

Making sense of

History

*What Is
History For?*

Johann Gustav Droysen and
the Functions of Historiography

Arthur Alfaix Assis

§ What Is History For? §

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Introduction

In many cultures, the practice of historiography has often been attended by reflections on its general value and function. In the Western world since classical antiquity, some rhetoricians, philosophers and historians have attempted to explain why writing narratives referring to the past (and reading them) happens to be a worthwhile venture. Throughout the centuries a great variety of explanations emerged, most of them stressing that the issue goes far beyond the recognition that reading histories is sometimes a pleasant experience. In this regard, one explanatory *topos* had a very significant impact: Cicero's (106–43 BC) metaphor comparing history to a '*magistra vitae*' (life's teacher, guide to life).¹ Up until the beginnings of modern times, very few scholars would disagree with the argument condensed in Cicero's metaphor, namely, that the historian's task is to convey to an audience the lessons that can be extracted from past events and experiences. Even today, one could still easily uncover metaphors and arguments similar to Cicero's in several cultural realms. However, historians on duty at the beginning of the twenty-first century – unless they wished to commit professional suicide – no longer resorted to such a discourse when justifying the significance of their work and their academic discipline.

The origins of this change in how the work of historians is justified are traceable to the period from the late eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century, when criticism of historiography's exemplary function took shape. A modern discourse on the function of historiography only arose when (German) intellectuals such as August Ludwig Schlözer (1735–1809), Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831) and Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), to quote only the most widely known, began challenging what can be called the 'exemplar theory of history'.

In this work, I assume that Johann Gustav Droysen's (1808–1884) texts on historical theory can be read as very important marks on the intellectual path leading to the critique of historical exemplarity. Part of their significance is due

Notes for this section begin on page 14.

to his extraordinary attempts to think out a new positive justification for historiography. Basically, he proposed that we should not study, research and write history in order to learn or produce universally valid examples. Instead, he suggested that historiography is better conceived of as a vehicle through which authors and readers learn and improve mental skills that he himself addressed as 'historical thinking'.²

Droysen's claim that history should teach how to think historically points to the capacity by which human beings become able to really understand the present world they live in. This is a skill that should enable one to see one's lifeworld through the lens of a genetic perspective, a perspective centred on the temporal evolving of current things. In other words, it is the capacity to mentally re-enact the history of the present and, hence, to unveil the historicity of oneself and one's surrounding world. But in no way did Droysen see historical thinking only as a means for contemplating the past, for it was directly linked to human agency in a given present. According to him, historical thinking can provide an understanding of the generative process of a given lifeworld that is crucial for someone willing to reasonably make decisions, act and interact within that world.

Such an argument elicited a new approach to the relationship between historical knowledge and human action. Previous historical theorists had defined the function of historiography as the conveyance of examples worked out of past events related to the actions of either memorable or despicable men, thus presupposing historical knowledge as general knowledge of human nature. Accordingly, histories were supposed to communicate substantive maxims of action whose exemplary validity would transcend temporal and spatial contexts – maxims that actors in each given present would be able to apply if they judged it convenient. Droysen, for his part, regarded this way of referring historical knowledge to action as largely insufficient. He proposed instead that historical knowledge should function as a formal support for subjective reflection, action and suffering. Unlike the theorists who focused on historical learning from examples, Droysen assumed that the kind of learning sponsored by historical thinking related neither to a substantial set of recommendations nor to the ability to decide which example to follow in each given circumstance. For him, historical thinking was not a ready-made solution to the problem of human agency, but a capacity that agents could develop and improve so as to be able to find adequate, feasible, responsible and original paths of action in every specific case.

As can be seen, Droysen's theoretical texts reflected and promoted the stabilization of a genetic and non-exemplary sense of history. Nevertheless, they reveal not only a rejection of the old meta-historical pragmatism, but also a special concern not to isolate historiography from either ethics or politics. In fact, what Droysen proposed was a reconstruction of the very pragmatic

link between history and life that Cicero had placed at the core of his formula. This was, however, only one of the paths nineteenth-century historians and philosophers followed in their attempts to either formulate a non-exemplary justification for historiography or put into practice a non-exemplary form of historical writing. Leopold von Ranke, as we will see in Chapter 1, constantly pled in favour of isolating historical knowledge from any kind of immediate practical application.³ Conversely, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) would later argue for a radically pragmatic use of historiography to counter what he regarded as the paralysing effects of excessive historical knowledge on the human capacity to act.⁴ Like Nietzsche, Droysen believed that history should be a practical, somehow life-assisting and life-enhancing knowledge. But he could at once agree also with Ranke that history no longer had examples to teach. What Droysen proposed, then, was a redefinition of the practical value of history. For him, historical knowledge could be a legitimate source of cultural, moral or political orientation, but only if it were relocated to a temporalized, historicized, atmosphere that he found lacking in all previous exemplar theories of history.

In its broadest sense, the term historicism (*Historismus*)⁵ gives a name to the general framework within which a genetic (and non-exemplary) approach to history emerged. According to Ernst Troeltsch, historicism refers to the ‘fundamental historicization of our thinking on human beings, their culture and values’.⁶ It is thus a way of perceiving the human world that assumes that history is the most important concept for the understanding of human beings. To embrace a historicist perspective thus means to accept that the present world is indissolubly and dynamically linked with past worlds. It also means to acknowledge that a privileged way to understand the present is by looking into its becoming, into the gradual changes undergone by the past situations and frameworks that set up a given present context. Historicism hence directs attention to formative processes, qualitative changes and morphologies, and the adjective ‘genetic’, which I frequently use to define Droysen’s conception of historiography, refers precisely to this attitude of spotlighting the complex linkage (made of changes and continuities) that every present retains with its preceding pasts.

As such a world view, historicism opposes both theological and mechanistic views of social life: it attempts to understand why the world is the way it is, but not by equating current reality with an order determined by God or resorting to natural patterns or laws. Historicism comprises a special kind of consciousness of time that stresses the singularity of every historical epoch and subject, and is structured by individualizing, developmental and genetic concepts. Historicism, which originated in late eighteenth-century Europe among German and Scottish historical thinkers especially,⁷ had the work of Italian Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) as its most significant precursor.⁸ It is an (originally Western) intellectual phenomenon that can only be understood in con-

nection with other major modern developments, such as the Enlightenment, the political revolutions of the late eighteenth century, the industrial revolution and many accomplishments in natural sciences and technique.⁹

In this sense of a specifically modern historical outlook, historicism frequently went hand in hand with the German historiographical movement that established history as a professional and autonomous discipline. The word historicism commonly refers also to this process, so it is important to differentiate it from the more general meaning of historicism as a genetic approach to human life, as mentioned above. In fact, the latter extends to several academic fields beyond historiography: jurisprudence, theology, philology and philosophy, among others. In addition, historicism in a broad sense is not limited to the academic world, for it comes close to being a world view. In a narrower sense, however, historicism frequently refers to the professionalization of historical studies as first accomplished in some German universities between the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries.¹⁰

Justifications and Functions

Droysen's texts are rife with attempts to define which impacts the kind of genetic historiography composed by professional historians have or should have on then contemporary culture, society or politics. He frequently expresses these attempts in sentences opening with 'Our science's task is...' or 'The task of historians is...'. In general in this kind of sentence (and here I am thinking not only about Droysen's case), it is difficult to differentiate descriptive from ascriptive content. Drawing a line between Droysen's assessment of the actual function performed by historiography and his ideas about what this function should really be is an unworthy task. But as we survey the particular sentences in which Droysen describes functions or ascribes them to historiography, a more fruitful conclusion strikes us: depending on the context, Droysen filled the ellipses in sentences like 'the task of historians is...' with relatively differing arguments. This point can be illustrated by a collection of quotes extracted from some of his texts.

In 1843, in a preface printed in only a few copies of the second volume of his *History of Hellenism* – the so-called Private Preface – Droysen expatiates on the ultimate presuppositions of his interpretation of ancient history. Within this context, he states that that 'our science's highest task is the theodicy'.¹¹ Later on, in 1846, he further develops this same argument on the religious value of history as follows: 'Faith offers us the consolation that a hand of God bears us.... And the science of history has no higher task than to justify this faith.'¹² Nonetheless, in the 1855 opening of his multi-volume *History of Prussian Politics*, Droysen claims that the essence of historical studies is 'to learn how

to understand by means of research'.¹³ In his first lecture course on historical theory in 1857, that definition undergoes a slight change, for there he claims that 'the task of historical studies is to stimulate one's learning of historical thinking'.¹⁴ Shortly after, in 1858, while opening his lectures on contemporary history, he advocates that 'more than ever, history is the interpreter of the present, its *gnothi seauton* (γνώθι σαυτον), its conscience'.¹⁵ Further, in the last edition of his *Outlines of Historical Theory* (*Grundriss der Historik*), of 1882, he reminds us that '[t]he great practical significance of historical studies lies in the fact that they, and they alone, hold up before the state, or people, or army, its own picture. It is the study of history – and not the study of law – which is the basis for political and administrative instruction and qualification'.¹⁶ Finally, in the same *Outlines*, he also proposes that history is 'humankind's knowledge of itself, its self-awareness'.¹⁷

As the quotes reveal, Droysen's argues that the function(s) of historiography comprise, at least, serving as humankind's self-awareness; training politicians and bureaucrats to qualify them to properly deal with state affairs; interpreting the contemporary world; stimulating the development of historical thinking; learning to understand the world by means of research; justifying the religious faith that God directs the movement of history; and, finally, providing an explanation for the theological issue concerning the existence of evil in a world supposedly created by a good god. This multiplicity of answers might indeed lead today's readers to the opinion that Droysen's entire theory of history is either ambiguous or vague. Even if this opinion could be proven correct with regard to certain passages of his texts, one should from the very beginning take into account Droysen's highly dialectical way of thinking and arguing. In dialectics, as it is well known, contradiction plays the role of a constructive principle for reasoning and exposition; therefore, it does not necessarily indicate a vice of thought. Most of the ambiguities featuring in Droysen's theoretical texts can be understood in this manner.

Moreover, with regard to Droysen's style of thought, it is interesting to recall a dictum by Hegel, who alongside Karl Marx (1818–1883) is the most obvious modern philosopher associated with the term dialectics. Characterizing his own philosophical system, Hegel is quoted as having said that as he uttered its first word he also uttered its last.¹⁸ The image of the mutual interrelatedness of all concepts and ideas evoked here also serves as a good description of the way Droysen structured his own historical theory. In fact, Droysen never clarified a single sector of his theory without referencing all others: his methodological and epistemological concepts imply notions related to a substantive philosophy of history, his didactic arguments imply ethical and religious assumptions, and so on. In addition, Droysen many times delivered more or less the same message by using different key terms and introducing peripheral changes to subject matter.¹⁹ All these repetitions, of course, raise the correct impression of circular

thought, but again, in most of the cases, circularity does not necessarily correspond to vagueness or tautology. It can largely be seen as a stylistic mark accruing much less from Droysen's personal choice than from his affiliation to the hermeneutic tradition, a tradition that is no stranger to the image of knowledge and understanding emerging from circles or spirals of thought.

Indeed, Droysen's proposition that histories are meaningful because they serve to support the development of someone's historical thinking is not the only functional definition that can be extracted from his work. However, it is probably his strongest, most general, and consistent definition. First of all, historical thinking, as Chapter 2 will show, is very much akin to the formula 'understanding by means of research'. Nevertheless, as it points to not only historical understanding as performed by researchers but also that of readers and agents, historical thinking much better highlights Droysen's opinion that the value of history reaches far beyond the academic world. Secondly, Droysen's argument on history as the interpreter or conscience of the present is also highly compatible with the notion of historical thinking, though again the latter conveys a didactic orientation that the former lacks. In addition to that, and especially because of its close link with the parallel notion of *Bildung*, historical thinking underscores the idea of history as humankind's self-awareness. Finally, the notion of historical thinking also accords with Droysen's theological assumptions: it does not disallow the presupposition that God directs the course of history, and it can also be harmonized with an ultimately teleological conception of the historical process.

In any case, Droysen speaks of functions of historiography that definitively transcend his plea for historical thinking – even though there is, as mentioned, a high level of compatibility between many of them. It is also important to keep in mind that arguments justifying historiography's value are commonly contradicted by the actual functions concrete historical texts perform. Droysen's case unequivocally illustrates this disjunction between theory and practice, which abounds in the history of historical thought. As will be shown in Chapter 4, his theoretical argument against historical exemplarity largely conflicts with the recurrence, in his texts on Prussian history, of characters and stories that can function as examples to be followed by the audience. To be more specific: Droysen's commitment to the cause of German national unification led him to infuse many of his historical texts with the very same exemplarity that his theoretical reflections once condemned.

Outline of the Book

This study places Droysen's notion of historical thinking in the limelight. I have attempted to investigate many of his texts in search of the existing connections

between this notion and three of the main sectors of his general world view: his theory of historical method, his representations regarding the totality of the historical process, and his political beliefs and agenda. The book deals, therefore, with Droysen the theoretician of historiography; Droysen the holder of a necessitarian sense of history; and Droysen the political historian and utopist.

This last circumstance and of course also the comprehensiveness of Droysen's intellectual interests necessarily turn every consequent survey of his ideas into an enterprise falling within several academic fields. These include, among others, history of German nineteenth-century politics, ideas and intellectuals; theory and philosophy of history; history of philosophy and hermeneutics; and history of historiography. My text combines concepts, analyses and insights accruing from all these fields, and I only hope that its hybridized perspective will turn out to be more enriching than confusing for the readers.

I am starting with an outline of the history of the discourse on the function of historiography. Up until its last paragraphs, Chapter 1 does not directly address Droysen, but rather the diachronic context in which his historical theory came about. First, I will attempt to substantiate the general thesis that premodern meta-historical discourses were importantly marked by exemplar theories of history. Here my references to ancient, medieval and early modern authors are supposed to disclose a fundamental structure of thought that could be treated as a *longue durée*. However, since it is unrealistic here to extensively consider the over 2,000-year-old corpus of literature containing reflections on historiography, I will have to restrict the analysis to some well-known classics and rely heavily on secondary sources. Then, in this chapter's second half, I will discuss some of the critiques levelled against the exemplar theory of history by German historical thinkers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as different types of arguments advanced as alternative justifications for the practice of historiography.

The proper analysis of Droysen's ideas related to the issue of the function of historiography begins in Chapter 2, where I will focus on his texts on historical theory and methodology. The chapter delivers an analysis of what was at stake in Droysen's claim that 'the task of historical studies is to stimulate one's learning of historical thinking',²⁰ considering methodological, epistemological, didactical and pragmatic aspects involved therein. It will track the roots of Droysen's new didactics, both in his opposition to the historiographical positivism of facts,²¹ and in the hermeneutical methodology of historical science that he developed as a consequence thereof. In that way, I will reconstruct Droysen's theory of historical thinking and analyse the concepts it envelops, particularly historical understanding and interpretation, sense of reality, *Bildung* and identity.

Subsequently, Chapter 3 will turn to the way Droysen's theory of historical thinking materialized into a substantive philosophy of history, that is,

a concrete and long-ranging meta-narrative that, taken as a whole, ascribes a meaning to the process of history. There I will attempt to show that his notion of historical thinking is strongly linked to a genetic interpretation of his own present age, in which the latter features as an intermediary stage within the historical development of the idea of freedom – a long-term development initiated by the ancient Greeks and to be continued in the future. The chapter cuts into some significant cross-sections of Droysen's genealogy of the present, concentrating especially on its contemporary phase.

As already pointed out, Droysen's theory of historical thinking remained in tension with his commitment to a set of ideas regarding German national politics and Prussia's role in it. Chapter 4 will delve into Droysen's application of historical thinking to politics. I will characterize there the main aspects of his political standings, identifying the interrelationship between them and Droysen's actual historiographical oeuvre. Furthermore, I will argue that a good deal of the universalism that characterizes Droysen's theory of historical thinking was lost in the application. In addition, I will show that with this instrumentalization of historiography, Droysen eventually fell back into the very kind of historical practice suggested and justified by the old exemplar theories of history.

Finally, since Droysen is not among the most obvious authors within the English-speaking meta-historical debate, I have prepared a biographical sketch and a brief characterization of his historical theory, which are both to be found in the Appendix. This text can provide some initial orientation to those who are encountering Droysen's ideas for the first time, and may as well serve as a reminder that Droysen's *Historik* reaches far beyond the themes and concepts at the centre of the study at hand.

Having just mentioned the German term *Historik*, I shall take the opportunity to make note of the meaning and the translation of some of the vocabulary used throughout the present text. Droysen developed many of his theoretical considerations on history and historiography within the context of lectures he gave between 1857 and 1882–83.²² Droysen's own advertisements for his theoretical lectures employed different combinations of terms, such as historical encyclopaedia and historical methodology, but sometimes he also resorted to the term *Historik*.²³ The latter ended up becoming a widespread way for editors and commentators to refer to Droysen's theoretical project. The semantics of the term *Historik* is rather ambiguous; Droysen and his editors and commentators use it to refer to his theoretical lectures as well as to the arguments and points of views they communicate. The realm of the term's meanings is amplified by the fact that *Historik* (as *Geschichtstheorie* and *Theorie der Geschichte*) has also been generally used in Germany to designate the academic field that deals with theoretical and methodological issues related to historical knowledge.²⁴ The ambiguities of *Historik* are, moreover, only furthered by the ambiguities of

the term history itself, which simultaneously means, at least, a given succession of past events, the account of such events and the academic field specializing in historical research and writing.²⁵

Taking all that into consideration, I am translating *Historik*, *Geschichtstheorie* and *Theorie der Geschichte* as ‘theory of history’ or ‘historical theory’. Sometimes I will also employ the term *Historik* in its original form, but only as a special reference to Droysen’s theoretical lectures and ideas. I am thus differentiating between ‘theory of history’ and ‘(substantive) philosophy of history’. In the following, philosophy of history will be used only as a reference to the many kinds of conceptions related to the course and the general meaning of the historical process,²⁶ whereas theory of history will point to a general reflection on the historians’ professional practice.²⁷ In the English-speaking world, this distinction is rather unusual, since a more general meaning is linked to philosophy of history, and as a result the term has come to cover also the semantic field that I ascribe to historical theory.²⁸ All in all, as Droysen’s case will illustrate once again, it should not be forgotten that historical theories are often related to substantive philosophies of history. Meanwhile, I try to employ the word ‘historiography’ exclusively when referring to the writing of history, as a way to avoid setting it into concurrence with terms like ‘historical theory’ or ‘philosophy of history’.

Neither the language of my main primary sources (German) nor the language of my own text (English) is my native language (Portuguese). Because of that, during the research (for) and the writing of this book, I have always felt translation as a critical issue. My strategy to cope with this difficulty consists in privileging paraphrases rather than translations when referencing primary sources and secondary literature. Even so, several passages and expressions had to be translated into English. In translating, the transparency of the translated text was at least intended, sometimes to the detriment of fidelity to the source’s language. To compensate, most of the quotes appear in the notes in their original version.

Background

In order to situate the general theses on the history of historical thought that the present study is premised on, one could retrocede at least as far as to the differentiation of the kinds of historiography Hegel developed in the earlier versions of his philosophy of history. Hegel distinguished between the philosophical world history that he took on as his subject matter and older forms of historiography that he called ‘original history’ and ‘reflective history’, respectively. He conceived of one of the variations of this latter as ‘pragmatic history’, insisting that the genre was possibly suitable to the moral instruction of chil-

dren, but over time it had definitely revealed itself of no help for the management of current affairs related to the life of peoples and states.²⁹

Decades later, Ernst Bernheim would outline a similar scheme of the evolution of historical studies. According to him, history of historiography was marked by three different and increasingly more complex stages, namely 'narrative (or referential) history', 'exemplar (or pragmatic) history', and 'developmental (or genetic) history'.³⁰ Bernheim accentuates that none of the newer stages had cancelled the effects of their forerunners, and that in his time all three co-existed more or less peacefully. But he notes that since the early nineteenth century, the greatest German historians had professed themselves to the genetic conception of history, and then argues that thenceforth the other two forms of history were subordinated to it.³¹

Curiously, these two nineteenth-century interpretations resemble several general arguments and formulations on the function of historiography that I have borrowed from more recent authors, especially Reinhart Koselleck, George Nadel, Ulrich Muhlack, Peter Reill and Jörn Rüsen. In this regard, maybe the most important case is the expression 'exemplar theory of history', which I have imported from Nadel's 1964 essay on 'philosophy of history before historicism'.³² This text argues that one of the decisive features of Western premodern historical thought was the ascription of an exemplary function to historiography. The term exemplar theory of history is precisely the conceptual label Nadel uses to address that feature. Analysing texts dating from classical Greece to the time of the European Enlightenment, he correctly locates the roots of the exemplar theory of history in classical rhetoric, tracing its decline back to the late eighteenth century and to the outset of historicism. Nevertheless, he also suggests that the exemplar attitude was only superseded by the claim that historical knowledge should be entirely segregated from practical imperatives.

This debatable conclusion is frequently drawn by many of the most important authors who have addressed the function of historiography in the German historical thought of the nineteenth century. Another case in point is Ulrich Muhlack's 1990 essay on '*Bildung* between Neo-humanism and Historicism'.³³ Muhlack focuses on the incorporation of nineteenth-century *Bildungs*-philosophy into the problematic of the value and function of historiography. He appropriately stresses that the historicist orientation towards *Bildung*, that is, historicism's *Bildungsanspruch*, embodied both a refusal of and an alternative to the exemplar theory of history. Even so, precisely like Nadel, Muhlack ends up concluding that historicism as a whole was marked by an autotelic³⁴ definition of the function of historiography, that is, by the notion that historical knowledge is a purpose in itself rather than a means for other purposes.³⁵ Here Muhlack overlooks that the works of many important late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century historians hold no evidence of the kind of autotelic definitions that are to be found, for instance, in Ranke's texts.

An additional problem exhibited by Muhlack's interpretations is that, by crediting Wilhelm von Humboldt as the first historical theorist to have resolutely rejected the validity of the motto '*historia magistra vitae*', he entirely downplays the efforts a few earlier historians had made towards rethinking historiography's function.³⁶ Contrariwise, Peter Reill has shown that even though German late-Enlightenment historians kept conceiving history as pragmatic knowledge, they were in fact re-signifying historical pragmatism.³⁷ The same can be said about Droysen and some other important figures of nineteenth-century historical thought. In this regard, the thesis I want to develop is that the establishment of a critical attitude towards historical examples in the early nineteenth century did not automatically imply discarding historical pragmatism. This was so not only because a good part of historical culture remained untouched by the mentioned criticism of historical exemplarity, but also because a group of historical thinkers – of whom Droysen is representative – combined a refusal of historical examples with an insistence on history's pragmatic value.

Reinhart Koselleck has, in my opinion, correctly grasped the real meaning of this refashioned historical pragmatism. I have therefore resorted to arguments he developed, especially those from his 1967 essay on 'the dissolution of the topos *historia magistra vitae* into the perspective of a modernised historical process'.³⁸ Koselleck's reference to the topos *historia magistra vitae* equals Nadel's use of 'exemplar theory of history'. Like Bernheim and Nadel, Koselleck points to the strong connections between the critiques of exemplar justifications for historiography and what he presents as the emergence of a modern concept of history, a process that for him would have taken place during the period from 1750 to 1850. In recent years, Koselleck's interpretation of the origins of the modern concept of history has been subjected to some meticulous critical assessments that have undermined some of his conclusions.³⁹ But still, regarding the particular issue of the discourse on the functions of historiography, I think Koselleck introduces several good clues. First, he avoids the mistake of postulating that the downfall of the exemplar theory of history meant the total disappearance of historical pragmatism. At the same time, he accurately identifies (though without exhaustively analysing) the onset of a new way of justifying the pragmatic function of historiography in German-speaking historical thought, by connecting it to the notion of *Bildung*. In this regard, what Koselleck shows is that in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries the idea of 'learning from history' was undergoing an important change. This change corresponds to the emergence of a new definition of historical learning, one that departed from the old convention that historiography is the source of a moral and political kind of wisdom that could be immediately applicable to decision-making and action. At the core of this new perspective is the idealistic concept of *Bildung*. Reconceived as a special facet of individual *Bildung*, historical learning, according to Koselleck, then began to be seen as

a vehicle that leads human subjects to a mediate and self-reflexive relationship with their past and that of humankind.⁴⁰

It is, in any case, symptomatic that Koselleck's conclusion refers to a passage in Droysen's *Historik* that argues that whereas history offers no examples to be imitated it conveys ideas that can nourish the individual's *Bildung*: 'History provides agents with a plethora of ideas, with a material, which they have to bring into the melting pot of their judgement in order to refine it.'⁴¹ Clearly, this new definition of the purpose of historiography is in no way equivalent to the notion of history as a purpose in itself. Droysen's claim that the main point of studying history is the development and enhancement of the ability to judge – in other words, of historical thinking – condenses thus a still pragmatic though no longer exemplary definition of the function of historiography.

The general architecture of my interpretation of Droysen's historical theory evolved in a critical dialogue with the mentioned views on the history of historical thought. As I have recalled, analysts have long recognized that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the old exemplary function of historiography had been destabilized by the reinforcement of a genetic model of historical explanation. For scholars like the ones mentioned above and many others, modern historical discourse distinguishes itself from its predecessors because it is much more decisively structured by a dynamic, historicized or genetic perspective. In the main, I do subscribe to this general thesis, though it is at least my intention to avoid the frequent mistake of rigidly opposing a modern, dynamic, temporalized consciousness of time to a supposedly static and trans-temporal 'premodern' one.

On the beaten track of scholarship on modern historical thought, my investigation concentrates on a particular issue not hitherto subject to intensive exploration. Despite the goodly number of works dedicated to both the crisis of exemplary historiography and the emergence of modern historical thought, to my knowledge no analyst has really focused on the kind of justifications that replaced the exemplar theory of history. How was the modern genetic historiography justified? What kind of non-exemplary functions were then ascribed to history? These questions remain, I think, insufficiently answered. Indeed, Koselleck, for one, correctly points out that a special kind of educative function took the place of historical examples. At that point, he has argued, the function of historiography started to be defined in terms of a *Bildungsfunktion*. However, neither he nor the scholars whose texts I have surveyed delved deeply into the way this new function was conceived. None of them focused on how a few nineteenth-century historical thinkers, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Droysen, Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), Nietzsche and maybe a few others, attempted to theoretically establish a non-exemplary function for historical knowledge.

My interpretation also engages in dialogues with the much more specific scholarship on Droysen's historical theory and historiography.⁴² In particular, it proceeds on the assumption that Droysen's *Historik* can be taken as an important culminating point in the trajectory of the conceptions of history and historical knowledge originated since 1750.⁴³ The most pre-eminent contemporary defence of that point of view is undoubtedly the one advanced by Jörn Rüsen, an author who, by the way, also agrees in not seeing the autotelic solution as the only modern answer to the problem of the function of historiography. According to Friedrich Jaeger and Rüsen, Droysen's *Historik* is 'historicism's most significant achievement as regards the discussion on the fundamentals of historical science'.⁴⁴ Furthermore, I also draw on Rüsen's publications with regard to particular analyses of Droysen's texts. I have especially tried to follow Rüsen's suggestion that one should understand Droysen's *Historik* not as a purely theoretical hermeneutics, but as a theory embedded in concrete historical interpretations and entirely intermingled with practical motives.⁴⁵ In his *Begriffene Geschichte*, published in 1969, Rüsen shows how Droysen's historical and political texts presupposed several of the theoretical ideas that he systematically developed in his *Historik*.⁴⁶ Rüsen's basic claim is that it is not adequate to isolate Droysen's methodology from other segments of the historical cosmos within which it evolved.⁴⁷ To a good extent, this volume's Chapter 3 (on Droysen's substantive philosophy of history) and Chapter 4 (on his politics of historical thinking) are attempts to further validate that claim.

Nonetheless, although Rüsen has succeeded in demonstrating the interdependence between Droysen's hermeneutical reflections and his substantive historical interpretations, he has not sufficiently explored the connections between Droysen's theoretical arguments and Droysen's political creed and positions. In this regard, Rüsen follows a general trend in Droysen research. Actually, most scholars who have produced detailed analyses of Droysen's texts and ideas have usually leaned towards separating the author's theory of history from his political historiography, engagement and beliefs. This situation has given rise to a scholarly division of labour, according to which one approaches either Droysen's meta-historical ideas or his political activism, but very seldom tries to prove how the two could be interrelated. Even though scholarship on Droysen has resulted in a great many high-quality studies, the tendency to separate the theoretician from the political actor has led to only an incomplete picture of Droysen as an intellectual. The consequent research gap is worth reducing.

To some extent, bridging this gap was one of the main goals pursued by the most prominent book on Droysen published in recent years, namely, Wilfried Nippel's *Droysen: A Life between Science and Politics*.⁴⁸ Nippel's book undoubtedly represents a new step towards a critical assessment of Droysen's biography and texts, but one clear shortfall is his interpretation of Droysen's

historical theory. His argument is that Droysen's *Historik* must be regarded as both a justification for Droysen's political creed and a tactical device providing support to Droysen's presumably inflated career ambitions. On this sole basis, and hence without having properly analysed Droysen's theoretical arguments, Nippel condemns Droysen's *Historik* for not being a 'pure theory'.⁴⁹ By doing this, Nippel misperceives some of the aspects that, according to many other scholars, make Droysen's *Historik* almost compulsory reading for anyone interested in exploring the field of historical theory and methodology. Examples include the trailblazing notions and arguments found in Droysen's texts, such as his threefold methodology focused on the formulation of research problems and on interpretation rather than on source criticism; his perspectivist and, to a good extent, constructivist approach to the nature of historical knowledge; his sensitivity to the issue of historical representation, which even led him to articulate the notion of 'narrative' in a meta-historical context; as well as his phenomenological insights on the historicity of both human action and historical sources.⁵⁰

I think, hence, that the relationship between historical theory and political commitment in Droysen's works is far more complex than Nippel's analyses indicate. To come to a more nuanced approach, I propose that we should avoid looking at Droysen's theory of historical thinking as a spurious rationalization of his political beliefs. In the same vein, however, we also have to cope with the fact of his theory being much more than a pure epistemological construct, for undoubtedly it interacts with strong political motives and assumptions. I have therefore decided to take both historical theory and politics, as developed in Droysen's writing, very seriously. Contrasting them with one another, I have often come across internal tensions and contradictions, some of which Droysen ultimately was unable to solve. Like many other intellectuals throughout history, Droysen attempted to integrate his ideas into a coherent world view. He only found mixed success in that, not least because coherence in the history of ideas is at best relative coherence. My aim of providing a critical account of Droysen's ideas entails, among other things, the need to point out and understand such contradictions. By this means, I hope to arrive at a realistic picture of Droysen as an intellectual without diminishing his status as a classical author who, in his theoretical reflections on history and historiography, posed questions that are still worth asking and provided some answers that remain valid.

Notes

1. Marcus Tullius Cicero. 1942. *De oratore*, books I–II, London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 224–225.

2. At this point, let me refer to only one clear (and perhaps the most elucidative) example of Droysen's usage of 'historical thinking': 'Die Aufgabe der historischen Studien ist, daß man

historisch denken lerne'. Johann Gustav Droysen. 1977. *Historik*, vol. 1: *Rekonstruktion der ersten vollständigen Fassung der Vorlesungen (1857)*; *Grundriß der Historik in der ersten handschriftlichen (1857/58) und in der letzten gedruckten Fassung (1882)*, Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 5 [Vorlesungstext, 1857].

3. Leopold von Ranke. 1990. 'Vorwort zu den 'Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535'', in Wolfgang Hardtwig (ed.), *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, Munich: DTV, 44–46; Leopold von Ranke. 1859. *Englische Geschichte, vornehmlich im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, Berlin Duncker and Humblot, iii–xvi. That Ranke succeeded in satisfying that theoretical plea in his actual history writing is dubious.

4. Friedrich Nietzsche. 2000. 'Von Nutzen und Nachteilen der Historie für das Leben', in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig: Insel, 95–184.

5. It is important to note that here I am not addressing what Karl Popper meant by historicism. In Popper's understanding, historicism is a fallacious approach to the social sciences that assumes their primary aim is to predict the course of future events based on knowledge of history's putatively underlying laws or patterns of evolution. See Karl Popper. 2002. *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge, 3.

6. Ernst Troeltsch. 1961. *Der Historismus und seine Probleme*, book 1: *Das logische Problem der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Aalen: Scientia, 102: 'Es ist das Problem der Bedeutung und des Wesens des Historismus überhaupt, wobei dieses Wort von seinem schlechten Nebensinn völlig zu lösen und in dem Sinne der grundsätzlichen Historisierung alles unseres Denkens über den Menschen, seine Kultur und seine Werte zu verstehen ist'. It is noteworthy that Troeltsch – like Karl Heussi, Friedrich Meinecke and Benedetto Croce after him – ascribed to *Historismus* a positive meaning that it lacked when it was initially popularized in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For more recent comprehensive studies on the history of historicism, see Frederick Beiser. 2011. *The German Historicist Tradition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen. 1992. *Geschichte des Historismus. Eine Einführung*, Munich: C.H. Beck.

7. Jaeger and Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus*, 12–14; Murray Pittock. 2003. 'Historiography', in Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 258–279; Peter Hanns Reill. 1975. *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

8. Benedetto Croce. 2000. *History as the Story of Liberty*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 69. Croce, while emphasizing Vico's role as a pioneer of historicism, would nonetheless stop short of crediting late-Enlightenment intellectuals with being historicists.

9. Otto Gerhard Oexle. 1996. *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeichen des Historismus: Studien zu Problemgeschichten der Moderne*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 17–18.

10. Scholars frequently trace the beginning of the professionalization process back to the late eighteenth-century University of Göttingen, where the term 'history' was mentioned in the designation of some academic chairs, historical journals were edited and historical seminars held. See, e.g., Horst Walter Blanke. 1991. *Historiographieggeschichte als Historik*, Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 111; Robert Harrison, Aled Jones, and Peter Lambert. 2004. 'The Institutionalisation and Organisation of History', in Peter Lambert and Phillip Schofield (eds), *Making History: An Introduction to the History and Practices of a Discipline*, London: Routledge, 11; Georg Iggers. 1994. 'Ist es in der Tat in Deutschland früher zur Verwissenschaftlichung der Geschichte gekommen als in anderen europäischen Ländern?' in Wolfgang Küttler et al. (eds), *Geschichtsdiskurs*, vol. 2: *Anfänge modernen historischen Denkens*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 75–76. Nevertheless, Jeremy Telman calls attention to the fact that the late eighteenth-century University of Göttingen was an exceptional case within the German academic landscape. According to him, the professionalization of the historical discipline only caught on during the nineteenth century. See Jeremy Telman. 1994. 'Review Essay', *History and Theory* 33(2): 249–265.

Professionalization means first of all that historical research and teaching found an institutional anchor – namely, in most cases, the universities, which in the course of the nineteenth century showed a mounting number of history professors. Beyond that, the professionalization of

historical research and writing was also buttressed by several other related developments, including the establishment of a system of archives, libraries and historical museums; the growth of historical journals and associations; the proliferation of seminar classes designed to convey research techniques to young historians; and the emergence of attempts at a theory of historical method, which formulated the principles of research and surely strengthened historians' professional identity. See Friedrich Jaeger. 2007. 'Historismus', in Friedrich Jaeger (ed.), *Enzyklopädie der Neuzeit*, vol. 5, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 532–539; Jaeger and Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus*, 8–10; Matthew Jefferies. 2006. 'The Age of Historism', in Stefan Berger (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 316; Georg Iggers. 1997. *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 27–28; Zachary Schiffman. 1985. 'Renaissance Historicism Reconsidered', *History and Theory* 24(2): 170–182; Rolf Torstendahl. 2003. 'Fact, Truth and Text: The Quest for a Firm Basis for Historical Knowledge around 1900', *History and Theory* 42(3): 308–310.

11. Johann Gustav Droysen. 2007. *Historik*, vol. 2: *Texte im Umkreis der Historik (1826–1882)*, Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 228 [Privatvorrede zu Band 2 der Geschichte des Hellenismus, 1843]: 'Die höchste Aufgabe unserer Wissenschaft ist ja die Theodicee'.

12. The translation of this quote from the *Lectures on the Wars of Freedom* (1846) was borrowed from Robert Southard. 1979. 'Theology in Droysen's Early Political Historiography: Free Will, Necessity, and the Historian', *History and Theory* 18(3): 379 (here the translation is slightly modified). Original quote in Johann Gustav Droysen. 1846. *Vorlesungen über die Freiheitskriege*, vol. 1, Kiel: Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 5.

13. Johann Gustav Droysen. 1868. *Geschichte der Preußischen Politik*, part 1: *Die Gründung*, Leipzig: Veit, v: 'Es gibt mancherlei Ansicht über die Art und Aufgabe der historischen Studien. Vielleicht darf man Alles zusammenfassend sagen, ihr Wesen sei forschend verstehen zu lernen'.

14. Droysen, *Historik* 1: 5 [Vorlesungstext, 1857]: 'Die Aufgabe der historischen Studien ist, daß man historisch denken lerne'.

15. Droysen, *Historik* 2: 379 [Einleitung in die Vorlesung über das Zeitalter der Revolution, 1858]: 'Mehr als je ist die Geschichte eine praktische Wissenschaft geworden. Sie ist die Deuterin der Gegenwart, ihr γῶσι αὐτων, ihr Gewissen'.

16. Johann Gustav Droysen. 1893. *Outline of the Principles of History*, Boston: Ginn, 56 [translation slightly modified].

17. Droysen, *Outline of the Principles of History*, 49.

18. The dictum was transmitted by Droysen himself in a paraphrase and without any further reference. I could not find any other source for the statement. See Droysen, *Historik* 1:382 [Vorlesungstext, 1857].

19. A good example is the interrelationship between the notions of understanding, interpretation, historical thinking, sense of reality, historical *Bildung* and identity. Chapter 2 will present more details on this.

20. Droysen, *Historik* 1: 5 [Vorlesungstext, 1857].

21. Chris Lorenz clarifies the meanings evocated by the term positivism while used in historiographical discussions as a resource to disqualify a work, an author or a school of historians. He distinguished between the 'positivism of facts', or empiricism, on the one hand, and 'the positivism of the covering-law model of explanation', i.e., the model implicated in attempts to demonstrate that historical explanation follows somehow the pattern of more evidently nomothetic sciences. See Chris Lorenz. 1998. 'Can Histories Be True? Narrativism, Positivism and the "Metaphorical Turn"', *History and Theory*, 37(3): 310–311.

22. For more details on the lectures, as well as on the published and translated texts related to them, see the Appendix.

23. Peter Leyh. 1977. 'Vorwort des Herausgebers', in Droysen, *Historik* 1: ix, fn. 2. According to Leyh, Droysen designated his theoretical lectures as follows: *Encyclopaediam et methodologiam historiarum* (1857), *Encyclopaedia historiarum* (1858, 1859), *Historische Methodologie und Enzyklopädie* (1860–61 [winter semester], 1863–64, 1865, 1868, 1870, 1872, 1879, 1881), *Hi-*

storik oder *Methodologie und Enzyklopädie der historischen Wissenschaften* (1862–63), *Methodologie und Enzyklopädie der Geschichtsstudien* (1875), *Methodologie und Enzyklopädie der historischen Wissenschaften* (1876), *Methodologie und Enzyklopädie der Geschichte* (1878, 1882–83).

24. *Geschichtstheorie* or *Theorie der Geschichte* are currently more common denominations for the field in question. *Historik* tends to be a less frequent term, not least for a structural reason: in German it is impossible to derive an adjective from the substantive *Historik*. The only possibility would be *historisch*, but this already means historic or historical. See H.-W. Hedinger. 1974. 'Historik, ars historica', in Joachim Ritter (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3, Basel: Schwabe, 1132; Hans-Jürgen Pandel. 1990. *Historik und Didaktik. Das Problem der Distribution historiographisch erzeugten Wissens in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft von der Spätaufklärung zum Frühhistorismus (1765–1830)*, Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 130–162. One alternative denomination is, moreover, *Historiologie*. Indeed, this could be a universal label, and registers of equivalents to it are found in other languages (historiology-en, historiologie-fr, historiologia-es, historiologia-pt, etc.). These denominations, however, have never been widely used.

25. See, e.g., Reinhart Koselleck. 2003. *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 130.

26. Karl Löwith's definition is still very much worth recalling. He used the term philosophy of history to define 'a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed towards an ultimate meaning'. See Karl Löwith. 2004. *Meaning and History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1.

27. See a further justification of this basic differentiation by José Guilherme Merquior. 1988. 'Philosophy of History: Thoughts on a Possible Revival', *History of the Human Sciences* 1(1): 23–24.

28. More usual distinctions are those between speculative philosophy of history and analytic philosophy of history (see Michael Lemon. 2003. *Philosophy of History: A Guide for Students*, London: Routledge); or between speculative philosophy of history and critical philosophy of history (see William Dray. 1964. *Philosophy of History*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall).

29. Georg Hegel. 1955. *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 18.

30. Ernst Bernheim. 1908. *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie*, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 22. Bernheim's original terms are 'erzählende oder referierende, lehrhafte oder pragmatische (im weiteren Sinne), entwickelnde oder genetische Geschichte'.

31. Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode*, 26–27.

32. George H. Nadel. 1964. 'Philosophy of History before Historicism', *History and Theory* 3(3): 291–315.

33. Ulrich Muhlack. 1990. 'Bildung zwischen Neuhumanismus und Historismus', in Reinhart Koselleck (ed.), *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, part 2: *Bildungsgüter und Bildungswissen*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 80–105.

34. The term autotelic (from the Greek autotelēs, complete in itself) was introduced into the English language in the 1920s as a way to refer to the belief that a work of art (or literature) is an end in itself or is its own justification. Its meaning is equivalent to that of the aestheticist formula 'art for art's sake'. Though the term is not commonly used in meta-historical contexts, I have opted to employ it on certain occasions, as it simplifies the reference to the point of view according to which historiography has a purpose in itself.

35. Muhlack agrees that the notion of *Bildung* did not entirely fit into this autotelic justification of historiography, for the former entails a practical and also in many cases a political moment. He deals with this problem by arguing that the historicist ideal of *Bildung* was actually subordinated to the scientific ideal of objectivity. Such an explanation is not entirely suitable to the case of the historians connected to the so-called Prussian School, and thus also to Droysen. See Muhlack, 'Bildung zwischen Neuhumanismus und Historismus', 89: 'Der Historismus negiert die praktische Zwecksetzung der Geschichte, erklärt vielmehr die historische Erkenntnis zum Selbstzweck.... Er [der Historismus] verkündet, daß die in seinem Zeichen erneuerte Geschichte zugleich gebildet mache und daß allein diese durch die erneuerte Geschichte vermittelte Bildung

praktisch nützlich sei. Er gelangt damit zu einer eigentümlichen Trias von Geschichtswissenschaft, Bildung und ethisch-politischer Praxis. Nach der Systematik des Historismus kommt die Geschichtswissenschaft vor der Bildung und die Bildung vor der ethisch-politischen Praxis.'

36. Muhlack did it quite consciously. His book on 'historicism's prehistory', i.e., on historiography and historical thought between Renaissance Humanism and Enlightenment, comprises several detailed analyses of the most important authors of the German historical *Aufklärung*. See Ulrich Muhlack. 1991. *Geschichtswissenschaft im Humanismus und in der Aufklärung. Die Vorgeschichte des Historismus*, Munich: C.H. Beck. Muhlack's argument on the fundamental cleavage between Enlightenment and historicist historical thought can be clearly read in the following quote (Muhlack, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Humanismus*, 44): 'Über den Zweck der Geschichte haben humanistische und aufklärerischen Historiker eine einhellige Meinung «historia magistra vitae»'.

37. Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, 41–43.

38. Reinhart Koselleck. 2003. *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 38–66.

39. In Chapter 1, I will go into some detail on Koselleck's interpretation of the emergence of the modern concept of history, as well as on the critiques it has recently undergone.

40. Reinhart Koselleck. 2004. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, New York: Columbia University Press, 41: 'However much the German Historical School conceived itself as concerned with a science of the past it did nonetheless fully exploit the dual meaning of the word *Geschichte* and seek to elevate history into a reflexive science. Here, the individual case lost its politico-didactic character. But History as a totality places the person who has learned to understand it in a state of learning [*Bildung*] that should have an indirect influence on the future.' The quote here is modified, as an error in the translated text seriously affects understanding of Koselleck's argument. Where the author writes '... Zustand der Bildung, der mittelbar auf die Zukunft einwirken soll', the translated text uses 'directly' where the correct term is 'indirectly'. The original quote is from Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, 65.

41. Johann Gustav Droysen. 1971. *Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 300: 'Also die Geschichte bietet eine Fülle von Ideen, und diese sind dem, der handeln soll, ein Material, das er in den Schmelztiegel seines eigenen Urteils tun muss, um es zu läutern.'

42. Droysen's notion of historical thinking has been little explored by either historians of nineteenth-century historical discourse or interpreters of his *Historik*. Pedro Caldas's Portuguese-language Ph.D. dissertation is surely the main exception in this landscape. See Pedro Caldas. 2004. *Que significa pensar historicamente: uma interpretação da teoria da história de Johann Gustav Droysen*, Ph.D. thesis: Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro. Caldas addresses the issue of historical thinking in Droysen's works throughout three enriching chapters dedicated to the issues of teleology, hermeneutics and *Bildung*. But even though he correctly points out that historical thinking is simultaneously implicated with these three dimensions, he leaves their interrelationship rather unexamined.

43. See, for instance, Blanke, *Historiographieggeschichte als Historik*, 111; Alexandre Escudier. 2006. 'Theory and Methodology of History from Chladenius to Droysen: A Historiographical Essay', in Christopher Ligota and Jean-Louis Quantin (eds), *History of Scholarship: A Selection of Papers from the Seminar on the History of Scholarship Held Annually at the Warburg Institute*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 476–477.

44. Jaeger and Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus*, 54. See also Jörn Rüsen. 2005. 'Droysen heute – Plädoyer zum Bedenken verlorener Themen der Historik', in Lutz Niethammer (ed.), *Droysen-Vorlesungen*, Jena: Universität Jena, Philosophische Fakultät, Historisches Institut, 179.

45. Jörn Rüsen. 1969. *Begriffene Geschichte. Genesis und Begründung der Geschichtstheorie J. G. Droysens*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 14–15.

46. Rüsen, *Begriffene Geschichte*; see also Jörn Rüsen. 1968. 'Politisches Denken und Geschichtswissenschaft bei J. G. Droysen', in Kurt Kluxen and Wolfgang Mommsen (eds), *Politische Ideologien und Nationalstaatliche Ordnung. Studien zur Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*

(Festschrift für Theodor Schieder), Munich: Oldenbourg. Rösen has also been one of the main promoters of the contemporary reception of Droysen's theory of history and has attempted to reintroduce it into contemporary meta-historical discussion at the international level. The importance of Rösen's interpretations lies furthermore in the fact that he largely incorporated Droysen's theoretical insights into his own theory of history, which originated from an explicit effort to refresh and renew Droysen's *Historik*. With regard to this last aspect, see Jörn Rösen. 1983. *Historische Vernunft. Grundzüge einer Historik I: Die Grundlagen der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Jörn Rösen. 1986. *Rekonstruktion der Vergangenheit: Grundzüge einer Historik II: Die Prinzipien der historischen Forschung*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Jörn Rösen. 1989. *Lebendige Geschichte: Grundzüge einer Historik III: Formen und Funktionen des historischen Wissens*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

47. Some of the main ideas featuring in my analyses of the historical-philosophical implications of Droysen's notion of historical thinking are also largely based on interpretations by Robert Southard, who has outstandingly demonstrated how Protestant philosophy of history, diagnosis of the present, and political expectations intertwine in Droysen's early political historiography. See Robert Southard. 1995. *Droysen and the Prussian School of History*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky; Southard, 'Theology in Droysen's Early Political Historiography'.

48. Wilfried Nippel. 2008. *Johann Gustav Droysen. Ein Leben zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik*, Munich: C.H. Beck.

49. Nippel, *Johann Gustav Droysen*, 227.

50. In addition, Nippel also completely ignored the religious foundations of Droysen's political thought and practice. For critical views on Nippel's book, see Joachim Eibach. 2008. 'Rezension zu: "Nippel, Wilfried: Johann Gustav Droysen. Ein Leben zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik. München 2008"', *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 12 December 2008; Jörn Rösen. 2008. 'J. G. Droysen, Dämon der Machtbesessenheit. Rezension zu Wilfried Nippels "Johann Gustav Droysen: Ein Leben zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik"', *Die Welt*, 5 April 2008; James Sheehan. 2009. 'A Political Professor: A New Biography of J.G. Droysen', *German History* 27(4): 580–582; Thomas Welskopp. 2009. 'Der "echte Historiker" als "richtiger Kerl". Neue Veröffentlichungen (nicht nur) zum 200. Geburtstag von Johann Gustav Droysen', *Historische Zeitschrift* 288(2): 385–407.

CHAPTER 1

Functions of Historiography until the Mid-nineteenth Century

A Short History of the Problem

The Rise of the Exemplar Theory of History

Long before Droysen began to systematize his ideas on the nature, methods, specificity and relevance of the science of history, the Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily in the first century BC included in the preface to his *Historical Library* a kind of catalogue in which he listed all the uses of history that came to his mind. According to him,

It is an excellent thing to be able to use the ignorant mistakes of others as warning examples for the correction of error, and, when we confront the varied vicissitudes of life, instead of having to investigate what is being done now, to be able to imitate the successes which have been achieved in the past.... One may hold that the acquisition of a knowledge of history is of the greatest utility for every conceivable circumstance of life. For it endows the young with the wisdom of the aged, while for the old it multiplies the experience which they already possess; citizens in private station it qualifies for leadership, and the leaders it incites, through the immortality of the glory which it confers, to undertake the noblest deeds; soldiers, again, it makes more ready to face dangers in defence of their country because of the public encomiums which they will receive after death, and wicked men it turns aside from their impulse towards evil through the everlasting opprobrium to which it will condemn them.¹

To sum up: in Diodorus's view, histories remind us of the actions of notable and failed men, thereby establishing models for present agents to either imitate or avoid. Histories multiply the experience already possessed by the old and, moreover, convey to the young the wisdom accumulated in the past. Histories teach lessons on leadership and inspire leaders to perform great deeds, and they stimulate soldiers' patriotism by offering them the hope of posthumous praise.

Notes for this section begin on page 51.