

KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN SCIENCE, HISTORICISM AND IDEOLOGY:  
THE PROBLEM OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

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By revealing the risks of historicism in his *Poverty of Historicism* and by showing the danger of ideology within scientific research, Karl Popper also indicates the methodological problems of investigating the history of philosophy. Himself a remarkable historian of philosophy, Popper describes his methodological starting point as follows: '[...] it may be our best plan to start by criticizing our most cherished belief'. In § X of his essay *On the Sources of Knowledge and Ignorance*, where he made this quoted statement, Popper refers to different philosophical traditions drawing a historical line from Plato to Nicolas of Cusa, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Montaigne, Bacon, Descartes, Locke up to Bertrand Russell. Drawing such a line is by no means without problems, especially if, for instance, the modern idea of tolerance or that of the dignity of man is traced back to the period from the 15th to the 17th century. By doing so, and Popper is not the only one, he defines the 'humanist doctrine' as the basis of the doctrine of tolerance (*On the Sources of Knowledge and Ignorance*, x). In applying Popper's theory of fallibility to specific problems of the historiography of the history of philosophy, namely the idea of tolerance and the idea of the dignity of man, I intend to answer the following questions: What is meant by "criticizing our most cherished belief"? What methodological consequences derive from it? How important are theories about developments within philosophy for research in the history of philosophy and its progress?