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The History of Philosophy as Philosophy

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Philosophers have been talking about their predecessors since before Plato and Aristotle. The history of philosophy as a subdiscipline of philosophy has been recognized since the eighteenth century, when subdivisions beyond the traditional logic, metaphysics, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy became generally established. Philosophers have addressed the *shape* of philosophy's history as a philosophical topic since Kant and Hegel. At the same time, philosophers as diverse as Descartes, Kant, and Russell have made disparaging remarks about the philosophical benefit of studying the history of philosophy, especially, as Russell put it, if done in a manner 'truly historical'.[1] Here, I take 'truly historical' to mean history of philosophy that, in framing its interpretations of past arguments and doctrines, pays considerable attention to the intellectual and cultural context in which past philosophy was produced.

In recent decades, a renewed interest in the history of philosophy has been noted, which implies that interest had previously been in decline. As early as 1970, Michael Ayers could suggest that 'more philosophers are now taking the history of philosophy seriously

[1] Russell (1900), p. v. The other disparaging remarks: Descartes (1637/1985), p. 115; Kant (1783/2002), p. 53. Descartes also characterizes reading past authors positively as affording 'a conversation with the most distinguished men of past ages—indeed, a rehearsed conversation in which these authors reveal to us only the best of their thoughts' (1637/1985, p. 113). When Wiener (1944, p. 262) later criticized Russell's purist split between philosophy and history, Russell (1944, p. 695) endorsed Wiener's (more contextualist) methodology for the history of philosophy. On early history of philosophy, see Passmore (1965), pp. 5–6, 19–22, and Gueroult (1984–8), i. Ancient discussions of predecessors included (constructed) surveys of previous philosophical positions, as in Aristotle, as well as doxographic surveys, as in Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Philosophers*; on the variety of such discussions, see Cherniss

than has been the case for some time'.[2] Since then, further claims of renewal have been made, along with more disparagement. In the past twenty years, appointments in the history of philosophy in major graduate departments have risen (in anglophone universities), especially in early modern philosophy. Ancient philosophy had representatives of historical and philological approaches throughout the twentieth century (in most major universities), as did medieval philosophy (in smaller numbers). The primary change in recent attitudes has concerned early modern philosophy (through Kant). I therefore focus initially on that period and, within it, on 'theoretical' as opposed to moral and political philosophy—on 'metaphysics and epistemology' broadly construed, as we now say.[3]

(1953) and Gueroult (1984–8), i, chs. 1–2. In antiquity, 'philosophical' (i.e. systematic and theoretical) disciplines could include, beyond those named, mathematical disciplines such as astronomy, and other disciplines organized around principles, such as politics and economics. By the seventeenth century, the 'philosophical' part of the university curriculum was canonically described as the four disciplines listed above (in the text). For an eighteenth-century university course in history of philosophy (offered in 1777, 1778, and subsequently), see Oberhausen and Pozzo (1999), ii. pp. 402, 416, etc.; one criterion for a 'discipline' (or 'subdiscipline') is a subject taught in school. Finally, the variety of activities that have gone under the title of 'philosophy' in the past, or that are retrospectively labelled as 'philosophy' now, reveals that the object of the history of philosophy—past philosophical texts and the intellectual activity that produced them—is not fixed, and is open to discussion (see Mandelbaum 1976; O'Hear 1985); it is therefore part of the meta-philosophy of the history of philosophy to reflect on what past and present philosophy is; but such reflection is typically part of philosophy itself.

[2] Ayers (1970), p. 38. Ayers's subsequent remarks seem to equate 'history of philosophy' with past philosophy. In this chapter, I distinguish 'the past' from its 'history', restricting the latter term to (a) accounts of the past, and (b) the scholarly activity through which such accounts are produced (see Gracia 1992, pp. 42–55).

[3] This limitation reflects my own interests and knowledge, as well as the preponderance of contextual work on early modern philosophy during the 1970s and 1980s (and before). Although early modern philosophers distinguished among philosophical disciplines—generically, as above, among logic, metaphysics, physics (or natural philosophy), and morals—the major figures typically were interested in all of the three substantive branches, and many were interested in philosophical method (turning away from traditional logic to other conceptions of the basis for philosophical cognition, on which see Michael (1997) and Owen (1999), chs. 1–3). Philosophers such as Hobbes, Descartes, and Spinoza viewed these branches as related, in that doctrines from metaphysics and natural philosophy were used, and may have been developed for use in, ethics and politics; similarly, Hume developed his 'science of man' partly in the service of ethics and politics. Finally, moral and political philosophers, including John Rawls and his students (Rawls 2000; Reath, Herman, and Korsgaard 1997), have contributed to the revaluing of history, and historians of moral and political philosophy have promoted contextualist methodology (e.g. Schneewind 1998; Skinner 2002).

Although Ayers's remark accurately captures a feeling that the history of philosophy had been in decline during the 1960s, it is important to recall that contextually oriented history of philosophy was being done throughout the twentieth century. Restricting the discussion to the English-speaking world (it should be generally recognized that the history of philosophy was alive and well in France, Germany, and Italy), instances of such history include E. A. Burtt's 1925 book on early modern science and metaphysics; A. B. Gibson's 1932 and S. V. Keeling's 1934 books on Descartes; N. K. Smith's studies, editions, and translations of Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant, published between 1902 and 1953; A. O. Lovejoy's 1936 book on the great chain of being (among other works); John Passmore's 1951 book on Hume; John Yolton's 1956 book on Locke; and Richard Popkin's 1960 book on scepticism.[4] These authors were trained at and held positions at a variety of universities throughout the English-speaking academic world, in Australia, Canada, England, Scotland, the United States, and New Zealand.[5] In the United States, Columbia and Johns Hopkins were prominent centres for research in the history of philosophy, but in fact such research was widespread in doctoral programmes.[6]

[4] The works of twentieth-century authors mentioned by name in the body of the text can be found in the list of references.

[5] Burtt's book arose from his doctoral dissertation at Columbia University. Upon leaving Columbia, he taught first at Chicago and then (from the early 1930s) at Cornell, where he became a co-editor of the *Philosophical Review*, which offered a venue for history of philosophy throughout the twentieth century (Etienne Gilson was an advisory editor in the 1920s and 1930s). Gibson taught at Birmingham and then at Melbourne, Keeling at London, and Smith at Princeton and then Edinburgh (where he became professor). Lovejoy was trained at Berkeley (B.A.), Harvard (M.A.), and the Sorbonne (but he never received the Ph.D.); he taught at Stanford, Washington University in St Louis, Columbia University, and the University of Missouri before settling at Johns Hopkins in 1910. Passmore was trained in Sydney, and taught at Otago before going to the Australian National University in Canberra. Yolton took his M.A. at the University of Cincinnati and his D.Phil. from Oxford in 1952 under the direction of Gilbert Ryle; during the 1950s he held appointments at Johns Hopkins, Princeton, and Kenyon College, and in subsequent decades at the University of Maryland, York University (Ontario), and Rutgers. Popkin received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Columbia (the last in 1950), studying with John Hermann Randall and Paul Oscar Kristeller; he spent 1945–6 at Yale and studied with the Hume scholar Charles Hendel. He taught at the University of Connecticut, the University of Iowa, and the Claremont Colleges before forging a new department at the University of California, San Diego (1963–73) and then settling at Washington University, St Louis (1973–86).

[6] Under the guidance of Frederick J. E. Woodbridge and then Randall, the Columbia department was a good place to study history of philosophy during the first half of the

The quality of work of the authors listed, and the continuing influence of many of them, leave no doubt that significant English-language work in history of philosophy was being produced from the turn of the century into the 1950s and beyond. At the same time, Ayers is not alone, or incorrect, in thinking that by 1970 the atmosphere for history was negative, not only in England but also in America.[7] However, this perception needs to be qualified in several ways. First, the negative attitude was not new, especially in England; in addition to Russell, C. D. Broad and H. H. Price suggested that although the great philosophers of the past should certainly be read and studied, little or nothing of philosophical significance was to be gained by adopting historical or contextual methods.[8] Second, it seems likely that any decline in the quality and relative quantity of work in the history of philosophy during the

century (and beyond). On Woodbridge, see Delaney (1969), ch. 4. Randall began teaching at Columbia in 1918, took over the course on history of philosophy from Woodbridge in 1925, and was appointed assistant professor in 1926. Richard McKeon, trained by Woodbridge and then Gilson, was at Columbia from 1925 to 1935. From 1918 to 1935 the department published three volumes of *Studies in the History of Ideas*, described as 'studies in the history of philosophy' (Department of Philosophy 1918, p. v). At Johns Hopkins, George Boas joined Lovejoy in 1921, and they founded the History of Ideas Club in 1923 (see Boas *et al.* 1953). Though its graduate programme was not large, the Johns Hopkins department and associated club were significant in promoting study of the history of philosophy (as well as history of ideas and intellectual history more generally; on the 'history of ideas' approach, see n. 9). When Maurice Mandelbaum received the baton many years later (in 1957), Lovejoy had long been emeritus (he died in 1962), and Boas was just retiring. On the ubiquity of historical doctoral dissertations in the United States, see Passmore (1964).

[7] Hare (1988, p. 11) attributes especially strong anti-historical sentiments to philosophers in the period from World War II to 1980; Popkin (1985) finds them throughout the twentieth century. By contrast, Randall (1963, pp. 82–3) speaks of the 'current disparaging of the history of philosophy in England' and of a post-World War II reaction against history in France, but notes no such general trend in the United States. Mandelbaum (1976, p. 719) notes the development of 'a definitely anti-historical, contemporary form of pseudo-historical writing' among 'recent Anglo-American philosophers', offering as examples some works from after 1950; he stresses that strong historical scholarship had been produced previously.

[8] Broad (1930), p. 2; Price (1940), p. 3. Broad wrote that 'the minute study of the works of great philosophers from the historical and philological point of view is an innocent and even praiseworthy occupation for learned men. But it is not philosophy; and, to me at least, it is not interesting. My primary interest in this book is to find out what is true and what is false about ethics; and the statements of our authors are important to me only in so far as they suggest possible answers to this question' (1930, p. 2). All the same, his 1930 book contains biographical information on Spinoza and other contextualizing statements (e.g. pp. 53–4, 143). Further, his works on perception (1914) and science (1923) acknowledged the scientific context of, e.g., work on primary

1960s, especially among new Ph.D.s, was due in part to a decline in the teaching (or learning) of important scholarly skills, including the ability to read Latin, French, and German. Third, there were national differences. The anti-historical attitudes of Russell, Broad, Price, and others had more immediate influence in England (despite the ongoing work of G. H. R. Parkinson, W. von Leyden, and others), while the oft-noted 'analytic' antipathy to history in the United States arose somewhat later (peaking in the 1960s and early 1970s). These points do not negate the fact of anti-historical sentiment, but they do restrict its spatio-temporal scope.

The fourth and perhaps most important qualification is that, despite the feeling in 1970 that history had previously been looked down upon, the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s saw a blossoming of work in the historiography of philosophy—or the philosophy of the history of philosophy—especially in the United States. This work was in part fostered by Lovejoy and his colleagues (such as George Boas and Philip Wiener) in the history of ideas movement (a movement that spawned much work in the history of philosophy, as well as influencing intellectual history generally). More widely, the historiography of philosophy was pursued by Maurice Mandelbaum at Johns Hopkins, Paul Oscar Kristeller and John Hermann Randall at Columbia, Lewis White Beck at Rochester, Harold R. Smart at Cornell, Haskell Fain at Wisconsin, and James Collins at St Louis University.[9] To this flourishing in the United States may be added Passmore in Australia, von Leyden at Durham, and W. H. Walsh at

and secondary qualities, in this way differing from the more radically acontextual work of the 1960s and 1970s, and he published additional biographical essays and work in history and philosophy of science (Broad 1952).

[9] On historiography of the history of philosophy, see Beck (1969); Boas (1944); Collins (1972); Edel (1949); Fain (1970); Kristeller (1946, 1964); Mandelbaum (1965, 1976, 1977); Randall (1939, 1963); Smart (1962); Wiener (1946); and Wiener and Noland (1962); authors such as Mandelbaum and Fain were also deeply interested in the philosophy of history, a topic much discussed in American philosophy during the 1950s and 1960s. Although Passmore (1965, pp. 16–17) disparages Randall's (1962) historical survey, it is an ambitious contribution to contextual history; none the less, Randall's (1962, p. 7) attitude is more historicist ('The problems of one age are ultimately irrelevant to those of another') than Passmore (or I) would find reasonable, and Randall (1963, chs. 2–3) soon conceded more continuity in philosophical problems than in the earlier quotation (in both places he allowed continuity of ideas and methods). For bibliographies on the historiography of philosophy, see Collins (1972); Walton (1977); Gracia (1992); and Boss (1994). Many of the works named above distinguish history of philosophy, which keeps its focus on philosophical significance

Edinburgh.[10] These authors took a philosophical attitude to the question of the necessity for and philosophical relevance of historically and contextually oriented history of philosophy. The more recent works in this vein, such as the 1978 book by Jonathan Rée, Ayers, and Adam Westoby, articles by Yolton (1975*a*, 1975*b*, 1985, 1986) and Richard Watson (1980), or the 1992 book by Jorge J. E. Gracia, and the collections edited by Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (1984), A. J. Holland (1985), Peter Hare (1988), and T. Z. Lavine and V. Tejera (1989), continue (and sometimes refer to) a well-established literature.

Against this backdrop, there is little basis for today's contextually oriented historians to consider themselves lonely revolutionaries.

and gives greater weight to major figures, from intellectual history, which shows greater interest in the 'common thought' of an age, and tends to flatten out major figures in accordance with how they were read by the lesser lights of a given period (for a critique of the tendency of intellectual history to render 'great texts' as mere historical documents, see LaCapra 1983). History of ideas (as practised by Lovejoy, Boas, and others) promoted a methodology of tracing the path of 'ideas' themselves (philosophical or otherwise), emphasizing the intellectual but not biographical or social context, and focusing on 'unit ideas', such as 'nature', 'soul', 'idea', or 'reason' (Boas 1944, p. 142), whether embedded in unconscious assumptions or explicit principles (Lovejoy 1936, ch. 1). This approach downplayed personal biography, the internal integrity of the thought of the individuals who were the vehicles of the ideas, and the social and cultural context of those individuals (factors often considered important by intellectual historians and contextualist historians of philosophy); but it encouraged a search for connections across disciplinary boundaries, so that philosophical ideas were examined in a wider context that included religious, scientific, and literary ideas (providing a healthy example for intellectual history and history of philosophy). Finally, the history of philosophy was constantly pursued at various of the major Roman Catholic universities (with something of a focus on medieval philosophy); this fact is evident in the series Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, published by the Catholic University of America Press since 1961, and in earlier lists from the same publisher, from the University of Notre Dame Press, and from Marquette University Press.

[10] Passmore (1963, 1964, 1965); von Leyden (1954); Walsh (1965). The work of non-English speakers was published in translation, e.g. Gueroult (1969); Tatarkiewicz (1957). Essays by European authors were published in English as a *Festschrift* for Cassirer, by Klibansky and Paton (1936). Walton's (1977) bibliography lists works in English, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish from 1377 to 1976. Additional works in French and German may be found in Beelman (2001). See also Gueroult (1979, 1984–8). On earlier historiographical discussions in Germany (1760s to 1830s), see Mandelbaum (1976); Mann (1996); and Piaia (2001), the last of which claims (against a 'received view') that Brucker (1742–67) engaged in more than doxography, explicitly discussing (a) the histories of various philosophical schools or 'sects', (b) the history of doctrines (and of individual philosophical disciplines), and (c) the effects of historical circumstances on the thought of individual persons. On Brucker, see also Hatfield (1996*b*).

Nor should they bemoan a lack of appreciation from ahistorical colleagues. As in the past, the only remedy for lack of appreciation is to do good work and make its significance accessible to non-specialists, including not only other philosophers but also the wider audience of humanists, scientists, and readers more generally (there are of course no guarantees). Here I want to consider ways in which the study of past philosophy has been used and is used in philosophy, and to make a case for the philosophical value and necessity of a contextually oriented approach. I shall consider some uses of past texts and of history that reveal limits to non-contextual history, including Strawson's Kant, Rorty's grand diagnosis of the Western tradition, and Friedman on Kant's philosophy of mathematics. I shall then consider ways in which the history of philosophy may become philosophically deeper by becoming more historical, and instances in which history of philosophy of various stripes has or may deliver a philosophical pay-off. Along the way, I shall urge historians of philosophy to attend not only to individual philosophers and their problems and projects, but also to the larger shape of the history of philosophy and its narrative themes.

1. PHILOSOPHICAL USES OF PAST PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS

More than any other discipline, philosophy uses the main texts of past philosophy as an introduction, at both the bachelor's and doctoral levels. It would be odd for someone to achieve a Ph.D. in philosophy without having studied in some depth one or more of the great philosophers of the past, such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, or Kant. Moreover, the texts and (presumed) positions of past philosophers are often used to locate or frame present contributions to philosophy, and perhaps even to supply candidate solutions to today's philosophical problems.

Philosophers make many uses of past texts, and so they should. Leaving aside non-essential uses, such as using a thick text for a doorstop or using editions in various colours as shelf decoration, properly philosophical uses can vary widely. A philosopher might simply skip and skim through some great work, using it as a sort of muse, without seeing herself as interpreting the text or assessing *its* arguments; her sole interest would be to prompt some ideas of

her own.[11] A different use would be to read through a past text without paying close attention to its historical context or its author's aims, in order to find potential answers to present philosophical problems and to assess them for their strength or weakness. In this approach, it is common to 'fix up' past positions by ignoring parts thought to be weak, such as the 'psychological' portions of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (in Strawson's reading), or to downplay some aspects, such as Berkeley's concern with spirit as an active substance (in Pappas's work on *Berkeley's Thought*).[12] Such approaches may pay close attention to the entire text, and attempt to give it a coherent reading using concepts and terminology from the interpreter's own time, as in Price's 'fixing up' of Hume as a sense-data philosopher.[13] Because neither the museful nor the fixer-upper use finds it necessary or desirable to attend to historical context, I classify them as *non-contextual* and *non-historical* uses (excluding them from the 'history of philosophy' proper).

Other philosophical users of past texts consider it essential to attend to historical context. These readers believe that the philosophical benefit of studying such texts is likely to increase through such attention.

Those who hold this view need not agree on the ultimate aim of reading historically, or on the extent of the relevant historical

[11] Such 'museful' reading was common in the 1960s and 1970s, often focusing on 'known' problems in landmark texts, read out of context, such as the famous bit of Locke's *Essay* on primary and secondary qualities (as in Mundle 1971, pp. 40–1). J. L. Mackie (1976) considers isolated 'problems' in Locke's *Essay*, divorced from any attempt to 'study his philosophy as a whole' (p. 1).

[12] Strawson (1966), pp. 31–2; Pappas (2000), ch. 1. Pappas does distinguish between assumptions widely held in Berkeley's time and positions that would be accepted now, thereby gesturing toward context.

[13] Price (1940), p. 23, where the term 'sense-datum' is introduced in paraphrasing Hume's position, without fanfare, and is used subsequently to develop Hume's problems and position. Works such as Price's are scholarly in the sense of taking into account the relevant major works—in this case, all of Book I of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* and all of his *Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*. Yet Price makes clear that his intent is to construct a positive theory on Hume's behalf (1940, p. 4); characteristically, he finds no contradiction in saying that his aim has been to 'expound Hume's own theory as fully and clearly as may be' (p. 227), while reporting that, with respect to the positive theories he has constructed as 'Hume's own', he does not assert 'that Hume himself held either of them' (p. 220). Not all interpreters who focus on internal readings (leaving aside any special study of the larger intellectual or cultural context) are fixer-uppers; some endeavour to reconstruct an author's aims on the author's own terms, thus providing historical context through the author's own text, as in Dryer's (1966) reading of Kant's first *Critique*.

context. Some may simply realize that, because language changes over time and because philosophers in different periods have different background knowledge or beliefs, even to read the words on the page with comprehension necessitates some degree of immersion in the literature surrounding a given text. Thus, to understand Descartes's use of the term 'a priori', it helps to be acquainted with a standard Aristotelian usage, meaning 'reasoning from cause to effect', by contrast with 'a posteriori' reasoning from effect to cause. Similarly, Kant's use of the term 'physiology' in its root sense (stemming from Greek *physis*, or nature) to mean 'science or doctrine concerning nature in general' would be badly misread if taken as referring to bodily physiology, or, in his phrase about Locke's 'physiology of the human understanding', to brain physiology.[14] One might, of course, be well aware of the need for historical context to gain better access to past texts while still wanting to use those texts primarily as a source of raw material for solutions or answers to present philosophical problems. This would be historically sensitive reading in the service of fixer-upper ends.[15]

Beyond this sort of aim, there are historically sensitive practices of reading that are also historically oriented in their philosophical methodology. By 'historically oriented philosophical methodology' I mean taking past texts seriously on their own terms, seeking to understand the problems and projects of past philosophy as they were, instead of only seeking a reading that solves a current philosophical problem. Such approaches need not be uncritical or non-evaluative, but their evaluations and criticisms will, in the first instance, be rendered according to standards implicit or explicit at the time the work was written. Discerning and employing such standards is itself no small task, requiring considerable philosophical work. Moreover, such approaches need not be without contemporary philosophical pay-off. But such pay-off occurs

[14] On 'a priori' in Descartes and other pre-Kantian authors, see Collins (1972), pp. 263–5. On Lockean 'physiology of the human understanding', see Kant (1781/1787/1998), A ix ('A' denotes the pagination of the 1st German edn. of 1781; below, 'B' denotes that of the 2nd edn. of 1787).

[15] The practice of combining historical scholarship with fixer-upper aims is found especially in writings on Kant's works (e.g. Kitcher 1990), presumably because philosophers today find much in Kant worth salvaging, but realize that mining his rich texts is aided by scholarly attention to context.

precisely because one has achieved an acquaintance with past philosophy on its own terms (as far as is possible).[16]

Some historically oriented methodologies do repudiate criticism. Their aim is simply to understand. This attitude is often accompanied by a historicist outlook—the belief that the philosophy of each age is (or should be seen as) simply an expression of the culture of the time, having no significance except as evidence about past thought. Such an outlook is more common among intellectual historians than historians of philosophy. Even so, such an attitude does not rule out all philosophical uses for history of philosophy, for even if past problems showed no real continuity with those of the present, we might still trace the previous evolution of our problems in order to isolate aspects that are vestiges of the past.[17]

Although I wouldn't want to rule out a radically historicist historiography of philosophy by *fiat*, I doubt the plausibility of the view that no philosophical topics or problems persist across long stretches of time, and I doubt that all past standards of evaluation

[16] On historically oriented methodology, see Collins (1972); Gracia (1992); Kristeller (1985); Mandelbaum (1976, 1977); Skinner (2002), ch. 4; and Yolton (1986). Those adopting such an approach often hold that in working on contemporary philosophical problems, it is preferable to speak in one's own voice, rather than to engage in a kind of ventriloquism using a name from the past. Still, it can be reasonable to develop 'Humean' or 'Kantian' or 'Jamesian' positions, placing oneself in a tradition while acknowledging that one has departed from, and may be addressing other issues than, past authors.

[17] Passmore (1965, pp. 8–18) disparagingly portrays historicist approaches as described in this paragraph as 'display[ing] philosophical theories in a cultural museum as representative expressions of a period' (p. 18). Elsewhere, he contrasts (philosophically uncritical) 'scholarship *about* philosophy' with (a) 'dialectical' treatments of past philosophers as though they were contemporaries, and (b) 'philosophical scholarship', which is carried out in a critical philosophical spirit and with a primary interest in philosophical content (1964, pp. 3–5). Mandelbaum (1965, pp. 46–66) criticizes historicist approaches that assume a social and cultural 'monism'. Collins (1972, pp. 14–22) criticizes purely historical approaches as philosophically unsatisfying, attributing them to an untenable 'purist split' between philosophical analysis and historical exegesis. Kristeller (1985, p. 621) urges a separation between 'interpretation' and 'criticism', but he includes among allegedly non-critical acts of interpretation 'analysing' the thought of past authors, identifying 'basic insights' and 'basic assumptions', and attending to 'contradictions and inconsistencies'. These phrases describe *critical* history of philosophy; his distinction between interpretation and criticism apparently applies to interpreting past positions so as to render them acceptable for wholesale adoption in the present. Gracia (1992, p. 111) uses the term 'historicist' more broadly than Passmore, to name the view that philosophy and history of philosophy are interdependent; he treats the 'historicism' criticized by Passmore as a confusion into which historically oriented philosophers sometimes fall (p. 122). In my

are totally foreign to current standards.[18] I would instead make the relation of past and present problems and standards into an object of investigation in its own right. A narrowly historicist approach would preclude that. So I will leave aside the historicist approach, and consider historically oriented approaches that aim for a present-day pay-off to be gained from historical understanding.

Several sorts of pay-off may be envisioned. One is simply to gain a genuine understanding of the landmark positions that frame contemporary discussions. Here, the idea is that, in making use of past philosophy, discovering Kant's actual position (e.g.) on the nature of analytic judgements will be of more use than simply translating his position into a recent idiom. Accordingly, one would see Kantian analyticity as applying to concepts and judgements (taken as cognitive acts) and would be wary of interpretations in terms of sentences or word meanings.[19] We can thereby come to appreciate both the similarities and the differences between Kant's and more recent notions of analyticity. Seeing the differences enables us to ask what changed and why. We gain not only a more accurate fix on a landmark but also the potential of greater self-understanding through history.

Better understanding of the structure and development of past philosophy can yield further benefits. A thorough investigation of individual texts or philosophers may reveal assumptions that are deeply embedded, unargued, and even unavowed. Examination of the historical progression of such assumptions may allow us to gain new perspective on current assumptions, or to question general platitudes. Here, the unit of analysis extends beyond the individual text or philosopher to the historical development of philosophical traditions. One use of such an examination would be to diagnose current philosophical ills, as Richard Rorty aimed to do in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. More generally, examination of the shape

experience, many intellectual historians and historians of science today adopt the sort of historicist attitude that seeks to understand past thought while avoiding the critical approach of most historians of philosophy; this attitude suits their aim of understanding tendencies of thought, or the relation of thoughts (or other 'products') to social, economic, and cultural factors, as opposed to critically engaging the content of past philosophy or science in its own right.

[18] On change and continuity, see Randall (1963) and Schneewind (1998), pp. 550–3. On standards of evaluation and the comparability of human mentalities (and their products) over time, see Gracia (1992), pp. 72–86; Mann (1996), pp. 194–5; and Wood (2002).

[19] See Beck (1955, 1956).

of the history of philosophy, relating project to project, trend to trend, tradition to tradition, involves a search for philosophical structure in that history. Finding such structure would certainly add to our knowledge of what philosophy is and can be.[20]

This taxonomy of uses of historically oriented methods is not exhaustive, but it captures some main instances of recent practice, as examples will illustrate.

2. FIXING UP KANT

P. F. Strawson described his book on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, entitled *The Bounds of Sense*, as follows: 'it is by no means a work of historical-philosophical scholarship. I have not been assiduous in studying the writings of Kant's lesser predecessors, his own minor works or the very numerous commentaries which two succeeding centuries have produced.'[21] Here Strawson lists some

[20] Let me clarify my distinction among (a) historicist enterprises (intellectual history), (b) history of philosophy, and (c) presentist musings or fixings-up, in relation to recent discussions. I view history of philosophy as critically and philosophically engaging the work of past philosophers, but in a spirit that takes seriously the aims, assumptions, and state of knowledge of past authors. Though evaluative, it does not adopt the principle that past arguments should be construed, whenever possible, so that they solve present problems; so it does not formulate its initial evaluation using that standard; it does not seek to 'fix up' past works during their interpretation. Thus, I view history of philosophy as more critically engaged than Bernard Williams's 'history of ideas' (1978, p. 9), but reject his proposal that 'history of philosophy' should from the outset reconstruct past positions to address today's problems (p. 10). (Of course, we who do the reconstructing are working today, and we may apply our work to contemporary problems; see sections 4 and 8 below.) For similar reasons, I do not include what Sleigh (1990, pp. 2–4) calls 'philosophical history' within history of philosophy; but I also hold that genuine history of philosophy (in what he overly modestly calls the 'exegetical' mode) cannot establish the 'facts' or 'explain' the positions of past authors without critically engaging and rethinking the philosophical content of those positions: there is no such thing as setting forth 'the plain facts about what an author thought and said' (p. 3) without substantial (historically sensitive) philosophical reconstruction. By way of examples, I do not count Strawson (1966) or Bennett (1971) as works in the history of philosophy, but do include Dryer (1966). Bernard Williams (1978) is a hybrid; his chapters 2–3 follow the presentism described in his preface, but the remaining chapters become ever more historical and contextual. Bennett (2001) has come to acknowledge the importance of context, and now sees a need to balance knowledge of 'historical setting' with an attitude of 'collegial' argument with past philosophers as if they were present (i. 1). He uses context in a piecemeal way that avoids treating single works as integrated wholes, so his writing seems to record museful free associations on isolated historical facts and bits of text.

[21] Strawson (1966), p. 11.

criteria that a historically oriented approach today might ideally be expected to meet, but he also indicates that he is not going that route. His intent is to read and reread the *Critique* so as to produce 'an uncluttered and unified interpretation'. He wants to interpret the doctrines in a way that emphasizes what can be made 'acceptable' while jettisoning what cannot be repaired. Acceptable by what standard? By the standards of philosophy as Strawson sees them; indeed, by standards of argument such as those exhibited in his previous book, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, which broached many themes found in his Kant book.

Strawson says that the aim of his book is to present an interpretation of 'the system of thought which the *Critique* contains' that is 'at least strongly supported by the text as it stands'. But he also makes clear that this interpretation will 'show how certain great parts of the structure can be held apart from each other, while showing also how, within the system itself, they are conceived of as related'. Here, he is talking about keeping the doctrine of transcendental idealism apart from the conceptual analysis of the conditions of experience, while also explaining why Kant might have seen a need to connect them. He further indicates that he has 'tried to give decisive reasons for rejecting some parts altogether'.[22] Here, he means the whole of what he terms 'transcendental psychology', which includes Kant's discussion of various faculties of cognition (sensibility, understanding, reason) and the central role that Kant gives to the notion of synthesis in some main arguments (in the Deduction and Analytic of Principles). What is to replace Kant's detailed discussions of judgement as synthesis? Analysis of 'our ordinary reports of what we see, feel, hear, etc.' (a popular mid-twentieth-century philosophical idiom). Indeed, he asserts as a philosophical axiom (as it were) that 'no faithful reports of these experiences are in general possible which do not make use of the concepts of the objects which our experiences are experiences of' (a conclusion of *Individuals*).[23]

Strawson suggests that Kant, in the Deduction of the categories, argued that the conditions on any possible experience (like ours) are the conditions for objective judgements (or objective descriptions)

[22] The previous quotations are from ibid.

[23] Quotations from Strawson (1966), p. 32; the corresponding discussion occurs in Strawson (1959), ch. 2.

of a uniquely ordered spatio-temporal world of objects. To conceive of experience as a sequence of representations is, it turns out, to presuppose that the conditions have been met for experiencing an objectively ordered world. Strawson's reconstruction is a generally plausible, and philosophically interesting, construal of local features of Kant's argument. Similarly, Strawson's discussion of the law of cause as a condition on objective experience may well reveal something about Kant's own position.[24] Strawson has perhaps repackaged certain Kantian insights about experience and its conceptual structure. To be sure, his book does not show that Kant understood or developed these insights in a Strawsonian manner. Still, besides being philosophically interesting in its own right, Strawson's book offers material that might be used by someone who was trying to understand Kant—even by those trying to read him in context.

None the less, Strawson's book would not help in reading many parts of Kant's text, or in interpreting many of its central doctrines, for Strawson ignores or rejects these. He mentions (but provides little discussion of) Kant's primary objective in the first *Critique*: to discern the limits to traditional metaphysics. Indeed, Strawson provides no general characterization of traditional metaphysics at all, but simply lists some doctrines that Kant himself names (concerning the immaterial soul, the structure and existence of the cosmos, and the existence of God). It is here especially that some attention to historical context might have helped him to see what Kant was after. Strawson instead renders Kant's project in terms of the familiar mid-twentieth-century idiom of seeking a 'principle of significance' to govern 'what we can say'.[25] He thus ignores Kant's own way of framing the bounds of sense: that is, through a strict limit on any use of the faculty of understanding independently of the senses, and a strict limit on treating sensory knowledge as determining the (unknown) properties of things in themselves. Rather, the bounding arises from Strawson's conceptual analysis of ordinary perceptual reports.

Strawson virtually ignores the place of synthetic a priori judgements in Kant. Kant, of course, considered this notion to be absolutely essential to his entire project. He rightly complained of an early review of the *Critique* (Christian Garve's review as revised by

[24] Strawson (1966), Pt. II, chs. 2–3.

[25] Strawson (1966), p. 16.

J. G. Feder, published anonymously in 1782) that, in ignoring the synthetic a priori, it failed to address the central topic of his work; he complained that the review 'did not say a word about the possibility of synthetic cognition *a priori*, which was the real problem, on the solution of which the fate of metaphysics wholly rests, and to which my *Critique* . . . was entirely directed'.[26]

Kant is not to be treated as an absolute authority, even in identifying the central point of his own work. At the same time, his assertions on this topic should be taken seriously; they should not be cast off lightly, and they should at least be explained. The most historically sensitive section of Strawson's work, Part V on the role of the phenomenal in Kant's conception of geometry, might well have sustained some discussion of the synthetic a priori, had Strawson looked more fully into Kant's account of the structure of Euclid's proofs. In section 5 (below), we will see that Kant offered an insightful analysis of the synthetic basis for geometrical proofs of Euclid's kind.

In the end, Strawson's book does not provide a reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as an integrated philosophical work. It offers a set of philosophical arguments that show us how to relate selected portions of Kant's text to Strawson's own views. This approach contrasts with contextually sensitive readings, as developed by Beck, Gerd Buchdahl, Karl Ameriks, Patricia Kitcher, and a new generation that includes Lanier Anderson, Lorne Falkenstein, and Lisa Shabel. These philosophers allow us to understand Kant on his own terms, to see how his work changed philosophy, to know where we differ from him, and to find where we might want to continue his project, suitably modified.

3. DIAGNOSING PAST ERRORS

In the past two decades, the most ambitious attempt to use contextually oriented history for philosophical ends is Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, which attempts to diagnose the central error of Western philosophy (as regards metaphysics and epistemology) from Plato onwards, focusing on Descartes, Locke, and Kant. According to Rorty, these philosophers developed a

[26] Kant (1783/2002), p. 164.

notion of knowledge as a mental 'mirroring' of reality. Philosophy's task was to assess the 'accuracy of representation' of this mirroring, both in general and in the various domains of knowledge. Locke allegedly rendered this task as a natural-scientific project, while Kant helped set up philosophy as a 'tribunal of pure reason'[27] before which other disciplines were to submit their credentials in order to receive their licences.

The accuracy of Rorty's picture of the history of ancient and early modern philosophy has frequently been challenged.[28] His rendering of the philosophers named is at best an outdated caricature, at worst a 'just so' story fabricated to portray the 'authority' of past philosophy as resting on a rhetorical ploy that would fail in the sophisticated present. The moral of his tale is that philosophy today can make no direct contribution to intellectual discussion. Its role can only be to 'edify', by describing the results of one (non-philosophical) area of discourse to the participants of another (non-philosophical) area.

Here is an example of Rorty's history. In a section on 'Epistemology and Philosophy's Self-Image', he uses Descartes and Hobbes to exemplify the aims of early modern epistemology. According to Rorty, Descartes and Hobbes were out to 'make the intellectual world safe for Copernicus and Galileo'. When these philosophers rejected the (Aristotelian) philosophy of the schools, 'they did not think of themselves as substituting a new and better kind of philosophy—a better theory of knowledge, or a better metaphysics, or a better ethics'; nor did they think of themselves as offering '"philosophical systems", but as contributing to the efflorescence of research in mathematics and mechanics'. In Rorty's view, neither Descartes nor Hobbes distinguished 'philosophy' from 'science'; they aimed mainly at effecting a separation between 'ecclesiastical institutions', on the one hand, and 'science and scholarship', on the other.[29]

Rorty's statements reveal his awareness that seventeenth-century philosophers were deeply involved in developing a new science, and that both Descartes and Hobbes addressed ecclesiastical authority. But his general characterization of their work badly misses the

[27] Rorty (1979), p. 139; more generally, see chs. 1, 3.
[28] See Hatfield (2001*a*) and the literature cited therein, and Piaia (2001).
[29] The quotations in this paragraph are from Rorty (1979), pp. 131–2.

mark. Hobbes wrote works on optics, but made no significant contributions to science and was not much of a mathematician; he was complimentary toward Galileo, but offered his own arguments for a corpuscular conception of matter. Although Descartes was an original mathematician and did some work in mechanics, he did not think much of Galileo's law for falling bodies, and had already formulated his own laws of motion when Galileo's work was published. Moreover, each of their approaches is nothing if not systematic. It is true that they used the term 'philosophy' to mean systematic knowledge in general, as indeed the word was then commonly defined. But it is not true that they, or their century, did not recognize distinctions among 'philosophical' disciplines—that is, among the various theoretical bodies of knowledge. Descartes explicitly differentiated the disciplines listed in his famous tree of knowledge: metaphysics as the roots, physics as the trunk, and medicine, mechanics, and morals as the branches. Although he held that metaphysics could provide principles for physics, he distinguished the two subject areas. Metaphysics was more general, encompassing the 'first elements' of everything, including questions about the essences and existence of God and the soul. Descartes explicitly sought to place the new science on a new and better metaphysical foundation, in order (as he revealed in correspondence) to replace the Aristotelian scheme.[30]

Examples could be multiplied of Rorty's lack of immersion in the work of the philosophers about whom he writes. Instead, I want to highlight two ironies concerning his work.

First, he intends to divert philosophy from its alleged role of imperious judge to that of conversational participant. Had he examined the work of early modern philosophy more fully, he would have found that the specifically philosophical portions of their work *did* engage their times. Descartes's metaphysics was aimed toward founding a new science of nature—not by engaging in rhetorical battle with the Roman Church, but by establishing, in a systematic philosophical manner, the fundamental principles of the new physics. Today we may doubt that Descartes accomplished his aim in the intended manner; for instance, we might question whether he actually could derive his specific laws of motion from

[30] On the tree of knowledge, see Descartes (1647/1985), pp. 186–7. On Hobbes's philosophy, see Sorell (1996); on Descartes, see Hatfield (2003).

metaphysical principles, as he said. But we should not doubt that Descartes provides (as do Locke, Kant, and others) a model of the philosopher as an intellectually engaged participant, not an aloof certifier of mirrors seeking to dupe the rest of culture into buying a mirror metaphor. A deeper pursuit of contextual history might have revealed a model from the past to aid Rorty in his effort to encourage philosophers to engage the intellectual and cultural work of their own times.

Second, although Rorty's historiography is avowedly historicist, his historical narrative portrays a near perennial task for philosophy in its first 2,500 years: the assessment of knower as mirrorer. Rorty reports that he found teachers as diverse as Richard McKeon, Rudolf Carnap, and Charles Hartshorne to be 'saying the same thing: that a "philosophical problem" was a product of the unconscious adoption of the assumptions built into the vocabulary in which the problem was stated—assumptions which were to be questioned before the problem itself was taken seriously'. Accordingly, 'philosophical problems' appear or disappear, and change their shapes 'as a result of new assumptions or vocabularies'. Rorty endorses a conception of philosophy's history 'as a series, not of alternative solutions to the same problems, but of quite different sets of problems'.[31] He adopts the 'historicism' I described in section 1.

Yet Rorty's book seeks to trace the single image or idea of the 'glassy essence' of the mind from Plato through Descartes, Locke, and Kant, into its linguistic transformation in the twentieth century.[32] In this story, the vocabulary changes, but the problems (and many of the solutions) remain the same: the problems pertain to the epistemology of mirroring. In the name of historicism, Rorty has flattened out the history of philosophy. He has failed to see how it could be true both that philosophy had been concerned since the time of Plato with questions about the knower's relation to the known, and also that the theories and purposes of philosophers had changed from epoch to epoch, or even from writer to writer. Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and Kant each had a relationship to the new science, but the relationships differed. Descartes, for instance, thought that metaphysics could provide a priori foundations for the new science, discernible through pure intellect. Locke, by contrast,

[31] The quotations in this paragraph are from Rorty (1979), p. xiii.
[32] Rorty (1979), chs. 1, 3–6.

cast philosophy as an 'under-laborer' to the sciences, and he denied that the source of knowledge allegedly used by Descartes, the pure intellect operating independently of the senses, even exists. But he shared with Descartes an interest in the implications of a corpuscular view of matter—which he introduced as the best hypothesis available for the description of sensory perception.[33]

Rorty's failure to capture the aims or diagnose the ills of Western philosophy does not show that history cannot provide diagnostic results, or that works of ambitious historical sweep should be avoided. But it does suggest that such efforts should draw on the extant work in history of philosophy. That type of work was in a comparative slump during the late 1960s to mid-1970s, when Rorty wrote his book, and in any case he chose to wave off its recent results.[34] A final irony is that Rorty's image of the philosophy of the past is remarkably similar to the actual practice of the detached and imperious analytic philosophers of the 1960s, the very time when he framed his project.[35]

4. CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

It is sometimes said that there will always be work to do in the history of philosophy, if only to reread past philosophy in terms of (ever-changing) current problems and standards. And indeed the themes addressed by historians of philosophy often relate to topics currently favoured in philosophy more generally. Thus, Woodbridge's naturalism, together with Cohen's presence at City College, gave the philosophy of the sciences a presence at Columbia, where Burtt produced a history of early modern metaphysics and science.[36] In the first half of the twentieth century, sense-data epistemology was a major contemporary topic, and many of the great

[33] On philosophy as an under-labourer, Locke (1690/1979), Epistle, p. 11; on corpuscularianism as a hypothesis, Bk. IV, ch. 3, art. 16; on sensory qualities and the corpuscular account, Bk. II, ch. 8.
[34] Rorty (1979), pp. 49–50 n. 19, the remarks on O'Neil (1974) and Yolton (1975*b*).
[35] One feature of such philosophy was the willingness to use 'conceptual' arguments based on 'ordinary' understanding to allegedly undermine whole areas of learning, as in, e.g., revealing the 'impossibility' of a scientific psychology (Davidson 1974). For an early dissent from the appeal to the 'ordinary', see Russell (1953).
[36] Morris Cohen at City College of New York published in philosophy of science during the 1910s and 1920s (see Cohen 1931 and Kuhn 1957); he was a presence at

philosophers, including Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, were treated as sense-data theorists. Many philosophers held that if a theory of sense-data as the primary objects of knowledge were combined with realism about ordinary physical objects, it would be difficult or impossible to avoid scepticism about the external world, and early modern philosophers from Descartes onward came to be seen as sceptics or sceptic-slayers.[37] Finally, philosophy of mind and cognition have been popular in recent decades, and of late the history of theories of mind has been undergoing a renewal.

The mere fact that contemporary interests are brought to bear in historical interpretation does not by itself cast doubt upon the interpretation. Each case must be examined on its own, to determine the extent to which current tastes are simply influencing the topics chosen for examination, and the extent to which past texts are being bent, stretched, or discarded to fit a Procrustean bed. Certainly, we can easily expose as distortion any interpretation that has Descartes setting as his primary problem that of inferring the external world from sensory impressions. Similarly, a careful reading of the first edition of Kant's first *Critique* indicates that, contrary to common assumption, he originally saw Hume as an ally who needed help, rather than a sceptical enemy who needed defeating.[38]

Columbia (as Burtt attests: 1925, preface). Ernest Nagel, a prominent twentieth-century philosopher of science, studied at City College and completed his Ph.D. at Columbia in 1931, where he joined the faculty.

[37] Sense-data theory, as developed by Moore (1913–14) and Russell (1912), analysed what is 'immediately known' in perception. These authors raised the problem of whether external objects must be 'inferred' from sense-data, which are representations of them (a 'representative' theory of perception), and if so, whether that would make such objects unknowable (external-world scepticism). Russell (1914) sought to avoid such scepticism by developing sense-data theory into a form of 'realism' in which the sense-datum is the primary (and easily knowable) object of knowledge, from which 'physical objects' are logically constructed. Many philosophers attributed a representative theory to Descartes and/or Locke, and sought ways to avoid that theory (Price 1932, ch. 4) or its sceptical consequences (Broad 1914, ch. 4; 1923, Pt. 2). Hume was treated as a sceptic about external objects (Moore 1909), though Price (1940) adopted a 'fixer-upper' approach, downplaying the sceptical aspects of Hume's position and attributing to him a sophisticated version of phenomenalism (1940, pp. 191–2). Ayer (1958, chs. 2–3), Rorty (1979), Michael Williams (1986, 1991), and others came to read early modern philosophy from Descartes onward as focused on the problem of inferring the external world from sense-data. Meanwhile, Popkin (1960) offered a historical treatment of early modern scepticism. For criticism of the sceptical master narrative for early modern philosophy, see Hatfield (1997, 2001*a*).

[38] On Kant's relation to Hume, see Hatfield (2001*b*) and Kuehn (2001), pp. 255–65.

The doing of history cannot be insulated from the influence of the present, nor should it be;[39] the past remains the past, and we are in the present. None the less, much is to be gained by setting as a goal for history of philosophy ~~as~~ that of accurately portraying the philosophical motives and positions of past authors. This goal involves what I have called 'understanding past philosophy on its own terms'. Even if, owing to the inevitability of historical distance, we cannot fully attain this goal in some absolute sense, it can be approached by adopting some methodological principles. We can read widely, including the major and minor works of individual authors, as well as major and minor predecessors; we can ask what intellectual and philosophical aims individual philosophers had in producing their work; and we can then seek to assess the effectiveness of a philosopher's arguments by the standards of his or her time. These precepts are not intended to be exclusionary; other questions, including purely present-oriented questions, may surely be asked. Rather, these precepts are intended to suggest ways of giving oneself over to the problems and projects of past philosophers in order to establish a basic reading of their works, after which further questions may be posed.

Earlier historiographical writers, including Passmore, identified the 'philosophical problem' as the relevant scale of analysis for a contextual approach. These adherents of the problem-centred approach were not committed to the thesis that there are eternal or unchanging philosophical problems, existing as it were outside history.[40] Rather, they suggested that in interpreting each philosopher, one should seek to discover the problems that motivated his or her philosophizing. This is good advice: it suggests trying to 'get inside' the philosophical activity of a past author, to 'rethink' the problems that motivated him or her.[41] I have incorporated this advice in my precept to consider the aims of past philosophers.

[39] On the inevitability of such influence and ways to keep it within acceptable bounds, see von Leyden (1954) and Collins (1972), ch. 4.

[40] On the 'problem-centred' approach, see Passmore (1965); on studying 'continuative problems' as one method among others, see Collins (1972, pp. 177–85). For an example of seeking the historical roots of philosophical problems, see Popper (1953). Without affirming 'eternal' problems, these authors acknowledge, or insist on, some historical continuity.

[41] Collingwood (1946, pp. 214–15) promoted 'rethinking' as a general historical method (hence applicable to past philosophy). The question of how this precept relates to his conception that 'All metaphysical questions are historical questions' (1940, p. 49) is intricate; see Martin (1995).

Philosophical aims may have a larger scale than the typical philosophical problem. Philosophers may have *projects*, within which problems cluster, or out of which they arise. Descartes had as a main aim the founding of a new physics (a comprehensive science of nature). Within this overall project, he worked on a number of problems, including characterizing the essence of matter, establishing the relation between mind and matter, and analysing the functioning of the senses. Similarly, Kant had as one main project assessing the possibility of metaphysics. Within this project, he identified a number of problems, including discovering the characteristic structure of metaphysical knowledge (it is synthetic a priori), analysing the possibility and limits of such knowledge, and explaining the persistent antinomies in the ontology of nature.

A historian might on one occasion focus on projects, and on another might use knowledge of the overarching project as a context in exploring a past philosopher's response to a specific problem. In either case, recognition of the past philosopher's overall aims and projects will aid interpretation.

More generally, contextual history of philosophy can look at a wider or narrower context. The minimum aim for a contextual approach must be to consider both the major and minor works of a chosen philosopher, the major and minor predecessors against whom the philosopher reacted, and the contemporaries who formed his or her audience. At least this much is needed in order to read early modern philosophical works with genuine comprehension. The relevant context spreads beyond works that we now consider 'philosophical', to early modern science, mathematics, medicine, law, theology, and letters more generally, and it can extend even further to include social structure, cultural movements, and political events.[42]

The breadth of the relevant context cannot be fixed ahead of time, and the type of context may vary, depending on the aims of

[42] In anglophone history of early modern theoretical philosophy (as opposed to political and moral philosophy), the context provided by the new science (including mathematics and medicine) has been most fully explored. Burtt (1925), Gibson (1932), Keeling (1934), and Smith (1941, 1953) were including the scientific context before mid-century. In recent years, Buchdahl (1969), Clarke (1982), Friedman (1992), Garber (1992), Gaukroger (1995, 2002), Hatfield (1990, 1992), Rutherford (1995), Watkins (2001), and Catherine Wilson (1995) have addressed the scientific context as well. See Edel (1949) for a penetrating discussion of the interdependence between the

the interpreter. History of philosophy focuses on the philosophical aspects of past texts: it examines the coherence of authors' positions and seeks to understand how authors sought to establish the cognitive force of their positions or theses. It focuses on the intellectual and the cognitive. Even for that purpose, wider aspects of the historical context may need to be taken into account. Some portions of Descartes's published works (and more of his correspondence) cannot be interpreted without knowledge of seventeenth-century Roman Catholic doctrines and their relation to Aristotelian thought; examples include his discussion of the properties of surfaces of bodies (with implicit or explicit connection to the Eucharist) and his discussion of the 'real union' of mind and body.[43] His characterization of planetary motion in the *Principles of Philosophy* (Part III) may be illuminated by knowledge of the Church's proscription of the Copernican hypothesis and its condemnation of Galileo. If we turn to moral and political philosophy, then cultural, social, and political contexts are even more deeply involved. Beyond these types of appeal to a wider context, interpreters sometimes invoke 'external factors' to explain how a philosopher could hold to a position on the basis of weak or nonexistent cognitive grounds. As I have suggested, this is not the only situation in which the wider context is relevant. Indeed, I suspect that cases in which cognitive factors play no role are rare. More frequently, aspects of the social and cultural context may set part of the philosophical problem space, in which case the philosopher's response is subject to evaluation as philosophy, in terms of coherence and cognitive force.[44]

In any event, each instance of contextual work need not address the wider context. It may instead focus on a single text or part of a

interpretation of ideas (including philosophical and scientific ideas) and knowledge of their social and cultural context.

[43] Examples requiring special attention to these doctrines are found in the Objections and Replies to the *Meditations* (Descartes 1641/1984, pp. 173–8, 292–3), and in *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet* (1648/1985).

[44] Loeb (1981, pp. 15–16) invokes 'extraphilosophical factors' to explain (seemingly unargued) metaphysical commitments of Descartes, Leibniz, and others. In my own work (Hatfield 2003), I have found it philosophically and historically more fruitful to treat the sorts of commitments in question, such as mind–body distinction and interaction, or the existence of an infinite substance, as philosophical theses that Descartes intended to establish on rational grounds alone, and to evaluate his position in that light. Further, I find that his doctrine of the creation of the eternal truths can best be

text, simply to establish a historically and philosophically viable reading, drawing on contextual background knowledge, as required. There is need for work at a variety of scales, directed at a variety of audiences. Some work will be written for other specialists in the history of philosophy. But that should not be the exclusive or ultimate audience for historians of philosophy. They should usually strive to make their work accessible and interesting to the larger group of philosophers, and often to readers more generally.[45]

5. READING FORWARD, READING BACKWARD

Historians of philosophy differ in their strategies for seeking a context. Some interpreters, such as Gaukroger or Buchdahl, read forward: they take the period preceding and surrounding a given author as the primary context. Others employ a strategy of reading backward. Friedman, in *Kant and the Exact Sciences*, uses some preceding material (especially in considering Kant's Newtonianism). But in addressing Kant's philosophy of mathematics, he reads backward from the perspective of late-nineteenth-century developments in mathematics and logic. He adopts attitudes that were not available before the late nineteenth century about the relation between logic and mathematics and about the subject-matter of mathematics itself, and he then interprets Kant by

understood philosophically in light of his conception of the relation between metaphysics and theology (Hatfield 1993).

[45] Passmore (1964) argued that in the several decades preceding his writing, 'a distinct class of philosopher scholars' (p. 5) was found in America (as opposed to Great Britain). These interpreters were philosophically competent, but they specialized in history rather than working on contemporary problems (though he acknowledged that some of the best historians, such as Lovejoy, did both). Even their best works were, in his view, 'written by philosophical scholars for other philosophical scholars, not by more scholarly philosophers for less scholarly philosophers' (p. 6). I hold that work written for other specialists is needed and desired, but I recommend that historians of philosophy, having established their contextual methods, should make a special effort to convey the philosophical interest and benefit of their work to the wider body of philosophers. That will require historians of philosophy to be trained in and to engage present-day philosophy that relates to the topics of their historical interests.

considering how his work anticipated or fell short of the standards set by these ways of thinking.

A primary aspect of Friedman's reconstruction concerns Kant's proposal that geometrical proofs require appeal to spatial intuition. Kant makes the point most clearly in the Doctrine of Method in the first *Critique*, where he argues that, in geometry, synthetic procedures relying on spatial intuition are needed; discursive logic and the analysis of concepts are insufficient by themselves.[46] Friedman sees this appeal to spatial intuition as arising because the logical resources available to Kant (monadic logic) were inadequate for logically constructing continuous magnitude (either the real number line, or a weaker subset of the reals, the rationals together with square roots). For example, if Kant had been asked to defend the proposition that a line-segment crossing the circumference of a circle (it starts inside and ends outside the circle) intersects that circumference, he could only have appealed to constructive procedures that relied on spatial structure. After geometry had been interpreted on an algebraic foundation in the nineteenth century, so that line-segments and arcs of circles were constituted as loci of point co-ordinates, a proof of this intersection could be provided algebraically.[47] If one wished in this context to interpret the real number line logically, one could construct a point-space with irrational co-ordinates (and thus betweenness relations appropriately dense for the problem) by employing the dependence relations for universal and existential quantifiers of modern polyadic logic. But Friedman has Kant realizing that his own (monadic) logical resources could not establish such a point-space, and turning to iterative constructive procedures (in a spatial medium) to get it done. Accordingly, Kant would demonstrate the appropriate infinity of points, including the point of intersection, through infinitely (or indefinitely) iterated procedures of construction (constructing one

[46] Kant (1781/1787/1998), A 712–37/B 740–65.

[47] It is sometimes mistakenly supposed that Descartes created analytic or algebraic geometry, in the sense that he thought of geometry as resting upon and being defined by algebraic relations. Rather, he developed techniques that permitted this creation to be completed by the nineteenth century. Descartes could have demonstrated the point of intersection of a circle and a line-segment by providing algebraic co-ordinates, but he would have seen no point in doing so. He regarded geometrical objects and constructions as primary, and his algebraic techniques as aids for when problems became too protracted for constructive techniques; see Hatfield (2003), Appendix, and the literature cited there.

point, then another, with compass-and-straight-edge procedures that include square-root line-lengths).[48]

This retrospective reading ignores the facts that, in Kant's time, geometry was commonly considered to be more basic than algebra, and geometrical structures were not thought to be composed of or constructed from points or point-sets. The idea of deriving all geometrical structures from algebraic relations was foreign to mathematics, certainly at the basic level at which Kant taught and understood mathematics. (Euler and others were laying the foundation for algebraization, but Kant didn't contend with that level of mathematics.)

In the *Critique*, Kant offered a good philosophical reconstruction of the actual procedures of proof used in Euclid's geometry and its common eighteenth-century expressions. Lisa Shabel has shown that these procedures did not rely primarily on logical structure, but often drew upon the spatial relations exhibited in diagrams constructible with only compass and straight-edge. These constructive procedures were not used to demonstrate the existence of an infinite structure; infinite spatial structure (or continuous, in the sense of unbroken) was assumed. For example, if a proof required placing a point on a line-segment between its two end-points, the procedure relied on the assumed spatial structure of the line-segment. That is, it was taken as given that all points of the segment lie *between* the two end-points; a point located anywhere on the segment was already known to be between the end-points, and its existence need not be proved. As Shabel argues, Kant's discussions in the *Critique* captured the ineliminable role of such appeals to spatial structure in the proofs of the extant Euclidean geometry. In this context, questions about the existence of the point where a line crosses a circle do not arise; such problems first arise with the nineteenth-century reconception of geometry in algebraic terms.[49]

[48] Friedman (1992), ch. 1. Friedman is sensitive to charges of anachronism, especially regarding the logical form of Kant's argument; my criticism alleges anachronism about the subject-matter and problems of geometry. Friedman does 'read forward' from earlier discussions of the method of fluxions to Kant's invocation of 'flowing quantities' (1992, p. 74).

[49] On Kant's analysis of Euclidean proofs, see Shabel (2003). On Friedman's historical methodology, see Hatfield (1996*a*). On the changes in geometry, see Hatfield (2003), Appendix, and the literature cited there. Neither Shabel nor I deny that Kant appealed to iterative procedures of construction; only that he used them to prove the existence of a dense ordering of points.

A reconstruction of Kant's philosophy of mathematics should, at the outset, pay close attention to the actual mathematical conceptions and practices of Kant and his predecessors. By allowing a later understanding of the problems and methods of geometry to set the context, Friedman missed fundamental aspects of Kant's theory and achievement. Whereas Kant appealed to spatial intuition because he recognized the role of spatial structure in Euclid's proofs, Friedman instead sees him as responding to questions that arose only fifty or one hundred years later by employing a counterpart to modern logical techniques. In writing the history and philosophy of mathematics, it will be more fruitful to read forward, by asking how the problems and methods of geometry were conceived at one time and then came to be reconceived later. Kant's position will not be most fruitfully characterized as 'not yet using' the later methods, or as 'using this work-around' to solve the later problems. Taking earlier mathematics and philosophy on their own terms will help locate the specific problems and opportunities that motivated or afforded later developments.

I do not suggest that reading backward is never useful. I do suggest that reading forward is more often useful in setting context. Reading backward should come later, in posing questions about shapes and themes in history.

6. EXPANDING CONTEXTS, SEEKING HISTORICAL THEMES

The 'context' for reading early modern philosophy can be as narrow as the text surrounding a passage (or the corpus containing a work), and (in the limit) as broad as human history itself. Initial steps in expanding the context of early modern philosophy came from taking seriously the aims of philosophers as expressed in their works. Such 'internal' contexts would have been sufficient (even if other evidence were not available) for expanding the context of early modern metaphysics and epistemology to include relations to mathematics, physics, and other scientific areas such as biology, physiology, or psychology. An internal context is also sufficient for expanding consideration of early modern theories of mind to include theories of the senses, of cognition more generally, and of

the passions and emotions.[50] Further extension from within is in order. Religion and theology are major presences in early modern philosophical texts. Rather than seeing them as encumbrances to be overcome (one common view), or as sources of arguments to be retrieved by today's believers (another trend), one might make the relations among philosophy, religion, and theology an object of investigation in its own right.[51]

There is more to history of philosophy than taking the contexts of individual works or authors into account in reconstructing or explaining their positions. Other units of investigation can be defined, including ideas and themes. One sort of thematic investigation would follow key philosophical ideas or subject areas over decades or centuries. These might include basic philosophical notions, such as conceptions of knowledge and its forms, technical notions, such as 'a priori' and 'a posteriori' or 'analysis' and 'synthesis', or general categories, such as 'metaphysics' or even 'philosophy'. Such basic work in 'philosophical history of ideas' is needed to support contextual work in the history of philosophy. But it can be of interest in its own right, in uncovering conceptual changes and their philosophical significance. Louis Loeb's examination of causation and substance in early modern philosophy is a recent example of this sort of thematic history.

Other work can attend to the ways in which philosophers have been read or 'received'. To understand seventeenth-century Aristotelianism and its opponents, an interpreter must distinguish the local Aristotelianism from the historical Aristotle. The same goes for every major figure. Histories of how the works of key figures were received, initially and over the centuries, are of great interest.[52] Kant's own presentation of his critical philosophy was altered as he responded to its initial reception. His works have been constantly studied since their appearance, with differing emphases. The historical work of untangling these threads can provide distance from today's locally received readings of Kant, as well as

[50] Descartes, for example, wrote not only on metaphysics, mathematics, and physics, but also on physiology, theory of mind and cognition, and the passions and emotions; for recent work on these topics, see Gaukroger (1998); Gaukroger, Schuster, and Sutton (2000); Hatfield (1992); and Sutton (1998).

[51] Recent work in this direction includes Jolley (1998) and Popkin (1998), as well as Funkenstein (1986) on theology, philosophy, and science.

[52] Examples of work on reception include Aarsleff (1971); Clarke (1989); Fieser (2000); Verbeek (1992); Schmaltz (2002); and Watson (1987).

presenting various possibilities, live or not, for interpreting or adapting his work.[53]

Additional historical and thematic connections should be sought across the boundaries of traditional periods. The relation between early modern philosophy and nineteenth-century philosophy might be taken beyond obvious connections such as that between Kant and German idealism, or between Locke and Hume and the two Mills. By the early twentieth century, the gross structure of periods and themes used in presenting the history of modern philosophy (into the nineteenth century) had solidified. Looking back now from the early twenty-first century, we may reconsider these received views and ask how the story continues. The impact of Darwinism on philosophy might be studied more fully. Links between the flourishing American philosophy before 1930 and the philosophy and science of the preceding century might be investigated.[54] The development of history of philosophy in America throughout the twentieth century deserves further exploration.[55]

In moving beyond contextual readings of individual texts or authors, the history of philosophy will develop historical accounts and explanations of larger movements of ideas. As history of *philosophy*, these accounts will focus on internal intellectual factors. As *history* of philosophy, they will, as needed, relate these factors to wider historical factors and trends.

[53] On Kant's reception, see Ameriks (2003); Hatfield (1990, 2001*b*); and Sassen (2000).

[54] Works pursuing some of these themes in twentieth-century philosophy include Cunningham (1996); Delaney (1969); Reynolds (2002); D. J. Wilson (1990); and R. J. Wilson (1989); as in the latter two instances, often such work has been undertaken by intellectual historians rather than historians of philosophy.

[55] Passmore (1964), in surveying philosophical scholarship in America (read: scholarship in history of philosophy), commended some work in ancient and medieval philosophy (by Paul Shorey, Harold Cherniss, Gregory Vlastos, H. A. Wolfson, and Julius Weinberg), but found the record in modern philosophy 'more than a little disappointing' (p. 84). He praised Randall (1940), Burtt, Wolfson, and Beck, and had measured praise for Popkin and Yolton (pp. 77, 85–6, 91, 95); he missed Gewirth's (1941*a*, 1941*b*, 1943) seminal articles on Descartes (the first two of which were originally published under the name 'Gewirtz'), though he did notice his work on Marsilius of Padua (Passmore 1964, p. 74). Passmore explained American 'erudition' and 'philosophical scholarship' as resulting from the large number of doctoral dissertations produced under pressure to seek 'originality'; as he saw it, this led to a focus on minor figures (otherwise little studied), yielding many 'one-book' philosophers who publish their dissertations and vanish (1964, p. 28). Grudgingly, he allowed that on occasion the 'drudgery' of slogging through minor philosophers was rewarded (p. 29).

7. SHAPES OF HISTORY

The positions and arguments of major philosophers are understood within a framework of assumptions, often tacit, about the larger shape of philosophy's past. These assumptions concern the motivating problems, aims, and also the achievements of past philosophers or 'schools' of philosophers. Evaluation of achievements may be expected to vary as the present philosophical climate varies. None the less, historians of philosophy, in pursuing contextual methodology, should seek as much as possible to work upward from past philosophers' own statements in establishing the aims or philosophical motives of individuals or schools. They might also seek, in the first instance, to gauge their evaluations by contextually appropriate standards.

Often, philosophical history has been given shape by dividing philosophers into competing schools, characterized as responding to one or more central problems. Kant divided the philosophers before himself into 'intellectualists' (like Plato) and 'sensualists' (like Epicurus) with regard to the primary object of knowledge, and, with respect to the origin of knowledge, into 'empiricists' (Aristotle and Locke) and 'noologists' (those who follow *nous*, or the intellect: Plato and Leibniz). These dichotomies were to be overcome by, or synthesized in, his own critical philosophy.[56] Others in Kant's time added a 'sceptical' school. In late-nineteenth-century histories, the period from Descartes to Kant was variously categorized, in terms of nationality; metaphysical versus critical approaches (with Locke, Berkeley, and Hume among the latter); systematic, empirical, and critical approaches; and rationalist, empiricist, sceptical, and critical ones.[57]

In more recent historical narratives, the theme of scepticism has been used to characterize the development of early modern philosophy within a framework of rationalism, empiricism, and critical philosophy. In this shaping of history, Descartes raised a sceptical challenge that he was unable to answer adequately; Locke, Berkeley, and Hume pursued it further, in successive steps; and Kant sought to answer Hume's sceptical challenge with his first *Critique*. As an

[56] Kant (1781/1787/1998), A 853–4/B 881–2.
[57] Höffding (1900); Falckenberg (1897); Ueberweg (1880); and Weber (1896).

organizing theme for early modern philosophy, scepticism has obvious limits, since Spinoza, Leibniz, and Locke paid scant attention to it, Descartes used scepticism as a tool but was not seriously threatened by it, and Kant had little interest in discussing scepticism about the external world until he was accused of it in early reviews of his first *Critique*.[58] Further, Berkeley's classification as an empiricist, proto-Humean sceptic can be challenged, notwithstanding his use of certain Lockean principles and Hume's subsequent use of Berkeleyan arguments. Berkeley affirmed a 'notion' of spirit as an active substance, upon which he sought to establish an immaterialist metaphysics—not a particularly 'empiricist' project.

Given the renewed interest in history of philosophy, there has in fact been surprisingly little explicit discussion of periodization, classification, and narrative themes. If the sceptical master narrative for early modern philosophy is abandoned (as it should be, while acknowledging various sceptical traditions), new themes and shapes will need to be developed. These should take into account the early modern penchant for investigating the power and scope of human understanding (which doesn't require sceptical motivation), the relations between philosophy and the sciences, and developments in value theory.

The shape of philosophy's history from the late nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century has yet to be formed. In anglophone scholarship, efforts toward creating this history include work in the history of 'analytic' philosophy and the history of the philosophy of science. The task is large, and the surface has barely been scratched. In the history of analytic philosophy, beyond the emphasis on logic and language as pursued by Michael Dummett and others,[59] further themes need investigating. These should address the widespread philosophical interest, in the first half of the twentieth century, in sense perception, knowledge, and mind. Perhaps as a result of the ensconcement of behaviourist attitudes within later analytic philosophy,[60] little attention has been paid to early-twentieth-century theories of mind and the mind–body relation. One context for these topics is the writings of the neo-Kantians on the distinction between

[58] Although reference to sceptical currents (or a 'sceptical school') in modern philosophy rightly has a long history, the sceptical master narrative has its limits (see n. 37 above).
[59] Dummett (1994); see also papers in Floyd and Shieh (2001).
[60] See Hatfield (2002).

the *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*.[61] Thus far, work on the history of the philosophy of science in the twentieth century has focused mainly on the Vienna Circle and its surroundings.[62] The topic might be widened to include American approaches initiated before 1930 and carried on afterward, French work in history and philosophy of science, and the ongoing relation between science and metaphysics.[63] Sufficient critical distance from the reflexive charge of 'psychologism' may have been attained by now to permit the extensive turn-of-the-century relations between philosophy and psychology to be studied on their own terms, and in a way that recognizes the many influences of the new psychology on philosophy at this time.[64]

As philosophers, historians of philosophy should be prepared to examine their enterprise philosophically. Discussions in the earlier historiographical literature on the methodology of interpreting particular texts have continued in recent work. However, larger questions about periodization and narrative themes, also raised in the earlier literature, have not been vigorously pursued. The recent bounty of work in the history of philosophy should provide the materials needed to support explicit reflection on the shapes of philosophical history.

As philosophers, historians of philosophy should also be prepared to relate the positions of the past (contextually understood)

[61] Anderson (1994) and Makkreel (1992).

[62] Recent work may be found in Giere and Richardson (1996) and Heidelberger and Stadler (2002).

[63] Beyond C. S. Peirce and Morris Cohen, who focused on mathematics and physical science, many American philosophers at the turn of the century (including Dewey and James) were interested in naturalism concerning the mind, or in naturalism more generally (e.g. Sellars 1922), which led them into topics from philosophy of biology and philosophy of psychology, and/or into scientifically informed metaphysics. Furthermore, work in general philosophy of science had been proceeding outside Vienna. Nagel's (1929) article on 'Nature and Convention' mentioned several recent authors, including N. R. Campbell, P. Bridgman, E. Dupreel, C. Eddington, Einstein, F. Gonseth, Peirce, Planck, Poincaré, Reichenbach, and Russell. Of these, only Reichenbach was connected with Vienna (via Berlin), and he was cited for his work on theories of space and time. Campbell and Eddington were cited the most frequently. In English-, French-, and German-language works, philosophical analyses of science—by philosophers and philosophical scientists—were extant from the beginning of the century (and before).

[64] On the various notions of psychologism at the turn of the century, see Kusch (1995). On this and the other topics described in the above paragraph, Baldwin (2003) will aid further work.

to the positions of the present, and to offer to present-day philosophy insights gleaned from history on both the structures of and solutions to philosophical problems.

8. PHILOSOPHICAL PAY-OFFS

In section 1 I alluded to various philosophical pay-offs from 'historical' history of philosophy. Taking philosophy of mind as my object, I will sketch examples of two sorts of pay-off: understanding landmark positions and questioning embedded assumptions or platitudes. The examples involve early modern and nineteenth-century texts, which are often used to set 'standard' problems or positions in contemporary philosophy. In such cases, historically sensitive readings are directly relevant to contemporary work.

In recent philosophy of mind, terms such as 'intentionality', 'introspection', and 'naturalism' are frequently employed. Often, such terms are introduced and defined with a glance back at a historical figure. Thus, in discussing introspection and self-knowledge, it is common to speak of a 'Cartesian model' of the mind, and to invoke the 'introspective psychology' of Wilhelm Wundt. This Cartesian model maintains that the contents of the mind are 'transparently' and 'incorrigibly' known.[65] Transparency means that there can be nothing in the mind that is hidden or unavailable to direct inspection and cognitive apprehension. Incorrigibility means that we cannot make mistakes about what is present in our own mind. The defeat of these two theses is often linked with rejecting a notion of phenomenal content as something more than the bare representation of physical objects or bodily states. Allegedly, these epistemological theses were the main support for the notion that there is an 'inner' domain of phenomenal content. Here, Wundtian introspection may be invoked as a last gasp of the Cartesian model.[66]

[65] e.g. Moran (2001), pp. 1–12. Shoemaker (1996, pp. 224–5) distinguishes 'Cartesian' incorrigibility from the 'perceptual model'; Moran (2001, p. 12) attributes the 'perceptual model' to Descartes, but wonders whether he held to full transparency. On characterizing 'inner perception', see also Lyons (1986), pp. 2–3, 151–2; Rey (1997), pp. 136–7; and Tye (1995), pp. 30–1. Some authors credit the rise of introspection to Locke or Hume. [66] e.g. Lyons (1986), pp. 2–6; Rey (1997), pp. 136–7.

The historical attributions to Descartes and Wundt are at best caricatures, at worst grossly in error. Quotations can indeed be produced from Descartes's works that seem to affirm both positions. But in fact Descartes admitted—or insisted—that people can be mistaken about the content of their own minds: e.g. about whether they are having a clear and distinct perception. He also allowed that activities may occur in the mind that are so rapid or so dim as to go unnoticed.[67] Similarly, Wundt did not suppose that, when introspecting a sensory state, a subject is aware of some inner state that is unrelated to the perception of an external object. Rather, he saw such introspection as a special attitude taken toward the perception of an external object. If someone who is looking at an object is asked to report its colour or match its colour to a set of standard colours, Wundt took these acts to yield introspective reports of current experience. At the same time, he acknowledged that the perception of colour involves a special sensory quality that depends on the perceiving subject. Physical objects are presented by means of subjectively conditioned sensory experiences. The introspective attitude focuses on the subjective character of sensation, rather than seeking to abstract from it, as in physical observation.[68]

This is not the place to develop these interpretations of Descartes and Wundt in detail, and I certainly do not mean to imply that there are no problems with the positions they take. But if the alleged positions of these figures are used in contemporary philosophy of mind as objects to be criticized, or as examples of positions that have been surpassed, then a difficulty arises if they did not hold the

[67] Descartes 1637/1985, p. 122; 1641/1984, pp. 25, 295; also 1991, pp. 356–7, where he distinguishes reflective awareness from bare consciousness. Of course, Descartes did hold that clear and distinct perceptions themselves cannot be mistaken, and he offered procedures for ascertaining that one is having them (see Hatfield 2003, pp. 145–6, 199–200). Passages suggesting 'transparency' include Descartes 1641/1984, pp. 33–4, 171.

[68] Wundt (1901/1902), pp. 1–6, 9–12, 24–6. Brentano (1874/1995, pp. 29–36) likewise rejected a perceptual model; he distinguished 'inner observation'—understood by analogy with external perception of objects—from 'inner perception', which is awareness of mental phenomena that does not involve directed attention. He considered perception-like 'observation' of one's mental states while they occur to be unachievable; such observation is available only through memory (reflection). Lyons (1986, pp. 3–5) is sensitive to aspects of these two positions, but he ends up assimilating Wundt and all pre-Jamesian psychologists to an 'inner sense' position (p. 151), without commenting on Wundt's explicit denials.

positions attributed to them. Of course, one may be able to find someone else who held the position targeted. But if Descartes or Wundt held positions that are less implausible than the ones being shot down, then today's philosophers would be in danger of choosing the weaker opponent—an *ineffective* procedure at best. By offering an easily refuted caricature, a contemporary philosopher claims a comparative advantage. But the refutation of a straw position leaves open the possibility that the 'advantage' is spurious. This outcome can derail the study of live alternatives, by enshrining the common 'knowledge' that a particular position has been decisively set aside.

A similar situation arises with the term 'intentionality', frequently invoked in contemporary philosophy of mind but rarely discussed in systematic fashion. The term is introduced, often with a reference to Brentano, and is said to denote a relation of 'aboutness' or 'representation', or a 'directedness' of the mind to its object. In recent 'intentionalist' theories of sensory qualities, intentionalism is alleged to do away with qualia or intrinsic features of phenomenal states.[69] Brentano held no such doctrine, and found no incompatibility between his notion of the intentional and the distinction, commonly held in the nineteenth century, between primary and secondary qualities.[70] Here, historical work might well enrich contemporary discussions of intentionality, and augment the surprisingly small amount of direct discussion of the notion, even by those who label themselves 'intentionalists'.

Finally, in contemporary discussion, 'naturalism' about the mental is frequently assumed to imply physicalism or materialism, so that offering a naturalistic account of the intentional is considered as tantamount to reducing that notion to non-intentional terms (usually, to physical or material terms). Are mentalistic notions such as (unreduced) intentionality non-natural? They have not always been regarded as such. Many early modern authors, even dualists,

[69] Brentano-citing 'intentionalists' who understand their intentionalism as obviating a need for phenomenal qualities include Dretske (1995, pp. 28–34 (including a comparatively extensive discussion of intentionality) and ch. 2); and Tye (1995, chs. 4–5), though he says Brentano is too obscure to interpret (1995, p. 95). Lyons (1995) is an exception, both in appreciating Brentano's position and in exploring the concept of intentionality in detail.

[70] Brentano (1874/1995), pp. 88–91 and 99–100; on p. 100, the view held by some 'at the present time' amounts to the distinction between primary and secondary qualities.

saw mind as a part of nature, as did major nineteenth-century physiologist-philosophers. Some twentieth-century philosophers, including John Dewey and Ernest Nagel, have distinguished naturalism about the mental from materialism.[71] Again, this is not the place to argue for such a distinction, but historical investigation of the notion of the natural as it has been applied (or not) to the mental (and to the mind–brain relation) could help to sort out these matters philosophically.

Most philosophers grant that past philosophical texts demand philosophical skills from their interpreters. Many would allow that there is plenty of work to be done in interpreting past philosophy and comprehending its history. However, across the twentieth century, philosophers disputed whether historically oriented interpretations have their own philosophical value. I would urge that such interpretations are essential to the health of ongoing philosophy. Philosophy without history may not be completely blind, but it is likely to be extremely near-sighted, bumbling about as it attempts to orient itself in its own evolving problem space. It is not required, for philosophy to get its bearings, that every philosopher become a historian. But all of us may need to draw from the work of our historically oriented colleagues. Which makes it all the more desirable for historians of philosophy to take pains to render the interest and the results of their work readily accessible to other philosophers.[72]

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[71] Dewey, Hook, and Nagel (1945); see also Woodbridge (1926). On earlier naturalism about the mind, see Hatfield (1997).

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