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Part Two

I

The subject of history is the life of peoples and of mankind. To grasp directly and embrace in words—to describe—the life not only of mankind, but of one people, appears impossible.

All the ancient historians used one and the same method to describe and grasp the seemingly ungraspable—the life of a people. They described the activity of individual men who ruled the people; and this activity expressed for them the activity of the whole people.

To the questions of how individual men made peoples act according to their will, and what governed the will of these men themselves, the ancients answered the first question by recognizing the will of a divinity who subjected peoples to the will of one chosen man, and the second by recognizing that the same divinity guided the will of the chosen one towards a predestined goal.

For the ancients, these questions were decided by faith in the direct participation of a divinity in the affairs of mankind.

Modern history, in its theory, has rejected both of these propositions.

It would seem that, having rejected the beliefs of the ancients in the subjection of peoples to a divinity and in the definite goal towards which peoples are led, modern history should study not the manifestations of power, but the causes that form it. Modern history has not done that. Having rejected the views of the ancients in theory, it follows them in practice.

In place of men endowed with divine power and directly guided by the will of a divinity, modern history has put either heroes endowed with extraordinary, superhuman capacities, or simply men of the most diverse qualities, from monarchs to journalists, who guide the masses. In place of the former god-pleasing goals of the peoples—the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans—which the ancients took for goals of the movement of mankind, modern history has set up its own goals—the good of the French, the Germans, the English, and, in its highest abstraction, the goal of the good of all human civilization, usually understood as the people occupying the small northwest corner of a large continent.

Modern history has rejected the beliefs of the ancients without putting in their place a new view, and the logic of the situation has made historians, who fancied they had rejected the divine power of kings and the fatum of old, come by a different route to the same thing: to the recognition that (1) peoples are

descriptions. On the contrary, it is the mildest expression of those answers, contradictory and answering no questions, which are given by *all* history, from the composers of memoirs and histories of separate states to general histories and the new genre of histories of the *culture* of that time.

The strangeness and comicality of these answers come from the fact that modern history is like a deaf man, answering questions that no one has asked him.

If the aim of history is to describe the movements of mankind and of peoples, then the first question, without answering which the rest will remain incomprehensible, is the following: what force moves peoples? To this question, modern history anxiously tells us either that Napoleon was a great genius, or that Louis XIV was very proud, or else that the writers so-and-so wrote such-and-such books.

All that may very well be, and mankind is ready to agree with it; but it is not asking about that. All that might be interesting, if we recognized the divine power, based on itself and always the same, that governs its peoples through Napoleons, Louis, and writers; but we do not recognize that power, and therefore, before talking about Napoleons, Louis, and writers, we must show the existing connection between these persons and the movement of peoples.

If in place of divine power there stands another force, then what this force consists in must be explained, for the whole interest of history is contained precisely in that force.

History seems to suppose that this force goes without saying and is known to everyone. But, despite all the desire to take this new force as a known thing, anyone who reads through very many historical works will involuntarily doubt that this new force, variously understood by the historians themselves, is well known to everyone.

II

What force moves peoples?

Specialized biographical historians and historians of separate peoples understand this force as the force inherent in heroes and rulers. In their descriptions, events are produced solely by the will of the Napoleons, the Alexanders, or generally of those persons the specialized historian is describing. The answers given by this sort of historian to the question of the force that moves events are satisfactory, but only so long as there is one historian for each event. But once historians of different nationalities and views begin to describe the same event, the answers they give immediately lose all meaning, because each of them understands this force not only differently but often in a totally opposite way. One historian insists that the event was produced by the power of Napoleon; another insists that it was produced by the power of Alexander; a third by the

power of some third person. Besides that, historians of this sort contradict one another even in explaining that force on which the power of one and the same person is based. Thiers, a Bonapartist, says that Napoleon's power was based on his virtue and genius; Lanfrey, a republican, says it was based on his swindling and on duping the people. So that historians of this sort, by mutually demolishing each other's propositions, thereby demolish the concept of the force that produces events, and give no answer to the essential question of history.

General historians, who deal with all peoples, seem to recognize the incorrectness of the specialized historians' view of the force that produces events. They do not recognize this force as the power inherent in heroes and rulers, but as the result of many variously directed forces. In describing a war or the subjugation of a people, the general historian seeks the cause of an event not in the power of one person, but in the interaction of many persons connected with the event.

According to this view, it seems that the power of historical figures, conceived as the result of many forces, cannot be considered a force itself productive of events. Yet general historians in most cases happen to use the concept of power once again as a force in itself productive of events and related to them as a cause. By their account, a historical figure is now the product of his time and his power is only the product of various forces, now his power is a force productive of events. Gervinus, Schlosser, and others, for example, now prove that Napoleon was a product of the revolution, of the ideas of 1789, and so on, and now say outright that the campaign of the year twelve and other events they do not like are only products of Napoleon's misdirected will, and that those same ideas of 1789 were stopped in their development as a result of Napoleon's despotism. The ideas of the revolution, the general state of mind, produced the power of Napoleon. The power of Napoleon suppressed the ideas of the revolution and the general state of mind.

This strange contradiction is not accidental. Not only is it encountered at every step, but all the descriptions of the general historians are made up of a consecutive series of such contradictions. This contradiction comes from the fact that, having entered upon the path of analysis, the general historians stop halfway.

To find the component forces equal to a composite or resultant, it is necessary that the sum of the components equal the composite. This condition is never observed by general historians, and therefore, in order to explain the resultant force, they must necessarily allow for an unexplained force, besides the insufficient components, which acts upon the composite.

The specialized historian, describing the campaign of the year thirteen, or the restoration of the Bourbons, says directly that these events were produced by the will of Alexander. But the general historian Gervinus, disproving this

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view of the specialized historian, aims to show that the campaign of the year thirteen and the restoration of the Bourbons had as their causes, besides the will of Alexander, the activity of Stein, Metternich, Mme de Staël, Talleyrand, Fichte, Chateaubriand, and others. The historian has obviously broken down the power of Alexander into its components: Talleyrand, Chateaubriand, and so on; the sum of these components, that is, the mutual influence on each other of Chateaubriand, Talleyrand, Mme de Staël, and others, obviously does not equal the whole resultant, that is, the phenomenon that millions of Frenchmen submitted to the Bourbons. From the fact that Chateaubriand, Mme de Staël, and others said such-and-such words to each other, there follows only their relations among themselves, not the submission of millions. And therefore, in order to explain in what way the submission of millions followed from their relations, that is, how from components equal to one A there followed a resultant equal to a thousand times A, the historian must necessarily allow again for the same force of the power which he denies, recognizing it as the result of forces, that is, he must allow for the unexplained force acting upon the composite. This is what general historians do. And consequently they contradict not only the specialized historians, but also themselves.

Country dwellers, having no clear concept of what causes rain, say, depending on whether they would like to have rain or fair weather: the wind has scattered the clouds, the wind has gathered the clouds. It is the same with general historians: sometimes, when they want to, when it suits their theory, they say that power is the result of events; and sometimes, when they need to prove something else, they say that power produces events.

The third sort of historians, known as historians of *culture*, following the path laid down by the general historians, who sometimes recognize writers and ladies as forces productive of events, understand this force quite differently still. They see it in so-called culture, in intellectual activity.

Historians of culture are perfectly consistent in relation to their progenitors, the general historians, for if historical events can be explained by the fact that certain people had such-and-such relations with each other, then why not explain them by the fact that such-and-such people wrote such-and-such books? These historians select, from among the enormous number of symptoms that accompany any living phenomenon, the symptom of intellectual activity, and say that this symptom is the cause. But, despite all their attempts to show that the cause of an event lay in intellectual activity, only with great flexibility can one agree that there is something in common between intellectual activity and the movement of peoples, but in no case is it possible to allow that intellectual activity guides the activity of people, for such phenomena as the cruelest murders of the French revolution resulting from the preaching of the equality of man, and the wickedest wars and executions resulting from the preaching of love, do not confirm this supposition.

But, even allowing that all the cleverly woven arguments which fill these histories are correct, allowing that peoples are governed by some indefinable force known as an *idea*—the essential question of history either remains unanswered, or, to the former power of monarchs and to the influence of advisers and other persons introduced by the general historians, there is joined yet another new force, the *idea*, the connection of which with the masses calls for explanation. It is possible to understand that Napoleon had power, and therefore an event took place; with some flexibility it is possible to understand that Napoleon, along with other forces, was the cause of an event; but in what way the book *Le contrat social** brought it about that the French started drowning each other cannot be understood without explaining the causal connection of this new force with the event.

Undoubtedly there exists a connection among all that is alive at the same time, and therefore it is possible to find a certain connection between the intellectual activity of a people and their historical movement, just as this connection can be found between the movement of mankind and trade, crafts, gardening, or anything you like. But why the intellectual activity of people is presented by historians of culture as the cause or expression of the whole historical movement is hard to understand. Only the following considerations could lead historians to such a conclusion: (1) that history is written by scholars, and therefore it is natural and pleasant for them to think that the activity of their estate is the basis for the movement of all mankind, just as it is natural and pleasant for merchants, farmers, and soldiers to think so (this does not get expressed only because merchants and soldiers do not write history), and (2) that spiritual activity, education, civilization, culture, the *idea* are all vague, indefinite concepts, under the banner of which it is quite convenient to use words that have a still less clear meaning and therefore can easily be plugged into any theory.

But, not to speak of the inner merit of histories of this sort (perhaps they are even needed by someone or for something), the histories of culture, which all general histories are beginning to come down to more and more, are remarkable in that, while thoroughly and seriously analyzing various religious, philosophical, and political teachings as causes of events, each time they have only to describe an actual historical event—for example, the campaign of the year twelve—they describe it involuntarily as a product of power, saying outright that this campaign is the product of Napoleon's will. In speaking this way, the historians of culture involuntarily contradict themselves, or prove that the new force they have invented does not express historical events, and that the sole means of understanding history is that power which they supposedly do not recognize.

**The Social Contract.*

III

A locomotive is moving. Someone asks: why does it move? A muzhik says: the devil moves it. Another man says the locomotive moves because its wheels turn. A third asserts that the cause of the movement is the smoke blown away by the wind.

The muzhik is irrefutable. In order to refute him, someone would have to prove to him that there is no devil, or another muzhik would have to explain to him that it is not the devil but a German who moves the locomotive. Only then, by way of contradiction, will they see that they are both wrong. But the one who says that the cause is the turning of the wheels refutes himself, because, if he enters upon the terrain of analysis, he must keep going: he must explain the cause of the turning of the wheels. And until he arrives at the ultimate cause of the locomotive's movement, the steam compressed in the boiler, he will have no right to stop in his search for the cause. The one who explained the movement of the locomotive by the smoke blown back, noticing that the explanation by the wheels did not furnish the cause, took the first symptom that came along and, in his turn, passed it on as the cause.

The only concept that can explain the movement of the locomotive is the concept of a force equal to its visible movement.

The only concept by means of which the movement of peoples can be explained is the concept of a force equal to the whole movement of the peoples.

Yet under this concept different historians understand completely different forces, none of them equal to the visible movement. Some see it as a force immediately inherent in heroes—like the muzhik who sees the devil in a locomotive; others as a force produced by certain other forces—like the turning of the wheels; still others as an intellectual influence—like the blown-away smoke.

As long as histories of separate persons are written—be they Caesars, Alexanders, or Luthers and Voltaires—and not the history of *all* the people, *all* without a single exception, who participate in an event, it is absolutely impossible to describe the movement of mankind without the concept of a force that makes people direct their activity towards a single goal. And the only such concept known to historians is power.

This concept is the one handle by means of which the material of history can be mastered in today's accounting of it, and he who breaks off that handle, as Buckle did, without having learned any other method of dealing with historical material, only deprives himself of the last possibility of dealing with it. The inevitability of the concept of power for the explanation of historical phenomena is proved best of all by the general historians and historians of culture

themselves, who allegedly renounce the concept of power and inevitably make use of it at every step.

Up to now, in relation to the question of mankind, historical science has been like circulating money—paper and coin. Biographies and histories of separate peoples are like paper money. They pass and circulate, fulfilling their purpose, without harming anyone and even being useful, until the question arises of what backs them up. We need only forget the question of how the will of heroes produces events, and the histories of Thiers will be interesting, instructive, and besides that will acquire a tinge of poetry. But just as doubt of the actual value of paper money will arise, either because, as it is so easy to make, a great deal of it will be made, or because people will want to exchange it for gold—in just the same way doubt arises about the actual meaning of histories of this sort, either because too many of them appear, or because someone in the simplicity of his heart will ask: by what force did Napoleon do that?—that is, will want to exchange paper currency for the pure gold of actual understanding.

General historians and historians of culture are like people who, having recognized the inconvenience of paper money, decide instead to make coins out of a metal that lacks the density of gold. And the money will indeed come out having the *clink* of coin, but only the *clink*. Paper money might still deceive the unknowing, whereas a coin that clicks but has no value will deceive no one. As gold is only gold when it can be used not for exchange alone, but also for real things, so, too, general historians will only be gold when they are able to answer the essential question of history: what is power? The general historians answer this question contradictorily, and the historians of culture push it aside altogether, answering something else. And as tokens that resemble gold can only be used among a group of people who agree to take them for gold, and among those who do not know the properties of gold, so, too, general historians and historians of culture, without answering the essential questions of mankind, for some sort of purposes of their own, serve as current money for the universities and the mass of readers—lovers of serious books, as they put it.

IV

Having renounced the view of the ancients on the divine submission of the will of the people to a chosen one and on the submission of that will to a divinity, history cannot take a single step without contradiction unless it chooses one of two things: either to return to the former faith in the direct participation of the divinity in the affairs of mankind, or to explain definitely the meaning of that force productive of historical events which is known as power.

To return to the first is impossible: belief has been destroyed, and therefore it is necessary to explain the meaning of power.

Napoleon gave orders to gather troops and go to war. We are so accustomed to this notion, we have grown so used to this view, that the question of why six hundred thousand men go to war when Napoleon says such-and-such words seems senseless to us. He had power, and therefore what he ordered was done.

This answer is perfectly satisfactory, if we believe that power was given to him from God. But as soon as we do not acknowledge that, it becomes necessary to define what this power of one man over others is.

This power cannot be the direct power of physical domination of a strong being over a weak, a domination based on the application or threat of the application of physical force, like the power of Hercules; nor can it be based on the domination of moral force, as some historians think in the simplicity of their hearts, when they say that historical figures are heroes, that is, men endowed with a special force of soul and mind which is called genius. This power cannot be based on the domination of moral force, for, not to speak of heroic men like Napoleon, about whose moral virtues opinions differ greatly, history shows us that neither the Louis XIs nor the Metternichs, who ruled over millions of people, had any special qualities of spiritual force, but were, on the contrary, for the most part morally weaker than each of the millions of people they ruled over.

If the source of power lies neither in the physical nor in the moral qualities of the person who possesses it, then it is obvious that the source of this power must be found outside this person—in those relations to the masses in which the person who possesses power finds himself.

That is exactly how power is understood by jurisprudence, that money changer of history, which promises to exchange the historical understanding of power for pure gold.

Power is the sum total of the wills of the masses, transferred by express or tacit agreement to rulers chosen by the masses.

In the domain of jurisprudence, which consists of arguments about how the state and power must be organized, if all that can be organized, this is all very clear, but when applied to history, this definition of power calls for elucidation.

Jurisprudence considers the state and power as the ancients considered fire—as something absolutely existent. But for history, the state and power are only phenomena, just as for present-day physics fire is not an element but a phenomenon.

From this fundamental difference between the views of history and of jurisprudence comes the fact that jurisprudence can speak in detail of how, in its opinion, power must be organized and what power is, existing immutably outside time; but to historical questions about the meaning of power as it changes in time it can give no answer.

If power is the transfer of the sum total of wills to a ruler, then is Pugachev a representative of the wills of the masses? If he is not, then why is Napoleon I? Why was Napoleon III a criminal when he was caught in Boulogne,² while later the criminals were the ones he caught?

During palace revolutions, in which two or three men sometimes take part, is the will of the masses also transferred to a new person? In international relations, is the will of the popular masses transferred to their conqueror? Was the will of the Confederation of the Rhine transferred to Napoleon in 1808?³ Was the will of the mass of the Russian people transferred to Napoleon in 1809, when our troops in alliance with the French went to make war on Austria?

These questions can be answered in three ways:

Either (1) by recognizing that the will of the masses is always unconditionally handed over to a ruler or rulers whom they have chosen, and that therefore any rise of a new power, any struggle against the power once handed over, should be considered only as a violation of the real power.

Or (2) by recognizing that the will of the masses is transferred to a ruler conditionally, under definite and known conditions, and by showing that all constraints, clashes, and even destructions of power come from the non-observation by the rulers of the conditions under which power was transferred to them.

Or (3) by recognizing that the will of the masses is transferred to a ruler conditionally, but under unknown, undefined conditions, and that the rise of many powers, their struggle, and their fall come only from the greater or lesser degree to which the rulers fulfill those unknown conditions under which the wills of the masses are transferred from some persons to others.

And these are the three ways in which historians explain the relations of the masses to the rulers.

Some historians, not understanding, in the simplicity of their hearts, the question of the meaning of power, those same specialized and biographical historians of whom we have spoken above, seem to recognize that the sum total of the wills of the masses is transferred to historical figures unconditionally, and therefore, while describing some one power, these historians suppose that that same power alone is absolute and real, and that any other force opposing that real power is not power but a breach of power—violence.

Their theory, fit for primitive and peaceful periods of history, when applied to complex and stormy periods in the life of peoples, during which various powers arise simultaneously and struggle with each other, has the inconvenience that a legitimist historian will prove that the Convention, the Directoire, and Bonaparte were only breaches of power, while a republican and Bonapartist will prove—the one, that the Convention, and the other, that the empire was the real power, and that all the rest were breaches of power. It is obvious that the explanations of power by these historians, mutually refuting each other in this fashion, can be fit only for children of the most tender age.

Recognizing the falseness of this view of history, another sort of historian says that power is based on the conditional handing over to rulers of the sum total of the wills of the masses, and that historical figures have power only on condition of carrying out the program which the will of the people has tacitly agreed to prescribe to them. But what those conditions consist in the historians do not tell us, or if they do, they constantly contradict each other.

Each historian, according to his view of what constitutes the goal of the movement of a people, sees those conditions as the greatness, wealth, freedom, enlightenment of the citizens of France or some other state. But to say nothing of the contradictions of historians as to what those conditions are, even allowing for the existence of a single program of those conditions common to all, we will find that the historical facts almost always contradict this theory. If the conditions under which power is handed over consist in wealth, freedom, enlightenment of the people, then why do a Louis XIV and an Ivan the Terrible quietly live out their reigns, while a Louis XVI and a Charles I are executed by their people? To this question the historians answer that the activity of Louis XIV, being contrary to the program, affected Louis XVI. But why did it not affect Louis XIV and XV; why did it affect precisely Louis XVI? And what is the term of this effect? To these questions there neither are nor can be any answers. Equally little explanation is given by this view of the reason why the sum total of wills is not transferred from its rulers and their successors for several centuries, but then suddenly, in the course of fifty years, is transferred to the Convention, the Directoire, Napoleon, Alexander, Louis XVIII, again to Napoleon, to Charles X, to Louis Philippe, to the republican government, to Napoleon III. While explaining these quickly occurring transfers of wills from one figure to another, especially to do with international relations, conquests, and alliances, these historians must involuntarily recognize that part of these phenomena are not regular transfers of wills, but accidents, depending now on cunning, now on error, or perfidy, or the weakness of a diplomat, or a monarch, or a party leader. So that the majority of historical phenomena—civil wars, revolutions, conquests—are presented by these historians not as the results of transfers of free wills, but as results of the false application of the will of one or several men, that is, again, as breaches of power. And therefore historical events of this sort, too, are presented by historians as deviations from theory.

These historians are like the botanist who, having observed that some plants emerge from the seed with two cotyledons, would insist that everything that grows, grows only by doubling itself into two leaves, and that a palm, and a mushroom, and even an oak, branching out in its full growth and no longer having any resemblance to two leaves, deviate from the theory.

Historians of the third sort recognize that the will of the masses is transferred to historical figures conditionally, but that these conditions are unknown to us.

They say that historical figures have power only because they carry out the will of the masses transferred to them.

But in that case, if the force that moves peoples is not in historical figures, but in the peoples themselves, what then is the significance of historical figures?

Historical figures, say these historians, express in themselves the will of the masses; the activity of historical figures serves to represent the activity of the masses.

But in that case the question arises: does all the activity of historical figures serve to express the will of the masses, or only some side of it? If all the activity of historical figures serves to express the will of the masses, as some think, then the biographies of the Napoleons and Catherines, with all the details of court gossip, serve to express the life of the people, which is an obvious absurdity; if only one side of the activity of a historical figure serves to express the life of the people, as other alleged philosopher-historians think, then, in order to determine which side of the activity of a historical figure expresses the life of the people, we must first know what the life of the people is.

Running into this difficulty, historians of this sort think up the most vague, intangible, and general abstraction, to which the greatest number of events can be accommodated, and say that this abstraction is the goal of the movement of mankind. The most usual general abstractions, accepted by almost all historians, are freedom, equality, enlightenment, progress, civilization, culture. Having posited some such abstraction as the goal of the movement of mankind, historians study those who have left the greatest number of memorials behind—kings, ministers, generals, writers, reformers, popes, journalists—to the extent that all these figures, in their opinion, have furthered or hindered that abstraction. But since nothing proves that the goal of mankind consists in freedom, equality, enlightenment, or civilization, and since the connection of the masses with the rulers and enlighteners of mankind is based only on the arbitrary assumption that the sum total of the wills of the masses is always transferred to the figures who are conspicuous for us, the activity of the millions of people who migrate, burn houses, abandon farming, and destroy each other, is never expressed in the description of the activity of a dozen figures who do not burn houses, are not concerned with farming, and do not kill their own kind.

History proves that at every step. Is the ferment among the people of the west at the end of the last century and their striving towards the east explained by the activity of Louis XIV, XV, XVI, their mistresses and ministers, by the lives of Napoleon, Rousseau, Diderot, Beaumarchais, and others?

Is the movement of the Russian people to the east, to Kazan and Siberia, expressed in the details of the morbid character of Ioann IV and his correspondence with Kurbsky?⁴

Is the movement of people during the Crusades explained by studies of

the Godefroys and Louis and their ladies? We still find incomprehensible the movement of people from west to east without any goal, without leadership, with a crowd of vagabonds, with Peter the Hermit.⁵ And still less comprehensible remains the ceasing of this movement once a reasonable, holy purpose for the campaign—the deliverance of Jerusalem—had been set by the historical actors. Popes, kings, and knights urged the people to liberate the Holy Land, but the people did not go, because the unknown reason that had prompted them to move earlier no longer existed. The history of the Godefroys and minnesingers obviously cannot contain the life of the people. And the history of the Godefroys and minnesingers has remained the history of the Godefroys and minnesingers, while the history of the life of the people and their motives has remained unknown.

Still less will the history of writers and reformers explain the life of the people to us.

The history of culture will explain to us the motives, the conditions of life, and the thought of a writer or reformer. We will learn that Luther had a hot temper and said such-and-such things; we will learn that Rousseau was mistrustful and wrote such-and-such books; but we will not learn why, after the Reformation, the peoples slaughtered each other and why, during the French revolution, they executed each other.

If we combine these two sorts of history, as modern historians do, we will get the history of monarchs and writers, and not the history of the life of peoples.

V

The life of peoples cannot be contained in the lives of several men, for the connection between these several men and the peoples has not been found. The theory that this connection is based on the transfer of the sum total of wills to historical figures is a hypothesis not confirmed by the experience of history.

The theory of the transfer of the sum total of wills of the masses to historical figures may explain a great deal in the sphere of jurisprudence and may be necessary for its purposes; but in its application to history, once revolutions, conquests, civil wars appear, once history begins—this theory explains nothing.

This theory seems irrefutable precisely because the act of transferring the wills of the people cannot be verified, since it never took place.

Whatever event takes place, whoever stands at the head of the event, the theory can always say that this person stood at the head of the event because the sum total of wills was transferred to him.

The answers that this theory gives to historical questions are like the answers of a man who, looking at a moving herd, and taking no account either of the quality of pasture in different parts of the field or the urgings of the herdsman,

would judge the reasons for this or that direction of the herd by which animal is at the head of the herd.

"The herd is going in this direction because the animal at the head of it is leading it, and the sum total of wills of all the rest of the animals is transferred to this ruler of the herd." So answers the first category of historians, who recognize the absolute transfer of power.

"If the animals at the head of the herd change, that happens because the sum total of wills of all the animals is transferred from one ruler to another, depending on whether he leads the herd in the direction the entire herd has chosen." So answer the historians who recognize that the sum total of wills of the masses is transferred to the rulers under conditions which they consider known. (Given this method of observation, it quite often happens that the observer, depending on the direction chosen by the herd, considers animals as leaders who, as a result of a change in the direction of the masses, are no longer in front, but on the side, and sometimes behind.)

"If the animals at the head change constantly and the direction of the entire herd changes constantly, that happens because, to attain the direction which is known to us, the animals hand over their wills to animals that are conspicuous to us, and thus, in order to study the movement of the herd, we must observe all the conspicuous animals going on all sides of the herd." So speak historians of the third category, who recognize all historical figures, from monarchs to journalists, as expressive of their time.

The theory of the transfer of the will of the masses to historical figures is only a paraphrase—only an expression of the words of the question in different words.

What is the cause of historical events? Power. What is power? Power is the sum total of wills transferred to one person. On what condition are the wills of the masses transferred to one person? On condition that the person express the will of the whole people. That is, power is power. That is, power is a word the meaning of which we do not understand.

If the domain of human knowledge were limited to abstract thinking alone, then, having subjected the explanation of power given by *science* to criticism, mankind would come to the conclusion that power is only a word and does not exist in reality. But for the apprehending of phenomena, besides abstract thinking, man has the tool of experience, with which he verifies the results of thinking. And experience says that power is not a word, but an actually existing phenomenon.

Not to mention the fact that, without the concept of power, no description of the sum total of human activity is possible, the existence of power is proved by history as well as by the observation of contemporary events.

Whenever an event takes place, a man or men always appear by whose will

the event appears to take place. Napoleon III gives the command, and the French go to Mexico. The king of Prussia and Bismarck give the command, and troops go to Bohemia. Napoleon I gives the order, and troops go to Russia. Alexander I gives the order, and the French submit to the Bourbons.⁶ Experience shows us that, whenever an event takes place, it is always connected with the will of one or several persons who have ordered it.

Historians, from the old habit of acknowledging divine participation in human affairs, want to see the cause of an event in the expression of the will of the person invested with power; but that conclusion is confirmed neither by reasoning nor by experience.

On the one hand, reasoning shows that the expression of the will of man in words is only part of the general activity expressed in an event such as a war or a revolution; and therefore, without recognizing an incomprehensible supernatural force—a miracle—it is impossible to allow that words could be the immediate cause of the movement of millions; on the other hand, even if we allow that words can be the cause of an event, history shows that the expression of the will of historical figures in the majority of cases produces no effect at all, that is, that their orders often are not only not carried out, but that sometimes what takes place is even the opposite of what they ordered.

Unless we allow for divine participation in human affairs, we cannot take power as the cause of events.

Power, from the point of view of experience, is only the dependence that exists between the expression of a person's will and the carrying out of that will by other people.

In order to explain the conditions of that dependence to ourselves, we must first of all restore the concept of the expression of will, referring it to man and not to a divinity.

If a divinity gives an order, expresses its will, as the history of the ancients shows us, the expression of that will does not depend on time and is not caused by anything, since the divinity is in no way connected with the event. But, speaking of orders as the expression of the will of people who act in time and are connected among themselves, we should restore, so as to explain to ourselves the connection of orders with events: (1) the condition of all that takes place—the continuity of the movement in time both of events and of the person who gives orders, and (2) the condition of the necessary connection of the person who gives orders to the people who carry out his orders.

VI

Only the expression of the will of a divinity not dependent on time can pertain to a whole series of events that are to take place over several years or centuries, and only a divinity, without cause, by its will alone, can determine the direction of mankind's movement. Man acts in time and himself participates in events.

In restoring the first omitted condition—the condition of time—we will see that not a single order can be carried out without the existence of a previous order that makes possible the carrying out of the later one.

Never does a single order appear spontaneously and not include in itself a whole series of events; but each order follows from another and never pertains to a whole series of events, but always only to one moment of the event.

When we say, for instance, that Napoleon ordered the army to go to war, we unite into one simultaneously expressed order a series of consecutive orders dependent on each other. Napoleon could not order a campaign against Russia and never did. Today he ordered such-and-such papers written to Vienna, Berlin, and Petersburg; tomorrow, such-and-such decrees and orders to the army, the fleet, the commissariat, and so on, and so forth—millions of orders, which formed a series of orders corresponding to a series of events which brought French troops to Russia.

If Napoleon, throughout his reign, keeps giving orders about the expedition to England, expends more effort and time on it than on any other of his undertakings, and, despite that, throughout his reign, never once attempts to carry out his intention, but makes an expedition to Russia, with which, by his more than once expressed conviction, he considers it more advantageous to be in alliance, this happens because the first series of orders did not correspond to a series of events and the second series of orders did.

To be certain that an order will be carried out, one must give such orders as can be carried out. But to know what can and cannot be carried out is impossible, not only for Napoleon's campaign in Russia, in which millions take part, but even for the most uncomplicated event, because the carrying out of the one and the other can always meet with millions of obstacles. Each order carried out is always one of a great many that are not carried out. All the impossible orders are not connected with the event and are not carried out. Only those that are possible are connected in a consecutive series of orders that correspond to a series of events and are carried out.

Our false notion that the order that precedes an event is the cause of the event comes from the fact that, once an event has taken place and out of thousands of orders only those connected with the event were carried out, we forget about those that were not, because they could not be carried out. Besides,

the chief source of our error in this sense comes from the fact that, in a historical account, a whole series of countless, diverse, minuscule events, such as all that brought French troops to Russia, is generalized into one event, according to the result this series of events produced, and in correspondence with this generalization, the whole series of orders is also generalized into one expression of will.

We say: Napoleon wanted to and did campaign against Russia. In reality, we will never find in all the activity of Napoleon anything resembling the expression of such a will, but we will see the series of orders or expressions of his will directed in the most diverse and indefinite way. Out of a countless series of Napoleon's orders that were not carried out, the series of orders carried out for the campaign of the year twelve composed itself, not because those orders were in any way different from the others that were not carried out, but because the series of those orders corresponded to the series of events that brought French troops to Russia; just as in stenciling, some figure or other gets painted, not depending on the direction or manner in which the paint is applied, but because the figure cut out of the stencil is smeared in all directions with paint.

So that, considering the relation of orders to events in time, we will find that orders can in no way be the cause of events, but that there exists a certain dependence between the one and the other.

To understand what this dependence is, it is necessary to restore another omitted condition of any order proceeding not from a divinity, but from a man, which consists in the fact that the man who orders participates in the event himself.

This relation of the one who orders to those whom he orders is precisely what is called power. This relation consists in the following:

For common activity people always form themselves into certain units within which, despite the variety of purposes set for the joint action, the relation among the people participating in the activity is always the same.

In forming these units, people always arrive at such relations among themselves that the largest number of people take the largest direct part and the smallest number of people the smallest direct part in the joint action for which they have come together.

Of all the units that people form for carrying out joint actions, one of the most distinct and definite is an army.

Every army is made up of members of the lowest military rank—privates—of whom there is always the largest number; of members of the next higher military rank—corporals, sergeants—who are fewer in number than the first; of still higher rank, who are still fewer in number; and so on to the highest military power, which is concentrated in one person.

Military organization can be expressed with perfect precision in the figure of the cone, in which the base with the largest diameter would be made up of the

privates; the higher, smaller sections of the higher ranks of the army, and so on to the apex of the cone, the point of which would be the commander in chief.

The soldiers, of whom there is the largest number, constitute the lowest points of the cone and its base. The soldier himself directly stabs, cuts, burns, loots, and always receives orders for these actions from higher-placed persons; he himself never gives orders. A sergeant (the number of sergeants is already smaller) performs the action itself more rarely than the soldier, but he does give orders. An officer still more rarely performs the action itself and still more often gives orders. A general only orders the troops to move, pointing to the goal, and almost never uses weapons. The commander can never take a direct part in the action itself and only gives general instructions about the movement of the masses. The same relations of persons among themselves is manifested in any group of people united for common activity—in farming, trade, and any management.

And so, without artificially separating all the converging points of the cone and ranks of the army, or the titles and positions of any management or common business, from lowest to highest, a law is manifested according to which, for the carrying out of a joint action, people always form themselves into such relations that the more immediately people participate in carrying out the action, the less they can give orders and the greater their number; and the smaller the direct part that people take in the action itself, the more they give orders and the smaller their number, rising in this way from the lowest layers to the one last man, who takes the least direct part in the event and more than all aims his activity at giving orders.

This relation of the persons who give orders to those whom they order constitutes the essence of the concept known as power.

Having restored the conditions of time under which all events occur, we found that an order is executed only when it refers to a corresponding series of events. Restoring the necessary condition of the connection between the one who orders and the one who carries out, we have found that it is an inherent property of those who order to take the least part in the event itself and that their activity is aimed exclusively at giving orders.

VII

When some event takes place, people express their opinions and wishes about the event, and since the event results from the joint action of many people, one of the opinions or wishes expressed is bound to be fulfilled, if only approximately. When one of the opinions expressed is fulfilled, that opinion is connected with the event as the order preceding it.

Men are dragging a log. Each of them expresses his opinion about how and

where to drag it. The men drag the log out, and it is discovered that it was done the way one of them had said. He gave the order. Here are order and power in their primitive form.

The one who mainly worked with his hands was less able to think over what he was doing, to consider what might come of the common activity, and to give orders. The one who mainly gave orders, as a consequence of his verbal activity, was obviously less able to act with his hands. The greater the assembly of people aiming their activity at a single goal, the more sharply set off is the category of people who take a less direct part in the common activity, the more their activity is aimed at giving orders.

A man, when he acts alone, always bears within himself a certain series of considerations which guided, as it seems to him, his past activity, serve him as a justification for his present activity, and guide him in his suppositions about his future acts.

Assemblies of people do exactly the same thing, leaving it to those who do not participate in the action to think up considerations, justifications, and suppositions about their joint activity.

For reasons known or unknown to us, the French begin to drown and slaughter each other. And the event is correspondingly accompanied by its justification in the expressed wills of the people about the necessity of it for the welfare of France, for liberty, for equality. People stop slaughtering each other, and this event is accompanied by its justification in the necessity to unify power, to repulse Europe, and so on. People go from west to east, killing their own kind, and this event is accompanied by words about the glory of France, the baseness of England, and so on. History shows us that these justifications of the event have no general sense and contradict themselves, like killing a man in recognition of his rights, and killing millions in Russia to humiliate England. But in a contemporary sense, these justifications have a necessary significance.

These justifications take away the moral responsibility of the people who produce events. These temporary goals are similar to the brushes that go in front of a train to clear the way on the rails: they clear the way of people's moral responsibility. Without these justifications, there could be no explaining the simplest question, which presents itself with the examination of every event: how is it that millions of people commit joint crimes, wars, killings, and so on?

Given the complex present-day forms of state and social life in Europe, is it possible to think up any sort of event that would not have been prescribed, indicated, ordered by sovereigns, ministers, parliaments, the newspapers? Is there any joint action that would not find its justification in state unity, in nationality, in the balance of Europe, in civilization? Thus every event that takes place inevitably coincides with some expressed desire, and, receiving its justification, is seen as a product of the will of one or more persons.

Wherever a moving ship may be heading, at its bow will always be seen the swirl of the wave it cuts through. For people on the ship, the movement of that swirl will be the only noticeable movement.

Only by following closely, moment by moment, the movement of that swirl and comparing that movement with the movement of the ship, will we realize that at every moment the movement of the swirl is determined by the movement of the ship, and that we were misled by the fact that we ourselves were imperceptibly moving.

We will see the same thing if we follow moment by moment the movement of historical figures (that is, having restored the necessary condition of all that happens—the condition of the continuity of movement in time) and do not lose sight of the necessary connection of historical figures with the masses.

When a ship goes in one direction, there is one and the same swirl at its bow; when it frequently changes direction, the swirl running ahead of it also shifts frequently. But wherever it turns, there will always be a swirl preceding its movement.

Whatever happens, it will always turn out that that very thing had been foreseen and ordered. Wherever a ship heads, the swirl, without guiding it, without reinforcing its movement, foams at its bow, and from afar will appear to us not only to be moving by its own will, but to be guiding the movement of the ship.

Considering only those expressions of the will of historical figures which relate to events as orders, historians have supposed that events depend on orders. Considering the events by themselves and that connection with the masses in which historical figures find themselves, we have discovered that historical figures and their orders depend on the event. The unquestionable proof of this conclusion is the fact that, however great the number of orders, the event will not take place unless there are other reasons for it; but once the event—whatever it may be—takes place, there will be found, among the ceaselessly expressed wills of various persons, those which, by their sense and timing, will relate to the event as orders.

Having come to this conclusion, we can answer directly and positively those two essential questions of history:

(1) What is power?

(2) What force produces the movement of peoples?

(1) Power is that relation of a certain person to other persons in which the person takes the less part in the action the more he expresses opinions, suppositions, and justifications for the jointly accomplished action.

(2) The movement of peoples is produced, not by power, not by intellectual activity, not even by a combination of the two, as historians used to think, but by the activity of *all* the people taking part in the event and always joining together in such a way that those who take the greatest direct part in the event, take the least responsibility upon themselves, and vice versa.

In the moral respect, the cause of the event appears to be power; in the physical respect, those who submit to power. But since moral activity is unthinkable without physical activity, the cause of the event is neither the one nor the other, but a combination of the two.

Or, in other words, the concept of a cause is inapplicable to the phenomenon we are considering.

In the last analysis, we arrive at an eternal circle, at that utmost brink at which, in every domain of thought, the human mind always arrives, if it is not toying with its subject. Electricity produces heat, heat produces electricity. Atoms attract each other, atoms repel each other.

In speaking of the interaction of heat and electricity or of atoms, we cannot tell why it happens that way, and we say that it is that way because it is unthinkable otherwise, because it has to be that way, because it is a law. It is the same with respect to historical phenomena. Why does a war or a revolution take place? We do not know; we know only that for the accomplishment of the one action or the other, people form themselves into certain units and all participate; and we say that this is so because it is unthinkable otherwise, because it is a law.

VIII

If history had to do with no more than external phenomena, the positing of this simple and obvious law would be enough, and we would be done with our argument. But the law of history relates to man. A particle of matter cannot tell us that it feels no need at all to attract or repel and that it is not true; but man, who is the subject of history, says outright: I am free and therefore not subject to the law.

The presence of the question of man's free will, though unspoken, is felt at every step of history.

All serious-minded historians have involuntarily arrived at this question. All the contradictions and obscurities of history, the wrong path that this science has taken, are based only on the non-solution of this question.

If the will of each man were free, that is, if each could act as he pleased, the whole of history would be a series of incoherent accidents.

If even one man out of millions in a thousand-year period of time has had the possibility of acting freely, that is, as he pleased, then it is obvious that one free act of this man, contrary to the laws, destroys the possibility of the existence of any laws whatever for the whole of mankind.

If there is just one law that governs the actions of men, then there can be no free will, for the will of men would have to submit to that law.

In this contradiction lies the question of freedom of the will, which from

ancient times has occupied the best minds of mankind and since ancient times has been posed in all its enormous significance.

The question consists in the fact that, in looking at man as an object of observation from any point of view—theological, historical, ethical, philosophical—we find a general law of necessity to which he is subject, like all that exists. While looking at him from within ourselves, as that which we are conscious of, we feel ourselves free.

This consciousness is a totally separate source of self-knowledge, independent of reason. Through reason man observes himself, but he knows himself only through consciousness.

Without consciousness of oneself, no observation and no application of reason are thinkable.

In order to understand, observe, deduce, man must first be conscious of himself as alive. A living man knows himself not otherwise than as wanting, that is, he is conscious of his will. And his will, which constitutes the essence of his life, man is conscious of and cannot be conscious of otherwise than as free.

If, subjecting himself to observation, man sees that his will is always directed according to one and the same law (whether he observes the necessity of taking food, or the activity of the brain, or whatever), he cannot understand this always identical direction of his will otherwise than as a limitation of it. That which is not free cannot be limited. Man's will appears limited to him precisely because he is conscious of it not otherwise than as free.

You say: I am not free. But I have raised and lowered my arm. Everyone understands that this illogical answer is an irrefutable proof of freedom.

This answer is the expression of a consciousness not subject to reason.

If the consciousness of freedom were not a separate source of self-knowledge, independent of reason, it would be subject to reasoning and experience; but in reality such subjection never occurs and is unthinkable.

A series of experiments and arguments shows each man that as an object of observation he is subject to certain laws, and man submits to them and never fights against the law of gravity or of impermeability, once he knows them. But that same series of experiments and arguments shows him that full freedom, which he is conscious of in himself, is impossible, that his every action depends on his constitution, his character, and the motives that influence him; yet man never submits to the conclusions of these experiments and arguments.

Having learned from experience and argument that a stone falls downwards, man believes it unquestioningly and in all cases expects the law he has learned to be fulfilled.

But, having learned as unquestionably that his will is subject to laws, he does not and cannot believe it.

However many times experience and argument have shown a man that in the same conditions, with the same character, he would do the same thing he

did before, he, when he sets out for the thousandth time, in the same conditions, with the same character, on an action that has always ended the same way, undoubtedly feels no less certain that he can act as he pleases than he did before the experience. Every man, savage or sage, however irrefutably argument and experience prove to him that it is impossible to imagine two acts in the same conditions, feels that without this senseless notion (which constitutes the essence of freedom), he cannot imagine life. He feels that, impossible as it may be, it is so; for without this notion of freedom, he not only would not understand life, but could not live for a single moment.

He could not live, because all man's strivings, all his impulses to life, are but strivings towards greater freedom. Wealth and poverty, fame and obscurity, power and submission, strength and weakness, health and sickness, education and ignorance, work and idleness, satiety and hunger, virtue and vice are nothing but greater or lesser degrees of freedom.

It is impossible to imagine to oneself a man who has no freedom otherwise than as deprived of life.

If for reason the concept of freedom presents itself as senselessly contradictory, like the possibility of performing two acts in the same moment of time or an action without a cause, that only proves that consciousness is not subject to reason.

This consciousness of freedom, unshakable, irrefutable, not subject to experience or argument, recognized by all thinkers and sensed by all human beings without exception, a consciousness without which any notion of man is unthinkable, constitutes the other side of the question.

Man is the creation of an almighty, all-good, and all-knowing God. What then is sin, the concept of which follows from the consciousness of man's freedom? That is a question for theology.

Men's actions are subject to general, immutable laws expressed by statistics. In what, then, consists man's responsibility before society, the concept of which follows from the consciousness of man's freedom? That is a question for jurisprudence.

Man's acts follow from his innate character and the motives acting upon him. What is conscience and the consciousness of the good and evil of acts following from the consciousness of freedom? That is a question for ethics.

A man, in connection with the common life of mankind, appears subject to the laws defining that life. But the same man, independent of that connection, appears free. How should the past life of peoples and of mankind be regarded—as a product of the free or unfree activity of men? That is a question for history.

Only in our self-confident time of the popularization of knowledge, thanks to that most powerful tool of ignorance—the spread of printing—has the question of freedom of will been reduced to grounds on which the question

itself cannot exist. In our time the majority of so-called advanced people, that is, a crowd of ignoramuses, have taken the works of the naturalists, who study one side of the question, for the solution of the whole question.

The soul and freedom do not exist, because the life of man is expressed in muscular movements, and muscular movements are conditioned by nervous activity; the soul and freedom do not exist, because at some unknown period of time we descended from the apes—they say, write, and print, not even suspecting that thousands of years ago all religions and all thinkers not only recognized but never tried to deny that very law of necessity which they now try so zealously to prove by means of physiology and comparative zoology. They do not see that the role of natural science in this question consists only in serving as an instrument to throw light on one side of it. For the fact that, from the point of view of observation, reason and will are only secretions of the brain, and man, following a general law, could develop from lower animals at an unknown period of time, only clarifies from a new side a truth recognized thousands of years ago by all religious and philosophical theories, that from the viewpoint of reason man is subject to the laws of necessity, but does not advance by a hair the solution of the question, which has another, opposite side, based on the consciousness of freedom.

If men descended from the apes at an unknown period of time, that is as comprehensible as that men descended from a handful of earth at a known period of time (in the first case the x is time, in the second the descent), and the question of how the consciousness of man's freedom can be combined with the law of necessity to which man is subject cannot be resolved by comparative physiology and zoology, for in the frog, the rabbit, and the ape we can observe only muscular and nervous activity, while in man both muscular and nervous activity and consciousness.

The naturalists and their admirers, who think to solve this question, are like plasterers assigned to plaster one side of a church wall, who, taking advantage of the foreman's absence, in a fit of zeal smear their plaster all over the windows, the icons, the scaffolding, and the as yet unreinforced walls, and rejoice at how, from their plastering point of view, everything comes out flat and smooth.

IX

For the solution of the question of freedom and necessity, history has the advantage over other branches of knowledge in which the same question is raised, that for history this question refers not to the essence of man's will, but to the notion of the manifestation of that will in the past and under certain conditions.

For the solution of this question, history stands to other sciences in the position of an experimental science to speculative sciences.

History has as its subject not the will of man itself, but our notion of it.

And therefore the insoluble mystery of the combining of the two opposites, freedom and necessity, does not exist for history, as it does for theology, ethics, and philosophy. History examines the notion of man's life in which the combining of these two opposites has already taken place.

In actual life, every historical event, every human action, is understood quite clearly and definitely, without the least sense of contradiction, even though each event appears partly free and partly necessary.

To solve the question of how freedom and necessity are combined and what constitutes the essence of these two concepts, the philosophy of history can and must follow a path opposite to the one other sciences have taken. Instead of defining the concepts of freedom and necessity in themselves, and then fitting the phenomena of life to the worked-out definitions, history must take the immense number of phenomena lying before it, which always appear dependent on freedom and necessity, and from them derive a definition of the concepts of freedom and necessity themselves.

Whatever notion of the activity of many people or one man we examine, we understand it not otherwise than as a product partly of freedom and partly of the law of necessity.

Whether we are speaking of the migration of peoples and the raids of barbarians, or of the decrees of Napoleon III, or of the act of a man, performed an hour ago, which consisted in choosing one direction out of many for a stroll—we see not the slightest contradiction. The measure of freedom and necessity that guided the acts of these men is clearly defined for us.

Quite often the notion of greater or lesser freedom varies according to the different points of view from which we examine a phenomenon; but—always in the same way—every human action appears to us not otherwise than as a certain conjunction of freedom and necessity. In every action examined, we see a certain portion of freedom and a certain portion of necessity. And always, the more freedom we see in whatever action, the less necessity; and the more necessity, the less freedom.

The ratio of freedom to necessity decreases or increases depending on the point of view from which the action is examined; but this ratio always remains inversely proportional.

A drowning man who clutches another and drowns him, or a hungry mother, exhausted from nursing her baby, who steals food, or a man accustomed to discipline who stands in a firing squad and kills a defenseless man on command, appears less guilty, that is, less free and more subject to the law of necessity, to someone who knows the conditions these people were in, and more free to someone who does not know that the man was himself drowning, that the

mother was hungry, that the soldier was in a firing squad, and so on. In the same way, a man who twenty years ago committed a murder, and after that lived peacefully and harmlessly in society, appears less guilty—his act more subject to the law of necessity—for someone who examines it after a lapse of twenty years, and more free to someone who examined it the day after it was committed. And in the same way, every act of a crazy, drunk, or greatly agitated man appears less free and more necessary to someone who knows the inner state of the one who commits the act, and more free and less necessary to someone who does not know it. In all these cases, the concept of freedom increases or decreases and, correspondingly, the concept of necessity decreases or increases, depending on the point of view from which the act is examined. So that the greater the necessity appears, the lesser the freedom appears. And vice versa.

Religion, mankind's common sense, jurisprudence, and history itself understand this ratio between necessity and freedom in the same way.

All occasions without exception in which our notion of freedom and necessity increases and decreases have only three bases:

- (1) The relation of the man committing the act to the external world,
- (2) to time, and
- (3) to the causes producing the act.

(1) The first basis is the relation more or less visible to us of the man to the external world, the more or less clear notion of that definite place which every man occupies in relation to everything that exists simultaneously with him. This is that basis owing to which it is obvious that the drowning man is less free and more subject to necessity than a man standing on dry land; that basis owing to which the actions of a man living in close connection with other people in a densely populated area, the actions of a man who is connected with family, work, enterprises, appear unquestionably less free and more subject to necessity than the actions of man who is single and solitary.

If we examine a man alone, without his relation to everything around him, his every action appears free to us. But if we see at least some relation to what is around him, if we see his connection with anything whatever—with the man who is talking to him, with the book he is reading, with the work he is doing, even with the air that surrounds him, even with the light that falls on things around him—we see that each of these conditions has an influence on him and guides at least one side of his activity. And insofar as we see these influences, so far our notion of his freedom decreases and our notion of the necessity he is subject to increases.

(2) The second basis is the more or less visible temporal relation of man to the world; the more or less clear notion of the place that the action of a man occupies in time. This is that basis owing to which the fall of the first man, which had as its consequence the origin of mankind, appears, obviously, less

free than a modern man's marriage. This is that basis owing to which the life and activity of people who lived centuries ago, and are connected with me in time, cannot appear as free to me as modern life, the consequences of which are still unknown to me.

The degree of our notion of greater or lesser freedom and necessity in this relation depends on the greater or lesser span of time between the committing of the act and our judgment of it.

If I examine an act I committed a moment ago, under approximately the same conditions as I am in now, my action seems unquestionably free to me. But if I review an act I committed a month ago, I involuntarily recognize, being in different conditions, that if that act had not been committed, many useful, agreeable, and even necessary things which resulted from that act would not have taken place. If I transport myself in memory to an act still more remote, ten years back or more, the consequences of my act will appear still more obvious to me; and it will be hard for me to imagine what would have happened if the act had not been done. The further back I transport myself in memory, or, what is the same, ahead in my judgment, the more questionable my argument about the freedom of the act will become.

In history we find exactly the same progression of convincingness about the portion of free will in the general affairs of mankind. A just-accomplished contemporary event appears to us as unquestionably proceeding from all known people; but in a more remote event we see its inevitable consequences, aside from which we cannot imagine anything else. And the further back we transport ourselves in examining events, the less arbitrary they appear to us.

The Austro-Prussian war appears to us as the unquestionable consequence of the actions of cunning Bismarck, and so on.

The Napoleonic wars, though questionably now, still appear to us as proceeding from the wills of heroes; in the Crusades we already see an event which occupies a definite place and without which the modern history of Europe is unthinkable, though in the same way, for the chroniclers of the Crusades, this event appeared only as proceeding from the wills of several persons. As for the migrations of peoples, it never occurs to anyone in our time that the renewal of the European world depended on the good pleasure of Attila. The further back in history we transport the object of our observation, the more questionable becomes the freedom of the men producing events, and the more obvious the law of necessity.

(3) The third basis is the greater or lesser accessibility for us of that endless linking of causes that constitutes the inevitable demand of reason and in which every phenomenon comprehended, and therefore every human action, should have its definite place, as a consequence of what precedes and a cause of what follows.

This is that basis owing to which our own and other people's actions appear

to us, on the one hand, as more free and less subject to necessity, the more we know of those physiological, psychological, and historical laws man is subject to, deduced from observation, and the more correctly we perceive the physiological, psychological, or historical cause of the action; and on the other hand, the simpler the observed action itself and the less complex the character and mind of the man whose action we are examining.

When we totally fail to understand the cause of an act—whether an evil deed, a good deed, or even an act indifferent to good and evil—we recognize in such an act a greater share of freedom. If it is an evil deed, we most of all demand punishment for such an act; if it is a good deed, we most of all appreciate such an act. If it is indifferent, we recognize its greater individuality, originality, freedom. But if just one of the countless reasons is known to us, we already recognize a certain share of necessity and demand a lesser requital for the crime, recognize a lesser merit in the good deed, a lesser freedom in the seemingly original act. The fact that a criminal was brought up among evil-doers already extenuates his guilt. The selflessness of a father, of a mother, selflessness with a possibility of reward, is more comprehensible than causeless selflessness, and therefore appears less deserving of sympathy, less free. The founder of a sect or party, the inventor, surprise us less when we know how and by what his activity was prepared for. If we have a large series of experiences, if our observation is constantly directed at finding the correlation of causes and effects in people's actions, their actions appear the more necessary and the less free to us, the more correctly we connect effects with causes. If the examined actions are simple, and we have for observation an enormous number of such actions, our notion of their necessity will be more complete. The dishonest act of the son of a dishonest father, the bad behavior of a woman who ended up in a certain milieu, a drunkard's return to drinking, and so on, are actions which appear the less free to us, the more comprehensible we find their cause. And if the person himself whose actions we are examining stands on the lowest level of mental development, like a child, a madman, a simpleton, then, knowing the causes of the action and the incompleteness of his character and mind, we already see so large a share of necessity and so small of freedom, that once the cause that is to produce the action is known to us, we can predict the act.

Only on these three bases have irresponsibility for crimes and extenuating circumstances, which exist in all legal codes, been constructed. Responsibility appears greater or lesser, depending on a greater or lesser knowledge of the conditions in which the man whose action is being reviewed found himself, and on the greater or lesser span of time from the committing of the act to the judging of it, and on the greater or lesser understanding of the causes of the act.

X

Thus our notion of freedom and necessity gradually decreases or increases, depending on the greater or lesser connection with the external world, the greater or lesser distance in time, and the greater or lesser dependence on causes in which we examine the phenomenon of human life.

So that, if we examine a man in such a situation that his connection with the external world is most fully known, the period between the time of judgment and the time of committing the act is longest, and the causes of the act are most accessible, then we get the notion of the greatest necessity and the least freedom. But if we examine a man in least dependence on external conditions, if his action is committed in the moment closest to the present, and the causes of his action are inaccessible to us, then we will get the notion of the least necessity and the greatest freedom.

But neither in the one case nor in the other, however we may change our point of view, however we may try to grasp what connection the man finds himself in with the external world, or however inaccessible it seems to us, however much we lengthen or shorten the period of time, however intelligible or unfathomable the causes are for us—we can never imagine either total freedom or total necessity.

(1) However we may try to imagine a man excluded from the influences of the external world, we will never arrive at a concept of freedom in space. A man's every action is inevitably conditioned by what surrounds him and by his own body. I raise my arm and lower it. My action seems free to me; but asking myself if I could raise my arm in any direction, I see that I raised my arm in the direction in which there were fewest obstacles to that action either from bodies around me or from the structure of my own body. If, out of all possible directions, I chose one, I did so because there were fewer obstacles in that direction. For my action to be free, it is necessary that it not meet with any obstacles. To imagine man as free, we must imagine him outside space, which is obviously impossible.

(2) However close together we bring the time of judgment to the time of the act, we will never get a concept of freedom in time. For if I examine an act committed a second ago, I must still recognize the unfreedom of the act, since the act is bound to the moment of time in which it was committed. Can I raise my arm? I raise it, but I ask myself: could I have not raised my arm in that already past moment of time? To convince myself of it, I do not raise my arm in the next moment. But it is not in that first moment when I asked myself about freedom that I did not raise my arm. Time went by, it was not in my power to stop it, and the arm which I then raised and the air in which I then made that movement are no longer the air which now surrounds me and the arm with which I

now do not make that movement. The moment in which the first movement was performed is irretrievable, and at that moment I could make only one movement, and whatever movement I made, that movement could be the only one. The fact that I did not raise my arm the next moment does not prove that I could have not raised it. And since my movement could be the only one in one moment of time, it could not be any other. To imagine it as free, one must imagine it in the present, at the border of past and future, that is, outside time, which is impossible.

(3) However much the difficulty of comprehending causes may increase, we will never arrive at the notion of total freedom, that is, the absence of cause. However unfathomable for us is the cause of the expression of will in any act of mine or others, the first demand of intelligence is the assumption of and search for a cause, without which no phenomenon is conceivable. I raise my arm in order to perform an act independent of any cause, but the fact that I want to perform an act that has no cause, is the cause of my act.

But even if, imagining a man completely excluded from all influences, examining only his instantaneous act in the present, not provoked by any cause, we should allow the infinitesimally small remainder of necessity to equal zero, we would still not arrive at a notion of man's total freedom; for a being who is not affected by the influences of the external world, who is outside time and does not depend on causes, is no longer a man.

In the same way, we can never imagine the actions of a man without any participation of freedom and subject only to the law of necessity.

(1) However much our knowledge of the spatial conditions in which man finds himself may increase, that knowledge can never be complete, since the number of those conditions is as infinitely great as space is infinite. And therefore, so long as not *all* the conditions influencing man are defined, there is no complete necessity, and there is a certain share of freedom.

(2) However much we may lengthen the period of time between the phenomenon we are examining and the time of judgment, that period will be finite, while time is infinite, and therefore, in this respect, there can never be complete necessity.

(3) However accessible the chain of causes of any event, we will never know the entire chain, because it is endless, and again we will never get complete necessity.

But, besides that, even if, having allowed the smallest remainder of freedom to equal zero, we were to recognize in some case—for instance, a dying man, a fetus, an idiot—a total absence of freedom, we would thereby destroy the very concept of the man we are examining; because once there is no freedom, there is no man. And therefore to imagine the action of a man that is subject only to the law of necessity, without the slightest remainder of freedom, is as impossible as to imagine a totally free action.

Thus, to imagine the act of a man that is subject to the law of necessity

alone, without freedom, we must allow for knowledge of an *infinite* number of spatial conditions, an *infinitely* great period of time, and an *infinite* series of causes.

To imagine a man who is completely free, not subject to the law of necessity, we must imagine him alone, *outside space, outside time, and outside any dependence on causes.*

In the first case, if necessity without freedom were possible, we would arrive at the definition of the law of necessity by that same necessity, that is, at form alone without content.

In the second case, if freedom without necessity were possible, we would arrive at unconditional freedom outside space, time, and causes, which, by the very fact of being unconditional and unlimited by anything, would be nothing, or content alone without form.

We would arrive generally at those two bases from which man's whole worldview is formed—at the unfathomable essence of life and at the laws which define that essence.

Reason says: (1) Space, with all the forms which its visibility—matter—gives it, is infinite and cannot be conceived otherwise. (2) Time is infinite movement without a moment's rest, and cannot be conceived otherwise. (3) The linking of causes and effects has no beginning and can have no end.

Consciousness says: (1) I am alone, and all that exists is only I; consequently, I include space; (2) I measure fleeting time by the unmoving moment of the present, in which alone I am conscious of myself as living; consequently, I am outside time; and (3) I am outside cause, for I feel myself to be the cause of every manifestation of my life.

Reason expresses the laws of necessity. Consciousness expresses the essence of freedom.

Freedom, not limited by anything, is the essence of life in the consciousness of man. Necessity without content is man's reason with its three forms.

Freedom is that which is examined. Necessity is that which examines. Freedom is content. Necessity is form.

Only by the separation of the two sources of cognition, which are related to each other as form to content, do we get the distinct, mutually exclusive, and unfathomable concepts of freedom and necessity.

Only by their union do we get a clear picture of the life of man.

Outside these two concepts, mutually defining in their union as form and content, no picture of life is possible.

All that we know about the life of men is only a certain relation of freedom to necessity, that is, of consciousness to the laws of reason.

All that we know about the external world of nature is only a certain relation of the forces of nature to necessity, or of the essence of life to the laws of reason.

The forces of the life of nature lie outside us and we are not conscious of them, and we call these forces gravity, inertia, electricity, animal force, and so on; but we are conscious of the force of man's life, and we call it freedom.

But just as the force of gravity, unfathomable in itself but sensed by every man, is only comprehensible to us insofar as we know the law of necessity it is subject to (from the primitive knowledge that all bodies are heavy, to Newton's law), so, too, the force of freedom, unfathomable in itself but of which each of us is conscious, is only comprehensible to us insofar as we know the laws of necessity which it is subject to (starting from the fact that every man dies and going as far as the knowledge of the most complex economic or historical laws).

Any knowledge is only the placing of the essence of life under the laws of reason.

Man's freedom differs from any other force in that man is conscious of this force; but for reason it is no different from any other force. The forces of gravity, electricity, or chemical agents differ from each other only in that they are differently defined by reason. In the same way, for reason the force of man's freedom differs from all other forces of nature only by the definition which that same reason gives it. Freedom without necessity, that is, without the laws of reason which define it, does not differ in any way from gravity, or heat, or vegetative force—for reason it is only a momentary, undefinable sensation of life.

And as the undefinable essence of the force that moves the heavenly bodies, the undefinable essence of the force of heat, electricity, or chemical agents, or the life force make up the content of astronomy, physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, and so on, so the essence of the force of freedom makes up the content of history. But just as the subject of any science is the manifestation of this unknown essence of life, while the essence itself can only be the subject of metaphysics, so the manifestation of the force of men's freedom in space, time, and dependence on causes, is the subject of history; freedom itself is the subject of metaphysics.

In experimental science, what is known to us we call the laws of necessity; what is unknown to us we call the life force. The life force is only the expression of the unknown remainder of what we know about the essence of life.

It is the same with history: what is known to us we call the laws of necessity; what is unknown—freedom. For history, freedom is only the expression of the unknown remainder of what we know about the laws of human life.

XI

History examines the manifestations of man's freedom in connection with the external world in time and in dependence on causes, that is, it defines that freedom by the laws of reason, and therefore history is only a science insofar as that freedom is defined by those laws.

For history to recognize men's freedom as a force capable of influencing historical events, that is, as not subject to laws, is the same as for astronomy to recognize a free force moving the heavenly bodies.

That recognition destroys the possibility of the existence of laws, that is, of any knowledge whatever. If at least one freely moving body exists, then the laws of Kepler and Newton no longer exist, nor does any notion of the movement of the heavenly bodies. If there exists one free act of man, then not a single historical law exists or any notion of historical events.

For history there exist the lines of movement of human wills, one end of which vanishes into the unknown, but at the other end of which the consciousness of men's freedom in the present moves in space, in time, and in dependence on causes.

The more this field of movement expands before our eyes, the more obvious are the laws of this movement. To grasp and determine those laws constitutes the task of history.

From the point of view from which historical science now looks at its subject, on the path it follows, seeking the causes of phenomena in the free will of men, it is impossible for it to express laws, for, however much we limit men's freedom, as soon as we recognize it as a force not subject to laws, the existence of law is impossible.

Only by limiting this freedom infinitely, that is, by looking upon it as an infinitely small quantity, will we be convinced of the total inaccessibility of causes, and then, instead of searching for causes, history will set itself the task of searching for laws.

The search for these laws has long since begun, and the new methods of thinking which history should adopt for itself are being worked out simultaneously with the self-destruction towards which, ever subdividing and subdividing the causes of phenomena, the old history is moving.

All of mankind's sciences have followed this path. Having arrived at the infinitely small, mathematics, the most exact of sciences, abandons the process of subdividing and starts on a new process of summing up the unknown infinitesimals. Renouncing the concept of cause, mathematics seeks laws, that is, properties common to all unknown infinitely small elements.

Other sciences, though in a different form, have followed this same path

of thinking. When Newton formulated the law of gravity, he did not say that the sun or the earth has the property of attraction; he said that all bodies, from the largest to the smallest, have this property of attracting each other, as it were; that is, leaving aside the question of the cause of the movement of the bodies, he formulated the property common to all bodies, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small. The natural sciences do the same: leaving aside the question of cause, they seek for laws. History stands on the same path. And if history has for its subject of study the movements of peoples and of mankind, and not the description of episodes from people's lives, it should set aside the notion of causes and seek for the laws common to all the equal and inseparably bound together infinitely small elements of freedom.

XII

Ever since Copernicus's law was found and proved, the mere recognition of the fact that what moves is not the sun but the earth has destroyed the whole cosmology of the ancients. It might have been possible, by refuting the law, to retain the old view of the movement of bodies, but without refuting it, it would have been impossible, it seems, to go on studying the Ptolemaic worlds. Yet even after the discovery of Copernicus's law, the Ptolemaic worlds long went on being studied.

Ever since the first man said and proved that the number of births or crimes obeys mathematical laws, that certain geographic and politico-economic conditions determine one or another form of government, and that certain relations of the inhabitants to the land produce movements of peoples—ever since then the foundations on which history had been built were essentially destroyed.

It might have been possible, by refuting the new laws, to retain the former view of history, but without refuting them, it would have been impossible, it seems, to go on studying historical events as if they proceeded from men's free will. For, if a certain form of government has been established, or a certain movement of peoples has taken place owing to such-and-such geographic, ethnographic, or economic conditions, then the will of those men who appear to us as establishing a form of government or provoking a movement of peoples can no longer be considered the cause.

And yet the former history goes on being studied on a par with the laws of statistics, geography, political economy, comparative philology, and geology, which directly contradict its postulates.

A long and stubborn struggle went on in physical philosophy between the old and new views. Theology stood guard over the old view and accused the

new of destroying revelation. But when the truth triumphed, theology established itself as firmly on the new soil.

Just as long and stubborn a struggle has gone on in our time between the old and new views of history, and in the same way theology stands guard over the old view and accuses the new of destroying revelation.

In the one case as in the other, the struggle on both sides arouses passions and stifles the truth. On one side of the struggle there is fear and pity for the whole edifice erected over the centuries; on the other the passion for destruction.

To the people who fought against the emerging truth of physical philosophy it seemed that, if they were to recognize that truth, faith in God, in the creation of the firmament, in the miracle of Joshua, son of Nun,⁷ would be destroyed. To the defenders of the laws of Copernicus and Newton—Voltaire, for instance—it seemed that the laws of astronomy destroyed religion, and he used the law of gravity as a weapon against religion.

In the same way now it seems that we need only recognize the law of necessity and the notions of the soul, of good and evil, and all state and church institutions based on those notions will be destroyed.

In the same way now as with Voltaire in his time, the uninvited defenders of the law of necessity use that law as a weapon against religion; whereas—exactly like Copernicus's law in astronomy—the law of necessity in history not only does not destroy, but even consolidates the ground on which state and church institutions are built.

As in the question of astronomy then, so now in the question of history, all the difference in views is based on the recognition or non-recognition of an absolute unit serving as a measure of visible phenomena. In astronomy this was the immobility of the earth; in history it is the independence of the person—freedom.

As for astronomy the difficulty of recognizing the movement of the earth consisted in renouncing the immediate feeling of the immobility of the earth and the similar feeling of the movement of the planets, so for history the difficulty of recognizing the subjection of the person to the laws of space, time, and causes consists in renouncing the immediate feeling of the independence of one's person. But, as in astronomy the new view said: "True, we do not feel the movement of the earth, but by assuming its immobility, we arrive at an absurdity; whereas, by assuming the movement which we do not feel, we arrive at laws," so, too, in history the new view says: "True, we do not feel our dependence, but by assuming we are free, we arrive at an absurdity; whereas, by assuming our dependence on the external world, time, and causes, we arrive at laws."

In the first case, the need was to renounce the consciousness of a nonexistent immobility in space and recognize a movement we do not feel; in the present case, it is just as necessary to renounce a nonexistent freedom and recognize a dependence we do not feel.

THE END

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THE END