

HISTORY IN SEARCH OF SCIENCE¹

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Abstract

In present paper Immanuel Wallerstein is discussing a necessary change of the attitudes of historians under influence to the proposal of representatives of “new science”.

Myth, the presumed structure of the pre-modern or the savage... mind, was the single belief the enlightened class did not tolerate. Discrediting it seemed vital to the superiority of the modern world view.

Vassilis Lambropoulos²

If human activity is the direct product of the gods, then recounting it is a sacred duty, and can only be fulfilled by being faithful to the intent of the gods. But if human activity is the total responsibility of humans, then no referential authority is required to recount it, to analyze it, to interpret it. Modern science defined itself as the explanation of the natural as opposed to the magical. Science refused to accept magic as a meaningful category of reality. Magic was an illusion. The fact that people believed in illusions was real, and subject to scientific analysis — but only if the scientist rejected *a priori* the validity of magic.

History — or perhaps I should say, modern history, history as written in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries — was the child of this scientific

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² Vassilis Lambropoulos, *The Rise of Eurocentrism: Anatomy of Interpretation*, Princeton Univ. Press: Princeton 1993, p. 162.

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passion. History, *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, refused to accept revealed truth, speculation, fiction — that is, magic — as meaningful categories of reality. They were illusions. The fact of believing in these illusions was subject to historical analysis — but only if the historian rejected *a priori* the validity of magic. Thus it is that, for two centuries at least, history has been in search of science.

The search has been incessant, and is embedded in the everpresent litany about objectivity. It is no matter that objectivity was pursued in hypocritical ways.³ The belief that there exists an objective truth which is knowable has been the prevailing doctrine of the world's historians for these two centuries. The basic data which were used by these historians were the so-called primary documents, that is, documents that for some reason recorded events at the time they occurred, or were in fact the events themselves. Secondary documents were defined as those things that utilized documents, even primary documents, without being themselves a primary document. Secondary documents were dubious evidence because of the intrusion into the knowledge circuit of a non-participant in the event, an intrusion by an intruder whose motives were uncertain. But even seemingly primary documents were suspect. Any such purported document was submitted to a *Quellenkritik*, a verification of the plausibility of its authenticity.

Source criticism was to be sure a highly controversial doctrine in the history of history. For it was feared by some that source criticism could first of all be applied to the Bible, a document that had long been treated by Europeans as an unimpeachable primary document. And indeed, *Quellenkritik* was applied to the Bible in the form of the "Higher Criticism", whose beginnings occurred alongside the modern historiographical revolution. Historians thus joined natural scientists in their struggle with the churches, at least with any dogmatic and literal interpretation of revealed truth. It matters not that many noted historians were pious believers. So was Isaac Newton. What matters is the essentially secular, scientific claim of the historians: there is a real world, which evolves naturally, and its history can be known.

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³ See Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*, Cambridge Univ. Press: Cambridge 1988; Sigmund Diamond, *Compromised Campus: The Collaboration of Universities with the Intelligence Community, 1945–1955*, Oxford Univ. Press: New York 1991.

How then it is that historians came to be classed for the most part as opponents of science, as part of that other, more literary, “culture” of which C.P. Snow spoke? How it is that most historians were idiographic rather than nomothetic social scientists? Ironically, the principal motivating element in their anti-nomothetic stance was their “search for science”. Historians were haunted by their image of philosophy, and of what was called the philosophy of history. They had rebelled against philosophy, which was seen as deductive, and therefore speculative, and therefore fictional or magical. In their struggle to liberate themselves from the social pressures of hagiography, they insisted on being empirical, on locating “sources” of real “events”. To be nomothetic was to “theorize” and therefore to “speculate”. It was to be “subjective”, and therefore to go beyond what was knowable, or worse to recount reality incorrectly and prejudicially.

Historians observing sociologists or economists at work saw unjustified (and unjustifiable) leaps of inference in their generalizations, based usually on few sources, and those sources dubious sources at best. The historians tended to generalize this observation a bit hastily into the observation that all generalizations about social events were illegitimate because all events are unique. History does not, by definition, repeat itself. To suggest that it does is it to invent fables. We cannot enter the same water twice.

If the nomothetic social scientists replied to idiographic historians that all explanation is theoretical, and is necessarily based on the assumption that phenomena are categorizable and lawlike (that is, repetitive), the idiographic historians tended to retreat to the position that, whereas this may be true of inert matter, or even of most living organisms, this could not apply to historical research because human beings were self-conscious actors, hence autonomous and unpredictable. They argued that the reality of human will made it impossible to generalize, that is, to predict (or even postdict) behaviour. In this way historians in their search for science, while rejecting philosophy and revealed truth, fell back in the end on the uniqueness of the soul as the underpinning of their epistemology.

The obvious question was, if generalizations were intrinsically impossible, what was the point of writing history? Logically, there was only one possible answer — empathetic insight. By recreating the story of what happened, the reader is moved to understand another. The justification is aesthetico-moral, and is akin to what a dramatist would say if one asked what the point of writing a play. The answer is hermeneutic cathexis. There were those for whom this answer was insufficient, as for example, the *Annales*

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school. These historians said that history, to be faithful to its objective of explaining reality, had to set itself questions that required answers (*histoire-problème*) and therefore had to be analytic (*histoire pensée*). Given such a definition, these historians were less reluctant to admit their scientific ethos, even if they never renounced narrative and style as intrinsic elements of their craft.

The battle between empiricist / positivist / idiographic historians and analytic / social scientific historians has been spectacular. I wish to argue that nonetheless the epistemological gap between the two camps, while real, has been much narrower than its proponents have argued. Both schools, not just one of them, were “in search of science”. It suffices to notice that the presumably more “humanistic” (and ergo supposedly anti-scientific) camp has regularly been called “positivist,” a term of scientific or scientific jargon. Both schools were equally engaged in “interpretation,” if by that we mean the search for realities below the surface, the search for meanings that are somehow hidden. The real difference between the long dominant “positivist” mainstream of modern historiography and the “anti-Establishment” analytic historians was not whether or not one should interpret, but whether the hidden intents for which one is seeking were those of individual motivations or those of collective, even objective, forces. This is no doubt a real debate, but it is not a debate centered around a presumed difference between humanism and science.

Nonetheless, if one spoke to historians, if one speaks to them today, we shall discover that many of them, perhaps even most of them, believe in the reality of the two cultures, and in the fact that writing history and doing science are distinct kinds of activity. These historians would be surprised at the assertion that they were “in search of science.” The reason is that they have misperceived the essence of science as a human activity. However, if historians have misperceived the essence of science as a human activity, it is primarily because natural scientists have misperceived and misstated their own activity. Scientists have created self-serving mythologies which were deceptive.

This self-deception of science has been true for hundreds of years. But it is finally changing. This is what we mean by the “new science.” The new science seems to me first of all an attack on the mythologies of traditional (that is, Newtonian / Baconian / Cartesian) science. The new science⁴ does

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⁴ See Richard Lee, “Readings in the ‘New Science’: A Selective Annotated Bibliography,” *Review*, 1992, XV, 1, Winter, pp. 113–171.

not suggest that equilibria and linearity do not exist. It suggests that they are not the statistically dominant expression of reality, that they are infrequent, that they are special cases, and that the indeterminacy of bifurcation is a central reality with which we must cope. The new science does not say mathematical calculations are irrelevant. It raises the question whether the relentless quest for precision may not prevent us from obtaining measures that are more meaningful, stable, and realistic. The new science has not renounced the view what the description of reality is not to be ordained by any authority and is always subject to empirical verification. But it has renounced the theoretical possibility of the neutral observer, both because the observation always changes the reality (often importantly, as in the Heisenberg uncertainty principle), and because the theoretical frameworks with which reality is observed are social constructions subject to social revision (as in Kuhnian paradigms). The new science is at least aware that there is a social history to truth, and that scientific advance depends heavily on the faith with which we endow the claims of the community of scientific practitioners.⁵

Above all, the new science emphasizes the constant complexification of reality through the arrow of time and calls upon us to organize our research around these premises. This is good news for historians. For it means that, in their search for science, they have finally encountered a mode of scientific analysis which resonates deeply with what they want to be doing. They have finally encountered a science that makes the quarrel of idiographic versus nomothetic epistemologies irrelevant. They have finally encountered a natural science which is a history. Whether henceforth we call natural science history or history natural science is a matter of sentiment and convention, a small semantic bubble.

I have no claims to judge what are today the best and most interesting problems to pursue and the most useful techniques to use for students of say molecular structures. I restrict myself to some suggestions as to where the historical social sciences should be heading. I believe that history must start its quest for science anew. We have to rid ourselves of the assumptions and premises that we incorporated into our mentalities, and reified as our *Weltanschauungen*, in early modern times, and which we institutionalized as

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⁵ See Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*, Univ. of Chicago Press: Chicago 1994.

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our disciplinary categories and methodologies in the nineteenth century. We must go in search of the new science, as it goes in search of us.

The nineteenth century institutionalized a division of the medieval faculty of Philosophy into three divisions: the natural sciences on the one side, the humanities on the other, with the social sciences sitting uneasily in-between as the “third” culture. We are witnessing today a blurring of the meaningfulness of these boundaries, both those between the social sciences and the natural sciences, and those between the social sciences and the humanities.⁶ In addition, within the social sciences, we are seeing a tremendous overlap, virtually a total imbrication, of the so-called separate disciplines. The solution is distinctly not to be found becoming “multidisciplinary,” since multidisciplinary, far from overcoming the irrationalities of the disciplines, presumes their solidity. Multidisciplinary builds on sand, for today our “disciplines” are reduced to sand.

The way forward is instead to grapple with the classic antinomies of nineteenth century thought, show them to be false dilemmas, and to seek to go beyond them. Out of this may come a new programmatic division of labor which will allow us more effectively to account for and confront the historical choices which are before us. I shall discuss three such antinomies — nomothetic / idiographic; fact / value; micro / macro — and then look at the usefulness of our conceptual trinity of social arenas: the market, the state, and the society.

The nomothetic-idiographic antinomy of two competing (or for some, mutually exclusive) epistemologies is based on the assumptions of Newtonian science, in which TimeSpace is an eternal, external parameter, whose values the scientists should always seek to eliminate from the analysis. If this is our starting-point, a nomothetic epistemology — the search for covering laws that hold true across all of (real and possible) time and space — is of course indicated. It of course also then follows that, in practice, the researcher must reduce as much as possible the number of variables taken into account. The resulting simplification is a distortion that leads us immeasurably far from the analysis of real, complex historical system.

It is here that the idiographic critique enters. The humanist historian has always insisted on the dense texture of real life, the quite visible uniqueness of all describable realities, and the low level of plausibility of

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⁶ See Bonaventura de Sousa Santos, “A Discourse on the Sciences,” *Review*, 1992, XV, 1, Winter, pp. 9–47.

the nomothetic recountings of sequences. But, of course, the idiographic critics went from the frying pan into the fire. By insisting on incomparable uniqueness, they made TimeSpace as external to the analysis as had to nomothetic social scientists. By objecting to abstract concepts, they effectively eliminated the vast majority of factors that entered into accounting for the sequences they were depicting. It was another, different, but equally pernicious distortion of simplification.

If however we begin the arrow of time as an intrinsic factor of reality, if we add that TimeSpace are social creations, if we believe that multiple TimeSpaces coexist in any concrete social situation,⁷ then the epistemology that we must utilize is inevitably an *Aufhebung* of nomothetic-idiographic antinomy. I call it the concept of historical systems, wherein we recognize that human beings historically have clustered in structures which are discernible realities with real boundaries, if ones that are changing and sometimes difficult to specify. Such historical systems are, like all systems, partially open, partially closed: that is, they have rules by which they operate (they are systemic), and ever-evolving contours and contradictions (they are historical).

They are of course constant fluctuations in any system, which the structures seeks to contain; that is, there are cyclical rhythms we can identify, describe, and explain in functional terms. But each rhythmic fluctuation, resolving some short-term difficulty, moves the system in particular directions; that is, there are secular trends. And these secular trends accentuate the contradictions within the system, such that at some point the short-run rhythmic solutions to continuing difficulties become impossible because of the changes wrought by the long-run secular trends. At this point, the fluctuations become wilder, and we have a bifurcation, with an indeterminate outcome. Hence historical systems, like all systems, have a bounded history: they come into existence, they live their lives, they come to an end.

For historians, such a model requires that we identify historical systems and then analyze them at the three moments of their historical trajectory. There is first the moment of genesis: how is it that a given historical system came into existence at the time and in the place that it did (and not earlier or later, or elsewhere)? what were the unique complex confluence of variables that can best account for this genesis? There is secondly the long period

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⁷ Immanuel Wallerstein, "The TimeSpace of World-Systems Analysis: A Philosophical Essay," *Historical Geography*, 1993, XXIII, 1/2, pp. 5–22.

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of historical development: what are the rules by which the system has functioned? what were the constraints that were limiting the fluctuations caused by multiple human activity? The story is always a story of power and resistance, of structures and conjunctures, but the weight of the description is with repetition and continuity. And thirdly, at some point, there was the moment of structural crisis, and of the difficult transition from a historical system that is collapsing from its “successes” and its “perfections” to its one or more successor systems. This story is one of confusion and uncertainty, and of the large output that small input creates under the special circumstances of a bifurcation.

Techniques that seem congruent with nomothetic analysis will have some utility in analyzing the long period of the historical development of an historical system — provided to be sure, we maintain complexification as our objective rather than the simplification of the analysis. But such techniques have little value if we wish to analyze either the genesis or the period of crisis of an historical system. In such situations, historical choice moves to the forefront. We are located amidst acute, massive struggles over values, which become paramount to the scientific analysis itself.

We should thus turn our attention to the fact/value antinomy. The fact /value antinomy has been at the center of intellectual debates throughout the modern era. It has taken countless avatars. It was behind the struggle of philosophy to gain release from the hold of theology. It was in turn behind the struggle of science to distinguish itself from philosophy. It has been behind all the struggles between a universalizing versus a particularizing emphasis in social scientific analysis. In the nineteenth century, the rise of science to become the preeminent form of legitimating knowledge production represented a transformation of the *Zeitgeist*. Fact had triumphed over value, so to speak, in the sense that it had become deeply illegitimate to proclaim that knowledge production was consciously being directed, indeed ought to be consciously directed, by one’s values. Modernity was presumably incarnated by objective knowledge, and the scholar was supposed to play the same disinterested role as the bureaucrats.⁸

The problem of course is that there exists no disinterested scholar; there cannot exist one. Our values are an integral component of our science; in this sense, science is always philosophy. Values are part of our conceptual

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⁸ See Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Oxford Univ. Press: New York 1946, pp. 196–244.

apparatuses, our definitions of problems, our methodologies, and our measuring devices. We can affirm that they are being set aside; we cannot actually do this. What changed in the nineteenth century was not the triumph of fact over value, but the largely successful attempt to hide the intrusion of values under the veil of universalism. This protective, auto-persuasive veil was so effective that, even in such an extreme case as when German Indologists actively and directly served the cause of Nazi ideology, they could do it using all the apparatus of scientific objectivity, using sophisticated historical and philosophical methods, and affirming their commitment to the scientific ethos.⁹

Value-neutrality is under severe attack these days, especially from all those who have been writing under the very broad rubric of “cultural studies” (or the various “post”-doctrines). To be sure, the various arguments are not as new as their proponents seem to suggest. There are nonetheless a growing number of voices who worry that the pendulum could swing too far, that “fact” will disappear in the swirl of a multiplicity of competing “value” statements. Here too we need an *Aufhebung*.

The recognition that “value” intrudes everywhere in science does not negate the concept that there is a real world, whose reality is knowable. It only reveals the inescapable context for this scientific quest. Now that the natural scientists are beginning to recognize this (or more accurately to return to its recognition), historians may feel freer to confront directly its implications. We may start with the observation of Bourdieu:

The “pure” universe of the “purest” science is a social domain (*champ*) like any other, with its power relationships and its monopolies, its struggles and its strategies, its interests and its advantages, but one in which these constants take on quite specific forms.¹⁰

The fact that this is so, however, “in no way condemns us to relativism”.¹¹ Quite the contrary! Rather, it inserts the arrow of time directly into historical research itself.

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⁹ Sheldon Pollock, “Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power Behind the Raj,” in: C.A. Breckenridge & P. van der Veer (eds.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA 1993, pp. 86–96.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “La spécificité du champ scientifique et les conditions sociales du progrès de la raison,” *Sociologie et société*, 1975, VII, 1, Mai, p. 91.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

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The historian's problem is always to arrive at a plausible interpretation of reality. But interpretation is always propelled by the questions that are haunting the scholar, and the questions that are being asked are the outcome of current social struggles, pressures, and concerns. We will necessarily have competing interpretations offered. They are functions of each historian's position in the contemporary situation, his history, are therefore the kind of TimeSpace readings within which he chooses to make his interpretations. *Quellenkritik* can throw doubt on some interpretations, but it in turn is subject to an interpretation of the *Quellenkritik* itself. What it cannot do is create inalterable reality. Analyzing the "social domain" of science can throw doubt on the utility of the interpretation. But it cannot *per se* negate its validity. We are not on a situation of majority rule: whatever interpretation is shared by most members (is it living members or members through all of remembered history?) of the community of scholars is truer. Nor are we in a situation of total intellectual anarchy: all interpretations are equally meritorious. Plausibility is a social process, therefore a shifting reality, but one based on some interim ground rules. There can be overlapping plausibilities, even contradictory plausibilities, that emerge from the contradictions of the social present.

There is no simple pathway out of the fact/value imbroglio. That is why so many scholars seek to hide their positions under the deeply deceptive micro/macro antinomy. Micro and macro are always relative prefixes on an endless continuum of possibilities. However, for historians and social scientists in general, the predominant usage in modern times is individual/social system which is sometimes posed in terms of pseudo-causality: agency/structure.

The search for the unit of ultimate reality is part of the old search for simplification. Once we recognize that reality is irreducibly complex, the very notion of a monad is meaningless. To say that society is composed of individuals tells us no more than to say that molecules are composed of atom. It is a restatement of a taxonomy that is definitional, and not an indication of scientific strategy. To say that agents "act" and that structures have no "will" is to beg the question of where we can locate actual processes of decision-making. Surely we have moved beyond a naive mind / body distinction. If the agent's agency is the result of a complex interaction between his physiology, his unconscious, and his social constraints, is it so difficult to accept that a similar set of interacting variables account for collective actions? To assert the reality of structures as determining outcomes no more

negates the reality of biographical actions than asserting the reality of psychological processes negates the reality of physiological processes.

The whole issue is a red herring from beginning to end. In all of explanation we are always dealing with sameness and differences. To assert a sameness we must abstract, that is eliminate variables that differ in the two elements compared. To assert a difference, we are merely asserting the relevance of these variables to the interpretation. What we do in a particular instance depends totally on what question we believe ought to be addressed. The local/global distinction in social reality is one filled with political meaning. The choice of emphasis by the historian is an intrinsically political choice, and is indeed probably the single most important issue leading to overt social pressure on the scholar. Judging the reasonableness of any choice brings us right back to the fact/ value antinomy.

Finally, we should confront the sacred trinity of human arenas enshrined by nineteenth-century social science: the economic, the political, and the socio-cultural. This trinity is clearly and directly derived from liberal ideology and its *a priori* assertion that (at least in the modern world) the market, the state, and the (civil) society are autonomous arenas of action following separate logics, and therefore the object of distinct disciplines. Since liberalism defined this separation as a hallmark of modernity, historians operating within the strict game reserve of the “past” were not pressed to formalize this distinction in the manner of their contemporary social science colleagues. In practice, however, idiographic historians gave strong priority to writing “political” history just as they gave strong priority to facts over value, micro over macro, the idiographic over the nomothetic. In so doing, they tacitly accepted the legitimacy of the trinity.

The whole trend of writing in the last 25 years — by historians and by other social scientists — has been to ignore in practice the boundaries of these supposedly autonomous arenas, to stress their interpenetration when making their interpretations, while at the same time reasserting them theoretically and verbally. It is time to review and renew our vocabulary. If in fact it is more plausible to see these three “arenas” as at most three angles of vision on a single complex reality, then the very vocabulary serves as a constraint on useful analysis. The “trinity” of arenas becomes an outdated taxonomy, sustained by collapsing ideological visions.

This then is the set of immediate tasks for historians in search of science. We must be clear about the kind of science for which we are searching. We must elaborate a terminology which will get us beyond the antinomies

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dear to the nineteenth century idiographic/nomothetic, fact/value, micro/macro — and dispense with the concept of a trinity of arenas of human action. When we shall have done this, we shall have cleared away the underbrush. We must then deepen our realization of how different are the multiple social definitions of TimeSpace and use them to recreate interpretive frameworks that are adequate for our present reality.

Of course, doing this depends on our understanding of what our present reality is. I see it as primarily one in which the historical system in which we have been living, the capitalist world-economy, is in crisis and therefore is facing a bifurcation. I have argued this in detail elsewhere.¹² I see the present intellectual crisis as reflecting the structural crisis of the system. This creates in fact our opportunity as well as our compelling obligation. The construction of a new scientific vision, one that makes central the “reenchantment of the world”,¹³ will be a major element in whether this evolutionary turning-point in which we are located will be one for the better or for the worse.

Historia w poszukiwaniu nauki

Historia, jaka rozwinęła się na przestrzeni dziewiętnastego i dwudziestego wieku, jest dzieckiem naukowej pasji. W pogoni za naukowością odrzuca wszelką fikcję, spekulację i przewartościowaną prawdę. Odrzuca to wszystko, co jest w jakimś stopniu magiczne. Jest w tym dążeniu do oczywistego obiektywizmu wiele iluzji, można więc powiedzieć, że od ponad dwóch wieków historia znajduje się w stanie poszukiwania nauki.

W obawie przed brakiem naukowości historycy odrzucili to wszystko, co ma związek z filozofią. Filozofia jest postrzegana jako dedukcyjna, a więc i spekulatywna. To, co nomotetyczne, a więc posiadające swoje prawa, kojarzy się historykom z tym, co teoretyczne i spekulatywne.

W przeciwieństwie do uczonych reprezentujących inne nauki społeczne, historycy odrzucają zazwyczaj nomotetyzm, broniąc się poglądem o braku powtarzalności zjawisk w dziejach i wyjątkowości natury ludzkiej.

Problem w tym, że sami przedstawiciele tychże nauk są również w ciągłym poszukiwaniu nauki. Najlepszym tego przykładem jest pozytywizm. Problem istnieje i w deklaracjach prądu metodologicznego określanego mianem „nowej nauki”. „Nowa nauka” dostrzega bowiem pewną równowagę między naturą zjawisk a ich opisem. Sam opis wszakże też zawiera pewną rzeczywistość

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¹² Immanuel Wallerstein, “Peace, Stability, and Legitimacy, 1990–2025/2050,” in: Geir Lundestad (ed.), *The Fall of Great Powers*, Scandinavian Univ. Press: Oslo 1994, pp. 331–349.

¹³ Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers, *La nouvelle alliance*, Gallimard: Paris 1979.

i rzeczywistość tę kreuje. „Nowa nauka” nie podnosi do rangi rzeczywistego problemu różnicy między idiografizmem a nomotetyzmem.

Trudno jest określić dzisiaj jednoznacznie drogę uprawiania historii. To dowodzi, że należy wyjść naprzeciw oczekiwaniom „nowej nauki”. Należy wyjść naprzeciw oczekiwaniom innych, tak samo, jak inni wychodzą naprzeciw oczekiwaniom historyków.

W tym też duchu należy rozpatrzeć trzy zasadnicze antynomie nauki historycznej: nomotetyzm/idiografizm, fakt/wartość, mikro/makro, i spojrzeć na ich przydatność w analizie trzech wielkich aren życia społecznego: rynku, państwa i społeczeństwa.

Antynomię nomotetyzm/idiografizm historyk postrzega w czasoprzestrzeni. Jeśli czasoprzestrzeń jest traktowana jako element zewnętrzny w stosunku do przedmiotu badań, rozpatruje się ją jako dominującą wobec przedmiotu. Takie podejście uzasadnia idiografizm w historii. Jeżeli zaś historyk dostrzega kreatywną funkcję czasoprzestrzeni w dziejach, uznaje, że istnieje ich wiele w zależności od zjawiska, które bada. Takie zaś podejście do czasoprzestrzeni uzasadnia istnienie struktur dysponujących swoimi czasoprzestrzeniami i tym samym prowadzi do ujęć o charakterze nomotetycznym.

Antynomia fakt / wartość wywoływała i wywołuje wiele sporów. Oznacza w praktyce stopniowe wyzwianie się filozofii z objęć teologii oraz — z kolei — wyzwianie się nauki z objęć filozofii. Fakt zdominował wartość w nauce dziewiętnastowiecznej w tym sensie, że stało się na długi czas niemożliwe operowanie wyjaśnieniami opartymi wyłącznie na wartościach bez przytoczenia faktu. Problem wartości pozostał jednak aktualny w postaci systemu wartości wyznawanego przez uczonego. Wartości są wszakże elementem aparatu koncepcyjnego w nauce. W tym sensie historia pozostaje nadal w ścisłym związku z filozofią.

Problem antynomii mikro / makro postrzega się w historii w układzie zjawisk jednostkowych i społecznych, podmiotu działającego i struktury. Jest to również antynomia między zjawiskami o wymiarze lokalnym i globalnym. Jeżeli przyjmujemy założenie, że rzeczywistość jest nieredukowalną złożonością, pozostaniemy na gruncie analizy mikro. Jeżeli dostrzeżemy możliwość uproszczeń, będziemy w stanie postrzegać zjawiska w wymiarze makro.

Przedstawione tu wymiary analizy odbywają się w przestrzeni, której wymiary określa „Święta Trójca ludzkiej areny dziejowej”. W dziewiętnastowiecznym ujęciu są to areny zjawisk: gospodarczych, politycznych i społeczno-kulturowych, którym dzisiaj odpowiadają pojęcia: rynku, państwa i społeczeństwa. Ta wyprowadzona z ideologii liberalnej klasyfikacja zdaje się sugerować, że mamy do czynienia z przestrzeniami o odmiennej logice zjawisk w nich występujących. Tradycyjna historiografia tak też do tego zagadnienia podchodzi, uznając, że przedmiotem badań historycznych może być przede wszystkim państwo i polityka. Doświadczenie rozwoju badań historycznych ostatnich lat wskazuje natomiast, że przyszłość leży w przekroczeniu barier oddzielających te areny od siebie.