



DIROSAT

Journal of Education, Social Sciences & Humanities

Journal website: <https://dirosat.com/>

ISSN : 2985-5497 (Online)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58355/dirosat.v3i2.141>

Vol. 3 No. 2 (2025)

pp. 170-188

Research Article

The Challenges and Implications of Post-Concepts Historical Theory: Historiography of Meaning, Method and Manifestation

Danyal Masood

MPhil Research Scholar, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad;

danyalmasood8@gmail.com 



Copyright © 2025 by Authors, Published by **DIROSAT: Journal of Education, Social Sciences & Humanities**. This is an open access article under the CC BY License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Received : January 15, 2025
Accepted : March 19, 2025

Revised : February 16, 2025
Available online : April 18, 2025

How to Cite: Danyal Masood. (2025). The Challenges and Implications of Post-Concepts Historical Theory: Historiography of Meaning, Method and Manifestation . *DIROSAT: Journal of Education, Social Sciences & Humanities*, 3(2), 170–188. <https://doi.org/10.58355/dirosat.v3i2.141>

Abstract. This research article is an attempt to investigate the conceptual development in historical theory to understand knowledge production in contemporary culture of concepts. The contested nature of historical theory evolves with different measures to reconstruct different ideas in historical writings and to communicate and brings the process of historical temporalities alongside. This article deals with epistemic challenges and its implication in building historical theory. Postmodern culture encounters objectivity, positivism and modernist representation in historical discourse, which brought contests for meaning, method and manifestation. This article also tried to analyze the challenges and implications of meaning, method and manifestation in building historical theory as framework which consults historians in their possible design and structure about historical representation, and methodology to define how to solve historiographic problems systematically. Historical theory shares boundaries with other disciplines. It clearly presents a transcendental hope for new history which has

the capacity to resolve the personal and political existential crisis. This article tried to employ multidisciplinary inquiry, explores multifaced challenges in the post-concepts period.

Keywords: Historical theory, Conceptual history, meaning, method, manifestation.

INTRODUCTION

The development of historical theory has presented multiple shades of conceptual changes in philosophy of historiography. Historical theorization introduced and established alternatives way out for knowledge production. Historians use different nomenclature and terminologies to differentiate between historical theory and philosophy of history. The pre-second world war historical approaches have become problematic due to the fall of analytical philosophy of history and due to the emergence of literary theory. Herman Paul narrated that still historical theory makes different meanings to different approaches (Paul, 2015, pp. 12–15). The essence of historical theory is due to the inclination of historians toward literary theory and their decline from philosophy of history. Historical theory is identical to critical philosophy of history which deals the problem of mind and time (Holmes, 1991, pp. 23–54). The evolution of thought with philosophy of history deeply inspired historical theory. There is a clear continuity from speculative philosophy of history to historical theory. The practice of historical theory has the potential to give space for different opinions and different narratives which do not possess speculative traditions of history. With all similarities and continuities historical theory has differences with old tradition like the emergence of linguistic shift, the interdisciplinary approaches of second half of twentieth century, new historicism and ‘the end of philosophy’ⁱ and death of discipline.

The present historical theory emerged and developed during the second half of the twentieth century. Ankersmit (born 1976) demarcated a line between transcendental philosophy of language and the romanticist approach to the past. The relationship of our moods and feelings about the past are the prime concerns in understanding the cognition of experience. To him “how we feel about past (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 10)” is as much important as “what we know about it (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 10)”

Ankersmit argues that the rationality of theory is not stagnant but changes with time, like the transformation of transcendental meaning into linguistic meaning and from language into our cultural practices (Ankersmit, 2005, p. 10). The reconstruction of textual and temporal past and how we are doing or making its relationship with the present is the major fabric of historical theory. Emotions and feelings upon which our cognitive communications with time and space are attached with the narration of the past are the most important elements of present historical theory.

Historical theory is an edifice of historical knowledge. The theoretical traditions of nineteenth century tools to understand the long historical periods in philosophical means (Anjum, 2004, p. 65). However, historical theory is not just

bound to the history of historical writings. It deals with the specific and selected historical knowledge from the past with the endeavor of present point of view to ensure hope of progress empirically. Mary Fulbrook (born 1951) maintains that theory enables analysis to differentiate between better and worse position in historical interpretation and representation (Fulbrook, 2002, p. ix).

Historical knowledge is produced as cultural artifacts that are represented in our language patterns. All history in different societies employed analysis for cultural understandings. Despite these narrations of historical theory, it does not concern with the story of rise and fall, lesson of history, unification and fragmentation of civilizations, etc. These cases are the prime concern of speculative traditions of history. The purpose of theoretical analysis is to understand the foundational elements in historical knowledge, to investigate the transparency of intellectual ordeal, and to bend back upon the discipline of history. Historical theory after linguistic turn deals with texts when turned into histories (Partner, 2013, p. 3). Historians have transformed evidence like documents and oral traditions such as emotions, memory and observation into a system of complex language in overlapping situation of poetry and history to recognize the cognitive ability in the developmental stages of what is later called historical theory (White, 1978, pp. 218–230).

The logical argumentation of each part of historical facts has a chronological relationship which communicates or sticks together by historical theory. The context of work in historical studies functions as a hyperbole for the relationship of theory and factual history. Without theory, evidence cannot reach meaning. Jorn Rusen discusses the coherence amongst events which can only be ensured by historical theory (Rüsen, 2017, p. 37). Another important theorist Dominick La Capra explains six types of contexts within a text which are author's intentions and the text, author's life and the text society to text, culture to text, text to the corpus of a writer and modes of discourse and the text for understanding historical theory (LaCapra, 1985, p. 23).

Jorn Rusen emphasizes upon the theorization of historical knowledge which deals with two different stages. On the one hand, it deals with the nature and structure of historical studies, while on the other hand, it deals with the real or massive history and events happening in objective conditions (Rüsen, 2017, p. 38). The first stage of theorization discusses a century-old question of whether history is art or science. Does history obey any law? These are some of the queries which helped in the evolution of historical studies in the last four decades which directly influence historical theory. The nature of historical theory is theoretical thinking which invites philosophers due to the reflective nature of theory.

There are two important climates in historical theory (Rüsen, 2017, pp. 34–45). The first one deals with the ability of historical knowledge to theorize; the second one manages with theoretical knowledge production of past and its uses for historical research in present.

1. Reflections on the Nature and Meaning of Historical Theory

Historical theory consists of epistemological questions, like how historians perceived and conceived historical past which functions in knowledge production, and its visualization. Theory in historical written knowledge has accommodated the

discursive position within text which has to communicate. Theory functions as a methodology like how the perceived knowledge has interpreted the process of historical writings. Theory expresses itself as an ontological concern which discusses the existence of the past as knowledge in cultural and its material manifestation. The philosophical continuity within historical theory cannot be ignored from ancient to present time which have ethical, aesthetic, legal and cultural orientations. The history of historical theory cannot be traced back before First World War, however, philosophical traditions are the prime notions in establishing historical theory as an independent concept in the present time. Generally, historians who are with these engagements are conscious, which means that how much someone, either historian or not, is prone and exposed to the historical truth and realities, which are constructed intersubjectively. Functionally, historical theory is extracted and examined our assumption about the individuality and universality of historical knowledge. For historical development and understanding of historical writings, a brief description is necessary to differentiate historical theory from the rest of history's tools and approaches.

The hermeneutics of theory is the discovery of meaning in the process of interpreting a text. At this point, research cannot ignore the evolution of thoughts specifically the transformation of philosophical thought in which theory evolved and later in the second half of twentieth century professional recognized historical theory as a tool for understanding historical writings and exploration about a historical process. This freedom of theory leaves us free to move on our own way while building historical meaning. "Theory is antithetical counter force to that which is commonly supposed as true, positive as true and spoken as true (Fry, 2009)." As mentioned earlier, theory is not an isolated phenomenon but evolved with the philosophical traditions of history. R. G Collingwood certainly believes that it must be merged with the general body of knowledge (Collingwood, 1946, p. 7).

Peter L. Berger (1929-2017) highlights pre-theoretical level which he describes as "the sum, total of what everybody knows (Berger, 1967, p. 83)" which are the cultural values like local wisdom, mythology, oral traditions of literature like proverbs and idioms, which are the foundational materials for historical studies. Jorn Rosen (born 1930) believes that these narrations then in the later stage transform past into history, and at the same time narration creates a discipline from where it remains in the mind of people (Rüsen, 2008, p. 2). However, W. V. Quine (1908-2000) explains that every individual has a set of theories in his/her minds while dealing with meaning (Quine, 1963, p. 20). Actually, Quine believes in the epistemic ability of our behavior. For him, the meanings are behaviors and language are public. The present study explores the meaning of a knower and that a knower does not know any other secret meaning than that in his/her mind.

In historical writings, representation of historical epistemology is the distinction of historical thought from other form of social and artistic thought. The availability, authenticity and reliability of sources are the prime concerns in historical epistemology. It is important to understand the nature of period, place, agent, agencies and process to hold together the chain of reason while dealing with historical epistemology. The early twentieth century existential philosophy and

phenomenology from Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) to Albert Camus (1913-1960) deeply influenced historical imagination. Historical theory experienced a philosophical meaninglessness in the historiographical traditions in Europe. Historical theory directly criticized modern historicist and positivist narratives to undo the story of intellectual crisis that happened in historical studies in the second half of twentieth century. "In spite of its great theoretical and practical success, there is a crisis of science. It consists in the loss of its meaning for life (Carr, 1974, p. 46)". White historical theory identifies and holds together the crisis of representation is historical epistemology and the problems of 'meaning'. The displacement of historical meaning from the reference of contemporary historiography to the level of meaninglessness makes it more difficult in the process of historization. Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) examined that the displacement of meaning does not make the subject anonymous machine of meaning churning up representation. He saw the subject as life, it is life who thinks not a Cartesian thinking thing (Gadamer, 1977, p. ix). The design, purpose, significance and responsibility are the defining pattern in historical meaning, especially in the inherited meaning of past. When these patterns and expressions came under severe criticism and objection in 1960 and 1970 it directly reduced the meaningfulness in the historical understanding.

History as a discipline came into surface in Germany. 'Wilhelm von Giesebrecht (1854-1913)ⁱⁱⁱ explored the connection between rise of historical sciences and revolt of nationalist ideas which happened in Germany in the first half of nineteenth century. Its scientific position and its professionalization and institutionalization take place in the University of Gottingen (Berger, 2017, p. 19). The objectives of history writings at that time were to propagate the political agenda of German Nationalism.

Historically, the 18th and 19th centuries are considered as the Age of Science, but it was also an Age of History. Nations in Europe used history as a tool to undo and to explore their roots of identity, especially for political legitimacy. It was history which materialized the ancient world and reinforced archeology and other contemporary discipline. In the age of colonialism, history was used as a tool to legitimize the colonial subjugation of Asia, Africa and America. French Revolution boosted human knowledge and introduced a secular modernism in which human consciousness documented personal and collective memory to make new ways for thoughts and freedom. The triumph of Bolshevik Coup, fall of Ottoman empire and the rebuilding of mainland Europe challenged the progressive idea of history. These all-political factors were responsible for the shift of paradigm in history as a discipline. After First World War Historians were compelled to rethink the methodological conflicts within history due to its political usage in continental Europe and in colonialism.

Historical theory which is a combination of historiography, intellectual history and history of ideas and philosophy of history. However, this explanation is troublesome. Generally, historiography is defined as the writing of past events or the history of historical writings which can be further expanded to the study of the historian's methods, practices, models, paradigm, style and tools.

To make a difference between philosophy of history and historical theory, this study elaborates the historical tradition of how historical theory evolved over time. The term philosophy of history introduces in the late eighteenth century France, and then the German Romanticism in nineteenth century distinguishes two types of reflection about the study of past, one is the course of events (historical reality) and other one is the stories that people tell about the course of events (thought about past). Like historical methodology is the knowledge of how to do historical research, "historical theory is about what historical thought actually is (Paul, 2015, p. 1)." It also deals with the question of how historical thought travels from past to the present and how memory participates in building of this historical consciousness. Once, the past, ontologically unreliable, historians turn against philosophy of history which led to the collapse of many speculative theories in the late twentieth century. This time modernity, including critical and analytical philosophy of history became skeptical to resolve the matter of deflection in intellectual history. During this intellectual crisis, historical theory emerges from the ashes of speculative modernity and analytical philosophy of history which was condemned to be free in building meaning and representation.

Historical theory is a major fabric of the study of historians' methods, practices, models, paradigms, styles and tools. One should not ignore the continuity of philosophy of history and should not confuse it with the literary and scientific notion of theory. Historical theory is a hope in the old traditions of speculative and analytical philosophy of history but with all these continuities, historical theory has some discontinuities with old traditions like the narrative, literary and oral traditions of contemporary historical writings. The only difference between philosophy of history and historical theory is that the latter discusses historical reality and historical process which links it with metaphysics, while the latter proceeding one is concerned with historical thought and epistemology.

2. Function of Historical Theory: An Understanding of Methodology

While understanding the question, notion, and terminology of 'critical' first, this study would investigate the question of practicality of applied historical theory. Historical process places itself in a system of communication with past events, in the form of documents and memories. The interrogation and scrutiny of these events are generally discussed, in historical methodology around historiography, however its function and structure primarily has been discussed in historical theory. After the demise of objectivist modernism, twentieth century introduces social sciences as a discourse, to disjoin the question of subject and search it into the context of language and culture. Theory became an important tool to problematize the existing phenomena. On the one hand its revolutionaries' knowledge, while on other it questioned its own existence. Post-war absurdity and the fall of colonial model of knowledge production are responsible for the decline of conventional social and speculative historical theories.

This epistemic shift in modernism as discourse altogether has shifted the mode of thinking. What if theory evaporates in the process, would it be possible to think historically? Hayden White believes that "to think that one can think outside or

without theory is a delusion (White, 1999, p. iii).” Theoretical thinking is looking into the relation of what can be sense and conceive by perception is also a mode of understanding. “One can do very important and valuable things without theory. Such as talking and listing, loving and hating, fighting and making up, taking pleasure and causing pain, but thinking is not among them. Where there is no theory there is no active thought; there is only impression (White, 1999, p. 68).”

2.1 The Question of Critical Analysis

The emergence of contemporary analytical, critical and systematic nature of historical theory has been bridged by the unexplainable and unexplored territory, which connects it with the rest of all cultural activities. The question of which historical theory seems interesting, i.e. does the relationship of textual and conceptual historical understanding satisfy the theoretical demands of historical studies?

Historical epistemology before the Second World War relied upon the modernist theory of history, which was a social theory but now introduced more critical and analytic approaches to resolve the intra-war time question of how to restore liberal humanism with contesting narratives of leftist-Marxist theory. The paradox of progress split into left and right directions. Historians after the First World War tried to overcome the absurdity of modernity. All hopes were in ruins. The democratic values of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not resolve the issue of World War II. Despite these political changes, a change in the notion of reason took place. History as an event or as a process experienced the death of God,ⁱⁱⁱ the death of man (Foucault, 2002, p. 136-179), the death of author (Barthes, 1967) and now the death of reason (Heidegger, 1989) directly reinforced death of the discipline (Spivak, 2003) of history. These rhetorical statements of death end upon ‘the death of reader’ (Domanska & Kellner, 1994). However Michel Rolph Trouillot (1949-2012) once offers a very different insight into the meaning and use of historicity. “The ways in which what happened and what is said to have happened are and are not the same may itself be historical (Trouillot, 2015, p. 4).” Historical theory tried to resolve the conventional rhetoric of doing history. History as a discipline experienced meaninglessness and an absurd historiography of modernism and contemporary historical theory tried to transform that into a meaningful genre of writing. The disciplinary crisis within the discipline history still exists. However, most conventional historians have pointed out that the problem is resolved which is not correct. The advanced phenomenological understanding and the specialization of twentieth century is challenging historical epistemology. The discussion of how to restore the meaning and representation within the discipline of history is still going on. Until history is taken as a fundamental and basic inherent method for all epistemological researches, the crisis of prejudgment, untranslatable epistemological discourses, historical representation will thus lead the dialogue not to truth but to a dead end.

2.2 Conceptualizing Modes of Expression

The foundational themes and ideas in historical theory are the manifestation of historical form like the question of identity in our interpretation. Its orientations are a binding force of memory, which helps to build a historical meaning. Our experiencing subjectivity bonds together all these notions which are functional in the structure of theory. Representation and meaning gives life to historical theory. Fredric Jameson, in one of his articles "How Not to Historicize Theory" discusses that anti-theoretical culture has been prevails due to the empiricist and positivists' bias which cannot see beyond the objective representation of historical studies.

Why did the theory of history take place in the recent time? It is because of the different approaches of different cultures, which are not historical in modernist Western sense of constructing knowledge about the past. The concept of liberal humanism of Western culture replaced theocentric with anthropocentric in the historical studies in the age of science and history. These changes have developed a way forward for the present evolution of historical theory. The twentieth century postcolonial voices, which have been raised by the silent colonizers, make historical theory an ultra-humanistic approach, which confirm the end of a humanistic theoretical framework for historical study. The professionalization of history, its academic scope, is now inviting new horizons for the future of past and history. Metanarratives have a foundational basis for historical studies, in which it developed the methodology of history. It also differentiates history from the rest of other sciences. Jorn Rusen points out that all nineteenth century researches were mostly based upon how to differentiate from other sciences. These desires to use correct methodologies had helped historical studies to emerge in the time of positivism (Rüsen, 2008, p. 80).

Historical theory is quite different from philosophy of history, historiography and from the concerns of historical methodology. Historical methodology came under saver criticism due to its inclination toward objectivism and scientific positivism. The epistemological concerns of historical theory are not processing grand questions about the process of history, lesson of history and causes of history like philosophy of history once practiced it in the past, especially during eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Historical theory on other hand gave purely epistemic freedom to historical studies, by asking question like how the causes, lessons and process being interpreted by historians while dealing with the topics of war, peace, economy and citizenship. It is more like hermeneutics rather than predictive or speculative in nature. This hermeneutical and interpretative nature is primarily based upon the linguistic order which plays a major role in historical theory.

Nancy Partner has raised phenomenal question, regarding the function of historical theory. What does history mean by doing history, how knowledge of history produces and why we need theory in these all description? (Partner, 2013, pp. 1-3). The scientific knowledge cannot be possible without proper theorization, while in the past it was consider, that only the study of past is enough without due theorization, and without its epistemic reconstruction and reproduction. With the opening of new discussion about the meaning, representation, experience and memory, the objective neutrality of history resisted on multiple fronts, which gave birth to the importance of historical theory. Facts need practical concentration from historians and scholars,

but the establishment of facts and how it came into being is a matter of historical theory. These facts can only open to study, once we thoroughly place them under the historical interpretation, without ideological implications (White, 2008, p. 12).

How much these facts will affect, E. P Thompson placed it under a Marxist description, that a false and incorrectness invites intellectual dishonesty which would response produces historical fallacies (Thompson, 1981). Whenever the epistemological arguments in historical studies decide to determine the meaning of events as facts, a theory is needed to join these disjoined things into a meaningful order. Contemporary postmodern historical theory, at this stage has been given a details reflection in different writings while doing history by the Emplotment of events, reasons and interpretation. Partner explains the interlinking of statement and narratives which communicate with the help of historical theory. The purpose of historical theory is a deep systematic analysis of the historical writings in a reflective mood to sublimate substantial ideas and concepts in it. It has directly transformed eventual reality into factual reality. Disciplinary self-reflection, intellectual transparency and methodological scrutiny are the prime reasons upon which historical theory is going to build itself (Partner, 2013, pp. 1–3). Methodological inspection in historical study, gave a correct proceeding in evaluating the space and time of historical narration and these all set up then further support by historical theory. The ruin of the past becomes the evidence of foundation for historical knowledge. But one thing must be clear, that the structure in the past cannot be narrated but could be an attempt to bridge different temporalities. The comparison of historical identities in the past results in a clash of ideas, but historical theory has the potential for consensus in differences. These historical consensuses which are there in historical theory help to reduce the biasness and misleading of cultural war in the present time. Historical theory binds written history into more meaningful representation.

3. The Challenges of Theoretical Transformation in Historical Studies: Historicizing Historical Theory in Manifestation

The second half of the twentieth century has completely reshaped and restructured historical studies. A lot of historical theories evolved in these periods which need to be historicized for better understanding of challenges and implications of historical theory. This will demonstrate the text and context of different historical understanding during those periods.

There are multiple theories from ancient times up to the present time, but this study investigates post concepts historical theory. After years of professionalization of history as a discipline, history has been reshaped many times with different circumstances and objectives. We have different theories in human sciences, but this study would only be concerning those theories which have methodological, structural and functional importance in the discipline of history. This study would thoroughly introduce those theories after the paradigm and epistemic shifts which happened in the late modern period to look at how they evolved in the process as a critical tool (Foucault, 1969).

3.1 Historical Theorization of Period and Process

The twentieth century contributed a lot of theoretical imagination about historical studies. The political triumph of historical materialism, the emergence of psychological consciousness in continental traditions, the rise and fall of formalism, postcolonial subalternity and the shift of 'cultural materialism'^{iv} directly influenced global theorization of historical studies. Historians and other social scientists were making an alternative meaning for understanding historical process. These historians were trying to mirror the process of history and to liberate the modern determinism of objective history or past which evolved in the late nineteenth century, Rankian traditions. Carol Backer (1873-1945), Benedict Croce (1866-1952) and R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) were the founders who theorized and rethink the historical process of modernization. Croce contributions in historical studies were definitive at that time which elaborates that history has not ultimate and absolute meanings rather, we are involved in the construction of meaning, when conventional narratives were stuck in the content of historicist structure of objectivity. This discussion opens new mediums for understanding the nature of historical process and ultimately raises questions about the existential position of past as phenomenological and ontologically entity.

3.2 Historical Theorization Experience

Historical experience is about truth, validity, interpretation, meaning and temporality of historic existence of being in the process of understanding the totality of history. Arthor Danto (1924-2013) highlights the relationship of the world and our opinion in which either world-related i.e. objective conditions decide how we see the world or mind-related i.e. subjective conditions represent how others see the world. This narration also draws a relationship between historical representation and historical experience. The meaning which evolves from this discussion would also come into apprehension of this historical representation. Late twentieth century, analytical philosophy of history tries to bound truth into a specific historical meaning, which consequence failure. The narrativist critique of Davidson's analytical philosophy developed ahistoricist system of semantics (Ankersmit, 2013, p. 437), where the present separated from past. However, Donald Davidson (1917-2003) while supporting Quine epistemological dualism of empiricism introduces his own approach to the world of meaning which is based upon sensory evidence; through this sensory evidence, the surface of external world reflects it. For him sensory evidence is more valid approach than subjective or psychological approach (Davidson, 2005, pp. 48-49). Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) explores how historical experience in different categories like memory, time and its hermeneutical conditions supported and developed historiological meaning in historical system (White, 1987, p. 169). Ricoeur point out that our interpretative self needs memory to construct an identity narrative to recognize one own existence in the process of experience, but memory have its own uses and abuses on cultural and political level (Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 56-58). David Carr (born 1941) deals with historical experience on phenomenological ground (Carr, 2014). The intention of historians, experience of history on field and how our theoretical formation happened in which the

memorization of events, things, synchronization and temporalities came from that field work and the experience of reflection upon things make historical research more important in understanding the historical being in the world of 'transcendental subjectivity' (Carr, 1999, p.28) and empirical subjectivity.

3.3 Historical Theorization of Political Subjectivities

Historical theory methodologically influenced and mutated by the political events in the fourth decade of twentieth century. World of colonies became separated from each other and new horizon came forward. These separation and political shift gave new ways and opportunities to think out of the box for both the 'colonized' and 'colonizer'. This historical transformation opens an option of choice and freedom to unlearn and learn and reconstruct from the ruins of imperialism.

This political transformation was not a completely new horizon but inspired by the late nineteenth century western model of modernism which they introduced during the age of colonialism. The post-colonial world view rethinks both the colonial and nationalist perspectives in Asia, Africa and America. The postcolonial narratives were primarily against the Eurocentric approach and methodology to past and to understand how the colonials reshaped Asia, Africa and America. As study explores, enlightenment and modernization inspired some very important elements in the craft of historiography. Social and cultural aspects became important in historicizing the past (Bhatti, 2016, pp. 77-94).

3.4 Historical Theorization of Temporal Communication

After the rethinking process of modernism in the first half of twentieth century, a shift of paradigm happened in historical thinking. This paradigm shift was the analytical philosophy of history founded by Carl G. Hempel (1905-1997). Analytical philosophy of history profoundly took its influence by the Anglo-American traditions of positivist, empiricist and linguistic transformation in analytical philosophy of history. These traditions were not only limited to Anglo-American tradition, but continental German philosopher also Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) *Philosophical Investigation* was one of the foundational theses which turned the ideal linguistic requirement of Russell while studying and examining philosophy as a discipline. Wittgenstein 'language game theory' (Wittgenstein, 1986) makes it possible for everyone to be a part of philosophical traditions. These traditions in context help analytical traditions in historical studies. As this study earlier mentioned, Carl G Hempel played a foundational role in these traditions. Hempel work shifted historical studies from speculative to analytical tradition after publication of "The Function of General Law in History". He proposed that historical explanation must have at least one general law upon which the question of how and why would be solved.

Before this general law in history, historians believed that making historical imagination could be possible only by combination of events into a story. Hempel mentioned that "a general law ...a statement of universal conditional form which is capable of being confirmed or disconfirmed by suitable empirical findings" (Hempel, 1942, pp. 35-48). The issue of action and purpose in history were the emerged

differences and trends among the analytical historians of late twentieth century and to cultural materialists like White and Louis O. Mink. The salvation of Homo sapiens was a major factor of differences which gave a way to cultural theorists to make an isolation with the analytical traditions (Brzechczyn, 2018, pp. 1–27).

Generally, Language which is both literary language and language of common man cannot separate from each other. The human thought process is the formation of the above two inseparable entities which confirm human existence. This existence, however, in response, communicates ideas and other things which are responsible for a meaningful order (Ferris, 2008, p. 36). These all developments reinforce theory which takes its elementary formation (Lorenz, 2011, p. 14).

3.5 Historical Theorization of Presence and Present

Conventional historiography and philosophy of history would not allow it to say something about the present perspective (Staley, 2002, pp. 72–89). David Hackett Fisher also considers presentism as fallacy (Fischer, 1970, p. 135). In historical studies, the issue of period i.e. presentist narratives refuse to communicate with the narrative of the past, which is an objective phenomenon in which stories present in actual conditions. The modernist stuck in a substantial validity that past narrate itself without our interference in the building historical meaning. Such narratives impose an absolute wishful interpretation to get desired political results. The production of knowledge is not limited by the external means of culture. Research explores it, that such attempt creates historiographical nihilism in later twentieth century. The objective reality is also a cultural reconstruction of either formulas or social theories.

History is no longer just a narration about the presence and permeability of the past, even though the past will play an important role, however, not a central one. The present is always there, in front of us, and the future has a rational predictability; let the study allow to remark a scientific permeable availability. This futuristic concept of history has the potential to affect ‘the future of past’ (Koselleck, 2004). If researcher agrees with ‘Kavin Reilly’ (Reily, 2007) that history is not just a noun but also a verb which means that it has a cognitive capability. Historical studies are not just a body of stagnating knowledge but involve historical thinking for the present and for future as well.

The twentieth century phenomenologists and existentialists were the precursor for the presentist and futurist approaches in historical studies. They were the first to condemn the fundamentalism of pre-modern and modern thought about the historical knowledge production. The ‘bad faith’ (Sartre, 1956) of conventional historians never gave them an opportunity to see beyond their speculative and fundamental objectivist prejudices.

The presentist and futurist turns questioned the presence of the future and freedom of past and present. Arthur Danto an art critic, philosopher and philosopher of history responded about the mentioned discussion that “the future, if it is not determinate, does not exist” (Danto, 1962, pp. 146–179). He asserts that the future is free as compare with the past which has been constructed. The possibility of the future is not dead like a past, rather it can transform the existing narration of dualism (Ayer, 1956, p. 188) and (Danto, 1962, p. 148).

4. The Implications of Contemporary Historical Theory: Encounters Anti-Historiographic Culture with Discourse of Meaning

The early twentieth century Heideggerian interpretation as an anti-humanistic discourse does not agree with the question of skepticism, which is absurd and useless. The correspondence of subject, object and verb in Heideggerian epistemology cannot pretend to be skeptical but always understands the development of historical process which in phenomenology calls it, being in the world making historical meanings. For phenomenology, human being is the ultimate being which have the capacity to project a network of meanings in which things are revealed. Understanding of human being like Dasein, Heidegger was sure about the possibility to perceive and conceive the meaning of historical existence which developed in the long period of historical shifts and process. Derrida examines it like a deconstructionist desire and hope in which unstable becomes stable and impossible become possible. Jenkins believes that if there would a continuity of peace and stability there would not be politics, chaos is there and thus our actions are possible for the consensus of change and replacement of the instability. Instability is not natural rather it is a constructed phenomenon (Jenkins, 1999, p. 29). However, White believes that the political intervention of historians into representational meanings creates ethical possibility about past as a story of freedom and as an epistemic choice (White, 1978, p. 22). Impossibility of alternative representation in the discourse of nineteenth century historical studies impact the function and neutrality of historical theory. On one side if the epistemic suppression of other genres like literature and rhetoric gave an advantage to historical studies to practice independently it also led this analysis to edge of chaos.

4.1 Fragmentation of Metahistory

The isolation and alienation in historical narration has existed for centuries within the nature and function of historical knowledge. It is only in the present contemporary time that it started to rethink systematically on an analytical basis. R.G Collingwood described 'history as the science of human actions' (Collingwood, 1946, p. 20) in which things belong to the world of change however, in ancient Greek things which are changeable were impossible to know. For ancient Greek folks only, mathematical knowledge fulfills the status and nature of knowledge.

There was a discussion in the pre-Socrates philosophy about the possibility of knowledge. The discussion was about the problem of motion. Obscurantism was broadly anti-intellectual, and they were dominated at that time. 'The way of truth' and 'the way of opinion'^v represents the truth and appearance of the world in which change is impossible. Opinion for the philosopher of Greek was semi-knowledge not a complete rationality. For them knowledge is a universal phenomenon which can be useful everywhere. The metaphysical and ontological discussion during the pre-Socrates period deeply influenced every bit of knowledge whether it was historical or other than it. The histories wrote in Greek were mostly inspired by these approaches.

However, the medieval world of historical knowledge had developed under different circumstances which possess different opinion about the function of historical knowledge. Scholars of Judo-Christians-Islamic world who believes in the Biblical hermeneutics and reconstruction of hadith took part in the production of

knowledge. The late twentieth century crisis of historical knowledge production in historical studies happened due to the late nineteenth century failure of objectivist determinism, which is collectively known as Historicism (White, 2005, pp. 147–157). The delusion of old regime and fantasy of old political order had been deconstructed by historical knowledge. The revolutionary nineteenth century Europe evolves into a factual historiographical tradition which later become a central point for the critic of late twentieth century historical theory (White, 2010, p. 306).

Historical studies from its early institutionalization have differences of opinion about the practice and theory in hermeneutics and philosophy of history. The fundamental empiricists and objectivists of the late nineteenth century were strictly against the culture of theoretical dominance in the domain of history. They even reject romanticist historians like Jules Michelet's *On History* was considers rhetoric and fiction. In early twentieth century his work recognized and acknowledged among historian as historical craft in the historical and historiographical writings in France.

Will Durant was very much Optimist about the possibility of historical meaning. He believes that the past is living as a heredity material and function as well, which has been transformed to us personally and collectively (Durant, 2014, pp. 87–97). However, this concept has encouraged isolation and alienation of historical theory in which the present is not working as an epistemological temporality. These challenges on the one hand have given a tough time to historical theory while on other hand it rooted the growth of theory in these circumstances to develop into an independent entity, in the spectrum of research and other methodologies.

Historical study can treat methodological skepticism by investigating it in the historical process. Historical study can function both in reflective and in field work. It challenges the universality of procedure and structure of ideas and connects it with the locality of alternative meaning to represent a hope in a discourse of meaninglessness.^{vi} Whether the discourse is humanistic like thinking about a specific theoretical formation of what and where it happened or anti-humanistic i.e. how the structure of theory and practice came into being, the analysis will produce its meaningful representation without skeptic notions.

4.2 Epistemic Possibilities in Historical Theory as Applied History

Theoretical framing accommodates textual and structural anxieties through historiographic investigation. Theory is likely a predictable source for examining the craft of history, its method and its practices. Theory as objectivist history has been widely practiced by the nationalist, conservative and progressive traditions of nineteenth and twentieth century historical writings (Masood, 2024). However, in applied history theory is not bound to interpret the determinist historical process or to understand the historical societies, but to change these all situation through 'a philosophical defense of history in the metonymical mode' (White, 1973, p. 28). Jorn Rusen a foundational contemporary German philosopher of history and historiography highlights how historical consciousness shape moral consciousness. Which means how theory becomes history and history becomes theory. These conditions introduced us with linguistic form in which narrative competences play a role in shaping and re-shaping the process of historical development.

Narrative competence is subdivided into three competences like competence of historical experience^{vii}, competence of historical interpretation^{viii} and competence of historical orientation^{ix} which is based on elements of content, form and function. The theoretical legitimacy of historical model ensures the collapse of 'philosophy of subject'^x and fall of human as a center of knowledge which ensured an anti-humanist philosophy of history. The methodological form of theory calls for action to identify the fabricated facts and domesticated events from the ideological implementation in historical writings. Applied history demands different tools and methods and intentions of historians in the construction of historical knowledge. These intentions are a matter of ethical and epistemological concerns.

Hayden White has raised some very interesting questions while dealing with Manifesting history. "What of a manifesto for history? Does it make any sense to manifest for a scholarly discipline, and especially a contemplative rather than a drastic one, fixed on the past, committed to the long view, suspicious of generalization, and hostile to every futurism? (White, 2009, p. 220)"

Frank Ankersmit stresses that history is not just a passive activity where historians are supposed to present the past as it looks but also ensure intervention in the process of its presentation. Manifesto of annals school, or subaltern studies deeply transforms the historiographical narrations of truth and meaning about the community and about the discipline itself.

In applied history the applicability of epistemic ideology stands to define the historian's transcendental instinct which synchronizes the reflection of ideas within historical studies while looking into the methodological undertaking of historical theory. Theoretical ethics and manifestation have no choice but to move into the ideology of meaningful representation. The epistemic ideology of historiography belongs to historical theory, rather than the political spectrum.

5. Denounce and Direction of Historical Theory

This study investigates the deflection of knowledge in historical studies, which happened during the late twentieth century in the post war period. Postmodern theorization introduced and established alternatives way out for historical knowledge production. Historical theory shares boundaries with other disciplines. It clearly presents a transcendental hope for a new form of historical studies which has the capacity to resolve the existential crisis and transform itself into a more advanced genre of the future. Historical theorization in contemporary time confirms that the deflection in historical knowledge happened due to its own modernist historicist nature, rather, than owing to postmodernity. The development in historical studies from classic humanism to liberal humanism, which transformed history into anti-humanistic and post-humanistic epistemology in the twentieth century have presented multiple shades of conceptual changes in philosophy of historiography. History as a discourse of desires has epistemic freedom and cultural responsibility. Historical theory condemned politically domesticated possibility of having claims for authentic objective representation. Historiosophy believes that historians have imaginations for story which are an attempt to present the real (Kudrya, n.d.). This perplexity of narration deals with dead stories from the past through annals and

chronicles. Historical theory alternatives exist in applied history and historical hermeneutics to bridge the non-communicative past into translatable present. The problem of truth, subjectivity and reconciliation faced terror and violence regarding rights, freedom and value of citizenship.

CONCLUSION

Historical knowledge cannot be bound to a specific interpretation. Historical theory is not just a history of historiography or approaches to philosophy of history but rather have more important themes, even in the time of postmodern challenges, like 'identity' (Bhatti, 2012, p. 137), future of past and communication with different temporality. The aesthetic of historical theory is that things get revealed and communicate into it like Heideggerian Dasein in which a being revealed into itself in the process of becoming.

Thompson practice of historical studies transforms theory into a social activism (Partner, 2013, p. 318). His *Making of English working Class* was an attempt against the deterministic school of historical writings. He strikes the so called intellectual and political border line, and impulsively supports public activism to overcome historic anxiety by the will of historical knowledge. Thus, on the same patterns the truth of postcolonial and subaltern historians tried to give voice to the unspeakable and unheard narratives.

There are three layers of theoretical practices reflecting the nature of historical theory. The first one is the epistemological legitimacy of doing history, like social and cultural historical theories, second is to verify the historical position of theory, like historian's use of specific historical methodology and third one is to separate historical theory from the rest of other theoretical framework, like scientism or art and humanities etc (Lorenz, *Ibid* 118, 15). Historical theory needs more practice in the present time. It can help our psycho-cultural confusion of how to overcome upon our own memory as practical past and how to wake up from the condensation of unconscious political dreams work into a more conscious historical work in the presence of contemporary challenges in epistemic virtues of functional historiography.

A historian as a researcher primarily uses historical methodology to explore unexplored phenomenon in historical process, however, in case of historical theory; it clearly challenged the authenticity and probability of historical methodology. However, historical theory resistance was not just limited to historical methodology. Historical theory in contemporary culture of writings challenges other schools of thought like analytical, dialectical, positivist and relativist theorization. Historical studies and writing in contemporary time freely move from psychologism to semiotics and from semiotics to ontology in historical context which makes it more difficult but inclusive in term of contextualization of knowledge. Historical theory in contemporary time committed to investigate structuralist and existential phenomenologist crisis in knowledge production and wanted to free humanity from the burden and perplexity of past. Applied history needs to be in function with different disciplinary areas such as field work to investigate static archival and official narratives of historical writings. Historical theory in contemporary time has the

potential to make meaning and memories possible and how to remember it and how to forget these things when needed. Historical production of meaning and method is the utmost important process of historical knowledge. Historical theory develops a system of re-enactment in which it functions under a complex sign and figurative system to construct an alternative medium for its legitimacy. Historical theory never meant to reject the phenomenological existence of the past. If the interpretation cannot bridge the structure with the rest of the plot of story it needs a willingness to realize a historical pluralism where the entire materials in this political polarization count as a system of signs. Historical theory calls for making sense of these all-unrealized historiographical representations into meaningful genre. Historical theory suggests a form of historization, in which elements of fiction are equally important in the Emplotment and explanations of events. Historical discourse digests the imposed archival politics of objective past as a part of moralizing narratives and dues to the domestication of political ideology. Theory develops alternative meanings and method for manifestation which flow from cultural humanism to digital nomadism.

REFERENCES

- Anjum, T. (2004). Speculative philosophy of history: Some major themes. *Historicus, Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi*, 52(2), 65–81.
- Ankersmit, F. (2005). *Sublime of historical experience* (1st ed.). Stanford University Press.
- Ankersmit, F. (2013). Historical experience beyond the linguistic turn. In N. Partner & S. Foot (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of historical theory* (pp. 437–454). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Ayer, A. J. (1956). *The problem of knowledge*. Macmillan.
- Balfour, I. (2002). The sublime between history and theory: Hegel, de Man, and beyond. In I. Balfour (Ed.), *After poststructuralism: Writing the intellectual history of theory* (pp. 110–129). University of Toronto Press.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (1st ed.). Penguin Books.
- Berger, S. (2017). The invention of European national traditions in European Romanticism. In S. Macintyre, J. Maiguashca, & A. Pok (Eds.), *The Oxford history of historical writings* (Vol. 4). Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
- Bhatti, M. S. (2012). Limiting the authority of historical knowledge: Postmodern critique of 'historicism' and 'history.' *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 32(1), 137–146.
- Carr, D. (1999). *The paradox of subjectivity: The self in the transcendental tradition*. Oxford University Press.
- Carr, D. (2014). *Experience and history: Phenomenological perspectives on the historical world*. Oxford University Press.
- Carr, E. H. (2018). *What is history?* (5th ed.). Penguin Books.
- Collingwood, R. G. (1946). *The idea of history*. Clarendon Press.
- Danto, A. C. (1962). Narrative sentences. *History and Theory*, 2(2), 146–179.
- Davidson, D. (2005). *Truth, language, and history* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.

- Durant, W. (2014). *Fallen leaves: Last words on life, love, war, and God*. Simon and Schuster.
- Fisher, D. H. (1970). *Historian's fallacies: Toward a logic of historical thought* (1st ed.). Harper Perennial.
- Foucault, M. (1969). *The archaeology of knowledge* (2nd ed.). Pantheon Books.
- Fulbrook, M. (2002). *Historical theory: Way of imagination* (1st ed.). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Fry, P. (2009, September 1). Reflections: Who doesn't hate theory now? [Lecture]. University of Yale. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FH7wsG1hdKw>
- Ferris, D. S. (2008). *The Cambridge introduction to Benjamin* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Ginzburg, C. (1999). *History, rhetoric, and proof*. Brandeis University Press.
- Hempel, C. G. (1942). The function of general laws in history. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 39(2), 35–48.
- Holmes, O. W. (1991). Historical time, mind and critical philosophy of history. In A. Tymieniecka (Ed.), *Analecta Husserliana* (Vol. 37, pp. 23–54). ANHU Press.
- Hunter, I. (2006). The history of theory. *Critical Inquiry*, 33(1), 78–112.
- Jenkins, K. (1999). On the end of metanarratives. In *Why history?* (pp. 27–39). Routledge.
- Jenkins, K., Morgan, S., Munslow, A., Bourke, J., & White, H. (Eds.). (2007). *Manifesto for history* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Koselleck, R. (2004). *The futures of the past: On the semantics of historical time* (1st ed.). Columbia University Press.
- LaCapra, D. (1985). *Rethinking intellectual history: Text, context, and language* (2nd ed.). Cornell University Press.
- Lorenz, C. (2011). History and theory. In A. Schneider & D. Woolf (Eds.), *The Oxford history of historical writing* (Vol. 5, pp. 14–30). Oxford University Press.
- Martin, H. (1989). *The end of philosophy and the principle of reason*. Harper and Row.
- Ricoeur, P. (2004). *Memory, history, forgetting*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Rüsen, J. (2008). *History: Narration, interpretation, orientation* (2nd ed.). Berghahn Books.
- Rüsen, J. (2017). *Evidence and meaning: A theory of historical studies* (1st ed.). Berghahn Books.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1956). *Being and nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology*. Washington Square Press.
- Staley, D. J. (2002). A history of the future. *History and Theory*, 41, 72–89.
- Thompson, E. P. (1981). *The poverty of theory and other essays*. Merlin Press.
- White, H. (1973). *Metahistory: The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- White, H. (1978). *Tropic of discourse: Essays in cultural criticism* (1st ed.). The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- White, H. (1987). *The content of the form: Narrative discourse and historical representation* (1st ed.). The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- White, H. (1999). *Figural realism: Studies in the mimesis effect* (1st ed.). The Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Woolf, D., & Schneider, A. (Eds.). (2011). *The Oxford history of historical writing: Historical writing since 1945* (Vol. 5). Oxford University Press.
- Masood, D. (2024). Sources, nature and narrative of Pashtun public history: Historiographic freedom and responsibility. *International Journal of Politics & Social Sciences Review*, 3(3), 30-43.
<https://ojs.ijpssr.org.pk/index.php/ijpssr/article/view/37>
- Masood, D. (2024). Rethink Pashtun's historiography as a narration of violence, displacement, and resistance: Applied history in Waziristan studies. *Shnakhat: Arts and Humanities Multidisciplinary Journal of Pakistan*, 3(3), 235-254. Shanakht Research & Educational Institute.
<https://shnakhat.com/index.php/shnakhat/article/view/346>.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Martin Heidegger believes that the essence and objective of philosophy completed its intellectual journey, started from pre-Socrates ontological philosophy up to the present contemporary phenomenological philosophy. He believes that Pure Sciences like information technology and physics took the journey from here up to the next level.

ⁱⁱ Wilhelm Giesebrecht was a Prussian zoologist, specialized in copepods.

ⁱⁱⁱ For details see, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

^{iv} Cultural Materialism is an attempt to study near or contemporary past while making a context for historical text.

^v Parmenides a Pre-Socrates Greek ontological Philosopher, famous for his poem *On Nature* in which he discussed way of opinion and way of truth.

^{vi} *Towards a Revival of Analytical Philosophy of History* by Around Paul A. Roth's Vision of Historical Sciences Edited by Krzysztof Brzechczyn support the argument that history and philosophy should work together.

^{vii} Understanding of past and to know the temporality of its time by separating from present.

^{viii} How to bridge the past with present and make a possible future which respects the temporality.

^{ix} Understanding identity, human action and aesthetics with respect to historical knowledge.

^x Philosophy of subject rose after the renaissance whose liberal humanistic claim acknowledge a pre-Socrates model of knowledge in which man is the center of all measurement. This philosophy bankrupted after the emergence of postmodernism. Philosophy of subject contains both continental and analytical traditions.