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Does History Make Sense?

For on the one hand, we have in history ingredients and natural conditions which are remote from the conceptual world—i.e. all kinds of human arbitrariness and external necessity. On the other hand, we set up against this the thought of a higher necessity, an eternal justice and love, the absolute and ultimate end which is truth in and for itself. In contrast to natural being, this second, opposite pole is based on abstract elements, on the freedom and necessity of the concept. This opposition contains many interesting features; it comes to our notice once again in the “Idea” of world history. Our present aim is to show how this opposition is resolved in and for itself in world-history.

—HEGEL, *Reason in History*

The subjecting of man to law is a problem in politics which I liken to that of the squaring of the circle in geometry. Solve this problem well, and the government based on your solution will be good and free from abuses. But until then you may rest assured that, wherever you think you are establishing the rule of law, it is men who will do the ruling.

—JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU,  
*Considerations on the Government of Poland*