themselves, we today have much more information of events that before could only be captured effectively in the textual medium, with all the limitations that come with that medium. (This is also very palpable when it comes to music. Think about the difference it makes to have a recording of a musical piece and not just its score, that is its textual representation.)

hypothesis or explanatory claim *explains* the evidence (Pataut 2009: 196). Put this way, we can see what the central problem of this coherentist account of scientific knowledge and justification is: the *problem of circularity*. If the hypothesis explains the evidence while the evidence justifies the hypothesis, we run the risk of producing a circular argument in which the hypothesis furnishes its own evidence that is then used to prove it (this is a form of the "petitio principii" that we discussed in the last section as a logical fallacy.)

The answer to this is in a sense to bite the bullet but to insist that not all forms of (wide) circularity are epistemically vicious. This is accomplished through the requirements of both the *epistemic independence* of our different claims in any epistemic act and through the *overall coherence* of our web of beliefs under these conditions (Kosso 2001: 81-87; 92). Given these two requirements, we can practically rebuff the problem of circularity (though we cannot fully dispel it). So, what we can and should demand in any epistemic act in historiography and beyond is that the theories we use to account for the evidence are independently justified from the evidence tokens for which they account and which, when properly accounted for, can be used to justify the hypothesis under question (Kosso/Kosso 1995: 583). No claim that goes into the justification of the informational accounting theories themselves should be based on any of the evidence tokens that are used in support of the hypothesis. If this is the case, then we can speak of epistemic independence between our explanatory and accounting claims, and we do not incur the problem of vicious circularity. What this form of independence presupposes on a most basic level is the "transmission-token independence" (Kosso 2001: 87) of individual units of evidence. The justification of our hypothesis and the justification of the accounting claims must be based on different and independent evidence tokens for their own validity. Otherwise, their evidential information chains would intersect, and they would share a step in the justification process, and so our evidence could not count as independent evidence for the hypothesis anymore. Epistemic independence has in this sense two overlapping meanings: a) independence of accounting from explanatory claims, and b) transmission token independence.

Before we go on with explicating the *relationship between coherence and independence* that is so central to the historical sciences, let us shortly illustrate the question of independence *ex negativo*, with a simple case of where it fails. Take as example the hypothesis that God created the Earth in six days, as we know it from the Genesis story of the Bible, and let the evidence for this hypothesis be the Bible narrative. Asking for the accounting claims for this form of evidence, we hear the

religiously inclined say that the Bible is the word of God, so what it says is true. But this is viciously circular because the accounting theory "word of God" is not independent from the evidence token "Bible", since we only know what the word of God is through the Bible itself. The claims that account for the reliability of the Bible story as evidence cannot be independently justified from the Bible. The Bible appears in both, so the hypothesis of God's creation cannot be justified in this way. Not being God Herself who sees everything as it is, no strings attached, we need independent evidence which the Bible story does not give us. Similarly, every author is the "god" of her historical novel. In a historical novel whose plot it is that an archaeologist named Daniel Jackson proves that the pyramids of Egypt and Mesoamerica both are alien landing platforms, the different kind of claims that make up historiographic justification are by definition not independent. The "author god" has created the historical "evidence" within the book as she sees fit by fiat to then "prove" the historiographic hypothesis based on it. The justification of the accounting theory blatantly shares a central claim here with the evidence that makes them both viciously circular and as a web of belief fully insular—their justification is fully dependent on the "author god". In both cases here we have vicious forms of circularity and with that also *insular coherence*, instead of epistemic independence and independent coherence of evidence tokens, something much rarer and more difficult to accomplish. Given the interconnectedness of our web of beliefs and our lack of godly insight to see things just as they are, only the latter though can be epistemically significant for the production of knowledge of the past, as we will see now.

Independently justified transmission-token independence, which fails in our two little "godly examples", then is the gold standard for the production of knowledge of the past and it implies that there always is more than one evidential chain, otherwise we could not speak of transmission-token independence to begin with (you need at least two things to be able to say that something is independent). Now, when we do have a sufficiently large number of evidence tokens that are similar to each other in some relevant aspect, say by reporting on the same event, then we have a peculiar situation that deserves the attention of the historical scientist. Scrutinizing the informational-causal links via our background knowledge, historical scientists look in this situation for *common causes* of the similarity, with the past itself exactly being one such common cause that might account for the registered similarity of the evidence tokens in the present. The independence criterion, at this stage, weeds out those common causes that we are not interested in. Without independence and the proper accounting for information

transmission, the evidence tokens might still have a common cause in the past, but we would be in no position to infer it, or it could be a common cause that we explicitly want to exclude, such as forgeries and conspiracies in the form of the collusion of witnesses or the deliberate libeling of historical figures. Only scrutiny of the informational chain can tell these common causes apart from those that indicate what really happened in the past, and that not always. In some epistemic acts, we may be unable to trace information back far enough or to make sure that evidence is independent, or to separate it from the noise that accrued to it over time. In such cases, we cannot come to knowledge of the past, and they are common throughout all the historical sciences. If on the other hand we do have independent and corroborating ("similar") evidence tokens for which we can account in terms of their reliability and fidelity, we can usually infer that the past itself is their common cause as the best explanation, that is, we are in a position to produce knowledge of the past. The other main explanation for this curious state of similarity under the condition of independence—a separate cause—can be excluded at this stage because it is highly unlikely, especially if the evidence had a low probability to begin with (Tucker 2009: 225-226).[26] In other words, that the past happened in the way the evidence suggests is the best explanation that we have in epistemic acts that heed the independence criterion in the form of epistemic independence and transmission-token independence and trace the information back accordingly, and it is for this reason that *independence of corroborating evidence* is the gold standard in historiography and other historical sciences.

Given the interconnected character of our web of beliefs where every belief is in need of justification and must be justified by another, there are the further criteria of overall *consistency* and *coherence* that our knowledge claims should be able to meet, so as to be (or count as very likely to be) true. Our hypotheses about the past

[26] More formally put, this of course is Bayes' theorem. If the evidence is independent and has a sufficiently low probability to begin with ("low priors"), then coherence between different evidence tokens lowers the likelihood of a separate causes for them to close to zero. The difficulty here being, as with all Bayesian reasoning, the gauging of the priors. However, Tucker has argued that the precise likelihoods matter little in historiographic practice as historical scientists at this stage of the research process confirm the common cause hypothesis against its only alternative, the separate cause hypothesis, and given independent and coherent evidence tokens, the posterior probability of the separate cause hypothesis is "vanishingly low" (Tucker 2009b: 226). For a more formal Bayesian reconstruction of the process of historiographic justification, see Tucker 2004a: 95-98. Tucker further claims that "Bayesian analysis can explain most of what historians do and how they reach an uncoerced, heterogeneous, and large consensus on determined historiography" though "there are occasional deviations from the Bayesian ideal" (Tucker 2004a: 139). This is a rather strong claim of fit of Bayesianism onto historiographic practices that deserves further empirical scrutiny. For a position critical of such wide applicability of Bayesian analysis in historiography, see Day/Radick 2009: 89-93.

and our theories must be free of contradiction (consistency) as a very basic requirement of any sensible statement at all (see also the last section on requirement). Beyond that, should the hypothesis fit comfortably into what else we know about related subject-matters in our hypothesis' epistemic neighbourhood (coherence). Further, our ideas need to be "cooperative" and explanatorily relevant to each other as in the case of independent evidence tokens and the relationship between accounting and explanatory claims, and not just logically consistent and generally coherent. We want to have a web of beliefs that is as closely knit as possible, without becoming insular or circular in the way of our "godly examples". So, theories and claims should be relevant for and explain one other in our theories about the past and our web of beliefs more generally (Kosso 2011: 23-24). Without these, we have an (explanatory) hole in our web of beliefs that is usually filled with doubtful ad-hoc assertions, vague claims, and theories and dogmas chosen for one's ideological preferences instead of epistemic reasons. A web of beliefs that is on the other hand based on independence of evidence, consistency, and overall coherence and (explanatory) relevance between claims spreads justification widely, making itself thereby much more vulnerable to disconfirmation. Maintaining coherence under these conditions amounts to achieving *dynamic coherence without collusion* (merging two definitions of Kosso's; Kosso 2001: 79 and 92), and this is a real accomplishment and a good indication for the (probable) truth of our hypothesis. If our hypothesis meets the challenge of the "onslaught of the future" (see Thagard 2007), that is of new evidence that might surface at any point in time, it is it is not just coherent but dynamically coherent, and our best explanation for the continuation of this curious state of affairs is the truth of our hypothesis.

Let us at this point shortly come back to the ancient coin with which we began this section to also give a positive, but still cooked-up example of the process of knowledge generation about the past. Suppose our hypothesis is that Roman trade routes existed in ancient times in the area where we found the coin. First, we must make sure that our supposed Roman coin is authentic and not a forgery or a different object altogether. Only as authentic can the coin be reliable evidence for our hypothesis. This determination might sound like an easy task, but it draws on wide-ranging accounting claims and background knowledge about Roman coins that had to be established at one point in the past. Further, with our claim being about a trade route, a sufficient number of coins and other Roman objects must be found in the same stratum of soil, as a more general claim like this requires for its justification a higher number of evidence tokens. At this stage, we would also need to consider potential "post-depositional processes" (Jeffares 2009: 330) in the language of

archaeology, which might have brought our Roman coin to its finding place in the soil, that is alternative explanations from that of a trade route. A 19th century schoolgirl dropping a Roman coin on some field and me unearthing it with metal detector a few centimetres below the surface is no evidence for a Roman trade network having ever existed in the area. So, even if the coin is authentic, this does mean that the information it contains is about such a trade network. To justify this claim, we need to establish the "causal information chain" linking the two, and crucially, for this we need more than just one strewn evidence token to do so (independence of multiple evidence tokens). And we also would need to relate our hypothesis to what else we know about the subject and must make sure that our beliefs about it, hypothesis included, are consistent with and relevant to each other (coherence, consistency, and explanatory relevance). Only then are we able to justifiably infer that there was a Roman trade network in the area we found the coin in, and we can do so only for so long as there is no relevant amount of contradictory evidence and a better hypothesis.

Ranke's own painstaking tracing back of information to primary sources in contact with the past event in question and his rejection of non-primary information sources whose access to the objects of interest cannot be established is another example of this central task of *information evaluation via independent but corroborating evidence* and the production of knowledge based on them that characterizes the historical sciences: only if the unbroken information chain from the object to the documents and from there to our present can be reconstructed and only when we have a number of independent evidence tokens, can we claim our hypothesis about the past to be justified by inferring the past as the common cause of the evidence. This not only is the centrepiece of the "Rankean paradigm" of scientific historiography as we described in section I.3 but of any historical science. It needs to build its knowledge claims on independent but coherent evidence, and it needs to employ informational background theories that vouch for the evidence.[27]

[27] Within the discussion on the philosophy of the different historical sciences, there has been some criticism about the "trace-centrism" of the approach advocated here, mainly voiced by Adrian Currie (see Currie 2018: 137-165, and Currie 2019: 24-25). Currie has made the convincing point that historical scientists are what he calls "methodological omnivores" (Currie 2018: 138). They exploit any method they see fit to create knowledge of the past, especially in epistemically unlucky circumstances where there is a scarcity of evidence to go around. Drawing on examples from paleontology, Currie points our attention particularly to "analogues, simulations, and other surrogative evidence" (Currie 2018: 158). These forms of "surrogate evidence" might of course also be employed in historiography and, close to historiography, there is the whole field of "experimental archaeology". While all of these methods and their potential use in the justification of claims about the past should be further investigated, it is my impression that the kind of reasoning Currie points us to is still less central to historiography than to

Now, all sciences, historical or not, must deal with the issue of circularity when it comes to our global web of beliefs and the justification of our beliefs. Every belief is in need of justification and is justified with the help of other beliefs which in the epistemic act in question act as background theories. Whenever we justify one belief or hypothesis, we do so with the help of background theories that account for the evidence and the apparatus used, and those background theories were themselves in need of justification in other prior epistemic acts. When we justify them, we will have to use again other background theories to do so, and so on, ad infinitum or ad nauseam. There are, in other words, no foundational beliefs, as there is no God's eye view or "view from nowhere" beyond any theoretical presuppositions, and without that, there is no absolute certainty in this coherentist account of justification either. In the ineluctable interplay of theory and evidence that ensues from this, all knowledge claims are fallible, or positively put, they are only probable (this also means demon of skepticism cannot be fully banished). What we can achieve though, under the right circumstances and with the right methods, is very probable propositions about the past, as the practice of the historical sciences over the last 150 years forcefully shows, which for all intents and purposes we might just call truths about the past. An objective point of view, that is one that is based on knowledge about an object, can in this framework in many cases indeed be attained, not by escaping our presuppositions, but by understanding them and their role as necessary inputs in any epistemic act worthy of its name. Knowledge production needs both, theory and evidence, and they must stand in the right relation to each other for knowledge about the past to be possible, no way around that.

In practice though, there are some claims that are justified to such a high degree, they are so likely to be true given the evidence and our background theories and knowledge, that in most situations we just take them as such. Strictly speaking, Darwinian evolution is only a very probable hypothesis to explain the diversity of life on earth that we can see today and in the fossil record and so is that one of the

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some other historical sciences. Also, one might conjecture that such methods are being mainly employed in cases where our hypotheses are epistemically fundamentally underdetermined. If that were the case, then historical scientists would still be free to make those claims and argue for them and they might still be rationally adjudicable by epistemic and cognitive standards, but they come with certain strings attached, which should be made clear. In any case, any more serious project to develop an overarching philosophy of the historical sciences should take Currie's objections to "trace-centrism" and his empirical analysis of divergent scholarly practices in different historical sciences very seriously. On the use of all kinds of "surrogate evidence" as "felicitous falsehoods" (Elgin 2017: 1) in the different natural sciences, see also very instructively Elgin 2017.

main causes for the rise of the Nazis was the economic crisis of 1929; but for all intents and purposes, we can and should take them for true. (Especially when faced with bad faith actors who will try to abuse that no piece of knowledge can claim absolute certainty for their own facile ideological goals. The juxtaposition between absolute certainty on the one hand and baselessness of scientific theories on the other is a false dilemma of the ideologist's own making.) The overall *coherentist understanding of knowledge and justification* presented here commits me thus to a "probabilistic and epistemically contextual concept of historical truth" (Tucker 2014: 236). While the scientific core of historiography is well justified and truth-conducive, as hopefully shown up to here, the actual threshold that we assume for something to count as true depends on contextual and pragmatic factors, and societal contexts considerably vary in this respect. It is, for instance, an open question where this threshold lies for historians, to what extent it is subject-dependent, and whether most historians share the same threshold (about the same or most subjects); but that there is such contextually dependent threshold and that many of our propositions about the past easily meet it seems to be beyond doubt. (See also the difference in Anglo-American common law between the legal standards of "beyond a reasonable doubt", usually gauged at 90% certainty of guilt, which is applied in criminal trials, and "preponderance of evidence" in civil matters, where a likelihood of greater than 50% is sufficient for a verdict. Given the context of the possibility of convicting someone of a felony and sending them to prison for it, the legal system applies a much more exacting standard in criminal trials. Similar differences in standard might exist for the acceptance of different kinds of historiographic claims.)

After having reconstructed philosophically the evidentiary default position and the scientific core of historiography with the help of coherentism and informational epistemology, I would now like to submit a thesis about the *form* of historiographic knowledge. The thesis is that all kinds of statements about the past can be justified by the method I just outlined, as long as we are able to muster the appropriate evidence and use theory correctly. It is not the form of the statement—existential, explanatory, narrative, statistical as in list and tables, more general or more concrete—or what the statement is about (humans, nature, processes, in-principle observables, unobservables in the past etc.) that determines its status as scientific knowledge, or per se excludes it from being such knowledge, it is the relation to evidence and theory that is crucial here, with different kinds of statements obviously needing different kinds and different amounts of evidence (Tucker 2004a: 92; Murphey 2009a: 70). The medium of the evidence is not significant either and

the historical sciences might use whatever medium of information that comes in handy in their epistemic endeavours. The important point here is that the medium as such is theoretically understood and that it can be shown to contain information about the object of interest via independent accounting claims. So, while each historical science has a more or less well-defined subject-matter and a preference for certain forms of evidence given that subject matter—textual evidence in historiography, material evidence in archaeology, fossils in paleontology, and so on—, each of these types of evidence can be used by any historical science. It is method that counts on this level, not the form of the evidence, the form of the proposition, or the actual historical object. And as far as method is concerned, the issue of the relationship between evidence and theory presents itself to all sciences, natural or social, experimental, or historical. The similarity of challenge creates a similarity of method on this basic level (Kosso 2001: 21). What differentiates the historical sciences from the experimental sciences beyond this commonality that all sciences share is that their objects cannot be restaged in the form of experiments, in contrast to those of the experimental sciences. This "metaphysically founded epistemic gap" (Tucker 2010: 68) forces the methods of information evaluation and the justification via the tracing of independent evidence tokens onto the historical sciences, whereas the experimental sciences can produce their own evidence in the form of experiments, under the same general constraints of theoretical mediation just discussed (Cleland 2002) (see also article I below for more details on this crucial difference and the different logic of explanation of historical and experimental sciences that follows from it).

As to the actual *reach of scientific historiography and its justificatory processes via the evidence* in individual works of historiography, in historiographic debates, schools, subfields, and in the discipline as a whole, this is an *open empirical question*. I think we have good evidence that not only all kinds of proposition are truth-apt but that many of them are justified in the way we just discussed and therefore (probably) true. Yet, it might very well be that historians regularly also assert theses about the past in the form of any of those propositions that are not at all backed epistemically, or which are epistemically (seriously) underdetermined given the evidence, and they might do that for a variety of reasons. Also, whole historiographic texts might very well contain parts that are not and cannot be justified in this sense. So, the actual "size" of the scientific core of historiography is an empirical question that should be addressed by an appropriate (evidentialist) research programme (for more thoughts on this research programme and on question of the building blocks of historiographic texts, see the next section).

This is especially a pressing concern as there is also the widespread view among historians that their discipline has lost much of its coherence and societal significance since the 1960s, and that by the 1980s, it "ceased to exist" as a "broad community of discourse, as a community of scholars united by common aims, common standards, and common purposes" (Novick 1988: 628). There is now extensive talk about "poly-paradigmatic fragmentation" (Lorenz 2009: 400) in historiography and about the "heterogeneity of historical practice" (Paul 2020: 171), with all of these statements coming from practicing historians and good theorists of history. On the face of it, this assessment stands in some tension to the belief that historiography is united by the common method of information evaluation that most historians also hold and which we just philosophically reconstructed as the prime means to produce knowledge about the past. Now, as we have seen with the example of the misguided rejection of theory itself by very renowned historians, there is no absolute interpretative prerogative for historians about their own practices. In their phenomenological self-consciousness historians they might very well be wrong about them (Tucker 2004a: 3-4); one can do something well without fully realizing what one is doing and how one is doing it ("tacit knowledge" and "knowing how"), and even while thinking one is doing something else. Still, even if we assume that the practices of information evaluation are still central to the discipline as a whole as most historians also do (for an overview, see Murphey 2009b), the questions about their actual reach and about how to account for the (perceived) growing fragmentation of the discipline remain. The former should be answerable by key for the answer of the latter, in the sense that exactly there where the reliable, truth-conducive methods fail fragmentation takes over. But this, obviously, is just a hypothesis for the moment awaiting (dis-)confirmation by the investigation of actual historiographic practices.

In one of his many definitions of the "idea of history", Collingwood tells us in his (posthumous) book of the same name that "the idea of fact and the idea of history are synonymous" (Collingwood 1956: 201). While this formulation of Collingwood's is ambiguous in its use of "history", we can improve on it by saying instead that the "idea of a scientific historiography" is "synonymous" with "the idea of facts about the past". In other words, it is the main goal of scientific historiography to furnish us with knowledge of the past. Likewise, the "idea of a philosophy of scientific historiography" is "synonymous" with elucidating this very process by showing how it indeed is truth-conducive and how it reliably leads to knowledge of the past. I have tried to show this in this section by philosophically reconstructing what I have called the "evidentiary default position" and the

scientific core of historiography, with the help of philosophical coherentism and informational epistemology. This reconstruction of the historiographic method of information evaluation ("source criticism") can also make a (prima facie) claim to being descriptively accurate, as the vast majority of historians are claiming to employ this method. As its centrepiece I have characterized the "epistemic iteration" between the evidence and our (informational) background theories. If the historian bases their hypotheses on independent evidence, if there is "epistemic independence" between the different claims involved in the epistemic act, and if our wider web of beliefs displays "dynamic coherence without collusion", then they can reliably produce the "facts about the past" that animate scientific historiography. I have in this section further put forth a thesis about the form of historiographic knowledge, i.e. that all kinds of propositions are truth-apt when it comes to statements about the past and that their justification is a question of evidence and method, not one of form or subject-matter. Eventually, I have also posed the question about the actual *reach* of the methods of scientific historiography when it comes to the entirety of historiographic practices and scholarly products. This is a fundamentally empirical issue that can only be answered within the envisioned *empirically-minded, evidentialist research paradigm*, and to the outline of that paradigm we will now turn.

But if I were allowed to end this section with a battle cry of my own, though not of my own making, I would choose these wise words from Larry Laudan and Jarrett Leplin:

> "We do not deny the possibility that the world is such that equally viable, incompatible theories of it are possible. We do not deny the possibility of the world's being unamenable to epistemic investigation and adjudication, beyond a certain level. But whether or not the world is like that is itself an empirical question open to investigation. The answer cannot be preordained by a transcendent, epistemic skepticism." (Laudan/Leplin 1991: 459)

1.6 The Empirical Turn: The Evidentialist Research Programme and its Main Topics

The push towards investigating historiography empirically is not just visible in the philosophical positions that we mentioned in the last section (evidentialism, postnarrativism, and constructivism), other "declarations of intent" to this respect have recently also surfaced, sometimes in unexpected places. Within wider

philosophy of historiography, there are also Herman Paul's "History and Philosophy of History" (HPH) (Paul 2020) and "microhistorical epistemology" (Kuukkanen 2017a), both more general proposals to look at historiography empirically that are not committed to any position on specific issues. Plus, in general philosophy of science there is the "philosophy of science in practice" movement since a decade or so (Ankeny et al. 2011) and there is also the proposal for a philosophy of the historical sciences (Tucker 2014b). Both of these want to probe historiography empirically too, among other sciences. Finally, do we also have sociological and even anthropological approaches to historiography that have surfaced in recent years (Kainulainen/Puurtinen/Chinn 2019; Tollebeek 2008).

All of these approaches considerably differ in the actual goals that they pursue with the proposed empirical examination of the discipline and in the realization of their "empirical intent" so far—Paul for instance conceives of his HPH first and foremost as a "hermeneutic space" (Paul 2020: 174) where historians and philosophers meet and exchange ideas, whereas Kuukkanen sees "microhistorical epistemology" as a more tightly framed research programme if not project—yet the commonality between all of them is the emphasis on *practices*. In other words, practices are the empirical objects of interest for all these approaches. Beyond that, for our purposes they can further be divided into those that primarily use *philosophical theories* and concept to make sense of said practices and those that do not. One the one side, we therefore have the sociology and anthropology of historiography, and on the other the remaining approaches that I mentioned (the different positions within the philosophy of historiography, HPH, microhistorical epistemology, the philosophy of the historical sciences, and "philosophy of science in practice"). The *empirical turn* more broadly conceived entails all of these approaches, and we can expect exciting insights about historiography from all of them if there is really a turnaround in this direction, but what we are interested in here is the *empirical turn in the philosophical study of historiography* in a narrower sense.

To get ahead in this narrower field, we first need to better understand what we actually mean by practices here. Paul, again, wants to "subject philosophical claims about scientific (historical) practice to empirical scrutiny" (Paul 2020: 170) and similarly does Kuukkanen want to study "one historian or other narrowly defined *historiographic* case (…) in order to tease out the epistemologically significant practices in it" (Kuukkanen 2017a: 118, original emphasis). On a grander scale and not limited to historiography, philosophy of science in practice, which has the term even in its name, and the philosophy of the historical sciences want to research the

practices of historiography too, and what they mean by them is roughly similar to what Paul called "scientific (historical) practice" and Kuukkanen "epistemologically significant practice".

Still, we might want to think about the term practice here a bit. In one sense, everything a person does, as historian or not, is *practice* or *doing*, and as such, human practice leads to all kinds of *products*, with extended practices that often entail a transformative element being called *processes* (Bhaskar 2009b: 145). (In this sense, practice includes both what the Greeks called *praxis* and what they called *poiesis*, the activities performed for their own sake and those that result in useful products.) In a looser way of speaking, we therefore might include both products and processes also in practices, even though a historiographic text in itself is not a practice anymore but the (processual) product of a very specific practice (or a set of such practices). Practice is normally used in this looser sense in the philosophical approaches discussed here that grant practices a central role. What they thus want to scrutinize is *relevant practices* (including products and processes), which in the loosely naturalistic outline of most of these approaches act as the arbiter for our philosophical claims about historiography, and relevant here means something like *cognitively or epistemically relevant* (see Paul's talk of "scientific (historical) practices" and Kuukkanen's of "epistemologically significant practice"). As such, all attributions of relevance will be *theory-laden*. Given the interest that all these approaches share in the "scientific practices" of historiography, it seems clear that not all the practices, processes, and products that a (professional) historian engages in as a historian are of equal interest to us here. Faculty meetings and their minutes, arguably one of the practices and products of historiography, usually revolve around money and power, and in this sense, they might be of tremendous interest to the sociologist or anthropologist of historiography but not to the philosopher. (On this level at least, knowledge is not power.)

At this juncture, the *different philosophical approaches that centre practice* need to be turned into *actionable research programmes* that ask *relevant questions* and form *philosophical expectations*, and based on them, *hypotheses* about the (epistemic) practices of historiography that are deemed relevant. These hypotheses can then be tested against the practices. That the hypotheses are about relevant historiographic practices is an important requirement here because there are many very general philosophical claims and hypotheses floating around in the philosophy of historiography that are perhaps interesting in themselves, but which cannot be answered by a rigorous examination of historiographic practices (say hypotheses about global realism or constructivism; see Gangl 2021a, and more generally,

Tucker 2001: 48 on this issue). The different research programmes can be understood in the roughly Lakatosian sense that they are built around different *core principles* that connect to their empirical research objects through a *heuristic* with *modifiable auxiliary hypotheses* (Lakatos 1970). Together, these create predictions according to Lakatos, or more modestly put, they form expectations about historiographic practices that follow from the core of the theories and which should be tested. Different research programmes will naturally rely on "different explanatory factors and principles" (Kuukkanen 2017b: 94), say about what (best) explains consensus in historiographic debates (on this issue, see further below). So, the requirement here is just that they formulate their theses about the same practices, something the different approaches in the philosophy of historiography have already begun to do up to a certain extent, and that they then engage in the empirical analyses in an open-ended und unbiased way (and hopefully also in cross-paradigmatic dialogue and debate). Just like with scientific paradigms, none of the philosophical research programmes can be conclusively refuted, but failure to account for the relevant practices either descriptively or normatively over a variety of empirical cases would mark a research programme as "degenerative" in Lakatos' words, and with that as a candidate for disposal as an appropriate philosophy of historiography (Virmajoki forthcoming).

Now, based on my own *evidence-centred philosophy of historiography* as outlined up to here in this chapter, I suggest an *evidentialist empirical research programme* aimed first and foremost at those *scientific practices* that sustain historiography as an endeavour with the central goal of producing knowledge of the past. In other words, in this research programme we should try to first and foremost understand those practices that reliably lead to the production of such knowledge through the evidence ("evidentiary default position"). The overall goal is to determine the *reach of these scientific practices* of the discipline within the scholarly products that historians produce and within the totality of the cognitive practices that make up historiography. —Or put as a simple research question: How far do the evidential practices of historiography get us? In section I.3 above, I have differentiated three different kinds of historiographic practices that primarily sustain the knowledge producing character of the discipline, first instituted as they were by Leopold Ranke: *epistemic, discursive, and disciplinary practices*. Epistemic practices centre around the use of (independent) evidence by the historian, and their philosophical justification has been given in the last section; discursive practices entail all the communicative practices that historians engage in to critique and discuss each other's work (with the footnote linking narrowly

epistemic to wider discursive practices, and with that, objectivity to intersubjectivity; they at the same time refer to the evidence and communicate it to the historian's peers). Finally, "disciplinary practices" is an umbrella term here for all the practices that lead to the reproduction of the discipline itself in its main scientific characteristics. Here I am mostly thinking about the practices of teaching and the training of future historians more generally. (So, in this definition methodology courses and textbooks are part of the relevant disciplinary practices but most faculty meetings, again, are not.)

Taking the epistemic and discursive aspects of the discipline together, the practices of most immediate interest for this research programme are for the moment *historiographic texts* and their *building blocks* and *historiographic debates* and their *results*.[28] The pertinent question about the former in the evidentialist research programme is: What are the building blocks of historiographic texts and to what extent are they justified by the evidence? And concerning latter: What are the results of historiographic debates and to what extent are they justified by the evidence? Given our lack of empirical knowledge of these research objects, investigating them also entails a substantive empirical effort, next to the requisite theoretical categories and philosophical research questions and hypotheses. (We need theoretical categories to understand the empirical research material and we need philosophical hypotheses to explain the conceptualized material.) Philosophical hypotheses have already been put forth by some of the main

[28] Given what I have said above about the difference between practices and products, one could doubt that these qualify as practices in a narrow sense. If philosophers wanted to research historiographic practices in this sense, they would essentially have to follow historians around, or more likely, stand behind them in their offices and in stuffy archives and look over their shoulders. Models of this kind of research could be anthropological field missions and the famous studies of "laboratory life" of the early Bruno Latour (Latour/Woolgar 1986). However, I doubt that the empiricism and the feigned naïveté that Latour counseled in his approach to lab practices would be of much help in the answering of philosophical questions. The same goes for the "total immersion" that anthropologists practice in foreign cultures. These methods are needed in situations where we have no understanding yet of what we are faced with and there is a good chance that we misunderstand by imposing our own ill-fitting categories, or when we want to purposefully estrange ourselves from our own preconceived ideas (Latour). When it comes to historiography, though, neither is needed. We share a language and culture with historians, we have philosophical theories to describe the (epistemically) relevant practices, and historians themselves profess to be engaged in them. Also, the practices are still visible in their products. We can usually gauge the epistemic goodness of a historiographic text by looking at the text itself and the debate it is part of, without recourse to the actual process of its writing. Now, in the grand scheme of things, it might be that both historians and philosophers deceive themselves about the practices historians are engaged in and about their epistemic goodness, but this sounds like an improbable hypothesis given the success the discipline has had in producing knowledge of the past so far and the cogency of the philosophical justifications given for their methods. Also, neither "total immersion" nor empiricism and theoretical naïveté in Latour's sense could actually tell us what makes these practices epistemically good.

philosophical approaches in the philosophy of historiography that I already mentioned (evidentialism, postnarrativism, constructivism). Given the "evidentiary default position" shared by (most) historians and philosophers, a crucial expectation in the evidentialist research programme is that the evidential relations (must) underpin to a large degree the building blocks of historiographic texts and account for the positive outcomes of historiographic debates, i.e. historiographic agreement. In recent years advances have further been made in the development of the theoretical categories for the analysis of both historiographic texts and debates. In other words, we do now have at least some theoretical categories for the analysis of those texts which connect them to our hypotheses, though we mostly still lack the empirical analyses. These categories are *description*, *narration*, and *argumentation* as the (main) building blocks of historiographic texts and *agreement*, *disagreement*, and *failure of communication* as the main outcomes of historiographic debates (Ankersmit 2009; Kansteiner 2021; Tucker 2008). In the evidentialist research programme, we should ask to what extent all of these are justified by the evidence, or perhaps cannot be justified by the evidence or even persist despite epistemic justification being available (disagreement and failure of communication).

Let me now shortly *outline* where we stand with respect to the discussion of these theoretical categories and how they can be employed within the evidentialist research programme. With the emergence of narrativism, narratives or whole texts became the focus of attention in the philosophy of history, with the narrativists usually not distinguishing between narratives on the side and the whole of a text on the other (Kuukkanen 2015: 44-49). Narrativists, while they were still around, talked a lot about whole texts and their alleged literary or linguistic properties, yet after White's initial analyses in *Metahistory* that started off much of the approach, not many went out to empirically analyze those texts, or at least some chunks of them. Further, given narrativism's philosophical propensities, they were not even intent on asking questions about the epistemic justification of greater junks of texts, not to speak of the whole of a historian's text. However, different classifications of the building blocks of historiographic texts have been suggested on occasion from this side. Most recently, Frank Ankersmit proposed that we differentiate three levels of a historiographic text: "(1) that of the statement of individual facts, (2) that of explanation, and (3) that of the holistic narrative" (Ankersmit 2009: 200). With "individual facts", Ankersmit means here basic propositional statements of low generality, something like "Émilie du Châtelet was born in Paris in 1706", and holistic narratives are for him really the actual whole of a historian's text, that is

every sentence of the piece included. While this is strangely unbalanced as to the different levels of a historiographic texts and skewed towards the extremes, it gives us the two end points for our question about the degree of *justification* of these texts, or chunks of them, by the evidence: individual propositions of low generality on the one side and the whole of a text on the other. The extreme positions here would be that no proposition in a historiographic text, however specific, is justified by the evidence or that the whole of a historian's text is. (Some pronouncements of Keith Jenkins and Geoffrey Elton come to mind if we needed figureheads for each of those extreme positions.)

Beyond this, Ankersmit's three levels are of not much use to us though, as in his typology only individual facts and equally sentential explanations can be justified by the evidence but not any bigger junks of text. This exactly leaves no room for the different kinds of text blocks found in historiographic texts, prime among them the descriptive and argumentative text parts (Kuukkanen 2015b: 236), which textually cannot be reduced to "statements of individual facts", but which also do not take up the whole of the text either. Ankersmit's holism and his peculiar understanding of justification get in the way here and we end up with a distinction into the levels of a historiographic text entirely unsuited for their empirical analysis (simple individual statements vs. the actual whole of a text). This comes out of Ankersmit's peculiar understanding of facts as simple and concrete propositional statements that are epistemically justifiable, while any more general statement is not. But there is no need restrict facts in this way to individual propositions, they come in in all forms of generality and as conjunctions of propositions in historiographic texts. The difference thus is not between individual, sentential, and epistemically justifiable facts on the one side and the whole, epistemically unjustifiable text on the other. The real "textual action" is found somewhere in between these textual extremes, just as the epistemic action is, between simple statements and the whole of a text and between easily justifiable singular statements and the purportedly unjustifiable whole of a text.[29]

[29] Throughout most of his oeuvre, Ankersmit is famously committed to a particularly strong form of holism concerning historiographic texts (for his classic formulation of this issue, see Ankersmit 1983). The narrative (or "narratio" in Ankersmit's early writings) is an indivisible whole, take away one statement about the *Sans-culottes*, for example, in a text about the French Revolution and you will end up with an entirely different and incomparable narrative and cognitive message. As Kuukkanen has shown, this kind of holism has many undesirable consequences. For instance, that it is doubtful that anybody at all, the author included, really understands the cognitive message of any historiographic text given that they would need to be able to recall every single statement made in the text (Kuukkanen 2015a: 77-80). In general, I would suggest stop talking about the historian's text as one single whole,

A big step forward in the *analysis of the building blocks of historiographic texts* has recently been made by Wulf Kansteiner with his text "History beyond Narration" (Kansteiner 2021). Drawing on narratology, Kansteiner proposes that we distinguish three "text types" (Kansteiner 2021: 53) *in* historiographic texts: description, argumentation, and narration. And other than Ankersmit, he does not confound his idea of text types with the different extreme levels of a text (individual statements vs. wholes) or with issues of epistemic justifiability. Kansteiner writes:

> "I suggest that historical writing consists of description, argumentation, and narration, and that the task of blending the three text types is a characteristic of the work of the historian. Put differently, almost all professional history texts seek to capture past reality (description), deliver a good story (narration) and make a compelling case about the nature of the past, the relation between past and present, and the mistakes of other historians (argument). Professional historical writing is thus a text hybrid; it utilizes all three text types." (Kansteiner 2021: 53)

Kansteiner offers us *a set of theoretical categories for the analysis of the building blocks of text*, and from an evidentialist point of view, all three of his text types are in principle compatible with reasoning by the evidence of the past. Description and narration are customarily justified through the evidence by the historian, this is the bread-and-butter of their doing. Narrative indeed is the main form in which past reality is "captured" in much of historiography, a term Kansteiner uses for description instead of narrative, as it is the natural form to represent the central explanandum of much historiography, change over time. Also, to "deliver a good story", Kansteiner's categorization of narration, is not necessarily antithetical to giving a "true story". Likewise, a "compelling case about the nature of the past", that is historiographic argumentation in Kansteiner's schema, is standardly made by reference to the evidence too. So, other than in Ankersmit's account of the different levels of a historiographic text, Kansteiner's "text types" are in principle all amenable to epistemic justification by the evidence of the past, and with that, to the main research question of the evidentialist research programme concerning the reach of the evidential practices of historiography. The salient

even as a narrativist, as it is not clear where the whole ends and what it encompasses. A "fully holist whole" in the sense of Ankersmit creates such paradoxes as the one pointed out by Kuukkanen, any smaller "whole" requires us to specify what else there is in a historiographic text, and this just is the task of specifying the building blocks of historiographic texts.

questions here being to what extent they all are justified by the evidence in different historiographic texts, which can only be answered empirically.

But there is another crucial stipulation in the quote from Kansteiner's. He claims that the argumentative parts in historiographic texts are not just about the "nature of the past" but also about "the relation between past and present, and the mistakes of other historians". Here, reasoning by the evidence of the past might still be central, but it is likely that other kinds of considerations play a role too, say of a logical, ethical, or political kind; especially since historians do not restrict themselves to speaking about the "relation between past and present" on the temporal continuum. They often also draw presumable lessons for the future, just as they envision desirable and undesirable futures (Simon/Tamm 2021; Gangl 2021b). Further, as I indicate in articles I-III below, historians sometimes also take part in theoretical discussions of a more general kind through their texts, or they want to intervene in the political, ethical, or social debates of their own day in some way or another. What all these argumentative elements of historiographic texts have in common is that they are not (fully) justified by the evidence of the past anymore, but that they still play a central role in many historiographic texts, though we do not know about their actual extent in individual texts and in historiography on the whole at the moment given the lack of empirical scrutiny so far. (And there are of course also the paratextual parts of some historiographic texts such as the prefaces of monographies that bear no obvious relation to the evidence whatsoever and which are not part of any straightforward argument either.)

Given the overlap between the three text types of Kansteiner's when it comes to their (potential) evidential underpinnings—in principle all of them can be justified by the evidence—I think we can reduce them for our purposes to a *differentiation between description and argumentation*, with narration from this standpoint being a form of description. While both types of text are regularly justified via the evidence, there are as it currently looks argumentative parts of a historiographic text that are not justified in this way, which does not mean that they are thereby cognitively unjustified or even irrational. The thesis for the moment therefore is that historiographic texts consist of descriptions, narrative or otherwise, and argumentations that are justified by the evidence and out of argumentations that are not justified in this way. And their precise relationship and ratio in historiographic texts is still unclear for the moment.[30]

[30] It might very well be that historiographic texts also entail descriptions that are not epistemically justified. One reason here might be that they are common knowledge, i.e. they were justified to a

Kansteiner is probably right though that historiographic works divide textually, but not epistemically, into the three text types that he differentiated and that they usually have one single "primary mode of progression" (Kansteiner 2021: 54). In other words, textually most historiographic texts are either descriptive, narrative, or argumentative, with narrative texts on this level being differentiated from descriptive texts by their emphasis on depicting more extended change over time. Timothy Snyder's "Bloodlands" (Snyder 2010), for instance, is in Kansteiner's analysis a primarily descriptive book, while something like Richard Evans' "In Defence of History" (Evans 1999) is arguably best captured as an argumentative book; and in Evans' case interestingly, many of his arguments are justified in other ways than by the evidence of the past (for instance philosophically via conceptual thinking, as Evans deals in this book with a lot of questions that properly belong to the philosophy of historiography). And a book such as Natalie Zemon Davis' *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Zemon Davis 1983) by contrast can on this level be seen as primarily narrational. While these textual distinctions are in many respects very instructive, not least for what to expect from a book and for explaining why certain books are popular with certain groups, the differentiation between description and argumentation justified by the evidence of the past and argumentation not justified in this way is the central one for our purposes.[31]

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sufficient degree in the past already. A biography of Hitler, for example, does not need to justify in detail that Hitler was born in 1889 in Braunau, Austria. The exclusion of the justification of such common knowledge in historiographic texts is a question of "proof economy" (Kansteiner 2021: 59), as only a limited number of descriptions can actually be justified via the footnotes, and justification of those claims that are not widely accepted must take priority here. Beyond this, historiographic texts might contain descriptions about issues that are epistemically underdetermined, which must in this sense remain conjectures and which hopefully are properly acknowledged as such. Finally, there is the question whether historiographic works contain descriptions about the past that are totally unjustified, or even unjustifiable, by any evidence. While possible, one would think that such descriptions are rare in proper historiography and if they occur, they are parts of properly acknowledged counterfactual scenarios, some form of declared speculation, or the product of honest mistakes. If that were not the case and epistemically unfounded descriptions of the past made up a significant portion of historiographic works, we would seriously have to rethink the evidentialist approach to historiography. And with that, whether historiography is a scientific endeavour at all.

[31] In the same text, Kansteiner also analyzes Timothy Snyder's "Bloodlands" (Snyder 2010), and he claims that Snyder's book is a predominantly descriptive text in terms of its primary mode of progression. So, Kansteiner's text not only advances the theoretical categories that we have for analyzing historiographic texts, he also uses those categories to empirically analyze an actual work of historiography of considerable length and complexity. And while Kansteiner's actual analysis in the text is mainly focused on the argumentative shortcomings in Snyder's book—according to Kansteiner, Snyder conflates on the level of *political argument* memory with history, so the main argumentative thesis of his book is not well justified—and not the evidential relations that underpin it, his text is a must-read for anyone with the faintest interest in the philosophical analysis of historiographic texts.

Also, as Daniel Plenge recently has shown, historians produce a great variety of texts beyond the traditional (thick) monograph. Plenge emphasizes that historiographic journals regularly publish "research reports" (Plenge 2020a: 32), for instance, without much in them that could count for argumentation or narration in Kansteiner's sense. So, just as there are traditional texts of historiography that differ in their "primary mode of progression", are there historiographic text forms beyond the traditional monograph that might lack substantial amounts of one or more of the text forms. Consequently, any (evidentialist) research programme must make sure not to solely focus on any one of the building blocks or any one of text types alone, and instead analyze the whole variety that seems to exist with respect to both.[32]

Finally, coming to the actual analysis of the different text types, Kansteiner further asserts that "on the microlevel of single statements, sentences or paragraphs" (Kansteiner 2021: 57) the different building blocks are clearly distinguishable. I agree and therefore think we should take this observation of Kansteiner's as a *methodological heuristic* and begin our analysis exactly "on the microlevel of single statements, sentences, and paragraphs". So, the approach is to assess the evidence base of those short chunks of text first, building up as we go. As shown in article I and II below, we do have the tools to differentiate such genuinely historiographic forms of description as causal narratives and conceptual colligations that imply a process or some form of conceptual whole even on this small-scale level, mainly thanks to the groundbreaking work of Arthur Danto on "narrative sentences" (Danto 1985: 143-159). And once we have singled out the potential narratives and the colligations in this way on the sentential level, we can

[32] Plenge has also suggested a method to come to terms with the lack of knowledge about the different kinds of texts historians produce: Randomized Qualitative Sampling (RQS) (Plenge 2020b: 17-28). He took 5 leading journals of German historiography (*Historical Social Research*, *Historische Anthropologie*, *Vierteljahreszeitschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, *Historische Zeitschrift*, and *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*), randomly selected the first issue of the year 2014 for analysis, and therein again randomly the first article for closer scrutiny. In total, he looked at about 40 texts, and he closely analyzed 5 of them. Plenge's findings are that there is a vast variety of different text forms published by historians in these journals, and that many of them do not contain vast parts of either narration or argumentation in the textual sense. If this pattern generalizes, if historians produce vastly different forms of text with very different building blocks (or at least very different ratios between them), then it is very doubtful that *empirically* there is any central cognitive contribution of their texts, beyond producing some knowledge of the past. And this would also cast very serious doubt on the assumption of Ankersmit and other holists that only the "the *whole* text conveys the historian's cognitivist message" (Ankersmit 2008: 92, original emphasis; similarly also in Ankersmit 1983 already). Also, it is simply false, as Ankersmit proclaims, that it is a "universally shared assumption in historical writing" (Ankersmit 2008: 92) that the whole of the historian's text is its cognitive message.

treat them like simple descriptions and proceed to see whether, and if so how, they are substantiated by the evidence.

Concerning historiographic texts and their building blocks, the evidentialist research programme looks currently as follows: So as to answer its core question—"how far does the evidence get us?"—we should investigate the descriptive and argumentative building blocks of historiographic texts. The *hypothesis* here is that they are to a large extent epistemically justified by the evidence, or at least justifiable in this way. When it comes to argumentation though, there are very likely parts of the text that cannot be justified (solely) like this, which suggests a limit for the evidential methods of historiography even within single historiographic texts. Historiographic texts further very likely display different "primary modes of progression" and differences in the precise relationship between their building blocks, just as there are text types beyond the traditional monography that also need to be investigated. The evidentiary research programme should therefore scrutinize how far evidentiary justification goes in both the descriptive and argumentative parts of all kinds of different historiographic texts.

Investigating the reach of the evidentiary practices of historiography also implies scrutinizing their limits ("determinatio est negatio"). The close scrutiny of the building blocks of texts and their evidential basis holds in this sense also promises for two central current discussions in the philosophy of history: 1) the nature of colligations and other higher-order or extended entities that historians posit; and 2) the question around the main cognitive contribution of historiography to our understanding and wider culture. Talking about higher-order entities, closely scrutinizing the evidence base should allow us to differentiate those entities that are, for the most part, justified by the evidence such as causal narratives or some more general statements about the past, and those that might entail a (significant) unjustified element. In terms of the latter, I think here mostly of colligations, especially those with a strong metaphorical element such as the Dark Ages (on colligations, see classically Walsh 1974, and in detail Kuukkanen 2015: 97-115). Part of the reason that they are "annoyingly vague" (McCullagh 2009: 158) and so recalcitrant to philosophical analysis could be that they interweave evidentiary forms of reasoning with other forms of more subjective evaluation (ethical, political, aesthetic, etc.). The starting point here should just as well be the evidence though and the question of how we far we get with it. Through such a research design that begins with the evidence base, we should be able to judge the descriptive contents of a (metaphorical) colligation by the evidence, and any element not translatable in this fashion would be a (argumentative) surplus that should be judged by a different

(rational) standard (or perhaps the use of such a colligation should be avoided if we don't want to buy into these additional meanings and their potential effects on readers).

Given the variation in building blocks and text types that can be found in historiographic texts, it is further unlikely that historiographic texts have any single central cognitive contribution to make to our understanding, aside of the production of some knowledge about the past. So, while producing knowledge of the past is the one central cognitive aim that all historiographic texts share, it is an open question how this goal hangs together with the other goals that many historiographic texts also pursue. This points towards a *pluralist conception* of the cognitive contributions that historiography makes to our culture overall and goes against the grain of much of the discussion on this issue so far, which has centered around *the* cognitive contribution historiography makes to broader society (with Kuukkanen most recently, for instance arguing that this contribution consists in argumentation for subjective but still rational points of view and traditional narrativists claiming that this contribution is narrative; see Kuukkanen 2015b and Ankersmit 2008: 92 for the narrativist position). In a sense, this is something that should be expected given that historians pursue rather different goals with their texts, aside of the central task of producing knowledge of the past. As said, within the very same text they might want to intervene in all kinds of debates of their day, they might want to impart moral lessons or advertise for certain desirable futures, among other things. These are all different (argumentative) goals that not necessarily go well together with each other and with the task of producing knowledge of the past. Such probing of the argumentative and inferential relations between the different text parts and the different goals historians pursue with them thus also points us towards a more *general theory of historical argumentation* as a desideratum coming out of the evidentialist research programme. We lack a good understanding of the "inferential structures of claiming in historiography" (Kuukkanen 2021b: 10), especially *across* the different building blocks and (argumentative) goals of a historiographic text, and we lack a broader theory of the uses and abuses of historiographic knowledge in more general arguments about the present and the future, or in arguments about more abstract matters such as ethics or theory.

Now, finally shortly on to historiographic debates and their results. In 1984, Larry Laudan argued that philosophers of science were either too enamoured with scientific consensus, taking it as the natural state of a science, or that they overstated the degree and amount of dissensus in the sciences, the former being the

traditional view and the latter being the standard in the post-Kuhnian era in which Laudan was writing his book (Laudan 1984: 6-22). The central issues for Laudan though were the mechanisms of "consensus formation" (Laudan 1984: 16) and the "dynamics of convergent belief change" (Laudan 1984: 23) in science by means of evidential reasoning and shared methodological commitments and cognitive values. If there is persistent disagreement on either of the former two levels, the debate regularly moves up one rung on the "cognitive ladder" (Laudan 1984: 34), so Laudan, and attempts are made to solve the issue there. As a consequence, factual disputes often become theoretical and methodological quarrels, and theoretical and methodological quarrels become fundamental disagreements about the goals of science. Still, even under these circumstances scientist often exhibited "convergent belief change" on all three of those levels, whereas in some cases disagreements persisted, at least for the time being. The persistent disagreement was mostly due to issues of underdetermination, which rules even here, as cognitive values are underdetermined by theory and method and theory and hypotheses are underdetermined by the evidence. Agreement and convergent belief change on the other was nevertheless happening and can be credited to the comparative empirical success of hypotheses but also shared methodological rules and cognitive values, even though there are no fixed and algorithm-like schemes for how to either reach agreement or solve disagreement.

The current situation in the philosophy of historiography seems similar to the one that Laudan described in 1984 for the philosophy of science, and his solution to the problem of accounting of (dis-)agreement seems just as applicable. Statements about vast amounts of disagreement within historiography are very common—examples are the quotes in the last section by Herman Paul and Peter Novick on the historian's side and famous pronouncements by Hayden White and other narrativists and postmodernists on the side of the philosophers. Traditionally though, consensus as result of the methodologically regulated research processes of historiography has been (over-)emphasized, for instance by many of the famous historians of the 19th and the early 20th century, but most recently also by Tucker (2021b: 74). What we do not know, beyond anecdotal evidence and "guesstimation", is the actual degree of consensus, dissensus, and failure of communication in historiography on a whole (these categories are taken from Tucker 2001: 37). Similarly, do we not really know what accounts for consensus, dissensus, and failure of communication in historiographic debates there were we do know that they have occurred. (And our work would be much easier already if some rudimentary sociology of historiography existed that had the degree of

agreement or otherwise in historiography as one of its subject matters.) The empirical question here therefore consists of determining where and how historians agree, disagree, and fail at communicating with each other. What we do know is that on the face of it there is widespread agreement in historiography on general methodology and on the central cognitive values of the discipline, perhaps even higher agreement than in many (experimental) sciences which have gone through an array of different Kuhnian paradigms, and which display a variety of central and sometimes contradictory cognitive values (say, simplicity vs. empirical accuracy). So, following Laudan, we could hypothesize that the shared methods and cognitive values account for historiographic agreement and that (epistemic) underdetermination accounts for disagreement in historiography; with failure of communication, a category Laudan did not consider, for the moment remaining unaccounted.

Thinking from the evidence, the question in the evidentialist research programme is, again, about the reach of historiography's evidentiary methods in the discipline's debates, and here especially in the process of "consensus formation" in the discipline. Just as the question with single historiographic texts was how the discipline's evidentiary methods account for their building blocks, the question here is to what extent they can account for the results of historiographic debates. More concretely, is historiographic agreement, or the convergence onto one position in historiographic debates, based on these methods? And if they do account for the results of such debates, what then about persistent historiographic disagreements and failures of communication? The evidentialist hypothesis here is that historiographic agreement is, for the large part, due to knowledge of the past and in this sense due to the past itself (mediated by properly vetted evidence). In other words, given that historians use their truth-conducive methods and cognitive values, the best explanation for historiographic agreement is that the past just happened in the way they agree that it did. Conversely, this also means that historians agreeing on a belief is a good indication for knowledge of the past being present even without having looked at the evidential base of the agreement (Tucker 2004a: 34). These two theses gain their initial plausibility from the insight that historiographic methods are conducive to the goal of producing knowledge of the past, as we have shown in the last section (in fact they're the best practice for attaining this goal that we know of). Further, historians claim to use these methods, just as they claim that they hold cognitive values consistent with those methods (impartial objectivity, truth-telling ethos etc.). Whether agreement actually is founded on these is the empirical question here.

While historiographic agreement and convergent belief change thus are good (reliabilist) indications for knowledge of the past being present up to a certain extent, the actual testing of the hypotheses is still parasitic upon answering the evidentiary questions about single accounts of historiography first. Only when we know how one account of, say, the Renaissance is justified by the evidence, and we by that token also know which parts of it perhaps are not, can we compare this account to how other historians have justified the Renaissance, and see if there is agreement between different historians on the level of both description of the phenomenon and the evidential basis for the description. And this procedure should be repeated for all the current "hot topics" of historiography at least, as we can expect disagreement to be most pronounced there and agreement, if occurring, quite the feat. There are shorthand methods for ascertaining such agreement in historiography though that do not need to go through the arduous task of closely comparing accounts and their evidence base, since we lamentably do not have the resources at the moment to pursue such close analyses: forms of disciplinary review and criticism and cases taken from the history of historiography.

Historiographic debates do not only occur about big questions and hot topics, they are also part and parcel of the general discursive practices of the discipline as they customarily take place in journals and other disciplinary forums such as conferences. One way of scrutinizing the degree of historiographic agreement on any given topic is therefore to study professional reviews and other form of mutual criticism that historians regularly engage in. Historians are usually quick to point the alleged mistakes of their peers out, be it in terms of the sources used or in terms of the theses defended. And while they are probably overly prone to highlight disagreements in these forms of disciplinary assessment, the degree of agreement among the relevant specialists should become visible as well in such debates. Also, the disagreement that shows might not be due evidential issues at all, given all the other goals that historians usually also pursue with their texts and given the highly metaphorical and evaluative character of some of the higher-order concepts they sometimes deploy (here I am especially thinking of colligations again). So, coming from the discursive dimension of the discipline, the same limits to evidential reasoning might become visible here as in the close analysis of single historiographic texts and their building blocks.[33]

[33] It is an open empirical question to what extent academic assessment in the form of reviews and historiographic debates more generally is about these non-epistemic elements. But even if they were, this would still be compatible with the hypothesis that there is agreement on factual matters and that this agreement is best explained by knowledge of the past (and in this sense in a mediated fashion by the

Further, the history of historiography is a vast fount of past historiographic debates and their results that the evidentialist research programme should tap into, especially in the absence of any contemporary sociology of historiography. And the history of historiography has not just recorded the outcomes of many debates, it has often also given us the reasons for those outcomes, be they evidential, political or whatever. (One example among many here for such a valuable work from a philosophical perspective is the work done by historiographers on the so-called "Historikerstreit" of the 1980s in German historiography; see Kailitz 2008.) Our evidentialist hypothesis can therefore fairly easily be tested against these debates. Also, cases might be chosen such that agreement was reached despite considerable political differences and relevant cleavages of the historians involved, such as in cases where the historians come from both sides of erstwhile warring parties and the historiographic issues in question concern that war (the First World War is a paragon of such a case). Agreement in such cases would strengthen the evidentialist hypothesis. If, on the contrary, cross-country agreement in such cases was founded on some shared political identity, or more likely, if it was shown that some such non-epistemic reasons were responsible for the persistent disagreement between historians from different national backgrounds, say French and German historians disagreeing on the causes of WWI, then some political hypothesis as to the grounds for agreement and disagreement in historiography would become more likely (Tucker 2004a: 39).

This example brings us to the question of what explains (persistent) disagreement and failures to communicate in historiography in the evidentialist paradigm but also beyond, with both arguably occurring in historiography on a regular basis. One obvious answer would be some non-epistemic, external factors such as a political or otherwise ideological agendas on any of the sides to the debate, as in the contrived example about WWI historiography just given where German and French historians disagree about the causes for WWI due to their opposing

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past itself). Disagreement would then exactly ensue there where the justification by the evidence is not available anymore, either due to underdetermination or in principle. One could even surmise that talking about issues that cannot be settled by the evidentiary methods of historiography as if they could be is a major reason for unproductive disagreements and discussions making no progress. Once we know the limits of evidential reasoning, something the evidentialist research programme aims to deliver, we can think, however, about the effects of these other elements of historiography in a different register and in this sense about their rational justification in other than epistemic ways. This would open up the possibility of a nevertheless rational discussion of these probably mostly ethical and political impositions by historians, perhaps along the lines of Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen's (Brandomian) theory of rationality (for an overview of this theory, see Kuukkanen 2015b: 237-239).

nationalisms. Another, following Laudan's lead, could be (strong) epistemic underdetermination. Rationally speaking, one should be able to exclude issues of epistemic underdetermination from this, as one should neither expect agreement or disagreement but withholding of judgment or properly acknowledged and hedged speculation in seriously underdetermined cases, given historiography's methodological commitments and cognitive values (but the evidence might in such cases still be sufficient to discard some hypotheses). The same goes for historiographic hypotheses that are vague, inconsistent, too complex or otherwise not well-formed (Tucker 2004a: 254), which we can surmise underlie many failures of communication in historiographic debates. But this assumes something else that we currently do not know, i.e. that historians do withhold judgments in these situations. On the face of it, it seems more plausible that underdetermination and ill-formed theses lead to prolonged debates and persistent and often intractable disagreements and failures to communicate, with the latter often disguising as the former. It just doesn't seem very common that historiographic debates end because the participants concluded that the matter is fundamentally underdetermined or that the hypotheses put forth are conceptually seriously deficient and therefore undecidable. Instead, debates often go in circles, participants dogmatically repeat their points, they add ad-hoc stipulations, and talk past each other. Given this situation, it is likely that theoretical allegiances and predilections, external political and ethical values and other such non-epistemic issues account for the dissensual outcomes of debates about fundamentally underdetermined and ill-formed historiographic issues and in this sense for much of the persistent historiographic disagreement and failure of communication that we see. This would be the flip side of evidentialist thesis about historiographic agreement, with disagreement and failure of communication being caused by epistemic underdetermination, conceptually ill-formed hypotheses, and non-epistemic factors, prime among them ethical and political convictions, but also blind allegiances to certain theoretical schools and their founders or masters.

Now, thought from the other side, one could extend the non-epistemic explanation even to consensus in questions where underdetermination plays no obvious role, and theses to this respect have been put forth by some. Consensus in historiography across the board would then be the effect of some sort of shared political view or shared cultural assumptions and not indicative of knowledge of the past (for the culturalist view on historiographic consensus, see White 1978: 86;

for the politicist one, Jenkins 1995: 8-9).[34] Yet, without having done the envisaged necessary analyses at this point, the evidentialist account seems to have more plausibility when it comes to explaining consensus in historiography: Different historians do not share a single politics, there are conservative and Marxist historians, and they do not share a single culture, historiography is nowadays a global phenomenon, yet they do share a broad set of methodological and cognitive commitments. So, it stands to reason that it is their methodology, underpinned by the cognitive values they also share, that allows them to agree on issues despite their political, cultural, and many other such as gender differences. If, say, a Ugandan Marxist Holocaust historian and a Taiwanese conservative Holocaust historian agree for the most part on the Holocaust then it cannot be in any facile sense their shared culture or politics that founds their consensus. That historians agree in such a way, and that a large enough number of them agrees (two is not enough here), and on what exactly they agree are of course the empirical questions that need to be investigated in the evidentialist research programme. What this shows, however, is that competing hypotheses from different research programmes have been formulated about the same issue. This is good news for the issue at hand, as this should allow for contrastive testing and comparative theory assessment where one hypothesis only needs to show that it is the better explanation than the other to be rationally compelling for the moment. And any findings in this situation of course invite the scrutiny and criticism of the adherents of other research programmes, which should improve the overall quality of the discussion.[35]

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[34] It is interesting how in White a strong cultural determinism about historiographic understanding is paired with a full rejection of the justificatory methods of historiography. He writes: "One must face the fact that when it comes to apprehending the historical record, there are no grounds to be found in the historical record for preferring one way of constituting its meaning over another" (White 1987c: 75). While method and justification are helpless and don't lead us anywhere, "cultural endowment" (White 1978: 86) is all-powerful in thrusting literary forms and tropes on us. Ineffectiveness of method goes together with full determination by cultural categories; we can't construe meaning by the evidence at all and we have no option instead but to reproduce cultural categories. As has been pointed out by many critics though, despite gesturing towards a transcendental grounding of his tropes in *Metahistory* and elsewhere, White has never shown the transcendental or otherwise absolute necessity of this "cultural endowment" (for this criticism, see for instance Ankersmit 2009: 206-207). Lacking any such necessity, his claim is just one empirical hypothesis on the causes for historiographic understanding and agreement among others, and that being the case, justifying meaning by the evidence, i.e. the evidentialist hypothesis, is back in the race too.

[35] Ideally, we would even have more than two hypotheses here. Given that he shares the belief in the necessity of an empirical turn, it would be interesting to see how Kuukkanen explains historiographic consensus about something like the Renaissance, i.e. about the more general, and in his theory non truth-functional, theses that he sees as the main cognitive contribution of historiography. How would he explain the putative fact that historians colligate the Renaissance, for the most part, in the same way?

Beyond this, research into historiographic (dis-)agreement also holds the promise of giving us a better handle on the vexed realism discussion in the philosophy of historiography. Here, as elsewhere, there is too much focus on Realism with a capital R, on global claims about being a realist or not about the past as such. And there is inversely too little attention on what kind of past entities historians actually posit in their accounts, how they (evidentially) argue for them, and if they broadly agree on those posited entities or not (a case in point for a very general discussion about the reality of the past is Kleinberg 2020; for a position very critical of strong global claims about Reality, see Kosso 1998: 14 and Gangl 2021a). The question in the philosophy of historiography should not be the metaphysical one as to whether the past is real, which is one of the main questions of the philosophy of time, or whether the past in general is somehow like a "ghost" (Kleinberg 2020: 87), or something like that. Instead, the discussion should be about what kind of entities historians posit in their accounts, whether they believe in their independent existence in the bygone past, and how they argue for that existence where they do. This approach might eventually yield a "substantive historical ontology" (Little 2010: 3) with the same generality as the claims that Kleinberg makes. The difference though is that the broader question about general features of the (human) past is then answered through creating an inventory of the entities that historians do posit in their accounts and on which they agree, and that through reconstructing and scrutinizing their evidential base. This latter move would get us from a "descriptive metaphysic" (Danto 1985: xv) of the historian's practice to the epistemic question of whether or not we should believe in the independent reality of the posited entity, or in the independent reality of parts of it at least (on this general approach and its "knowledge first" perspective, see Goldstein 1977). And if that were done on a grander scale, we would also know in what kinds of entities in the (human) past we should believe in, which brings us back to the questions of a general "substantive historical ontology". If this empirical research was furthermore done in conjunction with more general philosophical research into social ontology, as it can be found in the philosophy of social science, we might arrive at an empirically founded and historically sensitive "substantive historical ontology" instead of free-wheeling stipulations about what the past can and cannot be, which bear no relation to the practices of historiography (for earlier attempts to build such a "substantive social ontology" via the practices of historiography, see Lloyd 1993; and for an overview over social ontology, Udehn 2009).

To conclude, what the evidentialist research programme promises then is a thorough examination of the degree of epistemic (under-)determination in historiography on a whole by scrutinizing the "the relations between historical input (evidence, chiefly primary sources) and historiographic output (written accounts of the past in whatever form they may come)" (Tucker 2001: 51). Probing the limits of evidential reasoning in historiography should also give us an idea about other determinations historiography is subject to, be they political, ethical, reverential, or otherwise. As the issue currently stands, we do have good indication that these "external determinations" often reach all the way down to the level of individual propositions, as in many colligations, and that in historiography justified descriptions of the past are often baked together with some *external evaluative stance(s)* taken at the same time. This more strongly evaluative stances on the past that much of historiography also assumes are not necessarily a problem, as long as we make clear what we are speaking about, description of the past or its (present) evaluation.

Such evaluation might even be natural up to a certain extent. Other than other animals that are also all products of their pasts, individually and as a species, we humans know about this fact on a very basic level. The *reflectively temporal beings* that we are, we cannot not be concerned with the past and cognitively relate to it in some way, just as we cannot help but project a certain future for ourselves (Rüsen 2008) (see also section I.1 above). Yet, at the same time there is also an unbridgeable gap between the past and present. The past as past is irretrievably gone, and other than the future, we cannot causally affect it anymore either. Thanks to our specific temporal being then, we all wear a Janus Face and are in a nearly "schizoid" relation to the past; we all need it, yet on a fundamental level, it is unavailable to us. At this point, we need to make a decision as to how to deal with this basic fact of the human condition. Are we going to follow, there where it matters, the methods and deliverances of historiography and other historical sciences and try to speak about the past in an epistemically responsible and truthful fashion? Or are we going to follow our passions and create a past of our own making, full of affects, fantasy, and facile wish fulfilment? This brings us back to the beginning of this chapter and the central question of how we should relate to the past, individually and as a society.

After all, the unbridgeable gap between past and present is also the source for the endless questions and the sense of sheer wonder with which we often approach the past, and one of the most wondrous things here is that historiography and other historical sciences have developed reliable methods to infer knowledge about times

often long gone. While we cannot bridge the gap between the present and the past—we cannot go back in time, have a look, or even undo the past; we cannot "awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed" (Benjamin 1968: 257)—we can often peek over the abyss as it were, with historiography and other historical sciences being our binoculars (and sometimes the picture will be more grainy than at others). Historiography then stands for both, the understanding and appreciation of the vastness of the gap that separates present and past and the optimistic promise to overcome it; and with knowledge of the past comes the temporal relativization of our own present. Things have been rather different before, historiography tells us, so they might be different again. This is at the same time the source of angst and hope about the future I believe, especially as History itself is not necessarily on our side either. (It is on nobody's side actually, which at least provides some solace.) For things to become different in a sense that we consider better then, we need this fundamentally historicist perspective, but in our current situation, we even more urgently need the knowledge, methods, and skills of historiography. Some historicist or (temporally) relativist position is easy to come by in our times, just as much as moralistic fervour in judging the past is. To counter these intellectually lazy positions about the past and to criticize all the destructive "histomyths" that have in recent years been on the rise again, we need "historiographic reason" (Tucker 2021a: 161), with this reason being mainly organized in the historical profession. The sleep of reason produces monsters. Through its faithfulness to the past and the traces that it left behind, historiographic reason holds fast to the promise of a better future.

I believe it is the fear of change and need to hold fast to something in the often vertiginous and violent flow of time, the need to mollify, and up to a certain extent justify, the awful ways in which humans often treat each other, that account for the perceived necessity to describe and *judge* the past. And there is nothing wrong to expect and even look for this attitude and orientation in historians too. Actually, it is eminently rational as historians do not just give us evaluative attitudes about the past, something easy to come by elsewhere too, but also actual knowledge of it. And once we know how far this knowledge takes us, something the philosophy of scientific historiography and the evidentialist research programme centrally address by focusing conceptually and empirically on the issue of evidence, we are in a position to discuss the evaluative attitudes for what they are, with the historian and also among ourselves. And we can use them, along with the knowledge itself, to conceive and then create desirable futures.

We have now reached the end of this introductory chapter about the philosophy of scientific historiography, a philosophy and attendant research programme that I find highly interesting, timely, and innovative. Now it is time to have a closer look at the articles that form the backbone of this thesis. Before I do that, let me just mention what I believe to be the main roadblock for the realization of the research programme advocated here: the lack of academic recognition and institutional anchoring of the philosophy of historiography. But this is one more sad story for another time.

2 Summary, Results, and Perspective of the Articles

Chapter II is dedicated to a discussion of the four articles that form the backbone of this thesis. Below I discuss the main points of each article individually and relate them to the overall themes of this thesis at the end of each subchapter, before I summarize the main results and perspectives that come out of the articles in another separate section at the end of the chapter (for those main themes, see the begin of chapter I above). In the few cases where I have changed my mind on certain issues, or I use concepts to describe my position that I have not yet used in the articles themselves, I indicate that clearly in the footnotes.

References to the articles are given in the form "article in roman numeral (I-V): page number", e.g. I: 161, where the page number refers to the pagination of the published version where applicable.

2.1 Discussion of Article I "Narrative Explanations: The Case for Causality"

Article I tackles two interrelated main issues and broaches two other topics based on the arguments developed around the main issues. The two main issues are: a) the metaphysics of causation and the explanandum of historiography, and b) the theory of causal narratives and the "narrative connection". The ensuing topics are: c) the classification of the different (historiographic) forms of ordering the past; and d) the question of the building blocks of historiographic texts. I will talk about each of these issues in turn, putting special emphasis on a) and b), the main argumentative points of article I.

The ontology defended in the article stands against the Humean and Hempelian understandings of causation. The former has dominated philosophy for centuries and the latter the philosophy of history for a few decades at least. (Roughly from the 1940s to the 1970s, before the question of explanation disappeared entirely from discussions.). Both forms of causality center around regularity as the touchstone of causation, with Hempel's account being a refinement of Hume's (Hume 2000, Hempel 1942). Humean causality is empiricist and based on the idea of (temporal) priority, (physical) contiguity, and constant conjunction between an event A and an event B, where there is no, and cannot be any, causal connection that goes beyond the constant conjunction that can be experienced. Hempel, in the wake of the logical empiricists, turned the problem of induction stemming from the Humean account

upside down and made it logically watertight by requiring explanations to include deductive laws instead of Hume's inductive regularities. This account of explanation became known as "covering law model". The form of causality though that is presupposed by both accounts is ill-fitting when we are faced with the explananda of historiography and other historical sciences, and historians accordingly do not explain past events or processes by invoking either Humean regularities or Hempelian deductive laws (I: 161-162).

There are, however, non-Humean forms of causality that have been developed in general metaphysics and the philosophy of the social sciences in recent years that fit historiographic explanations much better. These are theories revolving around questions of causal production, and here in particular *mechanismic accounts of causation* (Glennan/Illari 2018; Little 2010) (I: 164). The explananda of the historical sciences are *unique past events* and *processes*. They are characterized by *substantive change*, *process*, and *development* not covered in their entirety by any laws or regularities, and they cannot be reinstated in controlled experimental settings. What we need for such explananda is an *ontology of powers* and an understanding of their activation as *tendencies* (Bhaskar 2008). In most configurations out of the lab and into the "wild" of the real world, different causal powers come together to cause unique outcomes, and the realization of the powers involved happens as tendencies only, since they are interacting with other powers which might counteract their effectiveness. A mechanismic account of causality based on powers and tendencies accounts for the *openness* and *complexity* of the domains of reality the historical sciences are interested in; domains lacking the possibility of artificial experimental closure. In a sense, this account of causality is more basic than Hume's regularity account or Hempel's deductive laws and it is presupposed by experimental activity itself as the regularity created in those settings is an achievement that does not obtain by itself in most other domains of reality (I: 164-165).

A *causal mechanism* can then at its basest be defined as the interplay of the different powers involved in the production of a certain outcome. The mechanisms themselves might stem from the regular interaction of the causal powers involved in which case we can speak of a *stable system*. A mechanism of a stable system is called a *paradigmatic mechanism* and an unstable one is *ephemeral*, in the words of Stuart Glennan (Glennan 2014). Some human-made systems and mechanisms such as clocks or standing armies are relatively stable, while others such as the mechanism that led to the outcome of the Battle of Stalingrad are not. The same applies to the mechanisms of the natural world; meaning the differentiation

between stable and ephemeral mechanisms is not consubstantial with the one between natural and human-made ones. Also, as the example of an army shows, people and their doings can be normal parts of mechanisms too, and no special issues pose themselves for mechanismic accounts when dealing with human actors and their reasons for doing things, as they can be considered as powers among others in mechanismic explanations (I: 165-167).

This ontology and understanding of its subject matter fits historiography much better than the Hempelian or Humean model, and it enables us to differentiate the historical sciences from what I called in the article the "theoretical sciences". The subject matter of the historical sciences are *unique, that is non-replicable, past events, changes, or processes* that happened the way they did because of some causal powers in their unique coming-together, they are in this sense *tokens*, whereas the theoretical or type sciences describe powers and mechanisms in their isolation, sometimes with the help of experiments, sometimes not.[36] Again, this differentiation does not neatly align with the one between natural sciences and social sciences (or humanities). Evolutionary biology is a historical science in this sense, just as (human) historiography is; cell biology is a type science just like theoretical sociology, though one of them is experimental, and has in this sense epistemic advantages, and the other is not (Tucker 2011; Cleland 2011) (I: 162).

This difference in explanandum between the historical and the experimental sciences, their working on different ontological levels if you will, explains the different *logics of explanation* they exhibit. Historical sciences must trace causes back from their effects, that is they establish "information-causal chains" (Tucker 2004a: 74) between the historical events and processes of the past and the traces they left in the present, which become evidence when properly accounted for. In this process, they must discard alternative explanations of the causes and trace the transmission of information about them back to the past. (Article II below deals in detail with this process of evidence assessment and the epistemology of

[36] I prefer to speak of "type sciences" now instead of "theoretical sciences". Using "theoretical sciences" might create the impression that theory plays no role in the historical sciences or that "type sciences" were theoretical in a more common-sensical notion of the term which equates "theory" with intellectual (armchair) engagement and "practice" with doing things in a more immediate and haptic fashion (with theory often being used pejoratively in this context). Both of these impressions are not correct and should be avoided. Theory plays as central a role in historiography and other historical sciences as it does in any non-historical science, as we will see in the discussion of article II and the chapter III below, and some type sciences are very practical in the sense that they are experimental sciences. Other type-sciences, such as theoretical sociology, are not, and special questions concerning the justification of their theoretically posited types present themselves. On the latter issue, see Danermark/Ekström/Jakobsen/Karlsson 2002.

historiography more generally; see also I.5 above where we philosophically reconstructed this process in detail.) In experimental sciences, this logic is exactly reversed. Being able to stage putative causes, they must rule out false positives and false negatives in terms of their created effects in the experimental setting (Cleland 2002). (With both kinds of sciences having to work under the general constraints of underdetermination and within the hermeneutic circle.) (I:163).

Having established the explanandum of historiography and the discipline's logic of explanation, along with the ontology and notion of causality that underpins both, we can now turn to the other main point of the article, the theory of causal narrative, that is b) in the listing above. If complex and unrepeatable change and process, understood in a mechanismic sense, are the explananda and in this sense the *substance* of explanations in historiography, then narrative is their *natural form of representation* in the historian's text. In other words, historiographic (causal) explanations are *fundamentally mechanismic and narrative in nature*, naming their form in the historian's text and their contents out in the (past) world.

The more concrete question about the form of narrative concerns what Noël Carroll called the "narrative connection" (Carroll 2001: 126), though I am using the term in an extended sense compared to Caroll. He means by "narrative connection" the criteria of relevance under which an event is seen as significant and admitted into a narrative under the description chosen for it. This issue concerning the internal cohesion of narratives might be dubbed 1) the *internal connection*. Another issue not explicitly found in Carrol that I added under the header "narrative connection" is the more general connection between historiography's explanandum and narrative as the natural form of its representation. We might call this issue 2) the *formal connection* (or in line with the naming of 1), the "external connection").[37] This article is more specifically concerned with the "narrative connection" in the former sense, particularly by offering a *causal criterion* for the cohesion of narratives, and with the differentiation of causal narratives from other forms of ordering the past on that basis (I: 159).

I do say a few things about the "formal connection" in this text already though. The explanandum of historiography, substantive change or process, is *ideally represented* in the form of narrative because there are *structural similarities*

[37] While both understandings of the "narrative connection" can be explicitly found in my original text where they are even numbered in this way, their naming as "internal" and "formal connection" is not found in the text yet.

between the story form and the explananda of historiography. Change is naturally represented as a story with its base structure of beginning, middle, and end since this story structure mirrors the structure of change itself from some state *A* to state *B*; with the beginning being the status quo ante *A* before the change, the middle being the change itself, and the resultant *B* being the end point after the change. And with the changes that historiography wrestles with being unrepeatable, there is also no better form of representation than narrative available for them. Narratives are in this sense ideally suited to depict the different causal elements that come together in all kinds of diachronic processes to create complex outcomes, and while they can only recount them from the vantage point of *hindsight* they do so as a process of *development* or *unfolding* from beginning to end. To loosely paraphrase Kierkegaard, "History can only be understood backwards; but it must be told forwards".

Given what I have argued for above, it seems natural that I also give a *causal* criterion in answer to 1) above, the question of relevance for the inclusion of events into narratives. This also answers how earlier events are (*re-)described* in narratives: in terms of their (co-)causing later ones. (Events can only be explained "under a description" as the famous phrase following Anscombe and Danto goes, as there is an infinite number of true descriptions about any token event.) Following from this, we have three criteria that license us to speak of a coherent causal narrative in the historian's text: I) causal connection between the individual parts of the story; II) unity of subject; III) temporally successive ordering (I: 177-178).

This gives us a handle on the differentiation of *causal narratives* from *conceptual colligations*, another genuinely historiographic way of describing the past and a central concept in recent discussions in the philosophy of historiography (McCullagh 2011; Kuukkanen 2015). Colligations are redescriptions of the past capitalizing on hindsight just as causal narratives are, but they are based on the later-day interests of the historian very broadly understood, and they do not pose any causal connection. In this sense, they adduce some *external significance* to the events of the past that they could not have had at the time of their occurrence (as opposed to the *causal* or *historical significance* that the events added in a causal narrative have in hindsight). An example of such a redescription, taken from Danto, is "Aristarchus anticipated in 270 BC the theory which Copernicus published in AD 1543" (Danto 1985: 156). (If we accept, for the sake of argument, that no causal connection can be established between Aristarchus and Copernicus.) We might add this ex-post redescription of Aristarchus' doings into a putative colligation named "History of Great Astronomers" just because we value from today's standpoint

Aristarchus' theory of the heavens, which was in fact much unlike any later heliocentric astronomical theory. Note, however, that this anecdote about Aristarchus could be added anywhere in our book, because there is no overarching unity of subject here, and no causal connection can be established, that is, the criteria of internal narrative coherence developed above do not apply here (I: 174-176).

What makes both forms of ordering of the past genuinely historiographic though is that they are fundamentally dependent on *hindsight*; they are redescriptions of the past based on its causal effects or later-day interests which the historian can only give thanks to her temporal location *after* the events in question (and in the case of causal narratives other evidentiary constraints). The article therefore argues that historiography is in its main therefore not about the reproduction of the past in the way it could have been experienced by historical actors, however important such experiences can be in the justification processes of some historiographic explananda (Danto 1985: 183). (See also II.6 below where I soften this stance again.) The historian instead uses her *temporal position in the future* of her objects of interest to come to *genuinely historiographic descriptions* of the past, of which causal (re-)descriptions, i.e. narratives, are the most important I contend. These descriptions track the causal networks of the past, many of which spanning much wider than the lives of single historical actors and with many of them in the natural historical sciences being about past things fundamentally unrelated to humans (Currie 2014) (I: 173).

This brings us to c), a theory of the *different forms of ordering the past* available to the historian, a topic only broached and not much developed in the paper. There seem to be (at least) two different kinds of orderings of the past employed in historiography: 1) genuinely historiographic ones, and 2) those that could have been employed by historical contemporaries, let us call them "presentist orderings" for the lack of a better term. Causal narratives and conceptual colligations are examples of 1), they fundamentally depend on hindsight as they link events and processes through time and forge descriptions on that basis. Chronicles and annals are orderings of the second kind common in historiography (if not much in historiographic writing anymore then at least as sources) (White 1987a). They lack the "future-oriented" characteristics of narratives and colligations (from the perspective of some event in the past). (I: 174).

Yet, the forms of ordering of the past available to historiography and the (ex-post) descriptions on which some of them depend must be differentiated from the actual composition of historiographic *texts*, issue d) from above. By historiographic

text I mean in this context the finished product of research that historians publish, traditionally books but more and more also papers. I do not claim that historiographic *texts* only consist of causal narratives and conceptual colligations. What I say instead is that causal narratives are a central *building block* of these texts, next to (possibly) conceptual colligations, chronicles, annals, and perhaps also other forms of ordering the past that are the historian's disposal. It stands to reason though that the *main cognitive contribution* historiography has on offer about the past lies in genuinely historiographic modes of ordering the past, and here especially in causal narratives, which give us knowledge of the past's unfolding in a way no other form of ordering can. There are, however, good reasons to believe that parts that do not deal with the past at all are often included in actual historiographic texts (Kuukkanen 2015) (I: 178-179). Here we need more empirical research of the form advocated in the introduction of this compilation part and also demanded, but not really executed, in every of the papers included in this thesis. (On the potential building blocks and the analysis of actual historiographic texts, see especially section I.6 above)

To sum up, article I scrutinizes the concept of a "narrative explanation" (Danto 1985: 236) in historiography by servicing it with a workable ontology, a subject matter (change), and criteria of narrative cohesion. The text also differentiates causal narratives on this basis from conceptual colligations, both genuinely historiographic forms of ordering the past. It further gestures at a more general theory of the different forms of ordering the past, along with a theory about the actual building blocks of historiographic texts.

2.2 Discussion of Article II "The Essential Tension. Historical Knowledge between Past and Present"

Article II's main goal is a) to establish an informational account of historiographic evidence and a coherentist account of the justification of such knowledge. Besides that, it also offers b) a classification of the different kinds of anachronism that are employed in historiography (evidential, interpretative, and pragmatic) along with an evaluation of their epistemic valence; and c) a more general reflection on the "existential presentism" of the historian and the "essential tension" the discipline finds itself in. The latter two points are further elaborations on the question of the *virtues and vices of hindsight* in historiography that have already occupied us in the previous text. As before, I argue that hindsight, while generally having a bad reputation, is in much of historiography an indispensable *asset* that historians

capitalize upon in various ways, with virtuous anachronisms being one central way of doing so. However, there are real problems associated with hindsight too, some of which can be elucidated through the concept of "existential presentism". In what follows, I will begin by discussing the "existential presentism" of the historian, c) from above, before coming to a), the main point of the whole paper dealing with the justification of our knowledge claims about the past, and finally b), the different anachronisms and their epistemic functions.

Historians find themselves in a peculiar position: they employ tools available to them in their own present to acquire knowledge and write about the past, a past that is over with and cannot be reinstated, and therefore must be reconstructed through the traces it left behind. It is also a past that might have been very different from the present the historian is used to—"the past is a foreign country, they do things differently there" as the famous aphorism goes. The *unavoidable temporal positioning of the historian in their own present* creates the *hindsight* that is characteristic of their perspective on the past, and it is also the origin of the vexed issue of *anachronism* in historiography. By anachronism I mean "a (re)description or analysis of the past (or its remains) that, for whatever reason, could not have been given during that particular past moment" (II: 517). Given the potential differences between past and present and the often spotty record of traces left of the past, there is a real possibility that our efforts of speaking the truth about history fail, with some forms of anachronisms being just such a fail: Employing them, we use modern categories, or at least modern meanings of those categories, that do not apply to the past and thereby fundamentally *misdescribe* it. Yet, not all anachronisms are like that, and some are indispensable for the work of the historian, as this paper tries to show (II: 513). (For more on these anachronisms, see further below.)

Historians themselves often give contradictory assessments of this temporal positioning when thinking more theoretically about their own endeavours and their goal of speaking the truth about the past, with this being something of the regulative ideal of historiography (Marwick 1993: 1-13.). *Marc Bloch* for instance is doubtful about our abilities to speak the truth about the past in this sense, at least when historiography is compared to other sciences, or to be more precise, to his own (idealized) model of those sciences. Bloch famously wrote that "[n]o Egyptologist has ever seen Ramses" (Bloch 1953: 48) emphasizing the problem of *observability* that comes with temporal distance. *Tony Judt* on his part looked at the issue from the other end and claimed that proximity to historical events can be a real problem for historiography (Judt 2005: xiii). From this we can gather that "both temporal

proximity and temporal distance seem to be able to affect the historian's knowledge claims in negative ways" (II: 514).

Now, the issue of presentism and anachronism along with the related issues of temporal proximity and distance can be addressed within the framework of *informational epistemology* and within a *coherentist theory of justification*, as they are both developed in this article. The text argues that any more *generalized epistemological anxiety* about the historian's prospects of gaining knowledge about the past—either because it is too close, too far away, or because we are too entrenched into our own present—is unfounded, and actually based on an outdated empiricism and foundationalism in epistemology. (This is especially true for Bloch who compares the objects of historiography unfavourably to those of other sciences because we cannot see Ramses anymore whereas in the experimental sciences, we can allegedly see the objects of our interest.) (II: 515)

Here the "existential presentism" that characterizes all our lives is to be differentiated from the justification of knowledge claims (about the past). (In the parlance of late 19th century German philosophy, one could say that *Genesis* has to be kept separate from *Geltung*.) By existential presentism I mean that we necessarily live our lives in the present and that we are also conditioned in these lives by that present along with the now "past presents" that we lived through before.[38] The most common term for this process is *socialization*. Now, historians do not just undergo the general socialization into the societies they grow up in, they are also socialized into the discipline of historiography in a more reflexive and intentionally guided way. This disciplinary socialization includes theoretical reflection on exactly the issue of existential presentism—and the attendant problems of anachronism—as well as *temporal disembedding and debiasing techniques* that are learned through various didactic techniques and in the work with actual historical source material (Tosh 2010: 54-108). (These positive sides of historiographic disciplinarity are also discussed in articles III and IV below.) (II: 516-517). These well-established techniques and theoretical reflections should already make us doubtful about any full-blown claims that historians are determined solely by their own presents and that the past is principally out of their reach.

[38] In this sense, humans are part of the "historical things" that are what they are because of their history; they are, in other words, affected by the ontological historicism that we discussed in the last chapter as a precondition for the historical sciences (see I.2). On the issue of historicism as it was traditionally understood in historiography, see Iggers 1983: 3-13, on a reasonable definition of the ontological historicism that underpins the historical sciences, see Tucker 2022.

Entirely implausible this position becomes if we have a closer look at what the article calls "the logic of historical (re)description and evaluation" (II: 533), which brings me to the paper's main points. First, talking about "pastness" per se as a problem is based on the "empiricist notion that immediate observation and observability are the touchstone for all knowledge and existential claims" (II: 518). This foundationalism about observation runs afoul of two well-known problems: 1) the delineation of observability; and 2) the question of the epistemic significance of such direct observations. As to 1), there is no clear line that can be drawn between unimpeded direct observation that supposedly confers epistemic warrant and observations aided by instruments (see the gradual difference only that exists between eyeglasses and a simple microscope, for instance) so that the former loses its privileged position and singular standing when it comes to the justification of our knowledge claims (Maxwell 1962; Shapere 1982). Further, scientifically valuable observation is an accomplishment which involves (tacit) skills on the side of the researcher but often also, again, various instruments. In other words, such observations are based on background theories and auxiliary hypotheses, in the heads of the researchers separating the significant in observations from the unsignificant, but also materialized in the instruments used (Hanson 1958: 4-30; Kosso 1998: 20) (II: 520-521). (This is just a description of the issue of theory-ladenness of all observation and it leads to the problem of underdetermination; see also I.5 above on this central point and on how to cope with it in historiography.)

A more promising approach when faced with the problem of how to come to knowledge of the past is to adopt an *informational epistemology* and to ask what information can be gained from the object of interest through different *media of transmission* and *transmission chains* and how to *justify* knowledge claims based on such transmissions without any recurrence to observations as arbiter of last resort, which in a pure form are impossible. In informational epistemology, information is defined as "the capacity or disposition of objects to inform suitably equipped receivers or agents, creating an information or learning effect in them" (II: 519; see on this also Dretske 2000: 71-72 and Floridi 2011).

Question of general "past-" or "presentness" lose their punch in this framework as it is not the case that all things past are disadvantaged when it comes to the information that is available about them (II: 519-520). The opposition between "past and therefore unobservable and unjustifiable" and "present therefore observable and justifiable" dissipates and questions about the availability of information about the past in the present and the justification of those claims via theories take their place. Instead of a touchstone for all knowledge claims, we have

now a "*web of beliefs*" (Quine/Ullian 1978, emphasis added) in which different beliefs play different roles in the process of the justification of our knowledge claims about the past. In general, there are two different *kinds* of claims that we need to differentiate in this respect: 1) knowledge claims, and 2) accounting claims. Knowledge claims are the hypotheses about the past that we try to (dis-)confirm through the evidence, and accounting claims vouch that information has been preserved in an unadulterated form into the present, the issue of the so-called reliability and fidelity of the information signal. The media of transmission for information are aplenty: from light over electromagnetic signals to fossils, testimony, and material evidence, to name a few, with some of them obviously being more central to the historical sciences than others (II: 518-522). In the paper itself this crucial thought is expressed in the following way:

"Central to understanding this informational account of knowledge, then, is focusing on the differing roles various claims play in the process of justification. Some of the claims will be knowledge claims about the objects themselves and others will be accounting claims that vouch for the reliability or fidelity of the transfer of information." (II: 521)

Justification is in this framework accomplished by the *relative independence* of the different kinds of claims from each other. (There is no absolute foundational independence, and we always justify our beliefs by some other beliefs; this is the general insight of coherentism.) In particular, what I have called "epistemic independence" (II: 523) is of central import here. We must make sure that the accounting claims for the evidence, for its fidelity and reliability, are independent from the claims for which the evidence serves as warrant. This criterion ensures that theories cannot produce their own evidence in any kind of facile or circular fashion. Such epistemic independence amounts to "coherence without collusion" (Kosso 2001: 79) and is also the "gold standard" in historiography where independent evidence tokens about some happening in the past are used to infer what really happened.[39] Think here for instance about the independent testimony given by eyewitnesses about a battle or the consilient material and testimonial evidence we might have about the past way of life of a Sumerian city state. (II: 523).

[39] Peter Kosso defines this sort of epistemic independence more formally in the following way: "One claim *x* is independent of another *y* in this epistemic sense just in case *y* does not entail any of the justification claims used to support *x*. Thus, if *y* does not contribute to the credibility of *x*, *x* can be used as independent evidence" (Kosso 2001: 84)

Beyond the central point of "coherence without collusion", the article also argues that our web of beliefs about the past should be *dynamic* in the sense that it should be able to withstand the onslaught of future evidence. It must further be *free of contradiction*, that is consistent, and there must be *explanatory relevance* among different parts that form the theory. [40] Such "dynamic coherence under independence" (II: 524) in which the causal-informational chain from the object of the past to the present is reconstructed and justified is a good indicator for the truth of our beliefs about the past (BonJour 1976) (II: 524).

In this coherentist account, there are no foundational claims and justification is a matter of degree and in principle never-ending; yet, we can still accomplish, under the right epistemic conditions, degrees of justification about (some) truth claims about the past that make them very probable, or by most standards, just true. However, that means also that there is no way around the application of (background) theories, some of which are vouching for the transmission process necessary for information of the past surviving into the present, others being about the objects themselves. Here the coherentist structure of our web of beliefs overlaps with the *general theory of understanding and interpretation, i.e. hermeneutics*, since the back and forth between what we have to presuppose to learn anything new and the newly learned that then might affect what we have presupposed is known as the *hermeneutic circle*. Said in a more "science-y" way:

> "In all sciences, from historiography to physics, observations are influenced by theories and theories are influenced by the information gained from observations. (…) There cannot be any meaningful understanding of new evidence or theories without the itinerant circling between the different elements and relevant claims of our web of beliefs." (II: 525)

The key to knowledge is the *independence and coherence* between our claims—two requirements that are anything but easy to keep together, with coherence often becoming dogmatic and insular, sacrificing independence (confirmation bias,

[40] A criterion related to explanatory relevance, but not entirely congruent with it, is the overall coherence of our thesis with what else we know to be true, that is the weighing of the theory in question against other well-justified parts of our web of belief that are located in proximity. This sort of "coherency testing" that is not mentioned in the article banks on the "dependency relationships between past events, processes, and entities" (Currie 2018: 157), and is a strategy often employed in situations where the independent justification of some theory is not easy to come by, but it might be more widespread than we think. Currie is very instructive on this issue that he has researched empirically by looking at cases from paleontology where "coherency testing" plays a central role (Currie 2018: 153-157).

anyone?); or independence tending to grow out into a big holes in our web of belief, creating anomalies and thereby sacrificing coherence and explanatory relevance.[41]

This, then, is the *essential tension* that gave this article its title (with a hat tip to Thomas Kuhn; Kuhn 1977). There is always some imposition of knowledge and theories to gain more knowledge and there is no way out of this circle. In historiography, where we, other than in the experimental sciences, cannot restage what we are interested in (see article I above), we must reconstruct the past through the informational traces it left behind and under the requirement of epistemic independence. Here the issue of our "existential presentism" and the accompanying issue of anachronism become salient. Whether or not we have our historian's cap on, we are fundamentally conditioned by our own present, a present that we must presuppose but also use in our inquiries into the past. But our "existential presentism" and anachronism are not necessarily the problems they are often made out to be, as this article tries to show. The informational and coherentist account offered in the text enables us to *distinguish the different roles that different beliefs play in the justification of knowledge claims about the past* without imposing any a-priori "penalty" on them for being held in the future (from the perspective of the past). Quite to the contrary, informational epistemology and coherentism allow us to ask directly to what extent our temporal positioning *in the future* of the past might play a positive epistemic role in our quest for knowledge of the past.

Anachronism we have defined above as a "(re)description or analysis of the past (or its remains) that, for whatever reason, could not have been given during that particular past moment" (II: 517) (see also Jardine 2000a). Now, based on the differentiation between the different inputs that go into a knowledge claim about the past, we can distinguish three kinds of anachronisms that historians regularly employ: *evidentiary, interpretative, and pragmatic anachronisms*, and discuss their epistemic impact and valence. Evidentiary anachronisms are the application of theories and techniques to the evidence that did not exist at the time of the past the

[41] Said in the words of Peter Kosso to whom my account is strongly indebted: "To summarize the ways in which theory influences scientific observation we can say that in science one needs evidence and not merely sensations. Evidence must be meaningful and reliable. It must be a credible indication of something, as the streaks are an indication of an alpha particle. The connection and the credibility are underwritten by theory. Of course the theories used to make the best and the most of the evidence are themselves subject to revision. (…) There will have to be a flow of information back-and-forth, from theories to observations and from observations to theories, from inside-out and outside-in" (Kosso 2011: 11). And a few pages later in conclusion: "The nature of indirect evidence, and the logical relation between evidence and theory, are the crux of scientific method" (Kosso 2011: 13). Kosso has also done intriguing, if mostly unheeded work on understanding and even beauty as forms of coherence, see Kosso 1996 and Kosso 2007.

evidence vouches for (and often neither much later). This process is pervasive in historiography and other historical sciences, and in the text I give paleogenomics as a very recent example of a powerful new tool in this respect. Paleogenomics uncovers kinship relations through the analysis of the DNA that is under favourable conditions is preserved in human bones for thousands of years (Lewis-Kraus 2019). Such an analysis would have been impossible only a decade ago, given the technical limitations of the technology of DNA sequencing back then. Modern DNA testing technologies were only invented in the 1980s and the most wondrous insights can be expected from the further application of the technology to the (human) past. (Also think of the impact "genetic genealogy" has in the solving of decades old crimes, which is equally breath-taking.) Another contemporary example, though not given in the text, would be the methods of the digital humanities such as distant reading (Moretti 2013), which need computing power and large digital archives, both of which becoming widely available over the last 10-15 years only. Many other once new methods and techniques from the history of historiography that tease out information about the past from its present remains could be added here, which is a testimony to the ingenuity of historians, but the important thing here is that this form of anachronism is epistemically very valuable and a normal part of historiography. Yet, it would not be possible without our in this sense *privileged position in our own present and the hindsight* that comes with it. (II: 528)

More contentious in the field are what I call "interpretative anachronisms". These anachronisms give theoretical redescriptions of events or states of affairs in the past "in terms of later (or earlier) criteria that were not available to historical actors" (II: 529) at their times. They are genuinely historiographic redescriptions of the past, as they were described in article I, equally capitalizing on the positive aspects that can come with looking back onto the past. In the text, I discuss again causal narratives and conceptual colligations as two such redescriptions. They can be given about historical actors and their deeds just as much as about processes in which the actors play a small or no role. There is no privilege for the self-description of historical actors in historiography. In this regard I shortly discuss and reject Quentin Skinner's influential intentionalism about descriptions of the deeds and thoughts of historical actors (Skinner 1969; see also Prudovsky 1997). Overall, under the right epistemic conditions, historians know a lot of things that the historical actors could not have known: how things turned out and about processes that are much longer than single human lives. Also, agency can have unintended consequences, hidden motivations, and presuppositions that can only be described

from the perspective of hindsight. All of these can motivate the historian to capitalize on their privileged perspective on the past and redescribe it in ways impossible for the historical actors themselves. (II: 529-531)

Causal narratives that are furnished through such redescriptions are epistemically very valuable because they fully capitalize on the vantage point of the historian and can in this sense be seen as the main cognitive contribution historians have on offer about the past; and they are by nature anachronistic. As to the epistemic valence of colligatory anachronisms, I write in the paper that they "seem epistemically inert, at least in the sense of how they enable us to acquire objective knowledge about the past, as defined above" (III: 530). I still think this is correct from the standpoint of our knowledge of the past and a more strictly defined scientific historiography that is built upon the inferences licensed by the evidence alone, but this issue needs further empirical and theoretical elucidation. (On the question of the theoretical status of colligations, see also section I.6 above where they are referenced as one of the main issues that empirical studies into historiography should address.)

Finally, we come to "pragmatic anachronisms", an umbrella category I introduced to capture the fact that historians need to communicate with a modern audience and that they need to be understood by that audience. It is difficult to differentiate all kinds of pragmatic anachronisms historians (must) employ to communicate with their audience. One very basic one is that, say, a book about the Sumerian city state of Ur for a British audience is usually written in English, and definitely not in Sumerian. It is equally difficult to impossible to assess the epistemic impact that these pragmatic anachronisms might have without looking at them in any detail. This can only be done on a case-by-case basis I believe and is beyond the scope of the article at hand. Here the epistemic goals of historiography touch upon other goals that the historian might want to pursue with their work such as didactic, moral, or entertainment goals (II: 532).

I end article II with a short reflection on the relationship between the central epistemic goals of historians and the other goals they might want to pursue with their texts:

> "These functions of historiography, especially when they are tailored to the needs of assumed audiences, are incidental to scientific historiography but can impose their own simplifications and anachronisms on historians' accounts of the past. Many of them might not be entirely justified from an epistemic point of view but may be defended from a different vantage point (…). In any case,

> the foregoing account of the justification and logic of historical descriptions offers vital tools for assessing such alterations, accommodations, and anachronisms epistemologically. It also provides a way to consider how the influence of such alterations, accommodations, and anachronisms on the objectivity of historical accounts can be *weighed* against historiography's other functions." (II: 532-533, emphasis added)

The takeaway point here is the "weighing" of historiography's central epistemic function against other potential functions by way of the coherentist account introduced in this text. In a sense, this is a reiteration of the thought developed in article I above that historiographic *texts* not only consist of that which can be justified by way of the evidence of the past. Here this phrased in a way pointing beyond the text: How should we assess, and in a sense weigh, the different relations to the past that humans engage in against each other, something that comes out of thinking the perspectives of the philosophy of historiography and the theory of history together. (See also section I.1 and chapter III.5 below on this most pressing issue.). The central question here is: Should people mostly relate to the past in an epistemically responsible fashion, that is through historiographic methods or at least by proxy through historiography?

This question brings us to articles III and IV of this thesis, and from there on to the chapter after this one in this introduction part which develops a philosophical framework for assessing political influence on historiography. Article III analyzes the discursive (knowledge) practices of the discipline and the (meta-)political interests all historians have qua being historians by discussing the goals and actions of two political associations of historians. This perspective is then further generalized in the chapter III below where coherentism as developed in this article is used as a framework for analyzing the influence politics has on historiography more generally.

Article II, finally, is a (small) step also towards the "empirical turn" I advocate throughout these articles and in more detail in the first chapter of this introduction part. Article I begins with phenomena that are assumed to be widespread in historiography (causal explanations and narratives) and analyzes them philosophically. Article II takes contradictory statements historians made about their work as a starting point for its analysis of the creation and justification of knowledge of the past. Article III, as we will see, analyzes the political practice of two associations of historians more broadly and reconstructs it philosophically.

This is not yet the empirical turn that was called for in the last chapter, but it is testimony of my increasing *empirical* engagement with historiography.

2.3 Discussion of article III "Historia Magistra Vitae? The Role of Historiography in Culture and Politics"

Article III analyzes the actions and goals of two political associations of historians, "Historians without Borders" (HWB) and the "Verband der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands" ("Association of German Historians") (VHD) in an effort to a) reconstruct the role historiography plays in wider historical culture and politics and b) to explore on that basis the relationship between historiography and democracy. It argues that there is a "set of overarching values and practices of justification" (III: 67) that links historiography to democracy, especially in its deliberative form. From this follows that c) historians qua being historians have legitimate (meta-)political interests in the establishment or maintenance of democracy and that they are justified in taking certain more closely political stances based on this goal. Article III overall continues the interest already manifest in the end of article II in the role that historiography plays in wider society, where it encounters other epistemically more unconcerned ways of relating to the past. The article further develops a position on in the relationship between historiography and politics that is of importance in article IV and more fully developed in the next chapter of this introduction part.

The article begins with the prima facie reasonable claim that many historians are political animals.[42] One example of such political interest and engagement of historians is "Historians without Borders" (HWB). HWB is an international organization of historians—many of which are very renowned, Timothy Garton Ash and Erkki Tuomioja are the organization's figureheads—whose goal it is to advance peace building and foster dialogue between opposite and often hostile national versions of history (nationalist historical doxographies that is), using historiographic knowledge and expertise. Next to this, the organization also has

[42] How many of them really are political, what political positions they endorse, how the actually political historians are distributed in the different subfields of the discipline, and whether the political interest of historians has grown or fallen over time, all of this we do not know to a satisfactory extent. For all of this, we would need a (quantitative) sociology of historiography as I also remarked, or implored, in the first part of this text, see I.5 and I.6 above. For some preliminary work in this direction, see Kainulainen/Puurtinen/Chinn 2019.

more usual goals for an association of historians such as the promotion of historical knowledge and understanding and countering distortions of the past.

The second example of the political engagement of historians that I discuss is the "Resolution of Münster" of the "Association of German Historians" from 2018, which was also called the "Anti-AfD resolution". The resolution was passed by this biggest association of German historians, counting over 3000 members, after the right-wing populist party "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD) gained more and more ground in elections leading up to 2018 in Germany. As such, the resolution

"champions pluralist democratic discourse and dispute within certain bounds, inalienable human rights, and long-term analysis of political phenomena based on the findings of historiography. It also takes, more concretely, a pro-EU, pro-migration, and pro-refugees position. On the flipside, the resolution castigates populist, divisive, and nationalist language in politics and wider society" (III: 66)

Now, HWB and the resolution are examples of historians pursuing political goals that go beyond the usual disciplinary interest politics and which lie on the face of it outside the main practices and goals of the profession that are epistemic and pedagogic in character, i.e. research and teaching. Furthermore, especially the German resolution displays the "*contours of a presumed relationship between historiography and democracy*" and an understanding of the "*main principles of democracy*" that allow for "*controversy and dispute within certain bounds*" (III: 66, original emphasis). Staying true to the format of a resolution though, these issues are mostly implied or at best stipulated yet not really expounded or argued for. Likewise, both the resolution and the organization are animated by the conviction that historians as historians have an interest in *defending democracy* which includes speaking up and act against populists and authoritarians of any colour.

Article III attempts to reconstruct the presumed relationships between historiography, society, and politics that the resolution and the organizations presuppose or at least allude to, and it assesses if they hold in the way the historians imply. For this purpose, the article first discusses historiography's role in "historical culture", i.e. in the "manifold past-relationships" (Grever/Adriaansen 2017: 83) a society maintains, before it turns to the theory of deliberative democracy to show that democracy understood in this way and historiography are (partially) based on the same values and practices.

Speaking of historical culture, I use the work of Jörn Rüsen in the paper to think about the different past-relationships a society engages in (Rüsen 1994; Rüsen 1997), along with a more institutional perspective borrowed from French theory of history (Nora 1989). Rüsen broadly distinguishes three kinds of relations we

maintain with the past: cognitive, political, and aesthetic relations whose main organizing principles are knowledge, power, and beauty. On an individual level, people create *historical sense* through these relations, that is they orientate themselves through them in the continuum that is past-present-future. The result of this process is that they "gain a (historical) understanding of their lives and life-worlds, develop a sense of purpose and create collective identities" (III: 68-69).[43]

Historical culture is enacted by individuals through their *historical thinking* and *consciousness*, but it is also influenced by *historical objects*, *rituals*, and *institutions* (with some of these institution's function exactly being the curation of historical rituals and objects) (see also I.2 above on the issue of historical thinking and consciousness). Central in this respect are in modern societies the institutions of the nation state, and here in particular the institutions of systematic learning such as schools and universities which disseminate certain politically and/or epistemically approved versions of history (Hobsbawm 1983). So, people mentally engage with the past throughout their lives, and they build their identity (partially) through this engagement. As part of this process, they become "historical reasoners" (III: 70), they develop or adapt *historical thinking*, *arguments*, and *narratives*, and they do that in the environment of the historical culture they grow up in, mostly within the frameworks and cues provided by the institutions of historical culture. This process also entails the possibility that people reason badly about the past, that their thinking about bygone times becomes *ideological* for whatever reason. (III: 70)

Professional historiography is itself part of the intermesh of historical culture in modern societies, though it occupies a specific position in it as an academic

[43] Rüsen's conceptualization of "historical culture", "Geschichtskultur" in the German original, is very similar to Herman Paul's understanding of historical theory. According to Paul, historical theory is interested in the "reflection on how human beings relate to the past" (Paul 2015a: 3), though Paul distinguishes more such relations than Rüsen does (see also Paul 2015b). Another field dealing with very similar issues that could be added to the mix here is "public history" (see Demantowsky 2018 for any overview). Demantowsky describes the subject matter of "public history" as "*complex past-related identity discourse. Operated by collectives and individuals, it serves the mutual recognition of narratives*" (Demantowsky 2018: 26, original emphasis). "Public history" has been booming in recent years, amassing more and more academic resources and esteem. It would be interesting to compare the rise of "public history" with that of STS, "science and technology studies", which succeeded in its academic establishment and disciplinarization in the 1990s. My thesis on this would be: While STS basically was, and maybe still is, the sociology of science amalgamated with some of the philosophy fashionable at that time (mostly poststructuralism), "public history" is a sociology of popular engagement with the past with, as far as I can see, no particular, fashionable philosophemes linked to it (yet). Given this subject matter, "public history" has probably quite something to offer for the sociology of historiography that we so direly need.

subject and has a special function given that it is a discourse on the past *centered around truth and the cognitive dimension* of our relations to the past in Rüsen's differentiation from above. This means historiography can act as "large-scale *regulatory instance and corrective*" (III: 71) when it comes to the ideological beliefs about the past held in wider society, and it can do that thanks to the "*epistemic and discursive characteristics* that set historiography apart from ordinary thinking about the past" (III: 71, original emphasis). It is these characteristics that allow historiography to produce justified (true) beliefs about the past. This is accomplished through the epistemic practices that reliably link historiography to the past, described in more detail in article II and especially I.5 above but also in shorter form here in article III, but also through the discursive processes that submit the work of historians to the close scrutiny of their peers, something I call in this article the *discursive knowledge practices of the discipline* (on the latter, see Kuukkanen 2017a and also I.3 above). These practices consist in the wholesale critical examination of a work of historiography by peers in public forums, in (double-blind) peer reviews just as much as in journal reviews and in open and equitable debate more generally. In this sense, objectivity towards the past and intersubjectivity come in historiography together in a discourse that is characterized by the absence of any force or violence, a discourse which in its ideal form is only regulated by the "unforced force of the better argument" (Habermas 1994: 23). In the words of the article:

> "In review and debate, intersubjective scrutiny and potentially warrant are established beyond the relations an individual work of historiography establishes to the evidence, which stand for objectivity in relation to the past. Under the ultimate goal of coming to an uncoerced consensus, and with no ulterior motives or dire consequences that might come from disagreement to fear, criticism in historiography can be levelled factually yet forcefully, focusing on the issues at stake alone." (III: 72)

These characteristics set historiography apart from more pedestrian discourses about the past in society and enable it to correct them where necessary (the "regulatory instance and corrective" from above). In this sense, the practices of historiography also have an "*exemplary function*" (III: 72, original emphasis) when it comes to the discussion of claims about the past. Historiographic discourse, where it lives up to its ideal, can indeed stand in as a *model* for the rational discussion of claims about the past but also more generally as a *rational setting for conflict-staging and resolution*, as it is a discourse that allows for a wide range of

disagreement while being consensus-oriented and excluding any more coercive means to get one's way beyond the "unforced force of the better argument". (III: 72-73)

Shading into the philosophy of history, historiography embodies towards society, thirdly, "a general *historical or historico-philosophical framework*" (III: 73, original emphasis). By this I mean that historiography gives society a more general understanding of the relationship between past, present, and future and the most basic concepts for understanding (one's own) historicity. In this sense, it fundamentally underpins the historical sense that individuals develop in a society. The general outlook that it provides in this way can be called "historicist" in a broad sense (and its underpinnings are the ontological historicism that we talk about in I.2). The general impulse of this historicism and the historicist culture it embodies is the "historization" of all human thinking and doing, though it does not have to stop at the *humanum*, and the understanding of the past first and foremost in its own right. This historization, though, is only one albeit a central way of looking at human society and nature. It does not amount to any strong historicism, with or without capital h, that absolutizes the historical genesis of things at the expense of all other perspectives. (This would mean committing to a grand version of the genetic fallacy.) This is especially so as with historiography we also have reliable methods to produce knowledge about the past; the historicism that historiography advances is, in other words, no absolute (and self-refuting) relativism that makes any claim (about the past) a mere function of its own history:

> "Modern historiography stands for the general historicist insight in the historical genesis of past and present, the fundamental difference between the two that this often entails, and the ensuing centrality of understanding the past in its own right, while all the same upholding the possibility of knowledge about it through the epistemically responsible and regulated practices of the discipline." (III: 73; see also Bhaskar 2009b: 211-223)

In a sense, this is just another formulation of the essential tension that we discussed in the article II above in detail.

> Finally, familiarity with and education in historiography teaches the public "*reflective and regulated use* of (…) *critical reasoning faculties*" (III: 74, original emphasis), including "*skills*, *dispositions*, and *attitudes* towards the past" (III: 75, original emphasis) that befit and benefit all reasoners. Such skills,

once acquired, are likely to be transferable to areas other than strictly historical reasoning. To conclude:

> "Together with situationally appropriate historical knowledge and the general historicist perspective historiography also has on offer they [the skills, dispositions, attitudes] can be used to arrive at well-formed and warranted arguments and judgments that are not limited to the realm of the past." (III: 75)

With this, we have reconstructed *the role historiography can play in society*, and the characteristics of the discipline just outlined are also at play in the political engagements of the associations of historians we talked about above. In its efforts at conflict prevention and resolution, HWB uses historiographic knowledge but also the generally historicist perspective and operatively even the exemplary function of historiographic discourse, all in an effort to resolve conflicts and establish peace. The same goes for the German resolution that stresses the analysis of politics in terms of long-term historical developments. However, for society and its members to be receptive to historiography's offerings and for historiography to be able to offer these epistemic goods in the first place, society needs to be organized in a certain way, which brings us to the topic of the relationship of historiography to (deliberate) democracy.

In its second half, article III argues that historiography and deliberative democracy share many common practices and values (issue b from above). Deliberation is usually defined in political philosophy as "the weighing of reasons or considerations in relation to a practical decision" (Chambers 2018: 55), and democratic deliberation demands in this framework the inclusion of everyone affected by the decision into the very process of deliberation. Democratic deliberation as a process is fundamentally based on *respect* and *reciprocity*; "on the recognition of others as equals in their humanity and in their reasoning abilities, but also in their potential involvedness in issues of common concern" (III: 78) Additionally, an orientation towards some (common) *good* that comes out of the deliberation and which can become the subject of the deliberation itself needs to be presupposed for genuine deliberation to take place. Otherwise, the discourse is engaged in insincerely and we are back to the populists, authoritarians, and sophists that HWB and the VHD are concerned with in their political actions and resolutions. Beyond respect, reciprocity, and orientation towards some good, deliberation does not prefigure any outcome or makes any substantial claim about the contents that is deliberated about. It is, in other words, a "meta-discouse"

(Bächtinger/Dryzek/Mansbridge/Warren 2018: 20; see also Habermas 1996) based on certain *values* and agreed upon *rules* and *procedures* for coming to an agreement. As such, the use of force, coercion, threats, or manipulation are fundamentally excluded from proper deliberative discourse since they would negate the respect and reciprocity that everyone engaged in the deliberation deserves. The only demand that can be made of the people participating is to "give and ask for reasons", in the famous formulation of Wilfrid Sellars, and to be open to the reasons others give just much as they proclaim their own. (Everything else would involve a double standard and a performative self-contradiction.) The kind of reasoning that is at work here can be called "*procedural and communicative reason*" (III: 79), which I define as an

> "always already a communal activity, requiring at least a You and an I. In this sense, it differs profoundly from instrumental or purely subjectivist reason that can be pursued by one individual alone, disregarding and *against* the reasons and interests of others. Communicative rationality is even beyond any purposive rationality pure and simple as it problematizes, or positively, justifies purposes in the first place in a wider collective setting. Indeed, communicative reason is intrinsically self-reflexive in ways these forms of rationality are not since it might itself become the subject of deliberation as a matter of course, addressing its own purview, limits, and the restraints imposed on it by society." (III: 79, original emphasis; see also Habermas 1994: 32)

Historiography is a good example of a discourse that is based on the principles of free deliberation as just outlined, underpinned by respect and reciprocity along with certain rules and procedures. In other words, basically everybody can participate in this discourse equally, personal characteristics such as their race, gender, or sexuality do not play any role. Instead, the rules and procedures are set by the rules of evidence and the procedures of disciplinary discussion expounded above that are insensitive to personal characteristics and keep the discourse focused on issues at hand and centered around the creation of knowledge of the past. Further, there is an orientation towards a common good in the deliberations of historiography, i.e. the goal of large and uncoerced consensus which is indicative of knowledge of the past (Tucker 2004a: 23-45), which everyone subscribes to as a goal, thereby also renouncing any use of force. These elements exactly need to be in place for historiography to be able endure widespread disagreement and controversy without exploding the whole discourse and turning it into a form of coercion. And this is exactly the structure of "*controversy and dispute within certain bounds*" (III: 66,

original emphasis) that the German resolution describes and saw threatened by the Right-wing populist that gained in strength in the years before 2018 in Germany: "In the resolution, all arguments are deemed legitimate as long as they heed historical facts and respect the inclusive rules of the deliberative process itself, that is, as long as they do not resort to the falsification of history and exclusion or denigration of other (potential) participants in the discourse. (Something populist political actors did according to the resolution.)" (III: 80)

It is here, then, where we touch on the general relationship between the (democratic) state and historiography. Historiography, while being an example of a competent deliberative discourse, cannot by itself establish the *conditions* for its own flourishing. It is the (democratic) state with its monopoly on the use of (legitimate) force that must safeguard the conditions under which historiography can produce its epistemic goods. In a functioning democracy, nobody can force the other's hand by threats or violence and there are usually also strong principles concerning academic freedom in such societies. Only given the fundamental divide between the state with its coercive powers and historiography and the non-interference by the state in the daily work of the discipline, can historiography go about its business undisturbed and, in turn, deliver those epistemic goods—mostly justified true beliefs about the past but also historicist reasoning and skills more generally, see above—to the deliberations that go on within and without the state, making those discourses argumentatively better off and overall more factual and rational. This "interrelationship of divide and mutual reinforcement" (III: 81) is non-existent in authoritarian states or traditionalist societies where historiography or claims about the past more generally are subjugated to political or other non-epistemic imperatives and values, and it is this configuration that is also threatened by the populists all around.[44]

This, finally, brings us to the (meta-)political interests historians have qua being historians. If historians want their discipline to continue premised on the current cognitive values and epistemic practices that are conducive to the production of knowledge about the past, then they have an interest in opposing any force that intends to infringe upon those practices and values. In the current political landscape, these threats are mainly voiced by populists, nationalist strongmen, autocrats, and dictators; some of which we are accustomed to see on the world stage

[44] A recent example of such a subjection of historiography to politics are Putin's distortions about Ukrainian and Soviet history that served as legitimation for his war of aggression against Ukraine, which were also shortly discussed on the beginning of this text (see I.1 above and Putin 2021). They also serve as a terrible reminder that our understanding of history can have real-life consequences in the present.

by the daily. (The Le Pens, Putins, Erdogans, and Xis of our day and age, to name them after the currently most well-known specimens.) Historiography furthermore has an interest in undoing any traditionalist dogmas that stand in the way of producing knowledge about the past. The German resolution is therefore right to "castigate populist, divisive, and nationalist language in politics and wider society" (III: 66) and to espouse (deliberative) democracy, just as it makes sense for the historians of HWB to try to prevent or stop armed conflict (the antithesis of the deliberative discussion that is historiography).[45] In the article I summarize the argument in the following way:

> "All of these actors [the populists etc.] want to arrest and disrupt genuine historiographic discussion and deliberative debate and they usually also work to unravel the democratic achievements that safeguard historiography. Historians intent on perpetuating their endeavours therefore have good grounds to oppose them, along with unreflective tradition and all sorts of ideology and dogma, as all of them thwart the rules of deliberation and their disciplinary organization. Given their expertise, they also hold some of the knowledge and the tools needed to debunk the disinformation and the manipulative tactics of these actors." (III: 82)

Now, it is important to stress again, just like in the previous article, that I am not advocating any form of *historiographic scientism or absolutism* here, in the sense that historiography can answer all questions that we might have about the past or that all relations society maintains to the past have to submit to the court and verdict of historiography (with the discipline being prosecutor, judge, and jury all at once). Historiography, like any scientific endeavour is fallible, and it might very well be that much information about the past is lost forever, which would mean that we can't know large swaths of (human) history. (To what extent this is so, is an open question, and has already been debated for natural history but not human history, as far as I am aware; see Turner 2011: 21-22.) Yet, with historiography we have at the same time a powerful and reliable institution to produce knowledge about the past that we do have information of, and also for making us better reasoners about

[45] However, in the paper I doubt that the more hands-on, and in this sense less metapolitical, positions that the German resolution also takes (pro-EU, pro-migration, and pro-refugees) can be justified on these grounds only. This does not mean that there are no good reasons at all to endorse them too. It only means that the resolution might have done well to separate those more convoluted issues from the metapolitical ones that address the threats to the foundations and conditions of the discipline and democracy itself, and to give additional arguments for them. See also III: 83.

the past, the present, and the future. So, I do believe that historiography and its findings should have a say when it comes our *cognitive relations* to the past insofar as they play a role in politics and insofar as such cognitive claims underpin our historical sense and identity as individuals and groups. Likewise, historians do good to speak up when they see the foundations of their honourable enterprise politically threatened by those that distort the past for their ideological purposes. (III: 83-84)

In the overall argumentative structure of this thesis, article III continues on one level the epistemological focus of article II in that it thinks about the justification of our beliefs about the past not just in terms of their objectivity, understood as justified through information derived from the historical objects themselves, but also in terms of intersubjectivity and what I have called here the "discursive knowledge practices of the discipline" (on these epistemic and intersubjective practices that in the main constitute scientific historiography, see also I.3 and I.5 above). This brings me in some respects closer to neo-pragmatist positions in the philosophy of historiography as they were in their main developed by Kuukkanen in the last years (Kuukkanen 2015; Kuukkanen 2017a; Kuukkanen 2021b). Whether there is any more sustained overlap beyond the emphasis on the disciplinary practices of "giving and asking for reasons" will have to be seen in the future. If I had to venture a guess, then there are still substantial differences, for example when it comes to the understanding of narrative and colligations or to Kuukkanen's pragmatic dissolution of objectivity as I understand it into intersubjectivity (Kuukkanen 2015: 168-179).

Next, this article also emphasizes the *advantages of disciplinarity* in historiography—a topic that we will return to one more time in article IV below—in relation and contrast to the state but also, more centrally, in relation to society. While the previous articles were cognizant and appreciative of the fact that "external considerations" from the standpoint of scientific historiography are parts of historiographic texts all the way down to the individual descriptions given, here the focus is on how historiography as a discipline relates to these external elements as they appear as other spheres of society and as part of wider historical culture and politics. In this respect I have specified the contributions that *scientific historiography* can make to these spheres and explicated commonalities that exist between the discipline and deliberative democratic practices. If what I said is correct, then scientific historiography is fundamentally dependent on a deliberative democratic state and historians have an interest in defending this state for their practice to continue let alone thrive. This can be read as a contribution to a *political*

philosophy of historiography that might be developed together with a political sociology of the discipline that tells us what historians actually think about politics and which political positions they hold (if any).

The interest in the relationship between historiography and politics is further taken up in the next chapter of this introduction part where we will discuss a philosophical framework for the assessment of political influence on historiography. In a sense, this interest of mine comes directly out of articles II and III combined. In II, we developed with coherentism a general framework for the analysis of the inferential relations in which different beliefs stand to each other, and in III, the interest is shifted to political beliefs and arguments, which just as much can be analyzed through this coherentist framework. Bringing these strands together, the goal is to come to an understanding of historiography that recognizes the (meta-)political interests and conditions of the discipline without falling prey to any crude politicism that claims that all historiography is just politics or is determined by politics (perhaps "in the last resort" as the Engelsian and Althusserian cop-out goes). That is, the task is to save the autonomy of historiography as a discipline along with the autonomy of its claims to knowledge while recognizing that a certain political configuration and certain (meta-)political values are constitutive of the discipline.

Finally, paper III does a practical step towards the empirical turn that is demanded throughout this thesis (in this introduction part just as much as in each of articles themselves), by philosophically analyzing the actions and statements of two openly political associations of historians. This spirit will be carried forward to article IV where a competing philosophical position in the philosophy of historiography, Kalle Pihlainen's "narrative constructivism" (Pihlainen 2017: xii), is subjected to the same empirical and philosophical scrutiny.

2.4 Discussion of article IV "Misunderstandings. Kalle Pihlainen's The Work of History, Constructivism, and the Politics of the Past"

Article IV is a review essay of Kalle Pihlainen's book *The Work of History. Constructivism and the Politics of the Past* (Pihlainen 2017). It argues for a) meaning and narrative as epistemic categories that stand in a determinate relationship to the past in historiography, for b) a positive assessment of both historiographic disciplinarity and the functions the discipline plays in society. It does so by way of an exposition and criticism of Pihlainen's "narrative

constructivism" (Pihlainen 2017: xiii). Pihlainen, negating all three points I just made, argues that meaning and narrative are ethical and ideological impositions by the historian fundamentally unconnected to the past, that disciplinarity in historiography is oppressive, and that the discipline stands against any real "democratization in the uses of the past" (Pihlainen 2017: 113, fn. 9) throughout society. Beyond this, the book offers *interesting theses* and *novel theoretical categories for the sociology of historiography* about which the review essay is overall appreciative, especially since the sociology of historiography is a field that does not really exist yet but should exist (see section I.6 above and my loose comments throughout this chapter on the need for a sociology of historiography).

The essay begins with an operative point: Pihlainen believes narrative constructivists like himself, but especially Hayden White, to be fundamentally misunderstood. [46] He speaks of "obfuscation" (Pihlainen 2017: xxi) and "a caricaturized view of what constructivism with respect to history is all about" (Pihlainen 2017: xv); of "knee-jerk defenses" and "theoretical naiveté" (Pihlainen 2017: 66) on the side of the critics, and all of that "despite of volumes of clarification" ((Pihlainen 2017: xvii) from White, himself, and others. In these examples, and throughout his whole book, Pihlainen displays a *rhetoric of impatience and weariness* towards all the critics, and he implies that they are habitual "misunderstanders" of him and White, or worse ("obfuscation"). The essay tries to avoid this charge also formally by being as precise as it can be in the exposition of what Pihlainen actually claims. It therefore first describes Pihlianen's position in detail with plenty of direct quotes and without much critical comment, before engaging in the criticism in a separate section. This way, there is at least an open attempt made to avoid the misunderstanding and "obfuscation" Pihlainen decries, and the unnecessary polemics that he wields as a forward defence is deflated.[47] (IV: 3-5)

[46] White plays a central role for Pihlainen. Of him he says: "In my view, he has said much of what there is to say about constructivism and history, and he has said it elegantly and with such thoughtfulness and insight, that any discussion of history as a representational practice must inevitably return to consider these ideas." (Pihlainen 2017: xiii)

[47] I do not believe though that these "misunderstandings" are a "receiver's problem" only, something Pihlainen does not properly consider. In the essay I write: "Add to this White's (and Pihlainen's) well-known essayism and the possibility at least emerges that misunderstanding is not only an issue on the side of the receiver. I mean Pihlainen admits as much when he says that White is sometimes 'deliberately provocative' and 'challenging', both of which easily lead to misunderstandings and thence negative responses if their intention is not understood or not appreciated. Yet, none of this is followed up by Pihlainen, instead we have to read the insinuations and invectives about critics of his and White's." (IV: 4). And of course, examples of apodictic and opaque statements, strong categorical claims without much

Now, as already mentioned, Pihlainen calls his own (Whitean) position "narrative constructivism" and his general philosophical framework "poststructuralist" (Pihlainen 2017: xiii). The key point here is that any account of the past is "based on archetypical story forms, culturally conditioned discourses, and generic plot structures" (Pihlainen 2017: 101) and that, on these grounds, "history writing cannot be produced without ideological valuation (…), or indeed, without the introduction of added meanings belonging to the representational (literary) form" (Pihlainen 2017: 18). The main claim thus is twofold: 1) there is a content that is introduced by the literary form (and which in itself consists of "archetypical story forms, culturally conditioned discourses, and generic plot structures"), and 2) this content is itself based on ideological considerations. (IV: 5-6)

This is the famous "contents of the form" after which White named a whole essay collection of his (White 1987b) and which in this theory transfigures ("emplots") the facts of the past into what Pihlainen calls meaning, which is central to his whole account. So, in Pihlainen there are facts about the past in the sense of simple existential statements of the sort "Sophie de Grouchy was born in 1764" (this is my example, not Pihlainen's) which might be true or false. Yet, these "do not carry a meaning" (Pihlainen 2017: xxi) for him as "meaning is a construction" (Pihlainen 2017: xxi) and "not something that can be discovered" (Pihlainen 2017: 2). However, while facts cannot give us meaning in this sense, they can still disprove historiographic interpretations: "[A]ny single contradicting fact *can* serve to disprove an overall interpretation" (Pihlainen 2017: 8, original emphasis), Pihlainen writes in rather Popperian fashion. Also, whatever meaning is in Pihlainen, it is not the semantic sense of meaning as our "example fact" above is obviously semantically meaningful. (IV: 6)

Pihlainen equates this sort of added meaning that he is after with narrative, making narrative by the same stroke unavailable for epistemic assessment too. Instead, narratives are "*based on moral and aesthetic preferences* (…) *and they also serve in conveying those preferences*" (Pihlainen 2017: 82, original emphasis). This means that every historiographic narrative fundamentally imposes moral and ethical preferences on the reader and with that accomplishes what Pihlainen calls

argument, and general polemics are legion in White. To give one example among many, here White claims that objective accounts of the past such as historiography will lead to the past's repetition: "Nothing is better suited to lead to a repetition of the past than a study of it that is either reverential or convincingly objective in the way conventional historical studies tend to be" (White 1987c: 82). Pihlainen explicitly agrees with this on the face of it very dubious and given the many atrocities in history even outrageous claim of White's. See Pihlainen 2017: 12.

"[n]arrative closure" (IV: 7). This ideologically motivated closure "constitutes the oppressive effects of narrativization" (Pihlainen 2017: 29). The same structure of argument also underlies Pihlainen's shorter discussions on interpretation and representation. They too might be falsified by the facts, but interpretations and representations cannot be sustained by them. Instead, they are constituted by story forms and culturally conditioned discourses, just as they represent by the same token an ideology that carries with it moral and aesthetic preferences. (IV: 7-8)

On a more general level, the narrative meaning that is so central to Pihlainen is characterized by (Derridaean) "*différance* and irreducibility and ultimate unattainability of (complete and totalizing) truth and meaning" (Pihlainen 2017: 43, original emphasis). So, while narrative is oppressive and achieves an ideological closure there is always also some "non-identical", to speak with Adorno, a "différance" as it were, that tends to thwart this impulse. This brings us to Pihlainen's general ontology and epistemology, of which his understanding of meaning as "différance" is just an expression.[48] He speaks in this ontology of the "limitlessness of the (past) reality" (Pihlainen 2017: 71) and at the same time of its "fragmentariness" (Pihlainen 2017: 30). Similarly, subjective experience is characterized by "granularity and disjointedness" (Pihlainen 2017: 77) and understanding "otherness 'from within'" (Pihlainen 2017: 110) cannot but fail. Epistemologically, Pihlainen's position has a Nietzschean ring to it. For him, history is always a "site of struggle" (Pihlainen 2017: 57) and "we are all idiosyncratically positioned in the world and perspectivism is all-pervasive" (Pihlainen 2017: 88). From all this he derives three principles of poststructuralist thought: i) a "*refusal to represent*"; ii) a "*refusal of grand narratives*" (Pihlainen 2017: 44, original emphasis); and iii) "*an emphasis on new forms of expression*"

[48] The emphasis on "différance" connects Pihlainen's theory to Ethan Kleinberg's who has also recently tried to make sense of historiography in the light of Derridaean philosophy (see, Kleinberg 2020, Kleinberg 2021, and my own Gangl 2021a). I have been very critical of this specific idea, as I am also very critical about the indiscriminate application of philosophical doctrines of a high abstraction such as "meaning is *différance*" or "being determines consciousness", to take a famous statement from another grand theory, to historiography and its practices. There is often just too big of a distance between the very general and vague statements of a Derrida, Marx, Hempel and their likes and the discipline of historiography that makes their straightforward application to the subject doubtful at best. The task would be to show how they are actually relevant to the discipline and its practices in more than a trivial way or that a solution of these grand problems can be furthered by the discussions of issues of the philosophy of historiography, neither of which is usually done. Instead, grand stipulations are made or just resounded, and historiography is just assumed to confirm to them. This is also metaphilosophically a very doubtful practice. See section I.4 of this introduction part, where I discuss this issue from a metaphilosophical point of view and from the viewpoint broad naturalism and empirical epistemology that I endorse. See also Kosso 1991 and Currie 2019: 7 for more details on this.

(Pihlainen 2017: 45, original emphasis). When it comes to actual historiography, he claims that "microhistory" comes closest to these stipulations, at least as far as issues of form are concerned, but he also mentions feminist historiography in this respect (Pihlainen 2017: 48-50) (IV: 8-9).[49]

At this point, we can "move from epistemological difficulties to ethics, politics, and responsibility" (Pihlainen 2017: 10) and from there to the "democratization in the uses of the past" that we already mentioned before. As it currently stands, "history", and by this Pihlainen means historiography, is an "oppressive structure" (Pihlainen 2017: 39) from which people should emancipate themselves with the help of "effective (aesthetic) form" (Pihlainen 2017: 65) (IV: 9).

This brings Pihlainen to a discussion of what I consider the theoretically most promising part of his book, i.e. "history in the world" (Pihlainen 2017: 82; on this see also very instructively Pihlainen 2021) and the different possible forms of representation of the past. Here he offers us *empirical theses* and *novel theoretical concepts* that are definitely worthy of further discussion, but which properly conceived belong to the sociology of historiography instead of its philosophy. Resounding once more White (White 2017: x-xi), he claims that modern historiography was founded on the ideal of the 19th century novel and the needs and interests of the (bourgeois) audience of that time. (On this shallow and empirically very doubtful association of modern historiography with the bourgeoisie and political conservativism, see also the next chapter.) Today though, reading sensibilities and interests have fundamentally changed and "epistemological skepticism has become the standard attitude among readers" (Pihlainen 2017: 83), so Pihlainen. Phrased in a slightly different way, this means that historiography's "reading contract is already firmly oriented toward confusion and disruption in that it relentlessly calls upon us to question the accounts with which we are presented"

[49] I have serious doubts that microhistory is well characterized by Pihlainen here. A book like Nathalie Zemon Davis' "The Return of Martin Guerre" (Zemon Davis 1983) is formally rather conventional and far from any "refusal to represent". Works such as Carlo Ginzburg's world-famous "The Cheese and the Worms" (Ginzburg 1992a) are indeed formally more unusual and less well-ordered, if that is the right term, but in Ginzburg this is done in the pursuit of a traditional epistemic goal, that is the description of the lifeworld and the pagan religious beliefs of the sixteenth-century Friulian miller "Menocchio", whose life ended on the stakes of the Roman Inquisition. In other words, Ginzburg is anything but a "narrative constructivist" and probably as far away from any poststructuralist ontology or epistemology as one can be as his famous feuding with White and other constructivists about Holocaust historiography has also shown (Ginzburg 1992b). On the rather conventional epistemic goals of microhistory, see also Levi 2001. The innovative form books such as Ginsburg's display should be further researched, though. To emphasize the importance of such "formal matters" is one of the merits of Pihlainen's book. He draws our attention to matters of form and potentially novel ways to represent the past, despite his overt "refusal to represent".

(Pihlainen 2017: 73). The welcomed effect of this is a "postponement of the interpretation to the reader" (Pihlainen 2017: 112) which amounts to said democratization of the past via aesthetic form that is Pihlainen's explicit (political) goal. The rather unfortunate example, also drawn from White (White 1999: 73), that Pihlainen uses to illustrate this development is the Challenger disaster from 1986 about which he claims: "Explanations are sought in the material itself, which is, obviously, unable to provide answers as such. The role of the historian as interpreter is simply displaced onto the viewer of this privileged material" (Pihlainen 2017: 127) (IV: 10-12). (As to why this is an unfortunate example, see IV: 22-23.)

Concepts such as historiography's "reading contract" point us to the expectations and presuppositions of both sides of the communicative act that is part of historiography, the historian and the reader, and it might very well be the case that what either side expects or presupposes changes over time. It might even be that the "other" in this relation changes. There have been discussions ongoing for decades that historians have lost their role as leading intellectuals in wider culture, that they are not the public intellectuals anymore that they prototypically were in the 19th century (see also section I.3 above). Instead, they might today be reduced to the role of a topical specialist among other specialists, writing mostly for other hsitorians. (A loss of significance that White already noted in the paper from the 1960s that first brought him some fame, "The Burden of History", see White 1966.) Likewise, previous readers of historiography might have turned to historical fiction as this genre fits their interests today better. These are interesting *empirical* theses, just as the ones that Pihlainen puts forth about the supposed "epistemological scepticism" that readers of historiography nowadays display. The same goes for a theoretical concept such as "reading contract". While I don't think that Pihlainen (and White) are right on these issues empirically, quite to the contrary, the sociological perspective and the theoretical concepts as such are very much appreciated.

This concludes the mostly descriptive and the short appreciative part of Pihlainen's account that worked with so many direct quotes and so little commenting so as to neutralize his self-immunizing rhetoric. If there is something I fully agree with him about, then it is that issues of form matter. Let me summarize his position shortly again before we move on to its critical assessment:

"Narrative and meaning are created by the same stroke through story forms, culturally conditioned discourse and generic plot structures. Those forms themselves are based on moral and aesthetic preferences that can change over time,

and they convey ideological contents and moral valuations (…). Meaning and value are *entirely* constructed through those forms, and they cannot be derived in any form from the facts. Facts, thought of as existential statements, can be unequivocally true or false and they can fault interpretations, but not support them in any way. Narratives further produce closure through their moral impositions, and such closure is in and of itself oppressive." (IV: 12-13, original emphasis)

Pihlainen makes the strong categorical claims that meaning and narrative are "constructed" and therefore cannot be "discovered", this is a strict "either-or" for him. This means there cannot be any *relation* between the evidence of the past that we have, and with that the past itself, and meaning or narrative; they are instead, as we have seen, based on culturally accepted story forms and plot structures, and express the moral and aesthetic preferences, ultimately the ideological stances of their authors. Facts as singular existential statements about the past do exist though and they can falsify the historian's interpretations, but they cannot prop them up under any circumstances, they cannot positively justify them to any degree at all. (Pihlainen does not differentiate meaning and narrative from interpretation here, so we can assume that the same relationship also holds for meaning and narrative.)

This, however, is a logically inconsistent idea. If facts bear no relationship to interpretations whatsoever, they can also not be used to disprove any interpretation, and if conversely such a relation is admitted, it cannot be without good grounds just be limited to the negative role that Pihlainen assigns to it. Strict (Popperian) falsification of a theory by facts is further in itself an incoherent idea (Kosso 2011: 15-20). It is always possible that faulty background theories or auxiliary hypotheses are to blame for the apparent "falsification" of our theories or interpretations instead of the supposed facts themselves, even in experimental sciences, where such theories can be put to the test of experiments. The same is a fortiori true in historiography where we have no such more decisive ways to intervene into the subject-matter of our interest (IV: 16). (We have talked about the different logics of explanation of experimental and historical sciences in more detail in article I above.) [50]

[50] Pihlainen's general ontology and epistemology that he calls poststructuralist are similarly contradictory. We remember, he called reality limitless and fragmentary, a contradiction in terms if not further specified, something Pihlainen does not do. Likewise, how did Pihlainen come to *know* about these most general characteristics of (past) reality if we cannot prop up our (philosophical) theories by the evidence and "perspectivism" is all there is, as he also claims? The only metaphysical position that would befit such a perspectivism is "metaphysical agnosticism" (Kosso 1998: 15), as Peter Kosso very aptly observed. Kosso further elaborates: "Epistemological anti-realism precludes metaphysical anti-realism; indeed it precludes metaphysical anything. If we cannot know how things are (…) then we

Next, "facts are small theories, and true theories are big facts" (Goodman 1978: 97), as Nelson Goodman put it so memorably. If there is any relation between facts and interpretations—something that Pihlainen at the same time wants to recognize and not in his contradictory stance that they can falsify but not confirm an interpretation—then we just as well need (background) theories that vouch for them and connect them with the rest of our web of beliefs, in the process that we have analyzed in detail in article III, and we need to specify these inputs and relations further (Kosso 2001; Tucker 2004a). So, it is ill-conceived to call meaning and narrative on this level constructed but facts not. The difference between constructed and not constructed is spurious on this level and therefore also cannot be consubstantial with what can be justified by the evidence and what not. We need theories and justifications for all of them, the facts included; the question therefore becomes which kind of theories and theoretical settings are able to justify our hypotheses, narratives, and interpretations of the past.

Pihlainen himself asserts *one possible relation* here, i.e. that all the theories used to establish narratives and interpretations are ideological, moral, and aesthetic impositions, based on "archetypical story forms, culturally conditioned discourses, and generic plot structures" (Pihlainen 2017: 101) of our Western culture. Now, it is important to stress here that this is an *assertion* of Pihlainen's for which he does not give much justification at all in terms of historiographic material, say by analyzing some historiographic text in any detail, and that technically the burden of proof is still on him concerning this question, even after the book. He would need to show that the structures he singles out are the *only* contributors to how meaning and narrative are constructed in historiography, especially as the relation to facts is sturdier than he acknowledged. If he accepts that facts stand in a relation to meaning and narrative at all, as he does with his falsification postulate, then he must also entertain the possibility at least that they are able to (more or less) justify our narratives, making them into (partial) representations of the past. Alternatively, he might double down and claim that meaning is entirely constructed through

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cannot know how things are not" (Kosso 1998: 180). And, of course, there is also the well-known self-referential paradox: Is the pronouncement about all-pervasive perspectivism itself just an idiosyncratic perspective? If it is, we have no reason to take it seriously as anything but, if it is not, then perspectivism is *not* everything that there is, and the statement performatively refutes itself. If the overused term of dialectic is used at all, it might be used in this (dia-)logical and Platonic sense as the investigation into the interaction between form and contents, between what is said and how it is said, between proposition, operation, and presupposition. On this issue, see very lucidly Zorn 2018: 72-82. On Pihlainen's contradictory ontology and epistemology, see IV: 14, Fn.12, and on poststructuralism's ontology and epistemology more generally, Gangl 2012.

culturally conditioned story forms and that facts play no role whatsoever here, that historiography just is fiction, but this would need to be shown as well; grand stipulations alone are of no help here. (IV: 17-18)

This is especially so because we have good reasons to believe that historiographic interpretations and narratives are in fact responsive to the evidence up to a certain extent, that historians do regularly change their positions and their narratives on historiographic questions based the assessment of (new) evidence and based on historiographic discussions, as can be regularly witnessed in historiographic debates (Zammito 2009: 76-79). Also, there are meanings and narratives of the past that in a technical sense are imposed by the historian but which play a central epistemic role and which stand in a determinate relationship to the past. I am here once more talking about the causal narratives and narrative explanation which were the main point of interest of article I. While being impositions of the historian and in a sense of his present, they epistemically capitalize on the perspective of hindsight and create a meaning and understanding of the past unavailable to the historical actor but still based on the evidence available in the historian's present. (And there are the other epistemic advantages of being in the present that we have discussed in article II, main among them evidentiary anachronisms.) They are, in other words, narratives based on the past and the specific temporal position that historians occupy, and they are backed by the proper accounting claims. They are not just plot structures or story forms that are imposed from the outside in the way Pihlainen thinks of them. From this follows that his "derivation" of meaning solely from plot structures and story forms cannot be the whole story, at least. To summarize:

> "Meaning, then, poses no special problems to historiography by being constructed, as opposed to say facts, and it is not solely derived from culturally legitimated plot structures and story forms. In addition, there are forms of meaning, such as displayed by narrative sentences, that are *genuinely epistemically valuable* because they tell us things about the past that we could not have come to know in any other way." (IV: 19, original emphasis)

This brings us to the other axe Pihlainen has to grind, historiography's disciplinarity and the discipline's role in society ("history in the world" in his terms). Here again, we can note that Pihlainen sells the discipline short epistemically by painting it in *purely negative and even oppressive terms*. However, historiography is a knowledge-oriented and consensus-driven *discourse* and *empirical scientific discipline*, not an authoritarian command structure that dishes out dogmas that need

to be obeyed. (Maybe he looked the wrong meaning of discipline up in his dictionary.) It is built upon a shared understanding of methods and on shared epistemic and cognitive values. Historians use both of which to criticize each other's work and the epistemic values that historiography holds are shared by other sciences as well (Kuukkanen 2015: 121-130). There are, further, good indications that these methods and values around which historiography is constituted are truth-conducive (Jardine 2000b: 77-146). Disciplinarity ensures the organization and transmission of these practices and values and is in this way indispensable for our continuous ability to produce knowledge of the past, just as narrative is, but Pihlainen does not engage with any of these arguments. His verdict is "oppressive". Yet the process of "giving and asking for reasons", the discursive side of historiography that is based on dialogue, respect, recognition, and the striving for consensus, is anything but simple oppression, neither within its disciplinary organization nor towards wider society (IV: 20), as we do not have a historiographic court in society that criminally sanctions false beliefs about the past. What we have is a scientific discipline and a scientific discourse in a democratic society that due to its epistemic and methodological specificities is able to criticize the widely held but often false beliefs about the past. People are entitled to their opinions about the past, but they are not entitled to not be questioned and criticized about them.

Pihlainen's negative view of the discipline seems to stem from a *free-wheeling anti-authoritarianism* that wants to "empower" the people by giving them free reign over "interpretations" of the past, unfettered by any epistemic or methodological standards or constraints. With the help of the "epistemological scepticism" that is ushered in through novel aesthetic forms, we then arrive at the "democratization of the uses of the past" that Pihlainen is after. To me, this sounds more like the tyranny of the post-truthers and of the propagandists and denialists of the nastier sort in a contest about who can shout the loudest than any "democratization of the uses of the past" (whatever that exactly means). By contrast, if we acknowledge that historiography gives us knowledge of the past in the form of narrative among other things, then we can also see how it has a function to play in our own present, for instance by enabling us to learn from the past what to do and what to avoid—history rhymes, they say—or by teaching us how to make reliable inferences based on low credibility and partial evidence tokens and unavoidable theoretical mediation. This is the opposite of oppression; it belongs to the world of the logos and to the civilized discourse of giving and asking for reasons. And it provides some of the knowledge and skills that we so direly need for the betterment of the sorry state of this world, a goal Pihlainen and I share. (IV: 21-23).

Article IV discusses anew most of the central themes of this thesis, and it does so by way of criticism of another position in the field, Pihlainen's "narrative constructivism". One could say that the positions that were mainly developed in the other articles are put to the test and further homed in this review essay where they are confronted with a competing approach in the field.

One of the central themes that is reiterated here is *narrative as an epistemic category and accomplishment* of historiography that capitalizes on *hindsight*. The bone of contention between Pihlainen and myself is whether there is a determinate link between the past (the evidence) and the narratives, meanings, and interpretations that historians create and impute ex post. I have argued in this paper, and throughout this thesis, that for the case of narrative and interpretation there is, though I am willing to admit that I do not know how far this connection goes when it comes to the *whole of the historiographic text*. It is reasonable to assume that some parts of the text, even of the narrative and the interpretation itself, are not (fully) justified by the evidence, but this needs to be assessed in practice through an analysis of such texts and other historiographic practices; it cannot just be asserted in the blanket form of Pihlainen (and White). Pihlainen's own position furthermore, with its claims that meaning and narrative can only be constructed and never discovered, is absolutist in this regard and overall little credible, besides being inherently contradictory when it comes the relationship of facts and narratives and in its general ontology and epistemology. In this sense, I believe that my own (evidentialist) position still stands after its confrontation with Pihlainen's account.

Also, with the framework developed in article II, we have developed a way for analyzing the justification of our beliefs about the past and the structure of our web of beliefs more generally. Combining this framework with the interest in politics further developed in article III, we can see how article IV relates to both, the issue of the standing that historiography and historiographic knowledge should have in society and the question of the relationship between historiography and politics. As regards the latter, Pihlainen's position can be read as a form of *politicism* in historiography. For him, historiographic narratives and interpretations are in the last resort determined by the ideologies we hold. This, again, is one possible position on the relationship between historiography and politics, and we will assess it further in the next chapter of this text (on the issue of politicism in historiography, see in particular section III.2 below).

Concerning the former, there is Pihlainen's negative view of disciplinarity and of historiography's role in society overall. While just as unfounded, especially

when taking article III into account, it points our attention to the central question of "Why History?", of why to (scientifically) engage with the past at all. Put in a slightly different way, this is the question of *the relationship between our epistemic and our other relations to the past*, and with that, of relationship of the philosophy of the historiography to the theory of history in the Paulian and Rüsenian sense. The main question here concerns the societal standing historiography should have in comparison to the other ways of relating to the past. Should we all strive for accurate knowledge of the past and base our understanding of it mainly on the findings of historiography? Is knowledge of the past an essential ingredient for the good life? While I have no clear answers to these questions, we will explore them shortly in the fourth and last chapter of this introduction. Yet, before we advance to political issues and eventually ask what knowledge of the past really is good for, let's shortly take stock of the main themes of all the articles and talk about some research perspectives that come out of them.

2.5 Main Themes and Further Research Perspectives of the Articles

As the sub-title of this thesis indicates, it is in its main about the "form, presuppositions, and justification of historiographic knowledge". The form and presupposition of this kind of knowledge that the articles mostly talk about are narrative and hindsight—they are indispensable tools for "telling like it really was", the fundamental goal of historiography, just as justification via information theories is.

Article I of this thesis is mainly concerned with advancing a *theory of historiographic narrative and narrative explanation*. It elucidates the notion of *causality* that underpins such explanations and the main *explanandum* of historiography, mechanisms and unrepeatable past change, along with *the criteria of narrative coherence* so that we can speak of such a unified historiographic explanandum. It further gives us a *classification of historiographic orderings of the past* based on their dependence on hindsight or a lack thereof. From article I follows that causal narratives are one of the, if not the central cognitive contribution historiography makes to the stock of our knowledge. However, the article is also very cognizant of the fact that historiographic texts consist of more than just causal narratives and that we desperately need more *empirical research about the composition of whole texts and their different buildings blocks*.

While article I is mainly about the *form* and *presuppositions* of historiographic knowledge—about narrative, causal mechanisms, the explananda of historiography, and hindsight—, article II deals with the third part of our subtitle, the *justification of our knowledge of the past*, by offering an *informational account of historiographic evidence* and a *coherentist and hermeneutic account of the justification* of historiographic knowledge based on that very evidence. Just as in article I, hindsight is of central importance here too since historians capitalize on their future perspective regarding the past so as to come to know things about it and represent it in ways that would have been impossible in the past itself. The discussion of the different anachronisms employed in historiography and their epistemic goodness stand paradigmatically for this aspect, but the aim of the article is much broader.

The issue of the justification of historiographic knowledge claims is continued in article III where the *intersubjective and discursive aspects of this process* are discussed, and historiography is set in its *wider context of politics and society*. Based on the findings of articles I-II, article III sketches the role historiography plays in wider historical culture and politics, and it also advances substantial theses on the *relationship between historiography and democracy*, another presupposition of historiographic knowledge if of a very different kind. Overall, article III concludes that historiography has a lot to offer to politics and society, just as historiographic disciplinarity has many positive effects. This relationship and the positive effects are further expounded on in article IV where they are also defended against a competing position in the philosophy of historiography, Kalle Pihlainen's "narrative constructivism".

These insights about historiography and its role in society, together with the politicist interpretation of the discipline discussed and criticized in article IV, bring us to the next chapter III of this thesis, a philosophical framework for assessing the relationship between historiography and politics and the political influence on the discipline. While only being one of the perspectives coming out of the results attained in this thesis, this issue is one of central importance today, I believe. Scientific historiography is currently under threat from both sides of the political spectrum, from the populist and authoritarian Right that was discussed in article III but also from an identitarian Left that turns identities and their grievances into absolutes at the expense of scientific integrity and knowledge of the past (on the latter, see Gangl 2022). (And like most of the humanities, historiography and its philosophy suffer from serious underfunding and, most deplorably, a growing lack of interest from young people.) In this fragile and conflictual situation, it is

paramount to understand historiography's relationship to politics better, and to defend historiography's autonomy as against all political ideologies and encroachments.

There are two other lines of research that directly come out of this thesis, but which are not followed up here any further. Those are a) the actual empirical analyses of historiographic texts and debates that I have demanded throughout this text (ad nauseam), and b) a general theory of historiographic hindsight. The findings of this thesis can be seen as preparatory work for both, though. As to the empirical analysis, in the last chapter we have established their philosophical underpinnings and necessity while in this we have identified some specifically historiographic orderings of the past, i.e. causal narratives and colligations, down to the sentential level, and we have also indicated other potential building blocks of historiographic texts (argumentation, theoretical positionings, political, moral, and ethical interventions etc.). The task ahead is to scrutinize them in their actual composition in historiographic texts in order to understand the construction principles of whole texts and the mutual influences that those building blocks assert on each other. As starting point for this endeavour, I suggest building our analyses up from said sentential level, from single narrative sentences and the evidence base, as outlined in the last chapter under the heading of a philosophy of scientific historiography (see section I.5 and I.6 above). With Kuukkanen's "microhistorical epistemology" (Kuukkanen 2017a; Kuukkanen 2021c) and Paul's HPH (Paul 2021), but also with pushes for a more generalized philosophy of the historical sciences in recent years (Tucker 2014; Currie 2021), we already have methodological reflections, guidelines, and reference material for how to go about this endeavour.

Second, there is a *more comprehensive treatment and a fuller theory of historiographic hindsight* that comes out of this thesis as a desideratum. This would entail a few things. One of them is to look more closely at the negative effects hindsight can also engender, from the loss of information about the past to issues of potentially heightened misunderstanding due to temporal and cultural distance. This has not been done in this thesis because these issues are very much present in general but also professional musings about the past—actually, I think they are overemphasized but undertheorized in these discourses, something that often goes together, and in this sense, they are too vague and abstract. Here, as elsewhere, we should use historiographic examples to discuss this issue. Against the one-sided emphasis on the potentially negative aspects of hindsight, we have highlighted in this thesis the perspective's positives concerning our ability to produce knowledge of the past. Yet, for a more comprehensive understanding, the *tension* between what

I called our "existential presentism" and the perspective of hindsight on the one hand and our desire to know the past in its own right on the other needs to be further addressed. This also entails renewed engagement with so-called "actor-centered philosophies of history" which have traditionally stressed the understanding of the past, or at least of past actors, on their own terms. With the rise first of Analytic Philosophy of History and then narrativism, these positions have been on the defensive over the last decades (Collingwood 1956; D'Oro 2021). In recent years, however, renewed interest in this kind of "pre-narrativist philosophy of history" (Ahlskog forthcoming) can be observed. In other words, the time is right to bring the Dantonian perspective of the centrality of hindsight that is also one of the mainstays of my own philosophy of historiography into conversation again with such actor-centered perspectives. One of the reasons for this is that historiography not only describes the past in ways unavailable to the historical actors themselves.[51] Sometimes it is those very descriptions that the historical actors gave that are of interest to us, and often we need them either way as evidence for whatever we want to explain in the past. To better understand the relationship between actor's categories and the actor's perspective on one hand and the necessary hindsight perspective of the historian on the other, I believe we need such a rapprochement between agent-centered and retrospective approaches in the philosophy of historiography (for a first promising step towards this rapprochement, see Ahlskog forthcoming).

Finally, a few words on the pragmatic elements and the perhaps paradigmatic role historiography plays in society, an issue that will become topical again in the last section of this introduction part (section III.5). We have good grounds to believe that pragmatic considerations, say about the audience, impinge upon even as central a historiographic tool as narrative, in fact down to the sentential descriptions given. When it comes to the whole of their texts, historians might also pursue other than simply epistemic goals with them, they might have didactic, political, entertainment etc. goals too, and these goals might also find their expression in different building blocks of historiographic texts. It is not clear that the epistemic goals always take precedence here in the overall configuration of the text, or indeed that they always should. The counsel here can only be, historian or

[51] The famous phrase of Danto's in this respect is: "For the whole point of history is *not* to know about actions as witnesses might, but as historians do, in connection with later events and as parts of temporal wholes." (Danto 1985: 183, original emphasis). Many philosophers of history such as Paul Roth, Chiel van den Akker, and myself have taken this to be a central insight about historiography, though we have all cashed it out in rather different ways.

not, to make it explicit, to be as open about the "external goals" one pursues while engaging with past as one can be, and to practice the virtue of *phronesis* that we already shortly discussed above in the section on metaphilosophy as the main goal and purpose of philosophy (see section I.4 above).

This relationship between epistemic and non-epistemic elements as it appears internally to historiography and in the historiographic text is duplicated on its outside, where the discipline and the knowledge of the past it produces are faced with other social spheres and their relationships to the past. Here too, it is not clear that historiography must always have the upper hand and that it should criticize these other relations to the past at all costs. While historiography has all the means and rights to criticize false statements about and abuses of the past, I am not arguing for any form of historiographic scientism or absolutism here, for the position that our epistemic relations to the past always have to take precedence over the other past relations that we maintain. Phrased in the language of the dispute between the remit of the philosophy of historiography and the remit of the theory of history, I do not think that the issues the theory of history deals with should just be dissolved into the issues of the philosophy of historiography (Gangl 2021a).

As to the question "why history?" and the relationship of historiography and our knowledge of the past to the good life and to human flourishing in the present, to eudaimonia, I think there are some good arguments for why a society should want historiography and that it should, where appropriate, base its decisions on the findings of historiography. As for the individual, I tend to think this is true too, although that might be the *déformation professionnelle* of a philosopher, and in any case, it is a question of phronesis that everyone must answer for themselves in the practical decisions of everyday life.

3 Rules of Engagement. A Philosophical Framework for Analysing the Relationship Between Historiography and Politics

Many historians are political animals, even though different historians often do not share the same political beliefs or affiliations. This already becomes clear when we take a casual glance only at the history of historiography and current political issues. Leopold Ranke, the founder of modern scientific historiography, was politically conservative and for most of his life closely associated with the Prussian establishment of his time (see I.3 above). The so-called "Neo-Rankeans", a group of German historians that was already reared in Ranke's paradigm, was even more strongly tied to the by then unified German Empire and its "Wilheminism", and they staunchly supported German national expansion and colonialism (Iggers 1983: 230). In the 20th century and even today, many historians have been avowed Marxists, most famous among them probably Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 2011). And just as there are Marxist historians still around today, there are to this day also respected historians to the right of the political spectrum, for instance Niall Ferguson or David Engels. Finally, there have always also been historians without any overt political beliefs or affiliation whose only goal it is to pursue their scholarly interests about the past in what is sometimes called an "antiquarian spirit". So, since the inception of scientific historiography, historians have held political positions representative of the whole gamut of the political spectrum, and they probably still to so today, just as some of them have been unpolitical throughout. Likewise, have historians collectively changed their political positions and allegiances with the changing times. While I do not have the numbers to back this claim up, I think it is reasonable to assume that there are proportionally fewer nationalist historians today than there were in the late 19th century just as there are fewer Marxist historians around today than there were pre-1989.

I have further no reason to doubt that historians of all of these political persuasions have followed the disciplinary norms and methodological rules that make historiography a science, and with that, produced proper knowledge of the past. In other words, on the face of it, there is no blanket negative relation between the political persuasion of a historian, or some more specific political affiliation of theirs, and the epistemic goals that they centrally pursue as historians. However, examples of such negative influence surely exist; most well-known are the cases of Nazism and Stalinism where historians produced seriously revisionist accounts of

the past or just straight-up fake history because of their political allegiances to those totalitarian regimes (on historians under Nazism, see Motadel 2023: 44; for historians under Stalin, Ferro 2003: 163-174).[52] Conversely, examples can also be found where the political commitments and values of historians had a positive influence on their historiographic work. We would not have feminist historiography and Gender History today in the form that we know them if it was not for the political commitments of female historians and feminist activists in the 1960s (Scott 1988: 16-27); and likewise would we not have "History from Below" or Labour History in their current forms without the Marxist commitments of E. P. Thompson and other historians of the Communist Party Historians Group in Britain (among them again Eric Hobsbawm) (Lynd 2014; Satia 2020). Given this complicated interaction between historians and political beliefs and values that we have recounted in only a few examples—historians have held a wide variety of (changing) political beliefs in the past and present and these beliefs have positively and negatively influenced their work as historians—there seem to be no quick and easy answers to the question of the *influence of politics on the historian's work*. Instead, I think we have to look in detail at the *different aspects* that make up the work of the historian and at *cases* of how (un-)political historians argue and infer descriptions of the past with the help of or against their political beliefs. (As in so many other questions in the philosophy of historiography, here too we need to be more empirical than we have been so far; see section I.5 and I.6 above for this need of an empirical turn.). Only through such attention to detail will we be able to properly analyse the relationship between historians and political beliefs and ideologies.

Turning the (causal) arrow around, pointing now from historiography to politics, another related set of questions concerns the *influence that historiography*

[52] The need for legitimization through history, or better: History, was particularly acute for the Soviet system as the official Marxist state ideology saw the Party and the state as the incarnations of the progressive movement of History towards Socialism. This speculative philosophy of history based on "determinist dogmas concerning phases of history" (Ferro 2003: 171)—primitive communism was to be followed by slavery, feudalism, capitalism and finally socialism as the goal of History— created along with the compulsion to show the party as the incarnation of this inexorable march towards Socialism endless demand to falsify history and adjust it to the most recent political maneuver of the Party in the present. In Marc Ferro's words: "For the historian of the Communist Party has, in the USSR, much the same function as a theologian in an Islamic or Christian country: the object of his teaching is to reinforce and add stature to the existing institutions. This function is not formally required by the Soviet system, but its leaders, Stalin in particular, insisted upon it in an extreme degree, so that the past was transformed and distorted according to the twists and turns of the political 'line', which had always to be explained by the necessities of history-in-the-making." (Ferro 2004: 167).

has on politics and the *role* that historians as historians might want to (or should) play in the political sphere. This is also a bone of contention in the profession, and opinions differ widely (see article III below, and on some such very recent disagreement in American historiography on this point, Gangl 2022). In the 19th century, historiography was seen as "the school of statesmanship", as the British historian J. R. Seeley put it in 1870 (Seeley 1870, quoted acc. to Motadel 2023: 39), and many of the leading politicians of the day underwent professional historiographic training, even if they then chose to go into politics instead of joining the historical profession. Historiography is indeed sometimes called the master discipline of the 19th century, with historians taking up leading positions in the intellectual and political debates of their time and sometimes also in the Empires that they were serving (on the 19th century as the "Age of History", see section 1.3 above). Taking Germany as example again, central figures in the profession such as Heinrich von Treitschke, Gustav Droysen, or Theodor Mommsen were all centrally involved in the leading political debates of the late 19th century, often, again, opposing each other in them. Treitschke and Mommsen, for example, were the main adversaries in the so-called "Berliner Antisemitismusstreit" (the "Berlin Antisemitism Dispute"), in which Treitschke spouted antisemitic ressentiments and demanded of the Jews to leave their "particularity" behind and fully assimilate themselves to the Christian majority and Mommsen championed a liberal understanding of the equality of all citizens before the state (Geismann 1993). Gone are the days, however, of this sort of central involvement of many historians in the main political debates of their day. Today, historians are seen mostly as *topical experts* who occupy one seat among many at the high table of politics and political decision making, if they are asked to participate at all. This expert role, one among many, points us to the question of the *usefulness and centrality of historiographic knowledge and expertise for political discussions and decision making*. Whether historians want it or not, whether they are aware of it or not, they often produce the "raw material for the non-professionals' use of misuse of the past" (Hobsbawm 1994: 55), and one such very central public (mis-)use of the past happens in the political sphere. In this sense, historians might be particularly beholden to politics, and they might feel (or have) the duty to engage in or with it.

This public role of the historian as a (topical) expert and epistemic authority on the past separated from the politics of the day is itself only a product of the 18th and 19th century. It was precipitated by the emergence of a wide-ranging discursive public sphere and by the fundamental detachment of historiography from the ruling powers of society and their traditionalist self-legitimatory "past needs", which

allowed historians to orientate themselves towards critical cognitive values and the goal of producing knowledge of the past only. In earlier times, historians were dependent on the patronage of their masters and their accounts of the past mostly looked the part. For most of the pre-scientific history of the discipline, the past was written about in either the "historia magistra vitae" tradition which "described examples of good and evil, prudent and imprudent speech and action" so as to "provide moral and political lessons valid in all times and places" (Grafton 1997: 23; on the whole "historia magistra vitae" tradition, see Koselleck 1985). Or the purpose was to legitimize the institutions, practices, and rulers of the time by linking them to some purported historical origin, lineage or antiquity, which often just meant to invent traditions for the sake of legitimizing the present (and to malign one's enemies in the past or present where necessary) (Tucker 2004a: 57).[53] Against this backdrop, the 19th century saw the widespread acceptance of the (historicist) insight that the past was in a sense unique and more complex than ever imagined and with the institutionalization of scientific historiography the reliable means to grasp this new-found diversity. However, these developments ruptured the close connection historiography had to both, politics and the present. With the present often being nothing like the past, historiography's usefulness for politics was called into question at the very moment that the grip of politics on the discipline loosened, and with that, the way was paved for the historian to become only one topical expert among many, at best. So, as soon as historiography developed the means to reliably produce knowledge of the past, it was relegated to be one perspective among many, despite the pretensions of some (19th century) historians. This basically is still the situation historiography finds itself in when it come to the discipline's relationship to politics and the powers that be.

Given this *complex intertwining but also separation between historiography and politics as spheres on the one hand and between the political beliefs and values and the epistemic goals* that historians pursue on the other, the first question to

[53] This invention of traditions for the purpose of the legitimization of the present has of course not vanished in modern times. Take nationalism as example. As Eric Hobsbawm has reminded us countless times, "nations are historically novel entities pretending to have existed for a very long time" (Hobsbawm 1994: 55; see also Hobsbawm 1983). Such forms of "identity history, old and new" (Hobsbawm 1994: 55) put traditional legitimization interests ahead of the cognitive interest of gaining knowledge of the past. It was only in the 19th century that historiography could free itself from the firm grip of the ruling powers of society and their legitimization needs and found a tradition of its own that is based scientific cognitive values and truth-conducive methods. And even today this more sober epistemic relation to the past is anything but hegemonial in society, and it is an open question whether it should or could be, within politics and more generally.

address is which parts of a historian's work are exactly influenced, positively or negatively, by their politics. Historians themselves, for the most part, agree that there are certain forms of political influence on historiography that are to be rejected, just as there are others that are usually welcomed. In the next section, we will discuss these positions of historians in some detail. This will enable us to take them as a point of departure for both, scrutinizing the positive influence politics can have on the historian's work and philosophically reconstructing why there is a threshold beyond which politics must not enter if historiography is to remain a scientific endeavour. This is done in two sections following the next. I end this chapter with an outline of a future philosophical research programme concerning the relationship of politics and historiography and some reflections on the *inevitable dependence of historiography on politics* despite of it all. From this dependence follow certain *metapolitical interests* to uphold democracy that all historians (should) share if they want their disciplinary endeavour to continue. Likewise, do democratic societies have an interest in an independent and scientific historiography. Historiographic reason cannot produce the conditions of its thriving all by itself and this directs historiography inevitably back to politics and the wider constitution of society, just as a society cannot thrive without the application of (historiographic) reason.

3.1 Politics, Politicism, and Some Basic Agreement Among Historians

If we want to understand the influence that political beliefs and politics have on the historian and their discipline, we first need some working definition of politics. For our purposes, some textbook definition will do, as it already highlights the main differences between politics on the one side and historiography on the other. Politics, in its broadest, is about how we want to live and how collective decisions should be made. I therefore define politics here as the "collective organization of communal life" and as the "the activity through which people make, preserve, and amend the general rules under which they live" (on such very basic definitions of politics, see Heywood 2013). Political theory is traditionally concerned with three main issues: the goals of politics, the processes by which those goals are pursued and attained, and the arenas of politics. There are many different political theories that differ on all three of these aspects, but traditional views with still some purchase are, for instance, that the goal of politics is eudaimonia or human flourishing, that the process of politics is deliberative, and that the main arena of

politics is the state. Whatever the actual goals, processes, or arenas of politics, it is clear that politics is based on certain *political values* that the political process is said to express, and/or which are said to be the goals of politics. Some such values that often underpin politics are freedom, justice, equality, (national) self-determination, and so on (Lacey 2017: 16). Different political actors cherish different political values, and they judge the same political values differently, and on the face of it, it is not clear whether such political values are playing any meaningful role in historiography, or that they should be.

Politics further is *future-oriented*. It is about what should and perhaps must be done for the organization of communal life. It is about collective action, authority, and the power to realize one's political goals and values, often against political opponents or even adversaries. This already demarcates a fundamental difference between the *logics* of historiography and those of politics. Historiography is for the most part a *knowledge-oriented discourse aimed at the past* and not a *practical discourse geared at the future*. The discipline's goals and values are therefore mainly being *cognitive* or *epistemic*, and not political, social, or moral (Tucker 2008: 4; on the fundamental difference between cognitive and non-cognitive values, see Lacey 2017). The discipline is not essentially geared towards collective action and political goals, neither is it shot through by a logic of power whose main goal is to organize majorities and create approval for one's own political decisions. In politics, there are many conflicting interests, competing needs, different wants and visions of the future, and rival opinions between which there is often no good method to decide (or at least there is no willingness to submit to such a method or to abide by its results); in historiography, there is one widely accepted goal—the production of knowledge of the past—along with an equally accepted method to attain that goal (source criticism or information evaluation). In that sense, for all its strife, historiography is not as "agonistic" as politics is, as there are on the face of it a common goal and there are no fundamentally conflicting values, interests, wants, or future visions involved, at least so long as such "external" issues as funding are not concerned.

Politics and its logic are based on *partisanship* then, though there is still some (procedural) rules to which all political actors subscribe, as politics is not coercion or sheer violence (that is if you are not a Fascist or some other form of totalitarian). A political advocate is thus someone who takes their partisan beliefs about something for *granted* and in the political process at stake as a given. The point for them is to rally others behind their cause and then act on it. A historian or scientist cannot take this position of partisanship or advocacy, at least within their own

knowledge-oriented practices. When historians approach the past, they stand on nobody's side so to speak, or their partisan beliefs are at least not immediately relevant for their scholarly pursuits concerning the past; historians need to be objective towards their objects of interest even if they are not politically neutral towards them (Newall 2009b: 173) (And as we have seen above in I.5, objective here does not mean having no theoretical preconceptions, which is impossible. See also article III below.) Cognitive values trump political values here. Historians, as it were, must at least entertain the possibility that they could be wrong and that they can be persuaded by contrary argument or evidence if it were to appear (Hobsbawm 1997a: 131-132). There is in this sense a boundary between politics and historiography that cannot be crossed, as they display different perspectives (past vs. future) and especially different logics (pursuit of knowledge and objectivity vs. realization of political goals and partisanship). The overstepping of this boundary and the *extension of the partisan (power) logic of politics onto historiography* is known as *politicism*, an epistemic vice historian (near) universally reject.

Before we come to this serious danger for any scientific historiography, especially as the state and ruling political parties often wield considerable coercive powers in the form of repressive state apparatuses that can easily suppress (or worse) any scientific historiography, a few more differentiations are due. Historians often talk about the "politics of history" (Motadel 2023: 42; see also Scott 1988: 10-11), and they usually mean one of two things with it: 1) the political use of the past, either in the form of the knowledge of the past that historiography produces or in the form of some bogus account of it; 2) the politics of the discipline itself, either in narrower or wider sense. I will use *politics of the past* only in the former sense, and for the latter issue I will reserve the term *politics of historiography*. The politics of historiography comes, as said, in two forms: a) as the governing and internal political organization of the discipline (narrower definition); and b) as the relationship between the discipline as a whole and politics (wider definition). While historiography has an interest in politics not encroaching on its territory—that is, historians have an interest in rebuffing any form of politicism—the discipline must relate to politics in some sense, given the coercive powers the state wields, its dependence on general social conditions beyond its making and control, and the need for material support in modern societies where historiography is mainly pursued in university settings. The differentiation between both spheres opens the *possibility of a politics (of the past) that is genuinely based on historiographic knowledge*, just as much as it allows historians to enter politics themselves as historians or topical experts about some past. (They obviously might enter politics

as politicians too, but then they should make clear that their role is not that of a topical expert anymore and that they hold no epistemic privilege on most questions of political concern.)

Next, the term *political historian* is equally ambiguous and might mean one of two things: α) a historian of past politics or some political aspects of the past; β) a historian whose approach to the past is influenced by some political beliefs or values that they hold (this distinction is inspired by a similar one made by Jonathan Gorman about moral historians, see Gorman 2009: 253). We can obviously have α) without β), a historian of politics who does not approach their subject matter through their own political values or beliefs (just as such historians of politics can be entirely unpolitical themselves). Likewise, can we have historians in the sense of β) who approach the past via their politics that do not fall under α), i.e. historians might very well apply their political values on parts of the past that are not in themselves political. In any case, our interest in this chapter lies with β) and the influence that political positions and values have on the work of historians throughout. When speaking about *political historians* I therefore only mean historians in the sense of β); "political historians" in the sense of α), I suggest calling *historians of politics* instead.

Now, political historians in the sense just defined might hold anything from *single political beliefs* or *values* that influence their work, say "women are equal to men", to broad *social philosophies* or *political ideology systems* (with ideology here being used in its nonpejorative meaning as an interconnected system of ideas). By social philosophy or political ideology, I mean something like socialism/Marxism or feminism/poststructuralism, where the former stands for a political movement with a political goal and the latter for some philosophical system or scientific theory that is said to undergird the politics (but in both cases the terms are also used interchangeably). These social philosophies or political ideology systems are a complex intermesh of basic philosophical commitments, usually of a metaphysical and epistemological kind, theoretical frameworks and categories, factual statements, and certain political and other values; with their meanings and exact contents often essentially contested even among the adherents of the political ideology system. For their adherents, these political ideologies further usually appear as a "package deal"—take one, take all—but how the different elements of the system actually hang together and (inferentially) justify each other along with the politics and the historiographic work itself is difficult to say and an open question (more on this below in the section on the apolitical character of historiographic method). Some renowned historians hold exactly such

political ideology systems that they see as both conducive to their historiographic work and justifying their more immediate political goals. Other historians might not have any such wide-ranging political and philosophical belief system underpinning their work while still being political historians in the sense that there are some more specific political beliefs or values that underwrite their epistemic practices in a more specific way, while still others have no such political beliefs or belief systems at all active in their historiographic work.

Examples of renowned historians endorsing such wide-ranging political ideology systems are Eric Hobsbawm and Joan Wallach Scott. Hobsbawm sees his social historiography underwritten by his Marxist worldview (Hobsbawm 1997b; Hobsbawm 1997c), and Scott sees her feminist historiography underpinned by "a more radical epistemology" that she identifies with "post-structuralism" (Scott 1988: 4). For Scott, this "radical epistemology (…) relativizes the status of all knowledge, links knowledge to power, and theorizes these in terms of the operation of difference" (Scott 1988: 4). Such a poststructuralist and feminist epistemology is further "profoundly political" in its implications because "it puts conflict at the center of its analysis" (Scott 1988: 9), with the basic philosophical commitment here being that any form of difference and differentiation is repressive in nature and, in this sense, creating (political) conflict.[54] Hobsbawm held similarly abstract philosophical and theoretical commitments, though of a rather different kind from Scott's, that he equally saw as undergirding both his historiographic and his political work. In an essay titled "What Do Historians Owe to Karl Marx?" (Hobsbawm 1997b), he spells his own Marxist commitments out. Hobsbawm lets us know that the "chief value of Marx for historians today" (Hobsbawm 1997b: 148) lies in Marx's discovery that societies are systems of relations that are entered into for the sake of production and reproduction, and that these relations are structured hierarchically ("basis/superstructure") and riven by internal tensions. These basic (ontological) commitments allow Marxism "to explain (…) why and how societies change and transform themselves: in other words, the facts of social

[54] Scott banks theoretically here on Derrida and Foucault, but Nietzsche also comes to mind as forefather of this understanding of conflict and difference, just as for Scott's "agonistic" definition of politics as necessarily conflictual and power-driven; and Foucault at least was of course heavily indebted to Nietzsche, something he readily admitted (Foucault 1980). It would be another worthwhile research project to look in detail at the notions of politics and democracy that different historians hold. It is my hunch that Scott's all-encompassing agonistic understanding of politics is a minority position here. The understanding of politics of the "Association of German Historians" (VHD) that I analyse in detail in article IV below (see also II.4 above) is, for instance, deliberative and in a wide sense Habermasian, and not agonistic.

evolution" (Hobsbawm 1997b: 149), something no other historiographic school or approach is able to do, so Hobsbawm.

Now, the point here is not to discuss these basic philosophical and political commitments of Hobsbawm and Scott in any detail, but to show the *breadth and diversity of the political belief systems that might influence historiographic work*, as these beliefs come with very different contents and in all sizes, from simple political beliefs and values, over grand scope (and vague) social theories, to whole social philosophies and political ideology systems that aim to realize certain (revolutionary) political goals. These cases also show that political and philosophical beliefs can make a prima facie claim to play a central role in the work of historians. Both Hobsbawm and Scott say so and they are both eminent historians. Hobsbawm even claims that no other historiographic approach or school can do what his Marxism enables him to do, i.e. to "explain why and how societies change". This should make us take these claims philosophically serious.

Beyond explicit political beliefs of whatever shape or form that historians themselves claim influence their historiographic work, there is another argument that posits the influence of the political ideas and the politics of their time on *any* historian: "the child of their times argument". This position is shared by most historians for what I can tell, and here is Hobsbawm's rendition of it:

> "There is the barely controversial proposition that the scientist, a child of his or her time, reflects the ideological and other preconditions of his/her milieu and historically or socially specific experiences and interests" (Hobsbawm 1997a: 125)[55]

This, again, is a reasonable starting point for assessing the influence political beliefs *could* have on *any* historian's work. The historian, like anyone else, is a "child of her times"; this basic historicist insight fits onto historians themselves just as much as they are applying it to the humans of the past (and underpinning the applicability of the principle is the "ontological historicism" that we discussed in II.2 above). Historians are shaped by and reflect their times, and they must therefore make use of the (intellectual) tools and "thought forms" of their own present in their efforts

[55] For good measure, see also this very similar formulation the historian David Motadel, whose text was written more than 40 years after Hobsbawm's piece that originally appeared in 1979: "Most would agree that the work of historians – including their choice of topic, their epistemic categories, the selection and order of information, the language used in their analysis, and so on – is, consciously or unconsciously, shaped by their own time and clime" (Motadel 2023: 40). See also very similarly Evans (Evans 1997: 168) and Oreskes (Oreskes 2013: 603-604) for even more historians making the "child of their times argument".

to produce knowledge of the past. (In article II below, I call this basic determination of every historian by their times "existential presentism".) Some of these tools and "thought forms" might very well be political beliefs and values historians came to hold due to their "milieu and historically or socially specific experiences and interests". In article II below (see also section II.3 above), I argue that is "existential presentism" of all historians can have decisive epistemic advantages too and that the historian can also, through the discipline's methods and temporal debiasing and disembedding techniques, counteract this basic determination or conditioning, there where it is epistemically detrimental. For the moment, however, we can accept this point and remark only that it is a rather *abstract and vague claim* and that it still remains unclear how this basic determination of the historian by their own times and their politics actually influences their historiographic work positively or negatively, if it does so at all.

This is especially so because most historians also draw a firm line as to where this (political) influence of their own times must end if historians want to go on with their scientific endeavour. In the same text of Hobsbawm's, titled "Partisanship", from which we just quoted the "child of their times argument", Hobsbawm goes on to say "that the criteria of validation are objective" (Hobsbawm 1997a: 127), and that there are "non-controversial procedures for verifying or falsifying evidence, and non-controversial arguments about it" (Hobsbawm 1997a: 126). This stance on the *objectivity of historiographic method* is near-universal among historians, I believe; it is shared by Joan Scott (Scott 1988: 20) just as much as by any other historians, despite their obvious differences in terms political beliefs, or in the case of Hobsbawm and Scott as we have seen, their differences in grand social philosophies or political ideologies.[56] There is no space for politics or political beliefs when it comes to the methodological standards of the discipline and the rules of evidence, just as politics plays no role in the philosophical justification of those methods and rules, as we will see in detail below. For the historian, there is a "supremacy of evidence" (Hobsbawm 1994: 57) over political values and beliefs on this level, but also over general social theory, and political values and beliefs must not enter the domain of the epistemic justification of the historian's descriptions of the past, though some theory is obviously needed in any historiographic epistemic act (on the philosophical reconstruction of the process of

[56] Here again how Motadel puts this central point: "In the end, present-day historical research – the production of knowledge about the past based on the collection, examination, and interpretation of empirical evidence – is governed by a set of controllable rules" (Motadel 2023: 40). Similarly, again, also Evans (Evans 1997: 223) and Oreskes (Oreskes 2013: 604).

knowledge production via informational and other background theories in historiography, see section I.5 above). This, in turn, means that the descriptions of the past that historians furnish, if justified, are independent from both the political beliefs that they hold and from the (political) theories that Hobsbawm and Scott present us with, which means that we should further investigate their usefulness in the historiographic research process. [57]

Having reconstructed the small or big political beliefs that (some) historians hold, the (potential) political influences from their present that they undergo ("child of their times"), and the threshold beyond which politics must not enter ("objectivity of the historical method"), we can now finally turn to the issue of *politicism*. Politicism, then, is the application of political beliefs, standards, or values to aspects of historiography (or life more generally) where they have no say and to judge these areas by those extraneous political standards and values. One such politicism is the plain *subordination* of the historian's epistemic goals and her findings under her political or ideological commitments and values, or under the political or ideological positions of the authorities that she accepts or must accept by threat of repression (Hobsbawm 1997a: 124). In such cases, historiography is made to yield to politics and the epistemic practices of the historian are openly

[57] Historiography is fundamentally bound by the evidential record, which is very lopsided and often also biased. This selectivity and bias is unfortunate given our goals of producing knowledge of the past and it might be deemed politically unjust, but it cannot be undone. Historiographic evidence in the form of documents must by definition be written by the literate, throughout much of history a fleeting minority closely associated with the ruling powers of a society. Plus, the authors of historical documents were willful humans that wrote with some intention in mind, if not with some bias or ulterior motive. Historiography has developed reliable methods to vet these documents and infer knowledge of the past through them, even if they individually carry very little credibility. What historiography cannot do, is to go to work where there is no evidence, which means that much of history is probably lost forever, as no information about it was preserved into our present. This poses a fundamental limit to our knowledge of the past, a limit which actors external to the discipline often do not accept. People might turn to the past for all kinds of political reasons and edificatory purposes, in the hopes of finding consolation for perceived injustices, retribution for (past) humiliation, or as an antidote for feelings of absurdity or inadequacy. Yet, the fulfillment of these non-cognitive needs and any form of edification are incidental to scientific historiography, the discipline cannot make them its goal without giving up on its very *raison d'être*. Truth be told, if that are the reasons for turning to the past, some bogus account should fit one's "past needs" much better anyways, as such an account can be tailored directly to those non-cognitive needs. And this is exactly what we see. The Fascists, authoritarians, and the populists of our day, but also some identitarian Leftists, create a past of their making that is tailored to fit their political needs and partisan positions in the present, instead of turning to historiography and the complicated and often unpleasant truths about the past that it produces. And of course, where historiography is in their way or openly questions their bunk, these political actors with ulterior motives go on the attack. In this situation, historiography must itself act politically and find a forceful response to these bad faith actors. One such response, the so-called "Resolution of Münster" of the "Association of German Historians" (VHD), I analysed in detail in article IV below (see also II.4 above for a summary of my argument).

subjugated to their political beliefs or to the political dogmas of the state in which they live. Examples of this kind of *ideological politicism* that is often just as cynical ("we know there is historical truth but we don't care about it") are easily found again in the authoritarian and totalitarian political systems of the 20th century, but also most recently in Russia or China, among other places, where historians are regularly being persecuted for publishing unwelcome truths about the past of the nation or the ruling party or clique (Reuters 2021; Cadell 2021; Network of Concerned Historians 2022; the annual report of the Network of Concerned Historians is a very sobering read in this respect). Almost all historians unequivocally reject this form of politicism.

A more intricate and in some sense more insidious form of politicism is the claim that everything just is politics, or less starkly, that everything is *also* politics and has political function, purpose, or consequences. This form of politicism, let's call it *ubiquitous politicism*, seems more reputable, at least in some quarters, and it can be found among both historians and philosophers of history. Historians sometimes assert that everything is somehow political, at least in the second sense, despite most historians also claiming that their methods and their assessment of the evidence should be kept free from any political beliefs, incurring contradiction (for some such definition of everything of interest in historiography being also political, see Scott 1988: 26). As to the philosophers, Hayden White and some postmodernists such as Keith Jenkins have made statements before that come close to the former kind of ubiquitous politicism, i.e. that everything in historiography just is politics in disguise (Jenkins 1995: 8-9).

Concerning the latter claim that everything is *also* political and has political consequences, this fundamentally depends on one's notion of politics, but more importantly, it is again so *abstract and vague* that by itself it is uninteresting for any serious philosophical analysis of historiography. When this claim is made more concrete, however, it boils down to the questions of how political beliefs and politics influence historiographic practices and how, conversely, the fruits of historiography are being used in politics and how historians themselves act in this sphere ("function, purpose, or consequences"); and these are exactly the questions that animate this chapter. Also, this claim is ipso facto contradicted by historians also claiming that the issues of method and historiographic inference should be kept free from politics. If the latter claim is correct, then this (weaker) version of politicism is refuted; that it is correct, we will see in the section after the next.

As to the issue that everything just *is* politics and that historiographic practices and products are just political ones in disguise, this obviously does not square with

the statements of historians that politics should play no role whatsoever in them either. The politicists here would have to show how historians systematically deceive themselves about the nature of their epistemic endeavour and that some sort of on this level mostly unconscious political beliefs and values are the actual source of their agreement over historiographic method and justification.[58] This problem is exacerbated for the politicist by the fact that this is a near-universal agreement between historians of ostensibly *different political persuasions* (on the centrality of the analysis of this kind of heterogeneous agreement for the future of the philosophy of historiography, see also section I.6 above). Finally, our philosophical analysis of those methods below will show in detail that that the best explanation for the agreement of historians on method is the very truth-conduciveness of those methods and that political beliefs play no role when it comes to historiographic method or the actual justification of propositions about the past. All in all, we thus have no reason to accept the ubiquitous politicism discussed either in weaker or stronger form, and historians do not accept them either even if they hold that their political beliefs play an important role in their historiographic practice, as renowned historians such as Scott and Hobsbawm do. Quite the opposite, any form of politicism is detrimental to the main cognitive goals of historiography, i.e. to the production of knowledge of the past. And if historiography cannot produce knowledge of the past, then society will have lost its most reliable institution for a rational and truthful relation to the past, something I suspect the politicists wanted all along.

[58] Claims of Keith Jenkins and others come close to this as they not only assert that historiography just is politics, but that it is a specific kind of politics that they oppose: bourgeois or conservative politics (Jenkins 1995: 8-9; see also Pihlainen 2021: 22-23). And if historians are not directly held to be the (unknowing) adherents of the same middle-class bourgeois ideology, it is at least their "pretension" to tell the truth about the past and the realist form of narrative they deploy, feigning to faithfully represent what has happened, that makes historiography conservative or bourgeois. The latter "pretension" and historiographic narrative disempower the people and prevent them from creating their own stories about the past, and through that, historians support conservative values and the bourgeois status quo by the mere form of their texts (Pihlainen 2017: 11-12; with the classic formulation of this argument to be found in White 1987c: 82). So, content, form, content of the form, do what you will, historians are conservatives. However, what we have here besides some philosophically unconvincing radical constructivism and skepticism about knowledge of the past that we already dealt with above (see especially the sections I.5 and II.5), are very doubtful empirical claims about both the political positions of historians and the readers of historiography. It is just not the case that all historians are middle-class conservatives or that historiographic narratives by necessity disempower their readers. One example out of a myriad here is E.P. Thompson and his famous "The Making of the English Working Class" (Thompson 1966). Thompson was a Marxist, not a conservative, and his book has been a source of inspiration, and in that sense of empowerment, for generations of socialists in Britain and elsewhere around the world.

This concludes our section on the basic differentiation between historiography and politics and on the political beliefs that (some) historians hold. Whether or not a historian considers themself political, there is some *basic agreement* among historians about politics and the influence of politics on their work. Historians reject all forms of *politicism*, and they believe their *methods and the actual process of the assessment of evidence to be free from any politics*. At the same time, do most of them also acknowledge that they *are influenced by the political beliefs and conditions of their own present* ("child of their time argument"). Plus, some historians further hold *particular political beliefs or even political ideology systems* that they see as influencing their work as historians (while others, again, are unpolitical and claim to hold no such beliefs). Politics and historiography are further based on *different logics* and a *contrary temporal perspective*, along with *fundamentally different values*. Historiography is a *knowledge-oriented discourse* geared at the past, and politics is a *future-oriented partisan activity* that seeks *majorities* and *approval*. Any historian entering the political sphere should be keenly aware of these differences, and we will come back to them in the end of this chapter. But before, we still need to discuss the *positive influence* that political beliefs can have on historiographic work despite all the caveats that we discussed in this section, along with the *apolitical justification of historiographic method*.

3.2 The Positive Influence of Politics on Historiography

In this section, I would like to discuss the positive influence political beliefs and values can have on different aspects of the historian's work, all having to do with the discipline's prime epistemic goal of producing knowledge of the past. These aspects are: the *discovery of new historiographic topics, questions, and explananda*; the *implementation of new approaches towards existing evidence and the detection of new (forms of) evidence*; the *adoption of new standards of historiographic significance*; the *introduction of new theories*; and the *creation of impulses to change the internal composition and the orientation of the discipline as a whole*. My examples of influences of this kind are taken from feminist historiography, and here especially from Joan Wallach Scott's book *Gender and the Politics of History* (Scott 1988). In this work, Scott lays out how political feminists and feminist historians changed historiography from the 1960s on (see especially Scott 1988: 15-18).

As Scott makes clear, feminist historiography has overtly political values, motives, and goals that it pursues. The political goal of feminist historians that also

animates much of their historiographic work is "to point out and change inequalities between women and men" (Scott 1988: 3). Scott goes even further and states that feminist politics and the academic study of gender are part of the one and same political project whose goal it is to change the power distribution between the genders in society (Scott 1988: 6). One can surmise here that the "academic study of gender", historiography included, furnishes some of the knowledge that is being used in the feminist political project, in an effort to change the gender inequalities and the power distribution of present society.

Now, given these political beliefs and values—women and men should be equal and the academic study of gender relations is needed to accomplish this equality—it should not wonder us that feminist historians turned to new historiographic *topics* that are congruent with these political goals and beliefs, that is that they founded what first came to be known as women's history, but which now is mostly known as Gender or Feminist History. (Consistent with the nomenclature I introduced in I.2 above, I will call the field feminist or gender historiography.) This mechanism of political beliefs leading to interest in or discovery of new historiographic topics, or even to the founding of new historiographic subfields if they manage to institutionalize themselves, is well known from the historiographies of other marginalized groups too. Historians with working class background and/or Marxist political beliefs founded labour history and "History from Below" (see the influence of E.P. Thompson and Hobsbawm here that we already mentioned; Lynd 2014); Black historians and historians with antiracist beliefs were instrumental in the creation of a historiography of Black Americans (Potts 1994); and most recently, we see the burgeoning of Queer or Transgender historiography led by activists and scholars animated by a belief in the equality of all genders and sexual identities (Hanhard 2019; Agarwal 2018).

Coming back to feminist historiography, the political impulse led more concretely to new *historiographic questions*, *subjects*, and *explananda*. Once you have recognized women as topics of equal historiographic interest, that is once you have recognized them as historical subjects in their own right, then you can ask specific historiographic questions and delineate appropriate explananda about them. In Scott's own words, feminist historiography made "women a focus of inquiry, a subject of the story, an agent of the narrative" (Scott 1988: 17). As for the actual new explananda concerning these new subjects, the "personal, subjective experience" (Scott 1988: 29) of past women became of interest thanks to the political beliefs and values of the feminist historians (among them "the private is political"). Given that historiography as a discipline came into being with a focus

on political and diplomatic history (see I.3 above on this process)—domains that have historically been strongly male-dominated and which are public in nature—and given that the overwhelming majority of historians until not too long ago were men, it is easy to see how women were not really being acknowledged as historical subjects before the feminist intervention, and how "personal, subjective experiences" were not conceived to be historiographic explananda of any kind of interest. Once there is such interest in (the history of) women and their doings though, it becomes clear that historiography cannot be limited to politics, diplomacy, and their usual and well-established explananda (wars, treaties, etc.). Furthermore, in earlier, and especially early modern times, women were often confined to the private realm of domesticity and much of the information they left behind was in the form of ego documents such as diaries. In such an environment and with women as one's object of interest, it makes sense to think of personal and subjective experiences as equally interesting explananda of historiography.

The latter point already touches on the next aspect of the historian's work which can be positively influenced by political beliefs and values: the *approach to the evidence*. If feminist historians hadn't been interested in the history of women and if they had not been intend to gaining knowledge about such new explananda as personal and subjective experiences, there would have been no reason to care about the information contained in domestic diaries and other ego documents of women of the past, and in this sense they would not have been considered as historiographic source material or evidence (on the use of diaries in feminist and other historiography, see Paperno 2004, especially 563-566). It therefore was their feminist political commitments that let feminist historians to the *discovery of new (forms of) evidence*. In addition, their feminist approach furnished these historians also with a *new perspective* towards already existing evidence. Scott gives the example of the British feminist social historians Jill Liddington and Jill Norris who investigated the participation of working-class women in the English suffrage campaigns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Scott 1988: 29). Their politically influenced research interest gave them a fresh perspective on existing evidence, in their case archival records from Manchester. In addition, did they conduct oral history interviews with former female activists in those campaigns for suffrage, that is they both *created new data and evidence* and *discovered new information* in existing sources. In this sense, political values and beliefs can help historians in the *detection of new (forms of) evidence*, in the *creation* of *new historiographic evidence*, and in developing a *new perspective towards already existing historiographic evidence*.

Next, Scott further shows that feminist historians challenged the (contingent) *standards of historiographic significance* that prevailed in the discipline before the 1960s (Scott 1988: 20, 29). By historiographic significance, I mean here the parts of the past historians deem as worthy of retelling, applying some present-day external and subjective standard (Danto 1985: 142). This historiographic significance is to be differentiated from historical significance, the latter's criterion being causal (see article I below and section II.1 above). Feminist historians insisted, as we have seen, that women had a history too, that there were specific explananda about them, and that they also played a significant role in many of received stories of the past, usually told by male historians about other men. In other words, the feminist historians asserted that the deeds of past women were *important* too and just as much worthy of being retold as the doings of (great) men. This challenge to the *standards of significance* of the discipline thus led to the project of a wider "feminist rewriting of history" (Scott 1988: 17), as the history of women often was not only not told, but they were also left out of those stories which were told and in which they played important but neglected roles. As such, feminist historiography questioned the received view of what was significant in history, say of the Neo-Rankean sort which saw the state as some kind of superior social reality, or the "Great Men Theory of History" that was often also held in previous times. Well into the 20th century, history was still told in a way as if only the "great men" mattered; it was in this sense really (aristocratic) *his*tory instead of *her*story or "*all*story" (on the Neo-Rankean theory of the historical significance of the state, see Tucker 2016a: 363; on the "Great Men Theory of History", Ogburn 1926). In line with feminist intervention and critique in other sciences, these standards of significance of the discipline were exposed as not just being contingent, but as being fundamentally *biased* towards spheres that were very male-dominated and towards males in general. In other words, the standards of significance were shown to be essentially *androcentric*, i.e. they viewed males by default as the primary agents of history and their actions as of primary and often only historiographic importance (on such androcentrism in different sciences, see classically Longino 1990: 103-132). It is these in themselves *biased and ideologically androcentric standards of historiographic significance* that are rebuffed by feminist historiography with the help of its political beliefs and values.

Also, in its investigations of newly unearthed topics or while having a fresh look at old ones, feminist historiography did not restrict itself to the theoretical categories or the conceptual systems of traditional historiography. Quite to the contrary, feminist historiography also led to "conceptual reorientations" and to new

kinds of "theory" (Scott 1988: 18) being employed in historiography, "as a way of exploring the philosophical and political problems encountered by the producers of new knowledge about women" (Scott 1988: 18), so Scott. The theories and concepts she means here are derived from poststructuralism and designed to capture the dynamics of language, meaning, power, and difference. We have discussed these theoretical and philosophical commitments of Scott's already shortly in the last section as an example of a historian endorsing wide-ranging social philosophies or political ideology systems. While not all feminist historians share in this theory and philosophy—and I myself am critical about their simple application in historiography and about the poststructuralist theory of meaning and difference—, Scott asserts here that there is a natural fit between feminist politics and feminist historiography on the one side and poststructuralism on the other. All of three of them are according to her intent on questioning societal power relations and they are similarly critical of all kinds of fixity, "exclusions" and any "absolutist and totalizing stance" (Scott 1988: 9). In this sense, feminist political beliefs can be seen as underpinning the *introduction of a new philosophical position and attendant theoretical categories* into historiography.

The same mechanism can be observed with our other example of a social philosophy or political ideology system from above: Marxism. Committed socialists such as Hobsbawm introjected theories about social relations and their determination and tension into historiography (Hobsbawm 2011). Such philosophical principles and theories are obviously not the endpoint or goal of historiography. They are idealized models and ideal types that serve in the actual "epistemic event" (Kosso 1998: 21) of knowledge production via the evidence as negotiable and defeasible background assumptions and theories (see section I.5 above and the following section for details on this process; and Tucker 2004a: 164-165 for the notion of theory that I employ here). It is there where they have to prove themselves useful; but to be able to be useful in this way, the theories must have been *adopted* at one point, and in this adoption political values and beliefs can play a central role, as can be seen in the cases of feminist and Marxist historiography (on the role of values in the adoption of theories, as opposed to the theory's acceptance where only cognitive values should matter, see very illuminatingly Lacey 2017: 19-21). Without political beliefs and values, historiography would be much poorer in philosophical stipulations and grand theories to be used in actual research projects and processes, that much is clear. (And this mechanism is not limited to sciences whose subject matter concerns the human past or present. It can

also even be discerned in the experimental natural sciences; for examples, see Kuhn 1977: 333, fn. 8.)

Finally, Scott claims that this "feminist approach to gender, politics, and history" (Scott 1988: 10), quasi as a package deal, also "inspire[s] critical challenges to the politics of history" (Scott 1988: 10), which brings us to the issue of political beliefs and values challenging the *internal composition and the orientation of the discipline as a whole*. As Scott outlines, the feminist intervention into historiography did not go down smoothly, at least in the beginning, and was instead met with powerful resistance by the established powers that constituted "a disciplined body of knowledge and a professional institution" (Scott 1988: 18). Given the (sociological) emphasis on disciplinary and professional issues, we are now speaking not so much about epistemic issues any more as about the narrower politics of historiograph*y* in the way we defined this concept in the last section. Feminist historiography, intent as it is on equality between men and women, eventually succeeded in changing the internal composition of a discipline that was overwhelmingly male dominated, and in a self-reenforcing cycle, this gender diversification of the discipline led again to the introduction of new topics and theories, that is a topical reorientation of the discipline. Actually, this reorientation should be seen as a form of *expansion* and *diversification* of the canon above everything else, as the established topics of the discipline were not simply supplanted by the new feminist ones. Instead, the discipline was enriched by this novel perspective and theory, at the same time as the range of topics itself increased, and this in an overall expanding discipline (Evans 1999: 153). As such, this diversification of historiography had many *positive downstream epistemic effects* as a *quantitatively larger and more diverse discipline became interested in more and different things in the past* and also in different aspects of those things it was already interested in before.

Such an interjection of new and different people, topics, and approaches into the discipline counteracts the creeping tendencies of *self-insulation* and looking inwards only, in the literature on historiography often referred to as scholasticism or antiquarianism (Hobsbawm 1997a: 140). Political beliefs and values are instead "mechanisms for bringing new ideas, new questions, new challenges into the sciences" (Hobsbawm 1997a: 140), and this is especially important in cases where the scientist themselves hold unacknowledged (political) values that shape the discipline. Case in point here is the androcentrism of much of traditional historiography before the intervention of feminist historiography that we discussed above as a value-derived (and illicit) restriction on what counts as significant

history worthy of the attention of the historian. This phenomenon, again, is very well documented for many other sciences too where the specific social values that scientists hold—say around progress achievable by technological means or economic utility—influence which theories and perspectives they adopt in the first place (not to speak of the managerial class of university administrators and science politicians who are often even more strongly attached to certain social and economic values that they want science to advance); at the detriment of other theories that are supported by other political values such as social justice, democratic participation, or sustainability (Lacey 2017: 21-25). Given this interplay between certain values and biases across the sciences that create *blind spots*, we should want a discipline that is as diverse as possible in terms of identities and political beliefs, as it is usually marginalized and affected groups themselves who first bring the histories of those overlooked by the discipline into the historiographic tableau (on this issue, see also Gangl 2022).[59] Just as in the case of feminist historiography that we investigated in some detail in this section, other kinds political identities and beliefs that are incorporated into the discipline should similarly lead to the *discovery of new historiographic topics, questions, and explananda*; the *implementation of new approaches to existing evidence and the detection and creation of new (forms of) evidence*; to the *adoption of new standards*

[59] The creation of such blind spots through the values that scientists do hold is explained very well by Hugh Lacey, whose work on cognitive and social values in science is overall exemplary: "This helps to make clear that, if the relevant social values are not held by some scientists, the theories whose adoption would be motivated by them might not be explored, and well-founded understanding might not be obtained of certain kinds of phenomena" (Lacey 2017: 21). And that is the case even if the science that is performed under the prevailing values lives up to disciplinary epistemic standards, with the actual research process only being influenced by cognitive values that determine the acceptance of an adopted theory. Also, this means that we should have a keen interest in the social and political values that scientists actually do hold, and we should not accept them at face value as justified in the same way as their cognitive values are. Scientists might have parochial professional or other vested interests, just like any other group in society. Under the guise of science and scientific research, they might try to pass very specific, usually technocratic and economic values as politically and otherwise neutral cognitive values and so withdraw them from political discussion and democratic deliberation. And just like, as in politicism, political values can interfere and override the open and knowledge-oriented epistemic process that characterizes scientific enquiry, so can economic, aesthetic, moral, religious, and other values, creating epistemically equally vicious imperatives that lead research to predetermined conclusions. Examples of such subjugation of science in the name of economic and commercial values and interests are collected in Naomi Oreskes and Eric M. Conway's famous book *Merchants of Doubt* (Oreskes/Conway 2010). Therein, they show in detail how professional propagandists in unison with unscrupulous scientists have cherry picked data to spread doubt about the existence of harmful issues of great societal concern (active and passive inhalation of tobacco smoke, acid rain, the ozone hole, and climate change), bankrolled by the very industries that produced those harms in the first place and which profited from their concealment and continued existence.

of historiographic significance, and the *introduction of new theories*; and to *changes of the internal composition and the orientation of the discipline as whole*. These incorporations should all be welcomed, and probably even actively sought after if we want to have an epistemically thriving discipline. Under the caveat, though, that they do not overreach into matters of historiographic method and the epistemic justification of hypotheses about the past. For all the positive influence that political beliefs and values can have on historiography, these issues are strictly *apolitical* and must remain so. Why this is so, we will explore in the next section.

3.3 The Apolitical Nature and Justification of Historiographic Method

As we have seen above, basically all historians believe their methods and the process of the assessment of evidence to be free of any politics and they denounce any encroachment of politics into these spheres as illicit politicism. Of course, historians might be wrong in their phenomenological understanding of their own practices so that they mistakenly believe that politics plays no role in them. This is not per se an outlandish claim. As we have seen in section I.5 above, many historians believe themselves to be following some naïve inductive empiricism when producing knowledge of the past, which is not the case because the use of (informational) background theories is ineluctable in this process. However, I believe that historians are correct in their assessment of this issue. Politics and political beliefs should play no role in the epistemic process of generating knowledge of the past, and if they are introduced into this process, they are actively detrimental to this goal. In this section, I will attempt to substantiate this claim along the lines of three arguments: the *universality of the methods of historiography*; the *reliance on cognitive values and information theories only* in historiographic theory appraisal (not choice) and hypothesis validation. I will try to show that in the latter two matters political values and beliefs simply play no role. Concerning the former issue, I argue that the *truth-conduciveness of the method* is the best explanation for both the *spread* of the historiographic method beyond its contingent place of origin—late 18th and 19th century Germany (see I.3 above on the genesis of the method)—and for its *universal appeal* today among historians beyond any political, national, cultural borders, or specific identities.

Universality here includes three aspects: 1) the initial globalization of the method beyond Germany and Western Europe; 2) its global outreach and appeal today; and 3) its imperviousness to all kinds of cultural or personal identity

differences. The essential point about this *global and cultural universality of modern historiographic method* is that the method is shared by a large and otherwise very heterogenous group of historians around the whole world. For our purposes most important, historians of all kinds of political persuasions agree on this method; the Marxist Eric Hobsbawm, as we have seen, believes the method of source criticism to be objective and superior, just as conservative historians of the 19th century such as Ranke did. And so do the already mentioned contemporary historians Joan Scott, Richard Evans, David Motadel, and Naomi Oreskes who among them are historians not just of different political and theoretical persuasions, but also of different nationalities, genders, generations, and specializations. In other words, historians agree on historiographic method and the processes of vetting the evidence *despite* having very different political, theoretical, national, gender, generational, and subject identities. On the face of it, it is therefore unlikely that any of these identities accounts for this consensus, and the question becomes what else might account for it.

Add to this that historiography is not only done by Westerners—and all the historians I just mentioned are Westerners—who could arguably be said to share some cultural identity nevertheless, but that it is today a global phenomenon. So, we can add cultural differences to our list of differences *despite* of which the historiographic method is held too. Indeed, if we look at the issue historically, it is surprising how fast the methods of scientific historiography spread from their birthplace in Germany first to other leading Western nations of the time (first France and the US and a little later Britain) and from there through the sinews of Empire on to the colonial and non-Western world, for instance to places such as India, China, Japan, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire, where they often were used *against* the colonizers and imperialists and the bogus racist claims they held about those places (which also means these methods cannot be in any facile sense Western or Eurocentric; on the process of the rapid spread of the methods, see Woolf 2019: 196-212). Conversely, those who reject these methods, past or present, are usually a homogeneous group with specific grievances whose members share at least one of the social characteristics just mentioned towards which the historiographic method is fundamentally insensitive. Religious fundamentalists and political traditionalists of the imaginary sort (nationalists) reject historiographic methods because of their shared *dogmatic religious or nationalist beliefs* and the *therapeutic values* that underpin them (Tucker 2004a: 38-41). Therapeutic values "judge historiographic propositions according to their effect on the psychological well-being of their intended audience" (Tucker 2004a: 40; see also Tucker 2008: 3-5)

instead of on the basis of their epistemic goodness and cognitive values that track this goodness. Similarly also the new and old authoritarians on the Left, who deny historiographic method and the knowledge it produces because of some political, identitarian, or egalitarian dogma that they hold, no matter how superficially emancipatory their rhetoric is (see Gangl 2022). In line with this, historiography and its methods were and are still suppressed in countries that strongly commit to a certain political dogma, as was the case with Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and is the case today in countries such as Russia and China, among other places. In other words, while the historiographic method is held all around the world by a large and heterogeneous group of historians in terms of political and other identities, those who reject these methods usually share certain specific political or identity characteristics, just as countries that base themselves on such specific characteristics or (political) ideologies suppress independent historiography. Yet, all they can do to create the semblance of consent, better acquiescence, is to use some form of moral outrage and "cancelling", intimidation, or even coercion, which is the exact opposite of the heterogeneous, unforced, and global consensus that we see in historiography around questions of method and the assessment of evidence. Historiography shows an *uncoerced heterogeneous consensus* on this matter, whereas those who disagree are *homogenous with respect to some identity characteristic* and any "consensus" they produce on historiography is *fragile* and *coerced*. (And it would take the whole machinery of a totalitarian state to publicly enforce such a "consensus". See the repression and terror the Nazis had to unleash on German science to give it the semblance of agreement with Nazi ideology, or the terror Stalin had to exert through the NKVD to make Lysenkoism look anything like a scientific consensus in the USSR; see Tucker 2004a: 28-29).[60]

[60] The same analysis also can be applied to groups within historiography and other sciences that reject very widely held knowledge about a subject matter, say revisionist historians of some sorts. Revisionist scientists of this sort usually share some single characteristic that the heterogeneous group of consenting scientists does not; for instance, Holocaust deniers are all neo-Nazis, and the deniers of Darwinian evolution and defenders of "creationism" are almost all religious fundamentalists (in contrast to the diverse bunch that believes in the Flying Spaghetti Monster). The historiographic consensus on the Holocaust and on evolution is, in contrast, held by historians and evolutionary biologists of all political persuasions and religious creeds. Short of analyzing the actual epistemic relationship between evidence and the hypothesis in both of these cases, we already have good grounds here for believing that the consensus in the heterogeneous group is not due to some specific religious or political position because people of many different religious creeds just as atheists agree on evolution and people of all political persuasions save neo-Nazis believe that the Holocaust happened. In contrast, the consensus in the homogeneous group can easily be attributed to the shared political or religious identity given the visible correlation between group identity and belief. The heterogeneity of the variable in question in the former group cancels any such obvious causal effectiveness in that group whereas the correlation makes it a

Now, the issue is somewhat complicated because historians obviously also share some potentially relevant identity characteristic despite being a political and otherwise very heterogeneous bunch—after all they're all historians. So, it is possible that their consensus is in effect due to their common education as historians, with perhaps some hidden bias within this education being the actual cause for their agreement on historiographic method instead of the method's truth-conduciveness (and once established in the different places around the world also for the continuous reproduction of the consensus in those places). In a trivial sense, it is obviously correct that historiographic education accounts for the consensus; historians believe in their methods because they were reared in a discipline that is built around them. The question here though is what (best) explains the *continuous consensus on and the universality of the method*, temporally and globally. A method must appear somewhere at some time, and it might even appear among a very homogenous group first—educated male German protestants in the case of the methods of information evaluation—the question however is what occasions the "many subsequent cases of belief-acceptance by an increasingly diversified population of varying interests and biases" (Tucker 2004a: 32). Given the lack of any obvious cultural or political determination of the method then, the method's truth-conduciveness seems to be the best explanation for its universal adoption and applicability.

Naturally, other hypotheses are possible here too. It might be that a conjunction of the different identities is responsible for the wide acceptance. Or some hitherto unknown political, gender, class, or other professional bias hidden in historiographic education might be the common cause for the consensus, despite the overt acceptance of the methods of historiography across all these differentiations. Or there might be some discipline-wide appeal to authority, actual coercion, economic interest, or sheer coincidence that tacitly accounts for the consensus and the universality of historiographic method. These are all possible, though on the face of it not very likely counterhypotheses. Given that the method prima facie generalizes over all or most these differences as we have seen and given that there is no good theory about how any such single hidden bias would lead to the acceptance of the method. Likewise is it very unlikely that a conjunction of known identities accounts for the universality of historiographic method, given that

prima facie reputable hypothesis in the homogeneous group. See also Tucker 2004a: 29-30, and Tucker 2014c more generally on this sort of correlation and inferences about types of epistemic causes and effects based on them.

these identities would all have to individually converge on the same belief about the superiority of the historiographic method. *Ceteris paribus*, a common cause for such convergence is much more likely than such spontaneous convergence, especially as some of these identities include mutually exclusive grievances (see also Tucker 2004a: 32 on the improbability of this "multiple biases thesis"). Also, actual coercion and appeals to authority would very likely be visible in the discipline if they were the cause, and given the size, heterogeneity, and temporal depth of the consensus, sheer coincidental convergence on this belief is also extremely unlikely. Finally, there is the possibility that some entirely unknown (social) bias creates the consensus. That's of course always possible given underdetermination, but an abstract possibility alone cannot create any competing hypothesis and one's hypothesis only needs to be the best explanation given existing alternatives. (And another advantage, perhaps, of inference to the best explanation is that there is no need to explicate the structure of the explanation for it to be justified, at least in cases where one explanation is clearly "best", according to some external (evidentiary) criteria; see Tucker 2004b: 579-580; 587). So, it seems for the time being that the truth-conduciveness of the method is the best explanation for its near-universality and global reach among historians, and that conversely political values and beliefs have nothing to do with the method's global and cultural universality. The same conclusion can also be reached by way of philosophical argument, i.e. via the explication of the role that cognitive values play in historiography and through a reconstruction of the process of justification of knowledge claims about the past, which further strengthens our case that in questions of historiographic method and justification politics plays no role (and thus should play no role). Historiographic method and justification are in a word: apolitical.

Now on to cognitive values. All sciences are shot through with values and these values can have various positive as well as negative effects on them and their epistemic. With the case of the employment of feminist political values in historiography, we have just discussed one example of values positively affecting science. Values, in general, are properties of objects that are used as criteria for their appraisal; where they are present, they are indications for the object's worth, goodness, desirability, or preferability relative to a standard or goal evaluated through the value (Lacey 2017: 15). Cognitive values appraise our thinking and reasoning and their products, they apply to the process whereby we turn sensory and all kinds of cognitive inputs into cognitive outputs (concepts, beliefs, disbelief, knowledge, judgments, and all kinds of other doxastic attitudes). *Scientific*

cognitive values assess different cognitive outputs, usually hypotheses or theories, according to their logical, rational, and especially epistemic qualities by providing us with criteria that allow us to evaluate them with regards to their relation to the evidence, other theories that we hold to be true, and basic logical and rational standards. In this sense, scientific cognitive values provide (fallible) guidance for picking out those hypotheses or theories that (prima facie) come in as contenders for knowledge and truth because they ceteris paribus "increase the probability of the truth of the propositions (…) they are attached to" (Tucker 2008: 4).

The discussion around the centrality of cognitive values in science was kickstarted in the philosophy of science by Thomas Kuhn with his famous essay "Objectivity, Values, and Theory Choice" (Kuhn 1977: 320-339). Kuhn himself distinguished five central cognitive values in the sciences: accuracy, simplicity, internal and external consistency, broad scope, and fruitfulness (Kuhn 1977: 322). (Kuhn just speaks of scope, but what he means is broad scope, and consistency entails for him both internal and external consistency.) Despite being somewhat imprecise and sometimes being in tension or even contradicting each other, and in this sense falling short of giving us anything like an algorithm, cognitive values can still be applied in theory and hypothesis appraisal because they change more slowly than theories themselves in the history of science, so Kuhn (Kuhn 1977: 335). Cognitive values thus give us defeasible criteria for the choice between competing theories and hypotheses (Kuhn 1977: 331). Philosophers of science ever since Kuhn have debated his set of cognitive values, just as much as many have proposed their own amended sets (see Rooney 2017: 35-39 on some of the more influential of those amended sets). Likewise, have they asked themselves how the individual cognitive values exactly relate to each other, where there are trade-offs, and what exactly can be done when they are in tension and sometimes even contradict each other (Laudan 1984: 36).

For our purposes, it does not really matter which set of cognitive values we exactly adopt, as a majority of criteria is shared by almost all of them, and most importantly, none of them contains any political values or is closely related to such (on the issue of shared cognitive values throughout the sciences, see Putnam 1992: 163-178 and Kuhn 1997: 184). For our purposes, I have chosen Hugh Lacey's set of cognitive values because it is more explicit than Kuhn's and the better overall fit for historiography. Lacey's set of cognitive values is as follows: "[e]mpirical adequacy, explanatory power, capacity to identify possibilities that the phenomena enable and allow, internal consistency, consistency with understanding of phenomena that is well founded in other theories, and minimization of *ad hoc*

hypotheses" (Lacey 2017: 16, original emphasis). As is immediately visible, there is a significant overlap between Kuhn's and Lacey's lists. Both contain internal and external consistency, empirical adequacy, and fruitfulness, though empirical adequacy is called accuracy by Kuhn and Kuhn's fruitfulness figures as "capacity to identify possibilities that the phenomena enable and allow" In Lacey. Arguably, both lists also contain simplicity, which Lacey cashes out as "minimization of *ad hoc* hypotheses". With simplicity being notoriously difficult to define and Kuhn never really succeeding in defining it, "minimization of ad hoc hypotheses" seems like a reasonable and workable definition of simplicity (see Kuhn 1977: 322 for his definition of simplicity, and Longino 1994: 43 critically on this issue). And there is even a case to be made that explanatory power and broad scope are the same criterion.

What is central here though is that historiography shares these cognitive values with other sciences, and that these values are fundamentally distinct from any political or other social values. Historians also judge theories and hypotheses for their empirical adequacy, that is according to their ability to fully and precisely account for the evidence in question, just as they assess them for their explanatory power when it comes to the explanation of both actual evidence and potential phenomena in the past. They also prefer simpler hypotheses in the sense of Lacey which minimize ad hoc auxiliary hypotheses to more complicated and convoluted ones, and internal and external consistency is as important in historiography as in other sciences. Similarly do historians judge some of the epistemic products of their discipline in terms of their fruitfulness and the capacity to identify new possibilities, say when it comes to a theory's capacity to direct us to new evidence or to point us towards interesting and new research objects and projects. Yet, given that historiographic (background) theories and hypotheses come in all shapes and forms (see I.5 above), not all of these values need to apply to all of the epistemic outputs of historiography equally well. Take the value "explanatory power" as an example. If it is cashed out in the Kuhnian sense as broad scope, is not a value that applies to all theories and hypotheses in historiography equally, given that historiography fundamentally is a token science, but this is not a problem in itself because historiography is no different from any other science here where these values can also be in tension or even contradict each other (a typical such tension in the sciences too is between empirical adequacy and explanatory power or scope, as Kuhn already emphasised; see Kuhn 1977: 322). In any case, even if they cannot give us an algorithm for theory choice or hypothesis confirmation, scientific cognitive values do give us guidance for theory and hypothesis appraisal, and most

importantly, they are on this level fundamentally distinct from and unrelated to any political values.[61] Actual knowledge production in science depends on cognitive values only, though certain conditions that science cannot produce by itself need to be present for the process to be possible. (On this central point, see the next and last section of this introduction part.)

Therefore, if a scientific hypothesis or theory displays (some of) these values, scientists we have *impartial cognitive grounds* to hold it or at least to see it as a contender for belief-acceptance, because in such cases it is the evidence alone along with basic logical and rational principles which (should) impel us to hold the theory or hypothesis, independent of and, where necessary, against any other political or other external values that we might also hold (Anderson 2004: 3). This can be so because scientific cognitive values exactly codify the relationship between hypothesis, (background) theories, and the evidence (empirical adequacy, explanatory power, minimization of ad hoc hypotheses, external consistency) or they specify more general rational and logical principles that any truth claim and theory has to meet (internal consistency, objectivity, etc.), and that is the reason why they can function as defeasible but impartial grounds for the acceptance of a theory (Rooney 2017: 33).[62] Whatever then the exact role of the different individual

[61] This issue also points to the connection between cognitive values and intellectual or epistemic virtues, the latter being more stable personality characteristics and dispositions that make one into a better reasoner and cognizer. Just as there are cognitive values that all sciences share there are likely epistemic virtues shared by all scientists too, historians included, such as objectivity or impartiality, open-mindedness, disinterestedness, or honesty, and these epistemic virtues are operational in the historiographic process of knowledge production and in the judgments historians make about theories and hypotheses too. (And where there are virtues there are also vices, and some of the flip-side epistemic vices to the virtues just mentioned, such as partiality, dogmatism, narrow self-interestedness, or dishonesty, are regularly found in politics.) The topic of epistemic virtues deserves more attention in the epistemology, historiography, and the sociology of historiography, but in recent years, some great work on all three of these levels has already been done by Herman Paul (Paul 2014; Paul 2022).

[62] I am not concerned here with the difference between wider cognitive and narrower epistemic values that is put forth by some scholars (for such a differentiation see for instance Lacey 2017: 16 and Kuukkanen 2017a: 110). For Lacey, cognitive values track understanding more generally and epistemic values evaluate knowledge and truth more narrowly. Similarly also Kuukkanen who defines cognitive values as "criteria that make a specific thesis *rationally persuasive*" (Kuukkanen 2017a: 110, original emphasis) and epistemic values as "standards for dealing with historiographic data and evidence" (Kuukkanen 2017a: 110). The difference between Lacey and Kuukkanen though is that for Kuukkanen epistemic values do not necessarily track the truth of a claim given that he believes the main theses of historiography, colligations in his words, not to be truth-functional (see also Kuukkanen 2015: 123-130 for the specific set of epistemic values that he proposes for the non-truth-functional assessment of historiographic theses or colligations). This is an interesting discussion, but nothing much in my argument here depends on it because neither wider cognitive values nor narrower epistemic values in the definitions given here are in any sense political. Whatever I say here about the non-political nature of cognitive values is therefore a fortiori also applicable to epistemic values. In general, I think

cognitive values in the justification of historiographic or other scientific hypotheses and theories, they encapsulate some basic principles concerning evidential reasoning and some very basic logical and rational principles, none of them having anything to do with political or other non-cognitive values. (One could even say that some of them are conversely presupposed by any careful reasoning outside of science, even in politics.) This conduciveness of cognitive values to the *epistemic aims* and *rational ideals* of science, above all the production of knowledge and understanding and the establishment of a fully rational scientific community aimed at unforced consensus, shows that they are justified as such (Lacey 2017: 16; Laudan 1984: 26). And mirroring the argument from above, one could even say that the truth-conduciveness of the cognitive values of science themselves, their conduciveness to the production epistemic goods that best explains their universal acceptance throughout all sciences, just as the truth-conduciveness of the historiographic method is the best explanation for the universality of historiographic method that we just discussed (Tucker 2004a: 37).[63] And in both cases of belief-acceptance, political values play no role. Even more, in the case of cognitive values, we have just furnished an additional *philosophical justification for their epistemic conduciveness*, in terms of their codifying basic relationships between theory, evidence, and hypotheses and very basic logical and rational principles, which makes them into appropriate means to achieve the goals of science.

This also explains why there is a *strict hierarchy* between scientific cognitive and other values in the science and why scientists react so allergically if those other values impinge on the territory of cognitive values, and with that, on the goal of knowledge production. On this level, cognitive values rule supreme, if not unfailingly, and they are the sole arbiter over the epistemic goodness of the products of a science. This is also clearly visible in historiography in questions of knowledge

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Kuukkanen is right to align cognitive values with values that express more general logical and rational principles such as internal and external consistency and epistemic values with the standards for evaluating the relationship between theory, evidence, and hypothesis. This would also explain how cognitive values apply more widely than epistemic values, in the sense that we have to presuppose some cognitive values in any rational discussion, as without them it would be impossible, which is not the case for more narrowly defined epistemic values.

[63] Aviezer Tucker makes this point very well: "Competing hypotheses that claim to explain a significant correlation of experts by any other (particularly external social or cultural) variables would find it quite difficult to explain the appeal of these [cognitive] values to very different experts and their lower appeal to very similar groups of non-experts. The size of the group (not a sample) that upholds scientific cognitive values is much larger than any group of experts with special knowledge; it is the set of all the sets of experts" (Tucker 2014c: 165; see also Tucker 2004a: 37-38, 46)

production where historians are adamant that political beliefs and values must not enter the "sanctum" of method, just as much as in the way they vet scholarly products and achievements (peer review and academic appointments), the way they conduct historiographic debates, and the way they organize disciplinary education. In other words, what I have called above the discursive and disciplinary aspects of historiography are just as much built around the goal of knowledge production and the attendant cognitive values, and not around realizing some political goals or some other broad political, moral, or social values. A historiographic debate as much as a teaching seminar is a place of exchange of arguments based on logic, rationality, and the truth-conducive methods of historiography. And they are not the place to organize political majorities or realize some predefined political goal, however noble a goal it might be, nor the place for reverence of (bogus) tradition, deference to teachers and authority figures, or a place to assert one's however fragile identity and have that identity generally validated.

To summarize where we stand at the moment: The truth-conduciveness, and not some political (or other) identity, is the best explanation for the global and heterogeneous universality of the historiographic method; historiographic theories and hypothesis are assessed by the scientific and equally veristic cognitive values only, just as in other sciences, and not by any political values or utility; plus, the discipline and its practices are built around these values and not around political values. What still remains to be seen now, is that the actual process of inference from the evidence and the theories that are used to justify such historiographic inferences are also free of politics, i.e. that political ideology systems and political beliefs in the way we defined them further above play no role in the actual process of the justification of historiographic claims.

This latter point we can talk about more shortly since we have detailed the method of information evaluation, the process of the inference of knowledge of the past with the help of independent but cohering evidence tokens, already in I.5 above. There we have also characterized these methods as the scientific core of historiography and the fact that basically all historians agree on them as the "evidentiary default position". In this chapter, this position was reaffirmed with historians unequivocally claiming that this core must be kept free of any political beliefs and also defended in another way by showing that the truth-conduciveness of the method is the best explanation for its global and cultural universality. Having reconstructed the process by which historians produce knowledge of the past above already, it becomes clear why politics must be kept out of this process. In any "epistemic event" (Kosso 1998: 21), we have to justify a belief by means of other

beliefs that we presuppose and hold true, that is we have to use background theories and background knowledge so as to be able to (dis-)confirm any hypothesis about the past or otherwise (Kosso 2009: 7-11). Similarly do we need theories to render any observation meaningful and relevant to our explanatory interest. However, none of the theories needed in the actual epistemic event of justification is a political belief or value; instead, the background theories that are at play here are in the case of historiography theoretical concepts and models mainly borrowed from the social sciences and most centrally informational theories that act as accounting claims for the evidence.

However, here we need to be precise. As we have seen above, Hobsbawm professes to use Marxist theory in his historiographic works, just as Scott claims the same about her poststructuralist and feminist theory. Both of these are grand and vague theoretical paradigms with overtly political goals (something I have called above "political ideology systems"). Plus, political commitments as these can have many positive influences on historiography overall, as we have analyzed with the help of Scott in some detail for feminist theory. The question here though is which background theories are actually at work in the very *epistemic acts* (or events) that justify a claim about the past. All historians of course employ some theoretical preunderstanding of their subject matter and they naturally have questions about the past they want to have answered through their research; as Danto famously quipped, "one does not go naked into the archives" (Danto 1985: 101). Historians, just like any scientist, must presuppose all kinds of background theories, background knowledge, and values as part of their web of belief and as precondition for any epistemic act to get going. Some of these beliefs and values are even very basic and they concern the subject matter of their interest just as much as their activity as historians. All of them act as (steady) background conditions, and in the case of background knowledge, often also as (implicit) comparison class, reference points, and so on. Under the cognitive value of external consistency, such background knowledge even plays a role in the wider justification of our beliefs of the past (see I.5 above too on the criterion of external coherence that historiographic hypotheses have to meet). But more narrowly construed, the theories employed in the actual justification of knowledge claims about the past, in the actual epistemic acts, are informational, having to do with the preservation of information through time and in different media (Kosso 2001: 44-55). They are not the kind of grand and vague social theories and philosophical principles that Hobsbawm and Scott profess, though the informational background theories at play can have any degree of generality, and neither are they some (covering) laws or empirical generalization

about society, or some general (and underdetermined) psychological or sociological theories that some historians also hold (Tucker 2004b: 576); and definitely are they not the different and sometimes contradicting political beliefs and values that a portion of historians otherwise might also profess.

This can be shown by zooming in on the iterative process of knowledge production, in which historians use the evidence they can observe in their present and information theories to infer knowledge of the past. Hobsbawm and Scott hold very abstract and vague theoretical beliefs which are best seen as models, ideal types, or (categorical) philosophical distinctions. In the actual process of historiographic knowledge production, they are assessed against and made to fit to the evidence, which in itself is accounted for by information theories, and not the other way around. The non-experimental token scientists they are, historians do not subsume historical processes or events under standard or general descriptions so as to explain them, rather they adapt the non-informational theories they (sometimes) presuppose to the evidence, in an effort to furnish the (best) singular causal explanation of the evidence. And this is done by means of tracing the "information preserving causal chains" (Tucker 2004a: 94) back from the present to the past. (Experimental sciences, on the other hand, standardize events and descriptions and attempt to fit the evidence that they produce to the hypothesis that is being tested, not caring much about single token events, something historical sciences simply cannot do.) In other words, the real epistemic action occurs in historiography on the level of the explanation of the evidence and the level of the information theories that make the evidence meaningful and vouch for the connection between processes and events in the past and the evidence apparent the historian's present (Kosso 1996: 173), and not on the level of the theoretic preunderstanding that any scientists has to bring to their subject matter willy-nilly, or on the level of the abstract theoretical models or philosophical categories that some (not all) historians also presuppose. Historians are no experimentalists or social scientists, and neither are they social ontologists or philosophers for that matter, and different from all those groups, they generate knowledge of the past by way of the best explanation of the evidence, via information theories that connect the evidence to the past in question. Given the characteristics of their subject matter—unrepeatable and complex past token events and change—, there is no other explanatory strategy available to them and all borrowings from the social sciences and other fields must be adapted to this subject matter and therefore abstract social theory must also yield to the evidence and not the other way around (Tucker 2004a: 164-165; see also Cleland 2002 and article I

below and II.1 above on the subject matter of historiography and the different explanatory logics of historical and experimental sciences).

Whatever then the exact role of grand or not so grand (social) theories in the wider research process, in the epistemic act of justification these theories are adapted through the process of adding ad hoc stipulations to them. Beyond that, the political beliefs and goals that some of these grand theories are also linked to in political ideology systems such as Marxism or feminism, and political goals and beliefs more generally, play no role whatsoever in this process. The general stipulations that are part of these grand theories that are usually very vague and therefore (rather) uninformative—"societies are a set of complex relations entered into for the sake of production and in tension with each other" for instance in Hobsbawm (for many similar such stipulations, see Hobsbawm 1997c: 162-167) or "conflict is at centre of any meaning making process" in Scott (see Scott 1988: 9)—therefore might play a role in the historian's preunderstanding and shape the questions they ask, just their political values might do, but even they play no key role in the actual process of justification. And in themselves, they are not intrinsically linked to the political goals or values that Hobsbawm and Scott hold in the theoretical bundle that is their Marxism and feminism. In other words, these grand theories do not play much of a role in the justification of knowledge claims about the past and in themselves they are fundamentally unconnected from the political beliefs and goals with which they are conjoined in political ideology systems such as Marxism and feminism—that goal in Marxism being Socialism and in feminism the equality and/or liberation of women. (Unless we assume some speculative philosophy of history where these theories, or perhaps their bearers, are History's subject or self-consciousness and holding them is a necessary step in the realization of the political aims that form the end of history. And truth be told, there are forms of Marxism that professed something like that, though Hobsbawm's own Marxism is not of that sort.) And while not all theoretical preconceptions that historians borrow from the (social) sciences and philosophy are as vague as Hobsbawm's and Scott's stipulations, the process of their adaption to the evidence, instead of the other way around, is the same for more concrete concepts as well. The only time thus they play a real role is when they can be used as information theories, otherwise they undergo ad-hoc transformation into hypotheses better fitting the evidence. This process of the application of information theories and the explanation of (independent) evidence via those very theories are the scientific core of historiography that I just talked about; correspondingly, could one call those information theories the discipline's "theoretical core". The actual production of

knowledge of the past is in this sense fundamentally a matter of competence and proficiency in the methods of information evaluation instead of a matter of the application of social scientific or other vague grand theories, political beliefs, values, or ideology system to the past, whatever positive influences they otherwise might have on various different aspects of the historian's work (Marwick 1993: 329-330).[64]

Now, given the interconnectedness of our web of beliefs, there is no absolute distinction between epistemically useful (information) theories and cognitive values on the one side and in this matter unhelpful non-cognitive values on the other, as some non-cognitive values are as much a presupposition of any epistemic act as any theoretical preunderstanding is. Science is indeed also dependent on a set of "meta-epistemic" (Rooney 2017: 42) or just *basic humanist* or *moral values* that scientists also have to assume beyond the cognitive values that are being employed in the assessment of evidence and hypotheses more narrowly. Science could not get off the ground without the "establishment of scientific communities as communities of epistemic respect, fairness, and trust" (Rooney 2017: 44), values that scientists need to uphold among themselves but also towards their research objects if they are dealing with (past) human beings. Without some generalized

[64] To say that the actual process of the production of historiographic knowledge via information theories and information evaluation is free of politics is just another way of saying that historiographic methodology is impervious to any personal identity and in this sense universal, as we argued in the beginning of this section. There we have pointed out that historians consent on method despite having a myriad of different political positions and identities, and now we have shown that the theories which are actually needed for the production of knowledge of the past and which comprise the historiographic method are free of any political beliefs and values. So, given this universality, "apoliticality", and truth-conduciveness of the historiographic method, there are no good grounds to speak of it as "Western", "Eurocentric", "White", "bourgeois", or what have you, and to promote some other alternative (i.e. non-Western, indigenous, Marxist etc.) "epistemologies" for producing knowledge of the past (often in unison with some specific "ontologies" bearing the same epithets too). People in all cultures have held all kinds of different (traditional) beliefs about how beliefs about the past should be produced and justified, but this does not mean that all these beliefs are truth-conducive and that they stand on an equal footing with the methods of modern historiography when it comes to the issue of producing actual *knowledge* of the past. That the methods of information evaluation that we have are the best practices that we know for this goal can be shown by general philosophical argument (see I.5 above) and by an epistemological analysis of the different principles underlying the justification of beliefs of the past. In other words, it can be shown that traditional criteria for the assessment of beliefs about the past based on faith or reverence of authority and modern criteria based on some political or other identity are not conducive for the generation of knowledge of the past. (Which is not surprising because, after all, they are just different forms of the genetic fallacy.) This being the case, anyone of any identity is well advised to turn to historiographic methods *if* they want to produce knowledge of the past, just as they are well advised to turn to the discipline of historiography *if* they are looking for knowledge about some historical subject.

form of (epistemic) respect, fairness, and even trust in other human beings, there could not be any "equality of intellectual authority" (Longino 1994: 40) in the discipline of historiography, and historians could not communicate with their peers effectively, only with the goal of knowledge production in mind. If that condition was not to a large extent met in historiography, and if it was not to act as a regulative ideal, historiographic discourse could not be rational and it could not be only about what Habermas called the "unforced force of the better argument" (Habermas 1994: 23). Likewise, talking about the relations to one's subject matter, without such presupposed respect historians would not be able to assess the evidence fairly. If they, for instance, held some discriminatory beliefs about certain groups of people of the sort that their testimony is a priori to be discarded as untrustworthy, this would create a form of "pre-emptive testimonial injustice" (Fricker 2007: 130). This and any other form of "epistemic injustice" (Fricker 2007) the discipline subscribes to would seriously hamper its goal of producing knowledge of the past.

Reason as it were is as much a presupposition of any epistemic act as it is its expected (or at least hoped for) outcome in the form of a justified judgment, but reason can neither force its own application, nor can it bring itself into existence or propel itself forward (though Hegel would of course have disagreed on this). That historians hold basic moral or humanist beliefs within their discipline but also towards their object is itself a *historical accomplishment*, just as their agreement on cognitive values is, and without both of these modern historiography and modern historiographic reason could not exist. That they, or anybody, *must* hold these values and that historiographic reason *must* be applied, is what we can neither rationally justify nor establish by force, however necessary they are for the production historiographic knowledge and probably also for human flourishing. One could probably justify the meta-cognitive humanist values that historiography also presupposes as equal demands of reason and rationality though, just as the discipline's truth-conducive cognitive values are such demands. After all, on a basic level they both follow from the *logos*, which is about reasons alone but universal in its application. What I mean by this is that from the use of reason seem to follow alone both respect for cognitive values and rules of evidence, after all they are nothing but elaborate forms of reasoning, and respect towards anybody else as autonomous reasoner. Reason then demands both respecting of cognitive values and the respecting of basic humanist or moral principles, and both of these are to large degree realized in modern historiography. It is other parts of society that do not submit to these basic demands of reason. That they should, sounds reasonable, whether they could, is a different question. However, since all of this sounds

suspiciously Hegelian, I leave it at this speculation about what reason fundamentally demands here. (And I feel I like I am somewhat safe in this speculation, as I did not claim that these demands of reason must be fulfilled in history in the process of Reason's self-realization as Hegel did. What I might have argued is that reason and respect are something like a transcendental presupposition of any communicative speech act, as Habermas did, but this claim is not the same as Hegel's. But then, what's a transcendental presupposition that has no actual purchase on history worth?)

In conclusion, in this section I attempted to substantiate the claim that historiographic method is apolitical, which is supported by the overwhelming majority of historians, by way of three arguments: 1) the global and cultural universality of historiography which is best explained by the truth conduciveness of the historical method and not by some political or other identity historians might share; and by showing that the assessment of historiographic theories and hypotheses is 2) dependent on cognitive values instead of political values, and 3) that the production of actual historiographic knowledge is dependent on information theories and not on some (grand and vague) social science theory or philosophy or their political components or goals. However, as before, I am not claiming here that all descriptions that historians give are free from political or other non-cognitive values, or that they necessarily must be. ("Thick concepts" and colligations immediately come to mind here. Some have even argued that colligatory concepts necessarily entail a political valuation component not backed by the evidence; see Ahlskog forthcoming on this and I.6 above generally on the issue of colligations.) Once historians have established actual knowledge of the past through their veristic and impartial, and with that also apolitical, cognitive values and methods, there is still ample room for judgments of the past and past actors based on some moral, political, aesthetic, and other values that historians also happen to hold; for judging what has happened by some external (political or other) standard as good, bad, significant, and so forth. The maxim here should be once more to "make it explicit", to clearly indicate where impartial historiographic knowledge ends and (partisan) political and other judgment begins (and there will surely be cases where this line is difficult to draw). This fundamentally respects the readers as independent reasoners, and it enables them to form their own judgments about these issues, whereas they have, if it is properly justified, impartial grounds to accept the knowledge that historians produce.

The independence of historiographic knowledge from political beliefs and values that we established in this section is key for understanding both the role

historiography can play in politics and the limits to this role. As such, this independence must also be institutional. Only if the discipline is separate from society, politics and their immediate needs and demands, can it focus on its primary epistemic goal of producing impartial knowledge of the past. But at the same time, historiographic reason remains dependent on societal conditions that it cannot by itself produce. To this relationship of independence and interdependence and the limits of historiographic reason in politics and beyond, we will now shortly turn in a final section of this text.

3.4 Historiography, Politics, and the Political Limits to Historiographic Reason

In modern societies, historiography and politics are fundamentally separate spheres. Historians are usually not closely attached anymore to the ruling powers of a society, and they are also not dependent anymore on their immediate approval and patronage. This separation grants a certain intellectual autonomy to the historian, and in modern democratic societies at least, they are in principle free to research whichever topic they wish, without any repercussions from politics to fear. This is especially so because this freedom and independence are in such democratic societies institutionalized and legally codified: Historiography is a university discipline and there are the legal and often even constitutional rights of freedom of speech and academic freedom. Plus, in many countries there is also the institution of tenure (with the latter's justification exactly being to free academics from any political pressures on their work).

This state of *separation and independence between politics and historiography* has arguably advantages for all parties involved—historiography, politics, and society as a whole—though beyond intellectual matters, the separation and independence are only relative. Even in places where the intellectual autonomy of historiography is institutionalized and legally well protected, as in modern democratic states, the state still has a say over the discipline, as its laws are also apply there, not to speak of the fact that the state holds the reins of power in a society and could easily subdue independent historiography at any moment through the repressive state apparatuses. The state, through its monopoly on the legitimate use of force, guarantees the freedom of expression in society as a whole, but also historiography, and this being the case, historiography can concentrate on epistemic issues alone, without any fear of threats, coercion, or violence within the discipline. Likewise, does the modern state provide the *material sustenance* for professional

historiography in the form of most (if not all) of the financing of the discipline as part of the modern university system. This is especially important for a humanist subject such as historiography (or philosophy), which does not hold much prospect for material gain or economic profitability in the future. (And of course, in our thoroughly economistic and shortsighted times, this lack in profitability has been the main argument for the axing of historiography and other humanist subjects. Ironically, this proposal is usually put forth by politicians and university administrators of meager intellectual abilities who would seriously benefit from even a modicum of humanist *bildung*.) The state further creates the *intellectual and many other general conditions* necessary for the reproduction of historiography as we know it. Without compulsory education systems for children and without the basic intellectual abilities and interests that are inculcated and fostered in these systems, modern historiography, just like any other scientific discipline, could not reproduce itself because it would lack the necessary "intermediate product" to work on as a refining practice. (And neither could the discipline do without roads and such that are also provided by the state, talking about general conditions necessary for any scientific historiography that the state maintains.) So, while the discipline is institutionally and legally independent from the state and politics, it is still depends on them for its material and intellectual reproduction and for the enforcement of the law. Plus, the state holds the reins of the main coercive powers of a society that could easily subdue any independent historiography. For all these reasons, the relationship between historiography and politics should be of concern for every historian and for the discipline as a whole.

Now, while there is a fundamental asymmetry here—politics and the state are not as dependent on historiography as the discipline is on them— the discipline has in this setting of relative separation and independence some goods to offer in return too. Prime among these offerings is of course *knowledge of the past*, but there are also such *skills* as *information evaluation* ("source criticism"), and *reasoning abilities* more generally that can be learned from historiography. The discipline therefore can make politicians and citizens alike into *better reasoners* about the past but also beyond, by providing them with both actual knowledge of the past they can dependably use in their own reasoning about the present and future and the very skills needed to assess such knowledge claims and reasoning. The societal value of actual historiographic knowledge, of proper information evaluation skills, and critical thinking skills more generally cannot be overstated in our digital era, characterized by the threat of "alternative facts" and post-truth (in educational discussions, information evaluation and critical thinking skills are sometimes

referred to together as "media literacy" or "historical literacy"; see Černín 2019). They are an effective antidote against the feverish, partisan, and often mob-like discourses in the echo chambers of our profit-driven "social media", which turned out to be rather anti-social.[65] (On a more detailed account of historiography's epistemic offerings to society, see article IV below and section II.4 above).

Via the knowledge it produces, historiography also allows us to grasp the *diversity and contingency of human history*. That means we can through the discipline understand humans in all their ingenuity and greatness, their waywardness and quirkiness, but also in all their wickedness and depravity; all of which are amply on display in history. Historiographic knowledge therefore enables us to appreciate the human condition in all its breadth beyond the "often unrepresentative, atypical sliver of time" (Currie 2019: 2) and place that we happen to inhabit. It shows us that things have been quite different before and that they can be meaningfully different again in the future. In this sense, historiography is an antidote to any complacent and self-centred temporal ideology, be it Whiggism or any other form of teleology, a temporal and cultural provincialism that believes the past to always already have looked like our present, or any form of facile moral judgmentalism towards the past. It allows us to do rescue the past from "the enormous condescension of posteriority" (Thompson 1967: 12), in the memorable phrase of E. P. Thompson, from the clutches of an ideology that sees in the past always only an imperfect version of our present and our present as the best of all possible worlds. Through historiography, we can come to a *much broader yet still realistic understanding of what it can mean to be human*, and with that there is the possibility to actually learn from the past, from its highest and lowest points, and use it as a guide in our political projects to create desirable futures. (Plus, via historiography we can even learn about the pitfalls of such projects to realize grand visions of the future. One thing history shows us is that things often do not turn out the way we planned or anticipated them, quite the opposite, and that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, as they say. In this sense, there is some fundamental

[65] "We really think you should see this outrageous claim because it will rile you up and make you interact with it, thereby producing ever more exposure, interaction, and outrage. You see, we created a near perfect perpetuum mobile here where offence is transformed into outrage, which then translates into calls for cancellation, "shitstorms", and further offence, beginning the cycle anew. Oh, you think that might sound the death knell for any form of civically minded discussion culture? Well, you know, time spent on the platform and interactions are money. But let's not talk about all the endless outrage and fussing, here a few cat videos to calm you down again." Thus spoke every executive of Twitter and Facebook, or thus speaks the algorithm of these companies while the executives put a good face on for the cameras.

tragicality to human life.) Historiography therefore stands both for both the insight into the vastness of possibilities that there are to lead a human life and for a rational grasp of them, and both of these are essential for any future politics and any grander vision of desirable futures.

So, just as the past was diverse, so is the future open, yet-to be made, with there being the possibility of things becoming rather different, even better; though of course, there is no guarantee here, and they might also become even worse. Yet, looking back at the history of the 20th century, its wars, genocides, and mass destructions on an unprecedented scale, and looking back at the failure of its main utopian ideology, Marxism or Socialism, which legitimized itself through History, one might surmise that *meliorism* is the philosophy of political change and progress that is vindicated by history and which should therefore also be adopted in politics. Meliorism holds that progress is possible and real, though it is anything but certain, and it most likely comes in a piecemeal fashion (Liszka 2021). Knowledge of the past, historiographic reason, and a philosophy of historiography that elucidates both of these, are key ingredients for any such progress, just as much as they show us that there is no such thing as Progress with a capital P or capital H History on our side.[66] (We should indeed never forget that such categories as progress and history cannot act by themselves; whatever they are, they have no agency on their own and are entirely contingent upon the action of groups of people.) In this sense, they all also caution us against the belief in any rapid and cataclysmic revolutionary change of society induced by a determined minority, however much that minority thinks it acts in the interest of the silent and oppressed majority and with History or Progress on its side. Historiography therefore not only provides us with knowledge of the

[66] I have always liked the following quote on the potential that knowledge of the past holds for creating desirable futures, even long before I became acquainted with the philosophy of historiography: "Only here [in the human sphere] is history written (or told); and made as well as done. For only here is experienced the hope that history, conceived as the understanding of the past, can be reflexively incorporated into our experience of history as the enactment of the present and so inform history as the process of the production of our future, already shaped and conditioned, ramified and constrained, but still unselected, open, yet to be made" (Bhaskar 2009b: 100). And of course, with the concepts of the philosophy of historiography, this quote can be made more precise by differentiating between history, historiography, and historicity in the way we introduced these terms in section I.2 above. Rephrased in such a way, it says that humans can come to understand the historical process with the help of historiography and that this understanding can itself become a force in the creation of a better future (but so does a lack of understanding). There is no certainty here, but depending on the subject matter at hand, good guidance on what (not) to do can be obtained from the human past. Concerning many issues, the question therefore is not so much if something could be learned from the past but whether people are willing to learn. Unlike the question about the limits of our knowledge of the past, this is a problem for which we have no good philosophical solution.

past and reasoning skills that are indispensable for the creation of any desirable future, it also fundamentally cautions us to realize these futures in a responsible and cautious fashion.

Now, given that we personally but also as a society cannot not have a past, of the imagined kind or not, to which we relate in some way (see I.4 above and article IV below), historiography offers us the *possibility of a genuinely truthful and rational relation to the past*, in our individual lives but also as a society as a whole. For society, this opens up the possibility of a *politics of the past that is genuinely built upon historiographic knowledge and basic humanist values* (on the notion of a politics of the past and its different forms, see also III.1 above). The same possibility exists in principle also for every individual, though it is at least questionable whether in memorial matters a fully rational relation to one's own past is always beneficial for the realization of one's goals or for the leading of a meaningful life (Hobsbawm 1994: 53; Kansteiner 2002). Be that as it may, historiography can function as a *model for a truthful and rational relation to the past* to be emulated in politics and the public sphere at least, and perhaps even in some other parts of society. (Again, it seems to me as legitimate to judge society by the demands of reason as it is to subsume reason under any predetermined societal ends, at least as long as we suppose there is something else and more than just instrumental reason.)[67] And scientific historiography does not need to stop at displaying this model function to societies that allow for its independent existence. It can also take a more active role and criticize any public or at least political utterance on the past that is false, biased, anachronistic, decontextualized, and so on. One might even say that the discipline has a duty to so given that it is uniquely equipped for the job and that it is often the (unwitting) "primary producer of the raw material that is turned into propaganda and mythology" (Hobsbawm 1994: 61). In this sense, historiography functions as a "*large-scale regulatory instance and corrective*", so article III above (III: 71, emphasis added), for all the ideologies and false beliefs about the past that are being held in public and especially in the

[67] What Israel Scheffler remarks here about the relationship between the school and society is equally applicable to historiography's relation to society. As much as historiography can (and should) be judged by the demands of society, can society be judged by the demands intrinsic to (historiographic) reason: "The school may be viewed as an intermediary agency helping to improve society in the long run, but society may equally be viewed as an intermediate agency to be judged by its dedication to the autonomous values of intelligence, criticism, knowledge, and art, of which the school is the guardian. (…) Its [the school's] job is not only to serve but also to enlighten, create, understand, and illuminate efforts which have intrinsic value and dignity, efforts which are themselves to be served by the society of men" (Scheffler 2011: 254-255).

political sphere, where much of the myth and propaganda about the past that is really efficacious is produced. Where there is a proper and independent historiography, the discipline can thus act as a bulwark against any political approach to the past that is based on myth or fantasy, engineered to satisfy some or another non-cognitive passion or need in the present. (See the first section of this compilation part for one such particularly destructive account of the past based on myths, fantasies, and unbridled passions in the form of resentment: Vladimir Putin's. Putin is quasi the worst-case scenario here. A false account of the past based on resentment became the official politics (of the past) of one of the most powerful states in the world, and this led with the war in Ukraine to an utterly destructive course of action in the present.).

Historiography stands like no other institution in society for a truthful relation and a reasonable approach to the past and it offers its goods of historiographic knowledge and reason to everybody. This creates the possibility of a truthful and rational relation to the past for politics but also for every single individual. The discipline can offer these good to society because it is built upon a "form of probable inference from information preserving evidence in the present" which "does not mutate according to personal identities or passions" (Tucker 2021a: 161). That much I tried to argue in this chapter, by showing that historiography is influenced by politics in all kinds of different ways, many of which positive, but that its methodology must remain free from politics and any identity concerns. Scientific historiography stands or falls with this. However, as such the discipline is dependent on societal and political conditions that it cannot by itself produce (intellectual independence, material sustenance, etc.). Only if these conditions are in place, can the discipline go about its work.

From this fact that a certain configuration between the state and historiography needs to obtain for modern historiography to be able to thrive and distribute its epistemic goods follow certain *metapolitical interests* that *all historians* have qua being historians (if they want their discipline to continue). I call these interests metapolitical because they concern the overall configuration of the political sphere and the state and the relationship between these spheres and historiography as a whole, and not any individual political position within any such configuration or within the narrower disciplinary politics of historiography. These interests then consist in the maintenance of the preconditions of historiography that we just discussed and which the discipline cannot establish by itself. In particular, they concern: 1) the intellectual autonomy and relative separation between politics and the state on the one side and historiography on the other; 2) resources for the

material reproduction of the discipline; and 3) the reproduction of the social preconditions of historiography (schools, roads, etc.). Without these conditions in place, scientific historiography cannot produce its main epistemic goods for the benefit of society and the discipline cannot act as a large-scale corrective for false beliefs about the past either. From these three positive metapolitical interests immediately follows a fourth negative one, quasi as "negation of negation": 4) all historians have an interest in opposing political actors that want to undo the societal configuration that underpins independent historiography. In most recent times, these "enemies of historiography" are in the West to be found among the populists of the Right and the identitarians on the Left. Globally speaking, this motley crew further consists of the dictators and autocrats of this world (the Xis, Putins, Erdogans, and so on), of traditional Fascists and Marxists, and of all kinds of religious and other (faux-)traditional fundamentalists.

While it is an open question whether the societal configuration that scientific historiography needs for its thriving can be created and maintained in societies other than democracies with strong deliberative elements—say in the form of an enlightened autocracy or oligarchy, ruled by a philosopher king, a group of such luminaries, or a benevolent artificial superintelligence—, it seems clear that these conditions are best and most stably upheld in modern democracies, just as it is exactly these societies that are in return most receptive and appreciative to the epistemic goods and services that historiography has on offer. It is such democracies that fundamentally respect the freedom of expression and academic freedom (including tenure), just as they are based on a separation and balance of powers which makes any politicist overreach or subjugation of historiography more difficult. In a sense, these freedoms are just the legal codifications of the humanist values that underpin both historiography and democracy. Historiography and (deliberative) democracy respect everybody equally as human beings which entails respecting them as reasoners. They uphold individual freedom and the responsibility that comes with it (where there is one, there must be the other), but crucially, they equally value knowledge, truth, and the open and objective procedures that we have for establishing and ascertaining them. And with that, they we arrive at the possibility of an *epistemically based unforced consensus on matters* as it is obvious in historiography and at least a possibility for democratic decision making. Members of democratic societies further display to a large extent a "democratic ethos" of respect for people, knowledge, and reason—that is, they have internalized the humanist and cognitive values on which historiography and deliberation both depend, and this in turn makes them more receptive to

historiography's epistemic goods. Thanks to such deliberative elements in democracies, in the state apparatuses but also beyond, the realm of rational discussion and of the potential applicability of historiographic knowledge and reason is expanded to all kinds of political and other venues. There is even the possibility of a virtuous circle here in which the application of reason is expanded to ever wider areas of public (and private) life.

Conversely, can this "elective affinity" between democracy and scientific historiography also be shown *via negativa*. As Aviezer Tucker has remarked: "Regimes that fear an independent judiciary attempt to control judgments about history as well" (Tucker 2001: 50). Plus, they usually do not stop there but attempt to control the judgments and freedoms of their citizens to a much larger extent than only concerning legal and historical matters. And as David Motadel reminds us, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of all and no creeds, whereas the creed of the latter normally is greed, do not just control historians and their doings, they often even persecute them because they consider speaking truth (to power) dangerous to their autocratic reign (Motadel 2023: 42; see also Network of Concerned Historians 2022). (One way to differentiate authoritarian from totalitarian regimes could exactly be along these lines; authoritarian regimes suppress speaking truth to power, whereas totalitarian regimes try to suppress the speaking of all truth.) Negative examples of such regimes, past and present, are manifold. There are the countries of the autocrats and dictators that we just mentioned: Russia, China, and Turkey; just as there are the totalitarian regimes par excellence of the 20th century: Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union; and there are also all kinds of traditionalist regimes and societies in the past or present that suppressed and/or persecuted historians for speaking truth about the past. What they all have in common is that they do not allow for free and democratic deliberation to take place, with that they also prohibit any politically independent institution such as historiography that represents a truthful and rational relationship to the past; and the more totalitarian they are, they more they try to suppress even any individually truthful relation to the past.

Now, given that (deliberative) democracy and scientific historiography are based on the same values and given the high correlation between the existence of scientific historiography and democratic forms of government, one can further concretise the three metapolitical interests from above to *one central metapolitical interest* that all historians share: the *maintenance of (deliberative) democracy* which includes the defence of this form of society against its inner and outer enemies where necessary. And conversely do democratic societies have an interest

in supporting independent historiography, as such an historiography produces epistemic goods and services that are central for both, an enlightened democratic citizenry and any rational political decision making, which are both direly needed for the proper functioning democratic systems.

This *mutually beneficial relationship between democracy and scientific historiography* that we have outlined in this section so far deserves to be further scrutinized in the form of a proper *political philosophy of historiography*, which as far as I can tell does not yet exist. Next to the relationship between historiography and democracy, such a political philosophy should moreover focus on *the issue of meliorism* as a (or perhaps the proper) philosophy of political change and progress that we raised above too. It seems to me to be more than a coincidence that both historiography and deliberative democracy show an affinity for and closeness to meliorism and an aversion to any sweeping revolutionary change of politics. In some parts, this future political philosophy of historiography could take its leads from the philosophy of education where the relationship between democracy, science, and reason has been a topic of interest for quite a while now (Siegel 2017).

We can now shortly turn to the question of *the role historians can play in politics*, after we just have clarified the relationship that must hold between historiography and politics overall for historiography to be able thrive and for politics to be able to reap the profits generated by historiography. Now, as much as historians have the metapolitical interest to uphold democracy, when they enter politics *as historians*, they do so as *topical experts* about some past topic or period. The epistemic authority of this expert status is dependent on the apolitical nature of their methods and on the apolitical philosophical justification of these methods, which undergird any actual historiographic knowledge claim about the past. Similarly, must there be the overall independence of historiography from politics that we just outlined. Only if those are in place can the discipline do the work it is meant to according to its own logic based on cognitive values and focusing only on epistemic matters. These then are the general prerequisites for the acceptance of historians as topical experts, which in democracies again can be assumed to be a given.

This setting, however, only underwrites the role of the historian as topical expert in politics which means that their actual *epistemic authority* in the that sphere is rather *limited*. Historians might of course also offer practical guidance for political decision making, just as they might advocate certain political causes and positions, as they indeed often do. They might even reasonably employ their expert knowledge and skills in these activities. However, when they engage in these

activities, they do not act as historical experts anymore and therefore we do not owe them assent. At this stage, their knowledge of the past is employed in (practical) arguments that concern the future, and here they encounter the openness of the future and the (contradictory) social and political values that pervade politics, about both of which we cannot adjudicate fully rationally. Due to the complex intermesh of knowledge, values, and uncertainty that goes into policy making, the epistemic authority historians hold does not simply transfer to the political advice and advocacy they sometimes also provide; in this, there is no difference between historians and any other scientists that act in politics (Lacey 2017: 27-29; Oreskes 2014: 606, fn. 11). The credo here can again only be *to make one's reasoning and values explicit* so that others can understand and judge them for themselves (and not to fool oneself on one's own expertise, authority, and importance). In matters involving more than only historiographic expertise, i.e. in most matters of real political concern, historians are citizens among others, and not experts, and they and their arguments should be treated as such, with the proper respect that befits everyone but not equipped with any special epistemic authority.

This points us to a second research desideratum coming out of this chapter, next to a political philosophy of historiography: a *theory of the use of historical arguments in politics*. It is obvious that politicians and historians active in the political sphere use historiographic knowledge, comparisons, analogies, and so forth to argue for certain policies and societal visions to be realized in the future, just as individuals do when it comes to their personal goals and potential futures. What we do not really understand yet though is the argumentative nexus and "the inferential structures of claiming" (Kuukkanen 2021c: 48) connecting the knowledge of the past with some action or policy to be realized in the present. Likewise, do we lack any real criteria for the goodness of such arguments and for the applicability of knowledge of the past to the present and the future, and that despite nearly all historians and politicians agreeing that we must learn from the past for the sake of the present and the future (for some preliminary work on this question, see Blau 2021, and classically Neustadt/ May 1986). Here, as elsewhere in the philosophy of historiography, it would make sense to approach this issue first empirically, that is by analyzing what historians and politicians say about the usefulness of historiographic knowledge in politics, and especially through reconstructing how such knowledge is used by both historians and politicians in their actual arguments about "what is to be done" in politics.

This should also give us a better understanding of the *actual limits of historiographic reason and knowledge* in politics and beyond. As I have argued in

III.2 above, politics is a future-oriented activity that is bound up with uncertainty and rationally not fully accountable political values. Plus, there is often an urgency to act under epistemically and otherwise less than fortunate circumstances (just think of the Covid-19 pandemic or any of the refugee crises of the last years). Similarly is politics riven by conflicting interests, competing needs, and dogmatic and in this sense fundamentally irrational forms of partisanship. While all of these make politics into a fascinating field for philosophical reflection and analysis, it is at least an open question to what extent there are fundamental limits to (historiographic) reason in in the political realm due to the intransigence of a logic of power, (economic) interest, and tribal identity concerns which for the broad masses and politicians alike often trump any form of rational and ethical behaviour. What historians, at least collectively, cannot do faced with this lack of reason in politics though is to turn away with their noses in the air. This would be unwise for the reason alone that historiography cannot by itself create the very conditions on which it depends for its own thriving, conditions which are inextricably bound up with politics and the state. Politics and the state are central for both, the creation of the conditions for human flourishing or the alternative establishment of a totalitarian hell on earth. They can be the sphere and activity where citizens deliberate freely and equitably over the common good based on (historiographic) reason and humanist values, or they can become a Behemoth fundamentally suppressing knowledge, reason, and humans themselves, or worse. (Franz Neumann famously described the Nazi "unstate" as a Behemoth; see Neumann 2009. Yet, according to Jewish tradition, it is the righteous that will feast on the Behemoth at the end times). This is the reason why the relationship to the state and the form of the politics of a society are so central to historiography and why historians have an intrinsic interest to defend (deliberative) democracy or any similar political system that guarantees the free development of historiographic reason within its very own realm, the discipline of historiography, and the chance at least of the application of that reason throughout society.

4 Concluding Remark

What scientific historiography has to offer is this. Most basically the discipline provides us with knowledge of the past and the proper methods to assess such knowledge claims ("information evaluation"). The temporal being we are, we cannot not refer to the past in some way and engage in historical thinking and reasoning. Also, given that the future is fundamentally open, the past is often the best guide we have for action. Therefore, we regularly use, and have to use, our beliefs about the past as premises in arguments about our future course of action—on some level, we are all inductivists. Thanks to historiography, we have the genuine opportunity to ground such arguments and our actions in actual knowledge and sound reasoning about the past. If we further assume that true beliefs are more conducive to our survival and to the realization of our goals than false beliefs are, a basic philosophical principle that I think is difficult to doubt in this abstract form, then to act rationally, we should just as well want true beliefs about the past as bases for our actions in the present. Thus, from the fact that we must argue historically and that true beliefs about the past are better for accomplishing our goals than false ones are follows that we should want historiography in its modern independent form, as historiography centrally revolves around the production of knowledge of the past. This would be an, admittedly very abstract, instrumentalist defense of the usefulness of historiography for individual action, and by extension, for politics and society as a whole (in a sense, they're nothing but individual action either).[68]

However useful though, historiography cannot guarantee the "uptake" of its offerings by politics or the general public. And this seems to me the key point when it comes to the question of the limits of historiographic reason. There is no end or meaning to history, no transcendental goal towards which it inexorably marches, and there is no God that could save us in this world or at least in the next. What there is, are (groups of) people with their thinking and agency, and properly conceived, the state, human history, and progress, come down to them too. And here historiography, its philosophy, and the reason they stand for can make a

[68] Depending on one's position in general epistemology, some might argue that historiography is only valuable in this instrumental sense for its production of true beliefs about the past, and not for the knowledge, justification, or understanding that it also produces. Others hold that those mental states are even more beneficial to successful action than mere true belief is. I have sympathies for this latter position, but since all of them are overall better guides to action than false beliefs about the past are and since historiography produces all of them reliably, it does not matter to the argument here whether or not it is only true belief that is conducive to successful action. On this so-called "value of knowledge" discussion in general epistemology, see Olsson 2011.

difference, but they are confronted with powerful foes. Whether the "package deal" of knowledge, reason, and democracy for which historiography and its philosophy stand is attractive enough to stem the tide of irrationality and the identitarian passions that have been fanned again in recent years by populists in the West and their authoritarian brethren all over the world, I do not know; and there is in any case no guarantee here. What reason cannot do is to force the fundamentally unreasonable to be reasonable. It can show them that they contradict themselves, that every time they argue for a point, even in bad faith, they presuppose for themselves the very reason they deny to others, and which they all too often reject in their general pronouncements and theories. And of course, through (historiographic) reason we can show them that their actions are based on false beliefs and in this sense wrong and unjustified. But neither of these will compel those acting out of unshakeable dogma, blind faith, or because their passions compel them, to change their ways. Historiography, like any other reasonable enterprise, has no miracle method to disabuse the fundamentally unreasonable from their (destructive) fantasies about the past and make them instead relate to it in an epistemically responsible and where possible truthful fashion, and by itself it is helpless against those willing to resort to threats, coercion, or even violence. It cannot even offer the wavering ones the assurance that such a more sober relation to the past necessarily makes them happier, or more capable of reaching their (imaginary) goals. Neither can it assure them that it will lead to pleasure, or to anything close to the compensatory psychological gratification they have been looking for in their bogus accounts of the past.

In other words, historiography and its reason cannot provide people with what M.C. Lemon aptly called "histodicy" (Lemon 2003: 11), i.e. with some sort of higher historical justification and solace for all the suffering and for all the awful ways in which humans have been treating each other since the beginning of time. This is so because historiography cannot produce knowledge and give guidance about issues for which there is no answer based on its scientific methodology. All the questions about the Meaning of Life and History that animate so many—and the answers that political ideologies, religions, and speculative philosophies of history give to them—fall into this category. If anything, then with the help of historiography it can be shown that these questions are based on wrong presuppositions and in this sense fundamentally wrongheaded. This can be too much to bear for the "religiously inclined and epistemically unconcerned" (Tucker 2004a: 17) who believe these questions and the soothing answers to them that they

seek as essential for their wellbeing and for the leading of any meaningful life; and with that, historiography and reason regularly incur their enmity and wrath.

This is the most fundamental challenge to historiography and its reason, I believe. In a sense, the future of humankind is dependent on whether people are willing to embrace a secular and disenchanted understanding of the (past) world and on whether they can cope with the "loss" that this fundamental paradigm change betokens. The alternative put forward by historiography and its philosophy is to embrace historiographic reason and humanist values instead. The issue at stake here is well put by Michael Ruse, and what he says does not just apply to dogmatic religious worldviews, but also all kinds of superficially secularized "histomyths" and accounts of the past passed on the passions (and at the very end of this text, a name joke might be allowed. It is of great delight to me that this insight was formulated by someone with the surname Ruse):

> "You are replacing a spiritual view of the world with a secular one. You are replacing one with meaning by one without meaning. You can try to keep as much as you can of the old picture, but you should not be surprised if in the end you lose things that were considered absolutely crucial. That is what the move from the sacred to the secular is all about. Some of us call it a loss. Others of us call it 'growing up.'" (Ruse 2009: 316)

What we receive in return though is the possibility of a rational and truthful relationship to the past, collectively and individually, and an understanding and appreciation of the near endless possibilities that there are to lead a human life (if there is any meaning in history, I think it should be sought in this). And such a realistic but capacious understanding of the human condition is indispensable for the realization of any desirable future.

Historiography and philosophy are indeed two such historical possibilities to lead a human life. They are both equally committed to basic humanist values such as respect and equality and the impartial demands of reason. Basic respect and equality are in historiography wedded to an objective method and a rationally oriented discourse geared at producing knowledge of the past. Under these conditions, the possibility of unforced consensus and progress beyond any dogmatically held beliefs and any fixed and parochial identities emerges. As such, this combination of humanist values and impartial reason that historiography stands for seems like an attractive model for politics and the public sphere as a whole, though of course there are doubts about the extent to which politics can be "ratiocinated" in this way. With deliberative democracy however, we have a form

of politics and societal organization available that is built on the same values and the same demands of reason as historiography is. Together, I believe they provide us invaluable guidance for the project of the good life for all, or eudaimonia, whatever that in detail may be.

This then is the form of life and the "utopia" that historiography and its philosophy stand for. They compel us to ponder a (public) life that is based upon knowledge, reason, humanist values, and democracy. I find such a life very attractive, and I believe it is worth being defended against its many enemies, if necessary by means other than those of reason. But this, just as the adoption of the form of life historiography stands for, is a choice everybody must make for themself.

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II Gangl. G. (2021). The Essential Tension. Historical Knowledge Between Past and Present. In *History and Theory*, *60*(3), 513-533, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/hith.12226

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IV Gangl. G. (2023). Misunderstandings. Kalle Pihlainen's The Work of History. Constructivism and the Politics of the Past. *Unpublished manuscript*

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