

## **A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORICISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CARL PAGE**

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### **Abstract**

“Human Reason is historicistic in nature” is the collective viewpoint of most of the contemporary philosophical discourses. Carl Page regards this viewpoint as ‘philosophical historicism’. This view takes the activity of human reason as a mere result of historical causes and context. Page argues that overemphasis on the historical character of human existence ultimately leads contemporary philosophers to the position that all human reason and knowledge are determined by history and are justified by historical context. Consequently, it has replaced the tradition of the first philosophy that regards human reason as universal and ahistorical. The philosophical historicist approach demands that philosophical inquiry must start with knowledge of historical patterns of human life and thought. It regards the historical context of human existence as a key to an understanding of human activity of reason. Page criticizes this approach and says that though some aspects of human reality and reason are historical, ‘philosophical historicism’ does not reasonably justify the idea of a complete historicity of reason. It undermines the natural tendency of the human mind that peruses universal reason and wants to see things as a whole. This paper aims at a critical analysis of philosophical historicism. Through a study of Page’s analysis of ‘philosophical historicism’ and its critique, this study works out the limitations of historicist trends in contemporary philosophical thought and sees how historicists overlook the fact that some of our experiences and awareness are ahistorically known. This study explores how ahistorical reason is relevant to our philosophical inquiries.

**Key Words:** Philosophical historicism, Contextualization of knowledge, Movement of history, Priority of language, Ahistorical reason.

## Introduction

In his *Philosophical Historicism and Betrayal of First Philosophy* Page critically examines the historicist trends in contemporary philosophical thought. He argues that contemporary philosophers over-emphasize the historical character of human existence. It ultimately leads contemporary philosophers to the viewpoint that all human reason and knowledge are determined by history. This view considers the activity of human reason as mere a result of historical causes and circumstances. According to Carl Page, contemporary philosophical thoughts collectively regard reason as historicistic in nature. Carl Page names this position as 'philosophical historicism'.

'Philosophical historicism', due to its belief in the idea of a pure historical contingency of human mind and reason, regards the historical context of human existence as a key for understanding the human activity of reason. Page maintains that 'philosophical historicism' merely focuses on knowledge of historical patterns of human life and thought to start a philosophical inquiry. This approach rejects the idea of a permanent feature of human nature and believes that reason has no firm foundation. Page regards this approach as a departure from the tradition of Aristotelian philosophy that believes that philosophical inquiry must start with knowledge of the permanent nature of things.<sup>1</sup> Page regards 'philosophical historicism' as a threat to the tradition of the 'first philosophy' that regards human reason as universal and ahistorical. 'Philosophical historicism' undermines the natural tendency of human mind that peruses universal reason and wants to see things as whole.

For Page, relying solely on historical context to understand human life and human thought is inadequate.<sup>2</sup> According to Page, even though some aspects of human reality are historical and even philosophy cannot be regarded completely isolated from the effect of historicity, 'philosophical historicism' does not reasonably justify the idea of complete historicity of reason.<sup>3</sup> It not only undermines the traditional idea of universal knowledge and reason but also involves various kinds of incoherencies. Page regards 'philosophical historicism' as a self-refuting doctrine as on the one hand it believes in complete contextualization of knowledge and does not leave any room for human cognitive access to universal knowledge, but on the other hand, it claims that this doctrine is universally true.

This paper aims at a critical analysis of 'philosophical historicism'. Through a study of Page's analysis of 'philosophical

historicism' and its critique, this study works out the limitations of historicist trends in contemporary philosophical thought. This study starts with the analysis of Margolis, Gadamer and Rorty's thoughts that Page proceeds as three historicist trends of contemporary philosophical thought. Here I see how these thoughts involve a complete locality or historicity of reason. In the second section of this paper, I focus on Page's critique of 'philosophical historicism'. I work out how Page establishes 'philosophical historicism' as a self-refuting and nihilistic doctrine. In the last part of this study, I focus on Roy Clouser's Critique of historicist trends in contemporary philosophical thought and see what anomalies are found in Gadamer and Rorty's ideas of priority of language and cultural contextuality of human knowledge. Here I see how it is improbable to diminish ahistorical reason completely. How historicists overlook the fact that some of our experiences and awareness are ahistorically known and how they are relevant to our philosophical inquiries. I conclude that the contemporary historicist's ideas of the complete historicity of human reason and cultural contextuality of human knowledge are overstatements.

### **Philosophical Historicism**

Most contemporary philosophical discourses consider human reason as artefacts of a particular historical period. Carl Page refers to this viewpoint as 'philosophical historicism'. The underlying principle of 'philosophical historicism' is that there is no independent criterion to validate human reason, concepts and theories. All concepts, theories and standards are relative to a specific human culture that is itself historically conditioned. This approach presupposes that human as a product of a specific socio-cultural dynamics is itself predominately historically determined and has no permanent nature. Hence, human reason cannot be justified by its correspondence to independent reality but is justified by historical context. Page argues that overemphasis upon the historical character of human existence ultimately leads contemporary philosophers to the viewpoint that all human reason, and hence philosophy, is historically conditioned. As a result, Philosophical historicism has replaced the tradition of 'first philosophy', which considers human reason as ahistorical and universal. It believes that philosophical inquiry must start with knowledge of the permanent nature of things.<sup>4</sup>Whereas, the philosophical historicist approach demands that philosophical inquiry starts with knowledge of historical patterns or context of human existence.

According to Page, Philosophical historicism emerges from three contemporary philosophical themes. First is the pragmatic tradition of American philosophy that on the basis of an inquiry into empiricist and continental rationalist tradition replaces the traditional idea of rationality with the idea of practicality.<sup>5</sup> Here Page refers to Margolis's pragmatism. Page finds traces of 'philosophical historicism' in Margolis's project of reconciliation of relativism and realism.<sup>6</sup> Margolis acknowledges the deep historicity of human existence. He explains that human is formed by a historical language and culture. As human conditions change with time, his reason also changes and is determined by his historical context and culture.<sup>7</sup> Page argues that though Margolis' project of reconciling realism and relativism is based on rational inquiries, the standard of inquiry is a mere 'generalization' of apparent facts of life for Margolis. These inquiries are mere speculation on a narrow ground.<sup>8</sup> Margolis's belief in the historicist nature of human existence and culturally constructed human thought leads him to reject the possibility of ahistorical and universal human judgment. For him, permanent and universal human judgments are problematic.<sup>9</sup> Human reason and his inquiry remain limited and cannot transcend from a specific historical context for him. That is why Margolis's pragmatism suggest that knowledge or inquiry is only justified if it is compatible with his practical needs of a specific historical context or period. Therefore, Page concludes that Margolis's conception of rational inquiry and reason is contextual rather than universal. In other words, Margolis pragmatism leads to a complete locality or historicity of reason.<sup>10</sup>

According to Page, Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutic is the second philosophical theme that provides a ground for Philosophical Historicism. Page points out that Gadamer's *Truth and Method* posits a total historicity of consciousness. So, it is a critique of the traditional idea of reason and 'first philosophy' in the true sense.<sup>11</sup> Gadamer examines the traditional concept of objectivity of knowledge. According to him, true knowledge is not achieved by focusing solely on human actions in isolation. Rather, Knowledge is the understanding of the 'movement of history' which provides the criterion of understanding the meaning of human action in a true sense. By understanding the 'movement of history', one can comprehend the common spirit or aim of history. Without this understanding, the true meaning of human action cannot be grasped.<sup>12</sup> For Gadamer, "what is rational" is the matter of "what is the aim of history". No reason exists on its own. There is no independent reason. It exists only in the historical sense and remains dependent on historical circumstances. History is the master of human reason. Human reason is determined by historical context.<sup>13</sup> As human existence and

consciousness are historical, human reason is purely historicist for Gadamer. He regards absolute reason as a myth and impossibility.<sup>14</sup>

As reason is contextual and there is no independent justification of reason, therefore for Gadamer truth and meaning are also contextual. He believes that the search for the ultimate truth is futile. It is merely a confusion of human thought that cannot reach an end. In his view, human thought is an endless dialogue with oneself that cannot transcend his historical and linguistic context. Consequently, it can never reach an 'end'.<sup>15</sup> It leads Page to conceive that Gadamer's thought is a critique of the traditional idea of reason and prepares the ground for 'philosophical historicism'.<sup>16</sup>

Page, to elaborate contemporary trend of philosophical historicism, refers to the project of Richard Rorty, as a third philosophical theme. The central theme of Rorty's philosophical project is his critique of foundational epistemology. In his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty examines foundational epistemology that is based on the distinction between contingent truth and necessary truth. According to Rorty, this distinction implies that there are two foundations of knowledge; 'sense perception' which provides knowledge of contingent truth and 'concepts', which provides knowledge of necessary truth.<sup>17</sup> Through analysis of the history of philosophy, Rorty argues that foundational epistemology is based upon the traditional idea of mind-body or subject-object dualism. Dualism presupposes that concepts and objects are causally related, especially such that a mind being a separate entity has direct access to the object. It ultimately leads foundational epistemologists to conceive that some basic and epistemically certain propositions can be justified on the grounds of their true representation of the world.<sup>18</sup> Rorty considers this view as narrow and mechanistic. Following the ideas of Sellars and Quine, Rorty argues that since whatever we conceive is 'linguistic' and there is no non-conceptual experience of the external world, knowledge cannot be justified objectively as foundationalists mistakenly presuppose it. Instead, Rorty believes that human knowledge and its justification is not a matter of relation between ideas and objects but a matter of conversation and social practice.<sup>19</sup> Human knowledge is not a simple endeavor. It is formed and justified within social wholes that have specific conceptual frameworks, which are historically and culturally contextual.

Page explains that for Rorty, social practice and conversation have no fixed standards. Instead, they are shaped by the historical context in which they occur. Each stage in history has its unique social dynamics. Foundationalism, which tries to pursue ultimate and fixed standards, is

an attempt to escape from history. However, this is ultimately impossible as no thought can transcend from history.<sup>20</sup> According to Rorty, knowledge is not just the fixed relation between the human mind and objects of his inquiry as traditional epistemology suggests. Instead, knowledge is the conversation about the relation between current standards and inquiries. It involves multiple types of propositions that can be justified in different ways, through various standards in the existing context. In this way, conversation is the ultimate context within which knowledge should be understood.<sup>21</sup> For Rorty, justification of knowledge has only one standard, which is the current standard of the inquiries of our day. That is the 'historical context' in which we find ourselves with our beliefs and language from where no escape is possible.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, Page concludes that the contemporary trend of 'philosophical historicism' views history as a contingent process that provides the ultimate framework for the justification of existing knowledge and conception of good. Additionally, this trend suggests that human reason is limited because it cannot transcend its historicity, and operates through an existing historicist framework of justification.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, rational inquiry for 'philosophical historicism' is always provisional and cannot be lucid. Historicists believe that human existence is historical, which means that human understanding and reasoning are also historicist. In this sense 'reason' is always finite and cannot transcend its boundary for philosophical historicists.<sup>24</sup>

The problem that Page highlights here, is that philosophical historicism rests upon the presumption that human reasoning and understanding is an activity that can only be comprehended through a historical context. For Page, though some human reasoning or thinking may be understood by an understanding of his action in a historical context, reasoning may also be other kinds of activity that do not require historical context to understand it. Some of the human reason may also be primary or ahistorical. Thinking is a complex phenomenon; while 'philosophical historicism' regards thinking as merely provisional or as Page says 'radical provisional'. As a result, 'philosophical historicism' completely rejects the universality and comprehensiveness of reason and views reason as local and provisional.<sup>25</sup>

### **Critique of Philosophical Historicism: Page's analysis**

We have seen how 'philosophical historicism' holds the belief that human reason and understanding have limitations. The doctrine of 'philosophical historicism' constructs dialectics to challenge the traditional concept of reason.<sup>26</sup> Page critically examines the doctrine of

philosophical historicism and identifies two main problems in the doctrine of 'philosophical historicism'.

The first problem that Page identifies in this doctrine is its incoherence, as it contradicts its own truth claim.<sup>27</sup> He argues that a doctrine is an insight or understanding of a mind that arrives at a conclusion by a logical or rational assessment of external conditions. The insight or understanding of the mind itself is non-provisional and does not depend upon external conditions. If thinking is solely dependent on external conditions, there will be no insight or understanding at all. If every insight is open to change with the historical condition, then how can philosophical historicism, as an understanding of a mind, be saved from the radical professionalism of philosophical historicism itself?<sup>28</sup> On the one hand, philosophical historicism believes in the complete contextuality of knowledge and does not leave any room for human cognitive access to universal knowledge, but on the other hand, it claims this doctrine is universally true.<sup>29</sup> Page explicates that if our mind has no access to universal and all knowledge is provisional, then the claim of philosophical historicism as universally true doctrine is nothing but a self-refutation.

Page argues that 'philosophical historicism' has an inherent contradiction. On the one hand, it is nihilistic because it dismisses the pursuit of truth and falsity as an impossible task. But on the other the other hand, it claims the truth of its own doctrine. Page explains that since 'philosophical historicism' regards human reason as entirely arbitrary, the claim of the arbitrariness of reason makes philosophical historicism a purely nihilistic doctrine.<sup>30</sup> Page asserts that if reason is wholly arbitrary, then how can philosophical historicism claim to be a true doctrine? If one believes in complete arbitrariness of reason, one cannot assert the truth of his doctrine. In other words, as for philosophical historicists, human understanding is dependent on historical conditions, it will be impossible for him to recognize that philosophical historicist thesis is universally true. The universal truth of the thesis of 'philosophical historicism' presupposes that human understanding can transcend the boundary of historical scenarios. Page explains that when Gadamer sets a limit to reason by his idea of 'movement of history', he comprehends the limit by transcending the 'movement of history' because the limit can only be known by going beyond it. Thus, mere 'movement of history' cannot lead one to infer the universal truth of the thesis of 'philosophical historicism'.<sup>31</sup> In other words, if the historical scenario is an absolute condition of human reason, reason cannot recognize its historicity.

But Philosophical historicists argue that the search for universal truth is baseless as reason cannot transcend its historicity. Therefore, a natural grasp of universals in their universality is impossible. They claim that the experience of history in a specific time and place gives knowledge of historical scenarios in its universality. However, the problem that Page identifies here is that even passive recognition of universal knowledge needs to transcend the limit of the reason that historicists have set.<sup>32</sup> Historist's claim of the complete contextualization of reason is the main problem. It problematizes the idea of universal knowledge. A possible response to this problem is given by the concept of 'rational imagination'. 'Rational imagination' is regarded as a specific capacity of humans that distinguishes humans from other creations. Carl Page explains that 'rational imagination' is the ability to go beyond "how things are" and imagine "how things might be". It is the capacity to imagine the totality of possibility. It is human power to imagine or propose the structure of 'whole'. Because of this ability, one fairly claims that man is a rational being different from other creations.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it can be said that humans hope for universal knowledge and exist in the realm of historical meaning through the use of their ability of 'rational imagination'.<sup>34</sup> But Page argues that 'rational imagination' as a capacity to imagine or to propose the structure of 'whole' or 'totality of possibility' cannot itself be finite. It is incoherent to combine the finitude of experience and the capacity to imagine the 'totality of possibility'. This human capacity can go beyond the historicists' limits and propose truly universal and ahistorical ideas.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the complete historicity of reason is not plausible.

The second problem that Page identifies in the doctrine of 'philosophical historicism' is the problem of justification of inquiry. If reason is completely historicist, there can be no plausible and consistent justification of any inquiry, including the justification of 'philosophical historicism' itself. In other words, historicism will become 'Herakleiteanism' as Page explains.<sup>36</sup> Page argues that if the historical scenario is the only criterion of justification, then knowledge claims will merely be opinions. Since opinions cannot be evaluated without a stable and plausible criterion of justification, and for 'philosophical historicism' such a stable criterion is impossible, this position essentially reduces human judgments to the same level as mere opinions.<sup>37</sup> Thus, no judgment can be regarded as true or false. Philosophical historicist's denial of knowledge of universal knowledge ultimately leads their doctrine to nihilism.



As nihilism falls in the anarchistic theory of knowledge and no 'philosophical position' wants to be considered as an anarchistic theory, 'philosophical historicism' to save itself from anarchistic implication proposes the criterion of differentiation between superstitions and knowledge by approximation of generalized experience. In this way, philosophical historicists claim that they pursue universal without being inclined toward universalism and essentialism. Page argues that though 'philosophical historicists' try to provide a criterion to differentiate between true and false judgment, this criterion is pragmatic as they believe that generalization is guided by historicist conditions and the mind is not capable of conceiving universal truth. Philosophical historicist's position regarding truth is merely pragmatic.<sup>38</sup>

The question that arises here is that if the truth is merely pragmatic and reason is purely historicist and only justified by current historical context, how one can rationally predict future historical context or 'form of justification' of reason? According to Page, for philosophical historicists, it is not possible as they believe that the historical process is open and unpredictable<sup>39</sup>. What follows is that we know only the 'form of justification' of reason that exists right now but cannot know the future dynamics of knowledge. Moreover, one may ask here whether can we have an autonomous criterion for the assessment of even existing 'forms of justification' of knowledge or reason. The philosophical historicists are silent here as they have no independent reason that can examine the existing criterion of reason or rationality as we see in Gadamer's case. For Gadamer, 'justification of rule' is understood in terms of 'individual activities' and 'individual activities' are understood in terms of rules i.e. a hermeneutical circle. We can neither predict the future 'form of justification' of reason nor we can justify the existing form or context independently. That is why Page infers that for philosophical historicists, the historical context is merely a phenomenon that has no rational explanation.<sup>40</sup> Thus what is reasonable for historicists is merely interim and temporal. For philosophical historicists, no inquiry is final. Thus, philosophical historicism leaves no room for good or even relative approximation of knowledge because the process of history prevents all existing criteria of justification of knowledge and replaces them with new ones. In Page's terms, what prevails in philosophical historicism is 'radical provisionalism'.<sup>41</sup>

The upshot of Page's critique of contemporary trends of 'philosophical historicism' is that it lacks a plausible criterion for justification of knowledge. Philosophical historicist's concepts of historicist contextuality of reason or 'form of justification' of knowledge are merely interim. Here truth is merely an order created by an arbitrary

historical process. They have no reason to show how this blind order is cognitively relevant.<sup>42</sup>Page argues what is relevant to human cognition is the coherent and consistent inquiries. Such inquiries can differentiate between good or bad judgments or opinions. Such inquiries presuppose an ahistorical nature of the human mind and its dependency upon socio-biological factors. Some traditional historicists have also been interested in coherent and consistent inquiries. Their inquiries focus on human concrete aims of survival and reproduction and provide the ground for differentiation between good and bad explanations. However, as Page points out, philosophical historicists, believe in the complete historicization of the human mind and reason. They overlook such factors and consider the human mind as solely a product of history.<sup>43</sup>Philosophical historicists regard the human mind as merely a product of history without having any concrete aim or permanent interest. For them, mind and reason are merely contextual and man is an ever-changing historical being. Their over-emphasis upon the historical character of man leaves no room for ahistorical reason.

In a broader sense, contemporary philosophical thoughts endorse a form of historicism that regards all concepts, theories and standards as relative to a specific human culture that is itself historically conditioned. Contemporary historicist trends regard knowledge as mere cultural artefacts.

### **Roy Clouser's Critique of Contemporary Historicist Trends and Relevance of Ahistorical Reason**

In his 'Critique of Historicism', Roy Clouser examines historicist trends of contemporary philosophical thought and shows how ahistorical reason is relevant. He argues that due to over-emphasis upon the historicity of human reason, most contemporary philosophical thoughts strongly believe that all human knowledge and experiences are not the reflection of independent reality or world but are simply a product of the culture that humans have created.<sup>44</sup>This kind of historicism ignores any relevance of ahistorical reason or knowledge. Even physics and math which are traditionally regarded as a true knowledge of the independent reality, contemporary historicism considers them as historically conditioned artefacts of human culture. Here Clouser cites Oswald Spengler's view that Mathematics and Physics cannot be without a historical or cultural context. Spengler argues that scientific knowledge is determined by the characteristics of the respective culture. He asserts that there is no one arithmetic because there is more than one culture. Different civilizations have different systems of numbers. The validity of

concepts of mathematics, according to Spengler, is determined by respective systems. Similarly, he asserts that there is no one Physics, but rather the history of Physics. Concepts of Physics neither depend upon facts, nor are justified through facts, of objective reality but rather they are the result of conceptual frame works that depend upon cultural-historical factors.<sup>45</sup> So, all knowledge, beliefs and opinions are shaped and justified in the context of a specific culture. As a result, they do not necessarily correspond to an objective reality. Thus, contemporary historicist trends fall in a situation where cultural clash has no way to identify which viewpoint is rational. This position leaves no room for ahistorical reason or knowledge.

Clouser argues that it is unlikely to eliminate the relevance of ahistorical reason. He explains that though various cultures have different symbols or languages to express knowledge, some fundamental features of linguistic, scientific and mathematical knowledge remain independent of these symbols. They are justified objectivity and represent reality as such. For example,  $I+V=VI$  and  $1+5=6$  are different symbolic expressions, but they represent the same truth. Roman and Arabic arithmetic may use different number systems, but they represent the same mathematical truth.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, when Spengler says that “there is more than one culture” or “there is no one physics” or “all knowledge is historicist”, he must rely on the concept of the number ‘one’ or ‘more than one’ or ‘all’ as representing independent mathematical truth rather than culturally specific truth. Clouser explains that if numbers were culturally specific, Spengler could not claim to know there is more than one culture. Thus, numbers are not artefacts of history or they are not historicist. They are logical and ahistorical.

Clouser identifies that historicists have a contradictory approach. On the one hand, such historicists deny the knowledge of objective reality, but on the other hand, they objectively compare cultural differences. If all of their thoughts are culturally determined, they cannot know physical similarities or differences. The knowledge of physical aspects of things is distinct from culturally determined knowledge. Similarly, when Spengler says that there are many physics, he assumes that the history of physics belongs to the same physical word that has objective characteristics such as motion and displacement. Such knowledge is ahistorical.

According to Clouser, historicist trends of contemporary philosophical thought have incoherence in another way. These trends employ the method of ‘logical abstraction’ to analyze various rival philosophical theories and infer that rival theories are artefacts of

respective cultures and are historically conditioned. But obviously 'logical abstraction' is not historically conditioned. Their inquiry or analysis is incompatible with their claim that all knowledge has only a cultural character.<sup>47</sup> Historicists assert that all knowledge is historically conditioned or cultural artefacts. However, the method or process that leads to this assertion cannot be historicist itself. Historicist's inquiry presupposes ahistorical knowledge. Moreover, Clouser says, their historical analysis requires 'facts' that have history but are not historicist themselves. There must be some objective ground on the basis of which they are examined.<sup>48</sup>

However contemporary historicism has been of the view that all human knowledge is the construction of language that is entirely human creation and human himself is a product of history. Therefore, there is no objective source to inspect 'facts. Here, Clouser examines Gadamer and Rorty's ideas, who advocate that human experiences are essentially linguistic. So, what we know is determined by language. There is no description or awareness of abstract or particular things that are not influenced by an autonomous language. Clouser says what Rorty and Gadamer advocate is that language goes all the way down and none of our thought is without language.<sup>49</sup> Clouser argues that this idea of the priority of language over independent reality has serious implications for the theory of truth. This leads contemporary historicism to the conclusion that truth is merely pragmatic, as we see in the case of Rorty. According to Clouser, Rorty combines historicism with pragmatism and believes that there is no independent reality that can justify our knowledge. Truth and knowledge are entirely based on the criteria constructed by language, which is itself invented through human social practice to satisfy needs.<sup>50</sup>

Clouser argues that contemporary historicist trends have two incompatible ideas. The first is that language goes all the way down and we cannot think or experience without language. The second idea is that language is invented through social practices to meet our pragmatic needs. According to Clouser, language cannot be invented without thinking or experience. Therefore, there must be some kind of experience or thought that is without language. Clouser explains that though human activities have linguistic aspects, they also have nonlinguistic aspects. These aspects are human immediate awareness or experiences that do not require language. We become aware of these aspects first, and then we give words to them. Hence, Clouser concludes that the idea that language is essentially prior to experience is inadequate. The pragmatists who believe that language is invented through social practices to satisfy our pragmatic needs presuppose that there is an independent reality which is

before language.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the idea that language goes all the way down is not correct. Language does not influence all of our awareness and experience. Such awareness and experience are the awareness and experience of an independent reality.<sup>52</sup>

Clouser rightly mentions that our experience can be prior to language. For instance, when we feel pain or joy, we do not need a prior language to comprehend this kind of awareness and experience. This is truth by correspondence to reality. Although we can say that we need language for expression and communication, it is an overstatement to claim that experience is solely linguistic affairs. Therefore, Rorty's statement that "a true statement is not true for its correspondence to reality but is true for the reason that an autonomous prior language makes it true" is not convincing.<sup>53</sup> Clouser explains that certain biological facts such as our need for food, shelter and the inevitability of death belong to independent reality and human nature.<sup>54</sup> These facts are considered ahistorical and their knowledge is not culturally or historically contextual. Moreover, Clouser argues that when we analyze different contradictory ideas and differentiate between math and physics or differentiate between different discourses, we do it on the basis of logic or facts of independent reality, rather than mere conventions.<sup>55</sup> Historicist's total reliance on linguistic priority overlooks the fact that some of our experiences and awareness are not historically conditioned.

### **Conclusion**

What follows from the above analysis is that 'philosophical historicism' rests upon the presumption that human reasoning and understanding is an activity that can only be understood in its historical context. Carl Page convincingly shows that while some of human reasoning or thinking may be understood by an understanding of his action in a historical context, human reasoning may also be primary or ahistorical and does not require historical context to understand it. This ahistorical kind of reasoning is an 'insight of a mind' by which the mind arrives at a conclusion by a logical or rational assessment of external conditions. This 'insight of a mind' is the ability of logical or rational assessment that itself is non-provisional and does not depend upon external conditions. If thinking is solely dependent on external conditions, then there will no longer be insight or understanding at all. Without 'ahistorical reason' no knowledge will be possible. Even historicists formulate their claims on ahistorical reasoning. They assess similarities or differences of histories and cultures to formulate the doctrine of historicism. Clouser also raises the same point; he convincingly shows that if all knowledge is culturally or historically

contextual, we cannot even know physical similarities or differences between cultures or histories. The knowledge of physical aspects of things is separate from culturally determined knowledge. The process or method that leads historicism to infer that all knowledge is historically conditioned or a cultural artefact cannot itself be historicist. Historicist's inquiry presupposes ahistorical knowledge. Historicists overlook the fact that some of our experiences and awareness are ahistorically known. These are relevant to our philosophical inquiries.

### Notes and References

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- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.5
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.46
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.48
- <sup>7</sup> Joseph Margolis, *Pragmatism without Foundation: Reconciling Realism and Relativism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (London: Continuum, 2007), p. xvii
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- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp.63-64
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- <sup>18</sup> Timm Triplett, "Rorty's Critique of Foundationalism", *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in Analytical Tradition*, volume. 52, No. 1, July, 1987, p. 115
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- <sup>21</sup> Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (New Jersey: Princeton,1979), p.389
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- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.80
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.82

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.82

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.87

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.89

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp.89-90

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.94

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.90

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.108

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.109

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp.110-111

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.111

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp.111-112

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.114

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.115

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.116

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.118

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.119

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.120

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.121

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.122

<sup>44</sup> Roy Clouser, "A Critique of Historicis", *Critica:RevistaHispanoamericana de Filosofia*, volume.29, April, No.89,1997, pp.44-46

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp.47-48

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.48

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., Pp. 49-50

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.51

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp.53-54

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp.54-55

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.56

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.59

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp.55-56

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.62

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.63