All that the historian means, when he describes certain historical facts as his data, is that for the purposes of a particular piece of work there are certain historical problems relevant to that work which for the present he proposes to treat as settled; though, if they are settled, it is only because historical thinking has settled them in the past, and they remain settled only until he or some one else decides to reopen them. Geoffrey Elton often serves as a straw man to be castigated without re-reading; nevertheless, even Elton makes quite sensible remarks on the active character of
historical writing, the ways in which the historian shapes the material, and the need for empathy and engagement rather than impersonality. New paperback Quantity Available: 1. We seem to be trapped in a vicious circle of endless discourses; the texts-commenting-upon-texts syndrome. There is a slightly deeper issue here, however, which has to do with underlying assumptions about connections between different factors. This act of interpolation has two significant characteristics. Otherwise it is merely perceived fact, historically dumb. Skip to main content. If you own the copyright to this book and it is wronglylisted on our website, we offer a simple DMCA procedure to remove your content from our site. Two misunderstandings may here be forestalled. Once a wider range of sources were addressed and not merely Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past, the letters of the literate, or published Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past on religion and philosophy it became possible — as for example in the pioneering works of Keith Thomas and Peter Burke — to explore in more depth aspects of popular culture and social history which had previously been ignored or deemed inaccessible. A very clear example may be found in the work of Lewis Namier on factionalism and personal motives in Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past English politics. In effect, Marx simply replaced one metanarrative with another. Part III then turns to aspects of bringing selected, interpreted knowledge of the past to the present, examining issues of representation, reception and political implications of our knowledge of the past in the present. Let us start with the classic metanarratives. This custom can of course be defended. Of Wuthering Heights it has been well said that the scene is laid in Hell, though the place-names are English; and it was a sure instinct that led another great novelist to replace Oxford by Christminster, Wantage by Alfredston, and Fawley by Marychurch, recoiling against the discord of topographical fact in what should be a purely imaginary world. They have simply entered the everyday parlance of post-Freudian western Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past. So, whatever one makes of some of their more abstruse formulations and ontological claims, it is important to attain some clarity about what precisely they are saying and whether or not it makes sense. For a western liberal, some notion of representative democracy which, at its most basic, allows people at regular intervals to throw out a government of which they disapprove is the yardstick by which other systems are measured and found wanting. I have thought Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past the issues discussed in this book over a long period of time, and it would be inappropriate to thank all those who have contributed in some way to the development of my current views on these matters although I would probably want to include Geoffrey Hawthorn, Theda Skocpol and Daniel Bell in this wider long-term list of those who have particularly stimulated and guided my interest in matters to do with historical theory. Drawing on the example of language, in which SATISFYING CURiosity speakers are born into a particular community, the rules of whose language they learn, internalise, and subsequently deploy and develop creatively, contributing to processes of change, Giddens and others have sought to explicate the ways in which, over time, human beings both experience and alter the structures in which they live their lives. Both have to be examined in some detail to tease out the relative importance of different factors at different times, including aspects of socio-economic and political structure, the impact of certain events, and Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past roles of individuals, in a given international and cultural context. Written by a prominent historian, Historical Theory develops a highly Original argument in the context of recent debates. Just a moment while we sign you in to your Goodreads account. The underlying issues have in fact been played out in a variety of theoretical terms. Revisionist critiques thus served to reveal that eighteenth-century French society could not appropriately be conceived simply in terms of classes as composite actors with common material interests driving their collective actions. Reading Freud. I do not actually think that the personal attributes of the author are or should be relevant to the evaluation of a particular theoretical approach, as I shall seek to argue below particularly in Chapter 9, and I would hope that my arguments in this book will stand or fall on their own merits — no doubt an illustration of my underlying faith in intellectual rationality. Historical Theory Mary Fulbrook To understand history in this way is not to reject those works which make claims to realistic representation based upon the authenticity of documentary sources; it is rather to read them in a way that their authenticity is a creation effected with other sources, essentially rhetorical in character. Welcome back. We shall return to these major questions later on.

The SAGE Handbook of Historical Theory

Let us assume for the moment that we need not adopt the extreme position that we cannot make any meaningful statements about an extra-textual reality, and that we can agree with Hayden White that it is possible to make individual meaningful statements which are at least some degree communicable with others. The historian, however long and faithfully he works, can never say that his work, even in crudest outline or in this or that smallest detail, is done once. The other is the constructive way. In short: if we even only implicitly agree that there are a range of theoretical perspectives in history, and that the task of courses on historical theory is simply to expose students to this range, but we have no means — other than appeal to political or personal preferences — of adjudicating between these competing perspectives, then we again, perhaps only implicitly land up adopting one of two possible and in my view undesirable positions. Most historians Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past at least an implicit claim for some degree of truth value for what they are saying. Chapters are written by leading academics from around the world and cover a wide array of specialized areas of the discipline, including social history, intellectual history, gender, memory, psychoanalysis and cultural history. Historians cannot even begin work, or, more precisely, begin to determine the object of their inquiries, without some form of analytical framework which construes the subject to be investigated. Sources are important; and there is the possibility of advancement of understanding, not only within given frameworks of interpretation, but indeed even across these. Moreover, the elements in the Table of the Elements really exist, and retain their properties, irrespective of who observes them hydrogen and oxygen, when mixed in the right proportions, at the appropriate temperatures, under the correct conditions, will always combine accordingly to form ice, water or steam. Maggi Young rated it it was amazing Mar 18. The editors have assembled a large and outstanding group of historians and other theorists who examine and represent theories Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past historical knowledge from every angle. Cynthia marked it as to-read Jan 13. Here we come perhaps to the key issue raised by postmodernists, which is not successfully answered by an appeal to the sources; the question about the ways in which the stories told by historians relate to individually true facts about the past; or, to use Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past Hayden White term, the question of employment. Other Editions 9. Or, by using the same method, he may convict of ignorance a less critical predecessor who has accepted the version of the battle given him by the same dispatches. In the context of his attempted rebuttal of postmodernist scepticism, Richard J. Focusing on central theoretical issues and strategies for bridging the gap between the traces of the past and the interpretations of the present, and deploying a range of substantive examples to illustrate the argument, Historical Theory provides an essential guide to and through major debates about the nature of history and representations of the past. This is, as it stands, an extraordinarily strong assertion. History, therefore, cannot be made to square with theories according to which the object of knowledge is abstract and changeless, a logical entity towards which the mind may take up various attitudes. Acts of faith? In particular, postmodernists tend to emphasise heavily the gap between an essentially unknowable past and an imposed and, it is often implied, almost arbitrarily constructed representation in the present, while empiricists often tend almost to ignore the
character of this gap altogether. This broader argument cannot be developed in this chapter alone; what follows here is the general framework which underpins the arguments of the rest of the book. To bowdlerise only slightly, the historical landscape of the later twentieth century might appear to Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past Martian observer roughly as follows. Becky Quinn marked it as to-read Aug 09, This polarisation is accompanied by the relative if not absolute eminence of the ever greater numbers of the proletariat in contrast to the relative or absolute growth in wealth of the ever fewer but wealthier capitalists, who are increasingly able to squeeze out the petite bourgeoisie, who must, in turn, sink into the swelling ranks of the lower classes. Other Popular Editions of the Same Title. Opinions of contemporaries and of later historians were polished by this dramatic and violent upheaval. Now for the bad news. The underlying assumptions may be based in deep sets of political, moral and philosophical beliefs about society, the future, human nature, human development. But, as far as scientists at any given time are aware, these observed realities exist irrespective of our attempts to name them, and act in the same way under the same conditions whatever we choose to call them. This handbook is Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past essential resource for practising historians, and students of history, and will appeal to scholars in related disciplines in the social sciences and humanities who seek a closer understanding of the theoretical foundations of history. The relatively stronger economic and political position of the English gentry in contrast to the Prussian Junkers will play a role in explaining the failure of Charles I Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past contrast to the later successes of Prussian absolutism if one is operating within a paradigm having reference to general structural patterns and political trends in Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past modern Europe; the personalities of key individuals will bear a heavier explanatory weight if one is operating within the complex single narrative paradigm. If we really believed this in its full sense and I can hardly think that even Hayden White or his followers actually conduct their own lives on this basis, we would have to say that there are or were no real connections between different things which happened in the past; that there are no real causes, or combinations of causes, for which we can look, when seeking to explain particular outcomes. Dictatorships of the Left and the Right are united under this heading. No doubt, historical thought is in one way like perception. Evidence is evidence only when some one contemplates it historically. But if different historians actually employ different conceptual vocabularies their analyses will not necessarily be mutually compatible. And this we do by using the present as evidence for its own past. There is no overarching coherence evident. I described constructive history as Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past, between the statements borrowed from our authorities, other statements implied by them. We do not have a choice about this. The language of history is also the language of everyday life.

Historical Theory

Sharon added it Jun 16, Without it the historian would have no narrative to adorn. Debates over approaches to knowledge, understanding and explanation in the historical and social sciences have been going on for generations, indeed centuries. It is the purpose of this book to explore some of the parameters of those collective conversations. Seller Rating: Jonathan added it Aug 09. It is in fact nothing but Aristotle's criterion of what is admissible in poetry; and hence it does not serve to discriminate history from fiction. All of these are perfectly legitimate historical questions, which we would hardly expect historians to answer in the terms of the various conceptual frameworks of the periods they were exploring. Scholars are permitted to reproduce this material for personal use. Differences over the character of history as a discipline for acquiring knowledge of the past are hardly a recent development. Add to Basket. The ordering framework is thus quite different. The incommensurability of paradigms proper My purpose here, however, is not to present a history of currents in intellectual thought, but rather, by this relatively brief survey of a few contrasting approaches, to highlight the importance of different metatheoretical presuppositions underlying certain paradigms. To quote Appleby, Hunt and Jacobs again: "At the heart of modernity is the notion of the freely acting, freely knowing individual whose experiments can penetrate the secrets of nature and whose work with other individuals can make a new and better world."

Book Description Condition: New. Published July 25th by Routledge first published June 27th. However, the reconstitution of past concepts is not as uncontroversial or unproblematic as we might hope. And which broader interpretive framework better accounts for the Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past I would, however, explicitly like to thank those who commented very fully and helpfully on the original proposal for this book: Patrick Joyce, Allan Megill, Alun Munslow, David Welch, and an anonymous referee. These are the big questions we shall be concerned to address throughout. It is, in other words, perhaps ultra-constructivist, to return to the discussion at the start of this chapter. However, this does not mean that the apparently more Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past and empiricist approach of structural-functionalism was not, itself, predicated on distinctive metatheoretical assumptions. One is the critical way, and this is what Bradley has attempted to analyse. If we cannot even agree on what it is we are talking about — on categories for labelling the past — it is hardly likely that we will reach agreement Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past stories constructed in terms of these elements. Of course, for the western democrat, dictatorship entails restrictions on what are seen as basic human freedoms and rights, and scorns any notion of majority decisions arrived at by peaceful debate; thus, dictatorship is A Bad Thing. The fundamental goal is to penetrate beyond the level of observed realities to the underlying and ultimately determining deep structures that are beyond the consciousness of the human actors who play out the effects, like puppets on strings. If they are not recognised as legitimate arbiters among competing accounts of the same historical phenomenon, what theoretical arguments can be deployed to sustain some notion of objectivity or value-freedom — or should this concept be jettisoned? Here, it was not the actions of a few named individuals, or even of whole Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past, but entire structures that seemed to dominate the account. Crucial work will already have gone on, producing apparently promising and illuminating results; but puzzles remain to be solved, allowing for movement, progress, revisions within the paradigm. The issue arises as to whether most perspicacious paradigms genuinely represent new theoretical approaches; or whether they are not, in fact — to use a photographic metaphor — simply taking photos of the same clump of trees, with the same camera, but from different perspectives. The historian has a double task: he has both to do this, and to construct a picture of things as they really were and of events as they really happened. Trivia About Historical Theory. Nor is it possible to give an account of knowledge by combining theories of these two types. And when I read the works of even the greatest contemporary and recent English philosophers, admiring them deeply and learning from them more than I can hope to acknowledge, I find myself constantly haunted by the thought that their accounts of knowledge, based as they seem to be primarily on the study of perception and of scientific thinking, not only ignore historical thinking but are actually inconsistent with there being such a thing. These consequences of the common-sense theory have only to be stated in order to be repudiated. In Historical Theory, a prominent historian develops a highly original argument that evaluates the diversity of approaches to history and points to a constructive way forward. There are interesting ways forward, in which evidence can be brought to bear on these wider issues, and I shall return to this example again in some of the later chapters.

Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past by Taylor and Francis.London Historical Theory: Ways of Imagining the Past