HUNGARIAN PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW

Teleology: Old Wine in New Skins

Edited by László Bernáth — Dániel Kodaj

Contents

Attila Hangai

What is Rational Reconstruction in the History of Philosophy?

A Reply to Live Reconstructivists*

Christia Mercer's defence of the contextualist history of philosophy and her opposition to rational reconstruction in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (Mercer 2019) induced some direct reflection in the *Hungarian Philosophical Review* 66/1 (2022), titled *Reconstructivists Not Dead*. As the title suggests, the editors propose to defend reconstructivist methodology as the aim of the special issue:

> Our aim is twofold. First, to present methodological reflections on what exactly reconstructivist methodology consists in, how it is different from contextualism, and how it can provide new perspectives and insights not available for contextualists. Second, to demonstrate, with the help of case studies, that reconstructivist research can produce relevant and exciting new results. (Szalai and Tóth 2022. 6)

In what follows, I reflect on some arguments found in the issue and in Mercer's study: first, (I) on the purported distinction between reconstructivism and contextualism; second, (II) on Mercer's principle for making the distinction; third, (III) on what rational reconstruction amounts to.

I. RECONSTRUCTIVISM VS. CONTEXTUALISM

Let us start with the very distinction: reconstructivism versus contextualism. I think Mercer rightly identifies an important divide as a difference in purpose (Mercer 2019. 530, 533–539). Namely, whereas "contextualists" are engaged in a study to identify and explain views and arguments of past philosophers in their own historical context, that is, to explain *historical facts*, "reconstructivists" aim to gather *philosophical ideas* (positions and arguments) from historical texts, sometimes irrespective of whether the given philosopher did hold exactly such

views;[1] and they do so to use these philosophical munitions in their contemporary philosophizing. Thus, the distinction is between philosophical and historical *interests*.[2]

Being a matter of aim and purpose, however, drawing the distinction in terms of methodology seems utterly misleading.[3] For one, it seems possible to aim at answering a philosophical problem through studying a past philosopher and their cultural context (philosophical aim and contextualist method), just as to aim at a correct identification of a philosopher's view through reconstructing her arguments preserved in a scattered way (historical aim and reconstruction as a method). For the former, there are numerous examples (quite a lot in Mercer's paper, which she categorizes as "contextualists"). For the latter, there are plenty of works, such as the whole area of Pre-Socratics and most of Hellenistic philosophy,[4] or Leibniz's metaphysics preserved in different writings and notebooks (on which see Blank 2022), to name just three. Even worse for Mercer's account, it is likely that any reasonable scholar reconstructing an old view (with philosophical or historical aim) will appeal to some context of the philosopher in question[5] (hence, they will also be "contextualists" for Mercer (even the notorious Della Rocca),[6] and so unsurprisingly she does not find any live "recon-

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[1] As Schmaltz (2022. 27–28) notes, those who did not care at all about historical accuracy were not reconstructivists but philosophers dealing with strawman views.

[2] Many agree with the primacy of such a distinction, for example, Frede 2022; 1988; 1987; Normore 2016; 1990; Garber 2015; Vermeir 2013. 53–57; Lærke 2013; Hatfield 2005; Rorty, Schneewind, and Skinner 1984; Ayers 1978; Mandelbaum 1965. Also Rorty 1984, although he apparently confuses the terminology, on which see section III. Skinner (1969. 3–5) puts the distinction in terms of studying the text vs. studying the context. Passmore (1965) and Gracia (1992. 234–276) propose more detailed differentiations of aims.

[3] The terminology seems to originate from Rorty 1984, see section III.

[4] Cf. Frede 2022. 58, 85–86. While both Mercer and her critics restrict the scope of their reflections to early modernity, most of what they say applies to history of philosophy on a general, theoretical level. Thus, allowing that there will be differences in the specific methodology applied for material from different ages, and that the difference stems from the difference in the nature of the textual evidence, I aim to consider what is common in studies of philosophies in different periods.

[5] Cf. Rée 1978. 30; Frede 2022. 26, 30; Catana 2013. especially 133; Copenhaver 2020. However, Blank (2022. 72) denies using "contextualist methodology". This seems an adequate description of his paper, although he does appeal to many (even minor) works of Leibniz, which is sometimes cited as a contextualist feature (although, as it is often emphasized, the use of *all* relevant evidence is a minimal criterion of historical study, see, e.g., Normore 2016. 33, 45–46). Blank's reconstruction, however, is devoid of the feature which the methodological papers of the reviewed issue – Lenz 2022; Schmaltz 2022; and Tóth 2022 – emphasize: using concepts in the reconstruction of the view that are not available for the given author due to historical reasons. On this, see section II.

[6] Della Rocca is accused by Garber (2015) of doing mere rational reconstruction in Della Rocca 2008 instead of taking the job of the historian of philosophy seriously, that is, to identify the real historical Spinoza. Among many simplifications of Della Rocca, Garber points to the missing identification of Spinoza's motivations, especially his ethical and political concerns, while reducing his philosophy to pure rationalism following from the principle of sufficient reason. Della Rocca (2015) agrees that what he does is rational reconstruction. Moreover, he

structivist"). Thus, it would be better to label the main divide as between (say) "philosophical history of philosophy" and "historical history of philosophy".[7] This is not just a point of terminology, though, since this division and the methodological one are independent, as we have seen. Hence, it would be better to keep them distinct; so (I believe) we could avoid a lot of confusion.

Thus, this means that the distinction is not merely a matter of emphasis on different aspects of a "dialogical reading", as Martin Lenz suggests (Lenz 2022). He is right that we can learn much about our philosophical assumptions or the genealogy of our concepts by reading historical texts, as we inevitably apply our own conceptual framework to understand those texts. However, the very nature of his dialogical reading invites a division into two steps in the process. First, the reader aims to establish an interpretation of the historical view; then, she brings it into dialogue with our contemporary concepts or another text embodying our contemporary concepts. Granted that current considerations already influence the first step, it still relies on historical evidence and seems to remain faithful to the past author and their concepts.[8] So, Lenz's approach is best seen as a combination of historical reconstruction with a further step of philosophical reflection (similar to the idea expressed, e.g., by Rorty 1984. 49).[9]

At one point, however, Lenz insists on the difference between philosophical and historical *aims*, in addition to the methodological divide (Lenz 2022. 17). For an unstated reason, he takes his philosophical aim of learning about our assumptions as more prominent than any historical aim could be (although he only mentions a quite secondary one of extending the canon,[10] but not the explanation of historical facts). Accordingly, he construes his dialogical method as dependent on his *philosophical aim*. That is, Lenz fails to be in dialogue with Mercer, who writes about a methodology for *historical aims*.

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acknowledges that his aims are philosophical: to criticize contemporary philosophy through Spinoza's philosophy. Thus, Della Rocca could have been a par excellence "reconstructivist" for Mercer (philosophical aim with reconstructivist method), but she misses the opportunity, and instead clings to Della Rocca's comment that he does believe to identify the real Spinoza. Mercer's taking Della Rocca to be a "contextualist" is all the more surprising, as she needs to stretch the meaning of "context" beyond plausibility to cover Della Rocca's principle of interpretation, namely, the principle of sufficient reason. I hope no argument is needed to show that this is not a contextual factor (in the sense used in the debate).

[7] This is the terminology of Frede *2022*.

[8] This "dialogue" seems to be an application of our later concepts as a heuristic to search for similar or analogous conceptions in the past work. At the end, the past view must be identified through a thorough (historical) interpretation of the textual evidence, no matter what heuristics are applied in the process. As Gracia (1992. 154–155) points out, a real dialogue requires that the parties can respond to each other and all of them can (and is open to) change their views. Thus, strictly speaking, dialogue with the past is impossible.

[9] Cf. Beaney 2013. 253–255, who calls his own approach "dialectical reconstruction;" also see Frede 2022. 10, *26*, 124–130; Passmore 1965. 12–13.

[10] This aspect is the focus of Klein *2022*, so the placing of her paper in the journal issue is unclear. Hence, I do not discuss it here.

Tóth – who also confuses the aim of a study with the methodological question[11] – takes such a two-step approach (of historical reconstruction and philosophical reflection) as incoherent (Tóth 2022. 66). I see no incoherence here. His argument for the purported incoherence seems to depend on confusion. He suggests that contextual studies aim at identifying the actual view of a philosopher, which depends on the philosopher's *utterance*, whereas reconstructivists try to recover possible views, namely *propositions*. This curious wording often in the paper disguises that the contextual approach aims at historical truth without resorting to contemporary concepts,[12] while the reconstructivist aims at historical truth[13] by allowing concepts unavailable to the historical figure (on this question, see section II). In this specific case (of the alleged incoherence), Tóth is misled by his curious formulation: "the reconstructivist does not aim at reconstructing what historical agents took the utterance to mean, rather at discovering what proposition is expressed by the utterance." (Tóth 2022. 58). But what could be the intended meaning of an utterance, if not the propositions expressed by the utterance (with illocutionary force,[14] of course)? 'Proposition' is, after all, introduced into the philosophical vocabulary for the *meaning* of utterances of sentences and the like. That is, both contextual reconstruction and rational reconstruction will result in a set of propositions (and since we are discussing philosophical views, the propositions will have inferential relations among them). The difference between them is, perhaps, that while the contextual reconstruction aims to identify the set of propositions most plausibly attributable to the past author

[11] Let me pick out just one of his rhetorical arguments: appeal to the (putative) absurdity of thinking that we understand Aristotle better than Aquinas simply due to our better grasp of the context (Tóth 2022. 62). This completely misses the mark. First, Aquinas did not engage in history of philosophy: he pursues philosophy, just as any commentator before him and many after him. Thus, it is quite likely that historians of philosophy indeed have a better grasp of the historical Aristotle than Aquinas, allowing that Aquinas' philosophical interpretation or reconstruction is quite ingenious. Second, reserving such an authority to the Great Aquinas is quite at odds with Tóth's general audacity for claiming that rational reconstructivists often better understand past philosophical views than the past philosophers themselves.

[12] In this paper, I am not focusing on issues with "contextualism" – which I discuss in Hangai (2023) –, so I only mention cursorily here that Tóth's circumscription of contextualism as a search for identifying the *particular intention* the past philosopher had (Tóth 2022. 55–57) (hence, the meaning of the text) is, in a sense, a distortion. Historical facts need not be about the *psychology* of an agent or an author. Indeed, psychological explanations should be avoided in history of philosophy as much as possible, while explanation in terms of philosophical reasons is to be preferred. See Frede 2022; 1988; 1987; also Skinner 2002b, Gracia 1992. 229–231, *passim*. That is, an internal history of philosophy (even if called "contextualist") need not (and should not) privilege the author's actual intention or interpretation, but should take into account interpretations of contemporaries of the author, those that contributed to the same debate as the author. Cf. Skinner 2002c. 77–78; 2002a. 110–111. Also see the accounts of Passmore 1965; Mandelbaum 1965; Normore 1990; 2016; Hatfield 2005. 103–110; Lærke 2013; Vermeir 2013.

[13] At some points, he makes the distinction in terms of purpose (reconstructivists having philosophical interest), for example, Tóth 2022. 64.

[14] See Skinner 2002a; 2002c. 82; 1969. 45–47.

(identifying the historical truth), the rational reconstruction does not do so.[15] So, it is unclear why it would be incoherent to assess, once determined, such a set of propositions according to current philosophical standards.

II. MERCER'S PRINCIPLE

Let us turn to how Mercer conceives of the main distinction above. She provides a minimalist criterion to count a given approach as historical (or contextualist): the aim to "getting things right", that is, to be historically accurate. Influenced by Skinner (1969), she explicates the rule negatively in terms of the historical author's *psychology*: "historians of philosophy should not attribute claims or ideas to historical figures without concern for whether or not they are ones the figures would recognize as their own" (Mercer 2019. 530). Since there is no independent criterion of whether the psychological criterion holds (we cannot ask dead philosophers whether they would adopt a view or recognize it as their own) but the historical (mainly textual) evidence, we can reduce Mercer's rule to conformity with ordinary historical evidence.[16]

Schmaltz criticizes Mercer's principle as not allowing the use of concepts unavailable to the past philosophers in the reconstruction of their views (Schmaltz 2022). In practice, such would be contemporary concepts (or at least later than the historical author), like referential opacity, as Quine conceived it. Schmaltz says the possibility that an interpretation appealing to such a concept C is correct implies that what the past author A *meant* is to be understood in terms of concept C. Since concept C is supposed to be unavailable to author A, A could not recognize the reconstructed view as their own since it involves concept C (and concepts unavailable to one cannot be recognized by one). Hence, Mercer's principle would render the interpretation incorrect; as Schmaltz puts it, it would "violate Mercer's GTRC,[17] as much as Skinner's principle"[18] (Schmaltz 2022. 30). While I agree that using such concepts in interpreting past authors is not straightforward, I think doing so does not necessarily violate Skinner's and Mercer's principle. As I will suggest interpreting the past author's claim in terms of such a concept C involves attributing the availability of concept C to the author rather than appealing to a concept unavailable to them. Before turning to the details, let us review Schmaltz's arguments for his claim.

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[15] Curiously, Tóth believes that rational reconstruction does consider all the historical data and context, so he remains closer to contextualism than he admits. On my remarks on this, see section II.

[16] This point is already made clear by Skinner himself, see Skinner 1969. 28–29, 49. On this point, see also Schliesser 2019.

[17] Mercer abbreviates her "getting things right constraint" as "GTRC".

[18] For the original explication, see Skinner 1969. 28.

In support of this view, he appeals to the ordinary case that sometimes an interpreter might hit the mark better than a speaker or, in general, an agent; that is, the interpreter understands better what the agent means than the agent itself. The reason cited (from Kant) is that the agent "may not have determined his concept sufficiently" (Kant 1998. A314/B370). Before turning to the ordinary phenomenon, let me comment on the appeal to Kant's authority. First, if Kant is right in his diagnosis of our better understanding than the author, the concept will appear to be *available* to the author. For according to Kant, the author did not have an accurate understanding because they determined the concept insufficiently. But insufficient determination is already some determination, so it seems clear that according to Kant, the author already has the concept in some (though insufficiently determined) way. So, the concept is available to the author, at least in principle.[19] Second, Kant is explicit in the sentence preceding the cited one that he does not mean his interpretation (perhaps appealing to concepts insufficiently determined by their authors) to be a historical interpretation, or as Kant writes, "I do not wish to go into any literary investigation here, in order to make out the sense which the sublime philosopher combined with his word." (*ibid*.) So, the citation of Kant should rather imply (if we want to draw any conclusion from Kant's authority) that when we better understand some author than the author themselves, even then, the author has access to all the concepts in terms of which we understand them, although in an insufficient way. But, again, such a case should not be taken as a historical understanding anyway.[20]

The ordinary phenomenon – we understand better what a speaker means than the speaker – is still pressing, though. But consider the case more fully: it typically continues like this. Once we express our (better) interpretation to the speaker, the speaker *acknowledges* that it is indeed a better understanding of what they meant. This acknowledgement, then, is to be counted as a criterion of what the meaning actually was.[21] In extending this case to writings and past authors, however, we lose this kind of criterion, as they cannot make acknowledgement. However, without such a criterion, it is unclear how we could know if our understanding of what the author meant is better than that of the author. One obvious criterion is the historical evidence, or the "context" if you like. But even though Schmaltz admits the importance of historical evidence (Schmaltz 2022. 6–7), he seems to deny that historical evidence would be decisive in such a case.

Return to Schmaltz's assumption that an interpretation appealing to a concept unknown to a past author might be correct. Let me construe the situa-

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[19] Cf. Kant (1998. B9–11, A8) on how analysis of concepts leads to better understanding of them without adding anything to them. Cf. Passmore 1965. 32.

[20] For a similar reading of Kant's better understanding the author, see Dornbach 2016. 90–97.

[21] Compare Grice (1989, especially Part I: Logic and Conversation). Cf. Rorty 1984. 53–54.

tion differently, which disarms the case against Mercer's constraint. What if the interpretation using concept C turns out to be correct? First, as I suggested above, this should imply that the historical evidence is closely scrutinized, and the interpretation is determined to be adequate to it and more adequate than competing interpretations. But what about concept C? I surmise that in such a case, the adequate interpretation should demonstrate – with supporting textual evidence – that author A indeed had access to concept C (at least, perhaps, in an insufficient way, as Kant suggested). Thus, it would turn out that the correct interpretation will not involve concepts unavailable to the author in question; rather, it would involve attributing the availability of concept C to the author that previously was thought to be unavailable to them.[22] In terms of Mercer's principle, we could say that once A was faced with the interpretation of A's view that involves concept C, A could recognize it as her own, which would comprise A's recognition (learning) of concept C.[23]

It is indeed questionable whether we should allow using such concepts to interpret past authors.[24] Schmaltz himself proposes to be cautious, perhaps leaving it for last resort (Schmaltz 2022. 6–7). With the caution, Tóth (2022. 61) agrees while making the possibility of using concepts unavailable to a past author in historical interpretations the mark of his own "reconstructivism".[25] His caution is, however, telling. He says we should appeal to unavailable concepts only "if

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[22] This is how Szalai (2022) proceeds: attributing the distinction between narrow and broad content to Descartes based primarily on textual evidence where Descartes does use such a distinction, so that she is able to account for certain claims of Descartes that otherwise would lack explanation. While she admits the "apparent anachronism", the lack of a label for and systematic treatment of the distinction, and the shifts between Descartes' appeal to narrow and broad content within short passages (*ibid*. 102), we might take these as signs that Descartes did have the concept in an unclear way (since he did use the distinction), rather than that he did not have it at all. A note on the purported anachronism. Since many commentators of Aristotle interpret the distinction of regarding a *phantasma* in itself and as a copy (or image, *eikōn*) of something else at *de Memoria* 450b20–27 exactly as the distinction of narrow and broad content *à la* Szalai (this seems to be the "orthodox reading" in 20th century scholarship, see references in Caston 2021. note 45 and 47), it seems unlikely that this distinction was completely unfamiliar in the 17th century. However, Caston argues against this reading of Aristotle (Caston 2021. 177–190). Again, the distinction between narrow and broad content might be similar to the case of the concept of subjectivity, which Kaukua and Lähteenmäki 2010 take as a non-textual standard of interpretation that we should assume to be available anytime.

[23] For an approach similar to what I propose in the text, suggested by James Conant, building indeed on Kant's "better understanding", see Forsberg and Conant 2013. 155–159. I owe this reference to Márton Dornbach.

[24] See especially Skinner 2002c. 59–60, 77–78; also Skinner 1969. 7–9, 22–24, 28–29, where the relationship between views of politics on the one hand, and contemporary political practice (or later significance of the views in question) on the other, makes Skinner's case decisive.

[25] Tóth's proposal is probably similar to Della Rocca's holistic approach, according to which the meaning of a historical text depends on contemporary conceptual frameworks, just as everything else; and so history of philosophy is not different from philosophy after all (Della Rocca 2020. 194–195).

the assumption that the historical author expressed that view explains more features of the historical author's utterance than rival interpretations" that appeal to the historical context. That is, the historical context can never be ignored and sets a constraint on what interpretation is acceptable. Thus, Tóth seems unsuccessful in distancing himself from the "contextualist" methodology. Again, it seems unlikely that an interpretation that appeals to a concept C unavailable to philosopher A can explain "more features" than one that appeals only to concepts certainly available to A. An explanation of the former kind leaves at least one "feature" unexplained: the use of concept C.

Lenz, touching upon the issue, goes further. He takes it as a historicist principle that concepts unavailable to an author should not be used in the interpretation of the author's text (Lenz 2022. 12) while submitting that, to gain a better understanding of the past text, it is inevitable to apply such contemporary concepts (or concepts developed significantly later than the target author). His reasons are, however, blatantly flawed (Lenz 2022. 13). First, he suggests that "writing for future generations," which seems a relatively common practice of philosophers,[26] implies that the interpretation of a text that ignores the future reception of the text (this appears to be the idea) is poor. I do not see how this is supposed to follow, and Schliesser's idea of philosophical prophecy (Schliesser 2013) does not help. For a text's meaning differs from how it is understood later (the significance and reception).[27] Second, Lenz suggests that we cannot understand a sentence without taking it to be either true or false. It is true that I cannot fail to take the "that"-clause in the previous sentence to be false *once I have understood it* – but this is completely different from saying that I understand its meaning *because I take it to be false*. Lenz construes the dependency the wrong way. In any case, since the understanding of the sentence does not (and cannot) depend on taking it to be true or false, I can fully understand any sentence without assigning a truth value to it.[28]

[26] Cf. Frede 2022. 28.

[27] Cf. Skinner 1969. 23. As Normore (2016. 43) has put it, "a misreading of a text can be as historically important as a correct reading!" Note that this is consistent with the legitimacy of questions of reception in the history of philosophy, although such questions are different from the question what a given philosopher meant; and, as Hatfield (2005. 106–109) submits, come later than the more basic question of identifying what the author meant in its own context.

[28] This is lucidly shown by Skinner (2002b. especially 29–30). Also see Glock 2008. 889–892.

III. RATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION: WHAT IS IT?

While the papers discussed (and especially the issue editors) aim to defend rational reconstruction as a valid method in the history of philosophy (or in philosophy, for that matter), they use the term mainly in the sense Rorty used it, as I will show it shortly, and give little or no reflection on what this method amounts to (one exception is Tóth 2022). This is all the more problematic, for some confusions detected above could be avoided with reflection. To get a clearer view of what "rational reconstruction" is, let me close with a brief recapitulation of the history of the concept based on Michael Beaney's succinct account and Imre Lakatos' view of rational reconstruction in the history of science. With these in hand, we can find a place for rational reconstruction in history of philosophy. But first, let us see Rorty's account.

Rorty describes rational reconstruction as applying our concepts to past authors to engage in a philosophical discussion with them (Rorty 1984. 49–56). Thus, he emphasized the distorting, anachronistic tendency of rational reconstruction that forces *contemporary concepts* into past views so that they appear as alternative answers to contemporary philosophical problems. Yet, he also proposes to do historical reconstruction, involving an appeal to the cultural context and, most importantly, Skinner's principle as a constraint of accuracy. Simply put, Rorty makes the distinction in terms of Skinner's principle (just like Mercer, as we have seen in section I): historical reconstruction adopts it – rational reconstruction does not (ibid. 54). He prefers doing both separately as the two-step approach mentioned above (ibid. 49), where reflection on our concepts follows historical reconstruction. However, he argues for the inseparability of the two methods, pointing to the indispensability of our concepts to understanding other's acts and language (ibid. 51, note 1).[29] Whichever is Rorty's preferred view, most of his considerations point to the former, and he does not sufficiently specify the latter. Thus, it seems the debate related to Mercer's paper – that emphasizes the use of concepts unavailable to a past author in the interpretation – remains in the confines of Rorty's framework and so is misled by Rorty's terminology.

Turning to the history of the method, Beaney (2013. 233–236) detects two sources of rational reconstruction: Neo-Kantianism and Logicism. Neo-Kantians emphasized the distinction between discovery and justification. While discovery (or the generation of our beliefs) is explained mainly in psychological terms, and so it has spurious value, justification (and validity of knowledge) follows strict rules, so the norms guiding justification can be studied scientifically. The method for the latter is called "critical" or "reconstructive". Again, Frege's reduction of arithmetic to logic can be seen as a reconstruction. What he does is,

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[29] The discrepancy is also noted by Beaney (2013. 247).

first, clear the ground from mistaken views and identify aspects of the concept under investigation (the concept "number"), which is a sort of historical investigation. Second, he construes (reconceives) arithmetic in terms of concepts and logical relations.

Following these traditions, "rational reconstruction" becomes an explicit philosophical method for Carnap and subsequently for Popper, Reichenbach, and others (Beaney 2013. 237–242). The authors apply rational reconstruction to various problems, so the method is not uniform for them, but something of the following emerges. Rational reconstruction has to do with *explication* (or redefinition) of our old concepts using clearer (or more basic) concepts, paying particular attention to identifying the *logical relations* between concepts, and aiming to arrive at a more or less *systematic* and *coherent structure* of concepts. Thus, the method is essentially *normative*: it prescribes coherence and systematicity in logical relations. Moreover, it is used primarily in the logic of justification, where *time* (hence history) is not a factor.

Nevertheless, rational reconstruction has been applied in the history of philosophy (as we have seen) and in the history of science. The idea can be fruitfully elaborated using the influential paper of Imre Lakatos (1971). Lakatos argues that an epistemological theory of scientific discovery – inductivism, conventionalism (e.g., Duhem), falsificationism (like Popper), and his methodology of research programs – entails a historical narrative of scientific development. The methodology provides a normative rule of rationality to demarcate science and a criterion for what counts as an internal rational history of science (a rational reconstruction) and what remains as an external irrational factor (e.g., psychological, sociological context). Even though the history of science needs external history as well, internal history is the primary in two ways. First, the internal history of science is autonomous (since this is the rational part of science); hence understanding the logic of science does not require external history. Second, the questions in external history depend on internal history.

Lakatos argues for his methodology by comparing the adequacy of the histories entailed by the different rationality norms of science. That is, he compares the rational reconstructions of the history of science according to each demarcation criterion: how much each renders the actual history of science rational. He prefers the reconstruction that fits the actual history (historic events) better (especially ibid. 117–118). The role remaining for external history is telling: "either provides non-rational explanation of the speed, locality, selectiveness etc. of historic events as *interpreted* in terms of internal history; or, when history differs from its rational reconstruction, it provides an empirical explanation of why it differs" (ibid. 105–106). Thus, importantly, the history of science for Lakatos should explain all the past of science and explain it internally and rationally as much as possible; where it is not possible to provide a rational explanation, an empirical explanation of external history should be supplied. This is reminis-

cent of Michael Frede's approach to the history of philosophy (Frede 2022), which prefers internal history – as much a rational endeavour as possible – over external history (appealing to all sorts of cultural contexts). For him, contextual factors are allowed to *enter into the internal history* to provide empirical explanations when the purely rational explanation is impossible[30] (for Frede, the external history contains all sorts of inter-relations with other scientific disciplines, theology, sociological or cultural context, and psychological motivations). Thus, let me apply Lakatos' view on the history of philosophy by paraphrasing his paraphrase of Kant (Lakatos 1971. 91): "Rational reconstruction without actual history of philosophy is empty; actual history of philosophy without rational reconstruction is blind."

The normative aspect of rational reconstruction and the fact that it can easily lead to distorting selection is apparent in examples like Russell, who aims at identifying generic types of philosophy rather than particular historical views and forces a logically coherent system on the opinions of philosophers (Beaney 2013. 248–252). Another aspect of normativity is the connection to criticism. Like Russell, the so-called "reconstructivists" do not stop with the systematic re-description of the views; they *criticize* anything that does not fit into or conflict with the system. Rational reconstructions "have an important role in making us aware of the logical relations between the views a philosopher holds and facilitating assessment of the validity and soundness of their arguments" (Beaney 2013. 253).

Apparently, Rorty picks up this latter aspect while leaving the positive role of the normativity of rational reconstruction untouched, especially in demarcating internal from external history. Instead, for similar purposes, Rorty introduces two other (larger scale) "genres" of history of philosophy besides historical and rational reconstruction: *Geistesgeschichte*, for guiding larger-scale historical narratives and giving a rationality principle to the history of philosophy (Rorty 1984. 56–61); and *intellectual history* for Geistesgeschichte to remain honest (ibid. 67–74). A simpler, more economical (and preferable) alternative could be construed along the lines of Lakatos' account. It would assign a normative role to rational reconstruction in determining the internal history of philosophy while the actual historical facts would be explained thoroughly (through historical reconstruction, if you will), primarily as rational philosophical acts, secondarily as effects

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[30] I make the comparison only with regard to this aspect. Most importantly, Frede by no means suggests (or gives a hint) that the history of philosophy should be reconstructed in accordance with a uniform norm of philosophical rationality. But the status of non-rational, contextual factors as empirical explanations of historical facts unexplained rationally is quite important for him. See especially Frede 2022. 53–54, 84, 100–101; 1987. xi–xviii; 1988. 669–672. For a similar approach (influenced by Frede), see Normore 1990. 221–226 and 2016. 38–42.

of contextual factors of the time. As suggested above, Frede's account can be construed along these lines.[31]

Let me close by approvingly citing Beaney's reflection on Quine's critique of rational reconstruction (à la Rorty et al.) devoid of historical accuracy (Beaney 2013. 244):

> As I see it, Quine raises a dilemma here for any project of rational reconstruction. Either rational reconstruction aims to provide translational equivalents, or it does not. If it does, then all well and good, but no attempts have yet been successful. If it does not, then there will always be something to explain, in which case appeal will need to be made to actual history (or psychological genesis). But if such appeal is needed, then why not seek to explain the actual history in the first place?

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[31] One might suggest that retrospective histories of philosophy that proceed from a given philosophy and trace its genesis back in the past, like Hegel's history of philosophy is more akin to the structure of Lakatos' account, insofar as such histories apply a given view of philosophy (and so philosophical rationality) to the entire history of philosophy. This is true, but just as Lakatos demonstrates that the theories alternative to his (inductivism, conventionalism, and falsificationism) lead to inadequate historical accounts, inadequacy could be shown for any history of philosophy that applies a uniform norm of rationality throughout the history of philosophy. It seems clear that what philosophy was taken to be in the past (say by Plato) is quite different than what philosophy is taken to be nowadays.

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