

# THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE ART OF WRITING IT<sup>1</sup>

## I. SCIENCE AND ART IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

The history of philosophy, like every area of human endeavor, has given rise to criticisms and reservations. Nobody has expressed this more vehemently than Schopenhauer. "To study philosophy, not by reading the actual works of the philosophers, but with the aid of summaries of their doctrines in a history of philosophy, is like having someone else chew one's own food."

In a general way, Schopenhauer's reservations apply to all history of philosophy, not only to one of its aspects. Nor are they directed against history itself, but specifically against the history of philosophy. The plight of the history of philosophy is worse than that of other fields of history precisely because philosophy itself happens to have the most favorable conditions. In effect, political or economic events are in the realm of the past, while philosophical events remain in the present in the form of manuscripts and books. For this reason political or economic history has a *raison*

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*d'être*: in it a historian reconstructs that which no longer exists, whereas a historian of philosophy merely reproduces what is.

Such was Schopenhauer's opinion. If, in fact, the historian of philosophy merely reproduced what existed, his work would have no meaning. Actually, he does more.

He not only confirms facts ("a philosopher Ph expressed an affirmation A") but studies them. And, even when he ascertains the facts, he is not necessarily limited to a mere transcription of the documents. If he does transcribe them, he does so only after he has satisfied himself that the source, date and authorship having been ascertained, merits his attention. The historian's obstacles will increase if the philosopher does not himself write down his opinions or if all that he has written has disappeared. In the history of philosophy the very establishment of simple facts implies a criticism, and often this calls for complex interventions and reasoning. The work of a historian of philosophy is not limited to the verification of facts; like all historical endeavor, it also consists of selecting, interpreting, integrating, organizing, correlating, and, finally, correcting.

### I. *The Selection of Facts*

From all the statements made in the past, the historian must single out the philosophical ones. In order to do this, he must have a concept of philosophy and, consequently, must accomplish an intellectual work that differs from the observation and verification of facts. This is not a mechanical endeavor, because, during the course of the ages, philosophical statements have been expressed in different terms, and the word "philosophy" itself has many meanings.

However, the historian cannot take into consideration the innumerable philosophical statements made in the past; this would be meaningless and impossible also because of the quantity of the material. He selects those statements that seem valid because they are true, original, and progressive or because they exerted an influence. On the other hand, he eliminates those facts that prove to be erroneous, obsolete, useless, or non-independent. The postulate of "complete extension" with which Sigwart confronted the historians was unreal, corresponding neither to the ends nor to the possibilities of science.

The historian must select and classify the material, rejecting everything that does not tally with his concept of philosophy as well as what does not correspond to his criteria of value. He makes a double selection: material that is related to certain concepts and material that corresponds to certain

evaluations. On the one hand, in other words, he isolates certain material and, on the other, chooses certain parts of it. Or we might say that he assembles material and then selects from it.

2. *The Interpretation of Facts*

The interpretation of facts is necessary, given the large number of their meanings—given the “unlimited multiple of the significance of the philosophical material,” as Dilthey puts it. The data of a history of philosophy tend to have many more meanings than those of a history of art or of politics, because the latter—directly, as, for example, in the history of art or, indirectly, as in political history—are concerned with actual things, while those of a history of philosophy are concerned with words and concepts. No great philosopher exists whose opinions have not been interpreted differently by historians. And the opinions of many of them have even been the subject of contradictory interpretations.

3. *The Integration of Facts*

Only a very primitive history of philosophy would limit itself to an enumeration of statements previously made. This would represent only preparation for subsequent tasks in a more advanced history of philosophy. Even if limited merely to stating the opinions of a philosopher, a history performs another kind of work: it reviews opinions, integrates them, searches for the fundamental ideas, and groups opinions that derive from these ideas. “It [the history of philosophy] reviews all the ideas of a thinker, a school, or a trend in such a way that we can, as a consequence, visualize them exactly in all their details.” The historian’s art consists in a concise presentation of data which is simultaneously complete, restrained, and clear. In general, the historian has many possibilities; he is forced to take the initiative; he is condemned to freedom of action.

4. *The Classification of Facts*

Not only must the historian separately classify the opinions of each philosopher but he must classify the philosophies themselves according to tendencies, schools, and trends. He performs this task with the help of general ideas which include related opinions. He does this in at least two ways.

First, he groups opinions according to their similarity; he distinguishes among types of philosophy, schools, and tendencies; he thus creates a philosophical typology. This is an indispensable labor which can and, indeed, has been done variously. Around 1800, historians juxtaposed the

“schools” of Descartes, Bacon, Leibniz, and Kant and the eclectics; around 1900, historians contrasted the dogmatists with the skeptics and the critics. Today a distinction is made between materialists and idealists.

Second, the historian of philosophy, in classifying the philosophies according to the dates of their appearance and their sway, establishes philosophical periodization. We are already so profoundly accustomed to certain chronological divisions that they seem indispensable to us. Such, for example, is the division into the ancient, medieval, and modern periods. But this division was not immediately accepted, and it certainly is not a definitive one. Like typology, periodization is *magis artis quam naturae*. It does not result directly from the facts and can therefore be established in different ways. More or less new philosophical ideas appear all the time. The historian must choose from them the ones that introduce a new period; if he begins with Descartes, then he does not begin with Bacon. The historian must also choose his principle of periodization: he can fix the beginning of a period at the time when new ideas appeared or when the conditions that gave rise to them materialized or, even later, when these ideas had been accepted. Or he can date a period from the time when the ideas came into being or when they reached their highest expression, their maturity, their acme, which is a moment no less important than that of their birth. Periodization is indispensable in the history of philosophy, but, by and large, the facts do not indicate it incontrovertibly; the historian has a freedom of action that frequently could be excessive.

##### 5. *The Relationship of Facts*

The historian must establish not merely the similarities between philosophical data but also their interdependence. Just as he classifies data according to their similarities, he likewise explains them by taking into account their interdependence. The particular facts of a history of philosophy are not isolated; they are related to other philosophical data. They are also related to economic, political, psychological, scientific, and artistic data. The only question that can be raised is: Which of these relationships are the stronger? The positivists have coined the slogan of pure description that abstains from explanation, but this slogan has never been applied.

The historian of philosophy tries to connect and to explain data in at least two different ways.

First, he associates them with prior philosophical data which influenced them, thus establishing philosophical genealogies. For example, it is well known that Comte was the initiator of positivism—but the historians have

established the genealogy of this current of thought by going back from Comte to D'Alembert and even to Hume and Hobbes and further still to Bacon. We also know that Fechner proclaimed the associationist conception of aesthetics, but the historians have shown that Fechner was preceded by Herder, and Herder by Diderot, Montesquieu, and Hume, who themselves were preceded by Hutcheson, just as the latter was by Perreault. Books on the history of philosophy are filled with such genealogical trees; every doctrine and every philosophical concept has one.

Second, the historian links philosophical data with contemporaneous data that belong to different domains. Above all, he connects philosophical data with the social and economic data which underlie human existence. He also connects them with scientific and artistic facts, which, like philosophical data, constitute an ideological superstructure. In some instances, scientific and artistic data influence philosophical data; in others, the reverse is true. The historian attempts to discover those independent, or relatively independent, variables which, in a given time and place, have conditioned philosophical data. The writings of the philosophers do not generally provide information concerning this data, and the historian is therefore obliged to furnish such information himself.

#### 6. *The Correction of the Facts*

Some historians ask not only what the opinions were of such-and-such a philosopher but also whether these opinions were correct. An article that appeared in the periodical *Logos* and that is typical of the beginning of the twentieth century claims that only what is true in a philosophical system constitutes the proper subject matter of a history of philosophy. Expressing the Marxist point of view on the history of philosophy, Ždanov said: "Philosophical opinions and ideas which have long since been destroyed and buried should not attract a great deal of attention." According to these directives, the historian of philosophy should not, in the course of his researches, treat false and true statements in the same way. In any case, he should point out what is inconsequential, careless, insufficient, or mistaken. He should make corrections. He should not merely reproduce the philosophy he is studying with all its errors but rather try to give a perfect rendition which, even if it does not exist in this form in the text, stems from the philosopher's own principles. According to these tenets, D. Einhorn paradoxically considered the history of philosophy as a corrective, normative science.

Some historians go even further. They attempt not only corrections but

criticisms as well. They do not want merely to ascertain whether the philosopher correctly deduced conclusions from his principles but also whether the principles themselves are sound. This is an extreme point of view regarding the task of the historian of philosophy and one that is not acceptable to everyone. However, it seems that there are few historians of high caliber who have rejected altogether this kind of criticism.

The work of a historian of philosophy therefore comprises six operations: to select the data and to interpret, integrate, classify, correlate, and correct them. Actually there are more than six tasks, because what we call 'selection' includes both isolation and choice; classification includes typology and periodization; to correlate the data involves tracing their genealogy as well as explaining them; correction embraces the literal meaning of the word as well as criticism. There is also historical synthesis which is concerned with the evolution, the progress, and the sense of history in general; but the question does not arise here, because its aim is transhistorical, and hence it belongs more to historiography than to history.

All the activities of the historian of philosophy presented here are concerned with the texts of philosophers, but they do not consist of pure transcription. There is a theory that maintains that the history of philosophy is nothing more than a passive statement of facts; we must add that practice gives the lie to such a theory. The historian's intervention is inevitable. And it often appears in vehement and paradoxical forms. The historian of philosophy rarely is satisfied to reproduce facts; he transforms them, reinforces them, presents them "in verdichtender Reproduktion," as the Germans say, in order to make them stand out, to render them expressive. He proceeds in a way that is analogous to that of expressionists in art.

From time to time the historian of philosophy paradoxically decides to attempt to understand the philosopher's meanings better than the philosopher himself. Indeed, the historian, because he is living in a later epoch, has a better perspective than the philosopher who is the object of his studies. It is important to know what the philosopher thought about his own theses, but it is even more important to establish what these theses really signify, especially if their author failed to express himself clearly or did not draw all the necessary inferences.

The active role of the historian of philosophy, the demand for his continuous intervention, and the inevitable freedom of these interventions cannot but influence the development of the history of philosophy. The latter evolves not only through the accumulation of syntheses and of new

facts but also through subtraction and elimination. It owes as much to the introduction of new statements as to the rectification of old ones. The merit of the best historians of philosophy springs not only from their discovery of new data but also from their verification, their correction or rejection, of old data and expositions.

Historians make a contribution when they merely correct material errors: when they discover that the copyist has transcribed the text erroneously (e.g., certain manuscripts of Aristotle's) or that the printer has mutilated the text or reversed the pages (e.g., certain editions of Kant). They also prove their worth by indicating that the text of the work was modified by the editor (e.g., Pascal's *Pensées*) or that the text was incorrectly attributed to a certain philosopher (e.g., Plato's *Dialogues*); or they might show that the work was not of the period to which it was supposed to belong (e.g., the works of the Pseudo-Areopagite), that it did not entirely reveal the thinking of a philosopher (e.g., Leibniz), or that it provided false information (e.g., Xenophon and Plato on the philosophy of Socrates).

The worth of eminent historians of philosophy resides in the rectification not only of the facts themselves but also of their selection. The end result is that some philosophers who were overestimated diminish in stature and others who have been forgotten are resurrected. In 1824 J. E. Jankowski, a professor at Cracow, expressed the prevailing opinion when he wrote that "future generations will always remember with gratitude" the names of Wolf, Crusius, Basedow, Eberhand, Meiners, Garve, Platner, Feder, Ulrich, Hufeland, Abicht, Bergk, Jacobi, and Schmidt. We know today that successive generations have already forgotten the majority of them.

The role of the most famous historians of philosophy also consists to a certain extent in rectifying or discrediting traditional interpretations. Historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries undermined the centuries-old metaphysical interpretations of Platonic ideas. They also struck a blow at the psychological interpretation of Kantism which was then prevalent and very highly regarded. The following generation of historians portrayed Aristotle as free from inconsistencies, Descartes as devoid of dualism, Berkeley without idealism, Condillac as no sensualist, and Comte as untouched by positivism.

The demolition of generalizations likewise attested progress. Early generalizations in the history of logic turned out to be false after the Stoics' analysis of logic. Early generalizations in the history of Scholasticism suf-

ferred the same fate following studies on empirical and agnostic tendencies. Progress was also registered through correcting typologies and periodizations that had been in use. De Gérando, the influential historian of the early nineteenth century, did not emphasize materialism among the modern philosophies. He was still treating the period that extended from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century as an indivisible totality, a single era. Progress was likewise manifested in the correction of philosophical genealogies. Although formerly Plato was considered to have derived from the ancient Pythagoreans, today the reverse opinion is held. The idealists disagreed with the positivists who thought of Locke and Hume as descendants of Kant, suggesting an entirely different genealogy, one that stemmed from Plato and Descartes. Progress in the history of philosophy consists also in additions, in the rejection of partial explanations, premature syntheses, evaluations, corrections, and unwarranted criticisms.

The role of these negative and destructive processes is important for the development of the history of philosophy. This is very understandable. Isolation, selection, interpretation, integration, typologies, periodizations, genealogies, explanations, syntheses, criticisms, and corrections are, on the one hand, indispensable to a history of philosophy, but, on the other hand, they often rest upon insufficient evidence. The historian must perform all these tasks, but he cannot do so with perfection. It is relatively easier to establish the facts in a history of philosophy than in other domains of history because they can frequently be found in manuscripts or publications. However, the organization is particularly difficult in this field, for in no other is it as general. We can see from the over-all nature of the organization that the distance between it and the facts becomes especially great. And this great distance leaves room for freedom and for error.

The historian of philosophy verifies data and compares them with each other. He decides if the philosophy he is studying has actually made affirmation A. He makes up his mind principally on the basis of whether A is consistent with statements of the philosopher and eventually with the statements of his contemporaries or his successors. He applies the same criterion of mutual consistency in establishing and verifying interpretations or syntheses. His task is very much the same when he must establish a periodization or construct a typology or a genealogy; he does this on the basis of similarity of data.

Thus the historian of philosophy functions with consistent facts and similarities; that is to say, with something that is difficult to formulate in definitive and unequivocal form. This is why the results are always uncer-



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tain and tenuous. Moreover, the historian cannot place in the foreground all the facts upon which he bases his results. He changes the picture of past reality, depending upon which facts he stresses. The foreground is constantly changing because the perspective of the past recedes with time, new facts appear, and those that were close grow distant.

If one were to attempt to give a name to the opinion presented above, the most suitable would doubtless seem to be "historical interventionism." Historical interventionism maintains that the work of a historian of philosophy requires selection, integration, interpretation, classification, and correction and that the active intervention of the historian is necessary for the accomplishment of all these tasks.

This opinion does not prejudge the question whether such intervention has an aprioristic character, as the Kantists claim, or whether it introduces conventional factors, as the conventionalists claim. It does not exclude the possibility that the historian's intervention might be presented within the framework of empiricism, viewed in very broad terms; in any case, to a great extent, it consists in contrasting historical facts with one another.

The intervention of the historian is very apparent in a history of philosophy, but it does not constitute its distinctiveness; *mutatis mutandis*, it repeats itself in other branches of history.

Historians are like students at the Académie des Beaux Arts who paint from a model: each sees it from where he sits, and he sees it differently from the others, but each can paint it accurately. The different points of view complement and rectify one another. The result of interventionism is not that history must be subjective but that, like any other science, it must be the product of a common effort which can attain its ends only gradually; it is equally apparent that one intervention complements another.

A historian's intervention assumes varying proportions; it is natural that it increase with more extensive tasks, when the historian goes beyond the particular facts and people, when he attempts to visualize the great historical totalities, if not the entire history of philosophy. It is here that generalizations, selection, genealogies, typologies, and periodizations assume great importance. Comparison of data is not alone sufficient; conjectures and hypotheses are called into play. The disproportion between the facts which the historian uses and the tasks which he must accomplish becomes enormous. He must choose between the various possibilities, and the freedom of his choice is great enough to dismay him.

One question arises: Should this historian renounce tasks that cannot

be performed with exactitude and limit himself to the verification of facts? Yet it is not the facts—"the philosopher Ph expressed opinion A"—that his readers expect of the historian of philosophy. They anticipate a general portrayal of history, an account of it as it appears today as well as its important controversies and principal accomplishments. No single historian is responsible for this task but rather history itself as a collective activity. Society needs this kind of historical presentation, and, if scholarship does not provide it, a solution outside of scientific research will be sought.

Such a task cannot be accomplished by the ordinary methods of scientific observation and induction. One must have recourse to means that increasingly belong to domains other than science. The eminent historian of philosophy, Wilhelm Windelband, in speaking of another no less renowned historian of philosophy, Kuno Fischer, held that the relationships of the latter with philosophical systems were like those of an artist with living men: "He did not tell a story, reconstruct and inform, but rather molded and created." The foundation of philosophy—in other words, the data—belongs to science, and this even in its narrowest and most exact meaning. But everything that is built on this foundation resembles, as it grows, less and less the image of science as it is pictured by the layman. Without ceasing to be science, it draws closer and closer to art. Perhaps not to the *beaux arts*—although one does see certain similarities—but to *ars* in the ancient and classical sense of the word,<sup>2</sup> which also implies imagination and ingenuity and which postulates that one can often attain one's end better through them than by accurate observation and proper reasoning.

## II. PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHERS IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Comprehension of this history corresponds to the comprehension of the facts of the history of philosophy. There are two principal conceptions. According to one, the history of philosophy deals with affirmations; according to the other, with ideas. It is concerned with affirmations expressed in manuscripts and publications—or with ideas that have arisen in the minds of living persons. The first is literally the history of philosophy. The second is rather the history of philosophers. One discusses the products of thought, the other its activities; one deals with knowledge, the other with the acquisition of this knowledge. According to one of these concepts, the history of philosophy possesses an impersonal character; ac-

2. The Polish word *umiejętność* embraces the science both of art and of the arts, both knowledge and "know-how."

ording to the other, it has a personal character that is connected with the person of the philosophers.

The partisans of personal history proclaim: Man produced a book, and without him the book cannot be understood. That is, truths and books alone do not constitute a continuous historical chain. There are links of a different kind between them: men, their thoughts, and their activities. The historian cannot reconstruct the history of philosophy in its totality and its continuity without them.

But one can also maintain the reverse: Men, their thoughts, and their works, viewed as separate entities, do not constitute a continuous, evolutive, and complete chain; truths, affirmations, and books are also links. Man created them by his activity, but they, in turn, influenced him. They serve as intermediaries between people who have never met, who have lived in different times. The historian may present the history of philosophers; but he may likewise present only the history of philosophical affirmations. Neither the one nor the other embodies a complete evolutive chain. The scientific rule for specialized work always leads to a homogeneous history, whether it be a history of philosophers or a history of doctrines. Yet the result is never entirely satisfactory; indeed, it fails to satisfy another scientific rule—that of the exhaustive work of completely reconstructing the evolutive chains.

The rule for a complete work goes even further so far as the history of philosophy is concerned. Even if the historian takes philosophers as well as doctrines into consideration, he still does not achieve a complete evolutive chain, because the philosophers and their affirmations were influenced by artists and artistic trends, by prophets and religious dogmas, by scholars and scientific discoveries, and, above all, by economic conditions and social forms—in short, by all of human culture. Only after the introduction of these links does the evolutive chain of philosophy become complete. But, in that case, the history of philosophy becomes part of the history of civilization and blends with it. It is thus that the complete history of philosophy arrives at its natural ends (and the complete history of art, religion, or science is achieved in the same way).

The rule for specialized work in the history of philosophy also goes further: in a direction which is opposite to that toward which the rule of a complete work leads it. The reason for this is that the work is not special or rather because it is not pure if it is not homogeneous, if it deals with various subjects—some abstract (the truths), others concrete (men). This is why the rule for pure work is not satisfied with the formula: “A was

expressed by Ph"; it tends to eliminate the philosopher Ph and to limit itself to the A truths alone, to affirmations like the following: "A was expressed in a time T"; this rule determines a history of philosophy without names, and consequently incomplete, but for this reason homogeneous.

The rule of a pure work goes even further. It stresses the problems themselves, not their solutions, because only the problems have a purely philosophical character, while the solutions always bear the imprint of social and economic conditions. Therefore, the rule of purely philosophical history leads to the history of uniquely philosophical problems (recently developed by Windelband and elaborated by Nicolai Hartmann). The latter constitutes the second pole of a history of philosophy just as a general history of civilization constitutes the first pole. And it was not without cause that Eisler discerned three principal types in the history of philosophy and only three. These were: (1) the simplest "psychological and biographical" history, a point of departure for the best historiography and unrelated to the two previously cited poles; (2) the history of "philosophical problems"; and (3) "the general history of philosophical culture."

The historian of philosophy studies what individuals as well as groups have said about philosophical subjects. Individuals formulate certain ideas, and groups preserve them. But the groups incite the individuals to formulate them. Some historians, like Zeller, have pointed out that the individual improvises what the masses need, and others, like Eucken, have indicated that the masses believe what the individual improvises. However, it is the fusion of these points of view that provides an image of the history of philosophy. This explains why a complete history of philosophy must be in part the history of individuals and in part that of groups. This difference corresponds to another: the history of philosophy is in part the history of the formation of philosophical ideas and in part the history of their diffusion. One can distinguish between these aspects and treat separately the formation of philosophical doctrines (thanks to individuals) and their diffusion (among the masses). The rule for pure work leads to a distinction between these parts. But the rule for a complete work counters it because none of these parts gives a picture of the true development of philosophy. Here, again, the two rules continue to conflict.

One can treat the history of philosophy like the history of art or literature or like the history of science. Hartmann says that until the present it has been treated as the history of art or literature because it dealt with that which, in the philosophy of the past, was original, profound, characteristic, or coherent and not uniquely with that which was true. It presented

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what a philosopher affirmed, not what he really discovered; it was as much concerned with error as with truth; it followed the transformations of the human mind and not the progress of human thought. Hartmann contrasted this conception of the history of philosophy with another: he believed that, since philosophy is a science, its history must point up the truths it embraces. Instead of trying to explain why an epoch had some predilections rather than others, it would be more important to prove that they were correct. The rule of pure work requires this last point of view, while that of complete work corresponds to the first conception. Actually philosophers are concerned with matters in which the truth is very difficult to discern. If they have exerted an influence and elicited admiration, the reason is not so much the truth of their opinions as their suggestive power, their originality, or the impact of their opinions.

### III. PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

We have pointed out in the first part of this essay that the role of the historian cannot be a passive one and that he must intervene in the selection, interpretation, and correction of the material. But how should he intervene if he wishes to remain impartial, objective, scientific, and fair? As long as he can interpret and correct certain facts with the help of other facts, the problem is simple; but, when the facts themselves fail to provide sufficient basis for interpretation, correction, or selection, what then should be his guide? A priori principles? Conventions? Or merely intuitional conjectures? In other words, can the historian rely upon doctrinal philosophy in elaborating the history of philosophy?

The opinion that the history of philosophy can and should make use of doctrinal philosophy has been known for a long time. Czeryszewski wrote: "Without the history of the subject, there is no theory of the subject; but without the theory of the subject one cannot even speak of its history because there is then no idea of the subject, of its significance, or of its boundaries." Later, Schwegler stresses that, above all, one must learn to think philosophically in order to study the history of philosophy. S. Pawlicki<sup>3</sup> defended the following thesis: "Historia philosophiae non est componenda nisi a philosophis." In drawing a parallel between philosophy and music, Willmann wrote: "One would deride a non-musician who attempted to elaborate the history of music." Zeller wrote that anyone who does not clearly and deliberately adopt a certain scientific point of view in study-

3. A Polish historian of Greek philosophy.

ing history thereby adopts a non-scientific point of view, for it is impossible to work without some point of view.

However convincing it may be, this opinion presents some difficulties. Its partisans, in effect, say: This is the procedure in every branch of history; no one writes or can write the history of zoölogy without knowing zoölogy. But their opponents retort: The situation in philosophy is not the same as it is in zoölogy. Whereas zoölogy states affirmations that are universally approved, philosophy comprises very few affirmations of this kind. The historian of zoölogy works on the basis of a generally accepted science. The historian of philosophy at all times can take only a position that is approved by some and rejected by others.

As for the partisans of the introduction of doctrinal philosophy into the history of philosophy, their thesis does not have just one meaning. Rather, it can be understood from at least three different points of view. First, where are systematic principles necessary in the history of philosophy? Is it a matter of problems or of affirmations? Of specific affirmations or of the whole philosophical system? Second, to what are these principles necessary? To the selection of facts, to their interpretation or to their criticism? Third, are these principles indispensable or merely useful?

The first point raises the following question: What can and should the history of philosophy borrow from philosophy itself? It can adopt ideas and problems without much limitation, because in this domain philosophers do not diverge a great deal. Rather, it is the acceptance of definitive solutions that is doubtful, above all, as regards the adoption of total solutions or of a system. It is true that, by proceeding from a definite position, the historian will more easily discover and understand those philosophers who have taken the same position. But, on the other hand, he might easily neglect or distort the opinions of other philosophers. Herein lurks a risk for the historian: he can gain by his doctrinal position, but he can likewise lose. Generally speaking, he will gain in studying the small sectors of history and lose in studying its totality.

The second point signifies a query as to how philosophy is necessary to the historian. He needs to be familiar with philosophical problems in order to select and, above all, to isolate his material. This is incontrovertible. But the problem is not so clear cut when the historian proceeds to an interpretation of the facts. And when he begins to appraise critically, when he refers to the affirmations of philosophy and to his own doctrine, this attitude becomes questionable and delicate.

Finally, if we examine the third point we have raised, we see that

philosophical affirmations seem indispensable to the history of philosophy. For the historian must adopt a certain point of view in order to undertake his study, and this point of view entails certain ideas and conceptions. But he can quite easily find this point of view, these ideas and conceptions, in the philosopher he is studying, and, if that particular philosopher has not expounded them clearly, the historian will discover them in later philosophers of the same school. Furthermore, he may find this point of view, these ideas and problems, in history itself, without having to contrast it with some system or other. Generally, a distinction is made between (present-day) philosophy and the history of (past) philosophy; but a historian regards the philosophy of today as a part of history, as momentarily its final link.

The difficulty of philosophical problems explains why their solutions, unlike those in other fields of learning, are never satisfactory or universally approved. But, thanks to this, their recent solutions do not render earlier ones obsolete. This disadvantage for philosophical science constitutes an advantage for its history. In other sciences, earlier solutions, the previous stages of development, are merely a part of history and have no actuality. In philosophy, on the contrary, they preserve their characteristic of actuality; if not all the solutions, at least some of them remain valid, despite the fact that the evolution of philosophy has progressed, sometimes even in other directions.

It is not enough for the historian of philosophy to know philosophy. He must also be a philosopher. This requirement stems from his active rôle, from his incessant intervention during the elaboration of the material at his disposal. The question that naturally arises is not, "Should the historian of philosophy use philosophy in his researches?" but "What philosophy should he use?" In other words, must he always make use of a same philosophy which he believes to be true and by means of which he can either judge all the phenomena of the past or adapt his criterion to the phenomena themselves? It is probably here that the greatest divergences of philosophical historiography manifest themselves. Two conflicting conceptions confront each other. According to the first, the historian adopts a definite philosophical truth on the basis of which he selects from, interprets, and judges the entire philosophical past; according to the second, he tries to understand every theory and to evaluate it on the basis of its own distinctive principles. Representing this type of philosophical historiography, Léon Robin claimed, in the course of a famous discussion that took place in 1936 at the Société Française de Philosophie, that, when one

studies Epicurus, one must resign one's self to becoming a materialist. Generally speaking, if one studies some particular philosophy, one must delve into its spirit and attempt to live it. No impartial person will deny that this second type of historical work has well served the history of philosophy.

One might wonder whether the above remarks are applicable to the study of the history of philosophy rather than to its writing. When only simple facts are involved, the boundary between "studying" and "writing" is quite distinct, and it is certain that one must first study and then write. However, the more profound a study of the facts becomes, and the closer it comes to synthesis, the fainter the boundary between research itself and the act of writing grows. At a higher level, not only does writing depend upon study but study likewise depends upon the manner of writing. The essential point is that the historian formulates his problems and his ideas as he writes and according to what he wishes to achieve. He chooses problems and ideas differently—and, in the last analysis, selection is guided by the concrete objective that he has chosen; in short, the historian is guided by his pen. Here—between the act of studying and the act of writing—there is established a relationship similar to that which exists between speaking and thinking. The layman imagines that he thinks first and that only afterward does he express what he has thought; he believes that the act of speaking is secondary in comparison with thought and that it consists in the mere enunciation of thoughts already elaborated. However, the psychologist of today is of a different opinion: man is capable of thinking only by means of speech, that is to say, by pronouncing words out loud or to himself, so that they define his thought; not only do thoughts influence words but words influence thoughts. As for the fact of writing, it is certainly analogous to the fact of speaking.