

HISTORIANS IN SEARCH OF NEW WAYS AT THE BORDER OF THE CENTURIES

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Rezumat: Istoricii în căutarea de noi căi la hotarul dintre secole

Lucrarea analizează transformările radicale care au avut loc în privința fundamentelor teoretice, a metodologiei și a modelelor conceptuale ale științei istorice de la limita secolelor XX - XXI. Schimbările în strategiile de cercetare ale istoriografiei recente sunt considerate drept o rezultată a interacțiunii fructuoase a diferitelor discipline din arealul comun al științelor sociale și umaniste. Autorul estimează potențialul cognitiv al noilor modele teoretice cu scopul de a restabili integritatea viziunii istorice a trecutului.

Résumé: Historiens à la recherche de nouveaux chemins à la limite des siècles

L'ouvrage ci-joint analyse les transformations radicales qui se produiraient dans le domaine des fondements théoriques, de la méthodologie et des méthodes conceptuelles de la science historique à la limite des XXème – XXIème siècles. On considère les changements dans les stratégies de recherche de l'historiographie récente comme le résultat de l'interaction fructueuse des disciplines différentes du domaine commun des sciences sociales et humanistes. L'auteur estime le potentiel cognitif des nouveaux modèles théoriques au but de rétablir l'intégrité de la vision historique du passé.

Abstract: *The paper analyses the radical transformations that took place in the theoretical foundations, methodology and conceptual models of historical science at the border of the XX – XXI centuries. The changes in research strategies of recent historiography are considered as an outcome of the fruitful interaction of different disciplines in the common space of social sciences and humanities. The author estimates the cognitive potential of new theoretical models aiming to restore the integrity of historical vision of the past.*

Keywords: *recent historiography, social theories, interdisciplinarity, cultural turn, search for synthesis*

The last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century have been marked by deep changes in the structure and content of social sciences and humanities and in the methodology of these fields of knowledge. In this

rapidly transforming intellectual context a radical reorganization of historiography has taken place. Comparing some aspects of historiographical situation of the mid-twentieth century with that of the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, one can see fundamental differences in the understanding of the subject and methods of historical cognition, the content and nature of historical knowledge, in the definition of its status and narrative style as well as the possibilities of the further interpretations of historical text. It was already at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s that serious theoretical discussions took place in which new conceptions were being shaped, formulations refined and the platform for the future consensus was being built. Numerous monographic studies and collections of essays not only reflected the challenges of the time, encountered by historians at the turn of the two centuries and eras, but demonstrated a whole range of reactions to these challenges.

The main “post-modernist challenge” to history was directed against its perception of historical reality and hence of the object of historical knowledge, which in the new interpretation was presented as something constructed by language and discursive practice. Notably, the definition and supposed specificity of historical narrative itself as a form of an adequate reconstruction of the past were problematized. Creative character of historical narrative, which transforms patchy and often arbitrarily selected historical evidence into an unambiguous linear pattern, was emphasized to the highest extent. The issues of the possible depth of historical understanding, familiar criteria of objectivity and ways of a scholar’s own control over her creative work were raised from a new perspective. A historian was now supposed to look closer into the texts, use new methods to reveal the hidden meanings and decipher the slightest nuances of changes in the language of a source, to analyze the rules and ways of perception of a text by the intended audience and so on and so forth. One of the most distinct signs of changes that took place at the end of the twentieth century was the intensive use of literary sources in historical studies, and consequently, of methods and theories borrowed from contemporary literary studies. Significant changes, related to the development of post-modernist paradigm, occurred in the sphere of professional consciousness of historians; they urged to reconsider the established ideas about the place of history within the system of knowledge, its inner structure and exploratory tasks.

The climax of the confrontation between the two opposing positions, “linguistic” and “objectivist”, or the one of “post-modernist critics” and of “orthodox realists”, occurred at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. However, as the ideas, initially perceived as rather wild, were becoming more and more acceptable, the voices of the “moderates”, who were calling for the understanding of each other, were growing stronger. The natural protest of historians against the extremes of the “linguistic turn” was converted to constructive suggestions and compelling arguments in favour of the so-called “middle ground”. The “moderates” found a foothold in the idea that the

impossibility of *direct* perception of a long-gone reality did not mean that a historian was completely arbitrary in his “construction” of it. Historians sharing the “middle-ground” platform had thoroughly reconsidered their practice in the light of “linguistic turn”. As Aron Gurevich emphasized, “it would be mistaken to deny the fact that the post-modernist critique of historiography had revealed the real weaknesses in the methodology of historians. It re-opened old sores that had been previously largely neglected by historians”¹. Recognition of these weak points and the search for the ways of overcoming them do not necessitate joining those who stand at the extreme positions of post-modernist critique, but, as Gabrielle Spiegel pointed out, “even if we wanted it (and there are few who do), we would never be able to go back to the self-confident assumptions of the nineteenth-century positivist historiography”². The solution was found in the paradigm of “new social and cultural history” that interprets various social processes through the lens of cultural assumptions, symbolic practices and value systems. Along with the adoption of the techniques of literary criticism, the scholars’ attention was drawn to the “social logic of the text” – to the extra-linguistic characteristics of the discourse, linked to biographical, socio-political and mental contexts within which the text was made, and also to the aims, interests and world outlook of its creator.

Looking at the various manifestations of new tendencies in historiography, it would be appropriate once again to acknowledge the continuity of intellectual processes in the sphere of humanities. Indeed, the new tendencies were not imposed from without. As a part of the general cultural shift, the “linguistic turn” embodied everything that has long been neglected and seemed to be lost, but was being gradually crystallized within historiography itself, and that was transformed by it within the interdisciplinary “new history”. The need in the structural reorganization of all historical disciplines also became obvious long before “linguistic turn”. The old division between economic, political, social history and the history of ideas became outdated, although for some time this reorganization was going latently on the constantly expanding exploratory field that was then colonized by new social history with its interconnected and intermingling sub-disciplines.

The powerful influence of post-modernist tendencies affected the development of *new cultural history* that attempts to construct social life by means of cultural practice, the potential of which is, in turn, defined by practice of everyday relationships. The social norms and institutions are analysed in the context of cultural

¹ А. Я. Гуревич, *Историк конца XX века в поисках метода* [A. Ya. Gurevich, *Historian of the end of the XX century in search of a method*], in *Одиссей. Человек в истории* [*Odysseus. Man in History*], Москва, 1996, с. 7.

² Г. М. Спигел, *К теории среднего плана: историописание в век постмодернизма* [G. M. Spiegel, *For a theory of middle ground: history writing in the age of post-modernism*], in *Одиссей. Человек в истории*, Москва, 1995, с. 219.

practices of historical actors, and the social dynamics is seen as a process which includes not only structural differentiation and reorganization of activities of groups and individuals, but also the “reorganization of minds”, or the changes in values and beliefs, a certain new mind-set, or *new culture*, which literally *sees* the world around it (natural as well as social) from a *different point of view*. The main task of a scholar is to demonstrate the ways personal beliefs, thoughts, abilities, intentions of the individuals operate within the space of possibilities, limited by collective structures that had been created by the previously existed cultural practice. In the view of Roger Chartier, this complex subordination can be described by the notion of representation that articulates “three registers of reality”³. The conception of competing “strategies of representation” opens up new ways of exploring the dynamics of social processes on different levels.

At the same time new cultural history encounters difficult epistemological problems which stem from specific qualities of “non-traditional” sources, such as the traces of everyday practices of “ordinary people” or literary works. However, “it does not invalidate the significance of such sources, we should only bear in mind that even in the cases when the sources do not allow us to comprehend the events, they can give us important information about the authors’ assumptions and beliefs, and hence reveal the range of ideas, i.e., help us to understand the character of the cultural life of the epoch”⁴. The notable place within the “space of possibility”, limited by the norms of historical critique, is taken by the models based on the recognition of the definitive role of social context for all kinds of collective activities (including a linguistic one). In their striving to escape the dichotomy of “literature and life”, “individual and society” they follow the original dialogic conception of Mikhail Bakhtin. Individual experience is understood in the context of interpersonal and intergroup relationships within the examined society and with consideration for the existence of multiple “competing groups” each of which can assign its own “programme of behaviour” to an individual in different circumstances. On the one hand, the reading of each text involves its exposure to the contexts of discursive and social practices that set out its limits, on the other hand, in each text the various aspects of these contexts are being revealed and their inherent contradictions and conflicts are being uncovered⁵. In the history of everyday life the priority is given to the analysis of symbolic systems and, in the first place, of linguistic structures, through which the people of the past

³ R. Chartier, *Le monde comme representation*, in “Annales E.S.C.”, 1989, no. 6, pp. 1505-1520; Idem, *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language and Practices*, Baltimore, 1997.

⁴ А. Я. Гуревич, “Территория историка” [A. Ya. Gurevich, “A Historian’s Territory”], in *Одиссей. Человек в истории*, 1996, с. 91.

⁵ R. Chartier, *Texts, Printing, Readings*, in L. Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley; Los Angeles, 1989, pp. 154-175.

perceived and interpreted the real world, gave meaning to their experience and visualized the future.

“Cultural”, “pragmatic”, “memorial”, “visual”, “spatial” and other “turns” opened up the new perspectives to history: new objects and methods of historical research emerged, masses of new sources were given wide circulation, a whole range of revolutionary approaches to traditional sources was elaborated, new effective ways of information processing came into being. The extent of these shifts was such as to characterize the situation in history at the turn of the century as “historiographical revolution”. Intensive research has resulted in the creation of new (neoclassical) integrative models, built on the principle of complementarity of micro- and macro-historical approaches and their use in historical studies. It led to the moving away from binary thinking with its juxtaposition of macro- and micro-history, structures and events, rational and irrational, and also to the sweeping expansion of “the territory of a historian”.

Proponents of the “third position” have demonstrated a rather wide range of responses to the post-modernist challenge. “Experience” (which could not be reduced to discourse) and “practice” became the key concepts in the unfolding revision of the linguistic approach. Notably, it is the conception of “practice”, which can be described as a *complex of conscious and unconscious principles organizing human behaviour* that is given preference over the notion of “strategy” with its emphasis on deliberate choice⁶. The search for a new research paradigm resulted in the development of historical concepts, consolidated around various theories of “pragmatic turn”. These “theories of practice” bring to the fore the historical actors in their local situations, in the context of those social structures that create the opportunities for action while at the same time set limits for it, putting “structural pressure”. Thus the question of how historical actors change their ways of living and action has become a central one. Its further exploration requires the development of integrative theoretical model, oriented towards the combination of micro- and macro-analysis and incorporating the mechanisms of individual choice⁷.

In a paradoxical way, the narrowing of the field of observation and detailed study of the models of relationships and types of behaviour opens up the possibilities for a fresh approach to the processes of the historical structures’ formation. It is not a coincidence that in the discussion of micro-history’s intention to go into all possible details and take into account all mechanisms of the construction of reality, the term *neopositivism* is frequently used, and the subject of analysis is shifted: instead of the reconstruction of “what really happened” it is now concerned with “*everything that*

⁶ R. Biernacki, *Language and the Shift from Signs to Practice in Cultural Inquiry*, in “History and Theory”, 2000, Vol. 39, no. 3, p. 289.

⁷ Л. П. Репина, *Комбинационные возможности микро- и макроанализа* [Combinatory potentialities of micro- and macroanalysis], in “Диалог со временем”, 2001, no. 7, с. 61-88.

has caused something to happen, or everything that could have happened"⁸.

The perspective of socio-cultural approach and micro-history leads to the development of a specific method of comparison as well. The method of "decentring comparison" takes single and unique cases as its referent points, which means that we deal with the case study approach. In her paper "*Decentering history: local stories and cultural crossings in a global world*" Natalie Zemon Davis has raised the question of whether the historian can "hold onto the subjects of "decentred" social and cultural history, often local and full of concrete detail, and still address the perspectives of global history". She demonstrated such an approach, comparing single cases, scattered over different countries, continents and civilizations, and presenting the historical experience, documented in these cases, not in the terms of "backwardness" and "development" but as alternatives. In her opinion, "the decentring historian does not tell the story of the past only from the vantage point of a single part of the world or of powerful elites, but rather widens his or her scope, socially and geographically, and introduces plural voices into the account"⁹.

It is not difficult to see that the advocates of the "third platform" from among professional historians closely monitor (and often follow) the research of the leading social theorists, who are looking for the "third way" in the presentation of a theoretical model of social reality as a synthesis between the objectivism of system-structural approach and the subjectivism of phenomenology. "Pragmatic turn" has indeed led to the establishment of the category of "practices" in the wide range of fields of contemporary social science and humanities (including history, theory of language and literary theory). It demonstrates that a "certain paradigm common to all social sciences is being formed", which generated a new understanding of historical society through the process of formation of the social in the activities of cultural subjects¹⁰. Accepting the idea that "every discipline has its own, characteristic and distinct from any other, way of incorporating these notions into the research tradition, its own way of conceptualization", we should add, however, that today even those research strategies and ways of conceptualization that exist within the same discipline can be significantly different from each other, and that they are not constrained by the "pursuit to demonstrate that the abilities of a person, which seem natural (like rationality or aesthetic ability), the basic forms of experience (sexuality, violence, madness, cognition, death) and self-awareness (personality, individuality), as well as

⁸ P. A. Rosenthal, *Construire le "macro" par le "micro": Frederic Barth et la microstoria*, in *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*. Textes rassemblés et présentés par J. Revel, Paris, 1996, p. 159.

⁹ Davis N. Zemon, *Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World*, in "History and Theory", 2011, Vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 188-202.

¹⁰ В. Волков, О. Хархордин, *Теория практик* [Volkov V., Kharhordin O., *Theory of Practice*] СПб., 2008, с. 12.

main cultural practices that became natural (manners, colloquial speech, reading) have long and often non-linear history of development and transformation”¹¹.

The movement towards a new conceptualization of socio-historical reality that took place in historiography draw mainly from the sociological theories that analysed the organization of social life in the complex of interactions of its local and integral components. According to these theories, practices rather than structures become a starting point for the social analysis, enriched by the “subjective perspective” of acting individuals, - the analysis of their mental acts and interpretative schemes, which stresses the divergences between the culturally determined meanings and their individual, historically conditioned use. The suggested perspective also offers a chance to widen the restraints of retrospective vision, so familiar to historians, to overcome the linear historiographical thinking, which reduces the variety of possibilities of the past situations (with their complex dynamics and open, rather than pre-determined, future) to the “real” or, more precisely, constructed from the presentist point of view, historical process.

It is hardly a coincidence that the interest of historians to the theoretical foundations of historiographical practice in its both aspects, research and representation, is increasing. A whole new corpus of work has now appeared concerned with discussion of theoretical problems of history in the new intellectual situation. Their main focus is not on a theory of historical process or the implementation of social sciences’ theories to history, but on the *historical* theory, on the theory of historical knowledge.

In contemporary Russian historiography the opinions on the influence of postmodernism on history are also very diverse. In spite of terminological variety, they still have much in common regarding their concepts and methodologies in the context of development of “new rationality” and the new image of history. Thus, the late Yuri Bessmertnyi’s works of the early 2000s¹² were concentrated on epistemological turn, which the author regarded as the abrupt change of the “logic of

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

¹² Ю. Л. Бессмертный, *Это странное, странное прошлое...* [Yu. L. Bessmertnyi, *This strange, strange past...*], in “Диалог со временем”, no. 3, 2000, pp.34-46; *Idem*, *Многоликая история. Проблема интеграции микро- и макроподходов* [*Multifaceted History. Problem of integration of micro- and macro-approaches*], in *Казус. Индивидуальное и уникальное в истории – 2000* [*Incident. Individual and unique in history – 2000*], Москва, 2000, pp.52-61; *Idem*, *Иная история* [*The Other History*], in *Казус. Индивидуальное и уникальное в истории – 2000*, pp. 165-177; *Idem*, *Индивид и понятие частной жизни в Средние века: в поисках нового подхода* [*Individual and a notion of private life in the Middle Ages: in search of a new approach*], in *Казус. Индивидуальное и уникальное в истории – 2003*, Москва, 2003, pp. 484-491; *Idem*, *О понятиях «Другой», «Чужой», «Иной» в современной социальной истории* [*On the concepts of the Other, the Stranger, the Different in current social history*], in *Казус. Индивидуальное и уникальное в истории – 2003*, p. 492-496.

analysis itself”, of the “set of the ways of thinking”. The new developments in current historiography that accompanied this turn, in his view, were the evidence of the “decisive refusal of the evolutionary-successive position that interprets the phenomena of the past within the same semantic framework as their analogues of the later period”¹³. However, one could notice controversies in his ideas, which hint at least to the incompleteness of methodological searches of the author, who clearly saw these controversies himself and even tried to resolve them. In the first place, it pertains to the problem of understanding the Other, which becomes particularly acute in the situation of emphasizing not only substantial differences but fundamental gap between the logic and motivations of medieval people and contemporary historians, which makes any comparison absolutely impossible. On the one hand, the demonstration of “strangeness” of everything that happened in the past implies a move away from the idea of successiveness and requires the use of only those concepts and ways of thinking that actually existed in the past. On the other hand, without a certain “dose” of successiveness any more or less adequate description of the “uniqueness of medieval phenomenon” becomes inaccessible. It is not a coincidence that in these works Yuri Bessmertnyi moves from the category of “incomparability/incommensurability” to the idea of gradation of the concepts that form it. He introduces the division between the category of the “Different” (which implies “a certain, more or less noticeable specificity that do not require any distinct logical foundations for its analysis”) and the “Other” (which hints at the “extreme form of difference of a phenomenon in focus”).

It is clear that the persistent denial of successiveness and absolutization of discontinuity in these works serves more as an “antidote”, as an instrument of the historian’s self-control. Such forms of control become critically important in the context of the development of a *neoclassical model* of historical research, which reflected the transition from “one-dimensional interpretations of history to the multi-dimensional ones on the basis of the synthesis of “positive” cognitive principles of classical and non-classical models”¹⁴. Hence the question of the relation between empirical and theoretical components of historical study is raised on new grounds. A rational explanation in history is being rehabilitated and therefore *historical theories* are being developed, that are not a mere derivative of social theories, but “interpret the relationship between the individual actions and social structures” on their own

¹³ Idem, *К изучению разрывов в интеллектуальной истории западноевропейского средневековья* [For a study of the ruptures in the intellectual history of the Middle Ages], in Л. П. Репина (ред.), *Преемственность и разрывы в интеллектуальной истории* [L. P. Repina (Ed.), *Continuities and discontinuities in the intellectual history*], Москва, 2000, p. 34-36.

¹⁴ А. В. Лубский, *Альтернативные модели исторического исследования* [A. V. Lubskey, *The Alternative Models of Historical Research*], Москва, 2005, pp. 86, 267, 271.

right¹⁵. It is hard to disagree that *historical theory* is instrumental, probabilistic; it is not universal and always implies existence of alternative theoretical interpretations.

Such evaluation of the cognitive potential of middle-level theories has led to the task to create a historical methodology based on the synthesis of these competing strategies. An innovative construction of multidisciplinary methodology of analysis was developed by Irina Nikolaeva who successively implemented it into research of massive social transformations of early medieval and early modern Europe¹⁶. This model was created “on the basis of the *methodologically matching and complementary approaches focused on the problem of the unconscious*” and oriented towards the solution of the problem of variability of mental structures in their complex relationship with historical context. Such poly-disciplinary technology enables the author to verify the results of her study and examine its heuristic potential on specific historical material. It is particularly important here to ensure the compatibility of the instruments chosen by the author (and hence the suggested synthetic technology) with the macro-historical middle-level theories of the typology of the genesis of feudalism and typology of early European modernization.

These models offer a dual system of determination: the social context is understood as a situation, which determines not only conditions but also the challenges and problems that require solution. This is combined with the assumption that the subjectivity of a historical actor (an individual or a group) significantly affects the results of his or her activity, which, in the end, transforms its own context. It needs to be said, however, that the multi-level dynamics, characteristic of the neoclassical theoretical model, with its complex interweaving of actions, phenomena and processes of various scale, cannot be described within the *linear narrative logic of consequent events*. Variety of research perspectives leads to the variety of historical narratives. Depending on the personal position of a scholar, the result can be characterised in a twofold way, as a crisis of history or as the enrichment of our understanding of historical past.

The current historiographical situation is indicative of the wide-scale theoretical reflection of historians over the problems of historical research and ways of constructing historical texts. The difficulties of cognitive re-orientation and corresponding re-organization of professional conventions, the need in theoretical reconsideration of the own historiographical practice are realized by the leading historians, who proved themselves ready to productive interdisciplinary dialogue. For many participants of these discussions of the turn of the centuries it becomes

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 282.

¹⁶ И. Ю. Николаева, *Проблема методологического синтеза и верификации в истории в свете современных концепций бессознательного* [I. Yu. Nikolayeva, *The Problem of Methodological Synthesis and Verification in History in the Light of Contemporary Conceptions of the Unconscious*], Томск, Изд-во Томского университета, 2005, p. 301.

increasingly obvious that the socially significant status of a historian cannot be retained any longer without a reconsideration of main epistemological problems and all consequences of “methodological turns”.

As Jörn Rüsen demonstrated, objectivity can be legitimated within the narrative theory of history. According to Rüsen, the notion of objectivity also includes the “subjective” side of historical interpretation, which means that interpretation is not arbitrary in relation to the cultural discourse and social life, within which the historical narrative is being created. It means that there is an inter-subjective truth: the pluralism of historians’ viewpoints is understood not as the denial of the objectivity of a historical interpretation but on the contrary, as the condition to its realization. Interpretation is seen through a prism of the crossing perspectives that correspond to various identities, or “incorporates them as complementary”¹⁷.

The polemics around the problems of “objectivity” and “truthfulness” of historical knowledge, which is so prominent nowadays, has long history that needs to be explored. Robin George Collingwood once considered as a potential “Copernican revolution” in the theory of history the recognition of the idea that the historian’s thought was self-authorizing and possessed of a criterion to which his so-called authorities must conform and by reference to which they are criticized. And this criterion was the idea of history itself. The reference to “Copernican revolution” in the theory of history brings to the mind the reflections of Michael Polanyi on the “lessons of Copernican revolution” in the history of science and the problem of ineradicable human perspective of mind.

The present-day state of the natural sciences allows historiography to overcome its age-old scientific inferiority complex by countering radical post-modernist relativism with a “healthy” relativism, borrowed from the contemporary natural sciences. One of the proposals made in this vein is a “correlative theory of truth”, according to which our knowledge of the past is conditioned but not pre-determined by culture, and realism in regard to the past is compatible with cultural relativism in regard to the knowledge about it¹⁸. As a response to the challenge of the time, significant changes have occurred both in the problematic field and the image of history. These include the emergence of new approaches to the understanding of historical truth, which have provoked heated debates over “facts” and “fictions”. However, even in the milieu of professional historians, the assumptions that history must give an account of “how it really was”, or to “rebuild” and “resurrect” the past, are still alive.

¹⁷ J. Rüsen, *Narrativity and Objectivity in Historical Studies*, in *Symposium: History and the Limits of Interpretation*, Rice University (USA), March 15–17, 1996; <http://cohesion.rice.edu/humanities/csc/conferences>.

¹⁸ C. Behan McCullagh, *The Truth of History*, London and New York, Routledge, 1998, p. 26-28.

An interesting argumentation regarding the specificity of the use of imagination by historians and “non-fictionality” of historical narrative is given by David Carr, who takes as a premise, that the “product of... imagination” can equally pertain to something that did not exist and something that existed. He insists that “the human world manifests a concrete version of the narrative form in the very structure of action itself”, as “human beings live their lives by formulating and acting out stories that they implicitly tell both to themselves and to others... by remembering what was and projecting what will be”. Narrative structures are already present in the fabric of human reality, and there is no need for the historian to inscribe them inside it... The structures of narrative are already inherent in human reality. The historian does not have to “reinscribe” lived time into natural time by the act of narration... This is not to say that every historical narrative is true, or that some narratives are not better than others” or “that every use of the imagination in history is legitimate”¹⁹.

An extended analysis of the problem of truth in history is given in the works of Irina Savel'eva and Andrei Poletaev. They discuss the specificity of historical knowledge, the relativity of criteria of truth, objectivity and veracity in historical research; they convincingly prove that the radical renovation of theoretical foundations of historical knowledge is both inevitable and irreversible. At the same time the authors do not blur the border between “fact” and “fiction”, they still believe in the possibilities of historical knowledge and the need to pursue “historical truth” that is so specific and difficult to achieve. The process of re-formatting and specification of contemporary historiography does not lead to its loss of the image of a “strict science” with its own ways of creating new knowledge. “Knowledge” is the key word here, and the whole range of issues of “truthfulness” and “objectivity”, as well as those of “reality” and “historical fact” etc. are incorporated into reflections on the current presumptions of this complex concept. Drawing on contemporary studies of knowledge in philosophy of science, sociology of knowledge, cognitive psychology, the authors strongly reject the thesis that the difference between subjective beliefs or opinions, on the one hand, and knowledge, on the other hand, is connected with the object of knowledge itself. They define knowledge (according to the place of its formation) as socially objectified. The separate types of knowledge – in this case it is historical knowledge – are rightly treated as the equal forms of construction of historical reality, which are distinguished by their specific characteristics²⁰.

¹⁹ D. Carr, *History, Fiction and Human Time* in *Symposium: History and the Limits of Interpretation*, <http://cohesion.rice.edu/humanities/csc/conferences>. See also: G. Noiriel, *L'historien et l'objectivité*, in *L'histoire aujourd'hui*, Auxerre, 1999, p. 421-426; R. Harrison, A. Jones, P. Lambert, ‘Scientific’ *History and the Problem of Objectivity*, in P. Lambert, Ph. Schofield (eds.), *Making History. An Introduction to the history and practices of a discipline*, London and New York, Routledge, 2004, pp. 26-37.

²⁰ И. М. Савельева, А. В. Полетаев, *Знание о прошлом: теория и история* [I. M. Savelieva, A. V. Poletayev, *Knowledge of the Past: Theory and History*], Т. 1-2. СПб., 2003–2006.

The problem of historical truth is discussed in numerous works of Ksenia Khvostova and Victor Finn²¹, combining strict logical analysis with deep understanding of research practice of the professional historian. Historical truth is identified (with the help of quaternary logic, implying the existence of degrees of veracity) as pluralistic. Assumptions about the consensus character of historical truth are criticized as based on binary logic (in which a judgment is understood unambiguously, either as true or false, and the intermediate states, characterizing various degrees of truthfulness and falseness, are excluded). The specificity of historical truth is seen by Ksenia Khvostova in that it is always understood as a certain extreme limit, around which various hypotheses, opinions and conclusions of historians are arranged according to the degree of their probability.

The introduction of reputable theoretical conceptions and cognitive logical analysis into reflections on the specificity of historical truth significantly expands the horizons of methodological discussions and contributes to the intensification and further development of theoretical thinking on the research and expert practices of historians.

²¹ К. В. Хвостова, В. К. Финн, *Проблемы исторического познания в свете современных междисциплинарных исследований* [K. V. Khvostova, *Problems of Historical Cognition in the Light of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Studies*], Москва, 1997, p. 256; idem, *Диалог со временем и современная количественная история* [*Dialogue with Time and Contemporary Quantitative History*], in "Диалог со временем", 2006, № 16, pp. 134-146; В. К. Финн *Интеллектуальные системы и общество: идеи и понятия* [V. K. Finn, *Intellectual Systems and Society: Ideas and Conceptions*], Москва, 2007, p. 309.