History and Psychology

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The relationship between history and psychology has been much discussed in recent decades. But you expect from me neither a report on the discussions carried out in the literature, some of which have become quite well known, nor a systematic treatment of the various aspects of the problem today, but rather a characterization of the role of psychology in the context of a theory of history that does justice to the current state of the social sciences. For this purpose, it is necessary to clarify the concept of history which I intend to use. The prevalence of several meanings of "history," associated with heterogeneous intellectual intentions, further complicates agreement regarding questions of detail.

In particular, two logically opposed concepts of history can be identified. The first derives from those systems, whose roots are to be found in Kant, that arose in the latter decades of the nineteenth century in reaction against materialist tendencies in both science and society. Their common denominator lay in the effort to find the meaning of nature, art, and history not from direct immersion in these areas themselves, but rather from an analysis of the knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] corresponding to them. From the fundamental conviction of this philosophy—namely, that the world has a subjective origin—came the attempt to trace the peculiarities of the realms of being back to various characteristics [*Funktionsweisen*] of the knowing subject. The essence of nature was to be illuminated from the systematic elaboration of the constitutive methods of the natural sciences; likewise, history was to

be explained on the basis of an analysis of historical methods. The concept of history in this philosophy is thus oriented to the given facts of historical science. In principle this philosophy can relate to historical writing only apologetically, not critically—even at a time when historiography remains behind the current state of knowledge in its methods and approaches.

The philosophy upon which the other concept of history is based maintains no such modesty with respect to the available sciences. It is a part of the contemporary effort to make the so-called ideological [*weltanschaulich*] questions independent of scientific criteria, and to develop philosophy entirely beyond the realm of empirical research. In contrast to the epistemological view outlined above, the various realms of being are to be made comprehensible not in terms of the sciences but rather in terms of their common root, primordial Being [*ursprungliches Sein*], to which our age claims a novel access. A new concept of historicity has emerged particularly from the phenomenological school, the fundamental doctrine of which was at first completely ahistorical. In Scheler's attempt during his last years to reconcile the undialectical doctrines of phenomenology with the fact of a revolutionary [*umwälzende*] history, he essentially understood social and political history under this rubric. For Heidegger, however, "historicity" means a mode of being [*Geschehensweise*] in the ground of Being [*im Seinsgrund*]—which latter had itself to be discovered in human beings. History [*Geschichte*] as a theme of "*Historie*" would first acquire its meaning from this primordial mode of proceeding. It thus seems appropriate today to begin from this meaning of "history" in any fundamental discussion.

For the topic under consideration here, however, it is no less problematic to premise the concept of inner historicity than it would be to start with the concept of history employed in traditional science. Because existential philosophy in the phenomenological tradition seeks to make itself independent of the results of research in the various spheres, because it is determined to start from the very beginning and strives to determine the meaning of Being without respect to the contemporary state of research, its approach appears too narrow for our problem. According to the notion that history is first to be grasped out of the inner historicity of *Dasein,*[1] the interweaving of *Dasein* in

the real process of history would have to seem merely external and illusory. Just as engagement with external history illuminates the individual beings [*das jeweilige Dasein*], however, the analysis of individual existence [*das jeweilige Existenzen*] conditions the understanding of history. *Dasein* is indissolubly implicated in external history, and accordingly its analysis cannot lead to the discovery of any ground that moves in itself, independent of all external determination. Real history, then, with its multifaceted, supraindividual structures is not merely a derivative, subsidiary, objectivated realm, as existential philosophy would insist. The theory of human Being [*vom Sein im Menschen*] is thus transformed—along with all kinds of philosophical anthropology—from a static ontology into the psychology of human beings living in a definite historical epoch.

The difficulties confronted in the application of these concepts of history are multiplied in this context by their negative relation to psychology. I have just described the tendency of contemporary phenomenology to transfer the tasks of psychology to an ontology divorced from scientific criteria. The attitude of Kantianism toward our question has changed little since Fichte's assertion that psychology "is nothing."[2] Rickert, the historical theorist of neo-Kantianism, considers the hopes "that have been placed in an advancement of historical science through psychology or indeed through psychologism" to be evidence of a type of thought "to which the logical essence of history remains completely alien."[3] Instead of proceeding from contemporary philosophy's conception of history, therefore, I would like to proceed from a philosophy of history familiar to you all—namely, the Hegelian. After indicating its relation to psychology, the latter's role in the economic conception of history must be elaborated in some detail. I hope that a discussion of the problem on the basis of this theory may be fruitful even for those among you who see historical questions from the perspective of a subjectivistic philosophy.

Philosophical reflection has to do with insight into the unified dynamic structure of the bewildering multiplicity of events. From Hegel's perspective, this task is impossible without the exact knowledge of the Idea and its moments which derives from dialectical logic, for philosophical consideration of history is nothing but the application to the human world of the conviction that the Idea has the power to realize and develop itself in reality. In this process, philosophers of

history acquire from empirical history not merely their raw material, but extensive elements of its historical construction as well. According to Hegel, natural scientists do not merely deliver to philosophers of nature a listing of facts; rather, they approach and anticipate the latter by way of the theoretical formulation of their knowledge. Likewise, *Historie* offers the philosophy of history—beyond mere knowledge of the actual events—basic organizing principles such as the original conditions, the periods, the division of historically acting human beings into races, tribes, and nations. But the periods gain their living meaning only when we grasp them as epochs of the Idea in its self-development. Only when the world-historical nation shows itself to be the bearer of a new, unique principle more adequate to the Idea does it grow from an ordering concept into a meaningful reality; its spirit [*Geist*], the spirit of a people [*Volksgeist*], grows from a collection of peculiarities into a metaphysical power, and the struggles among nations grow from deplorable acts with an arbitrary outcome into a world-historical tribune [*Weltgericht*] realizing itself in the contradictions.

Hegel takes this interplay of empirical *Historie* and philosophy of history quite seriously. He wants neither to interpret empirical history after the fact from a standpoint external to it, nor to measure it against an alien standard. His concept of reason is rather so little abstract that, for instance, the meaning of the moment of freedom as it appears in the *Logic* can only be defined adequately in terms of the bourgeois freedom in the state documented by historians. One can only comprehend freedom in general if one knows that the freedom under examination in the *Logic* is the very same freedom that was realized by a single individual in the oriental despotisms and by only a few Greeks, and which thus stands in contradiction to slavery. The Hegelian system is really a circle; the most abstract ideas of the *Logic* are only realized to the extent that the age is realized—that is, to the extent that the essence of the future is anticipated in the determination of the essence of the present. The exhaustion of a belief in the present—and the intention to undertake its radical transformation—must therefore sublate [*aufheben*] the Hegelian system as a system to which closure was intrinsic, at least in its later form. And this must occur in a manner irreconcilable with the principles of that system.

The significance of psychology for historical knowledge has thus been transformed. For Hegel, as well as for any French Enlightenment thinker, the drives and passions of human beings are the immediate motor of history. Human beings act as their interests determine them to act, and heroes have no more "consciousness of the general Idea" than do the masses.[4] Rather, their own political and other purposes are what count; human beings are determined by their drives. But according to Hegel (and in contrast to the Enlightenment), to pursue the psychic structure of such human beings is unimportant, because the real force that realizes itself in history is comprehensible on the basis of neither the individual psyche nor the mass psyche. Hegel asserts that "great historical men" draw "from a concealed fount—one which has not attained to phenomenal, present existence—from that inner Spirit, still hidden beneath the surface, which, impinging on the outer world as on a shell, bursts it into pieces, because it is another kernel than that which belonged to the shell in question."[5] He refers here not to the unconscious of modern psychology but rather to the Idea itself—that is, that immanent telos of history that can be grasped not through psychology but through philosophy. According to that telos, results are not merely results but testimony to the power of reason; likewise, historical knowledge is not the mere establishment of facts and the most comprehensive possible explanation of events, but knowledge of God.

After the collapse of the Hegelian system, the liberal world view once again assumed partial dominance. It dismissed, along with the belief in the power of an Idea operating in history, the notion of overarching dynamic historical structures, and made self-interested individuals the ultimate independent units in the historical process. Correspondingly, the liberal conception of history is fundamentally psychological. The individuals, with certain eternal drives firmly fixed in their nature, are no longer merely the immediate actors of history, but ultimately the standard against which any theory of processes occurring in social reality must henceforth be measured. Liberalism was of course incapable of solving the problem of how, despite this chaotic foundation of social life, society as a whole could exist—or, of course, of how its life is increasingly damaged by this foundation. The eighteenth-century belief in progress—that the drives of individuals would necessarily lead to the unity of culture once feudal restraints were

abolished—was transformed in nineteenth-century liberalism into the dogma of a harmony of interests.

Marx and Engels, however, took up the dialectic in a materialist sense. They remained faithful to Hegel's belief in the existence of supraindividual dynamic structures and tendencies in historical development, but rejected the belief in an independent spiritual power operating in history. According to them, there is nothing at the root of history, and nothing is expressed in history that could be interpreted as comprehensive meaning, as unifying force, as motivating Reason, as immanent telos. The trust in the existence of such a core of history is, in their view, rather the accessory of an inverted idealist philosophy. Thought, and thus concepts and ideas, are modes of functioning of human beings, and not independent forces. There is no comprehensive idea coming to itself in history, for there is no Spirit independent of human beings. Human beings with their consciousness—despite all their knowledge, their memory, their tradition, and their spontaneity, despite their culture and their intellect [*Geist*]—are transitory; all things come and go.

But this hardly leads Marx to a psychologistic theory of history. According to him, historically acting human beings are never comprehensible simply on the basis of their internal selves, whether of their nature or of some ground of Being to be discovered in themselves. Rather, human beings are bound up in historical formations with dynamics of their own. In methodological terms, Marx here follows Hegel. Hegel had asserted the existence of unique structural principles in each great historical epoch: the principles of the constitutions of the various peoples change in accordance with an inner lawfulness; nations confront each other in the struggles of world history and suffer their fate, without its cause being discernible in the psyche of various individuals or even of a majority of them. While Hegel's dialectic is articulated by way of the logic of absolute Spirit—that is, by way of metaphysics—Marx insists that no insight logically prior to history offers the key to its understanding. Instead, the correct theory derives from consideration of human beings living under definite conditions and sustaining themselves with the aid of specific tools. Such lawfulness as history may reveal is neither an a priori construction nor the registering of facts by a knowing subject conceived as independent;

rather, that lawfulness is produced by thought, itself drawn into historical praxis, as the reflection of the dynamic structure of history.

The economic or materialist conception of history, which grew out of this attitude, thus reveals itself as both the antithesis and the continuation of Hegelian philosophy. In the latter, history is constituted in essence by the struggle for domination among the world-historical empires. For the individuals as well as for peoples and states, the issue is thus not Spirit but their own power. Despite this unconscious quality, the outcome of the struggles is not without spiritual meaning. Hegel thus calls world history the world's court of judgment [*Weltgericht*];[6] this follows from his tenet that the nation [*Volk*] that assumes dominance is always the one whose inner constitution represents a more concrete form of freedom than does that of the defeated people. The extent to which the states have developed toward "the image and actuality of reason"[7] determines their victory. Yet Hegel never explains how this sequence, corresponding to the logic of absolute Spirit, actually realizes itself in acts of war: how, in other words, the people whose state constitutes a more adequate representation of the Idea and its moments must also have the better strategy and superior arms. It appears instead as one of the prestabilized harmonies that necessarily go along with idealist philosophy. Insofar as scientific research into the series of mediating conditions is capable of putting recognized historical connections in the place of merely asserted parallelisms, the myth of the "cunning of reason" (and hence also the metaphysical centerpiece of this philosophy of history) becomes obsolete. We then learn the real reasons why the more differentiated forms of state and society have supplanted the more underdeveloped—that is, in Hegel's terms, the causes of progress in the consciousness of freedom. Knowledge of the real connections dethrones Spirit as the force autonomously shaping history, and installs as the motor of history the dialectic between obsolete forms of society and the various human powers maturing in the struggle with nature.

The economic conception of history completes this shift from metaphysics to scientific theory. That conception holds that the maintenance and reproduction of social life forces upon human beings a definite social order. Conditioning not merely the political and legal institutions but the higher domains of culture, this order is given to

human beings through the various functions that must be carried out in the context of the economic process corresponding to the human capacities of a certain period. The fact, for instance, that ancient Roman society was divided into free and slave, the Middle Ages into lords and serfs, the industrial system into entrepreneurs and workers—as well as the differentiation of these relations within states, the cleavage into nations, and the conflicts between national power groups—all of this is explicable in terms neither of good or evil intentions nor of a unitary spiritual principle, but rather in terms of the requirements of the material life process in its various stages of development. Relations of dependency and the corresponding juridical and political apparatuses arise according to the level of technical development of the tools and forms of cooperation among human beings—that is, according to the mode of production. While the growth of human productive capacities may make possible a new mode of production that could serve the whole of society better than the old, the existence of the given social structure with its corresponding institutions and entrenched human dispositions initially inhibits its diffusion as the dominant mode. Thus arise the social tensions that are expressed in historical struggles and that form, so to speak, the basic theme of world history.

This conception of history can be transformed into a closed, dogmatic metaphysics if concrete investigations of the contradiction between growing human capacities and the social structure—which reveals itself in this connection as the motor of history—are replaced by a universal interpretive scheme, or if that contradiction is inflated into a force that shapes the future as a matter of necessity. If, however, this conception of history is understood as the correct theory of the known historical process, though still subordinate to the epistemological problem of theory as such, it constitutes a formulation of historical experience consistent with contemporary knowledge. In attempting to determine its relation to psychology, it becomes clear that—in contrast to the liberal view—this conception is not psychological. To be consistent, liberalism must explain history as the interplay of isolated individuals and their essentially invariant psychical forces: their interests. If, however, history is divided according to the various modes in which the life process of human society takes place, then economic rather than psychological categories are historically fundamental.

Rather than a foundational science, psychology becomes instead an indispensable auxiliary science for history. Its content is influenced by this transformation of function. In the context of this theory, its object loses its unitary quality. Psychology no longer has to do with human beings as such. Rather, it must differentiate within each epoch the total spiritual [*seelische*] powers available within individuals—the strivings at the root of their physical and intellectual efforts, and the spiritual factors that enrich the social and individual life process—from those relatively static psychic characteristics of individuals, groups, classes, races, and nations that are determined by the overall social structure: in short, from their character.

However much the object of psychology may be interwoven with history, the role of individuals may not therefore be dissolved into mere functions of economic relationships. The theory denies the significance neither of world-historical personalities nor of the psychical constitution of the members of different social groups. The replacement of inferior modes of production by ones more differentiated and better adapted to the needs of the people as a whole represents, so to speak, the skeleton of the history that interests us. That insight is the summary expression for human activity. The corresponding claim that culture depends upon the manner in which the life process of a society, its confrontation with nature, takes place—that, indeed, every aspect of culture carries within it the index of those fundamental relationships and that the consciousness of human beings changes along with changes in their economic activity—in no way denies human initiative. Rather, this approach attempts to offer insight into the forms and conditions of its historical efficacy. Human activity must, of course, connect in each case with the exigencies handed down by preceding generations. But the human efforts directed toward both the maintenance and the transformation of given relations have particular qualities that psychology must investigate. It is above all in this sense that the concepts of the economic theory of history distinguish themselves decisively from the metaphysical: they attempt to mirror the historical dynamic in its most definite form, but offer no ultimate view of the totality. To the contrary, they contain points of departure for further investigations, the results of which affect the theory itself.

This is especially true of psychology. The theoretical claim that the historical action of human beings and human groups is determined

by the economic process can only be validated in detail by way of the scientific elucidation of the modes of response characteristic of a definite historical stage of development. It remains unknown precisely how structural economic changes that affect the psychic constitution prevailing among the members of different social groups in a given period transform their overall life expressions [*Lebensäusserungen*]. Thus the claim that the latter depends upon the former contains dogmatic elements that seriously undermine its hypothetical value for explaining the present. The disclosure of psychical mediations between economic and cultural development certainly allows us to maintain that radical economic changes precipitate radical cultural changes. Yet it may lead not merely to a critique of the conception of the functional relations between the two, but indeed to a strengthening of the suspicion that the sequence may be changed or reversed in the future. In that case, the priority of economics and psychology with respect to history would have to change. Moreover, it then becomes clear that the conception of history under discussion here considers the hierarchy of the sciences and thus also its own theses—as well as the drives of human beings themselves—as falling within its purview.

The real circumstance, however, that determines the relation of the two sciences at present is reflected in the contemporary form of psychology. That human beings sustain economic relationships which their powers and needs have made obsolete, instead of replacing them with a higher and more rational form of organization, is only possible because the action of numerically significant social strata is determined not by knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] but by a drive structure that leads to false consciousness. Mere ideological machinations are hardly the only roots of this historically crucial moment; this is the type of interpretation one might associate with the rationalistic anthropology of the Enlightenment and its historical situation. Rather, the overall psychic structure of these groups—that is, the character of their members—is continuously renewed in connection with their role in the economic process. Psychology must therefore penetrate to these deeper psychic factors by means of which the economy conditions human beings; it must become largely the psychology of the unconscious. In this form, determined by given social relations, it cannot be applied to the action of the various social strata in the same way. The more the historical action of human beings and groups is motivated by insight, the less

the historian needs to revert to psychological explanations. Hegel's contempt for the psychological interpretation of heroes finds its justification here. The less, however, action derives from insight into reality—indeed, the more it contradicts such insight—the more necessary it is to uncover psychologically the irrational powers that determine human compulsions.

The characterization of psychology as an auxiliary science of history is grounded in the fact that every society that has ever held sway on earth is based on a definite level of development of human powers and is thus psychologically codetermined. The functioning of an already-existing society and the maintenance of currently declining forms of organization depend, among other things, upon psychic factors. In the analysis of a historical epoch it is especially important to know the psychic powers and dispositions, the character and mutability of the members of different social groups. Yet psychology does not thus become mass psychology; rather, it gains its insights from the investigation of individuals. "The individual psyche always remains the foundation of social psychology."[8] There exists neither a mass soul nor a mass consciousness. The vulgar concept of the "mass" seems to have been shaped by observations of crowds during tumultuous events. While human beings may react stereotypically when they are part of such accidental groups, comprehension of these reactions is to be sought in the psyche of the individuals constituting them, which is itself determined by the fate of the social group of which they are members. A differentiated group psychology—that is, inquiry into those instinctual mechanisms common to members of the important groups in the production process—takes the place of mass psychology. Above all, this group psychology must investigate the extent to which the function of the individual in the production process is determined by the individual's fate in a certain kind of family, by the effect of socialization at this point in social space, but also by the way in which the individual's own labor in the economy shapes the forms of character and consciousness. It is necessary to investigate the genesis of psychic mechanisms that make it possible to keep latent the tensions between social classes that lead to conflicts on the basis of the economic situation. Though in many discussions of psychology there is much talk of leaders and masses, the loyalty of an unorganized mass to an individual leader is in fact a less significant historical relationship than the

trust of social groups in the stability and necessity of the given hierarchy and the social powers-that-be. Psychology has observed that "all successful social organizations, whether democratic or aristocratic, have the effect of bringing a dominant, coherent, individual purpose more purely, less changed and more deeply, more surely, and more directly into the minds of society's members," and that in the absence of such organization the leader of an uprising can never completely command his people, while in contrast the general can almost always do so.[9] But this approach, which takes the relationship between leader and mass as a special problem, remains in need of psychological sophistication.[10] The concept of "*habitude*," to which French research ascribes an important function in the treatment of social-psychological questions, superbly describes the result of the process of socialization [*Bildungsprozess*]: the strength of the psychological dispositions that lead to the social action demanded of individuals. But this must be pursued more deeply in order to understand the origin of this outcome, its reproduction, and its continuous adaptation to changing social processes. This is only possible on the basis of insights gained from the analysis of individuals.

The adaptability of the members of a social group to their economic situation is especially important among the methodological guidelines of a psychology useful for history. The various psychological mechanisms that continuously make possible this adaptation have themselves developed historically, of course, but they must be assumed as given in the explanation of specific historical events; those mechanisms then constitute part of the psychology of the current epoch. Here must be included, for instance, the capacity of human beings to see the world in such a way that the satisfaction of the interests deriving from a group's economic situation is in harmony with the essence of things—in other words, to see the world as rooted in an objective morality [*Moral*]. Such an orientation need not develop so rationally that distortion and lying are necessary. On the basis of their psychical apparatus, human beings tend to take account of the world in such a way that their action can accord with their knowledge. In his discussion of "schematism," the essential achievement of which consists in the overall preformation of our impressions before their assimilation into empirical consciousness, Kant spoke of a hidden art in the depths of the human soul "whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely

ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze."[11] Psychology must explain that particular preformation, however, which has as its consequence the harmony of world views with the action demanded by the economy; it is even possible that something of the "schematism" referred to by Kant might be discerned in the process. For its function of bringing the world into consciousness in such a manner that the world is subsequently absorbed by the mathematical and mechanical categories of natural science appears to be a historically conditioned psychical effect—irrespective of how such categories are determined.

The grounding of some psychological systems in a rationalistic utilitarianism has justifiably contributed to the mistrust with which many historians approach psychology in the first place. According to this perspective, human beings supposedly act exclusively on the basis of their material advantage. Such psychological considerations have been decisive for liberal political economy [*Nationalökonomie*], not only in the sense of working hypotheses, but predominantly so. To be sure, private interests play in the societies of certain periods a role that can hardly be overestimated. But the analogue to this psychological abstraction in real, active human beings—namely economic egoism—is historically conditioned and subject to radical change, just like the social situation that this principle is supposed to explain. The proponents as well as the opponents of an egoistic theory of human nature are incorrect to hinge their arguments concerning the possibility of a nonindividualistic economic order on the general validity of such a problematic principle. Modern psychology has long since identified the error of asserting that the human instinct of self-preservation is "natural," as well as of introducing so-called "central" factors to derive from it manifestly unrelated individual and social deeds. Human beings—and probably animals as well—are hardly so psychologically individualistic that all their instinctual impulses are necessarily founded in immediate desire for material gratifications. Human beings may, for instance, experience a sort of happiness in the solidarity with like-minded souls that makes it possible for them to assume the risk of suffering and death. Wars and revolutions offer the most tangible example here. Nonegoistic instinctual impulses have existed during all periods, and are not denied factually by any serious psychology; at worst, problematic attempts have been made to trace them back to

individualistic motives. In the face of this economistic misrepresentation of the theory of human nature by certain psychological and philosophical tendencies, some sociologists have tried to come up with their own theory of instincts. In contrast to the utilitarian theory, which attempts to explain everything on the basis of one point, however, these approaches tend to draw up great lists of instincts and drives which are seen as equiprimordial, and to neglect the specifically psychological relations.[12]

In any case, the actions of human beings derive not simply from their striving for physical self-preservation, nor simply from their immediate sexual drive, but rather also from the needs to employ their aggressive powers, to gain recognition and affirmation as persons, to find security in a collectivity, and from other drives as well. Modern psychology (Freud) has shown that such demands are distinguished from hunger, which requires a more direct and more continuous satisfaction, while the others admit of being delayed, reshaped, and satisfied in fantasy. Connections exist, however, between the two types of instinctual impulses—the immutable and the "plastic"—that are of great importance in historical development. Despite their greater urgency, inadequate satisfaction of the immediately physical needs can partially and temporarily be replaced by satisfying other kinds of desires. *Circenses* of all kinds have in many historical situations taken the place of *panis,* and the study of the psychological mechanisms that make this possible—along with their skilled application to the explanation of the concrete historical process—is an urgent task that psychology must fulfill in the context of historical research.

In this effort, the economistic principle could only cause damage. The participation of lower social strata in actions of the larger society from which they can expect no economic improvement (such as wars) might thus mistakenly be explained, via theoretical legerdemain, on the basis of material aims. Such an explanation misses the great psychic meaning for human beings of membership in a respected and powerful collectivity, where their upbringing has taught them to desire personal efficacy, mobility, and a secure existence, and where the realization of these values has been made impossible by their social situation. Satisfying work that raises self-respect allows physical sacrifices to be borne more lightly, and even the simple awareness of success can largely compensate for the unpleasantness

of inadequate nutrition. To the extent that human beings are denied this compensation for an oppressive material existence, the identification in fantasy with a supraindividual collectivity that affords respect and success becomes profoundly important. Our understanding of a variety of world-historical phenomena would be much enhanced if psychology could demonstrate that the satisfaction of these needs is a psychical reality no less intense than that of material gratifications.

I offer another example of the role of psychology in the context of the theory of history. The differentiated processes and conflicts in the consciousness of refined individuals—the phenomena of their consciences—are a product of the economic division of labor to the extent that those individuals are removed from the crude tasks necessary for the reproduction of society. Although their lives as they lead them depend upon the existence of prisons and slaughterhouses and the execution of a whole series of labors whose performance under current arrangements is unthinkable without brutality, they can repress these processes from their consciousness due to their social distance from the coarser aspects of the life process. Their mental apparatus is capable of reacting in such a refined manner that an insignificant moral conflict in their own lives can result in the greatest upsets. Both their conscious reaction and difficulties and the mechanism of repression must be grasped by psychology; the condition of existence of these phenomena, however, is economic. The economic appears as the comprehensive and primary category, but recognizing its conditionedness, investigating the mediating processes themselves, and thus also grasping the results depend upon psychological work.

The rejection of a psychology rooted in economistic prejudices should not distract us, however, from the fact that the economic situation affects the most minute aspects of human inner life. The strength as well as the content of the eruptions of the psychic apparatus are economically conditioned. In the face of the slightest annoyance or of an insignificant but pleasant change of pace, certain relationships give rise to mood swings of an intensity hardly comprehensible to the outside observer. Reduction of one's life to a restricted sphere leads to a corresponding distribution of love and desire that reacts back upon and qualitatively influences character. In contrast, more favorable situations in the production process, such as the management of large industries, afford so broad an overview that pleasures and distresses

that would entail great shifts in the lives of other human beings become irrelevant. Moral conceptions and world views, held rigidly by and determining the lives of those for whom social connections are not visible, are surveyed from the vantage of high economic positions in their conditioning and vicissitudes, so that their rigid character dissolves. Even if we assume that inborn psychic differences are extremely great, the structure of fundamental interests stamped upon individuals from childhood onward by their fate—the horizon prescribed to them by their function in society—only rarely permits the uninterrupted development of those original differences. The chances for such development themselves vary according to the social stratum to which the individual belongs. Above all, intelligence and a series of other talents may develop more easily if their situation in life puts fewer hindrances in their way from the very beginning. The present is characterized more by the unrecognized effect of economic relationships on the overall shaping of a life than it is by conscious economic motives.

To Dilthey we owe the honor of having made the relation between psychology and history the object of philosophical discussion. In the course of his work he repeatedly returned to this problem. He demanded a new psychology that would accommodate the needs of the human sciences and overcome the weakness of academic psychology. In his view, the development of the individual human sciences is bound up with the development of psychology; without the psychic [*seelische*] context in which their objects are grounded, the human sciences constitute "an aggregate, a bundle, [but] not a system."[13] "This is so," he writes, "and no departmentalization can prevent it; the systems of culture, commerce, law, religion, art, and scholarship and the outer organization of society in family, community, church, and state originated from the living context of the human mind and, ultimately, can only be understood through it. Mental facts form their most important constituents so they cannot be grasped without psychological analysis."[14] Even though for Dilthey psychology functions as an auxiliary science to history, the latter is itself in essence a means to understanding human beings. It is his firm conviction that the unitary human essence originally given in every individual unfolds itself in its various aspects in the great historical cultures; the representative personalities of each epoch are for him only the best expressions of each of

these various aspects. "Races, nations, social classes, occupations, historical stages, individualities: all these are . . . distinctions of the individual aspects within a uniform human nature"[15] that reveals itself in a particular way in each epoch.

However justified Dilthey's research into a psychology adequate to the needs of historical scholarship, it hardly seems correct that the cultural systems of an epoch are rooted in a unified mental context, and that this thoroughly understandable [*verständliche*] context represents an aspect of a human essence that first gains expression in the overall development of history. This unity of cultural systems in a single epoch and in all epochs must be in essence an intellectual [*geistige*] unity, for otherwise its expressions could not be asserted to be comprehensible and accessible to the methods of an interpretive psychology. The psychology demanded by Dilthey is indeed an interpretive psychology [*Psychologie des Verstehens*], and history is thus transformed in his philosophy essentially into intellectual history. As I have argued in the foregoing, neither an epoch nor so-called world history, indeed not even the history of the individual spheres of culture, can be understood in terms of such a unity, even if some elements of, say, the history of philosophy—perhaps as a legacy of the pre-Socratics—may be characterized by a unitary intellectual thread. Historical transformations are drenched with the mental and the intellectual; individuals in their groups and within variously conditioned social antagonisms are mental entities, and history thus needs psychology. But it would be a grave error to seek to grasp any facet of history on the basis of some unitary mental life of a universal human nature.

An understanding of history as the history of ideas tends also to be bound up with the belief that human beings are essentially identical to that which they themselves see, feel, judge—in short, with their consciousness of themselves. This confusion of the task of the cultural scientist [*Geisteswissenschaftler*] with that of the economist, the sociologist, the psychologist, the physiologist, and others derives from an idealist tradition, but constitutes a narrowing of the historical horizon that can hardly be squared with the status of contemporary knowledge. What is true of individuals is also true of humanity in general: if one wishes to know what they are, one cannot believe what they think of themselves.

I have only been able to offer here a few remarks concerning the logical place of psychology in a theory of history adequate to the contemporary situation. Despite the orientation to the economic conception, this approach could hardly be outlined satisfactorily. Still, the question of the general significance of detailed psychological work for historical research is important, because psychological problems are in principle ignored by many sociologists and historians, and above all because a primitive psychology may thus play an uncontrolled role in much historical writing. Psychology also has a special significance in the current period—a significance which may, however, prove ephemeral. With the quickening of economic development, changes in the modes of human response that are immediately conditioned by the economy—that is, the habits, fashions, and moral and aesthetic notions emerging directly from economic life—can shift so rapidly that they do not have the time to establish themselves and become fully developed characteristics of human beings. Under these circumstances, the relatively permanent elements in the mental structure—and thus general psychology—gain greater weight. In more stable periods, the mere differentiation of social character types seems to suffice; at present, psychology tends to become the most important source for learning something about human modes of being. In critical moments, therefore, the psyche becomes a more decisive factor than is usually the case—for economic factors alone do not dictate whether and in what sense the moral constitution of the members of different social classes in the period just surpassed is maintained or changed.

The meaning of neither problems nor theories is independent of the historical situation and of the role an individual plays in it. This is also true of the economic conception of history: there may be individuals to whom history turns another side, or for whom it seems to have no structure whatsoever. In that case, it is difficult to achieve consensus in these questions, and not merely because of the variety of material interests, but rather because, despite the parallelism, theoretical interests also lead in different directions. But this concerns the difficulty of agreement, not the unity of truth. The great variety of interests notwithstanding, the subjective element in human beings that must be understood is not their arbitrariness. Instead, it is their capacities, their upbringing, their labor—in short, their own history—which must be grasped in connection with the history of society.