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APPROACHES TO HISTORY

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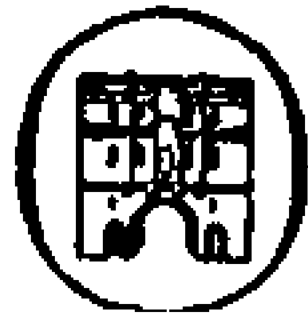
APPROACHES TO HISTORY

A SYMPOSIUM

Edited by

H. P. R. FINBERG



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INTRODUCTION

It is perhaps difficult for anybody less than fifty years old to appreciate how long it took for history to win the place it occupies today in the established organization of scholarship. Our senior universities have indeed had chairs of history ever since the seventeenth century; but elsewhere the claim to acceptance as an independent academic discipline was conceded only after a protracted struggle. Not until 1923 could that great pioneer of the Manchester school, T. F. Tout, write: "The battle for the recognition of the subject is as good as won."

Since then history has greatly enlarged its conquests; and with a vastly greater area to be administered, the need for devolution has made itself felt. There is an obvious case for a division of labour on chronological lines—as for example into 'ancient' and 'modern' history; or on a territorial basis—Roman history, Oriental history, and the like. Today, however, subdivision has been carried to great lengths, and in a fashion which cuts right across the simpler frontiers of yesterday. We have chairs of International History, of Economic History, of Archaeology. At one English university there is a department, though not a chair, of Local History; at another, Social History is accorded a lectureship though not a department of its own. Fragmentation has been effected in seemingly haphazard fashion, giving rise to frequent misunderstandings and a certain amount of discontent. The complaint is often heard nowadays that no one any longer writes or teaches history on the grand scale; or if any one tries to do so, he is promptly attacked by a swarm of professional critics, each armour-plated in his own narrow specialism. What is worse, the specialists do not even understand each other. The archaeologist, for instance, brings to the investigation of the past his

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own distinctive method and techniques, but his field of study is identical with that of a historian engaged on the same period; yet, in this country at any rate, the field is too often shrouded in a thick fog of mutual incomprehension.

The purpose of the symposium which follows is to dissipate, if possible, some of these misunderstandings. In any theoretical discussion of the subject there is of course an antecedent question that might and perhaps should be put: why study history at all? The contributors to this volume have not been asked to discuss that question. If the editor may take it upon himself to offer a compendious answer in their place, he would say that "the proper study of mankind"—or at any rate *a* proper study —"is man," man considered as a social being. Since the future is unknowable, and the present only an invisible dividing-line between the future and the past, any fruitful study of man in society must end, even if it does not begin, as a historical study. In any case, there is already an abundant literature devoted to this fundamental question, and the intention of the present volume is pragmatic rather than philosophical.

Between the various historical disciplines as now organized there is bound to be some degree of overlapping. Local History, for example, sometimes opens new vistas for the political historian, while itself laying geography, archaeology, and economic history under contribution. It would certainly be a mistake to picture all these branches of scholarship as functioning in separate compartments, and it is not the aim of this book to draw hard frontier-lines between them. Each of the scholars who have consented to take part in it has had one end in view: to explain the *raison d'être*, as he understands it, of his own specialism. Any pretension to saying the last word even on that limited theme would be disclaimed by one and all, for alike in theory and practice historiography has doubtless a long process of development still before it. But it is hoped that this book will promote discussion and help to illuminate the relationship between some of the major specialities among which the historical field is now partitioned.

H. P. R. F.

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POLITICAL HISTORY

By S. T. Bindoff

SIR John Seeley's definition of history as "past politics" doubtless appears today—at least before reflection—as outmoded as the works in which he applied it to the previous two or three centuries of the national story. Seeley's dictum is, indeed, seldom quoted save to be scorned: *nous avons changé tout cela.* History, we now know, is not merely, or even primarily, past politics; it is also past economics, past society, past religion, past civilization, in short, past everything. A master of the subject has even essayed (though he can scarcely be said to have produced) a history of the English people "with the politics left out,"[1] an undertaking which Seeley's shade can have viewed only as a meaningless absurdity. It is the 'new' kinds of history—several of them are expounded in this book—which, especially during the present century, have caught the imagination and captured the limelight. How the men of the past tilled their fields and made their wares, what they ate and drank and wore, how they housed themselves, organized themselves in societies, worshipped God, made love, married, proliferated, fell ill and died, how they spent their money and occupied their leisure, what—above all—they thought about these activities, it is such questions as these about our forefathers, rather than how they were governed, misgoverned, or ungoverned, which have for two generations or more been thrusting themselves imperiously upon history's attention. Not only so, but the posing and answering of these questions is sometimes hailed as the stuff of 'real history', of 'the history that matters', in contrast to the sham-and-tinsel history

[1] G. M. Trevelyan, *English Social History*, intro., p. vii.

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of crowns and coronets, councils and parliaments, armies and navies, diplomacy, peace and war. Political history is widely regarded as at best *vieux jeu*, as the residuum of history after all its significant parts have been removed and given separate labels, or as a mere framework maintained to promote these other kinds of historical study.

Yet it is no more than a recognition of fact to observe that history is still 'past politics' in the sense that by far the greatest part of the history which is at present read and written is political history. To take to witness our own national scene, school history courses and textbooks are overwhelmingly political in content, as are the examination syllabuses on which, in the senior school, those books and courses are increasingly focused. It is not substantially different with the advanced study of the subject: for even though university departments cater for a widening range of the 'new' kinds of history, economic and social, cultural, scientific, and technological, these are almost everywhere treated as ancillary to the political core, and are represented in final examinations either by a sprinkling of questions in 'main' papers (questions which candidates notoriously avoid) or by 'alternative' papers taken only by select groups of students offering the particular subject as an option.

The standard literature conforms to the same rule. 'Histories of England' remain predominantly political. In the *Oxford History*, for example, a pattern has been set which is exemplified, in its most recent volumes, by the allocation of somewhat less than one-third of the contents to non-political matters. The comparable series published by Longmans and Methuens are cast in much the same mould; and it may be guessed that the authors concerned would endorse, albeit with the adaptation appropriate to another period, this sentence from the preface to one of the most stimulating of the recent volumes: "To me it seems that what matters most in the story is the condition, reconstruction, and gradual moulding of a state—the history of a nation and its leaders in political action, and therefore the history of government in its widest sense." [1] Of course, the writer of, or contributor to, a 'History of England' can nowa-

[1] G. R. Elton, *England under the Tudors*, preface, p. v.

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days, if he chooses, excuse his relative neglect of matters non-political by pointing to the many works devoted to them. England's economic past has—or will one day have—its five volumes from Professor Ashton and his associates; her social evolution its pioneer outline in Trevelyan's farewell book, and its cross-sections in such 'background books' as Dorothy Marshall's *Eighteenth Century*; her political thought in the Home University series; her literature in a Cambridge and now in an Oxford history; her artistic heritage in the relevant volumes of the Pelican History of Art. With such treatments at such hands within his readers' reach, the writer of 'history' is likely to confine himself to a chapter or two with a deprecatory air and a reference to the experts. Yet it is his volume which is entitled a 'History' *tout court*, and his political, constitutional, diplomatic, and military chapters which his student-reader must concentrate upon in preparation for an examination paper similarly weighted.

And behind the 'standard works' there jostle and multiply the monographs, the editions of texts, the biographies, the articles, among which, while it no longer enjoys a monopoly, political history still does a flourishing trade, its volume of business probably at least equalling that of all its rivals put together. It is a trade employing many hands but one which also continues to throw up master-craftsmen. Any survey of British (including American) historians of England of the last generation would look odd if it omitted Namier, Neale, Notestein, Richard Pares, Conyers Read, Temperley, Webster, and Woodward, all of whom are or were first and foremost political historians. Mention of the first three of those names also serves as a reminder that one of the largest pieces of organized historical investigation at present being undertaken in Great Britain is indubitably a study of 'past politics': it is the History of Parliament.

Evidently, then, political history, with its supporting 'powers' of constitutional, administrative, and diplomatic history, far from being the 'sick man' of the historical system, both continues to wield sway over extensive territories and displays plenty of vigour in their administration. If we enquire into the reasons for this state of affairs, we shall discover a

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variety of them, some better, some worse. Let us briefly review them, beginning with what may well seem the worst of all.

"History does not repeat itself," remarked Philip Guedalla, "it is historians who repeat one another." That the continuing pre-eminence of political history, and the persistence within it not merely of a 'received' factual content (including time-worn errors) but also of inherited points of view, judgements, and scales of values—that both these owe something to the urge to cling to the old, old story cannot be gainsaid, and the consequences are readily apparent in most textbooks and almost all examination scripts. In the garden of political history the weeds of error and the undergrowth of stodge luxuriate in spite of all that such stalwart 'improvers' as the Historical Association do to eradicate them; while to clear and replant a single one of its beds is an operation for heroes. And since, as any gardener knows, weeds are apt to spread, the faulty cultivation of political history all too easily contaminates its neighbours. Take, for example, the tyranny of dates and periods. The time-honoured division of English history at 1066, 1485, 1603, 1760, and the like, if never without some meaning in the political context whence it sprang, can even there become misleading, but when applied indiscriminately it has ludicrous results. Two generations of economic historians have laboured to abolish a phrase and dethrone a date: the phrase is The Industrial Revolution, the date 1760. Both, it need hardly be said, were borrowed from political history, at a time (they owe their currency, if not their origin, to Arnold Toynbee's lectures of 1881–2, as published in 1894) when a new school of economists was turning to history as part of a challenge to the classical tradition of their science. That what Macaulay had been content to call, with nice and memorable restraint, the "portentously rapid" development of the economy should thenceforth be dramatized into a 'revolution', that it should be given a date, and that the year chosen should have been that of the accession of a monarch whose chief claim to be remembered with it—apart from his (in this respect anomalous) patronage of agriculture—was his survival through sixty years of its gathering momentum, these mis-

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fortunes are an awful example of the blunders which can be committed in the name of history.

And yet . . . and yet . . . is it an altogether bad thing that we—and let him among us who is without this fault, if fault it be, cast the first stone—should cleave to a traditional concept of history, nay even to the miscellany of good, bad, and indifferent elements which make it up? What the positive merits of political history are, as I conceive them, will appear later among the more estimable reasons for its study. Here it is a question whether, on balance, we gain or lose by continuing to grant such history precedence, not on its merits in comparison with others, but simply because we, or most of us, are accustomed to doing so, because this is the kind of history with which we feel most at home. At the risk of appearing timidly and pedestrianly conservative, I will declare my belief that we gain by doing so, and that, especially in the early stages of historical awareness, at school and even at the university, the well-trodden path makes for easier and swifter progress than the half-opened track. Not the least of its attractions is its inducement to learn something of those who have passed this way before; and since most of the great historians, from the founding fathers to the latter-day giants, were political historians, an early introduction to what they conceived history's proper subject-matter to be is best calculated to foster their desirable acquaintance.

If one reason for studying political history is thus, like one reason for climbing Everest, "because it is there," all the remainder arise directly or indirectly from answers to the question, why is it there? why, that is to say, has history so long preoccupied itself with 'past politics'? Among these further reasons I will mention first the intrinsic interest to most people of much of its content. Of the motives which lead the 'ordinary reader' to read history at all, one of the most compelling is the urge to mingle vicariously with the great, the famous, the wealthy. To those of us, the vast majority, for whom courts and cabinets, legislatures and departments of state, political salons, backstairs and backrooms, are impenetrable *arcana*, the reading of history can best assuage our thirst for admission and compensate for our exclusion. Here

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we may exchange the fleeting glimpse of a living monarch for daily and intimate converse with dead ones; here we can hob-nob with ministers and grey eminences, learn the innermost secrets of policy, take part—at no personal risk—in crises, triumphs, downfalls, revolutions.

It must be admitted, of course, that this kind of interest is chiefly responsible for the output of such trash as those 'Private Lives' whose staple themes are the medical, psychological, and sexual peculiarities of kings and queens: these are the pseudo-historical counterparts of the sensational journalism of our own day in the same field. But because an innocent and widespread appetite can be so abused and degraded, that is no reason for discrediting it: rather should it be elevated by introduction to healthier fare. And this it is one of the tasks of the political historian to provide. For the interest which attaches to the great, and not-so-great, political figures of the past is nourished by the circumstance that, generally speaking, history can tell us more about them than about either their fellows in other walks of life or their humbler contemporaries. It may be a pity that we know so much more of Richard II than of the painter of the Wilton Diptych, of Elizabeth I than of Shakespeare, of George III than of Jane Austen; still more regrettable that for some thirteen out of the fifteen hundred years of the English nation's recorded history all but a tiny minority of the individuals who composed it must for ever remain, at best, bearers of names and pursuers of occupations. We may regret, but it is beyond our power to alter. History as the story of 'people', of men and women with discernible virtues and vices, hopes and fears, loves and hates, achievements and failures, with, in a word, personalities, such history, for all that it is worth, must remain preponderantly political in subject and setting.

The case is hardly otherwise with the more sophisticated study of those perennially compelling figures, the 'makers of history'. Few aspects of the riddle of historical causation have been so persistently debated as the place in it of the 'outsize man', from Alexander, Julius Caesar, and Constantine in the ancient world to Napoleon, Bolivar, Lincoln, Bismarck, Lenin, and Hitler in the modern. Did the age produce the man, or the man the age? How far is the 'hero' to be viewed as the

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probable—few would say the necessary—product of a given situation, the expected response to a challenge, how far the maker of that situation or at least its manipulator once made? Until recently the tendency was to play down his independent creative (or destructive) rôle and to exalt the part of those impersonal causes to which so much historical—as well as other forms of—study has itself been devoted: even the most towering of men have been thought of as merely quickening or retarding, not permanently arresting or significantly deflecting, processes of change whose origins are to be sought elsewhere. There are signs that the pendulum is beginning to swing back, and that, no doubt with an eye to those individuals of our own day who, if they have not made history, at least appear to have intervened remarkably in it, we are readier to concede to their fellows from the past a more formative rôle. Be that as it may, it is unquestionably the political sphere, whether present or past, which furnishes most of the 'case studies' of this particular problem, the only serious rivals being war and religion, with both of which politics is in any case interwoven. Of the ultimate reason for this fact, namely, that the greatest problems in human affairs being, as they always have been, by their nature political, it is these problems which pose the greatest challenge and (at times) call forth the greatest response,—of this something will be said later. Here the point to be made is that the 'cult of personality', in history as in the world about us, is a predominantly political exercise.

It is also one—and this brings us to a new stage in the consideration of our subject—which displays a markedly 'national' character. The giants in question belong, in first place, each to one people as part of its heritage: they are the Heroes of the Nations, to borrow the title of a once popular series in which many of them were briefly portrayed. And in their national pantheons they are flanked by other figures ranking only below them in reputed importance: whereas nine Englishmen earned places among the 'Heroes of the Nations', Lord Morley adopted the apostolic number of 'English Statesmen' for his series of that name. The fame of such worthies, as endorsed by posterity, is at once an effect and a cause. If they owe their pedestals to their accepted contributions to the national story,

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it is the continuing prestige of that story which keeps their memory green and ensures them a succession of admirers and students. What is true of them is also true of national history as a whole: in honouring its past the nation honours something which is, both by definition and by the exigencies of evidence, basically political. Between political history and national history there is a necessary and, in one sense at least, indissoluble connection.

Not that the two kinds of history are synonymous, although the extent to which they overlap is, naturally, dependent upon how each is defined. Elsewhere in this book national history will be found contrasted, on the one hand, with supranational and even supra-continental or global history, and on the other with infra-national or local history. In the first of these views national history might well be taken to comprehend not only the history of a nation as a whole, seen from its capital and centre, but also that of its parts regarded separately; whereas in the second view these two, the national and the local, are clearly distinguished. Now political history is, to adopt the definition already quoted, "the history of government in its widest sense," and government in its widest sense has in the past meant a good deal more than the working of central state machinery. Most obviously, it has included all those activities which in English political terminology have for a century or more been styled 'local government'. During that century, as we know, the institutions of English (not to mention Scottish and Irish) local government have undergone drastic alteration: their areas of jurisdiction, powers and functions, representative basis, social affiliations, all have been changed almost out of recognition, and they have suffered a cumulative erosion under the impact of central authority. But for centuries before this era of reform and upheaval English local government displayed not merely a high degree of permanence in both structure and working but also a marked capacity to resist pressures of one sort and another exerted upon it from the centre. In general, of course, it was, even in its heyday, in practice less independent of Westminster than were its counterparts in most continental states of their central authorities: but of the sum-total of governmental activity

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at the time it accounted for a much larger share than it now claims. Indeed, one might assert, with no more error than is bound to attend any such generalization, that the further back we go in English history the more significant the rôle of local and the less that of central government.

Since local government involves local politics, whether it be the 'party politics' of the present-day town or county council, or the factional politics of the Tudor and Stuart lieutenancies, sheriffdoms, or commissions of the peace, the reconstruction, so far as is practicable, of this branch of English government is as much the task of the political historian as that of the goings-on in Westminster or Whitehall. It is one which has been neglected. The classic county histories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had little to say of such matters, for these were part of the mystery of local statecraft which the gentle or clerical authors of such works considered it no part of their duty to unveil: and the great *History of Local Government* with which the Webbs prepared a further stage in its overhaul was primarily institutional and functional. More recent scholarship has taken up the larger task, and in particular the inclusion in recent *Victoria County Histories* of surveys of political and administrative history is a welcome indication of interest in such history as applied to units smaller than the nation-state. That institution is, moreover, in its mature form, not seldom a product of amalgamation, and its constituent parts are likely to have histories which differ in scope and character from that of their devourer. It has been said that Wales became a nation only after she had ceased to be a state; but it is certain that Welsh nationality is nourished by, among other memories in common, that of Wales's statehood before the Edwardian conquest. Scotland, by contrast, maintained her political independence long enough to ensure the survival, after its passing, of native institutions (although not of the native language), and this may be one of the reasons—there are clearly others—why Scottish history is less cherished there than is Welsh history in the Principality.

Of the political history which transcends the frontiers of states the most intensively cultivated is that which treats of the organized relations between their governments. The serious study of diplomatic history took its rise only in this century,

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but it has been powerfully stimulated by two World Wars, with their revelation of the catastrophes which diplomacy, or its breakdown, could produce. The last forty years have seen a prodigious expenditure of effort and an impressive, although not wholly commensurate, output in this field: in particular the literature of nineteenth- and twentieth-century international relations has already become formidable. This rapid growth has been accompanied, too, by changes in the scope and technique, and to some extent in the very nature, of the subject. First conceived as an aspect of national history, as the 'foreign policy' of a single state, and largely compiled from sources domestic to that state, the history of diplomacy has become increasingly international in name and character. No contribution to it, beyond the mere publication of materials, which remains largely a national enterprise, will now count for much which does not rest on a comparative study of the archives of two or more governments, or which does not attempt to view its themes from a standpoint other than that of any one of them. This, in its turn, presupposes a closer acquaintance with the different political systems thus brought into contact than was formerly held necessary and so fertilizes the study of various national histories. The source-materials drawn upon, and with them the categories of questions posed, have likewise undergone expansion: to the despatches and telegrams preserved in the archives have been added private correspondence, memoirs, and a variety of printed sources—pamphlets for the earlier, newspapers and periodicals for the later period—while the content of the diplomatic history thus investigated has been correspondingly broadened to cover more than inter-governmental relationships as conventionally conceived.[1]

Yet much remains to do, and there are aspects of international political history, in its widest sense, which have been touched upon only recently, if at all. Take, for instance, the comparative study of governmental institutions. Although this has a long and distinguished pedigree, reaching back to Aristotle and numbering among its modern names those of

[1] An excellent example of the wider view of diplomatic history is Dr Douglas Coombs's *The Conduct of the Dutch: British Opinion and the Dutch Alliance during the War of the Spanish Succession* (1958).

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Montesquieu, De Tocqueville, and Bryce, its appropriation by historians, as distinct from political theorists, is a new departure and one for which the pioneer work of the International Commission for the History of Representative Institutions augurs a bright future. But the branch of international history which is 'newest' in both subject-matter and approach is that which treats, not of the relationships between independent sovereign states, but of the tendency of those states to become absorbed in larger, supra-national organizations. Before 1919 the scope of such history was limited: the Middle Ages, of course, had its Empire and its Church, but in the modern period, with their breakdown, there was little to fasten upon beyond the formation of some empires and attempts to establish international order such as the Concert of Europe or the Pan-American Union. But the last forty years, and above all the last fifteen, have seen international institutions proliferate to the point where the historian cannot evade them: the League of Nations and the United Nations, N.A.T.O., Benelux and the United Arab Republic, the Iron and Steel Community, the Six and the Seven—all such efforts to give political form to international needs are the latest accretion to the content of political history in this sphere.

It is, of course, the widespread conviction that the day of the national sovereign state is over, and that the future of the human race turns on its ability to evolve broader-based institutions of government, which has called in question the propriety of the continued cultivation of national history. We have been informed, in magisterial tones, not only that history's obstinate allegiance to the nation-state is a disservice to humanity in this larger quest, but that national history is no longer, if it ever was, an "intelligible field of study."[1] What are the grounds for such rebukes, and how far is the indictment warranted?

History is the product of two elements: the past, or what is left of it in material or immaterial form, and the present's imaginative skill in its reconstruction. The 'traces' of the past, the 'sources' available to the historian, are external to him: much as he would like to, he cannot alter or add to them, save

[1] Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, I, pp. 9 ff.

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by forgery or fabrication, although he may discover and reveal those previously lost or unknown. It is this fixity and finiteness in his material which marks the extreme possible limits of the subject, the 'frontier of knowledge' which, however he strives to enlarge it, must stop somewhere. What is, on the contrary, mutable and elastic is the intensity and nature of the interest with which the present approaches the past, and the degree of skill which it applies to the reconstructive process: on this side there is perpetual change and, perhaps, some progress. Now it is one of the 'given facts' of the past, and particularly of the recent past—say, the last four or five hundred years—that most civilized people's lives were lived, and their experiences gained, within the framework of the national sovereign state. Over that period particular states have of course displayed markedly different characteristics: they have varied in age (only about half of those which make up Europe today had already achieved statehood a century ago), in their degree of 'nationality', in their structures and institutions. But, taken together, they have constituted what is incomparably man's most valuable laboratory of political experience. It was within them that there were continually sought new solutions to age-old problems, the reconciliation between individual freedom and the welfare of the community, between the need for leadership and the consent of the led, between that which is Caesar's and that which is God's; and in the process there were evolved categories of institutions—monarchies and presidencies, cabinets and councils, parliaments, law-courts, and bureaucracies, armed forces and police—and codes of conduct governing speech, worship, behaviour, dissident minorities, and the like, which make up a large part of the accumulated body of human experience in these fields. We must not forget, either, that the leaders among these states all shared in some measure the task of wielding imperial rule over dependent territories, and with it the problems of adapting these organs and codes to societies differing radically from their own.

All this is the stuff of modern political history: and since its setting is the nation-state, such history is of necessity also national. To argue that, because the problems and preoccupations of mankind today increasingly transcend national boun-

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daries, this kind of history is outmoded and irrelevant, is surely to ask us to turn our backs upon a large and immensely valuable slice of experience, one which was bought, too, with much tribulation. And on what grounds? That the continuing pre-eminence of national history in some way hinders the desired development of supra-national or global views and sympathies? If it were any longer true, as it admittedly has been in the past, that national history was used to foster national vainglory (as opposed to national pride or self-respect), there might be something to be said for sacrificing it to the higher emotion of international or world fellowship. But it is difficult to believe that the objective and critical spirit in which the nations' histories are nowadays generally approached is conducive to national conceit: on the contrary, it is national failings, and especially the failings of politicians, which engage, and at least in some cases rightly engage—do we want Germans to forget Hitler?—most attention. Surely the more constructive view is that every people has something to contribute to the common stock, whether by way of example or warning: and that the more rigorously its contribution has been tested and refined by its own scholars, the more acceptable will the gift be.

Or is it objected that national history, being by its very nature history conceived in a political context, the context of the state, is inferior to history removed or raised out of that context? That the student of certain forms of human activity, economic, intellectual, or artistic, for instance, can, and perhaps should, take less account of political or national considerations goes without saying: yet even these are likely to suffer if treated in a political vacuum. For to any such tendency there is opposed the formidable obstacle of the unique, and increasing, part played by the state in the course of modern history. To the historian this fact presents itself in two ways: not only has the state been for some centuries the most prolific producer and the most careful (a relative term this!) preserver of the documentary evidence upon which the study of nearly every branch of history chiefly depends, but also—as in part a cause and in part an effect of that circumstance—history cannot but regard that institution, in all its ramifications, as one

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of its cynosures. Of the first of these points our own history furnishes the outstanding example, and illustrations of it abound. Thus the economic historian must rely, for his reconstruction of that aspect of the national past, principally upon records emanating, not from the economic processes which are his theme, but from the state's (or, to a less and diminishing extent, the church's) interest in and interference with them. To trace the history of population he turns to parish registers, muster rolls, taxation lists, and ultimately (but late in time) census reports; of production, until the advent in any quantity of business records, to such fragmentary and defective sources as aulnage returns; of foreign trade, above all, to the customs records; while something more about the nation's livelihood is to be recovered from legislation, litigation, testamentary evidence, and the like. Compared with the bulk and continuity of these materials, the records of economic activity as such, in the form of farmers' notebooks, manufacturers' papers, or merchants' accounts, are, before at least the eighteenth century, woefully meagre: only dealings in land are well-documented (although even these not until our own time by a regular land-registry) to satisfy the demands of title. From this state of affairs there arises not merely the difficulty, often verging on the impossibility, confronting the investigator of any activity which, since the state was not interested in it, the public records do not reflect, but also the obligation to master the nature and purpose of those records which the state did produce before trying to write economic history from them. For such indispensable knowledge he must turn to political, constitutional, and administrative history.

If the political historian has something to give to his fellows in other fields, he has much to gain from the stimulus of their fresh approach to his sources and subject. One has only to compare, for instance, the presentation of the Civil War and Interregnum by S. R. Gardiner, whose *History* came out between 1863 and 1903, with their treatment in our own day, to realize how much that is fresh and important—as well as some less estimable things—has been added to the story. Yet in one sense the most significant recent episode in Civil War historiography has been the appearance, from Miss Wedg-

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wood's accomplished pen, of a work which, while taking account of the new 'interpretations', sets out to re-tell that story in the belief that there are readers chiefly interested in knowing what men did, why they did it, and with what consequences. It must be recognized that to meet this demand becomes progressively harder. Not the least merit of political history in its older, narrower sense was that it lent itself so admirably to narrative; and when a Macaulay, a Lingard, or a Froude sat down to write history, he thought, perhaps instinctively, in terms of narrative. His successor of our own day has somehow to combine narrative with description and analysis, or to keep more than one narrative going at a time.

This artistic consideration apart, there is every prospect that political history, whether local, national, or supra-national, will be strengthened rather than impoverished by the rise of other and newer kinds of history. Any such fortification will be welcome, but it will not affect the claim of political history to be, if rightly conceived and pursued, the highest form of history in that it deals with man's highest form of activity as a social being. With the possible exception, at some periods, of the church, no form of human association has wielded such power as the state, nor has any activity been of such consequence as the politics of the state. The dictum that the greatest problems facing mankind are political was never more obviously true than it is today: but it has always been true. For politics is the wielding of, or the aspiration to, power in the state for certain ends: and whether those ends be good or bad, their pursuit is the *raison d'être* of all government and therefore of universal interest. How men acquired, kept, or lost such power in the past, what they attempted with it once gained, and above all how they met the problems inseparable from its possession, these matters are the core of political history. It is the only form of history in which we can at once diagnose a problem, observe its attempted solution, and weigh the reasons for success or failure. Man, said Aristotle, is by nature a political animal. By the same token man's history is, in the last analysis, political.

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ECONOMIC HISTORY

By W. H. B. Court

I

ECONOMIC history is a study which may be discussed in its relation to either economics or history, for it has grown up to assist both economist and historian. Many of the most important contributions of recent years towards the understanding of modern economic history have been made by men who would regard themselves as economists first and foremost. In this part of the field the interchange of knowledge between economists and historians is continuous. But while economic history is necessary to the economist, it is also studied by those whose prime concern is not the advancement of economics but the writing and explanation of history. Economic history has been well defined as that part of history which requires a knowledge of economics for its full understanding. What economics can and what it cannot do for the explanation of history are of course vexed questions, which lie close to the heart of the intellectual debate of our age. Without pretending to settle them here, economic history will be discussed in this essay from the standpoint of the historian and his concerns.[1]

[1] I have tried to refrain in this essay from over-much reference or quotation and to concentrate on the nature of economic history and of the economic historian's work, rather than upon what economic historians have written or are writing now. Ample bibliographies of the subject can be found elsewhere and are regularly published in journals such as the *Economic History Review* and the (American) *Journal of Economic History*, to say nothing of many others.

In discussing economic history as a part of the historian's work (there is, of course, much admirable enquiry into the past by men whose main

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The general purpose of the economic historian is that common to all historians. The purpose is to recreate historical situations—a reliving and recreation of the past which is not only an exercise of the intellect but also an experience of the whole personality, as well as involving an act of communication with the reader which is not the least important of the historian's tasks. The method of the historian distinguishes him sharply from the social scientist. For the historian, describing and analysing historical situations, concentrates naturally upon the uniqueness, concreteness, and particularity of the events he is describing and uses every help of analogy and contrast to bring out and illustrate those qualities in them. The social scientist, on the other hand, considering the same events, is concerned rather with the uniformities they display, with the common qualities of apparently disparate situations. He in his turn uses every technical weapon which may assist him to lay bare and to emphasize such uniformities. The social scientist abstracts from society the particular type of relation which interests him; the historian must use his concreting faculty to recover a past society and the situations which arose in the course of its development.

Does this mean that the social scientist cannot help the historian or the historian the social scientist? By no means. The same piece of knowledge in the hands of either serves different purposes and each has to adapt to his own purpose the

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interests are in economics or sociology), I should like, if it can be done without ostentation and without imputing to them mistakes which are mine, to acknowledge my debt, extending over many years, to the writings of two Continental scholars, Friedrich Meinecke and Benedetto Croce. These men, the one a Prussian conservative, the other an Italian liberal, maintained in the course of their long lives social and political attitudes and opinions which are not mine and which could indeed hardly be those of an Englishman. They were largely indifferent to the economic side of history and they paid little attention to the social sciences, except political science. But each in his own way seems, for various reasons, to have penetrated deeper than any Englishman of their time known to me into the nature and structure of historical truth. It is significant that both men lived in an honourable state of disgrace with the governments which ruled their countries in the nineteen-thirties and which were, as is well known, committed to very different philosophies of history of their own.

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discoveries of the other. But each also plays into the other's hands. History and the social sciences stand or fall together, to the extent that their great periods of growth have tended to coincide. It was no accident that the revival of political history writing in Europe in the sixteenth century came at the hands of Macchiavelli and Guicciardini, men who were passionate political analysts and students of the theory of politics; no accident either, that economic history arrived late on the scene. Perhaps the first great piece of economic history writing in English was the third chapter of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. Economic history had to await the development of the capacity for economic analysis in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

To say all this does not perhaps make the exact nature of the work of the economic historian much clearer, except that the kind of reasoned narrative which he hopes to write depends, among other things, on economic analysis. What are the relations and the processes in history which specially concern the economic historian and which make economic analysis necessary if they are to be understood?

It seems desirable to begin by clearing out of the way a number of misunderstandings which have arisen largely out of phrases. Economic history is often said to deal with the 'economic factors' in history, with 'economic motives', or with the 'economic foundation' as contrasted with the 'superstructure' of society. These are words which have strayed from mathematics, or psychology, or even architecture. They may well have a use in history but they are often so applied as to be largely meaningless, where they are not seriously misleading. The misleadingness consists in their being very generally employed in the conviction that there must be in history a certain range of motives or a certain kind of institution which is specifically economic and which thus defines the province of the economic historian. There is good reason to doubt this belief.

The business of the economic historian is with a certain kind of historical problem. But these problems may arise in connection with motives the most diverse and institutions the most varied. Like economics itself, economic history rests

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upon an observation so general as to be more or less applicable to man everywhere: that he cannot satisfy all his desires fully or at once and must therefore make what appears to him the best use of his resources, allotting them as best he can among competing ends. Such ends or purposes are of course both personal and social. This necessity, shared by men of every society and of every age, to bring their ends and their means into some kind of relation, to adapt ends to means and means to ends, is the true economic necessity. It is also the beginning of economic history, for it imposes economic choice. The act of choice lies between one use of resources and another, and men being social, their choices work themselves out through social institutions. Economic choice includes those important, even fateful, choices which decide whether the resources of an individual or a people or a world shall grow or diminish in relation to the wants to be satisfied. It covers all the processes of economic growth and decay.

Economic choice forms the centre of economic history.[1] This might almost be defined as the record of the economic choices which appear to the historian to have been the most interesting and important that men have made; how and why they came to make them; what the execution was, and the economic consequences, so far as we can tell.

If this is true, it follows that there are no specific economic motives, or rather, there is only one. This is the economizing motive itself, the desire to overcome relative scarcities, to make the best use of any resources that one has, in a given situation,

[1] It may be said, what becomes of choice in a society dominated by custom? Alfred Marshall's comment seems apposite here, although it does not cover the whole ground. "To say that any arrangement is due to custom is really little more than to say that we do not know its cause. I believe that very many customs could be traced, if we only had knowledge enough, to the slow equilibration of measurable motives: that even in such a country as India no custom retains its hold long after the relative positions of the motives of demand and supply have so changed, that the values which would bring them into stable equilibrium are far removed from those which the custom sanctions."—*The Present Position of Economics*, 1885, p. 48. Custom, that is to say, is the medium of economic decisions for some societies. In other societies, they are made through the state and the market. Whether the motives at work are measurable or not in any precise sense is another matter.

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in relation to what one wants. For the rest, the motives at work in economic history are as varied as human nature. They are, however, looked at by the economic historian from a special point of view, in so far as they lead to economic decisions.

When it is said, as it so often is, that money-making motives form the material of economic history, it is the economizing motive which is meant, working itself out as it does in our Western world through the institutions of a money-using, market-organized society. But it would be too narrow a definition of economic history to confine it to societies which know the use of money and the market. Economic changes and choices may be made by men and societies too primitive to have knowledge of either. Nor is it true, even where the market and money are known, that the prime economic decisions are always market-made. In modern Europe and North America many of the major economic decisions have been and are taken by governments. This is still more true of the centrally planned economies of eastern Europe.

There are then no specific economic motives. Men make economic choices under the pressure of different motives at different times. Furthermore, living as they do in different societies, they make their decisions according to different schemes of values and according to the habits and structure of the society they find themselves living in. Economic doing involves social being. Similarly, there are no specific institutions which act as the sole vehicles and makers of economic decisions, constant and recognizable throughout history. Over long periods, the major economic decisions in society may be taken over the camp-fires of primitive hunters; over other long ages, in the village communities of peasant cultivators; over others, in the recognized markets for money and commodities of industrial and commercial cities. Organized churches have their own economic history; organized states have theirs. Whoever has the disposition of resources is the maker of economic decisions and those decisions are made through whatever institutions seem appropriate to the doer at the time.

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II

If economic history is the record of economic choices, it might appear that men are free to do as they please in the distribution of their resources. But it is of the nature of economic decisions, being choices to overcome scarcities, that men are not so free; or rather they are free only in the sense that they must choose. They must adapt themselves to limits, whether these are set for them by physical nature, by their own want of knowledge and ignorance of alternatives, or by the other circumstances of the situation in which they find themselves, whether that is primitive and simple, or civilized and complicated.

The great phases of Western economic history seem to have arisen in this way, out of the dilemmas created for men by the scarcity of means to satisfy their wants, the penalty for failing to do so being sometimes no less than extinction. The processes, for example, by which in remote times agriculture, even of the most simple forest-burning, extensive variety, came to be adopted by the hunters and food-gatherers of prehistoric Europe are lost to our view.[1] But they presumably had something to do with the gradual multiplication in the number of hunters and the relative scarcity of game, in some regions always, in all regions at some seasons.

Agriculture once established, it made possible a world of cultivators and of town-living craftsmen and merchants. The requirements of agriculture prepared the way for the agricultural ages and for some of the major problems of later history. Agriculture needed land, and land, it seemed, could never be enough. How or why, in the half-settled Europe of late Roman times, land-hunger became acute among the German tribes, is not wholly clear.[2] But it was so, and out of the decisions of the tribes to seek new land with increasing frequency beyond the Roman border, sprang much of the settlement of western Europe and the fall of the Empire.

[1] Much careful work has been done on the chronology and other aspects of this change. See, to mention only one book, J. G. D. Clark, *Primitive Europe; the economic basis*, London, 1952.

[2] The late Professor Koebner has considered the point in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, I, Cambridge, 1941, pp. 19–20.

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Under the far different circumstances of the nineteenth century, the lack of opportunities on the land in Europe, arising out of a variety of conditions, decided many families to move to the United States and other countries overseas. Of course, land shortage was far from being the only cause of emigration, but in countries like Ireland and western Germany in the first half of the century it was a strong reason, given the opening up of land at that time for settlement elsewhere.[1]

Land scarcity in the literal sense has been and still is one of the great formative powers of economic history. Translated into terms of the need at particular times of particular sorts of land for particular purposes, and made the object of the observation and ingenuity of many men now forgotten, it has been the source of the farming systems of the world, as well as of dearths and famines. It has also been a cause of conflict. Every schoolboy knows of the clash between agriculturalist and cattleman in the American West of the last century. But that was only one of numberless disputes in history about the use of land, often additionally complicated by differences of race and culture and religion.

Physical scarcities of an easily understandable type also played their part in that Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century in England which was as decisive a turning-point in European history as the adoption of tillage had been thousands of years before. It has been remarked with much truth that Britain's industrial success in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depended on her richness in the two great new raw materials, coal and iron.[2] But the wealth of her resources in coal and the successful use of coal for smelting would not have been discovered but for the gradual encroachment upon the woodlands over centuries by agriculturists and others, the

[1] There were important complications of 'push' and 'pull' behind the European emigrations of last century. Were people pushed overseas by 'pressure of population' or were they 'pulled' there by new opportunities? On the American emigration, Brinley Thomas, *Migration and Economic Growth*, 1954, and M. L. Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607–1860*, Cambridge, Mass., 1940, are instructive.

[2] Charles Singer and others, editors, *History of Technology*, Oxford, 1957, III, p. 712.

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growing relative scarcity of wood fuel in particular districts, and its rôle in the iron producer's costs.

Crude physical scarcity therefore plays and has played a great part in economic history. It has also influenced men's views of that history. Much of the impression created among Englishmen over a hundred years ago by Malthus and his *Essay on Population* (1798) arose from the telling effect with which a complete view of history was derived from the observable relations between population and the land available for food. In a country such as Malthus's England, where primary poverty, in the sense of not enough to eat, was common, that view seemed to fit well with what people could see for themselves.

It would be an unduly simplified vision of economic history, however, which described it as a record of choices arising out of the conflict between physical needs, constant and overwhelmingly powerful though they are. Even where human needs have an obvious physical basis, they have become so adjusted and are so closely tied with custom and habit as to be properly described as social or cultural needs. Other needs, such as those of art and religion, seem to possess no clear physical basis whatever, although they have an obvious physical expression.

This social pattern of human wants has an important bearing upon the work of the economic historian. If economic history is the study of how men have chosen to use their resources to satisfy their wants, we have to recognize that there is a fundamental mobility about men's ideas of their wants which lends a certain elusiveness to the conception of a resource. This is not only or even primarily a question of changing techniques, although a change in technique can revolutionize our ideas both of our wants and our resources. It is a question of economic logic. For what is economically logical, in the sense of a rational distribution of resources in one state of society, may not be so at all in another.

An illustration may make this clear. When Englishmen went to Australasia in the nineteenth century they found, among the Maoris of New Zealand and the Australian aborigines, a conception of what was a good use of land which was, not un-

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surprisingly, entirely different from their own. To hunting and food-gathering peoples it seemed natural that they should collect their subsistence according to an established annual routine over hundreds and even thousands of square miles of virgin country. To the incoming grazier or stock-man, with his head full of the knowledge of money and European markets, this was economic madness. He proceeded to take over the land, in the name of a higher civilization. In the conviction that he stood for a higher civilization he may possibly have been correct, but he was hardly superior in economic logic. It would be very difficult indeed to argue that the land was not rationally used, from the standpoint of the Maori and the aborigine, given the state of the culture of each at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[1]

This matter is of some importance in understanding the economic history of countries and people outside the Western circle and the European impact upon them. It also bears upon economic history nearer home. One could not, for example, relate the economic history of Britain over the past half century without reference to the arrangements and the values of European society as a whole. European economic arrangements have had their own special logic, which cannot be explained apart from Europe's history, including two great wars. If, for instance, a Maori or an Australian aborigine of the early nineteenth century had been able to return to contemplate the economic affairs of Europe in the nineteen-thirties, he might perhaps have felt that his own efforts at economic rationality needed rather less defence than had at one time been supposed to be necessary.

To study his chosen subject, therefore, the economic historian needs to abstract from the web of events in historical time those situations which involve acts of economic choice. But it is hardly likely that he will make much of them unless he either knows already or takes the trouble to get to know a great deal about the society from which he abstracts.

[1] R. H. Tawney made this point of the relative rationality of economic systems in his own unforgettable way in an introduction to Raymond Firth's book, *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, London, 1929.

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Particular economic decisions and situations mean very little, detached from the context of the society in which they take place. This may not be obvious to the student of contemporary problems. In the shorthand of day-to-day economic discussion, it is possible to take for granted a knowledge of the society, the economic arrangements of which are under debate. When we move, however, out of our own parish in time and place, the extent to which economic choices depend upon the existing structure of society and its accepted values becomes apparent. The economic historian must, by the nature of the problems upon which he works, be prepared to employ economic analysis of the kind and to the degree which is necessary to explain the situation he is rebuilding and, so to speak, reliving. But he should also be, if not by training, at least by inclination and experience, something of a sociologist too—an observer and re-creator of the codes, loyalties, and organizations which men create and which are just as real to them as physical conditions. Of the processes of this social world, we know, to be sure, very little.[1] The deliberate study of social structure and values and of the transformations which come over them is still something of a novelty among historians, while the nature of the relations between economic and social change is a fundamental problem not to be discussed here. But whoever observes and reflects upon the one is likely to find himself observing and reflecting upon the other and will be led to consider those hidden springs of social growth out of which all history comes.

III

Economic change is, one might say, the first great theme of the economic historian. It covers all the transformations in the distribution of their resources which men think it necessary to make, whether privately or publicly, whether in peace or war,

[1] It seems unfair to write this without mentioning the name of George Unwin. Of all the English economic historians of an earlier generation, he perhaps most successfully communicated the sense of the fundamental relation between the economic and the social. See, for example, his (posthumous) *Studies in Economic History* (1927). There was, however, in his work no direct relating of history to sociology.

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whether in time of the rise or the fall of civilizations. This accounts for some of the importance of the study of economic history for us living in an age of great economic developments, when thinking men in almost all countries are concerned with problems of practical economic dynamics that can hardly be solved without reference to history.

Perhaps one of the first things to be said about economic change is that to write its history, especially in modern times and when attempted on a large scale, covering it may be the economic life of a nation, requires the help of the economist and the statistician. This may sound a little intimidating—despite the analogous connection which has long existed between the political historian and the political scientist—but the reasons are clear enough. The great complexity of economic situations, in which the elements at work are rarely few or simple and where what has to be traced is often an elaborate series of calculations and actions, each conditioning and in turn conditioned by the other, makes it necessary to analyse or, in other words, pick out the significant relations. This is necessary even to describe a given state of affairs; still more, if one is going to understand the elaborate dynamics of the change from one state to another.

The work of the economist lies with such analysis. His interest in economic relations is different from the historian's, since he uses them to build theoretical or abstract models of the economic world. But it is only with the help of such models, however simple,[1] that the historian can get forward with his own work of reconstructing historical situations. It is not, of course, the business of the historian to 'prove' the validity of economic theorems or indeed to prove anything. He approaches the economist for certain intellectual tools, concepts and categories which are necessary to his own work. To the economist familiar with the full range of theoretical work, the use of

[1] Professor D. Walker, 'Economics in East Africa', *Makerere Journal*, No. 2, 1959, pp. 14–26, points out that a certain amount of model-building is necessary to understand the working even of a wholly unindustrial economy. One might add that it is still more necessary when tracing the transition from agriculture to industry or from one type of industrial economy to another.

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theory by the historian must always seem very elementary and imperfect, if not positively misapplied. But elementary or not, it is indispensable.

If he is to be a judge of theoretical tools, the historian must keep an eye on the economist's work-bench. Indeed, it is probable that the connection between the state of economic theory and the writing of economic history is a good deal closer than many people would suppose who have not closely considered the matter. It might be correct to say that every great departure in theory, as under Adam Smith and Ricardo, and thirty years ago under Keynes, makes possible a new kind of economic history. Marxian theory certainly occasioned a new kind of history. But this is too large a matter to be pursued here.

The statistician comes in because economic decisions about what to do with resources turn naturally upon questions of quantity. They involve the allocation of amounts. How much income shall be saved, how much spent? How much land shall be given over to crops, how much to stock? How much shall be allowed in the factory for wages, how much for raw materials? How much money can be earned in one job, how much in another? If he is dealing with a society accustomed to numbers and accounts, the historian often finds that the men whose actions he is studying have begun his statistical work for him. They have already counted the sheep on the manor and the amount of wool sold in the year; the number of ships at sea and the value of the cargoes; the number of the work-people and the amount of raw material. The contemporary figure is often highly important; it may have settled opinion and determined policy at the time. But it is rarely enough by itself. Any historian studying these transactions in a later age almost always wants to analyse them in a slightly different fashion, from an angle which is often suggested to him by the interests of the world he lives in. He also requires to look at relations and interactions which the contemporaries of historical events were unaware of or felt no need to consider. In a word, he feels the need to cross-examine the evidence for himself. The historian's interest is not the same as that of the men he is studying. This becomes particularly evident if he is following events over a long period, beyond the life of one generation.

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The provision of national historical statistics is becoming professional work. The time has already arrived when it seems worthwhile to publish such collections.[1] But many quantitative answers to his own questions the historian must ferret out for himself. Such work is at a low level of *expertise* compared with what mathematicians are used to, being nothing more than the simple arithmetic and accounting of history, but it has to conform to sound standards. Sometimes it needs the statistician's advice.

A figure, a table, or a graph can be critical in economic history, for it may bring to the final test our view of how or why things happened. At the same time, it must be allowed that much statistical work is in the nature of description rather than explanation. Emphasis and degree are however important matters in history. Quantities may assist to define the limits of a problem, even if they do not serve to solve it.

It can therefore truthfully be said that important parts of the study of history are becoming mathematical. There are, however, important limits to the helpfulness of statistics. The systematic quantification of history, without an equally careful observation of qualities, may be more than unhelpful. It can be definitely misleading. The economic historian, to put things shortly, has to learn to live both with the quantities and the qualities, and above all, to cultivate that kind of judgement 'at the back of the head' which acts as a guide towards what is important both in quantitative and qualitative things.

One way of avoiding sad mistakes is to vary the point of view. In the observation of economic change, it may be instructive to turn from the history of the economic system as a whole and from the study of aggregate figures and general statements, which often obscure the varieties of individual and group behaviour, to the study of individuals and small groups. This is to come in many ways nearer to the sources of change and certainly to avoid some of the mistakes of generalization. The record of what has actually happened in and on farms and estates, towns and manors, cities and factories, railways and

[1] See, for example, the extremely useful volume published by the United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789–1945*, Washington, D.C., 1949, since revised.

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banks, industries and markets, is a part of economic history so immensely important that it might almost be said that the worth of our general histories depends on the value of the regional and local and industrial studies behind them.

The men who have produced economic changes, sometimes radical and far-reaching, more often limited and imitative, have arisen in many different classes and lived in different walks of life. But whether noblemen or plantation owners or farmers, merchants or bankers, shipowners, railwaymen, industrialists, auctioneers, or shop-keepers, they have left records behind them, sometimes of great historical interest. The practice of conserving, out of family and historical interest, the records of landed estates is ancient. The preservation of business records, in the sense of the papers of industrial, commercial, and financial houses, is relatively new. It has become increasingly common as it has come to be recognized that the past decisions of business men form much of the fabric of modern Western economic history.

Studies which may be conveniently described as business history, because they are written with the help of business records, are becoming steadily more important. Their relation to general economic history has been admirably described by Professor Ashton. "The contribution that business history has to make to the parent study is by no means small. For it is in the individual firm . . . that we can observe the operation of economic forces at first hand . . . Decisions reached in the counting house or the board room may affect the course of events quite as much as those made in public assemblies." [1]

It is important to know the minds of the business men because they, far more than governments, have settled the course of investment, the rate of technical development, the methods of management, and the other determinants of economic change. But to understand that change perfectly, we also need to know the mind of labour. This is hard to do, for want of written evidence. The worker's search for work, whether it has taken the form of a move from Welsh farm-land to the coal valleys of Glamorganshire or from Italy to the Argentine or

[1] Professor T. S. Ashton in *Business History*, Liverpool University Press and the Business Archives Council, I, No. 1, December, 1958, p. 2.

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from Ireland to the United States, has altered the face of the world. His shift from occupation to occupation in the last century and a half has refashioned the centuries-old society of Europe. But direct evidence of what was in his mind at the time he moved is as often as not impossible to come by. There was a man, for example, in the sixties of last century, an apprenticed currier, who after marriage in Gloucestershire migrated to London to find work among the tanneries and leather works on the south side of the Thames. When the boom of the early seventies broke, he moved to other tanneries and leatherworks at Woodbridge in Suffolk, only to return after a short interval to the West of England, where he took up employment in his wife's trade of tailoring in the same small textile town from which he had first set out. Every step in this man's movements must have been the subject of much pondering and much discussion in the home, yet nothing survives of it but oral tradition. It is an example of what is well known to anthropologists but is sometimes oddly minimized by historians, that conduct in itself as deliberate and rational as any other may leave no documentary evidence behind it.[1] Mainly for this reason, that most important branch of economic history, the history of labour as a factor in production, is extraordinarily difficult to write. It succeeds best at the point where the working man came into contact with institutions and persons—Poor Law officers, trade union secretaries—concerned with his search for work and his conditions of employment and where they have kept records. But his own voice is too often missing, to the grave discomfort of any historian with a sense of evidence.

IV

Economic change is one of the great permanent themes of economic history. Economic welfare, to use the clumsy conventional phrase, is another. They are closely related, but

[1] Compare the interesting discussion on the difficulties of writing African history in Professor Gluckman's foreword to Gann, *The Birth of a Plural Society: the Development of Northern Rhodesia under the British South Africa Company*, Manchester, 1958, p. ix. The problem is far from being limited to Africa or to labour. Consider how much is decided nowadays over the telephone, without record.

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separate. The one is the history of the wealth of nations, of the creation of incomes and production. The other is the record of the influence of the wealth of nations upon their well-being. What good, if any, came to society from all this? The two themes are intertwined. Most men would find it hard to discuss economic change without raising sooner or later questions of welfare; almost equally puzzling to consider welfare without coming up at some point against questions of change.

The weight of emphasis tends to shift from time to time. The theme which has been in the ascendant among economists and economic historians has varied with circumstances. David Ricardo discussed, nearly a century and a half ago, the distribution of wealth. But he treated it very much as a condition of the wealth of nations, that is, as a cause of the differences between stationary, progressive, and declining economies. Forty and fifty years ago, on the crest of the great wave of prosperity in Victorian and Edwardian England, there was a certain tendency to take economic change for granted and to concentrate upon problems of economic welfare. The late Professor Pigou introduced that term before the First World War to describe what was then a new branch of economics, and what might be described as the Hammond-Webb approach to economic history matured in the same age. Very different conditions in the last thirty years have restored the dynamics of economic progress to first place in economic discussion and among economic historians too. But economic progress divorced from economic welfare makes no sense. A balanced view of economic history requires that justice be done to both themes, as well as to one other yet to be mentioned.

The good which men may derive from economic change is usually thought of in terms of their command over goods and services. In proportion as that command is increased or diminished, they tend to regard themselves as benefited or injured. But when this kind of judgement is applied to historical situations, considerable difficulties arise. Substantial changes in the economic life of a nation may take place over a long period. Within that time, not only does one generation give way to another, but the whole style and way of life may change.

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Imprecise answers only are possible to questions about changes in the standard of life.[1]

The concept of a standard of living has itself something impalpable about it. Some kind of answer is required, however, from the historian, and it has to be as definite as possible. It is an important part of his work therefore to try to give some clear meaning to the effect of historical changes in production and in money incomes upon nations and social groups. He has to consider whether their riches or their poverty afforded them an adequate living by the standards to which they were accustomed. The changes which have taken place from time to time in social or national income; its division between groups, classes, and individuals; the fluctuation of incomes, whether due to harvests or to the state of investment and trade, and its effect upon the well-being of particular people—these are the problems involved in the concepts of economic good and economic welfare. One has only to enumerate them to see that these questions include some which have deeply agitated societies from time to time. They have mixed themselves with, although they are far from having been the sole cause of, wars and revolutions.

What has already been said of the necessary association of the economic historian with the economist and the statistician in the piecing out of the complicated process of the creation of incomes and production, holds good here too. Without the help of analysis and measurement, it would be difficult to decide what can be known and how far it can be known. But

[1] Professor T. S. Ashton has put the point practically. "The truth is that it is not possible to compare the welfare of two groups of people separated widely in time and space. We cannot compare the satisfaction derived from a diet that includes bread, potatoes, tea, sugar, and meat with that derived from a diet consisting mainly of oatmeal, milk, cheese, and beer." ('The Standard of Life of the Workers in England, 1790–1830', *Journal of Economic History*, IX, 1949, p. 33.) The commodity standard is not, of course, the only possible one. One might compare Sir John Clapham's use of mortality and expectation of life as a test of economic welfare; for many purposes, a very good one. Dr D. E. C. Eversley has pointed out to me how closely the two things, standard of living, so far as we can measure it, and expectation of life, tend to march together, to the extent that they can be used as checks upon one another.

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other knowledge may be just as valuable. The economic historian must be prepared to pick up bits and pieces of other people's techniques as he goes along. If a knowledge of metallurgy or soil chemistry might not come amiss to the historian of agricultural and industrial production, a student of welfare among large industrial populations may profit by the experience of the doctor, the magistrate, or the professional social worker.

There is, however, more to be said about economic welfare than can be contained in statements about income. For most men, what they earn in the way of income is of no greater importance than the conditions under which they earn it. Hours and conditions of labour may be as good a sign of the effect of economic change upon the well-being of a people as the quantity of goods and services which they consume. The impact of economic events can in this respect be very great indeed. If all possible changes are taken into account, for example, in the move from agriculture to industry, what comes out may be nothing less than a transformation of industrial relations and of the organization of society. Most men would hold that a new system of social relations in industry or a new way of living, in cities and towns perhaps instead of villages, represents for them a change in every respect as important as any income which they may get, or fail to get, out of the new arrangements.

The history of industrial relations is therefore a most important part of economic history. The attention paid to it fifty years ago by some of the founders of economic history in Great Britain, by people so different in their general outlook as the Webbs and W. J. Ashley, was a recognition of the hugeness of the changes brought about by the industrialization of the nineteenth century. Like other types of history it depends upon documents. Many of these are to be found among the records of trade unions and industrial firms. The kind of problems which arise go, however, far beyond bargaining about wages, hours, and conditions. Industrial relations raise the whole perplexing question of the incentives to labour and of why people live and act as they do. They require us to bring into focus the individuals and the groups in industry, if we are

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to understand the human relations which social institutions and law merely form and modify. The historian may need to be something of a psychologist and sociologist, as well as a lawyer, if he is to understand the thoughts and emotions which lie behind those relations.

If human relations in industry are complex and difficult to grasp, the sort of alterations in the life of society which tend to go with major economic change are even more difficult to expound. They are difficult to capture in words. Qualities and changes of quality are the things to be expressed. Nevertheless, they cannot be put aside in favour of more manageable things which have been christened economic goods because these carry money values and are consequently roughly measurable. It could be said with much truth that the chief function of economic change in history has been not so much to alter the standard of living, in any ordinary sense, as to bring new varieties of human and social life into being.

It may be objected that the historian of welfare cannot be impartial or objective. When he deals with the results of economic change in terms of comfort and happiness, freedom and justice, good and evil, he is moving out of the field of economic analysis into that of ethics and social philosophy. What he is watching and describing are changes in social values, and he cannot but take up an attitude towards them. His subject becomes involved in value judgements. This is, of course, true. But it does not appear that his difficulties in this respect are greater than those of, say, the historian of politics or religion who endeavours to set church and state in some relation to the life and movement of society. History free of all values cannot be written. Indeed, it is a concept almost impossible to understand, for men will scarcely take the trouble to enquire laboriously into something which they set no value upon. But if the historian cannot escape judgements of value and the clash of judgement, he can at least know his own order of values, acquaint himself with his sources of bias, and strive to put himself in the shoes of the people he is dealing with. Here it is a victory to understand those one disapproves of and to write with sympathy and insight of states of society far removed from one's own.

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The struggle for historical understanding is not the same thing as a willingness to vote all economic arrangements equally sensible or all states of society equally good. A good state of society may be ill-served by its economic arrangements; a particular society may direct its economic arrangements with intense and driving rationality towards evil ends. But the historian resembles the society which he describes in at least one respect. He does not pick up a knowledge of what is rational or good by the light of nature, but by a lengthy and imperfect process of experience. The more he is aware of this, the less likely he is ever to be satisfied with what he writes in this difficult field.

V

Between economic welfare and politics there is an obvious link. Welfare concerns the ends of human and social life. It easily becomes a matter of public concern and draws the attention of the state. Government, as the supreme law-making body, invested historically with the care of the interests of the whole, is interested in decisions which involve the alternative use of resources, because they affect the welfare both of those making the decisions and of other people. But government also concerns itself with those decisions to serve its own purposes. Not only does the machinery of the state become involved in the ceaseless competition between social groups for economic advantage and monopoly power. The state has an interest of its own to preserve. What is from one point of view private wealth is from another public revenue and war potential. Without these two, the state cannot survive, if only because it is itself involved in a struggle for power in a world without law.

These have been the commonplaces of public life in Europe for centuries. We cannot then get away from the state in economic history, however much we try, and least of all today, when the state becomes constantly more powerful and effective. But what is meant by welfare and what is understood under the heading of economic development have, of course, meant different things at different times, and different things to differ-

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ent people.[1] The history of public policy in the sphere of economic growth and welfare is an impure subject in the eyes of those who prefer their economics pure, for it is considerably mixed with other things than economics. But pure or impure, and ceaselessly reminding us as it does how much politics there must always be in political economy, it is an important topic. With economic welfare and change, it forms the third great theme of the economic historian.

The history of modern economic policies in Europe began with the rise of nation states, three centuries or more before the French Revolution. What those states did in the way of trying to mobilize resources and to promote the economic welfare of their subjects in peace and war is still matter of controversy among historians. The effects of their policies and the nature of the influences and interests which lay behind them are still being unravelled. But the general relation between public authority and economic activities extends, of course, far back behind the nation state and far outside the limits of Europe.

Only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did a type of economic policy and thinking arise in Europe which seemed to break with the age-old connection between public authority and economic life. This was chiefly the result of the teachings of the English classical economists and the acceptance of *laissez-faire* doctrines. Whatever the effects of such views on public policy, there were certainly great gains to be had from them in the field of social thought. They made possible, for instance, the recognition of economics and sociology as studies independent of political science. The insistence on the "spontaneous forces of social development" as those which are chiefly important for the understanding of economic history is one to which historical studies owe a great debt. It led to the observation of a vast range of activities by individuals and social groups which a state-bound conception of history had neglected. The *laissez-faire* view was not, by the way, that the state had no obligations or interests in the economic field. It

[1] Some idea of the changes which in this country have taken place over the centuries in the public sense of what is and what is not desirable and allowable in the economic field may be gained by turning over the pages of Sir William Holdsworth's great *History of English Law.*

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was that public authority need only act when individuals and groups could not take decisions or make contracts for themselves, or when the public interest required that something be done which would not otherwise be done at all. The *laissez-faire* philosophy was itself a philosophy of the public purpose, for behind it lay a clear-cut and well-defined view, the validity of which will not be discussed here, of how the public interest in economic development could best be achieved and economic welfare promoted, given certain states of society.

Since then, the wheel of public policy has come full circle. Even in the West, let alone those countries which run centrally planned economies, the state has become an active guardian of economic welfare in a manner undreamed of in the nineteenth century, and an industrial investor and innovator on the great scale. This turn of events makes it more rather than less important that the history of economic policy should be well, thoroughly, and independently written.

There is perhaps a special reason why economic history studies should always have been closely connected with public policy. This lies in the potentially explosive nature of the relation between economic, and social change. Social change of a kind dangerous to the stability of society may arise, of course, on any of the many sides of the life of man, and economic change is not the only source of social transformation. But it remains true that economic changes of a major sort have been and are a standing invitation to social conflict. One might almost say that the only question has been, not whether conflict would follow change, but how it should be dealt with. Some must gain and others lose, both in economic and social ways, by almost any economic change, and some in any case will gain more than others. Both gain and loss may occur to the same man and to the same society. Conflict may arise between groups, between nations, or within individuals. The last-named variety of conflict may be the most important of all. It menaces the integrity of human personality, and unstable personalities threaten the stability of society, as unstable societies in their turn threaten personality through the instability of their relationships.

The resolution of conflict must be regarded as a necessary

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means by which individuals and societies grow. It is in this way that they acquire the character which we see them to have. Solution has to be achieved, however, if it is at all, by different ways and means. The majority of changes and conflicts individuals and groups can somehow cope with and reconcile for themselves. In a more profound sense and in the long run, the task of reconciling human nature to itself and the world it lives in seems to fall to religion and the arts. They can provide a fundamental resolution of tensions. They have historically made possible the summoning up and release of new energy, capable of building up new social forms of power and beauty even out of the ruins of past societies. The significance of the state for economic history is that, in the short run, much of the business of resolving social conflicts falls to it.

The final position of the state and of public policy in the history of economic development and welfare is and must always be hard to judge. It is so, partly because economic policy is clearly open to grave mistakes of calculation in determining the correct quantitative relations of things, and partly because of the values involved in the situations to be handled. Problems of public economic policy, like all questions of the distribution of resources, are matters of more or less. The determination of quantities may be critical in the development of a nation's economy. These problems are also at bottom questions of the public interest. Conflicts have to be reconciled within a larger whole, and the price of reconciling and resolving them has at some time or other to be paid. The typical question of public economic policy is in the double form: how much of the available resources shall be distributed to this purpose or that, and for what social ends? What values and whose values are being served by a given distribution of resources?

The answer to such questions obviously cannot be wholly quantitative and scientific. They raise issues of political expediency and of social philosophy. Economic policy has to be looked at by the economic historian primarily as a means to given ends, to be judged in terms of its economic effectiveness in distributing means between ends. But the historian cannot altogether neglect the fact that not only other means but other ends may well have been possible.

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The history of economic policy, being a part of public policy, encounters questions which are as old and as difficult as the concept of public interest itself. However statistical and technical the form in which these questions are asked and settled, they run at bottom in the shape of the question which meets us in the works of Macchiavelli, the first great modern student of the public interest. He asked in effect: How much public evil is to be tolerated for the sake of how much good? (In this world the one is not to be found without the other.) Macchiavelli could answer that question in the confident tone of a man who knew passionately what he wanted and in whom the historical sense was weak. The historian cannot reply so easily. He sees new goods and new evils arising at different times in history. He knows both that they are evil and good in some fundamental sense, and also that they are relative to the circumstances of the time.

This question of public values is raised in an acute form by economic change and by public policy in relation to it. New means may radically affect the accepted ends of society, and great transformations of accepted ends may revolutionize the distribution of resources. Much of the interest of economic history in the nineteenth century, when under the impact of industrialism and the revolution of expectations new conceptions of the public interest began to emerge, arises out of problems in this class. It may easily be seen that the most minute research into details cannot clear up all the problems which arise in the course of investigating the history of economic policy.

The historian of policy is a student both of the quantities of the historical situation and of other men's values, which are also historical facts. He is not without values and views of his own, and he is addressing himself to an audience, whether learned or lay, which has its own views and values. Nevertheless, the difficult and inconclusive kind of history that he writes is indispensable. Few things can be more necessary to society than the historical self-analysis which asks where one's economic ideas and social values came from, and which considers whether events have proved them to be true or false. The importance of such history does not lie in its certainty, for it is always uncertain, but in the need which the historian shares

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with other men to re-examine from time to time the basis of his assumptions.

VI

What has been said so far may briefly indicate the strange fusion of direct description and narrative, explanation and evaluation, which forms the work of the economic historian. It is a mixture shared no doubt with other forms of history-writing. The effect is possibly more paradoxical in the economic sphere. The economic historian, dealing with the economizing principle in human nature, is on the face of things in touch with one of the most constant and rational and intelligible forces in history. In fact, he may well find himself, as in writing the economic history of war, dealing with the mathematics of pure passion. But such as his subject is, so must his methods of enquiry be. They are only partly to be compared with those of the scientist measuring and explaining indifferent nature. Yet they are not ill-adapted to the study of beings of intention and will, such as men are.

An interesting question which arises out of those methods concerns the writing of economic history. The writing of history is not simply, as might perhaps be supposed, a question of communicating dead information in a suitably dead manner. It is part of the task of interpreting and of bringing to life historical situations. Strictly speaking, the economic historian's work is not done until he has selected the form of words in which he proposes to do this and to communicate his own view of the past to other men. Those men will, of course, also have their view, which the historian will seek to change, if what was his personal interpretation is to become a part of the public mind. In this context, what is the relation between the form of communication to be adopted by the economic historian and the classical type of historical narrative? Is there any room for narrative in economic history at all? Ought the economic historian to regard himself as carrying out a kind of structural analysis of historical situations? If so, what is the model of such an analysis? Or is he writing one kind of analytical narrative, as the political historian writes another? The literary problems of writing economic history deserve far more attention than

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they have ever received. They are bound up with the character of the discipline, that is, with the purposes of the historian and of the historian's readers. But they can only be alluded to here before passing on to another question.

No systematic consideration of the relation between economic history and general history will be expected at the end of a short essay. It would be fair, however, that any reader should ask what that relation is, and a few remarks may be attempted on the subject. They may amount to little more than drawing out some implications of what has been said already.

Perhaps it would be useful at this point to draw a distinction between general and universal history, so as to avoid confusion. For the two concepts are distinct. General history or integral history, as it could better be called, deals with the whole society of which it is the record. Universal or world history is, one assumes, the record of all societies, of the whole human world.

If universal history is to be written in a perfect form, certain difficult conditions have to be fulfilled. The idea assumes that the histories of the various peoples make, in some sort, a whole or a universe. But the histories of separate peoples can only become a whole by virtue of experiences and values which are common to them all and which outweigh differences that may be profound. Ranke, the great German historian, felt able in the last century to write the histories of the nations which have made up the circle of European civilization and to regard what he wrote as being universal history, something more than the sum of national histories. Such history-writing is obviously far removed from the confusion of our time. It represents the end-product of a long process, both in history and in the historian's mind. Value and fact are both necessary for it. The most we can hope for in our age is that, since history begins in the struggle of men to understand the life of the society to which they belong, and since that effort starts so often in the encounter with men who are the bearers of different traditions and standards, then perhaps out of our divisions and conflicts universal history in the true, Ranke-like, sense may one day rise again.

Meanwhile, the economic historian needs, for his own purposes and in a kind which is a good deal less than perfect, universal history. The encounter of men with men which makes

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world history has been to no small extent economic. The history of the economic development of one nation almost always requires the economic history of other peoples to make it fully intelligible. This is not only a matter of the spread of economic institutions, as they come to be copied in lands remote from the place of their origin. The vital processes of growth or decay in the economy of a people may be connected with the intimacy or remoteness of its economic relations with other countries. The economic theorist may for his own purposes and from time to time feel the need to consider a closed economy, without foreign trade, migration, or international credit. The economic historian is seldom able to contemplate such a singular state of society. If he is considering men who know, even in the most primitive way, how to exchange things, how to augment their resources or to satisfy their wants by doing so, or who possess the natural human habit of wandering, their economy is likely to be linked with that of others. The tread of the caravan and the winds that blow upon the sea have united the economic destinies of many peoples who grew up in isolation from one another. In more modern times, when the interchange of ideas and goods and tastes is incessant, the relation between economic developments in one part of the world and another may be so close as to be extremely hard to disentangle. Without going back for an example to the Italian or German cities of the Middle Ages, or to the trade of seventeenth-century Holland, the correct interpretation of what actually happened in England in the eighteenth century, when she took the first long and irrevocable steps towards an industrial economy, depends to no small extent upon what we think of the developments which took place at the same time in other countries known to have been in close touch with her. Why the Industrial Revolution took place in Britain and not in some other land, and whether British industrial developments can be understood without reference to the whole trading area of which Britain formed so active a part, may be questions which it is impossible to answer. But they are well worth asking.[1]

[1] For a discussion of this sort, see, for example, K. Berrill, 'International Trade and the Rate of Economic Growth', *Economic History Review*, April, 1960.

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Much of the study of modern economic history consists in putting to the historian's materials just such questions, not only about Britain, but also about Australia, the United States, tropical Africa, and the many other countries which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became tied together for the first time into something which could be called, with fair accuracy, a world economy.

Questions concerning the relations between economies affect not only long-term development as world conditions alter over long ages, but also the changes and chances of much shorter periods. No one could go far, for instance, in the economic understanding of Victorian England, its perpetual transformation of expectations, its many changes of mood, the uncertain and uneven movement of production, consumption, and money-incomes, and the other details of the day-to-day economic history of the time, without paying the closest attention to the many links which bound England to other economies in every quarter of the world and the responsiveness of her balance of payments and her credit institutions, consequently of her whole economic system, to the succession of events abroad.

The economic historian needs universal history in order to grasp the broad trend and the flux of the events which he is describing. He needs it not only in its breadth, because he is studying one society among others, but also in depth, because the relationships he is studying go back in time and some of them go very far back. A student of English economic history is, almost by definition, a student of the economic history of Europe and of more than Europe, over periods of time which deepen with his purposes.

General history, or integral history, is something different from this. Seen from the standpoint of the economic historian, universal history is the study of economic relationships in their full extension in space and time. General history is the examination of economic relationships in their connection with the other sides of the life of society. It may be useful at this point to repeat something that has already been said. Economic history, it has been suggested, is the study of a particular class of historical events. These are the events which arise out of economic choice, where men find themselves faced, as they daily do,

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with the need to make their resources go round among the ends which they set themselves. Their decisions and the outcome of those decisions may be studied at many different levels. But they are all events and decisions of an economic kind, requiring from the historian some degree of economic knowledge. The kind of judgement demanded is, it is true, rather that of political economy, which has to take account of other things besides economics, than the strict and formal analysis of the economic schools, necessary though that is.[1]

Economic choices, it has also been argued, just because they are imposed by the scarcity of material means compared with ends, are unintelligible without reference to the other activities and qualities of the men concerned. The historian needs especially to be familiar with the social values of the people he is watching. For their economic decisions were taken in the service of those values, and without a knowledge of them the historian can hardly imagine how they thought they could be advantaged by the steps they took, or judge the results, whether by his standard or by theirs. He is likely also to find both their ends and their resources powerfully affected by a particular institution, the state.

On the view so far set out, two particular activities of a non-economic kind, the search for what men regard as a good life —easily identified by most of us with the life we lead—and the political struggle for power and for law, appear as permanent fixed parts of the historical scene. They are as inescapable for men as economic choice itself.

Granted this conception of history, economic activity becomes one of a number of social activities, and the economic function one of a number of functions, which any society must discharge if it is to live and cohere at all. The making the best of resources is for the sake of those other functions and for the sake of that social coherence, rather than for its own sake. Economic action is for the sake of living, and the economic

[1] The difference between economic science and political economy has been best drawn perhaps by an American scholar, O. H. Taylor, in his *Economics and Liberalism: Collected Papers*, Harvard University Press, 1955. See particularly p. 225, where he insists upon the part which value judgements must necessarily play in judgements upon economic policy.

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world carries a social meaning derived from activities beyond its own boundaries. This seems to be the conclusion to be drawn not only from European experience but also from the history of society in many other parts of the world at many levels of culture.

All this may seem obvious enough. But when we face the question, what determines the relation of these various social activities and the movement of society under their impulse, we leave certainty behind and find ourselves handling problems both important and puzzling. What are the relations between the ends of society and its means? How far do the means determine the ends or the ends the means? To what extent do social institutions, which embody in themselves certain relationships between ends and means, acquire an independent existence of their own, which makes them the potential master as well as the agents of the society they are supposed to serve?

General questions of this direct and difficult sort have given rise to great philosophies of history, usually achieved under the pressure of unusual circumstances by a kind of heroic simplification from the flow of events. Macchiavelli in one century, Marx in another, have given us supreme examples of such abstracts of history and society. It is not possible to read the one man, without becoming possessed as he was by the primacy in history of political power and of the struggles which surround it, or the other, without becoming convinced that economic change is the independent variable upon which all other things hinge. So compelling is genius, that it takes a conscious effort of mind to remind oneself that these are mighty abstracts of experience, that they are far from exhausting reality, and that perhaps what is being left out is as important as what is being included. Renaissance Italy was a land of many activities besides politics, and in nineteenth-century England, where Marx lived and wrote, there were working men and women who would not only have denied his premisses but maintained with calmness and fortitude throughout their lives views almost precisely opposite to his. Their views on a matter touching their own experience have to be respected.

Economic history studies in England have owed a great deal over the last forty years to general discussions of this nature,

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much of it arising indirectly out of the existence of the Marxian system. One might instance Max Weber's well-known writings published in Germany before the First World War, which argued, not, as has sometimes been supposed, that Protestantism gave rise to capitalism, but that there was a distinct element in European capitalism which could only be accounted for by the presence of an ethic which was Protestant in origin. At the hands of R. H. Tawney, whose *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* was published in 1926, this thesis became the centre of one of the major historical controversies in this country of the inter-war decades.[1]

Abstracts of human experience there must be. At the same time, it may be suspected that the spirit of our time is, by contrast with the nineteenth century, which produced both the idealistic philosophy of history of Hegel and the materialistic theory of Marx, averse from general constructions and total explanations in history. This scepticism is not merely the result of a refusal by historians to consider general ideas. On the particular point which interests us, the relation between economic activities and the other functions of society, the historian often thinks, and with reason, that he has ground to suspect unitary explanations of general history. His observations suggest that the operative causes at work in different periods have often been different in their intensity and in the system of their relations, and that the smoothing away of these differences by philosophers of history does not help but hinders historical understanding. The historian tends therefore to favour explanations of historical situations which are, so to speak, tailor-made to the events to be described. This sense that the life and truth of each historical situation is to be found in the situation itself, and that general explanations lead us away from them as often as they lead us to them, is one of the most valuable parts of the historian's training. For this reason, historians will always tend, not so much to deny the possibility of general explanations of history, as to be highly critical of their effectiveness.

[1] Max Weber's articles, originally published in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik Statistik*, XX, XXI, were translated into English by Talcott Parsons under the title *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, 1930.

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European experience in the last half-century has tended to undermine the faith in general explanations which seem to achieve unity and system at the expense of truth, and has reinforced the caution of historians. Wherever men have been free to reflect upon that experience, they have found it disillusioning and perplexing in the extreme. They have seen much blood shed and atrocious deeds committed on behalf of philosophies of history for which the most final claims had been made. They have perceived or they have seemed to perceive that while many mistakes are possible in this life, perhaps the worst is to substitute theory for life, to take the abstract for historical reality, and to act accordingly. In this mood, all kinds of scepticism and cynicism, natural and unnatural, flourish, the inescapable reaction against the falsities of a violent confessional age. One great philosophy of history of the nineteenth century—the Marxian—continues to propagate itself in the void left in the world by the death of conventional beliefs and traditional forms of society. In Western Europe we live, it seems, in an interim between two ages in thought, marked by the features of such a time.

What can be said, in these circumstances, about the relation between the economic historian and general history? His study of economic choices needs to be, from one aspect, universal, and from another, related to society as a whole. At the same time, the general explanation, the philosophy of all history, is rightly suspect. It may even be surmised that a great change is coming over the meaning of words, and that what is understood by the 'meaning' of history and its 'explanation' are increasingly something different from what was meant by those phrases in the nineteenth century, which saw the heyday both of the natural sciences and of the great philosophies of history. Should the economic historian then eschew speculation, refrain from looking for the causes of things, and be content with a measure of understanding of history shallower than exacting standards would demand?

The argument by analogy is always dangerous. But it may be that some clue to the proper course can be found in what appears to be happening elsewhere, in a field which in Adam Smith's day was closely related to economics and economic

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history, in moral philosophy. There too, one reads, the general system is out of fashion, although it may be conceded that there is "no reason why we should not still look at human beings in general in their context in the world." Moral philosophers, it appears, have been "too much concerned with moral theories to pay very much attention to how people actually decide, or what moral decisions are really like." An improved moral philosophy would include "both description of the complexities of actual choices and actual decisions, and also discussion of what would count as reasons for making this or that decision." One is told that such descriptions would need to be "long, complicated, and realistic," and that moral philosophy, in the result, would be "much more difficult, perhaps much more embarrassing to write than it has been recently . . ."[1]

Whether this is what moral philosophers now agree upon and are doing, whether the systems of the past are regarded as strictly meaningless without far more careful study of the actual processes and structure of the moral world which they were supposed to explain, only a moral philosopher could say. But the position reads curiously like that in the relation between our ideas of general history and the study of actual historical situations. Indeed, the resemblance between the programme for moral philosophers so sketched out and the work of the economic historian, among other historians, is close, even to the ultimate difficulty and embarrassment of any explanation of actual human conduct.

Perhaps it is just in this way, by treating economic choices as what in fact they are, acts of the whole man, and by studying them in their full range and complexity, that the economic historian can best assist the cause of general historical understanding. The sense of universal history and a comprehension of the structure and development of the social world in which the individual has to live, move, and act, and which in turn he helps to make—these were the aims of the great European

[1] The quotations are from Mary Warnock, *Ethics since 1900*, Home University Library, 1960, pp. 205–7. The use of the analogy with historical studies, which may be most misleading, is of course mine, not Mrs Warnock's.

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philosophers of history of the last century. They were fine and proper aims; but they were realized with a success which now seems to us limited, and because inadequate, dangerous. A pursuit of the concrete and analytical truths of history, persevered in with a consciousness of the narrow limits of the historian's vision and the obscure pattern of cause and event, must appear laborious and unsatisfying compared with the great speculative systems. But it may turn out to be in the long run no less philosophic, and a more secure guide to action in a world which is and must always remain doubtfully known to us.

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SOCIAL HISTORY

By H. J. Perkin

SOCIAL history as a separate discipline is the Cinderella of English historical studies. Judged by the usual criteria of academic disciplines, it can scarcely be said to exist: there are no chairs and, if we omit local history, no university departments, no learned journals, and few if any textbooks. There seems to be something approaching agreement about its second eldest sister. "There is now a virtual consensus of opinion," wrote Professor J. F. Rees some years ago, "on the scope of economic history. It includes a study of the state of agriculture, industry, commerce, and transport, together with an elucidation of the more technical problems of currency, credit, and taxation." He goes on to say, "These subjects necessarily involve an examination and description of social conditions. In fact the line between the economic and the social cannot be strictly drawn." [1] Sir Maurice Powicke writes in a similar vein: "Political and social history are in my view two aspects of the same process. Social life loses half its interest and political movements lose most of their meaning if they are considered separately." [2]

On social history, then, there seems to be only confusion. Is it, in the words of Professor G. M. Trevelyan, "the history of a people with the politics left out," [3] or, in those of Dr A. L. Rowse, how society consumes what it has produced?[4] Is it

[1] In A. Redford, *Economic History of England, 1760–1860*, 1931, p. v.
[2] F. M. Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, Oxford, 1947, p. v.
[3] *English Social History*, 1944, p. vii.
[4] *The Use of History*, 1946, p. 69.

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economic history without the more technical problems of currency, credit, and taxation, or even without the economics? Is it, stripped to the skeleton, simply how men spent their leisure hours? All these definitions seem to me inadequate. Should we, and if so how can we, distinguish it from political or economic history, or even from general history? For, as the late Sir Lewis Namier remarked, "human affairs being the subject-matter of history, all human pursuits and disciplines in their social aspects enter into it."[1] What is the field of the social historian? How can we find a place for him?

I suspect that the social historian, like many others, is here the victim of a metaphor which bedevils even the most casual methodological remark. I mean the agrarian metaphor of 'fields of study'. According to this the busy cultivators of the academic soil divide it up into allotments on each of which, by a natural division of labour, each cultivator raises the kind of crops (of facts, hypotheses, and generalizations) the ground and green fingers will yield. The ploughland, plotted and pieced, of human knowledge is parcelled out like a great open field after enclosure—and woe to the tenant who cannot show a title-deed! The social historian finds his crops still stubbornly growing athwart his neighbours' hedges, and he must trespass, or become a hired labourer serving several masters. Finding a place for him seems an ungrateful task.

But 'studies', 'subjects', 'disciplines' are not fields, and facts are not crops to be privately harvested and garnered. Facts belong to that category of goods which can be shared without being diminished. All facts are grist to the student's mill, provided his mill will grind them. The outcome of his labours depends on his choice of facts, and this depends on his interests, on the questions he wishes to ask.

Historians know this better than most students, for does not 'history' come from a Greek word for an enquiry? All historians start with a question, however frequently they have to change it as they work. What happened? How did it happen? Why? Or at the very least: what will these documents tell me about the past? The social historian differs from other historians only in the questions he asks and the answers he seeks.

[1] 'History, its Subject Matter and Tasks', *History Today*, II, 1952, p. 161.

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Finding a place for him does not entail a re-allocation of holdings. It merely involves allowing him access to the evidence.

Social history might be thought to be the historical counterpart of sociology, which "ideally . . . has for its field the whole life of man in society." [1] But all historians ask questions about the life of man in society. What characterizes the questions of the social historian? The word 'social' is, *prima facie*, not a help. The Oxford English Dictionary gives thirteen major usages (some of them obsolete). Not one of them covers all that is implied in 'social history', or, if it does, covers too much. By virtue of its derivation the word seems at one time or another to have attached itself (in the human sphere alone) to any and every idea or relationship in any way connected with the grouping of men for whatever purpose. For 'social' is an omnibus word covering in the first instance all those human activities which display awareness of others. Semantics fails us: we must fall back on common sense.

Professor W. W. Rostow, attempting to "relate economic forces to social and political events," has written: "It is a useful convention to regard society as made up of three levels, each with a life and continuity of its own, but related variously to the others. These three levels are normally designated as economic, social, and political." [2] However useful, it is still, of course, a convention. All three "levels" inhere, if anywhere, in each and every member of society. Society, like the universe, is one and indivisible. It is impossible to isolate, except metaphorically, any one of the "levels," however lively and continuous its existence within the whole. To claim primacy for the impulses from one level is no more than to assert that in each man one kind of interest, appetite, desire, or motivation, predominates. The economic interpretation of history asserts the primacy of the economic motive in each man over all others. (Oddly enough, the Marxist view is more a sociological than a purely economic interpretation. "All history is the history of class struggle" is a socio-political rather than an economic maxim. It is true that Marx believed that a man's class and therefore his position in the struggle is determined by his

[1] M. Ginsberg, *Sociology*, 1949, p. 7.

[2] *British Economy of the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1948, p. 134.

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relation to the system of production, but Engels the capitalist goes to prove that men are not invariably motivated by their economic interest alone, while Marx himself goes to prove that men can elect to espouse the cause of a class to which they do not themselves belong.) Put in this way the determinist case becomes an interpretation of the nature of man. It may still hold, but the proofs are metaphysical, and the determinist must meet Professor Ryle's thesis that a man is a single entity, not a bundle of discrete parts and qualities.[1] Men in the past, as we today, lived simultaneously on all three levels, without any division of themselves into abstract 'men', either political, economic, or social.

But, like the universe, society cannot be viewed from all sides at once. The spectacular success of the natural sciences since the seventeenth century springs from the device of abstraction, by which the scientist is able to concentrate on a limited number of eminently answerable questions. Abstraction does not change the world, it merely focuses the attention of the observer. In the study of history, of men in past society, it is the difference in focus which justifies the three-fold division of labour. Each specialist has his own focus of attention, his own point of view, his own techniques and tools, his own informing link with an appropriate analytical science (political science, economics, or sociology). It is the labour, we note, not the final product, and in many cases not the raw material, which is divided. Social history is not a part of history. It is, in Professor Arthur Redford's phrase, all history from the social point of view.

But what is the social point of view? "The social level" (as viewed by Rostow) "is very broad indeed. It includes the way people live, the culture and religion which they generate and regard as acceptable, their scientific pursuits, and above all the general political concepts which serve to rationalize their relationship to the community." [2] This last point is surprising, though less so in a later form: "the manner in which general ideas are formed which serve as the basis for a considerable array of political positions on particular issues." G. M. Trevelyan, who takes a similar view of the intermediate rôle

[1] G. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 1949, *passim*. [2] Rostow, *loc. cit.*

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of social life between what are usually called the economic basis and the political superstructure, defines the scope of social history as "the daily life of the inhabitants of the land in past ages: this includes the human as well as the economic relation of different classes to one another, the character of family and household life, the conditions of labour and of leisure, the attitude of man to nature, the culture of each age as it arose out of these general conditions of life, and took ever changing forms in religion, literature and music, architecture, learning and thought."[1]

So far, so good: but one feels it is not far enough. Social history, on this pattern, is still auxiliary, peripheral, invertebrate, not, in Professor Arnold Toynbee's terminology, an intelligible field of study, or even an articulation of one. There are some for whom even this is too much, who would confine social history to the kitchen, the wardrobe, the sports-field, the ballroom, the garden-party, the tap-room, and the green circle round the maypole. All these are fascinating places, provided they are seen in significant relation to the wider world of which they form part. What is to be avoided is antiquarianism, the compilation of undigested facts in unpalatable lists without significance or inspiration. Social history of this kind is prone to suffer from the defect remarked by Dr H. P. R. Finberg in the local historians of the old school: it lacks a central unifying theme.[2]

Local history of the new school, as it has developed in the twentieth century under Sir Frank Stenton, Dr W. G. Hoskins, and others, gives us the clue. Its central unifying theme seems to be none other than the social history of local communities. I am far from suggesting that social history, like the Department of English Local History at Leicester, should take "the local history of all England for its province," though this would certainly have many advantages: Sir Maurice Powicke long ago acclaimed "the study of local history as the basis of the intimate understanding of social change."[3] What I have in mind is that the social historian should take his society, and try to see it whole. That is, in addition to studying the daily life of

[1] Trevelyan, *loc. cit.*
[2] *The Local Historian and his Theme*, Leicester, 1952, p. 17.
[3] *Historical Study in Oxford*, Oxford, 1929, p. 10.

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its members—in the wide sense intended by Trevelyan—he should concern himself with society *qua* society, with social activities and institutions as such, irrespective of their end or purpose. This is the plan adopted by Dr A. L. Rowse in his excellent study of the structure of society in *The England of Elizabeth*. There he essays to "expose and portray" the whole society, to "extract the juices of the social" from government and economic matters, parliament and the church, law, education, and the cultivation of the land; wherever in short they can be found. "Only so is it possible to write the book and give it a coherent form." [1]

The political and the economic historian are aware of the social framework underpinning the economy and the political system at every point. The shape and structure of society, its growth and decline, the physical distribution of its members by region and district, town, village, and homestead, and their social distribution in the bands of prestige we call classes or the pyramids of connection the eighteenth century called "interests" [2]—all these affect and are affected by events on the levels of politics and economics. The political or economic historian is often driven to ask questions about them, but they are not his primary concern. He is not interested in them for their own sake, but only as they affect the economy or political affairs. Except indirectly, they are not his questions: but they are the social historian's starting-point.

The best example of what I mean is the study of population, now a discipline in itself, with its own name, techniques, and journals. Its protagonists point out that demography requires the aid of many different specialisms—statistics, medicine, biology, dietetics, economics, sociology—and its findings must be taken into account by all who study society, from whatever point of view. In the words of one of them, "the significance of population phenomena lies in the meaning for human activity. Population numbers mean markets, military forces,

[1] *The Elizabethan Age: I, The England of Elizabeth: The Structure of Society*, 1950, p. viii.

[2] W. J. H. Sprott, *Sociology*, 1949, p. 98; S. H. Beer, 'The Representation of Interests in British Government: Historical Background', *American Political Science Review*, LI, 1957, pp. 613–50.

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land values. Deaths mean ill-health and disabilities."[1] The political or economic historian can no more ignore population than parliament or prices. An explanation of "bastard feudalism" or the break-up of manorialism without reference to the decline of population in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries would be *Hamlet* without the prince indeed. Nor is mere reference to an otherwise independent variable enough. If we knew the precise relationship between population growth and the agricultural, industrial, medical, and sanitary improvements during the British Industrial Revolution we should have gone far towards explaining the process of industrialization as a whole. A generation ago we could point to the medical advances of the eighteenth century as evidence that population was more cause than effect in the onset of industrialism.[2] Now the whole question has been re-opened on a subtler basis by a series of analyses designed to show how complex was the interaction between population and economic growth.[3] Cause and effect were so intertwined as to require the most patient demographic research and refined statistical techniques to extricate them.[4] Meanwhile, the most that can be said is that, whatever caused the initial population surge of the mid-

[1] W. F. Ogburn, 'On the Social Aspects of Population Change', *British Journal of Sociology*, IV, 1953, p. 26.

[2] M. C. Buer, *Health, Wealth and Population in the Early Days of the Industrial Revolution*, 1926; G. T. Griffith, *Population Problems in the Age of Malthus*, Cambridge, 1926; T. H. Marshall, 'The Population of England and Wales from the Industrial Revolution to the World War', *Economic History Review*, V, 1934–5, pp. 65–78.

[3] K. H. Connell, 'Some Unsettled Problems in English and Irish Population History, 1750–1845', *Irish Historical Studies*, VII, 1950–1, pp. 225–234; H. J. Habakkuk, 'English Population in the Eighteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, VI, 1953, pp. 117–33, and 'The Economic History of Modern Britain', *Journal of Economic History*, XVIII, 1958, pp. 486–501; J. T. Krause, 'Changes in English Fertility and Mortality, 1781–1850', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, XI, 1958, pp. 52–70, and 'Some Implications of Recent Research in Demographic History', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, I, 1959, pp. 164–88; T. McKeown and R. G. Brown, 'Medical Evidence related to English Population Changes in the Eighteenth Century', *Population Studies*, IX, 1955, pp. 119–41.

[4] Cf. D. E. C. Eversley, 'Population and Economic Growth in England before the "Take-off"—Some notes on methodology and the objects

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eighteenth century, its failure to be met by the usual Malthusian check was not unconnected with the larger supplies of food and opportunities for jobs provided by economic growth —a surprising return after a century and a half to the general, if not the particular, position of Malthus. A necessary adjunct to political and economic history, the study of population is central to the social historian's purpose. Demography as a practical science is a branch of sociology: as a historical study it is a branch of social history.

As for the study of institutions, the House of Lords or the 'City' is just as legitimate a topic for the social historian as the kitchen or the wardrobe. Indeed, the social origins of the peerage and the social connections of City-men both cry out for systematic investigation.[1] Every institution, from trial by ordeal to the modern factory, from partible inheritance to political patronage, has its social aspect. Its interest for the social historian is intensified if it throws light on the way in which the society maintains and renews itself, distributes prestige or status, and solves or frets at the recurring problems of adjustment to its environment and its neighbours.

Light may be found in the most improbable place. Sir Maurice Powicke says of the thirteenth-century tournament: "The inducements to violence were too great to allow room for restraint. In the early days, if not later, prisoners might be held to ransom; the booty in valuable horses and equipment might always be large; victory could lead to fortune as well as to fame. The Earl Marshal's prowess in the tournament had laid the foundation of a career which had led to a rich marriage and an earldom; and, although he was certainly an exceptional man, it would be easy to underrate the influence of these martial gatherings on the social fortunes of young men in

of future research', a paper read at the Economic History Conference, Stockholm, August 1960, and kindly lent to me by the author.

[1] G. E. C. *et al.*, *The Complete Peerage*, 1910–59, gives no systematic information about the origins of newly-created peers; on the social connections of City-men a beginning has been made by T. Lupton and C. Shirley Wilson, 'The Bank-Rate Tribunal: the Social Background and Connections of "Top Decision Makers" ', *Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies*, XXVII, 1959, pp. 30–51.

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succeeding generations." [1] There is a clear example of social mobility, all the more important in an age when the opportunities for social advancement were relatively few.

Pilgrimage to the relics of saints might be thought a social activity of some interest, but not much far-reaching significance. In a book remarkable for its consistently social approach to European history, Professor R. W. Southern writes of the tenth and eleventh centuries: "The deficiencies in human resources were supplied by the power of the saints. They were the great power-houses in the fight against evil; they filled the gaps left in the structure of human justice. The most revealing map of Europe in these centuries would be a map, not of political or commercial capitals, but of the constellation of sanctuaries, the points of material contact with the unseen world." [2] So succinctly is characterized the religious orientation and springs of action of an entire, if small, international society. When he recalls that Rome was the sanctuary of many saints, above all of the two great apostles, a flood of light is thrown on the origins of Papal supremacy.

Social history, then, is nothing more and nothing less than the history of society. If this is an Odyssey indeed, it has its wayside hazards. On the one side there is, since nothing human happens outside society, the whirlpool of exhaustiveness, of totality, the desperate, plunging end of those "still climbing after knowledge infinite." On the other side prowls the devouring monster of social science.

First, the history of society is not the history of everything that happens in society. That is total history, ideal history, that complete understanding of mankind's past which every true historian dreams of, works towards, and (since he cannot travel simultaneously by land, sea, and air) forsakes only as a means, not as an end. The social historian must avoid the attempt to be everywhere at once. He must keep firmly in view his immediate goal, the understanding of the life of men in the past, in its setting of society and institutions.

Secondly, social history is not a branch of sociology. It does not seek practical knowledge, descriptive laws, governing

[1] *King Henry III and the Lord Edward*, p. 21.
[2] *The Making of the Middle Ages*, 1953, p. 137.

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principles, predictive generalizations, or what Professor G. C. Homans, emulating Clerk-Maxwell, calls "the nine field-equations" of the science of human relations. It is, first and last, a kind of history. Like all history, it is concerned with "concrete events fixed in time and space,"[1] that is, with particular societies at particular times in particular places. These the social historian studies for their own sake, as an end in themselves, without reference to the practical utility of what he discovers. If an ulterior end is required, it is the hope that "Histories make men wise." Economic history in its early days had to resist the economists' demand that it be "governed by the desire to illustrate economic laws."[2] The social historian differs from the sociologist precisely as the economic historian from the economist. Like the latter, the former pair are colleagues, partners, members of the same team. They cannot afford to neglect each other's insights and *expertise*. If they do, sociology, deprived of the temporal breadth and multiple sensibilities of the historian, becomes historically parochial, restricting itself to such societies and institutions as happen to have survived, without the means of knowing how they came to survive; while social history, deprived of the heuristic depth and theoretical penetration of the sociologist, becomes academically superficial, an antiquarian pursuit of facts-in-themselves, without the means of relating their significance. Yet neither is the master, neither the servant of the other. Both are equals in the study of society, approaching it from different directions and for different purposes. The social historian confronts the same material, may even borrow the sociologist's techniques, but he asks different questions, seeks a different end.

Social history, to justify itself, must ultimately issue in actual social histories. At present it seems to be in, or just emerging from, the situation Cunningham remarked of economic history over forty years ago: "There have been numerous histories of one or another department of economic activity, as for example, merchant shipping, or agriculture, or of particular localities; but comparatively little progress has

[1] Namier, *loc. cit.*, p. 157.

[2] W. Cunningham, *The Progress of Capitalism in England*, Cambridge, 1916, p. 6, n. 2.

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been made in surveying the growth of economic activities in their interconnection, and the development of the body economic as a whole."[1] Now there is nothing at all to be said against histories of departments of any kind of history, least of all social history. The more there are, the nearer draws the possibility of a comprehensive social history, and the better it will be when it comes. Moreover, there is no need for the specialist historian to consider too closely into what category his interest falls. Let him follow his question, his problem, or his material where it will lead. If he cuts across categories, if like Newton he can unite two hitherto unrelated levels of experience, so much the better. He may be a genius, a man who sets the world thinking in a way which was not possible before. His work in any event will have value for general history, and for some historians in particular. But, to paraphrase Cunningham, there will still be a need to survey the growth of social activities in their interconnection, and the development of the body social as a whole.

Of what ought a comprehensive social history to consist? It should concern one society, fixed in space and time: Ancient Babylon, Periclean Athens, Imperial Rome, Latin Christendom in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, China under the Great Khan, Elizabethan England, Glossop since the Industrial Revolution. How should the historian approach his society, unfold its themes, write its history, so far as the evidence permits? He should try to see his society as a structured, functioning, evolving, self-regenerating, self-reacting whole, set in its geographical and cosmic environment. He should present the natural history of the body politic, exposing and explaining its ecology, anatomy, physiology, pathology, and, since the body politic may be presumed to exist on more than the physical plane, its psychology too: its awareness of itself, its conscious aims, criteria, and ideals.

This of course is a tendentious metaphor which must not be pushed too far. Society is no more a body than it is a machine; it is a *social* entity, an integrated collectivity of human beings, and therefore in important ways both something more and something less than an individual man or woman. Above all,

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

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though it has no soul and no putative expectation of eternal life, it has the remarkable property of self-regeneration, that is, of reproducing not some other creature in the same form but *itself* in a great variety of forms. It is a dynamic system which, unlike the body, does not need to organize its members according to a pre-ordained pattern, but can interchange them and evolve new organs according to its requirements. The body metaphor had the tendency in those societies which invented or utilized it of suppressing this potentiality and defending the *status quo ante*—a tendency easily circumvented by those assailants wise enough to appeal to their own version of the *status quo*. Yet the metaphor has the merit of insisting on the essential unity of the thing studied, and, avoiding its obvious traps, we may with its aid usefully explore the implications of the five interrelated aspects of social history.

By the society's ecology is meant its relation to the physical environment, first of all to the geographical background with which it is intimately intermingled, the hard facts of topography, soil, climate, fauna, and vegetation, and the ways in which they have been modified by human action. Adaptation is a two-way process. As society adapts itself to the environment, so it learns to adapt the environment to itself. The well-known English contrast between 'woodland' and 'champion', between the hamlet-and-homestead settlement of the highland zone and the nucleated-village settlement of the lowlands, is the product of such mutual adaptation—mutual, since open-field villages were by no means unknown in the north and west, and British settlement in the south and east before the English came seems to have been mainly of the highland type. Moreover, East Anglia after the Danes came—if not earlier, after a possibly Jutish immigration—enjoyed down to modern times a highland type of settlement on a lowland topography. This paradox is traceable to the inheritance customs of East Anglian peasants, partible inheritance in an area with abundant land to be reclaimed from waste and fen.[1] The younger son used his inheritance as a base from which to drive back the marsh and reclaim a home, necessarily segregated, for himself.

[1] Cf. G. C. Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1941.

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Partible inheritance characterizes socage tenure, and down to this day adjacent fenland parishes bear witness in their differing population densities to their diverse proportions of medieval sokemen and different rates of reclamation.[1] Thus intimately did community and landscape adjust to one another.

At the other extreme from the local is the larger environment of the cosmos. Nothing, it may be thought, changes less from one society or one generation to another than the unchanged and unchanging universe. On the contrary, nothing in human experience can change more and with profounder implications for society than man's view of the universe and his place in it. Quaint, arbitrary, and artificial to the modern scientist, the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology (responsible for the body-metaphor besides much else in our social thinking) was as hard and ineluctable a fact to the medieval European as the stubborn soil or the capricious weather. It had the special virtue of linking human society to every thing that existed from the archangel to the lowest worm that crawled, and so endowed it with the same ontological certainty. The prince among his subjects was the natural equivalent of God among the angels, man among the creatures, the lion (or the elephant) among beasts, the eagle (or the phoenix) among birds, the whale (or the dolphin) among fishes. Harmony in the body politic echoed the cosmic harmony of the circumambient spheres; treason and civil strife made discords which heaven rejected and cast out with disgust.[2] When the New Philosophy put all in doubt, shattered the music of the spheres, and overturned the ladder and scale of creatures, European man gained power over nature and, collectively, over his own social organization, at the cost of this old assurance of the continuity of the social, natural, and supernatural worlds. A society's cosmology is from one point of view an aspect of its

[1] Cf. H. E. Hallam, *The New Lands of Elloe*, Leicester, 1954, and his forthcoming books, *The Lincolnshire Fenland in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press) and *Land and People: England in the Early Middle Ages* (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.). For the Romano-British landscape see Dr Sylvia Hallam's forthcoming companion volume, *Land and People: England to the Coming of the English.*

[2] Cf. E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World-Picture*, 1950.

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psychology: from its own it is an integral part of its objective environment.

By way of adaptation a society's ecology leads straight to its anatomy. The structure of society is a great deal more than its class-system. In the first place, it embraces the whole of the social 'given element' into which the individual is born: the size and shape of society, that is, the population and its distribution by geography and age as well as by occupation and social position; the pattern of institutions, from marriage or inheritance customs to feudal homage, patronage, or contract of employment; and the complex of associations—family, church, gild, chivalrous order, school, hospital, workhouse, club, trade union, professional body, and even factory, political party, or organ of government, in, and only in, their social aspects—in and around which the individual must move and have his being.

Secondly, class is not the only or inevitable division of a hierarchical society. The very concept of class, in the modern sense of broad, mutually hostile, horizontal bands based on conflicting economic interest, is a product of the British Industrial Revolution. Until then the word was used in its neutral, 'classifying' sense, and its place supplied by the 'ranks', 'orders', and 'degrees' of a more finely graded hierarchy of great subtlety and discrimination.[1] In that older society the horizontal solidarities and vertical antagonisms of class were usually latent, overlain by the vertical bonds of patronage and dependency and the horizontal antagonisms between different interests, such as the landed, East and West Indian, cloth-manufacturing, and wool-exporting interests. In the small communities—village or tiny town—which made up most of the old society, a man was highly conscious of his exact position in the social hierarchy, not by comparison with his anonymous fellows on his own level elsewhere, but by his face-to-face relationship with his immediate neighbours above and below him. In regard to such a society the concept of class is a

[1] Cf. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950*, 1958, pp. xiii, xv; Asa Briggs, 'The Language of Class in Early Nineteenth-Century England', in A. Briggs and J. Saville, eds., *Essays in Labour History*, 1960.

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bludgeon rather than a scalpel, and crushes what it tries to dissect.

Nor is it much improved by turning it round and calling it status group, at least in the Germanic sense of *Stand. Stände* are but classes ancient enough to have acquired a customary title, and to exchange a crudely economic for a quasi-legal criterion. They are appropriate to a schematized feudalism, just as classes are to a schematized capitalism, and in real life schematically correct classes are rare. Modern distinctions, based often enough on a narrow historical experience, fail us, and we must fall back, as in social anthropology, on the terminology used in the society itself. In this case, as explained by a somewhat old-fashioned Irish judge in 1798, "Society consists of noblemen, baronets, esquires, gentlemen, yeomen, tradesmen, and artificers," [1] though he might have added husbandmen and the "labouring poor."

The structure of society may be a dynamic rather than a static system, even when maintaining itself in substantial equilibrium. The "storm over the gentry" in the century between the English Reformation and the Great Civil War,[2] whatever the outcome of the controversy, has illuminated, if rather fitfully, one of the most important features of English society, not only in that period, but from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century: the continuous recruitment to the landed aristocracy and gentry of 'new men' from trade, industry, the professions, and occasionally from agriculture. In the Tudor and early Stuart era of profit-inflation, a buyers' land market, and swollen opportunities at Court, the upward flow may have been brisker than at any time before the Industrial Revolution. But it was in principle the same social process which begins with families like the Howards, de la Poles, and Pastons in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and is still going strong with the Peels, Strutts, Addingtons, and Scotts (Lords Eldon and

[1] G. M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*, 1960 ed., p. 6, n. 1.

[2] For full bibliographies of the controversy between Professors Tawney and Trevor-Roper and their followers, see J. H. Hexter, 'Storm over the Gentry', *Encounter*, x, 1958, no. 5, pp. 22-34; and P. Zagorin, 'The Social Interpretation of the English Revolution', *Journal of Economic History*, xix, 1959, pp. 376–401.

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Stowell) in the early nineteenth. It is, indeed, a part of the larger mobility of English society, that two-way flow of blood and wealth—an upward flow of rising men from all the lower to all the higher levels, balanced by a downward flow of younger sons from higher to lower, to which must be added an upward flow of heiresses and a downward as well as a sideways flow of dowried daughters—which made England a more open, expansive, and yet a more stable society than any Continental nation. Its dynamic stability created a resourceful landed aristocracy continually replenished from below and in close contact through its own sons with the society it dominated; an active middle layer of business and professional men with powerful incentives to enterprise but none to remain in the towns and form a permanent, frustrated, revolutionary bourgeoisie; and 'lower orders' stimulated by social emulation to the twin prerequisites of industrial expansion, proletarian wage-earning, and consumption via the market. In France, by contrast, the segregation from trade and the professions of the privileged old *noblesse*, completed and confirmed by Louis XIV, not only severely impeded French economic development[1] but was perhaps the greatest single cause of political discontent. France had a political, England an industrial revolution: the difference arises from their contrasting social structures.

The third step is to see how the structure works, how the body politic functions. Its physiology includes how the society gets its living, how it exploits its natural and human resources, how it distributes and consumes what it has produced, what activities other than the means of life it pursues by way of ends in themselves, by what social controls it maintains itself in being and defends itself from unacceptable structural change, and how it regenerates itself and passes on its knowledge and skills, its attitudes and ideals, from one generation to the next. In other words, the historian must "extract the juices of the social" from agriculture, industry, and trade, the distribution of income and capital, government and public order, legislation and public morality, education in all its many forms, religion, intellectual and scientific thought, literature, music, the

[1] Cf. R. B. Grassby, 'Social Status and Commercial Enterprise under Louis XIV', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, XIII, 1960, pp. 19–38.

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arts, sports and games, pastimes and amusements. Here we seem very near the whirlpool of totality, if not to have plunged right in.

Yet the problem of keeping a steady course is not so difficult as it at first appears, nor is the pull of the whirlpool peculiar to the social historian. Let us look at what J. R. McCulloch considered the prerequisites of the good economist. "The economist will not arrive at anything like a true knowledge of the laws regulating the production, accumulation, distribution, and the consumption of wealth if he do not draw his materials from a very wide surface. He should study man in every situation; he should have recourse to the history of society, arts, commerce, and civilization, to the works of legislators, philosophers, and travellers, to everything in short that can throw light on the causes which accelerate or retard the progress of nations . . ." [1] In this breadth of view, McCulloch was joined by John Stuart Mill and, more recently, by Professor Arthur Lewis.[2] Neither he nor they intended the economist to be also a professional social historian, art critic, archaeologist, political scientist, philosopher, or explorer. They simply meant that he should seek his answers wherever they might be found.

Relevance is a matter of questions asked and answers obtained. The political historian cannot refuse to deal with the Black Death, enclosures and engrossing of farms, the Reformation, population growth, inflation, the invention of gunpowder, the General Strike, or the hydrogen bomb, on the grounds that disease, agriculture, religion, demography, currency, technology, industrial relations, and science are not his subjects. They are all his subjects in so far as they affect his central theme, the public issues upon which turned the politics of the age.

The social historian has his own central theme by which to test the relevance of his questions. He will welcome answers to them from any source. He is not concerned with agriculture, industry, and commerce for their intrinsic interest, but he can scarcely give any account of the functioning of society without

[1] *Principles of Political Economy*, 4th ed., Edinburgh, 1849, p. 21.
[2] J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, 1848; W. A. Lewis, *Theory of Economic Growth*, 1955, esp. pp. 5–6.

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reference to them. Social structure is by no means the same thing as the distribution of income. "The essence of social class," says Professor T. H. Marshall, "is the way a man is treated by his fellows (and, reciprocally, the way he treats them), not the qualities or the possessions which cause that treatment."[1] But a study of a class-system without the economic qualities and possessions of its members would be divorced from reality. Moreover, many of the statistics used by the economic historian, of income and wealth, occupations and unemployment, immigration and emigration, for example, are immediately relevant to the social historian, answering some of his most important questions. The political historian, taking into account the wealth of nations and the sinews of military power, will readily concede the point.

In the same manner, the social historian cannot ignore the social implications of politics, legislation, and administration. Social policy in the days of Burleigh or of Beveridge, the social causes and effects of war, the social foundations of a ruling aristocracy, the social consequences of taxation and welfare measures, the class connections of political parties, all affect the functioning of society, and are his concern. This point the economic historian, who has since the time of Adam Smith had to take into account the policies and actions of government, will readily concede.

Many of the answers the social historian seeks, or the evidence for them, are already to be found, then, between the covers of books labelled political or economic history. This he can only welcome, as teacher and researcher. If it were not so the teaching of social history would be next to impossible, since so few satisfactory textbooks yet exist, and undergraduates cannot work entirely from the sources. As for research, history is a co-operative not a competitive endeavour, and we owe a duty to our colleagues and predecessors to use whatever they have discovered of relevance to our interests. Economic and political activities are not the social historian's first interest. He is concerned with them only as they affect social activities and institutions. It is a matter of focus, of priorities, of emphasis. He will follow in the wake of the

[1] *Citizenship and Social Class*, Cambridge, 1950, p. 92.

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political or economic historian just long enough to get his questions answered. Though he may for a time fish the same waters, he will use a different net and steer a different course.

There is another approach to the whirlpool of totality, that of the dilettante. Faced with a great multitude of topics, any one of which might become a lifetime's study, the social historian may lose himself in the intellectual dispersion of the jack-of-all-trades. Religion, science, philosophy, literature, music, painting, architecture, gastronomy, costume, furniture, courtship, sport, and entertainment—the list of sirens, each no less seductive than the rest, is endless. Yet the same sense of direction, the same steady navigation, will save him from drowning. He should follow them so far, and only so far, as they lead him in the direction of his central theme.

Let us take, for example, one of the humblest and most antiquarian of these topics, the study of costume. What could be less relevant or more frivolous than how the members of a society were dressed? On the contrary, no single source of evidence can, at a glance almost, tell the historian so much about his society: its comparative prosperity, the distance between rich and poor, the grading of the social hierarchy, its occupational, religious, military, or ceremonial inclinations, its frivolous or serious cast of mind, its attitudes towards women, children, servants, or the poor, something even of its moral standards and its ideal type of man or woman. Sir Walter Raleigh's £600 *ensemble* compared with the puritan suit of drab testifies as eloquently to courtly society as his "Say to the Court it glows, and shines like rotten wood." Pepys's £20 beaver hat compared with the cottager's fustian is as specific a comment as Gregory King's political arithmetic. Madame Récamier's republican Greek tunic compared with Marie Antoinette's aristocratic panniered gown makes its point as radically as Rousseau's *Contrat Social.*

Probing more deeply, we can see in the familiar fashion cycle, unique to Western civilization from the later middle ages till only yesterday, a clue to the expansion of European and still more of English society. The fashion cycle requires a special kind of society with a peculiar structure, aristocratic but not exclusive, hierarchical but open to infiltration from below,

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so that emulation by their social inferiors will force the leaders of society to change their style of dress periodically in order to maintain their visible supremacy. The social emulation and mobility to which the fashion cycle testifies were a source of energy which helped to drive the engine of expansion. England, where the fashion cycle reached furthest down the social scale, affecting according to eighteenth-century observers like Pehr Kalm the very labourers,[1] enjoyed the highest rate of mobility and the most far-reaching industrial and colonial expansion. Used thus to illuminate the structure and functioning of society the most peripheral of topics is reduced to perspective and becomes of relevance and value to the central theme.

The fourth aspect, the society's pathology, is concerned with social problems and the attempts at remedying them. These are what Cunningham had in mind when he wrote: "We cannot understand the past unless we attempt to realize the precise problems of each age and the success or failure which attended human efforts to grapple with them."[2] The social historian might begin with the five giants of our modern domestic epic, want, disease, ignorance, squalor, and idleness; but there are many others to be found in most societies in most ages—vice and crime, intolerance, civil strife, and the ravages of war. Their remedies take him, without apology, into the sphere of government policy, social administration, police and punishment, as well as individual and organized charity, mutual aid, and simple good-neighbourliness.

One of the most ubiquitous of problems is that of social conflict between different groups, orders, classes, or interests within the society's structure. Whether all history is the history of class struggle, whether exploitation and resentment at it, the diminishing size of the exploiting class and the increasing immiseration of the exploited, the final bloody revolution and its classless sequel, are all inevitable concomitants of class society, are questions which can only be answered empirically, and cannot be determined here. One sceptical

[1] Pehr Kalm, *Account of his Visit to England on his Way to America in 1748*, trans. J. Lucas, 1892, p. 52; quoted by Dorothy Marshall, *English People in the Eighteenth Century*, 1956, p. 178.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

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gloss may be permitted, however. The age which evolved the modern concept of class to describe the massive discontents released by the Industrial Revolution, on the legend of which Marx erected his theory, seems to have been an era not of *class* but of *pre*-class conflict. In a viable class society, such as the mid-Victorian which immediately succeeded it, conflict is institutionalized and rendered acceptable by channelling it through such institutions as industrial negotiation and parliamentary elections. The violence of the age of the Luddites and of the Chartists seems rather to have been the birthpangs of an older society unable to accept or deliver itself painlessly of the new society struggling in its womb. In that older society conflict was not the bargaining of reluctant but inevitable partners forced to adjust their differences by non-violent strike action and negotiation, but the violent disloyalty of insubordinate servants, to be suppressed by legal and military violence.

Paradoxically, even as Marx wrote, the new class society itself was undermining his theory of class struggle: in exact measure as it emerged into the light, and mature class attitudes replaced the outraged paternalism and Oedipean adolescent rebellion of the old society, so the violence subsided and was overtaken by the remarkable and, in Marxist terms, inexplicable pacification of mid-Victorian England. May it not be that non-violent class conflict is the normal relationship between marital partners who cannot live together without bickering, but who apart cannot live at all? And violent revolution the pathological variant, the rending divorce, to which most marriages do not lead?

Social problems are solved or evaded in the light of the fifth and last aspect, the society's psychology, the way it reacts upon itself. It includes the aims which it consciously pursues, the moral criteria by which it judges its success, the public opinion which it applies to its own behaviour and concerns, and the ideals which satisfy its aspirations. It has some affinity with social psychology, the study of group behaviour, but we must not be misled by the metaphor into thinking it is the same thing or its historical counterpart. It has more affinity with the sociology of knowledge, which sets out to discover the social provenance of ideas and ideologies, and provides the historian

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with hypotheses which can be tested against the experience of his society.[1] He can, for example, ask whether nineteenth-century Britain, the society in which Marx lived for most of his life, bears out the Marxist view that men's ideas are determined by their relation to the means of production, and if so, what was Marx's own relation to the economic system. He can ask whether Dicey's division of the century into three distinct periods of social-legislative opinion, labelled "Blackstonian optimism," "Benthamism or Individualism," and "Collectivism," can be squared with the empirical facts. Or he can ask why so many reforming minds of the century, including Marx and most of the Benthamites, classical economists, Christian Socialists, Fabians, and Oxford Idealists, belonged to none of the three great classes of landlords, capitalists, and proletarians, but to the "forgotten middle class" of salaried, feed, or dependent brain-workers. The answers to these questions will bring about—are already bringing about—a revolution in nineteenth-century historiography.[2]

Central to this aspect is perhaps the most significant feature of modern developing societies, their increasing self-awareness and control. In our own society self-awareness began even before the great antiquaries of Dr Rowse's "Elizabethan discovery of England"[3] with the violent xenophobia of the later medieval period. It sought precision through Graunt, Petty, King, and the political arithmetic of the seventeenth century; gained intellectual depth and a sense of growth in the eighteenth with Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, John Millar, James Steuart of Coltness, and the Scottish historical school of philosophy; made the crucial transition from self-knowledge to social engineering with Edwin Chadwick, Kay-Shuttleworth, Leonard Horner, and the great civil servants of the nineteenth

[1] Cf. W. Stark, *The Sociology of Knowledge*, 1958.

[2] On the side of social policy and administration, see J. B. Brebner, 'Laissez Faire and State Intervention in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Journal of Economic History*, Supplement VIII, 1948, pp. 59–73; O. MacDonagh, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: a Reappraisal', *Historical Journal*, I, 1958, pp. 52–67; Henry Parris, 'The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government: a Reappraisal Reappraised', *ibid.*, III, 1960, pp. 17–37.

[3] Rowse, *op. cit.*, chap. ii.

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century; and in the twentieth on the social science of Booth, Rowntree, Bowley, and Beveridge founded that great machine-tool of social engineering—still underemployed and its potentialities unrealized—the Welfare State. How far this evolution is peculiar to Britain and how far it is a necessary concomitant of industrialization, 'development', or 'modernization', is a further question for empirical enquiry.

But whether it knows it or not, every society has its ideals: of what constitutes the good life and how society should help which individuals to pursue it, of what society should be and what its relations with its *alter ego*, the state. All such ideals inevitably come back to the ideal of what the individual is, or should in the best of circumstances become. The ideal social type in feudal society was the chivalrous knight, serving God and his lord according to his oath. In the succeeding post-feudal, pre-capitalist society, it was the landed gentleman, the leisured amateur, freed by his unearned income to pursue the ends of life, which by definition were his own pleasures. In Victorian society it was the resourceful entrepreneur, who eschewed idleness and laboured in his vocation, providing work for the deserving and the workhouse for the undeserving poor. What does the twentieth century take for its ideal type? Is it not, East and West, in developed and developing societies alike, the professional expert, who alone amongst the non-proletarian classes enjoys ungrudged, unchallenged prestige and security?

Beneath the ideal of what a man should be there lies the deeper ideal of what human life is for. This is the fountain-head of the society's psychology. From it flows the quality and texture of its social thought, and ultimately of society itself. According as it finds the meaning and purpose of life in serving God or the five-year plan, in harrowing the heretic or consoling the brief pilgrimage of fallen man, in bringing light to the Gentile or death to the non-Aryan, in the *recherche du temps perdu* of a supposed golden age or in the *ignis fatuus* of a hypostasized posterity, in negotiating the narrow isthmus between two eternities or in furthering the ever-widening march of progress, in pursuing truth in the interstices of an authoritarian dogma or to the libertarian abyss of existential doubt or

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universal holocaust, so, consciously or unconsciously, it will create itself in the image of its ideal. Nor does its true belief necessarily cry out in the market place, orate in the forum, or speak in the flat tones of the administrator. It often speaks with the quiet voice of conversation in a private room. It is in the daily talk of ordinary men and women that the real values of a society are felt and heard. And it is at this most intimate of levels that the social historian must seek, if he can, the psychological generating power of his society.

We have now come full circle, from cosmology to the meaning and purpose of life *sub specie aeternitatis*. In the topology of a unitary object every surface is interconnected and every path leads back to where it started. The body politic's ecology, anatomy, physiology, pathology, and psychology overlap and inter-connect because a society is an organic whole in which the functioning of every part affects that of every other. Moreover, just as no man is an island, so no society can live for long in isolation from the great society of mankind. Hence to all the foregoing we must add a further dimension: the mutual relations and influence of diverse societies, the comparative study of their structure and institutions, and ultimately perhaps their involvement in the tortuous evolution which, willy-nilly and for better or worse, has made the modern world one, and all its societies members one of another in the same fateful progress to survival or perdition.

If so capacious a study as social history, thus delimited, sounds a superhuman task, that is because, in relation to any one human being, it is so. No one historian can or should hope to say all there is to say about a society: life is too manifold and too short for that. But a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a subject for? Fortunately for historians, of the making of history there is no end, and much study is a joy to the profession. In practice the teaching of an articulate social history is no more impossible than the teaching of an articulate political or economic history. One of the amenities of history as an educational discipline is that it tailors itself to the capacities of teacher and taught. What can be done at their level in the available time they may do, with pleasure and profit from the very beginning, without having to wait for distant returns.

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Two formidable problems still remain, of presentation and of sources. The first is the "rank-and-file dilemma" which Professor Hexter has compared to Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle in quantum physics.[1] The historian cannot simultaneously pursue all the aspects of a complex society *and* show the whole society in motion. He cannot write both narrative and topical history at the same time. But somehow he must try. A great deal may be learnt from local studies, in the handling of small societies over short periods. To larger studies periodization is the key: since the social historian must move forward by periods, he will choose them with an eye to their essential unity as temporal articulations of the whole society. In English social history he will find the old periodization a hindrance, as indeed it is increasingly felt to be by political and economic historians. He will find useful articulations in viable periods by taking the ages between or dominated by great geological shifts in the structure of society: true feudalism, succeeded via the decline of military service, serfdom, and population by 'bastard feudalism'; Tawney's century between the Reformation and the Great Civil War; the Augustan age from the Restoration to the onset of the Industrial Revolution; the Industrial Revolution, so much more than an economic phenomenon; G. M. Young's early Victorian England, succeeded by the different age between it and the first World War; the as yet twilit passage between the World Wars; and the amorphous, unorganized history of post-War England. Any periodization has its difficulties. There is no ideal solution and only one touchstone, that the history, like poetry, should seem to come unforced, like the leaves to a tree.

As for sources, the social historian, like McCulloch's economist, must "draw his materials from a very wide surface." They may be found in whatever has come down to us from the past, in whatever form: in print or manuscript, from love letters to Census returns; the myriad artefacts, from clothes to cooking-pots, which are the instruments of daily life; the products of past culture, from temples to miniature painting; or the marks of old habitation, from lost villages to landscape

[1] J. H. Hexter, 'A New Framework for Social History', *Journal of Economic History*, XV, 1955, p. 423.

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architecture, on the face of the country. He must know only how to use them. With documents he should be a skilled researcher; with objects, an amateur archaeologist; with Census returns or political arithmetic, a critical statistician; with *objets d'art*, not a connoisseur but at least a dilettante; with works of literature, a literary historian if not a critic. With them all he should have a keen eye for what the mediocre as well as the good of its kind can tell him about the social life of the past. He cannot hope and should not try to do other men's work for them; but what he can do he should do better. He cannot afford, for example, the intolerance of some literary critics towards all but the most perfect products of the creative imagination. Dr F. R. Leavis believes that to use literary evidence intelligently the student of society needs to be a trained literary critic. "Without the sensitizing familiarity with the subtleties of language, and the insight into the relations between abstract or generalizing thought and the concrete of human experience, that the trained frequentation of literature alone can bring, the thinking that attends social or political studies will not have the edge and force it should." [1] All this is true—but what does it profit a historian of early Victorian England if it teaches him that the *only* work of Dickens worth his serious attention is *Hard Times*? [2]

Moreover, Dr Leavis is less acutely aware of the need of the student of literature to have studied from non-fictional sources the society of which the literature is the outgrowth. Failure to do this well enough has led some literary critics into a kind of legendary history, geared to what Professor Frank Kermode has called "a myth of catastrophe," [3] the fall from a primordial state of innocence and grace before the "dissociation of sensibility" and the debasement of popular culture. The mere historian will not question the values upon which the theory of the golden age is erected, but he will question its periodization and its sources. T. E. Hulme found it in the age before the

[1] *The Common Pursuit*, 1952, p. 194.

[2] *The Great Tradition*, 1948, pp. 227, 19.

[3] F. Kermode, 'A Myth of Catastrophe', *The Listener*, 8 and 15 November 1956; cf. his 'The Dissociation of Sensibility', *Kenyon Review*, XIX, 1957, pp. 169–94.

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Renaissance and rationalism did their deadly work; W. B. Yeats, before Shakespeare; Dr Leavis himself, before Milton, since rather unkindly rehabilitated by Mr Eliot; Mrs Leavis, before W. H. Smith and the cheap editions on the railway bookstalls; and now Mr Richard Hoggart, in his childhood, before the working class was corrupted by the popular press. One wonders if they had ever read a broadsheet ballad, a 'penny dreadful', or a gallows sheet—the literary sources most relevant to any pronouncement on popular culture.[1]

On his part, the self-respecting social historian will not rely on evidence from one source alone. He will not, for example, expect Moll Flanders to typify the women of Defoe's England—but he may legitimately expect her story to make concrete the human experience behind the "great debate of the poor,"[2] the statistics of London poor relief, the settlement Acts, the harshness of the penal code, and the chronic fear betrayed in the parish records of the birth of fatherless children.

The multiple sensibility of the historian will connect the most diverse sources. The Cambridge University registers show that the heirs of eighteenth-century landowners did not distinguish themselves academically to the same extent as their fellow students and younger brothers.[3] How this conclusion comes alive when we find a manuscript letter from the anxious widow to her eldest boy at Magdalene! "Your promises aided by my strong affections prove powerful enough to make me give in to what you desire, even to forget past miscarriages if you'll be serious and make the best use of your time you possibly can for the future and study as much as in you lies to retrieve the precious time you have unhappily lost. In order to that you must drop all the Idle part of your acquaintance and they'll not care to trouble you if they find you intent upon a Book. Don't make much of your Self in a bad way. No philosopher in Cambridge will find occasion for more than four-

[1] See my 'Origins of the Popular Press', *History Today*, VII, 1957, pp. 425–35.

[2] Cf. Charles Wilson, 'The Other Face of Mercantilism', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, IX, 1959, pp. 81–101.

[3] H. Jenkins and D. Caradog Jones, 'Social Class of Cambridge University Alumni of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *British Journal of Sociology*, I, 1950, pp. 93–116.

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score pound a Year." Perhaps he had justified her earlier fears when Sturbridge Fair was drawing near, "that all the silly Students will lose their time and innocence there," and ignored her advice "to get your Tutor to go along with you . . ." We are not surprised to learn that there is no record of Jack Egerton's graduation, or that his brothers Samuel and Thomas, who did not go to a university, became successful merchants in Venice and Holland.[1]

Again, the first modern occupational Census of 1851 comes to life in Ford Madox Brown's *Work*, painted in the following year.[2] An invaluable document precisely because it is not great art and leaves nothing to the imagination, it offers a microcosm of mid-Victorian society: the equestrian, leisured gentry; the earnest middle-class ladies with crinoline, sunshade, and evangelical tract—*The Hodman's Haven, or Drink for Thirsty Souls*; the thirsty hodman downing a pint; the clean-drawn navvy in all the dignity of labour; the uppish craftsman with buttonhole, watch-chain, and *The Times*; the sleeping tramps; the shame-faced, yet pre-Raphaelite, ragged messenger-boy; the sandwich-board men and women; the orange-girl being moved along by the peeler; the intellectuals leaning on the fence—said to be Carlyle and F. D. Maurice; the merry urchins, the underfed baby with its sad, old-man's face, and, of course, the mongrels. On the frame there is the homily, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Even the work has a mid-Victorian flavour: they appear to be mending a sewer.

The social historian need not be a specialist in every discipline connected with his sources. Professor Butterfield has shown how, without being a scientist, one can offer a more rounded and satisfying history of science than the teleological version which usually passes for it. One does not have to be a scientist to trace the significance of a theory of impetus, which

[1] *Egerton MSS.*, kindly placed at the disposal of the History School of the University of Manchester by the late Lord Egerton of Tatton: letter, E. Egerton to John Egerton, postmarked 25 March (1729), and *ibid.*, August 1728; W. H. Chaloner, 'The Egertons in Italy and the Netherlands, 1729–44', *John Rylands Library Bulletin*, XXXII, 1949–50, pp. 157–70.

[2] In the Manchester City Art Gallery; reproduced in G. M. Young, ed., *Early Victorian England*, Oxford, 1934, I, opp. p. 4.

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the scientist, impatient to follow only the main line leading to the present, is likely to ignore.[1] Nor does one have to be a musician, a town-planner, a theologian, or a bookmaker to trace the significance of music, urban growth, religion, or gambling in the social life of the past. An educated man, it has been said, is one who can read every page of *The Times* or the *Guardian* with intelligence; but that does not mean that he needs to be an expert in politics, diplomacy, law, finance, technology, court etiquette, fashion-design, literary criticism, advertising, midwifery, marriage guidance, and life insurance, as well as the construction of crossword puzzles. The ideal social historian is the ideally educated man.

In spite of its difficulties and demands, the neglect of social history is only apparent. Cinderella has already moved to the centre of the stage and is giving cues to the other protagonists. Mr Charles Wilson recently contrasted with the political and individualist preoccupations of the historians of Acton's generation "the sociologized history of our own day which is less concerned with individuals and more with men as members of social groups."[2] His words are borne out in whatever direction we look: in the biographical approach of Namier, Sir John Neale, and their followers to the history of parliament, "a demographic study of the most significant group-formation in the life of this country;"[3] in the attempts on both sides of the gentry controversy to explain the Great Civil War in terms of the social upheavals of the preceding hundred years; in the interest in the social origins and interconnections of entrepreneurs;[4] in the recognition of the social factors necessary to economic growth;[5] or in the realization that modern international history turns on the competition of rival theories of the organization of society. In all of these the social approach

[1] Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*, 1949, chap. i.

[2] *Loc. cit.*, pp. 100–1.

[3] Namier, *loc. cit.*, p. 162; Cf. J. E. Neale, 'The Biographical Approach to History', *History*, XXXVI, 1951, pp. 193–203.

[4] Cf., e.g., *The Entrepreneur: Papers presented at the Annual Conference of the Economic History Society at Cambridge, England, April 1957*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957.

[5] Cf. Lewis, *op. cit.*; W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, Cambridge, 1960.

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offers insights and understanding not available to Acton's generation. It is a far cry from Seeley's "History is past politics: politics is present history" to Trevor-Roper's "Political history is often a commentary, a corrective and clarifying commentary, on social history, and as such cannot be divorced from it." [1]

Can social history go further than this? Will Cinderella cease to be a handmaiden and become a princess in her own right? There are some signs of a coming transformation. Comprehensive social histories are in progress, or completed: Dr Rowse's *The Elizabethan Age*, Professor Edward Hughes's *North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century*, the multi-volume *International Social History* under the editorship of Dr J. H. Plumb. Two front-rank academic publishers are devoting open series to the subject, while a third has widened its economic history textbook series to admit social history.[2] The *International Review of Social History*, published by the *International Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis* in Amsterdam, has been revived and by its publication of articles in English partly makes up for the lack of a native journal. Professor Asa Briggs's new appointment in social studies at the University College of Sussex may perhaps by those who know him be regarded as the first chair in social history; at least there is no danger that the subject will be neglected in Brighton.

Perhaps the way forward may be through a new approach to general history, already heralded by the new approaches to political and economic history: the comparative study of what Pareto, Toynbee, and G. D. H. Cole have taught us to call élites.[3] In the interaction of their political power, economic strength, and social roots and connections all three kinds of historian may learn to work together as equal partners in a

[1] H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Gentry, 1540–1640*, Cambridge, 1953, p. 44.

[2] William Heinemann Ltd, Kingswood Social History Series, edited by H. L. Beales and O. R. McGregor; Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, Studies in Social History, edited by myself; and Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd, Economic and Social History of England, edited by Asa Briggs.

[3] A similar suggestion, for the comparative study of the "overmighty subject" at different periods, is made by Professor Hexter, 'A New Framework for Social History', *loc. cit.*

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common enterprise. Professor Habakkuk has already shown the kind of contribution which social history can make to such an approach by his studies of the nobility in eighteenth-century England and of the rôle of family settlements in the maintenance of their wealth and power.[1]

Such an approach to general history may well reveal the special primacy of the impulses from the social level. I am not putting forward a new species of determinism. Men, we may still believe, choose their ends, although in the light of what seems best for them in the short or the long run. But the ends men have sought—prestige, admiration, culture, fame, knowledge and understanding, family life, philanthropic endeavour, spiritual rebirth, unreflecting enjoyment, or a vicarious eternal life in the seed of their loins—have been as often social as political or economic, while wealth and power under scrutiny often turn out to be means to social ends. Determinism, as we have seen, is at bottom an interpretation of the nature of man. Determinists impute to the majority of men, or at least to a majority of those in key positions, the pathological ends of a few: power or acquisition as ends in themselves. Social ends are so various and manifold that they offer no temptation to oversimplify the multi-centred complexity of human nature. And, since it is only in society that men become human, let alone civilized, there is no better definition of human nature than Aristotle's, translated as he understood it: "Man is a social animal."

Every age has its own interest in the past, its own version of the perennial question of Milton's Adam, "How came I thus, how here?" The interest of our own age can only be described as social. We want to know not only what laws were made and battles fought or even how men got their living, but what it felt like to be alive, how men in history—not merely kings and popes, statesmen and tycoons—lived and worked and thought and behaved towards each other. "Social questions," Beatrice Webb confided to her diary in 1884, "are

[1] H. J. Habakkuk, 'England', in A. Goodwin, ed., *The European Nobility in the Eighteenth Century*, 1953, and 'Marriage Settlements in the Eighteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, XXXII, 1950, pp. 15–30.

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the vital questions of today: they take the place of religion."[1] In the 1960's they take the place of everything, at least in politics, especially in international politics. And what is politics but the questions we most want to debate in public? At this point Cinderella becomes a princess if not, as the respect and the reluctance of political and economic history to let her go her independent way would seem to suggest, the queen of historical studies.

[1] *My Apprenticeship*, 1926, p. 149.

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UNIVERSAL HISTORY

By G. Barraclough

Of all the approaches to history none has been less explored than that which we usually call world-history or universal or 'oecumenical' history. And yet there is probably no type of history which is closer to our present preoccupations or more nearly attuned to the world in which we live. The reasons why the history most needed today is universal history lie all around us. They are a reflection of the unification of the world by science and technology and by the revolutionary advance of mass communications, a consequence of the familiar fact that we can no longer isolate ourselves from events in any quarter of the globe. Taiwan and Indo-China today are as near, and what happens there as relevant for us, as Greece or Portugal a century ago. Furthermore, the processes of industrial society, which originated in western Europe and North America, are now world-wide, their impact universal. Because the peoples of the Soviet Union, of China and India, and the other nations in Asia and Africa and Latin America, are playing an integral part in the political development of our world, a history which is limited to a more or less fragmentary account of the evolution of western civilization is inevitably less than adequate for present needs. The civilizations of China and India and Islam—in interplay, of course, with impulses coming from Europe—are just as much a part of the historical background of our times as is the civilization of the west. The emergence of the greater part of mankind from political subjection to political independence and political influence necessitates a shift in historical perspective. In short, the very forces which have transformed our view of the present compel us to

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widen our view of the past. It is this new situation which makes the need for universal history—by which we mean a history that looks beyond Europe and the west to humanity in all lands and ages—a matter of immediate practical urgency.

Nevertheless it would be a mistake to suppose that preoccupation with universal history is simply a consequence of the vast political changes which the world has undergone since 1939. In returning to world-history today we are returning to an older tradition which reaches back beyond the nineteenth century to the origins of modern critical historical study and which held its own until the close of the eighteenth century. For the men of the Enlightenment the idea of world-history was particularly congenial. It fitted in with their notion of progress, their view of mankind advancing steadily from primitive barbarism to reason and virtue and civilization. It fitted in also with their secular and rationalist spirit. So long as the authority of the Bible remained unchallenged, and all known historical events had to be fitted into a rigid biblical context, there could be no universal history as we know it; and since the Reformation affirmed rather than weakened the authority of the Bible, the concept of world-history was slow to take shape. Earlier historical interpretation, ever since the time of St Augustine and Orosius, had followed the pattern of Christian revelation—creation, crucifixion, last judgement—or had divided the past into periods corresponding to the four world-empires presaged in the book of Daniel: the Assyrian, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman. Both schemes gave rise to insoluble difficulties, particularly when the attempt was made to relate them to peoples whose history fell outside the realm of Judaeo-Christian experience.[1] The last great historical work written in the spirit of Christian eschatology was Bossuet's *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681). But Bossuet's position was incompatible with the new spirit of scientific enquiry stirring in the late seventeenth century; and from around 1655 we

[1] A characteristic example was the necessity of deriving all the races of mankind from Noah through his sons, Shem (Asia), Ham (Africa), and Japhet (Europe). As late as the seventeenth century this remained "unquestioned as a description of the peopling of the earth"; cf. Denys Hay, *Europe. The Emergence of an Idea*, 1957, p. 108.

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can perceive how the irreconcilability of biblical tradition with the facts brought to light by the great discoveries was preparing the ground for a new, secular view of world-history.[1] The French Calvinist Isaac de la Peyrère, who was unable to reconcile what he knew of Chinese history with the story of Adam and Eve, and the Dutch historian George Hornius, paved the way for Voltaire, whose *Essai sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations* (1752) is commonly regarded as "the first real world-history,"[2] and for the vast co-operative universal history—the first of its kind—which was published in England in thirty-eight volumes from 1736 onwards. Voltaire expressly accused his predecessor, Bossuet, of doing less than justice to the Arabs and the Babylonians and the Persians, and of ignoring the Chinese and Indians altogether; his history, in short, was unacceptable because his point of view was less than oecumenical.

The first great historical achievement of the eighteenth century was to bring the extra-European world into the field of enquiry and thus to make universal history possible.[3] Its second achievement, associated from about 1760 with the rising Göttingen school led by J. C. Gatterer and A. L. Schlözer, was to ventilate and debate the problems of method and practice involved in the writing of world-history. But this early interest in universal history, so characteristic of the Age of Reason, began to falter at the time of the French Revolution, and from the close of the eighteenth century until the First World War—in many respects, indeed, until the Second World War—it was in eclipse. The causes were many. One was the sense, as historical knowledge deepened and widened, of the insufficiency of the earlier attempts to view the history of the world as a whole. The eighteenth-century approach to world-history was more successful in conception than in execution. It expressed a vision of the general progress of society and culture, instead of a mere calendar of battles and

[1] Cf. R. Wittram, 'Die Möglichkeit einer Weltgeschichte', in *Das Interesse an der Geschichte*, 1958, p. 124.

[2] E. Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie*, 1925, p. 358.

[3] Cf. T. J. G. Locher, *Die Überwindung des europäozentrischen Geschichtsbildes*, 1954, p. 9.

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political events; but too often it resulted in a series of facile generalizations or patterns of a philosophical nature imposed on history from outside without criticism or detailed study of the records. And even those, such as Herder and Hegel, who sought to do justice to the oriental peoples, wrote without an adequate foundation of concrete historical knowledge.[1] It was therefore not surprising, as a more scientific attitude to history developed, that the superficiality of eighteenth-century historical writing was more deeply felt, and also that the very feasibility of universal history was called into question. In the first place, it was argued, the foundation of critical knowledge for anything so ambitious was totally insufficient; as Schlözer pointed out, the whole history of the ancient world would require re-writing if the Egyptian and Persian sources ever became as readily available as those of Greece and Rome. In the second place, it seemed that the writing of universal history made demands on human knowledge greater than the human intellect could ever hope to encompass; the field it covered was so immense that inevitably the knowledge which any single individual could bring to bear was too limited to carry the burden. Co-operative histories, on the other hand, amounted to little more than compendia or encyclopaedias; their result was not world-history, which treated mankind as a unity, but an aggregate of national histories with little, if any, cohesion or connection.

These were among the technical reasons why, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, world-history passed into the shadows. But fundamentally more important was a change in the climate of ideas. From the time of the French Revolution cosmopolitan gave way to national thinking; the nation-state asserted its place as the focus of human endeavour, the natural centre of all activity, and increasingly it was doubted whether there was any wider unity than the sovereign nation. But if the nation was the supreme expression of human striving, it followed that national history was the only type of history that ultimately mattered. There were, it is true, a few dissenting

[1] Cf. E. Schulin, *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke*, 1958, p. 8, and A. F. Wright, 'The Study of Chinese Civilization', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXI, 1960, p. 245.

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voices, such as that of the Swiss historian Jakob Burckhardt; but by the second half of the nineteenth century this was the prevailing view, borne out, it seemed, by the progress of national unification in Germany and Italy. Its victory was aided by the adaptation to historical study of vulgarized Darwinian concepts and by biological analogies, particularly the concepts of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. If, in fact, there were such a thing as universal history in a world in which the ultimate realities were the nation-states, then its subject-matter could only be their rivalries and conflicts, the clash of empires, the attempts of particular powers to establish a position of hegemony and bring the world (or as much of the world as they could encompass) under their rule and influence. But in any case the nation remained the focal point of historical study, for it was here, in the heart of the people and in the minds of its leaders, that the driving forces originated.

It needed the catastrophe of two world wars to shake the foundations of this historical attitude, and even today it is still so engrained that it frequently determines the unconscious assumptions of historians who would not consciously subscribe to such a view. We do not need to consider the problematical character, in the world today, of the concept of sovereignty, which looms so large yet means so little,[1] to realize that the era of the national state, as understood in the nineteenth century, was circumscribed in time and is now in the throes of a process of attrition. Its predominance was a historically conditioned phenomenon which lasted approximately a hundred and fifty years. By every test of national theory —language, racial unity, and the like—the political groups which count in the world of the second half of the twentieth century are supra-national in dimension, and the process of economic and technological change has cast serious doubt on the viability of the national state under modern conditions. If it is to keep pace with these developments history must break through the national framework in which the nineteenth century imprisoned it. That does not mean, of course, that

[1] Cf. J. H. Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age*, 1959, pp. 127–43.

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national history must, or can, be discarded. How far, for example, particular national characteristics—in themselves a baffling abstraction, always subject to change—affected the character of a civilization, how far the expression of particular values was the work of a particular nation or state or people, how far the actions of governments imposed a particular pattern on the life of a particular geographical area: these are questions which will always be debated and always be worth debating. To swing from one extreme to the other, to write as though civilization were a universal process with its own inherent laws, developing independently of nations and 'sub-nations', would be no advance. It would mark a return, in substance, to the oecumenical and cosmopolitan history of the eighteenth century without taking account of the valid criticism of that history which was the great achievement of the nineteenth century. What is necessary, in reality, is a new approach which does justice both to the oecumenical insights of the eighteenth century and to the profound feeling for national differences and for individuality which was the mark of nineteenth-century history. It would be easy to describe this as a synthesis at a higher level between two antithetical avenues of approach; but world-history, contrary to what is often thought, is not mere synthesis and a synthetic treatment will not solve its problems or give us the results we want. World-history cuts into reality at a different angle from other types of history; and because its angle is different, it cuts across the lines they have traced. We shall, perhaps, best describe it as a search for new dimensions and new perspectives more atune to the world in which we live than the traditional history we have inherited from the past. At any rate, it is a separate branch of historical study with its own distinctive starting-point, its own distinctive methods, and aims and objects which other types of history cannot fulfil.

Let us therefore proceed by examining what world-history is not. For although there have been many attempts to write world-history since H. G. Wells published his *Outline of History* in 1919, few have been successful, largely because little attempt has been made to come to terms with the problems

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which the writing of world-history involves. Indeed, much of the scepticism about the possibility of world-history, on the part of professional historians, arises from the failure to clarify its basic concepts and to show where and how and why it differs from other types of historical work and writing.

It should be clear, in the first place, that world-history is not, and never can be, the sum or aggregate of national histories. Many examples of such composite histories exist; they were tersely characterized by Lord Acton many years ago as "a rope of sand." [1] On the other hand, it would be equally erroneous to regard world-history as history with national history left out. As Ranke long ago observed, "if it were to desert the firm ground of national history," universal history would quickly "degenerate into mere theory and speculation." [2] In the third place, world-history is not to be confused with what is sometimes described as 'meta-history', or as the philosophy of history—that is to say, with the attempt, associated today with Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, to survey the whole vista of the historic past in order to discover trends and patterns and general laws. And finally, though most world-histories that have been produced follow this pattern, the purpose of world-history is not, in Wells's words, to trace "in one continuous narrative the whole story of life and mankind so far as it is known today." [3]

All these types of history may, of course, be of value in their own way, and there is no question here of criticizing them. In view of the tendency of professional historians to limit themselves to narrow periods and a single country, there is no reason to doubt that H. G. Wells's demand for a conspectus of historical knowledge on a world-wide scale, "written plainly

[1] *Lectures on Modern History*, 1906, p. 317: "By universal history I understand that which is distinct from the combined history of all countries, which is not a rope of sand, but a continuous development, and is not a burden on the memory but an illumination of the soul. It moves in a succession to which the nations are subsidiary. Their story will be told, not for their own sake, but in reference and subordination to a higher series, according to the time and the degree in which they contribute to the common fortunes of mankind."

[2] *Universal History*, Engl. ed. transl. by G. W. Prothero, 1884, p. xii.

[3] *The Outline of History*, 1919, p. 1.

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for the general reader," met a real practical need. And it is also true, for the reader sated with facts, that the type of history which deals in a broad sweep with "movements, tendencies, and influences," may be both interesting and stimulating.[1] Both these types represent a reaction against professional history and its alleged deficiencies; but it does not follow that they reflect a universal point of view.[2] The same is true of the composite histories, which have recently returned to fashion after a period of eclipse. Lord Acton was, in his day, one of the greatest advocates of universal history; but the point of view expressed in the *Cambridge Modern History*, which he planned, was distinctly European and its emphasis on European history was marked. In view of the dominant rôle of Europe at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this emphasis is easy to comprehend; but it is less easy to explain its persistence in the *New Cambridge Modern History*, planned in radically different circumstances after the Second World War. Series such as *The Pelican History of the World* or the *University of Michigan History of the Modern World*, on the other hand, deny explicitly or implicitly the need for a universal point of view. Their underlying assumption is that "national character, national development, and national power" lie "behind most of the

[1] For example, *A Brief History of Civilization* by John S. Hoyland (1925), a meritorious survey at its own level, according to a fairly familiar scheme (The Beginnings of History, The Meaning of Civilization: India and China, Christianity and Islam, Greece, Rome, The Middle Ages, Nationalism, Internationalism, The Return of Greece, i.e. the Renaissance and scientific discovery).

[2] As indicated by the title of a not very inspired textbook by R. Flenley and W. N. Welch: *World History. The Growth of Western Civilization* (1936). "Beginning with a brief general account of early man," the authors explain, they then describe "how civilizations arose in the Five Lands from Egypt to the Punjab, and in China . . . The story then carries us to the classical world and so to the origin and growth of the western society to which we belong." Here the whole scheme is marked by a specifically European bias (e.g. Part VII is entitled "The Age of the Renaissance and the Reformation," a division only applicable to Europe) but the same is of course true of many professedly universal histories, including Wells's *Outline*. Far better—indeed, by far the best single volume of its class I have seen in the English language—is *The Concise Encyclopaedia of World History*, ed. by John Bowle (1958), a work of real merit, which a misleading title unfortunately obscures.

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international problems with which we are faced today," [1] and that the only satisfactory approach to world-history is therefore by way of national history. The simple answer to this argument is that the whole is more than (or, at least, is something fundamentally different from) the sum of the parts. No composite history can answer the questions with which universal history is concerned because its objects are different, and in particular because the points of 'world-historical' significance are almost inevitably lost in the interstices between the different national or regional chapters or the separate accounts of different nations. This is true, for example, of the efforts of the United States to secure a dominant position in the Pacific, which was of such momentous consequence in the story of the rise of America to world power. Here we have a major theme of recent world-history; but, because of the division on national lines, there is no possibility of grasping and following the thread in (to take a specific instance) the histories of China and Japan and the United States in *The Pelican History of the World.* And it would be still less possible, with a national method of presentation, to see how this struggle, in which Great Britain, Russia, France, Japan, and the United States were all involved, was related to other conflicts of power and interest in central Asia and the Near and Middle East. The reason is that these, like so many of the other issues which are of immediate concern to us today, are questions of international history on a global plane, which only a universal point of view can elucidate. They cut across national boundaries and require a different approach.

[1] The quotation is from the general introduction to the different volumes of *The Pelican History of the World.* "It is often urged," the introductory statement sets forth, "that world history is best written without limitations of frontiers, that, for example, a history of the development of Western Europe has more historical validity than 'nationalist' histories of France, Germany, the Low Countries, and Britain. Nevertheless it is national character, national development, and national power which incite the curiosity of most of us, and it is these things which seem to be behind most of the international problems with which we are faced today. Therefore, in preparing the plan of *The Pelican History of the World* . . . the editor has decided that the old and familiar emphasis upon national history has meant sufficient to justify its continuance in this series."

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There is no doubt, therefore, that Wells was right in thinking that "universal history is at once something more and something less" than an "aggregate" of national histories, and that it must "be approached in a different spirit and dealt with in a different manner." Up to the present, however, there are very few examples of the successful application of this principle. On a sustained scale we may single out for mention the French series, *Histoire générale des civilisations*, and perhaps particularly its seventh and concluding volume on the contemporary period, which not only makes more than a perfunctory bow to Africa, the Orient, and the Americas, but also—what is even more important—adopts a global perspective.[1] But the nearest approach to date to a world-history which, instead of "a mere juxtaposition," set out to demonstrate "the interdependence of events in widely separated parts of the world," was provided in 1921 by the Swiss historian Eduard Fueter, whose volume on *World History, 1815–1920*, though now superseded by the progress of historical knowledge, was in its day a remarkable attempt to reconsider and re-interpret a familiar period and familiar events "from a universal point of view."[2] Fueter's criterion, with which it is impossible to quarrel, was that events of "universal significance" should be placed in the foreground; and although, for reasons which appeared to him sufficient, Europe and the European nations were "given first place," the "events selected for detailed treatment" were "those which exercised influence beyond the European boundaries."

It would be wrong to ignore or under-estimate the difficulties of writing world-history in this way. There is no objective criterion of universality, and it would be entirely misleading to set up, in Fueter's words, "a fictitious equality between different continents." Fueter himself was convinced that in the period with which he dealt the preponderance of Europe and the spread of European influence were such that it was right to

[1] *Histoire générale des civilisations*, VII: *L'époque contemporaine*, by Maurice Crouzet (1957); cf. also the new *Propyläen Weltgeschichte*, ed. Golo Mann, of which a first volume on the nineteenth century appeared in 1960.

[2] E. Fueter, *Weltgeschichte der letzten Hundert Jahre, 1815–1920*, 1921; Engl. ed., trans. by S. B. Fay, *World History, 1815–1920* (1923).

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pick out Europe—or, more particularly, those facets of European development which impinged most directly on the wider world—for special treatment as the centre from which the main movements of world-history originated.[1] Most western historians would agree with him; but it is, of course, true that an Indian or Japanese, or even a United States or a Russian historian, might make a radically different assessment. The problem of writing world-history would be easy, if it were only a question of bringing together a handful of experts from Paris and California and Warsaw and New Delhi and combining their views. Unfortunately no such solution is possible, and the basic theoretical weakness of Wells's position was his belief that there was a series of accepted "general facts" which had only to be set down "as one consistent process" to be universally accepted. In reality, an Asian historian will take quite a different view of the expansion of Europe and its impact on Asia from his European colleagues, and it would be very misleading to suppose that their interpretations could be combined or reconciled by a process of paste and scissors. We must accept the fact that world-history looked at from Peking or Cairo may well be different from world-history looked at from London or Berlin; but it is also true that the historian in any of these four centres who sets out to take a universal point of view

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 1: "What has hitherto been called 'world history' was nothing but an agglomeration. People believed they were writing universal history if they joined together in a formal way the events of different continents; they thought a mere juxtaposition was sufficient, when in fact what they should have been demonstrating was the interdependence of events in widely separated parts of the world. The present work has a different purpose. It will attempt to survey the history of the last century from a universal point of view. That does not mean setting up a fictitious equality between different continents. A world history that devoted the same attention to the chance happenings of an African tribe as to the development of the British empire would be as unworthy of the name as a history of Italy in the nineteenth century which treated in equal detail the duchy of Parma and the kingdom of Sardinia. On the contrary, events should be selected in such a way that those of universal significance are in the foreground; the criterion should be not local but universal results. Europe and the European nations are given first place, but the events selected for detailed treatment are those which exercised influence beyond the old European boundaries."

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will adopt a different attitude from his immediate colleagues who are only interested in their national history. For him China or Egypt or England or Prussia will not be an entity in itself, but will be one element in what Ranke called "the sequence of great events which link all nations together and control their destinies." What those events are, each historian must judge for himself, just as each must assess their relative importance; but at least the universal historian recognizes their existence and shapes his work accordingly.

From these considerations it will be evident why the much used method of the co-operative history has proved so disappointing as an answer to the demand for a universal or global approach. The weakness of the co-operative history is not merely, as we have seen, that it makes it virtually impossible to deal satisfactorily with those things which cut across the traditional boundaries, but also that it lacks a unitary vision and single point of view. Hence the sense of underlying interdependence, linking the separate sections and chapters, is all too apt to be missing. To this it will be objected that no individual historian possesses the breadth of knowledge to deal authoritatively with the whole world; and no one would deny that the accumulation over the years of exact, detailed, and critical studies of particular events and phases has undermined the foundations of the ambitious general histories to which earlier generations were partial. It is, however, another question whether general history is to be identified with world-history, and whether a comprehensive or overall view is only attainable by acquiring a complete knowledge of the history of all different parts of the world.[1] If this were really the case, it would have to be admitted that universal history, even for a relatively limited period, must be dismissed—however desirable it might be in theory—as an unrealizable ideal. The identification of general history with universal history is not, however, obligatory, and it would be a mistake to suppose that the type of history which seeks, on the eighteenth-century pattern, to provide a comprehensive picture of human develop-

[1] Cf. Locher, *op. cit.*, p. 15: "man soll Ganzheit nicht mit Vollständigkeit verwechseln. Das Ganze ist mehr als die zusammenzusetzenden Teile, aber ist gewiss auch weniger als diese."

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ment in all ages and continents is the best approach to world-history. On the contrary, there is much to be said for the view that so little has been written on specific phases and problems of world-history that it would be better, for the present, if there were fewer attempts to systematize the whole of known history. So far, it may be suggested, the tendency has been to put the cart before the horse. We have had grandiose works of synthesis but singularly few sustained attempts to re-examine particular events or particular themes from a specifically universal point of view. What is needed is something less ambitious, but also less generalized and more incisive.

The simple truth is that the study of world-history is still in its beginnings; only our realization of the inadequacy of our traditional approach to the past in the conditions which confront us today has compelled us to give it serious attention. From a practical point of view, moreover, it is only in quite recent times that we have acquired an adequate foundation of factual knowledge, and even now for many periods that knowledge has stultifying gaps. As late as the mid-nineteenth century most of the interior of Africa was unexplored and mysterious, and what was known of the Orient was less history than a compound of myth and legend. Until this was remedied—until the historian was aware, at least, of the gaps in his knowledge and of the relativity of the little that he knew, and until he was able to bring to bear the techniques of modern historical criticism on such evidence as he possessed—real world-history was impossible. It was impossible, also, until our perspectives had been lengthened in time as well as in space. Here the discoveries of pre-historians and archaeologists worked a revolution, adding centuries to our historical vision, destroying the conception of ancient history as a unity dominated by Greece and Rome, and changing the whole perspective in which we view modern times. On these foundations it has been possible to begin anew, and these are the concrete changes which differentiate world-history, as we understand it today, from world-history as it was understood in the eighteenth century. No less important was the influence of historical thinking, as developed in the nineteenth century, which taught us to consider and value every aspect of the past for its own

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sake, and so made it possible (though still incredibly difficult) to escape the fetters of our own environment and appreciate alien civilizations by their own standards and in their own right. The fact remains, however, that this gradual and stumbling approach to world-history—or, more accurately, to the preconditions which make world-history possible—has been in all essential ways an achievement of the European peoples, and so far as it has found its way into the Orient, it has been the result of western influences and largely the work of a western-educated intelligentsia. Interest in history, belief in the value of history, even the tendency to view events in historical context and historical perspective, which is so natural to us that we are rarely conscious of the extent to which we do it, is a western attitude which has no exact counterpart in China or India. China, indeed, has preserved excellent annals and chronological lists, which provide at least the bare bones of history; but India before the European invasions has little that, by modern standards, can be called history at all, and both countries have shown very little concern for the preservation of historical records. It is none of our business to enquire into the reasons for these differences of attitude;[1] but their implications for the writing of world-history, even with all the resources now at our disposal, are important. They indicate, in the first place, why our approach must for the present be tentative and why it is premature to think of producing a single, consistent, generally accepted account of the evolution of humanity.[2] They indicate, secondly, the difficulty, with the best will in the world, of avoiding a one-sided interpretation of events, written from the point of view of the west—one-sided, since there is no living oriental view of world-history to counterbalance that put forward by western historians. Even criticism of western interpretation on the part of eastern writers is based in large degree on western research, and is

[1] Nor should they be exaggerated, as many western writers have tended to do. The position is put with moderation and good sense in *Historical Writing on the Peoples of Asia*, I (ed. C. H. Philips, 1961), p. 4, and III (ed. W. H. Beazley and E. G. Pulleyblank, 1961), pp. 1–2, 30, 135.

[2] Such a work has, however, been planned under the auspices of UNESCO and is being prepared under the direction of Professor Turner in Yale University.

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more the reflection of a reaction against European assumptions than the expression of an independent point of view. Whether, in course of time, an indigenous Chinese or Indian approach to world-history will find expression, is a question which may be left unanswered; but present indications point in an opposite direction. The essential division today is not between occidental and oriental attitudes; rather it is between different western interpretations, which reflect the warring ideologies of the present and are busy winning adherents in the east.

If the very conception of world-history is European in origin, that is no reason for complacency. Up to the present, we in the west have done very little to translate it into reality. The work and, still more, the implicit assumptions of most western historians, where not narrowly nationalistic, are inherently 'Europacentric'; the proportions of their work bear little, if any, relation to a global time-chart. Except in the work of specialists, the east is scarcely mentioned except in a western connotation, either as a field for European expansion or as a threat to European security. We learn of Asiatic invasions of European soil; but we are told little of the contribution of the Asian peoples to civilization or of the positive values of their cultures. Asia as a whole remains wrapped in deep shadow.[1] Apart from a few brief allusions to Marco Polo, our view of the Middle Ages is systematically centred on Europe; indeed, the very conception of the Middle Ages—like the other periodizations which we rivet on to history—has no validity outside western Europe. Because it is conventional to deal with only a few areas which are of immediate interest, even Byzantium and Poland and Turkey get scant attention, except for the periods when they have been the victims of western attacks. "And beyond eastern Europe lies a whole Orient of mighty peoples with an incomparable past about which western Europeans know nothing at all . . . Most of the people of the world are 'coloured'; not more than four of Toynbee's twenty-odd civilizations have been the work of the unpigmented peoples of the West. Yet there are no world-histories in any language

[1] The great French orientalist, René Grousset, made some attempt to restore the balance in his volume, *Bilan de l'histoire*, 1946; Engl. trs. under the title *The Sum of History*, 1951.

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which give one-fifth, let alone the just four-fifths, of their space to these great 'coloured' civilizations, living and dead." [1]

It should hardly be necessary to say that the argument, sound enough so far as it goes, that no historian can entirely escape his own environment or free himself from the tradition in which he was brought up, is no justification for the sort of disproportion which besets most western attempts to write world-history—a disproportion (it has been said) which recalls the famous sculpture on the precipitous cliff of Behistun in which, before the giant figure of the Persian ruler Darius I, are depicted like pygmies the chiefs and princes whom he had made captive. Nor is it a valid excuse to say—as, unfortunately, is sometimes true—that other peoples are no less prejudiced and one-sided, if not deliberately deceitful, in their selection of material, once they have emancipated themselves from European points of view.[2] Even sillier is the argument that any attempt to break away from a 'Europacentric' view of the past, and to assign Europe its proportionate place in our picture of world-history, is "blasphemy against the West" or, even worse, is tantamount to defeatism and treason.[3] History, alas, has all too often been placed in the service of politics, often by sincere and conscientious men, either to defend one way of living or to attack another. Does it need saying again[4] that this is a perversion and not a reflection of its true objects, and a dangerous perversion at that, since, though it may serve to harden our prejudices and to fortify us in our belief in the superiority of our traditions and values, it is all too likely to mislead us as to the actual distribution of power and to the factors which determine

[1] E. H. Dance, *History the Betrayer. A Study of Bias*, 1960, pp. 25–6.

[2] Cf. the astonishing set of cards, on sale in Accra, reproduced in the *Sunday Express* of 16 October 1960. They show that "Africans taught the Greeks the alphabet," "The Science of Medicine was originated by Africans in the ancient Empire of Ghana," and so also chemistry. Africans taught mathematics, and Aesop imparted "the Wisdom of Africa" to the Greeks.

[3] The accusation was launched against Arnold Toynbee by P. Geyl, *Debates with Historians*, 1955, p. 178, and was then elaborated by H. R. Trevor-Roper in *Encounter*, VIII, no. 6 (June 1957). Trevor-Roper's polemics were faithfully dealt with by Zaki Saleh, *Trevor-Roper's Critique of Arnold Toynbee. A Symptom of Intellectual Chaos* (1958).

[4] Cf. G. Barraclough, *History in a Changing World*, 1955, pp. 25–6.

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the course of events at any particular time? What we have to do, in fact, is to reconsider and re-assess our basic assumptions —assumptions formed in circumstances very different from our own, and transmitted to us as a body of accepted beliefs — in the light of a changed world situation. This does not imply that we must minimize the part Europe has played in world affairs in recent centuries, or spurn the achievements of European civilization.[1] On the other hand, it does not mean either that it is treasonable or blasphemous to state that what we need today is "a new view of the European past, adapted to the new perspectives in which the old Europe stands in a new age of global politics and global civilization."[2]

It is frequently said today that there is no longer any possibility of world-history, that the explosive force of new knowledge has torn the very concept to shreds. To a large degree this view seems to arise from a mistaken idea of what world-history really is. In any case, the result is not that we have no world-history, but that we are left with an obsolete conception of world-history, which stems from the European historians of the nineteenth century and reflects the prejudices and presuppositions of their place and time. Since then we have seen remarkable advances in French and German history, in Italian and English and Spanish and Russian history; we have seen a vast output of detailed work on the history of the United States and many syntheses of American history; more important still, we have seen a new approach to the history of China and India and new schools of Pacific and African studies. But with what justification can it be maintained that all these separate histories, each going its own way, but each purporting to be one related strand in the story of civilization as a whole, has resulted in a general reappraisal of the structure of universal history? Yet such a reappraisal is not only an inescapable part of the historian's work; it is also a necessary contribution to the needs of a changing world. The political environment of today is world-wide; in spite of 'iron curtains' our global age knows

[1] As Christopher Dawson appears to believe; cf. his remarks on 'The Relevance of European History', in *The Movement of World Revolution*, 1959, pp. 5 sqq.

[2] Barraclough, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

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neither geographical nor cultural frontiers. This is the context in which historians of the present generation are working. Unless history keeps pace with our fast-moving world, unless it adapts itself to the revolutionary shift in historical perspectives which has been the mark of the years since 1945, it will atrophy into a parade of fascinating but sterile knowledge. A new age calls for new assessments, and today, whether we like it or not, we are in an era of world-history.

Against this critical background it should be more easy to see what world-history is, and what it can hope to achieve. In the most general terms we may describe it as an attempt to view the past, or particular aspects or periods of the past, with new eyes from a new vantage-point. It is not a question of collecting new facts or of incorporating an ever increasing number of specialized fields of historical study. No historian can hope to be expert at one and the same time in the history of western Europe and eastern Europe, of North and South America, of China, Islam, India, and Africa; and if this is what we expect of universal history, the result is bound to be superficial. Much universal history in the past has started from the assumption that there is a unitary pattern running through the story of humanity, that it forms one consistent process, and that the task of universal history is to unravel this unitary thread. This assumption is, however, a questionable hypothesis, and one against which many of the best historians have rebelled. It is one thing, as Troeltsch pointed out, to speak of points of contact between different civilizations and different cultural groups, and quite another to suppose that their histories are linked by a real causal connection, which makes them subordinate parts of a single historical process.[1] This applies, for example, to the Chinese and the Mediterranean peoples, whose development over the course of centuries followed virtually independent lines; if we try to force them into a single mould, we shall do violence to the historical truth, and this is a charge which has often been levelled, for example, against the work of Arnold Toynbee.[2] But these facts, though

[1] E. Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, III, 1920, p. 609.

[2] Cf. *Toynbee and History*, ed. M. F. Ashley Montagu, 1956, pp. 95, 136.

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they may (and in my view do) constitute a valid argument against those whose only idea of world-history is a towering synthesis, are not an argument against world-history itself. World-history is concerned with points of contact and with inter-relationships; but it does not call for a synthetic reconstruction of the whole of the past. It means thinking ourselves out of the *milieu* in which we have been reared, breaking through into a new dimension, adopting a global instead of a local (or even a parochial) perspective. For us in Europe, in particular, it means advancing from a view of the past in which Europe is the centre to universal, world-wide standards of judgement. The change can be compared with that from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican picture of the universe; and its results, in opening new dimensions and changing our perspective, may well be no less revolutionary.

Once we have clarified our conception of world-history, stripping off what it is not, it is easier to understand its possibilities and also its limitations. Since it is essentially an attitude of mind, it can in principle cut into the past at any given point. A world-history of the Stone Age is inherently as possible and inherently as necessary as a world-history of the twentieth century.[1] For the history of classical antiquity, where for so long the work of the historian has consisted of the detailed re-interpretation of an almost unchanging body of evidence, the new perspectives of world-history offer the best, perhaps almost the only, line of advance.[2] Even the most acute critical analysis of the Greek sources alone will not suffice, for example, to explain Alexander the Great's campaigns in Asia; it is necessary also to approach them from the Asian side, using such material as Asian sources provide. And how can we hope to evaluate imperial Rome and place its history in perspective, until we have removed it from its splendid isolation and can range it against the great Sassanid empire of Persia, which for centuries was its counterpart—"like two lighthouses" (a Persian ambassador once said) "illuminating the world"[3]—and

[1] Cf. O. Menghin, *Weltgeschichte der Steinzeit*, 2nd ed., 1940.

[2] Cf. J. Vogt, *Geschichte des Altertums und Universalgeschichte*, 1957, pp. 21–5.

[3] Barraclough, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

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its unconquered and unconquerable equal? There is no reason why world-history should encompass the whole globe; we can perfectly legitimately have a 'world-history' of Europe alone—that is to say, an attempt to reinterpret European history in relation to its place in the world.[1] Nor is it necessary that we should follow a political line, or seek to relate all other manifestations of the human spirit to a framework of political events. The influences and cross-currents from one part of the world to another operative at a given moment in art or literature or music are as much a part of world-history as political influences or political events. We in the west are too conscious of the power of politics, too indifferent to the power of things non-political which have influenced the lives of generations far more than politics have ever done. Our history tells us more about Hannibal than about Archimedes, more about Bede than about all the T'angs, more about Ethelred than about Avicenna; and a book which devotes lengthy chapters to the constitution of Sparta or the frontier defences of the Roman Empire or the Wars of the Roses can omit altogether such vital movements as the world-wide religious surge of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., or the cultural and racial turmoil in the lands between India and the Mediterranean at the time of the Roman empire.

What differences may we expect, in practice, from history conceived and written from a universal point of view? What does the shift in perspective from a parochial or national to a global perspective imply? The question is best answered by practical examples; and it will suffice if we take one from the thirteenth, one from the sixteenth, and one from the nineteenth centuries.

For English historians the dominant feature of the early thirteenth century was the constitutional struggle under John and Henry III; for French historians it was the consolidation of French unity and the strengthening of the monarchy by Philip Augustus and Louis IX; for German historians, it was Frederick II's restoration of imperial fortunes, the conflict of empire and papacy, and the collapse of Germany's position in Europe after Frederick's death in 1250. If, however, we sidestep these

[1] Cf. H. Freyer, *Weltgeschichte Europas*, 2nd ed., 1954.

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national positions, each with its own peculiar emphasis, and try instead to pick out the events which were important from a global point of view, the result is totally different. The most arresting event of the period from the point of view of world-history was undoubtedly the great conquering movement of the Mongol people under Genghis Khan and his son Ogdai, who extended their dominion over China and vast tracts of Asia and swept west across the steppes of Russia into Hungary, Poland, and Silesia. Neither king John nor king Philip nor even the emperor Frederick II was a world-figure (though Frederick came nearer to that rank); Genghis Khan indubitably was. Hence the historian with a global vision will place the great Mongol ruler, whose achievements were far more momentous for mankind than anything which happened in England in his lifetime, at the centre of his picture; and he will redesign the rest to fit the altered perspective. Even European history, looked at from this point of view, will be seen in different proportions: that is to say, the familiar story of the rise of the western national monarchies will loom less large, and the emphasis will shift to Russia and the borderlands of eastern Europe, which felt the brunt of the Mongol incursions, while the historian of the church will be less preoccupied with the quarrels of empire and papacy and more concerned with papal efforts to cope with the situation confronting Christianity in the east.

When we pass to the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the situation is different; but once again a global point of view—or an effort to put those things first which have a more than national or continental bearing—results in a far-reaching change of emphasis. For European historians the main threads in this period are dynastic conflicts—particularly the conflict of France and Spain in Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany—the rise of absolute monarchies, the Protestant revolt and the wars of religion, the Thirty Years' War, the struggle for mastery of the seas, and the beginnings of overseas expansion. From a global point of view much of this is of subordinate interest, if not irrelevant. Nevertheless, this time Europe remains in the centre of the picture, because even in universal terms there is no doubt that the outstanding development of world-wide

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significance was the emergence of Europe from a peripheral to a central position. At the close of the fifteenth century Europe was only one of four Eurasian centres of civilization, and by no means the most prominent. By the end of the eighteenth century it had gained control of the ocean routes, organized an immensely profitable worldwide commerce, and conquered vast territories in the Americas and India and Siberia. Thus in the perspective of world-history the period stands out as a period of transition from the regional isolation of the pre-1492 era to the European global hegemony of the nineteenth century' and for this reason, not because of a narrowly 'Europacentric; view of the past, Europe as the main centre of innovation and decision remains prominent. But the aspects of European history which receive emphasis are inevitably different. In terms of their global significance, the battles that stand out will not be those, such as Pavia (1525), which loom so large in the common run of history books, but Mohacs (1526), Lepanto (1571), Itamarca (1640); and it is significant that two of the three were naval battles. The defeat of the Turks at Lepanto, in particular, marked the shift of the axis of European history away from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic seaboard in the west and thus a significant stage in the history of European expansion. This expansion, as the distinguishing feature of the period—in the medieval centuries Europe had been hemmed in by the expanding civilizations of the Near East—is from a universal point of view the central theme. The first question it raises—a question which has not hitherto been systematically studied, though it takes us deep into European history—is what the roots of expansion were, or why it started from Europe and not from one of the other Eurasian centres of civilization. The second question is the manner in which the nature and course of European expansion was affected by the Chinese, Moslem, American, and Eurasian civilizations with which it came into contact. Thirdly, it raises the question of the impact of overseas expansion on European life and culture; and finally it is important to see the fluctuations in Europe's attitude to the non-European world—the rise and decline of respect for the Ottoman Empire, India, and China, the different attitudes of Christian missionaries to the American peoples, and the like.

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These are some of the questions, largely neglected, which an attempt to review and reinterpret what we call the 'early modern period' from a global point of view brings into new prominence.[1]

When we come to the nineteenth century, we reach a period when the predominance of Europe is as marked in the economic and technological as in the political field, and when the expansion of Europe had carried European ideas and values to every quarter of the globe. Never at any moment in history, it would seem, was there more ample justification for setting Europe at the centre of world affairs; never can we more confidently say that what went on in Europe, the rivalries and conflicts of the European powers, determined the course of events in Asia and Africa and the new world. But here again, if we look at the situation from a global rather than a European standpoint, the familiar dimensions change and new factors come into view. The traditional story, with its concentration on the rise of German and Italian nationalism, the European balance of power, the question of the Straits and of the Narrow Seas, is not wrong, but for a world-wide perspective it is inadequate. Down to 1914, it seemed as though the relations of the European powers would settle the future of the world, and that European expansion was simply carrying the principle of balance of power, on which the relations of the European nations were based, into the other continents. In reality, as the transformation of the war of 1914–18 from a European into a world war was soon to demonstrate, that was only half the story. When the tottering Ottoman empire was admitted to the concert of European powers in 1856, and when, a generation later, the United States and Japan were recognized as 'great powers', in addition to the six nations which happened at the time to be the strongest in Europe, it was clear that world-leadership was no longer a European prerogative. Hence the detailed studies of European diplomacy and of the conflicts of the European powers to which historians have given so much attention need to be balanced by an analysis of the contacts of the expanding imperialisms of Great Britain and Russia and the

[1] Cf. L. S. Stavrianos, 'The Teaching of World History', *Journal of Modern History*, XXXI, 1959, pp. 110–17.

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United States, on the north-west frontier of India, in Persia, in China, and on the Pacific seaboard of the North American continent, in California and Oregon and Alaska. These contacts, and the conflicts which arose from them, marked the rise, in place of the European balance of power, of the world-wide international system under which we live; they are of fundamental importance because—unlike the international politics of Bismarckian Europe—they were the beginning of a new era in world-history.[1] Already before the nineteenth century was out—and in spite of the fact that the 'new imperialism' which set in after 1885 seemed to mark the culmination of European might—a growing chorus of voices echoed the realization that Europe was being overhauled and surpassed by the extra-European powers, while already the anti-European reaction in Asia was taking shape and gathering strength.[2] This is the great reversal, the transition from one age to another, which we see if we look at the later nineteenth century from a global instead of a European point of view. It is not a sudden break, and it is peculiarly fascinating to see how the periods of European expansion and contraction overlap, and how closely events in Europe and in the wider world are linked. Hence it is not a question of rejecting one view completely and substituting another, but rather of a shift in balance and a change in dimensions. Nevertheless from a global point of view the events outside are no less important than those within Europe, for these events created the framework of the world in which we live. Its origins cannot be explained simply in European terms; they are only intelligible against the wider background of world-politics.

These examples have been briefly examined in order to clarify, in a practical way, what we mean by world-history and in what specific ways it differs from history as still usually con-

[1] I have discussed some of these points at greater length in an essay on 'Europe and the Wider World in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in the volume of *Essays Presented to G. P. Gooch*, ed. A. O. Sarkissian (1961).

[2] Cf. G. Barraclough, 'Das europäische Gleichgewicht und der neue Imperialismus', in *Propyläen–Weltgeschichte*, VIII: *Das 19. Jahrhundert* (1960), pp. 726–7.

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ceived and written. They have deliberately been chosen from familiar areas, avoiding those aspects and periods which carry us far from Europe, and it goes without saying that they are only examples of a line of approach which is applicable to many totally different fields. It goes without saying, also, that the object is not to secure uniformity of treatment or conformity to a rigid pattern. In each of the three examples we have discussed there is room for a wide disparity of treatment, and a radically different assessment of the complex factual ramifications; and we may be sure that different historians in different countries, and even different historians in the same country, will interpret the same situation in different terms. In this respect world-history is no different from other sorts of history. Its importance lies more in the questions that it raises than in the answers that are given; but it may fairly be said—allowing for all the inevitable exceptions—that the questions with which it deals are more relevant to the globally integrated world in which we live than the questions with which other types of history are concerned. If national history was the characteristic history of the nineteenth century, world-history is the history which corresponds to the conditions and requirements of the twentieth century.

It should also be clear from the examples which have been given that there are no insuperable obstacles on a practical level to the study of world-history. It is no more difficult to teach and to learn world-history, at all levels from school to university, than it is to teach and learn European history; indeed, the basic method is exactly the same—that is to say, just as no one in a one-year survey of modern or medieval European history at the university would set out to cover the separate histories of England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia, the Balkans, and Scandinavia, so no one would attempt to deal, one by one, with all the world's civilizations. But it is no more impossible to convey a basic understanding of the characteristics and experiences of the major civilizations of the world, and of world-wide movements such as the diffusion of the great religions, the invasions of the central Eurasian nomads, or the expansion of Europe, than it is for the historian of Europe to describe the development of the states which were important at

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any given period, and European movements such as the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, or Nationalism. The amount of knowledge to be absorbed is no larger nor is it basically more diversified; it is simply chosen on a different principle. And it is no more inherently difficult, nor intrinsically less interesting, for the schoolboy to learn of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century China than of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, or of Annam instead of the kingdom of Naples. Nor is the charge well founded, on a higher level, that it is only possible to study world-history in general terms and that in this way it is deprived of that close contact with original sources which prevents speculation and superficial generalization and provides the stimulus for new formulations. On the contrary, the historian who wishes to study in detail the nineteenth-century origins, for example, of the global international politics of today, will be forced to return again to the diplomatic archives to retrieve those documents which his predecessors, because of their concentration on Europe, brushed aside as irrelevant or peripheral. He will be looking for different things; but his work will be as concrete and as specific as theirs.

Why is it necessary to carry out this work of reinterpretation? The answer, in the broadest terms, is that every age needs its own view of the past, and that the present age of global politics and global civilization needs a global view of history. And although, as we have seen, world-history knows no bounds in time, there is a particular need for an analysis of our own nodal age in the unification of the world, and particularly of the processes through which unification has taken place from its beginnings at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to its near realization in the present. Without world-history, it has been said, there is no sense in history.[1] Certainly, without world-history we run the risk of falling back into an intellectual isolationism, which will stand in the way of any deeper understanding of the problems of the non-European and non-western world. These are facts we should remember when we are told that our overburdened syllabuses leave no time, our overburdened minds have neither room nor leisure, for China and Japan and India and Islam. Can anyone seriously pretend

[1] R. Wittram, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

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that we have no time for Akhnaton or Buddha or Asoka or Al Hazen while we are finding time for Caractacus and Gaveston and Lambert Simnel and Titus Oates? World-history is part of an overdue reassessment of our basic values. Every present indication is that the central problems with which we shall have to cope in the next generation will not be European problems but the relationship between the west and the peoples of Asia and Africa. So far as history is a medium of education, it is quite clear that the type of history which could equip our fathers or our grandfathers for adult life will not do for the kind of world which will confront the rising generation. The day is past when nine-tenths of the history taught can safely be devoted to a quarter, at most, of the world's inhabitants; anything less than a universal view-point is bound to leave out some of the most important factors directly affecting our lives. In the world as constituted today, not to teach world-history is to court disaster. If history is falling into disrepute, if for many people it seems to be lost in unessentials instead of guiding us to the threshold of the world we know, the reason is not far to seek: what it needs is a larger vision, a breakthrough to new dimensions. It is this breakthrough to new dimensions that world-history offers—and a vision of historical reality which measures up to our experience and to the perspectives opening out before us in the second half of the twentieth century.

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LOCAL HISTORY

By H. P. R. Finberg

IN 1908 the Board of Education issued a notable circular on the teaching of history in secondary schools. Notable because it appears to have been the earliest state paper to accord local history a place in the national system of education. For centuries local history had been a favourite pursuit of elderly antiquarians, but now it was to be pressed into service for the instruction of the young. "It is essential," said the Board, "that in each school attention should be paid to the history of the town and district in which it is situated." [1]

This pronouncement did not come quite as a bolt from the blue. It had been preceded, and in all probability inspired, by a meeting of the Historical Association, at which one speaker after another had supported a plea for the teaching of local history in schools. Their advocacy, however, stopped well short of a disinterested and full-blooded enthusiasm for the subject. "Of course we all agree," said Professor Hearnshaw—and only one of the speakers who followed him did not agree—"that local history must be used in a way entirely subsidiary." Subsidiary, that is, to the teaching of national history. The young must not be encouraged to flounder in "the bogs and sands of local detail," but they might find history tedious if their lessons were not enlivened by frequent references to things they could see around them or near their homes. "A lamp for the guidance and entertainment of the learner:" such was the function of local history according to its leading advocate, and elsewhere in his address he described it as "a storehouse of vivid and pregnant illustrations of the general course

[1] Board of Education Circular 599, dated 25 November 1908, p. 5.

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of national history." [1] This limited conception of its range was officially adopted by the Board of Education in the circular already quoted. The Board did not ask for separate courses of instruction in local history: all it required of teachers was that they should make "constant reference to the history of the locality as illustrative of the general history."

Thus local history makes its modest entry into the schools as "the sugar on the unpalatable but necessary pill that has to be administered to the young." [2] A parallel may be found in the use that great historians have made of local colour: one recalls, for instance, how Macaulay beguiles his readers with a graphic evocation of nineteenth-century Torquay, contrasting its "crowded marts" and "luxurious pavilions" with the naked shore that William of Orange approached in 1688. It is not at all surprising that the sugared pill should have found favour with the teaching profession. A teacher at Battle, in Sussex, let us say, would be well placed for making his pupils understand the Norman Conquest: he could show them the hill up which the Normans charged, the very spot where Harold stood. By so doing, he would transform their merely notional apprehension of the conquest into a picture of real people and familiar scenes. The remains of Battle Abbey would also illustrate the doings of Henry VIII in at least one important aspect. On the other hand, if the teacher wished to speak of Magna Carta or the Reform Act, he might not find much illustrative material in Battle. As a mirror of the national history, almost any village or town one cares to name is likely to be incomplete. "Certain limitations must be admitted; it is no use looking to Derbyshire, an inland county, for illustrations of Elizabethan maritime enterprise which belongs properly to the West Country. And although Derbyshire offers some of the most tragic in-

[1] Historical Association Leaflet No. 11, March 1908. The speaker was W. M. Childs, principal of what was then the university college of Reading. Some years later he justly claimed some credit for having promoted at Reading a living interest in the study of local history "as a means of illustrating the wider study of national history." From 1908 to 1912 the college possessed a research fellowship in local history, the first post of its kind in any English university, and memorable not only as such but as having been held by F. M. Stenton.

[2] Eric C. Walker, *History Teaching for To-day*, 1935, p. 96.

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cidents of Mary Queen of Scots' life, little of importance will be found there about the Wars of the Roses or the pretenders of Henry VII's reign." These admissions, it will be noted, are made by a teacher who is prepared to ransack a whole county for his illustrations.[1]

From a different point of view the same preoccupation with national history was expressed some years ago by Dr G. M. Trevelyan. Reviewing the first volume of Dr Rowse's work on Elizabethan England, he wrote: "Ever since the publication of *Tudor Cornwall*, I have believed that Mr A. L. Rowse had it in him to become a historian of high rank, if he would lay aside lesser activities and bend himself to the production of history on the grand scale." Here local history is represented as a sort of little harbour-boat in which a man is to find his sea-legs before launching out on the broad ocean of national history. It is a training ground for historians of high rank, and as soon as they have acquired some proficiency they are encouraged to sally forth in search of better worlds to conquer. Against this notion scores of local antiquaries rise from their graves to protest, admirable and devoted scholars, many of them, whose highest ambition was to erect a worthy memorial of their own parish, town, or county.

Some of those learned men would conceivably have welcomed the definition of their undertaking propounded not long ago by Mr R. B. Pugh. In Mr Pugh's eyes local history is not just a sugared pill for young learners, nor a gymnasium in which promising historians may develop their muscles; it is a specialized technique of historical research. He defines it as "a method of ascertaining certain facts about the history of England by the minute examination of those areas smaller than the realm that combine to make the realm." In the same paragraph he likens it to the proceeding of the scientist who studies natural phenomena through a microscope.[2] Parcelling up the map of England into conveniently small administrative or topographical units, the local historian focuses attention on one of them in the hope of discovering new facts, or new light on old facts, and thereby enriching the history of England as a

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

[2] R. B. Pugh, *How to write a Parish History*, 1954, p. 9.

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whole. In much the same way, the archaeologist who excavates a particular Roman villa hopes to enlarge our knowledge of Roman Britain.

Now it is certainly true that if the story of every parish in England could be told in full, we should know much more about the English past than we do; but the aggregate would still not be a history of England. That is not what Mr Pugh contends; he would almost certainly agree that in this case the whole is something other than the sum of its parts. He means, I take it, that all national histories are perforce written selectively. Faced with countless phenomena, the historian must bring them as best he can into manageable compass. He therefore selects those which impress him as significant, and arranges them into some sort of pattern. In doing so, he runs the risk of overlooking some local occurrence which, once perceived, necessarily upsets or alters the whole pattern. (Some years ago, if I may illustrate the point from my own experience, I investigated a dispute which revolved around an obscure village in east Devon. By so doing, I learnt more about the genesis of the civil war in Stephen's reign than could be gathered from all the standard histories put together.[1]) Again, the historian's choice of significant facts will be dictated as often as not by his own predilections. He may write as a partisan or propagandist; or—what very often comes to the same thing—he will tell the whole tale from the standpoint of the central government. Yet things seen from Westminster have a way of looking very different in the provinces. As the latest historian of High Wycombe has remarked: "We are in danger of falsifying history if we fail to realize that for the people of places like Wycombe their own borough was still the foreground of their view of the world, even in times of great national crisis."[2] The local historian, on the other hand, with his feet planted firmly on the ground, has a clearer and truer view, within his limited horizon, than the national historian surveying a vast field from his elevated watch-tower. He may supply important information which his more exalted colleague has overlooked; at the very

[1] Hoskins and Finberg, *Devonshire Studies*, 1952, pp. 59–77.

[2] L. J. Ashford, *The History of the Borough of High Wycombe from its Origins to 1880*, 1960, p. 119.

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least he provides a useful corrective, by exhibiting in all its diversity a past too complex to be securely imprisoned in generalized statements.

All this is true, and it will be seen that Mr Pugh gives local history a rather more dignified position among historical studies than the other writers I have quoted. But his ideas and theirs have one characteristic in common: an over-riding concern with national history. This is not surprising in an age like the present. We who enjoy the somewhat expensive privilege of living in the twentieth century inevitably find the national state looming large in our thoughts. Even when it is not plunging us into total war, it pursues, controls, and threatens us at every turn, taking toll of all our pleasures, saddling us with a burden of debt that we can never shake off, and, when we die, confiscating a handsome slice of anything we leave behind. But while none of us can forget it for a moment, the historian at least should be on his guard against permitting it to become an obsession. For, seen in historical perspective, any existing national state, our own included, is a thing of yesterday; and will anybody looking round the world we live in venture to prophesy that it still has a long life in front of it? To quote an American historian: "We are approaching the end of one of the great epochs of human history and the beginning of another. The period which is ending has lasted somewhat more than four centuries. It may be called the era of great national states. . . . In military, diplomatic, and some political aspects it may still be proper to think of Europe chiefly as a system of great national states. But in nearly every other aspect it is plain that the Age of Nations is approaching its end. The nation is ceasing to be the leading form of the world's structure; organizations transcending national boundaries are becoming more and more numerous and effective." [1] This was written as long ago as 1912, and nothing that has happened since diminishes its force.

Here is one form of bias, then, which the historian should try to correct. It is often an instinctive bias, born of natural affection for the land of one's birth. When one thinks of *King*

[1] J. Franklin Jackson, 'The Future Uses of History', reprinted in the *American Historical Review*, LXV, 1959, pp. 61–71.

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Lear, and *Tom Jones*, and *Pride and Prejudice*, and the chapter-house at Wells, and Habeas Corpus, and Stilton cheese, and Cox's Orange Pippins, one may well feel glad to have been born in England; but neither this feeling nor the less agreeable attentions of the income-tax collector should blind us to the fact that other societies, both smaller and larger than the community of the realm, have had life-histories of their own. National history occupies an intermediate position between local and what for want of a better word may be called oecumenical history. Hence anyone who treats it as the be-all and end-all of historical study finds himself under fire today from two directions. On the one flank are the critics who contend, quite rightly, that the history of this country makes very little sense unless the narrator constantly depicts England as part of a larger whole. On the other side we hear what has been called the "Leicester school" of historians declaring that smaller communities than the nation, local communities, have a history which deserves to be studied for its own sake.[1]

We approach here a conception which differs radically from those examined so far, in that it treats local history not as an ancillary discipline but as one subsisting in its own right. Those who take up this position—and without more ado let me avow that I am one of them—draw a distinction between local history *per se* and national history localized. The latter is what Mr Pugh seems to have in mind when he speaks of "areas smaller than the realm that combine to make the realm" and recommends their study as "a method of ascertaining certain facts about the history of England." (Mr Pugh is editor-in-chief of the Victoria County Histories; does he really consider the six-score volumes of that massive work to be nothing more than a footnote to somebody's yet unwritten History of England?) The "Leicester school," on the other hand, insists that the local historian should concern himself not with areas as such, but with social entities. It declares that his business is "to re-enact in his own mind, and to portray for his

[1] The term "Leicester school" was first used by Professor Asa Briggs when discussing work published by past and present members of the department of English Local History in the university of Leicester.—*The New Statesman*, 15 February 1958.

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readers, the Origin, Growth, Decline, and Fall of a Local Community." [1]

What do we mean here by 'community'? An American scholar who examined ninety-four definitions of the term found that they agreed on only one point: namely, that it was something to do with human beings.[2] But his enquiry was conducted in a sociological context; for historical purposes the idea need not perplex us. Let us say that a community is a set of people occupying an area with defined territorial limits and so far united in thought and action as to feel a sense of belonging together, in contradistinction from the many outsiders who do not belong. This definition obviously fits the national community. It also fits, or has fitted in the past, many a smaller social aggregate, both rural and urban. True, on most men's lips today the word *foreigner* means a citizen of another country, but historically it means any outsider, a man from another town or from the next village. An incident recorded in 1833 illustrates vividly, though not in the most pleasing light, the exclusive spirit which formerly animated two market towns in Devonshire barely fifteen miles apart. A tipsy carter on his way back from Okehampton to Tavistock tried to ford the river instead of crossing the bridge. The day was stormy, and he soon found himself in extreme danger from one of the sudden swells to which the moorland streams are subject. Jumping from his horse on to a large rock that still kept its head above water, he called out for help. A passer-by fetched a rope, but finding it impossible to throw it far enough, he asked a couple of Okehampton men who came up to lend a hand. But after taking a good look at the carter, one of them said: " 'Tis a Tav-'stock man; let un go." So they let him go, and the man of Tavistock was drowned.[3]

It would not be hard to find instances of similar antagonism

[1] H. P. R. Finberg, *The Local Historian and his Theme*, Leicester University Press, 1952, p. 9. The same idea was propounded almost simultaneously by Dr W. G. Hoskins in *History Today*, II, 1952, p. 490.

[2] George A. Hillery, 'Definitions of Community', *Rural Sociology*, XX, 1955, pp. 111–23.

[3] Mrs Bray, *A Description of the Part of Devonshire bordering on the Tamar and the Tavy*, 1836, III, p. 170.

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between rural communities. In 1439 it was decreed that the men of Isleworth in Middlesex should beat the bounds of their parish on Monday or Tuesday in Rogation week, and their neighbours of Twickenham on the Wednesday, experience having shown that if the processions took place on the same day they usually ended in bloodshed.[1] On the other hand, there have been striking instances of co-operation between neighbouring communities. Describing the process by which nearly a hundred square miles were reclaimed from the Lincolnshire fens during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Dr Hallam observes: "Most of this reclamation was a communal process . . . the co-operation of comparatively free communities amongst themselves."[2] Again, the Cinque Ports acted with complete unanimity in their long-drawn struggle to retain control of the East Anglian herring-trade, though here, it is true, the enemy was the 'foreign' borough of Yarmouth.[3] Even a shire could feel and act as a self-conscious unit. In 1313 "the community of the whole county" of Kent made petition to the justices in eyre "that they might be allowed their customs which they had ever been used to have," customs, they said, "which were not in accordance with the common law." And the justices answered that the king would not have their customs taken away from them, but they had better put them in writing.[4]

Many and various have been the factors making for the cohesion of the local community. One of the most powerful, before the religious upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was the unity of belief and worship that found its rallying-point in the parish church. For some time after that unity broke down, the young of all ranks continued to learn their letters at the local grammar school. On the secular side, fealty to the lord of the manor provided the community with a recognized head; and his court served as the local organ of

[1] M. Robbins, *Middlesex*, 1953, p. 303.

[2] H. E. Hallam, *The New Lands of Elloe*, Leicester University Press, 1954, p. 42.

[3] The Scottish boroughs appear to have shown a much greater capacity for united action than English boroughs in general; see T. Pagan, *The Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland*, Glasgow, 1926.

[4] Selden Society, XXIV, pp. 11, 18, 50.

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justice and administration. In the borough craft guilds and merchant guilds looked after the townsmen's economic interests. The earliest formal grant of incorporation, that of Coventry in 1345, empowers the burgesses thenceforth to have "communitatem inter se," a community amongst themselves. Outside the boroughs thousands of villages and hamlets depended for their bread, meat, and ale on the sustained co-operation of open-field husbandry.

Few of these things, it must be allowed, are in evidence today. We have moved away from a world of small, intensely self-conscious local units into the world of megalopolis, or what the town-planner calls conurbations. Hence we are in danger of forgetting something which has played an immense part in the social experience of mankind. It may be difficult for us to conjure up a picture of the largely self-contained local community in the fulness of its life and vigour, but the measure of our difficulty is also the measure of our need to have its history put on record, for unless that is done a large and important tract of human experience will have passed beyond our ken.

It should be noted that the theme proposed here for local history possesses a time-scheme or chronology of its own, distinct from that of national history. For, leaving on one side the possibility that some of our towns and villages may have had a continuous existence from a Roman-British or a still more ancient starting-point, it is undeniable that many of them are older than the realm: they date, that is to say, from a time long before the kings of Wessex established a united English monarchy. On the other hand, there have been casualties. Quite a number of settlements recorded in Domesday Book vanished from the map a century or two later, and the enclosures of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries wiped out hundreds more. Then there are the little market towns which from their date of origin in the twelfth or thirteenth century down to the era of stage-coaches flourished more or less vigorously, then perhaps resisted all too successfully the coming of the railway, became backwaters, and sank into a death-like trance, from which the later advent of motor transport may or may not have reawakened them. To counterbalance these losses there have been new

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births: eighteenth-century spas like Cheltenham, nineteenth-century railway towns like Swindon, twentieth-century 'garden cities'.

Thus the subject-matter of local history, as understood by the Leicester school, is not identical either in space or time with the subject-matter of national history. It follows that these are two different studies: the one is not a part of the other. The history of Mellstock or Barchester is not a mere fragment splintered off from the history of England: it deals with a social entity which has a perfectly good claim to be studied for its own sake.

To overthrow this claim, it would be necessary to establish one or other of three propositions. The opponent should convince us that the history of the English local community has been sufficiently well studied already; or that it is not worth studying; or that it cannot be studied at all. But when Mr Pugh writes: "English local history . . . is not or ought not to be an end in itself;" when Professor David Douglas, from the presidential chair of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, assures his hearers that the distinction sometimes made [!] between what he calls general (meaning national) and local history is "completely arbitrary," and not only arbitrary but "meaningless,"[1] they are not arguing against the Leicester thesis: they are just ignoring it. The only writer who has condescended to argue the matter is Mr W. R. Powell, who recently propounded three objections.[2] In the first place, he says, rural and urban communities survive to this day all over England; it is therefore premature to speak of their decline and fall. Secondly, England from Saxon times to the present day has been an administrative unity, and "the actions of the central government have influenced the lives of people living in all parts of the country," so that the local community cannot usefully be studied in isolation. Thirdly, "in some, perhaps many, cases the story of the community can never be told, because the essential records are missing." Are we then to

[1] R. B. Pugh, *loc. cit.*; *Transactions of the B. and G. Arch. Soc.*, LXXVI, 1957, pp. 19, 20.

[2] W. R. Powell, 'Local History in Theory and Practice', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XXXI, 1958, pp. 41–8.

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confine our attention to those communities which have left abundant records, and ignore the rest?

Before considering these objections, it is pertinent to enquire what Mr Powell understands by a local community. "No human community," he says, "can be truly said to have disintegrated while it includes people who are born, go to school, work, play, make love, worship, and die." This seems to land us back again in the sociological quagmire where the only thing that can be safely predicated of a community is that it consists of human beings. It is obvious that Mr Powell is not really envisaging anything like the closely integrated social formation which has been an ever-present, not to say obsessive, reality for so many thousands of people through the centuries.

In any case, the first objection rests on a misunderstanding. When we define the local historian's theme as embracing not only the origin and growth of a local community, but also its decline and fall, we are defining the theme at its fullest possible extension. We are not asking the historian to wait until a given community is dead before writing its history, any more than we are saying that nobody should write a history of England because England is not finished yet. "Origin and growth" may well be a sufficient and satisfying theme. Some even closer limitation of period can be accepted without the least demur. We are not saying no to the writer who should offer us a finely executed history of Elizabethan Ipswich or Georgian Weymouth or Victorian Exeter.

The second objection is identical with the reason Professor Douglas gave for his peremptory denial of independence to the local historian, namely, that he "can only make his work of general value if he constantly remembers that it is part of a larger whole." But if the local historian needs this reminder, so too does the national historian. What sense will the history of England make unless the narrator constantly remembers that England was once part of a united western Christendom and is today a member of the Atlantic power-*bloc*? To recognize this, however, is not to admit that the history of England has no significance except as a chapter in the history of Europe. We may picture the family, the local community, the national state, and the supra-national society as a series of concentric

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circles. Each requires to be studied with constant reference to the one outside it; but the inner rings are not the less perfect circles for being wholly surrounded and enclosed by the outer.

The objection that for many local communities the "essential records" may be missing makes one wonder what records or class of records Mr Powell regards as essential. The smallest village has a name; so have its farms and fields; and modern place-name study has shown how much can be learnt about the pattern of early settlement from this source. The geological and geographical data are never missing. The church and perhaps other buildings will contribute their testimony. Nor are written records likely to be wholly lacking. There will usually be an entry in Domesday Book; later, there will be parish registers, tax assessments, lawsuits; later still, census returns, directories, and newspapers. The sum-total of these materials may not produce a book of three hundred pages, but then not every community deserves or requires such extended treatment. The intrinsic interest of the theme, as well as the availability of materials, will dictate the proportions to be observed.[1] In any case, it will be time to consider what the local historian shall do next when the classic histories of our towns and villages have been written. At present all but a very few of them are still to come.

There are towns which, despite their modest size, have exhibited in a state of high perfection the most characteristic elements of our economic, religious, parliamentary, and civic history. A market-centre founded perhaps in the twelfth century on the domain of some bishopric or abbey, secularized three hundred years later, sending one or more representatives to parliament from the reign of Edward I to the Reform Act, experiencing the full force of the religious upheaval in the sixteenth century and of the subsequent divisions between church and chapel, struggling more or less successfully for municipal autonomy, earning its livelihood in twenty or a hundred differ-

[1] For an excellent account of a community which never contained more than a dozen households, see M. F. Howson, 'Aughton, near Lancaster', in *Trans. Lancs. and Cheshire Antiquarian Soc.*, LXIX, 1959, pp. 15–42; and for one of an average Leicester village, W. G. Hoskins, *The Midland Peasant*, 1957.

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ent ways, and all the while preserving an ethos of its own, marked enough to differentiate it from towns which have passed through similar vicissitudes elsewhere: an urban community of this sort will present its would-be historian with an exacting and variegated theme, by no means lacking in drama. So too, in perhaps a quieter strain, will the rural community which from a date of origin far back in the Old English period to the age of parliamentary enclosure tilled its common fields, worshipped in its parish church untroubled by dissenting murmurs until the disciples of Wycliffe or Fox or Wesley broke up its unity of belief, and accepted more or less contentedly the dominance of a manorial lord until modern taxation drove the squire from his ancestral home. If these are to some extent typical patterns, we have also, by way of contrast, communities with eccentric, highly individual records: Barrow-in-Furness, for example, a new industrial town which the local bishop described in 1872 as being "one of the miracles of our time;" Stourport, the almost accidental offspring of a canal; or, again, Cleethorpes, where a poverty-stricken group of oyster-fishers, converted to Methodism by a follower of Wesley, was almost immediately transformed by the vogue for sea-bathing into a community of well-to-do boarding-house keepers, without abating one jot of its Methodism.

The theme, then, need not be dull, and for the student of humanity is certainly not insignificant. If the historian is to do it justice, what equipment must he possess?

In the first place, he should have a sufficient working knowledge of national and even international history, for we have agreed that the local community, even at its strongest, is subject to the most various external pressures, and its history cannot be understood without reference to them. In other words, the local historian must be at once a good Englishman and a good European. Nor can he safely close his eyes to the history of local communities other than his own, for without some knowledge of them he will be incapable of recognizing the distinctive features of the tale he sets out to unfold. We are requiring him to be well read in more than one branch of historical literature.

Next, let us wish him a lively topographical sense. Gone for

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ever, let us hope, are the days when a man could suppose it possible to write local history without ever stirring outside libraries and muniment-rooms. A pair of legs not easily tired, an observant eye, some acquaintance with geology and architecture, are necessary items of the equipment. For every community will have left traces of its history on the changing face of England, and it is part of the historian's business to decipher that unwritten record, "to construe"—in Maitland's phrase—"the testimony of our fields and walls and hedges."

Although field-work is not the least important part of his research, it will bear full fruit only when conjoined with research among private muniments and public archives. A vast and seemingly endless range of documentary materials will claim attention, beginning perhaps with an Anglo-Saxon charter of the eighth century and ending with the files of the local newspaper. Mastery of these records implies a degree of palaeographical, diplomatic, and linguistic skill not easily or quickly attained. The maturest scholarship is not out of place in local history.

To feel equally at home in all the centuries is beyond most men's capacity. Nevertheless, the local historian should not allow himself to be too strongly repelled by any era with which he has to deal, for a lack of sympathetic insight can ruin even the most scholarly performance. If he sees the age of Anselm and Edmund Rich as a period of unmitigated squalor, or again if the age we live in fills him only with nostalgia for the good old days of Queen Victoria or Queen Anne or Queen Elizabeth I, he is unlikely to make the best of his theme.

In sketching the ideal attributes of our historian we have specified ripe scholarship, wide reading, wider sympathies, and sturdy legs. It is much to ask, but to these requirements let us add one more. The local historian should be no stranger to the art of composition. This is the more necessary because his subject has never been a favourite with the reading public. Yet the slow and often painful process by which a rural or urban community is brought into existence and nursed up to its full strength is not accomplished without tensions, often dramatic in their force and effect. The same may be said of the possibly more rapid and still more painful process of disinte-

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gration. The historian should possess a sufficiently vivid narrative gift to make those tensions felt. If local history has too often appeared dull, relying overmuch on the ready-made sympathy of the native or adopted inhabitant, it is because the writer has either misconceived his theme or lacked the imagination and literary skill required to communicate its interest. The perfect history of a town or village will be one that can be read with pleasure even by people who have never set foot in the place.

It will be obvious that local history as defined here is anything but an elementary study. Indeed, since at its fullest range it lays most of the other historical disciplines under contribution, a good case could be made out for regarding it as the most advanced of them all. This doubtless is why it still has far to go in achieving academic and public recognition. For although it has called forth a whole library of books and enlisted the devotion of many fine scholars from Camden onwards, it remains in its infancy still. Its technique has not yet been perfected, and its *raison d'être* is far from being generally understood.

We cannot be sure that it would have fared much better if it had been monopolized from the first by professional scholars. In point of fact, the portion of the field which they have cultivated is tiny compared with the vast area that has yet to be explored. There is work in plenty waiting to be done by willing hands. This being so, it is fortunate that local history possesses a seemingly inexhaustible attraction for the amateur. For the veriest novice can help to collect materials, and enjoy himself in doing so. There are field-names to be rescued from oblivion, reminiscences of old inhabitants to be gathered and sifted, family papers to be scrutinized. These and a host of other tasks call for no technical equipment, or none that cannot be acquired with a little patience. A respect for historic truth and a capacity for accurate recording will carry the beginner a long way. Local history is not only a challenge to the most highly trained master of historical techniques; it is also—and long may it remain!—the last refuge of the non-specialist.[1]

[1] It now has its own admirable textbook: W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England*, 1959.

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HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

By H. C. Darby

GEOGRAPHIES OF THE PAST

THE full force of the term 'historical geography' is borne in upon a man over the age of, say, fifty years. He can look back across a generation and recall some geographical account of an area he had read in his twenties. Maybe it described the material features of a countryside, both the natural and the man-made features; and, on the basis of these, it may have divided the area into contrasting regions, each with its own characteristic landscape. When it was written, such a description may well have been hailed as a faithful and penetrating picture, but, after the lapse of years, our reader is soon aware that it is 'out of date'. Immediately the question arises: "In becoming history, has it ceased to be geography?" It has certainly become a historical document. The Land Utilisation Survey of Britain, made in the 1930's, was an important achievement of geographical study, yet it is on the way to becoming as much a document of history as the county reports of the Board of Agriculture in the years around 1800.[1] On the other hand, it remains, not only in its factual material, but also in its conception and organization, as much a study of geography as a similar land-use survey that might be made today. In its turn, this present-day survey would be destined to take its place in the archives of the years to come. The present is but the past of some future.

It was with some such thoughts as these in mind that many geographers came to believe that the long-standing term 'historical geography' could logically be used to describe only one

[1] L. D. Stamp (ed.), *The Land of Britain: the report of the land utilisation survey of Britain*, 92 parts, London, 1936–46.

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approach—the description of the geography of an area at some past time. This was the point of view outlined by the German geographer, Alfred Hettner, in 1898, and elaborated by him in many subsequent studies. "A historical geography of any region," he wrote in 1927, "is, in principle, possible for any period of its history, and it must be written separately for each period; there is not merely one, but a multitude of historical geographies." [1] J. F. Unstead, in England in 1907, had described historical geography as the cutting of "horizontal sections through time;" [2] and in 1928 Sir Halford Mackinder was speaking of "a true historical geography" involving what "literary people call the historic present." [3] One British definition in the early 1930's declared that "Historical Geography is the reconstruction of the geographical conditions of past times." [4] This is a view that may be amplified by another statement of the time: "The application of the adjective 'Historical' to the noun 'Geography' strictly speaking merely carries the geographer's studies back into the past: his subject-matter remains the same." [5] American geographers, and to a less degree French geographers, were making somewhat similar statements, and exemplifying them in a series of distinguished studies.

While the term 'historical geography' was thus being limited by geographers to connote only the geography of a past period, some historians had already found it necessary to attempt such reconstructions as part of particular tasks before them. Macaulay in his *History of England* (1848) stated clearly the necessity for some visualization of past landscapes. "If we would study with profit the history of our ancestors," he wrote, "we . . . must never forget that the country of which we read was a very different country from that in which we

[1] Alfred Hettner, *Die Geographie, ihre Geschichte, ihr Wesen und ihre Methoden*, Breslau, 1927, p. 151.

[2] J. F. Unstead, 'The Meaning of Geography', *Geographical Teacher*, IV, 1907, p. 28.

[3] Sir Halford Mackinder, 'The Content of Philosophical Geography', *International Geographical Congress, Cambridge, 1928: Report of the Proceedings*, Cambridge, 1930, p. 310.

[4] 'What is Historical Geography?', *Geography*, XVII, 1932, p. 43.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

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live." Accordingly, in his famous third chapter, he set out to describe the landscape of England in 1685 as a prelude to the history of post-Restoration times. It was with similar intent that, not quite a century later, Macaulay's kinsman G. M. Trevelyan prefaced his trilogy, *England under Queen Anne* (1930–33), with what he described as "a survey" of "Queen Anne's island," based largely upon Daniel Defoe's account of it. And about this time, too, J. H. Clapham in his trilogy, *An Economic History of Modern Britain* (1926–38), gave two accounts of what he called "the face of the country," in 1820 and again in 1886–7. Then, more recently, A. L. Rowse in *The England of Elizabeth* (1950) asked the question: "If we would think back to what the face of the country looked like then, what are the chief differences we should notice?" (p. 66). A number of chapters seek an answer to this question, and, in so doing, give us a vivid reconstruction of the geography of England in the later years of the sixteenth century. In the same year, S. T. Bindoff was describing how Tudor England "wore an appearance very different from that which the name now conjures up in our minds." [1] And not long after this, J. D. Mackie, in his study of *The Earlier Tudors* (1952), devoted a chapter to "The Face of England."

It may be that these illuminating studies, and others of smaller areas within England, to say nothing of corresponding studies in other countries, are not exactly the 'cross-sections' that a geographer would produce, the geographer with his preoccupation with land and man and with the distribution of phenomena in space. But the difference is not one of principle. It is not difficult to envisage a historian, with an appreciation of geographical circumstances and method, writing something that would be indistinguishable from a similar study written by a geographer with an appreciation of historical evidence and method.

One of the most interesting 'reconstructions' yet achieved is by an American geographer, Ralph Brown. In 1938 he pointed out that "a time sequence is by no means essential in a geographical study of the past;" [2] and in 1943 appeared his *Mirror*

[1] S. T. Bindoff, *Tudor England*, Penguin Books, London, 1950, p. 9.
[2] Ralph Brown, 'Materials bearing upon the Geography of the Atlantic

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for Americans: Likeness of the Eastern Seaboard, 1810, in which "likeness" was used in its older meaning of image or portrait. The study is a reconstruction, but a reconstruction with a difference. Brown carried the idea of making a cross-section of the geography of a past period to a logical conclusion. He invented an imaginary author of the early nineteenth century, Thomas P. Keystone, and he wrote the book that Keystone might have written in 1810, based upon the sources that were available at the time. These sources, moreover, were used with the understanding that could be expected of a man of 1810; and the style of presentation, the maps and illustrations, even the language, are those of the period.

In appraising the method of the book, two points must be borne in mind. In the first place, the idiosyncrasy of the treatment has a limiting effect in the sense that the reconstruction does not avail itself of modern knowledge of the relief and soils and climate of the eastern seaboard. The imaginary Keystone was obviously a man who not only had something to say but who could say it well, yet a study by Ralph Brown, writing as Ralph Brown, would have given us an even clearer view of the geography of the area in 1810. Thomas P. Keystone's reconstruction, in effect, partakes of the nature of a genuine early source such as Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* that appeared in 1784. In the second place, the method of the *Mirror for Americans* is not one that can be followed generally with the likelihood of any great success. As one looks back in time, the language, the outlook, and the method of exposition, become more and more different from our own, until one reaches a point when a 'reconstruction' in Brown's manner could have little but antiquarian value. It is difficult, for example, to envisage a useful presentation of the geography of an area during the Middle Ages along these lines. Yet, even when the full force of these points is allowed, who would wish the *Mirror for Americans* to be any different? It is a *tour de force* and an intellectual exercise that throws light upon some of the problems involved in the creation of the "historic present."

Seaboard, 1790 to 1810,' *Annals Assoc. American Geographers*, XXVIII, 1938, p. 203.

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It is, moreover, a work of great charm that must delight all who read it.

In an attempt to draw a line between geography and history, the method of cross-sections has been hailed as being essentially geographical as opposed to historical. It is true that a cross-section must be written largely with the aid of historical data, nevertheless, wrote Derwent Whittlesey (partly with Ralph Brown's study in mind), "it omits the compelling time sequence of related events which is the vital spark of history."[1] The idea of a time sequence immediately involves narrative as opposed to description, and there is a variety of opinion about the degree to which a time element should appear in the geographical description of an area, whether at the present time or at some past time. Geographers have debated this amongst themselves, and their debate is not irrelevant to one's view of the relationship between geography and history. It is not too fanciful to discern a graduation in opinion, and to recognize three attitudes.

In the first place, there are those descriptions that ignore, or seem to ignore, what has gone before, and that restrict themselves severely to 'present-day' geography of whatever date that may be. Paradoxically, therefore, some studies in historical geography lack a historical approach, just as do some studies in modern geography. Such descriptions certainly have a utilitarian value in presenting a body of information convenient for reference. Ironically, these accounts will provide useful material for those scholars of future generations—whether geographers or historians—who essay to describe landscapes of the past.

In the second place, some opinion would limit historical comment to those features to be seen in the landscape of the 'present day', i.e. to the 'relict features' of a past age. That is to say, a geographer should be concerned with the past only in so far as "it has left vestiges and so exists also, in effect, in the present." [2] On reflecting upon this, one can but observe that it

[1] Derwent Whittlesey, 'The Horizon of Geography', *Annals Assoc. American Geographers*, XXXV, 1945, p. 32.

[2] Derwent Whittlesey, 'New England', being a contribution to 'Round

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is not always easy to separate the surviving elements of a past phase from associated phenomena that have disappeared. Moreover, the geography of a past age has frequently influenced that of the present day otherwise than by leaving souvenirs of itself. The absence of a species of tree in a forest, where soil and climate should make it dominant, might well be due to an earlier phase of utilization that has left no 'relict features'. Or, again, the growth of a town might well have obliterated the features that played a part in its origin.

Thirdly, there are yet others who would place no restriction on the rôle of history in geographical description and would even say, in the words of Preston James: "The full perspective of the time sequence in so far as it is related to geographic patterns and processes is essential if we are to read the story of contemporary differences correctly." [1] One can envisage such a treatment broadening out into a vista of man-land relationships evolving through time. This wide view of geographical change forming part of a cultural process has been re-affirmed time and again in a series of eloquent statements by Carl Sauer. To him, the landscape of any particular age reflects the culture of the people occupying it: "Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases."[2] A series of reconstructions of the landscape of an area at successive periods thus forms part of the culture history of the area, leading up to its present-day geography. Sauer explicitly stated in 1941: "I wish to reckon historical geography as part of culture history."[3]

When we contemplate not a single cross-section but a chronological series of cross-sections, we are at once faced by more complicated considerations. Two very different methods

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Table on Problems in Cultural Geography', *Annals Assoc. American Geographers*, XXVII, 1937, p. 169.

[1] Preston E. James, 'Toward a Further Understanding of the Regional Concept', *Annals Assoc. American Geographers*, XLII, 1952, p. 205.

[2] Carl Sauer, 'The Morphology of Landscape', *Univ. of California Publications in Geography*, II, 1925, p. 46.

[3] Carl Sauer, 'Foreword to Historical Geography', *Annals Assoc. American Geographers*, XXXI, 1941, p. 9.

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of treatment can be envisaged. If, on the one hand, each cross-section aims at being an account compounded of description and explanation, there will of necessity be much repetition and varying degrees of overlap as each cross-section ranges backwards to satisfy its own needs. If, on the other hand, each cross-section is limited strictly to its own contemporaneous materials, a valid criticism might be that the sequence constitutes a series of static pictures that provide no explanation. They will, of course, reflect changing geographical values by the mere fact of following one another, but only by implication, and inadequately. Between these two extremes a variety of compromises is possible, and it is instructive to consider some of the attempts at grappling with the problem of presenting a succession of dissolving views.

It is possible, for example, to base each cross-section directly on the one preceding it. This is very suitable when the intervals between the cross-sections are small, and when the area involved is so restricted as to change almost as one unit. Some studies by American geographers are of this nature. Such is S. D. Dodge's account of Bureau county in Illinois, with its five cross-sections of a characteristic Corn Belt township from 1829 onwards up to the "present day" which is now some thirty years ago.[1] In a sequence covering a larger and more varied area, a cross-section has frequently to embody in itself, either by allusion or in separate paragraphs, an account of the changes since the time of the preceding cross-section. This is so in K. B. Cumberland's four views of New Zealand between 1780 and 1881; the account of 1838 contains much retrospective material to explain the changes since 1780; that of 1853 likewise glances back more than once over the years since 1838; and, in turn, the cross-section of 1881 is accompanied at appropriate points by reviews of changes since 1853.[2] In brief, each cross-section seeks to explain itself; but, looking at the four cross-sections as a whole, we see, as Cumberland says, that "the

[1] S. D. Dodge, 'Bureau and the Princeton Community', *Annals Assoc. American Geographers*, XXII, 1932, pp. 159–209.

[2] K. B. Cumberland: (1) 'Aotearoa Maori: New Zealand about 1780', *Geog. Review*, XXXIX, 1949, pp. 401–24; (2) 'A Land Despoiled: New Zealand about 1838', *New Zealand Geographer*, VI, 1950, pp. 1–22; (3)

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chronological sequence of events" has been subordinated to the main theme of presenting views of past landscapes.

There are studies, however, that are compounded as much of narrative as of description. They have to be because their successive views cover such large periods of time and such great stretches of countryside. Thus Robert Gradmann's classic account of the development of the landscape of Central Europe is organized into five periods; one of these spans 500 years, and another as much as 750 years.[1] In contrast to this, Konrad Kretschmer's study of Central Europe, with its emphasis upon political change, uses horizontal cross-sections in a strict sense, and they are tied to five definite years: 1000, 1375, 1550, 1650, and 1770.[2] Among the many other German studies, Bodo Knüll's account of Germany in the Middle Ages adopts yet another method of combining narrative and description. The first nine chapters discuss the history of individual elements in the scene—vegetation, mining, settlement, and roads, for example—and then a last chapter summarizes the material in terms of three horizontal sections.[3]

At this point we must remind ourselves that an explanation of the visible scene may be bound up not only with its past fortunes but with its contemporaneous social and economic life. If a landscape is thus a manifestation of a given culture, an indication of that culture may well be an essential ingredient in a geographical reconstruction. Some French studies serve to illustrate the variety of emphasis that is possible. An account of the Alpine district of Oisans in the Middle Ages, by André

'"Jimmy Grants" and "Mihaneres": New Zealand about 1853', *Economic Geography*, XXX, 1954, pp. 70–89; (4) with R. P. Hargreaves, 'Middle Island Ascendant: New Zealand in 1881', *New Zealand Geographer*, XI, 1955, pp. 95–118; XII, 1956, pp. 51–74. To these must be added a fifth cross-section—R. P. Hargreaves, 'The Golden Age: New Zealand about 1867', *New Zealand Geographer*, XVI, 1960, pp. 1–32.

[1] R. Gradmann, 'Das mitteleuropäische Landschaftsbild nach seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung', *Geographische Zeitschrift*, VII, 1901, pp. 361–77 and 435–47.

[2] K. Kretschmer, *Historische Geographie von Mitteleuropa*, München, 1904.

[3] Bodo Knüll, *Historische Geographie Deutschlands im Mittelalter*, Breslau, 1903.

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Allix, is entitled "a study in historical geography" but it is a geographical description that leans heavily upon such matters as methods of cultivation and systems of tenure.[1] A geographer cannot interpret a landscape without some knowledge of the culture of its inhabitants any more than a historian can discuss people and their activities without asking questions about the relief and soil and water-supply of the area in which they live. Thus Georges Lefèbvre's account of the peasantry of northern France at the time of the Revolution is concerned not only with social and economic matters but also with the geographical differences that entered into them.[2] The emphasis of the first of these two French studies is upon place, that of the second upon people. In the words of Marc Bloch, we must "acknowledge the subordination of the perspective to the peculiar angle of the enquiry." [3] Place and people sometimes come close together, as on the broad canvas of Fernand Braudel's picture of the Mediterranean world in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Coining the word *géohistoire*, he tells us that its aim should be to constrain the geographer to pay more attention to time, and the historian to pay more attention to place, thus yielding a "real retrospective human geography." [4]

Just as historians and geographers have portrayed the geography of a past age for their own purposes, so have prehistorians. For the early periods of history, the aims, and to some extent the methods, of both historian and prehistorian have much in common; both need to know what was the former distribution of vegetation—of wood and marsh and open country. Such a picture provides, at the very least, a datum line from which to trace the effects of the transforming hand of man. We must be careful, however, of speaking of the "natural vegetation;" it would be better to follow the German practice and refer to the *Urlandschaft* or the primeval landscape. At any rate, the attempt to portray the vegetation of an area in

[1] A. Allix, *L'Oisans au moyen âge, Étude de géographie historique en haute montagne*, Paris, 1929.

[2] G. Lefèbvre, *Les paysans du Nord pendant la Révolution française*, Lille, 1923.

[3] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, Manchester, 1954, p. 193.

[4] F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris, 1949, p. 296.

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prehistoric times, or on the eve of agricultural settlement, constitutes a special case of the cross-sectional method.

The studies of Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England by Edwin Guest, from about 1849 onwards (collected together in 1883 under the title *Origines Celticae*) were illustrated by maps showing the disposition of wood and marsh. They were the forerunners of J. R. Green's reconstructions in *The Making of England* (1881), and Green confessed his indebtedness to Guest: "He has furnished a method for after enquirers, of which I have striven, however imperfectly, to avail myself" (p. 33n.). In the meantime, C. H. Pearson's *Historical Maps of England* (1869) was an outstanding pioneer attempt to portray some of the physical features of England in prehistoric and medieval times. Its preface speaks of "reconstructions of early geography," and the maps were accompanied by a discussion of the "physical aspects of early English geography." Historical atlases of a later date often contain somewhat similar maps with varying degrees of generalization.

A somewhat more elaborate reconstruction accompanied J. P. Williams-Freeman's introduction to the archaeology of Hampshire in 1915.[1] It was this reconstruction, on a scale of four miles to an inch, that lay behind O. G. S. Crawford's "attempt to restore the natural vegetation, chiefly woodland, on a geological basis" when he produced the *Map of Neolithic Wessex* in 1932.[2] The distribution of wood, likewise conjectured, was also marked upon the second edition of the *Map of Roman Britain* (1931). In detail, such reconstructions can be, and have been, criticized, and the portrayal of wood was omitted from the third edition of the map (1956). Even so, the attempt to show wood and marsh has greatly helped the interpretation of archaeological distributions. A notable example is the work of Sir Cyril Fox on *The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (1923). Its five general maps range from the Neolithic Age up to the Anglo-Saxon, and show their respective distributions against a background of wood and marsh. This study

[1] J. P. Williams-Freeman, *An Introduction to Field Archaeology as illustrated by Hampshire*, London, 1915.

[2] O. G. S. Crawford, *Said and Done: the Autobiography of an Archaeologist*, London, 1955, p. 216.

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will always remain a classic example of "distributional" or "geographical" prehistory.

Unlike French scholars, a number of German geographers, in particular Robert Gradmann, have been preoccupied with the reconstruction of the *Urlandschaft*, largely because of the light it throws upon the location of early settlements.[1] For the reconstruction of the primitive landscape of a somewhat later period, the time prior to the great clearing of the woodland, the detailed work of Otto Schlüter is outstanding. His reconstruction of the distribution of the woodland and settled areas of Central Europe at about A.D. 700 was a task which occupied him for over half a century, and it constitutes an outstanding achievement.[2]

In North America the relationship of early vegetation to that on the eve of white settlement is not always clear, and, in particular, there has been debate about whether the prairies were originally covered by grass, or by wood that was destroyed by fire in Indian times. Evidence for conditions at the beginning of white settlement is provided by the very detailed maps and notes of the Public Land Survey, especially those relating to the Middle West. The *Dictionary of American History* describes the records as "an invaluable source for a description of the geography, flora, and soil of the public land states as they were before settlement entered them," i.e. in the early years of the nineteenth century.[3] Studies by botanists, geographers, and historians have yielded maps of the early vegetation of small areas and even of complete states, but the material as a whole still awaits a critical attack. We have yet to see a map of the United States comparable to that produced for Central Europe by Otto Schlüter.

The map is frequently regarded as the essential and characteristic medium employed by the geographer in presenting his information, and some consideration of the value and limitations

[1] E.g. Robert Gradmann, *loc. cit.*

[2] O. Schlüter, *Die Siedlungsraüme Mitteleuropas in frühgeschichtlicher Zeit*, 3 vols., Remagen, Forschungen zur Deutschen Landeskunde, 1952–8.

[3] P. W. Gates, 'Surveyors, Early' in J. T. Adams (ed.), *The Dictionary of American History*, New York, 1940, v, p. 210.

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of historical maps may throw light upon the nature of the cross-sectional method. One atlas that constitutes a high-water mark of achievement is the *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States.* It appeared in 1932, and its aim, we are told, is to illustrate the "essential facts of geography and history that condition and explain the development of the United States." [1] Many of the groups of maps are very relevant to a geographer interested in the past, e.g. those concerned with "population, 1790–1930" or with "industries and transportation, 1620–1931." The accompanying text deals mainly with the sources upon which the maps are based, and makes no attempt "to interpret or explain" the maps in broad historical terms. To have done so, says the Introduction, "would have been equivalent to writing a history of the United States from a geographical point of view." Another comment in the Introduction is of interest to us in our exploration of the nature of historical geography: "The text gives enough information to enable the reader fully to understand what the maps show, but often he must go farther afield if he would know what they really mean." That is to say, each group of maps is in effect a series of episodic cross-sections that does not provide an explanation of how, or why, the distributions portrayed on any particular map came into being. This remark serves to remind us of what has already been said about the danger frequently attending a sequence of cross-sections—that the sequence might constitute a series of static pictures that in themselves provide no explanation of what they portray. Being separate, they fail to indicate the processes of change.

The point is even better illustrated by the remarkable series of three-dimensional models to be found in the museum at Harvard Forest in Petersham, Massachusetts.[2] Among them is a group of seven dioramas which show an area in central New England at different stages in its development from the primeval forest of 1700 up to 1930. Here are 'reconstructions' in a very literal sense of the term—reconstructions built to scale and showing in a most realistic manner a succession of land-

[1] C. O. Paullin (ed.), *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States*, American Geog. Soc., New York, 1932, p. xi.

[2] *The Harvard Forest Models*, Petersham, Mass., 1941.

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scapes in the same area. Each model presents a picture of a past landscape in about as clear a manner as could ever be devised; and, as one looks at one model after another, one lives so to speak in the past. Even so, it would be absurd to suggest that this set of dioramas does away with the need for an explanatory account of changing land use in central New England, and, in particular, for an explanation of the scene at any particular stage, including that of 1930, the date of the final reconstruction.

The Harvard Forest models, like the maps of the American *Atlas* of 1932, serve to throw light upon, and to emphasize, the limitations of static cross-sections. A succession of dioramas, or a chronological series of maps, or, indeed, a sequence of written descriptions of occupance, provide useful, and perhaps necessary, visualizations of the past, but they still leave something unsaid if, in the words already quoted, we "would know what they really mean." The moment we ask "Why does this landscape look as it does?" that moment we are committed to something more than mere description or a mere cross-section.

This is the burden of A. H. Clark's comments upon the "instantaneous cross-sections of area," contained in his account of the changing geography of Prince Edward Island from the seventeenth century onwards. The numerous distribution maps of different periods within this study constitute so many frameworks "upon which various geographies of various times have been erected." Yet, adds Clark, "to stop with these stage-by-stage, cross-sectional reconstructions surely would be to fail in an obvious opportunity, if not duty, of interpretation." [1] It has been suggested that one method of combining "the historical with the geographical approach" would be by means of "animated cartography" to show such features as the changing distribution of population, the expansion of urban areas, or the clearing of woodland.[2] The prospect of such films is an interesting one, but unfortunately for most areas, and for the greater part of time, the information cannot be available.

[1] A. H. Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island*, Toronto, 1959, p. 222.

[2] N. J. W. Thrower, 'Animated Cartography', *The Professional Geographer*, American Geog. Assoc., XI, 1959, p. 10.

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Such pictorial devices would merely demonstrate change and not explain it. In any case, the changing geography of one area may well be due to ideas and events in another area.

The problem of combining description and explanation has been approached in an ingenious way by J. O. M. Broek in *The Santa Clara Valley, California* (Utrecht, 1932). Here four cross-sections are separated by three studies of the social and economic forces that led to successive changes in the landscape. The relevant chapter-headings are as follows:

4. *The Primitive Landscape.*
   5. The Spanish Mexican period: The Social-Economic Determinants.
6. *The Landscape in Spanish-Mexican times.*
   7. The Early American period: The Social-Economic Determinants.
8. *The Landscape in the Early American period.*
   9. The Recent American period: The Social-Economic Determinants.
10. *The Present Landscape.*

The device of formally separating the explanatory "social-economic determinants" from the description of the landscape at each period serves not only to furnish a historical explanation of each but also to provide connecting links between the successive views. The "present landscape" of this study is that of 1932, a fact that again reflects the fleeting character of what a geographical description tries to catch. Something along the lines of Broek's approach has also been envisaged for England.[1]

CHANGING LANDSCAPES

When R. L. Sherlock published his book, *Man as a Geological Agent*, in 1922, he stated that he had been "unable to discover any comprehensive account of the effect of Man on geographical or geological conditions" (p. 14). In the following year he also said that while much had been written about the effect

[1] H. C. Darby, 'An Historical Geography of England: Twenty years after', *Geographical Journal*, CXXVI, 1960, pp. 149–51.

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of Nature on Man, "it is remarkable that the effect of Man on Nature seems to be almost entirely ignored."[1] Sherlock, however, was not the first to draw attention to this line of enquiry. As early as 1864 George Perkins Marsh, in the United States, had stressed the need for considering "the changes produced by human action in the physical conditions of the globe," and he has been hailed as the founder of the American Conservation movement. Early in the twentieth century the American geologist, Nathaniel Shaler, discussed the effects of mining and of agricultural practices upon the face of the earth in his study of *Man and the Earth* (1905). In Germany, in 1915, Ernst Fischer had also taken up the theme of the transforming hand of man, and there were others elsewhere.[2]

Moreover, Sherlock's generalization did less than justice to the numerous studies dealing with engineering and agricultural topics. On the one hand, the engineering studies discussed such activities as draining, stream-regulation, irrigation, and surface-subsidence as a result of mining. On the other hand, the agricultural studies were concerned with such matters as de-forestation, under-draining, tillage, and enclosure; Sherlock's own bibliography made reference to some of these studies and to the work of Marsh. Today such a bibliography would be a very long one, and Sherlock could hardly repeat his sweeping generalization of 1922. The increasing attention devoted to economic history, and the development of human geography, have both been reflected in numerous studies of the processes by which man has altered the landscape. These processes are almost entirely concerned with man's work—with the house he builds, the road he travels, the field he tills, the mine he exploits. Jean Brunhes, who made this point, went on to say: "It is in fact work and the direct consequences of work which form the true connection between geography and history."[3] The emphasis in the study of this work and these processes has varied. Sometimes it has been upon the results of the processes,

[1] R. L. Sherlock, 'The Influence of Man as an Agent in Geographical Change', *Geographical Journal*, LXI, 1923, p. 258.

[2] E. Fischer, 'Der Mensch als geologischer Faktor', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Geologischen Gesellschaft*, LXVII, 1915, pp. 106–48.

[3] Jean Brunhes, *Human Geography*, London, 1920, p. 544.

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sometimes upon the processes themselves, and sometimes upon the social and technical ideas behind the processes.

Some studies have been devoted to the changing character of specific countrysides. C. S. Orwin's account of *The Reclamation of Exmoor Forest* (Oxford, 1929) is an outstanding essay on the transformation of a region during the nineteenth century. Allied in theme is W. G. Hoskins's story of the reclamation of the waste in Devonshire between 1550 and 1800.[1] Or again, E. C. Willatts dealt with changes in the land utilization of the London Basin during 1840–1932, and sought, "by examining the past, to understand more fully how the present landscape has been evolved."[2] It demonstrated the possibilities of mapping the Tithe Returns, and was as notable a contribution to method as to fact. Somewhat different in emphasis are T. W. Woodhead's 'History of the Vegetation of the Southern Pennines',[3] and E. Wyllie Fenton's reflections on "man's influence on the vegetation of Scotland."[4] The writers of these studies, and of others like them, are agriculturalists, botanists, geographers, and historians. The treatments of their respective themes reflect different emphases, but they bear a family resemblance in that they all share the same general aim of considering the effect of man upon the face of the earth.

Other studies of the processes of change have been devoted to towns. The titles of some of these—and we restrict ourselves this time to studies by geographers—include such phrases as the evolution, the origin and development, the historical geography, the growth, the rise and growth, of this or that town. Then again, many industrial studies by geographers are concerned with changes in distribution, and they bear such titles as the development, or the development and de-

[1] W. G. Hoskins, 'The Reclamation of the Waste in Devon, 1550 and 1800', *Economic History Review*, XIII, 1943, pp. 80–92. See also W. G. Hoskins, 'The Making of the Agrarian Landscape', being pp. 289–333 of W. G. Hoskins and H. P. R. Finberg, *Devonshire Studies*, London, 1952.

[2] E. C. Willatts, 'Changes in Land Utilization in the South-West of the London Basin', *Geographical Journal*, LXXXII, 1933, pp. 515–28.

[3] T. W. Woodhead, 'History of the Vegetation of the Southern Pennines', *Journal of Ecology*, XVII, 1929, pp. 1–34.

[4] E. Wyllie Fenton, 'Some Aspects of Man's Influence on the Vegetation of Scotland', *Scottish Geog. Magazine*, LIII, 1937, pp. 16–24.

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cline, or the historical geography, of this or that industry during this or that period. Whatever be the strict definition of historical geography, it would seem that, to many people, it has been equated not with geographical cross-sections, but with narrative. Immediately, we must ask what difference, in practice or in principle, there is between such geographical studies and those by a historian or, more particularly, by an economic historian.

In practice, there is a difference that can be seen in the historical geographer's preoccupation with physical circumstances, with the changing character of areas, and so with distributions frequently expressed in maps. There is but little preoccupation with institutional changes or with, say, financial organization, except in so far as these are immediate causes affecting distributions. Thus the content of urban studies by geographers has covered such topics as (*a*) the physical site of a town in so far as this affects its plan and expansion, (*b*) the various economic and other influences that have promoted or retarded the growth of the town, and (*c*) the differentiation of form and function within the growing town. Turning to industry, it is safe to say that an account of, for example, the development of the chemical industry of an area by a historian would have a flavour very different from an account by a geographer. It would have yet a different flavour if it were written by a chemist or a sociologist or a lawyer or an economist. The students of each of these different disciplines would ask different questions, and their narratives would, therefore, each have its own character. Sir John Clapham once spoke of economic history as a borderline study "with an ill-defined territory over which both the general historians and the economists require—so to speak—grazing rights." [1] We might add that other people, too, need occasionally to graze in these pastures of the past.

In principle, however, we can make no distinction between studies of past changes by a geographer and those by a historian. We have been told that "in its amplest meaning History includes every trace and vestige of everything that man has

[1] J. H. Clapham, *The Study of Economic History: An Inaugural Lecture*, Cambridge, 1929, p. 7.

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done or thought since he first appeared on the earth."[1] In this sense, all studies of geographical change, and all descriptions of past geographies, take their place as part of history, or of economic history in a broad sense. Metaphors and analogies are notoriously dangerous, but perhaps we can risk saying that history may well be relevant to all the social sciences (including geography) just as mathematics are basic to the physical sciences. Without a historical element geography is shorn of much of its interest and value except for utilitarian and gazetteer purposes.

There is, on the other hand, traffic in the reverse direction. Clio has something to learn from those in her thrall. "The other disciplines ask questions about society which the historian has not commonly asked, and collect data which have a bearing, at least by inference and analogy, upon his problems. Even though the historian cannot always answer these questions with the evidence available to him they remain significant for his work."[2] This is true not only of questions prompted by the social sciences but also of those prompted by the natural sciences. As one economic historian said: "It would be easy to cite agrarian histories which almost ignore climate and soil."[3] In considering the ranging nature of historical enquiry, Marc Bloch's example of the Zwin is as good as any. This inlet of the Flemish coast, open in the tenth century, became silted up by the fifteenth; and bound up with this transformation was the destiny of Bruges. "To what department of knowledge," asked Marc Bloch, "does the study of this phenomenon belong?" To geology with its enquiry into physical processes? Or to history, because the silting was affected by human activities? Clearly here is an overlap "where the union of two disciplines is shown to be indispensable to any attempt at explanation."[4]

Something of the nature of this overlap, and of what is

[1] J. H. Robinson, *The New History*, New York, 1912, p. 1.

[2] R. Hofstadter, 'History and the Social Sciences', in F. Stern (ed.), *The Varieties of History*, Meridian Books, New York, 1956, p. 364.

[3] J. H. Clapham, 'Economic History as a Discipline', in E. R. A. Seligman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, New York, 1931, v, p. 330.

[4] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, Manchester, 1954, pp. 23–5.

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implied by the phrase "the transforming hand of man," may be seen from the international symposium on "Man's rôle in changing the face of the earth." Its theme was "the capacity of man to alter his natural environment, the manner of his so doing, and the virtue of his actions." [1] Among its participants were anthropologists, botanists, doctors, economists, engineers, geographers, geologists, historians, sociologists, zoologists, and also ecologists, soil scientists, and planners. If one must use that unhappy phrase 'department of knowledge', one can say that the phenomena the symposium studied belonged to no one department. Those phenomena were but facets of a common problem in which all were interested.

Moreover, history cannot elude its own process. The present arrangements of the phenomena of human activity over the face of the earth will, as we have seen, become part of the past of some future; this is true of agriculture and industry, of communications and settlement, and of the relations of these to the physical circumstances of the earth, to relief and soils and climate. In doing this, the human geography of the present, in all its complexity, will come within the consideration of some future economic historian. This is a continuous process that is true of all the 'present days' of past ages. What, asked Lucien Febvre, were the relations of human societies, at different epochs in various areas, with the geographical environments of their day? This, as he said, simply transfers the problem of the geographer to the past. "It matters little whether those who undertake such research be labelled at the outset geographers, historians, or even sociologists." [2] But it does matter, as he went on to say, whether their studies rest upon "a sound study of physical geography"—in other words of the ground itself.

In considering the instantaneous geographies of the past, we were led to the necessity of considering them in some broad framework of landscape history. So now, in considering the history of changes in the landscape, we are led to the necessity

[1] W. J. Thomas (ed.), *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, Chicago, 1956, p. 49.

[2] L. Febvre, *A Geographical Introduction to History*, London, 1925, pp. 364–5.

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of not neglecting those geographies that are lost to us in time—not completely lost, however, because vestiges still remain all around us, remain as the concern of both geographer and historian alike.

THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

It was F. W. Maitland, the legal historian and Domesday scholar, who spoke of the Ordnance Survey map as "that marvellous palimpsest, which under Dr Meitzen's guidance we are beginning to decipher." [1] The fact that we can no longer accept Meitzen's views about the origins of the nucleated village, the isolated farm, and other types of settlement, does in no way blind us to the value of his approach.[2] One historian who was keenly interested in the deciphering of the palimpsest was Grant Allen. "It was a pleasant thing to go for a walk with him," wrote York Powell, "he could read so much of the palimpsest before him. He was keen to note the *survivals* that are the key to so much that has now disappeared but that once existed." [3] More recently, A. L. Rowse has dwelt upon the same theme: "There is no research more fascinating than to attempt to decipher an earlier, vanished age beneath the forms of the present and successive layers that time has imposed. So it is that beneath the towns and villages, the roads and fields of today, we may construct under our eyes out of the evidences that remain, a picture of a former age." [4] This visual evidence has often been the starting-point for enquiry into those micro-features that meet the eye everywhere in the English landscape, and in the landscapes of other countries. Such is the sight of ridge and furrow and of the indications of deserted villages, about which the investigations of M. W. Beresford have so enriched our knowledge.[5] Had we but a complete survey of

[1] F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, Cambridge, 1897, p. 15.

[2] A. Meitzen, *Siedelung und Agrarwesen*, 3 vols., Berlin, 1895.

[3] Grant Allen, *Country and Town in England*, London, 1901, pp. v–vi. Prefatory Note by F. York Powell.

[4] A. L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall*, London, 1941, p. 13.

[5] M. W. Beresford: (1) 'Ridge and Furrow and the Open Fields', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 1, 1948, pp. 34–45; (2) *The Lost Villages of England*, London, 1954.

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these features in relation to the variety of soil-types, our understanding of them might be advanced yet a stage further. For only one county—Buckinghamshire—has a complete map of ridge and furrow been published.[1] Another of these minor features is the shape and size of fields, the systematic study of which has scarcely begun; and hardly any attention seems to have been devoted to the types of hedgerow that lend such a character to the English scene. Furthermore, the investigation of lynchets on the ground, in relation to slope and soil, is producing not so much answers as questions that connect past and present. Or again, what of the numerous small 'holes' and depressions that are to be found in every field over much of East Anglia and elsewhere? To what extent are they natural features or man-made pits? Much work remains to be done before we can begin to answer this question. When R. H. Tawney said that what economic historians needed was stouter boots, many geographers paused to consider the condition of their own shoe-leather, and their cry has quite properly been "field-work and more field-work." This is so often the essential complement to work in libraries and record offices.

Industrial as well as agrarian features of the present landscape prompt questions that are as much historical as geographical. The visible evidence has frequently assisted enquiry whether it be into the Wealden iron industry, the Cheshire salt industry, or the mining history of a coalfield.[2] Or again, the numerous residual features of former lead-mining in the Pennines raise questions for geographers and historians alike.[3] In all these activities, agrarian and industrial, if the past is necessary to explain the present, the present may well provide clues to the past. This is well seen on the broader canvas of W. G. Hoskins's

[1] W. R. Mead, 'Ridge and Furrow in Buckinghamshire', *Geographical Journal*, CXX, 1954, pp. 34–42.

[2] E. Straker, *Wealden Iron*, London, 1931; K. L. Walwork, 'Subsidence in the Mid-Cheshire Industrial Area', *Geographical Journal*, CXXII, 1956, pp. 40–53; R. Goodwin, 'Some Physical and Social Factors in the Evolution of a Mining Landscape', *Scottish Geog. Magazine*, LXXV, 1959, pp. 3–17.

[3] A. E. Smailes: (1) 'The Lead Dales of the Northern Pennines', *Geography*, XXI, 1936, pp. 120–9; (2) *North England*, London, 1960, chap. 16, pp. 271–84.

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study of the English landscape as a whole;[1] and, on another occasion, Hoskins has put forward the interesting view that every local history should begin with an account of what the locality looks like today.[2]

Such ideas recall to mind the words of Marc Bloch who once described a geographical study as furnishing "the best point of departure" for enquiry into rural history.[3] It was Marc Bloch, too, who warned us that the order which a historian adopts for his enquiries need not necessarily correspond to the sequence of events. Bloch spoke of "la méthode régressive," and of reading history "backwards," and of proceeding from the known to the unknown. In the investigation of a crime, the clues do not always emerge in chronological order. This might appear an inappropriate analogy, but not entirely so when we remember how men have misused land, and how widespread 'robber economy' has been, and how great is the need for the conservation of resources. But to return to Marc Bloch: "In certain of its fundamental features, our rural landscape, as has been previously mentioned, dates from a very remote epoch. However, in order to interpret the rare documents which permit us to fathom its misty beginnings, in order to ask the right questions, even in order to know what we were talking about, it was necessary to fulfil a primary condition: that of observing and analysing our present landscape. For it alone furnishes those comprehensive vistas without which it was impossible to begin. Not, indeed, that there could be any question of imposing this forever-static picture, just as it is, at each stage of the journey upstream to the headwaters of the past. Here, as elsewhere, it is change which the historian is seeking to grasp. But in the film which he is examining, only the last picture remains quite clear. In order to reconstruct the faded features of others, it behoves him first to unwind the spool in the opposite direction from that in which the pictures were taken."[4]

[1] W. G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, London, 1955.

[2] W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England*, London, 1959, p. 107.

[3] Marc Bloch in a review of A. Meynier's *Massif Central* in *Annales d'Histoire économique et sociale*, 1936, p. 319.

[4] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, 1954, p. 46.

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This is hardly possible in a literal sense, for a film shown in reverse would result in some strange actions and curious sequences. Moreover, the very vocabulary for such reversal does not exist. Can one speak of 'un-clearing' the wood, or of 'un-draining' the marsh? These comments are prompted by the fact that a few geographers have attempted the experiment of going backwards in time not only in their enquiries but also in the presentation of them. They have, it is true, not literally "unwound the spool" in reverse, but have presented series of cross-sections in reverse chronological sequence. Such is the account of part of Switzerland by H. Dörries,[1] that of the Middle Garonne region by P. Deffontaines,[2] and also, to some extent, that of medieval Burgundy by A. Deléage.[3] These experiments, interesting though they are, place many difficulties in the way of an ordered explanation of the present scene.

There are more orthodox ways in which an explanatory historical approach has been combined with geographical description. Some geographers have prefaced their descriptions and analyses by introductory narratives of the changes leading up to the present. This is the method of many of the remarkable French studies in regional geography, of such outstanding monographs as René Musset's *Le Bas-Maine* (1917) and of Roger Dion's *Le Val de Loire* (1934). Each of these describes itself as a geographical study, but each contains much that is of relevance to an economic historian. A second method is that of "sequent occupance," a term coined by Derwent Whittlesey in 1929.[4] By this method the description of the present scene is prefaced by a sequence of cross-sections aimed at providing an introduction to those features of past geographies in the geography of the present; such is Edward Ackerman's account of

[1] H. Dörries, 'Zur Entwicklung der Kulturlandschaft im Nord Schweizerischen Alpenvorland', *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft Hamburg*, XXXIX, 1928, pp. 108–202.

[2] P. Deffontaines, *Les Hommes et leurs Travaux dans les Pays de la Moyenne Garonne*, Lille, 1932.

[3] A. Deléage, *La Vie Économique et Sociale de la Bourgogne dans le Haut Moyen Age*, 3 vols,. Mâcon, 1941.

[4] Derwent Whittlesey, 'Sequent Occupance', *Annals Assoc. American Geographers*, XIX, 1929, pp. 162–5.

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the township of Concord in Massachusetts.[1] A third method is that of 'retrospective allusion' which involves the inclusion of 'asides' and parentheses or 'flash-backs' within the running text of the description. Such flash-backs provide explanatory comment as and when appropriate; very many geographical accounts partake of this nature. Allied to this is the idea of mapping the visible remains of the past in terms of the period from which they date. This is in some ways analogous to the method of those architectural plans that show the varying dates of different portions of a building or buildings. Suggestions along these lines were made by A. G. Ogilvie in a discussion of the time-element in geography.[2] This is the approach that lies behind J. W. Watson's account of "relict geography in an urban community." Concentrating upon relics of the past, it describes the present "scene as part of what has gone before." [3]

There are many variants of these methods, and, clearly, the problem of combining description and explanation presents great opportunity for ingenuity in presentation. The success of that presentation must depend partly upon literary skill and partly upon the character of the region described.

Whatever view one takes of the "retrogressive method" (the phrase is Maitland's[4]), and however one may wish to explain as well as describe the man-made elements in a landscape, there is one element in the present-day scene that is as fundamental for economic historians as for geographers. It is "the ground itself." We need not call it "the fullest and the most certain of documents," as J. R. Green did,[5] in order to appreciate its importance as an agency in economic life. It is not a fixed and constant feature. Marshes have been drained, and river channels embanked. Soils have changed in their significance; the Norfolk husbandry revalued the light soils, as did under-draining

[1] Edward Ackerman, 'Sequent Occupance of a Boston Suburban Community', *Economic Geography*, VII, 1941, pp. 61–75.

[2] A. G. Ogilvie, 'The Time Element in Geography', *Trans. and Papers, 1952, Institute of British Geographers*, 1953, Publication no. 19, pp. 1–11.

[3] J. W. Watson, 'Relict Geography in an Urban Community: Halifax, Nova Scotia', being chap. 6 (pp. 110–43) of R. Miller and J. W. Watson (eds.), *Geographical Essays in memory of Alan G. Ogilvie*, London, 1959.

[4] F. W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond*, p. v.

[5] J. R. Green, *The Making of England*, p. vii.

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the heavy soils, of England. Regions may well exist, as we have been told, only in the eye of the beholder,[1] but differences there certainly are in the land itself—differences in soil-texture, in relief, in erosion surfaces, in slope, in river régime, and in local climate. All constitute so many variations in opportunity between one area and another. One French historian, as we have seen, could make a plea not only for a study of human geography but for "a sound study of physical geography" (see p. 145). Another historian—English this time—could say that the writing of economic history "has much more often suffered from neglect not merely of geographical description but even of essential geographical considerations than it has erred by incorporating too much geography."[2]

GEOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

The term 'historical geography' has been used, as we have seen, in at least two senses. In one sense it has been taken to imply the reconstruction of past geographies, and upon this usage there is now very general agreement amongst geographers. In another sense it has been regarded as the study of geographical changes through time. But these two usages do not exhaust the meanings borne by the term. It has sometimes been taken to be the record of changes in political boundaries and in the extent of administrative divisions at different times. Such were E. A. Freeman's *The Historical Geography of Europe* (1881) and L. Mirot's *Manuel de Géographie Historique de France* (1929). We may also note in passing that the term has sometimes denoted the history of geographical exploration and geographical thought, but few would use it in this sense today. There is, finally, yet another usage, and one with which the term was long identified. This is the investigation of the influence of geographical conditions upon the course of history—a line of enquiry that is thought by many to be best described as 'geographical history'.

[1] D. L. Linton, *Discovery, Education, and Research* (Inaugural Lecture, Sheffield University, 1946), p. 11.

[2] J. H. Clapham, 'Economic History as a Discipline', in E. R. A. Seligman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, New York, 1931, v, p. 330.

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Long before the nineteenth century, and well into it, the preoccupation of much historical writing was with political relations and incidents. But as the nineteenth century grew to its mid-term, historians became increasingly preoccupied with other aspects of human endeavour. These new interests reflected wider changes in the intellectual climate and the economic circumstances of the time. This transformation of historical studies was, in the words of J. B. Bury, "itself a great event in the history of the world." [1] Men were asking new questions not only about their own age but also about the past. Economics, anthropology, sociology, philology, law, and geography were being called into the service of Clio, and the new approach was fortified after the appearance of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in 1859. Some have spoken of the "new history," and others have described it as "realistic" or as "genetic." However inadequate such adjectives are, they serve at any rate to focus our attention upon certain aspects of the new spirit of enquiry that was abroad. Men were now asking not only "When?" but "Why then?"; not only "Where?" but "Why there?"

As the study of history became more realistic, it became more geographical. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the writings of many historians showed an increasing awareness of the fact that the drama of man and of society takes place upon the earth, and is not unaffected by it. One indication of this new preoccupation was Michelet's *Histoire de France* (1833). Other writers had reduced the history of France to a story of monarchical centralization and to a tale of domestic politics and of the annexation of new provinces. Michelet, on the other hand, proclaimed that history was, in the first place, geographical; and, in order to equip himself for his task, he made long wanderings through various parts of France in order to gain a first-hand impression of its varying countrysides. Reviewing his work in the preface to the edition of 1869, he wrote: "Without a geographical basis, the people, the makers of history, seem to be walking on air, as in those Chinese pictures where the ground is wanting. The soil, too, must

[1] H. Temperley (ed.), *Selected Essays of J. B. Bury*, Cambridge, 1930, p. 4.

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not be looked upon only as the scene of action. Its influence appears in a hundred ways, such as food, climate, etc." Following, to some extent, his example, it became customary for French historians to preface their studies with geographical introductions, and we must not forget that Vidal de la Blache's *Tableau de la Géographie de la France* appeared in 1903 as an introductory volume to Lavisse's great history of France.

A long list of professions of the new faith could be made, and not only for France. In 1851, in Germany, appeared an account of the history and geography of the Peloponnesos by Ernst Curtius.[1] To him the aged Humboldt wrote: "I have read your first volume line by line. Your survey of the country is a masterpiece of nature painting."[2] Similar manifestations were evident in England, and one English example must stand for the rest: A. P. Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine in connection with their History*, which appeared in 1856. This was an attempt to unite geography and history by discussing "the relation in which each stands to the other" (p. ix). It is of especial interest to geographers because Stanley, as he confessed, owed something to Karl Ritter. These contacts between geographers and historians are indicative of the traffic in ideas; Humboldt and Ritter are generally regarded as the twin founders of modern geography.

In the meantime, the new emphasis in historical scholarship was reflected in general speculation about history, its nature and method. H. T. Buckle's *History of Civilization in England* appeared in two volumes in 1857–61. His aim was to make the study of history more "scientific" by deducing general "mental and physical laws" which govern human actions. The second chapter was entitled "Influence exercised by physical laws over the organization of society and over the character of individuals," and it classified the physical agents that influence society under four heads: climate, food, soil, and the general

[1] Ernst Curtius, *Peloponnesos: eine historisch-geographische Beschreibung der Halbinsel*, 2 vols., Gotha, 1851–2.

[2] Quoted in J. L. Myres, 'Ancient Geography in Modern Education', being the presidential address to Section E of the British Association, 1928; reprinted in J. L. Myres, *Geographical History in Greek Lands*, Oxford, 1953, p. 101.

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aspect of nature. The theme was developed with a wealth of allusion, and Buckle wrote of "man modifying nature, and nature modifying man; while out of this reciprocal modification all events must necessarily spring." The study, in J. B. Bury's words, "exercised an influence far beyond its intrinsic merit."[1] Other studies, unfettered by the quest for general laws, also bore witness to the new geographical approach. Three very different examples will serve to indicate the new temper. In the 1890's, in the United States, F. J. Turner was pointing to "the importance of physical conditions,"[2] and to "the part played by the environment in determining the lines of our development."[3] In 1893 appeared his epoch-making study of the frontier in American history.[4] In France, Camille Jullian's *Histoire de la Gaule* (1908–20) is filled with discussions of a geographical order. And in England during these years appeared Alfred Zimmern's *The Greek Commonwealth* (1911), a study of the citizens of fifth-century Athens in the light of "a knowledge of their surroundings and means of support—in other words, of their geographical and economic conditions" (p. 7).

This fine flowering of the geographic spirit in historical fields was clouded by some extreme statements of the rôle of geography in human affairs. The heady wine of environmentalism led many to attempt to explain history by geography, and to produce such statements as "History is governed by geography," "History is geography set into motion," "History is geography accumulating at compound interest." The belief in the decisive importance of geography has been termed environ-

[1] J. B. Bury, 'Darwinism and History', in A. C. Seward (ed.), *Darwinism and Modern Science*, Cambridge, 1909. Reprinted in H. Temperley (ed.), *Selected Essays of J. B. Bury*, pp. 23–42.

[2] F. J. Turner, *The Character and Influence of the Indian Trade in Wisconsin*, Baltimore, 1891. Reprinted in E. E. Edwards and F. Mood (eds.), *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner*, Madison, 1938, p. 104.

[3] F. J. Turner, 'Problems in American History' (1892). Reprinted in E. E. Edwards and F. Mood (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[4] J. F. Turner, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History'. This first appeared in 1893, and has been reprinted in many versions. See E. E. Edwards and F. Mood (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 185–229.

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mentalism or determinism. It was subjected to close criticism by Lucien Febvre, who wrote those oft-repeated words: "There are no necessities, but everywhere possibilities; and man, as master of the possibilities, is the judge of their use." [1] The argument between determinism and possibilism has been long and involved. Attention has been drawn to the fact that some possibilities are more possible than others. Ought we then to ask: "How determined is possibilism?" [2] Should we speak of "probabilism"?[3] Can we recognize a 'neo-determinism' more complicated and more subtle than the old? Must we, after all, admit to the philosophical "necessity for determinism"?[4] Such questions take us into the great debate about historical causation where so many have jousted for so long.

CONCLUSION

In discussions about the relations between history and geography, reference has often been made to the ideas of the philosopher Emmanuel Kant, who lectured on geography in the University of Königsberg from 1756 to 1796. History, he said, is the record of events that follow one another in time (*nacheinander*). Geography is the record of the phenomena that occur next to each other in space (*nebeneinander*). History is narrative; geography is description. This contrast has formed the basis of much methodological debate amongst geographers—to the point of weariness. But our attention is not very frequently drawn to what Kant went on to say: "Which was first, history or geography? The latter provides the foundation for the former, because events always take place in a certain setting. History involves a continuous process of changing events; but material phenomena also change, and so result at certain

[1] L. Febvre, *A Geographical Introduction to History*, London, 1925, p. 236.

[2] O. H. K. Spate, 'How Determined is Possibilism?', *Geographical Studies*, IV, 1957, pp. 1–10.

[3] O. H. K. Spate, 'Toynbee and Huntington: a study in determinism', *Geographical Journal*, CXVIII, 1952, p. 420.

[4] A. F. Martin, 'The Necessity for Determinism: a metaphysical problem confronting geographers', *Transactions and Papers, 1951, Institute of British Geographers*, 1952, Publication no. 17, pp. 1–11.

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periods in completely new geographies. Geography is thus the basis. As we recognize a history of a past period, so must we recognize the geography of a past period."[1] "Events always take place in a certain setting:" history is the study of man and society developing through time in a variety of places that present different opportunities. The changes of history result in "completely new geographies:" geography is the study of places as they have been, and are being, transformed by the hand of man.

History and geography are, after all, but two of a variety of social sciences. The range of academic subjects known as anthropology, economics, geography, history, and sociology are neither autonomous nor mutually exclusive. Nor, we dare say, are physics, chemistry, biochemistry, bio-physics, biology, botany, zoology, and eugenics. In each of these groups it might be comparatively easy to define the central objective of each subject, but he would be a bold man who would attempt to delimit too precisely its frontiers. It might be more true to say that there are problems not subjects. If we confine ourselves to history and geography, we can discern no high walls between them, no defensive moat, no tariff frontiers. Enquiry into their respective fields has produced many exercises in semantics. Amidst much discussion, the simple and commonsense statement of Sir John Clapham stands out. "He is a very imperfect economic historian who is not also a tolerable geographer; and I cannot picture to myself a useful historical geographer who has not a fair working knowledge of economic history."[2]

[1] D. F. T. Rink (ed.), *Immanuel Kant's physische Geographie*, Königsberg, 1802, §4. Reprinted in various editions of Kant's works.

[2] J. H. Clapham in the Editor's Preface to H. C. Darby, *The Draining of the Fens*, Cambridge, 1940, p. ix.

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THE HISTORY OF ART

By D. Talbot Rice

As we look back at any age that has passed, we find that certain outstanding essentials survive to characterize it; there are the records of events, public or private, that took place, and these records form the basis of history; there are the written products of man's thought, which constitute literature; there are the concrete examples of what man made or built in order to live, which we now term the products of his material culture; and finally there are the works which he created which do not necessarily fulfil any utilitarian purpose, though they have been valued by thinking man from the very earliest days of his sojourn on earth even above the utilitarian ones. These include music, paintings, sculptures, and certain other works which, whether churches or houses, pottery or metal, textile or bone, fall into the category, not of mere artefacts, but of works of art.

The ways in which these artistic manifestations may be studied are diverse, but they may be primarily grouped under two distinct heads, the philosophical and metaphysical, where the enquirer is primarily concerned with the basic reasons for art's existence, and with the mental processes that underlie it, and the analytic and historical where he is concerned with art's superficial character and with the numerous problems relating to its development. In the one it is the idea that is the subject for study, in the other the object, the work of art itself. Were this essay intended for a book on Approaches to Philosophy, primary attention would have to be accorded to the former aspect; as the enquiry takes its place among Approaches to History, the more direct method will be our main concern. And

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though music and literature are both essentially arts, we can do no more than note their importance in passing, for the former falls into a category that is all its own, while music, in so far as its study is not directly and narrowly historical, involving no more than the dates and events of a composer's life or details of performances, is a subject which is so highly technical that its study can hardly be undertaken without specialized knowledge.

So far as the visual arts are concerned, the term 'art-history' has now been well-nigh universally adopted as a portmanteau term to embrace the various aspects of study and the sundry routes of approach. It is the nearest English equivalent that can be found to the German *Kunstvorschung*, a word which was invented in the country where the systematic study of the visual arts was first developed as a serious discipline, and even if on the one hand the study of literature and music be handed to the appropriate specialists, and on the other, that of the 'idea' be left to the philosopher, the field that remains within the sphere of the art-historian is an extremely wide one, for it includes the mass of man's work, from Palaeolithic times to the present day, and ranges from the study of a work as complicated and as vast as Rheims Cathedral or the Sistine Chapel to that of one as small as a single pot or a minute ivory carving.

There are, it is true, some aspects of the study that can be delegated to specialists in other fields, like certain methods that have been developed to ascertain the age or genuineness of works of art, for they depend on chemical analysis or on some physical process. But the other methods, those of the connoisseur, who is primarily concerned with attributions, of the critic, who deals with the newest manifestations, of the technical expert, who has to do with how things were made, of the historian, who is primarily interested in questions of period, or of the aesthetician, whose main preoccupation is quality, must all be considered. But first, before embarking on a classification of methods, it may be best to begin with a brief enquiry into some of the reasons that have led man to create visual form, and into some of the methods he has adopted in doing so.

The reasons are multifarious, and the production and nature of works of art seem to have been actuated by numerous dif-

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ferent stimulants from outside. It has thus been suggested with a reasonable degree of probability that the world's earliest works of art resulted from *mimesis*, that they came about from the desire to imitate, and this was no doubt often brought about by attempts to accentuate the chance resemblance observed in a natural formation. A projection on a rock face, a mark on the roof of a cave, may thus have suggested an animal or a person, and the resemblance was intensified by the addition of some small detail, such as an eye or a nose. The term *objet trouvé* has been adopted in recent art-history to denote this idea. It has again been argued that much early art was produced in order to satisfy the demand of some magical belief, the artist being called on to assist the hunter or the warrior by 'sympathetic' representation of his quarry or his enemy; the depictions of animals in the Palaeolithic caves with spears sticking into them afford support for this suggestion. At later phases of man's development other reasons can be adduced, and it is clearly obvious that numerous outside factors have exercised an influence on the character of art at different times. Religion has perhaps always been the most significant of them; its influence was especially to the fore, for instance, in Ancient Egypt, in the Middle Ages in Europe, or in India. But political factors have also had a part to play, and the character of art in monarchical, feudal, bourgeois, or communist societies has often been considerably influenced by the views and ideas of the governing patrons. And even when no very direct control has been exercised, art has often tended to be a very significant 'mirror of its age'. For example, when thought and culture have been dominated by a prosaic, material outlook, the artist has tended to turn towards direct representation rather than idealization, whereas at an age when the general outlook has been more questioning, art has been governed by a search for ideal form. The portrait busts or narrative bas-reliefs of Rome thus contrast markedly with the idealization and poetic vision of Greek sculpture, while the interest in the infinite that preoccupied the Byzantine theologian is directly reflected in the 'expressionist' character of Byzantine art.

But it can hardly be argued that this has always been so, for art is also the result of a spontaneous desire to express, and at

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times it seems to have come about owing to no very obvious external stimulus; it has rather been inspired by some inner urge which has moved the artist and affected the spectator alike. And in these instances art has tended to see very rapid changes of style within comparatively short periods. Such was the case in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; such has been the case to an even more marked degree during the last century in the West. These ages stand in striking contrast to those when art was severely controlled by church or state, as in ancient Egypt or eastern Christendom.

Variations as to the basic character of art have been equally marked. Sometimes stress has been laid on three-dimensional form; sometimes two-dimensional pattern has been preferred; sometimes art has turned towards abstraction, perhaps because of a surfeit of naturalism in a preceding age, or because of religious prejudices as in the Islamic world, or for reasons which cannot always be fully fathomed, as in the Neolithic period. Sometimes it has been completely representational, and the artist's main aim has been almost to counterfeit nature. Indeed the pendulum has tended to swing from one side to the other, but it is not always easy to determine the direction of the swing and to say whether certain works represent a progress from representation towards abstraction, as was the case with the productions of such a painter as Cézanne, or from art of a non-representational, decorative, character towards representation, as was the case in Greek vase painting, through the phases that we know as geometric, orientalizing, black figure and red figure, to the final elegant figural work of the white lycathoi.

Again, there has been constant variation with regard to subject-matter. At certain periods the artist seems to have been concerned above anything else with a direct record of history. The temple reliefs of ancient Egypt, Trajan's column at Rome, or the Bayeux Tapestry afford good examples of this tendency. At times the artist sought to depict not so much the events as the character of his age, as we see for example in many medieval illuminations, like those of the Luterell Psalter, or in the eighteenth-century engravings of Hogarth. At times the nature of art seems to bear little relation to its age; at times the char-

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acter of an age is to be clearly discerned in its art, though the artist himself was not directly concerned with depicting it; such was the case in the Gothic world, where the great cathedrals, their sculptures and their glass, bear striking witness to the basically religious outlook of the times. Indeed, at certain phases of history, when there are no written records, the arts often afford practically the only source of evidence that we have on which to reconstruct a picture. In such cases, however, the process of reconstruction is more properly the concern of the archaeologist than the art-historian, for the former must take into account every facet of man's activity, whereas the art-historian is only concerned with works that are distinguished by some aesthetic significance. The fragments of pottery, bits of bone, and so on, that form the archaeologist's stock-in-trade can thus hardly concern the art-historian, though the complete pot or even the decoration of a fragment may often be selected by him for study, and it may well be that an examination, undertaken primarily because of the artistic quality of the object, may also provide evidence of great value to the historian.

When once the value of the work of art is accepted, the method that may then be adopted by the art-historian in its study must necessarily vary considerably in accordance with the character of the age with which he is concerned and the consequent nature of what may be termed his basic mate ial. At one period, that of the Italian Renaissance, for example, the individual was all-important, and the art-historian must consequently be to a great extent concerned with particular men, their lives and their works. At another period, such as the early medieval, practically no artists signed their works, nor did their individual personalities greatly affect the nature of their productions, so that the art of the age can best be studied under regional or chronological headings. In other ages again the names were important, but they have passed away and been forgotten, though the styles of the individuals can be recognized, and fictitious names such as 'The Master of Flemalle' or 'The Berlin Painter' have to be fabricated to distinguish them; careful study, indeed, shows that the works of these forgotten individuals can be grouped together almost as readily on the

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basis of style as they could be if records or signatures had survived.

An art-historian may thus be more concerned with individuals or more with periods; he may concentrate his study on some artist of the past in an effort to penetrate to the very essence of his technique, his thought, and his being, or he may sink himself in the spirit of an age so that he sees it through the spectacles of that age and not those of that in which he lives. He may specialize on some particular aspect of art, or study some particular technique; he may seek to explain art's character as the result of external influences, historical or geographic, or analyse it on Marxist principles. He may be concerned in the main with paintings or with sculpture, with objects or with buildings, with the thing itself or with the idea that underlies it. But whatever the subject of his study, the art-historian's fundamental task is the same: to distinguish the true from the false, the good from the bad; to furnish a record which involves chronological exactitude; to study the works in association with the age that produced them, so that it becomes clear how they form part of a culture-complex; to associate them with the historical background to which they belong; and finally to analyse and interpret the works so that they can be universally comprehended.

In this age of specialization these tasks have to be subdivided, and the first of them falls to the man who may best be termed the connoisseur. To the problem of the distinction between genuine and false and that of the discernment of quality with which he is concerned may be added that of attributing a work to some particular period or some specific artist or craftsman (I am not here concerned with his possible activities as a buyer or collector). These are all very essential and also very complicated tasks. Great knowledge is required, and an intimate acquaintance with the historical background of his period is a very necessary part of the connoisseur's equipment. But his most valuable asset is really his eye. Even for the fully trained and most accomplished eye the spotting of a masterpiece is not easy; the frequency with which the works of the great masters of the past, even more those of more recent times, have passed unnoticed is proof of this, while the way in

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which forgeries have been accepted by museums and collectors affords additional proof of the complicated nature of the connoisseur's task.

The problem of the distinction of forgeries is a truly fascinating one, and it too has many aspects. The fake that is made with the primary intention of deceiving is not necessarily always the hardest to discern. In the first place the forger, like the criminal, often tends to make a simple mistake; he uses, for example, a technique, a pigment, or a medium which was unknown at the time to which the object he is counterfeiting belongs. And again, he always tends to observe the past through spectacles coloured by the outlook of his own time. To the contemporary connoisseur his imitation is often convincing—as was the case for example with the famous Van Meegeren—but his efforts are less likely to deceive the next generation, because the 'period' character of his imitation becomes increasingly apparent as time passes. A fake of the early twentieth century thus appears to us today to be tinged by a strangely Edwardian touch, while one of the later nineteenth is usually frankly 'Victorian'.

Quite apart from intentional falsifications are the works which were done in all sincerity by minor men, following closely the manner of some great contemporary. A generation ago exhibition after exhibition was filled with paintings in themselves perfectly genuine and sincere, but very much in the style of Cézanne. Today the same holds good for Picasso. And in earlier times the same was equally true; the lesser men have always imitated the greater. Many of these lesser works eventually prove to be wholly insignificant, and in due course they disappear into oblivion; others, if not great, have none the less a secondary value, and survive as pleasant period pieces; a few are of more considerable merit and achieve fame either as school pieces or even as the works of some great master himself. In recent times their progress to fame has frequently been assisted by enterprising dealers through the addition of the signature of some greater man or the fabrication of a convincing pedigree. And to complicate the issue still further, we have learnt that the signatures of great men were sometimes added in contemporary times by collectors as a

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mark of appreciation or esteem; sometimes, even, great painters signed with their own names the works of their most distinguished or favoured pupils, as a compliment or sign of approval.

The connoisseur, then, must be equipped to deal with all these problems, and to do so it is essential for him to study profoundly the history of an age, a school, or an individual, and to immerse himself so deeply in it that he is familiar with every facet of its being. He must be able to recognize not only its more straightforward characteristics, such as the costumes that distinguish a particular period or group of society, but also the more intimate details that are typical of the tastes of a group or the outlook of an artist, such as the type of subject or composition that one man favoured, or the nature of a painter's brushwork or a sculptor's handling of his chisel; even more essential is the ability to discern the working of a man's mind as reflected in his art. The connoisseur must, in fact, be able to recognize every detail of the master's style, just as we recognize the handwriting of a well-known friend on an envelope at the breakfast table.

The connoisseur's methods are to a great extent subjective and must depend for their success on the degree of his sensibility. But today there are a number of purely mechanical aids which can be called in to assist him, and he must know something of them, even if he himself cannot be expected always to be expert in their manipulation. Chemical analysis of paints, board, or canvas; a study of the nature of chisel marks in relation to the type of metal required to make them; photography at unusual angles or with the aid of X or ultra-violet rays; certain electronic or physical methods: all have a part to play, but the chemist, the physicist, or the photographer, however skilled, can never act alone, for the very reason that art is something which depends ultimately on human sensibility, and its quality or character can never be wholly estimated by mechanical methods. The degree of sensitivity in the connoisseur must always afford the ultimate criterion by which quality and genuineness are judged.

Allied to the connoisseur, but working in the main in a distinct sphere, is the man who may best be called the critic. His

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principal task is to appraise a work of his own day and judge its quality, and further to explain to the public how it may be appreciated and enjoyed, or why it should be condemned. This activity is again an essentially subjective one, which for its success depends on sensibility, but it must not be so subjective that he cannot enter into the feelings of less endowed contemporaries. Of recent years the critic's task has become a peculiarly difficult one, because the old canons of judgement have been cast aside and new ones have changed almost before they have been formulated. It has never been easy to assess the merits or demerits of a work that is new and in an unfamiliar idiom. Even when the sign-posts, in the form of academic lore, were there, the critics were often at fault; the way in which individual masters or even whole styles that were once decried have subsequently come to be recognized affords adequate proof of this. But the informed critic of today, who is familiar with the history of art in all its wide variations and all its numerous mutations, is in a better position to reach discernment than the man who knows little of the story of art, and familiarity with the various forms of art that have formerly existed and of the various developments that art has undergone in the past is surely to be counted as a most vital part of his equipment. Thus a man who knows that in the past whole phases of the world's art have been characterized by work of a non-representational character is surely more likely to regard he abstract works of today at least with sympathy, if not with wholehearted enthusiasm, than one brought up in a wholly academical tradition of visual representation.

The critic's task, though difficult, is thus fairly limited in comparison with that of the connoisseur. That of the art-historian proper is, on the other hand, even more all-embracing. He must combine to some extent the functions both of connoisseur and of critic, though in the world of today he will often have to take certain facts for granted, for he cannot be expected to be an expert connoisseur in more than a very limited field, and so far as questions of attribution and authenticity are concerned he will more often than not have to rely on the work of others. Nor need he be more than casually concerned in attempting to estimate the value of individual modern

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works, though he must know something of the aims and aspirations of contemporary movements. But he must be more closely familiar with the nature of the art movements of the past than the critic needs to be, for it is his duty to blend together the evidence provided by narrower experts, and to build on this basis a structure that will enlighten the study of some particular age and show in its true perspective the rôle of some individual artist. His method is akin to that of the historian proper; that is to say, he is concerned with dates and events, and he depends on documents for many of his facts. But written documents, though of the greatest importance, are not his primary source; the object, the work of art, is always the first essential, and on that, whether it be pot or painting, statue or cathedral, he must be dependent in the first instance.

In so far as he is concerned with the age of humanism, the art-historian's first concern is usually with the individual artist, and in so far as this is the essential of his work, he may be defined as the 'historian of the artist'. Though today he can make use of a greater paraphernalia than in any previous age, and though he brings to his task a new, more critical, and more selective judgement, the activity is no new one. The elder Pliny had written on art and artists in Roman times, and so had the Greek philosophers, though they were perhaps on the whole more concerned with aesthetics. There were quite a number of writers on the history of art, and especially on artists, in Italy from the fifteenth century onwards, and we still today depend on the writings of Vasari for our basic information on most of the great men of the Renaissance. At a rather later date Van Mander wrote on the painters of the Flemish world, and with the seventeenth century the names of those who produced books about art and artists become almost too numerous to mention. The information provided by the earlier writers was not always very accurate, but it constitutes in many cases the main source that we have, and can never be disregarded.

Research that is primarily concerned with the individual artist leads on more or less automatically to a wider sphere, in which schools become the object of study rather than men, and the approach will be the same whether the scholar is concerned

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with well-known obvious groupings like the Sienese or Flemish schools of painting, or with more obscure ones, like a group of ivory carvers working in Provence in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., which has been described by the American scholar Baldwin Smith. His object will be to isolate these schools, to describe the characteristics that distinguish them, and to analyse the basis of their being. He will examine the direct history of each on the evidence of such documents as are available, and he will then treat of its output in comparison with that of contemporary schools elsewhere, and in relation to the wider culture-complex of which the art forms a part. It will also be for his consideration how far the products of the school are typical of their age, how far conservative, showing continuity from what has gone before, and how far precocious, heralding what is to come.

Such a study is part of the normal routine of the art-historian, and is in fact likely to be his daily concern. But it may well lead on to enquiry into more speculative fields, such as an estimation of the influence exercised upon art by economic conditions, trading relationships, or geography. Research on these problems has not up to now been carried very far, but they are fascinating subjects in themselves and we may look forward to interesting results from their study in the future.

The influences that economic conditions have exercised on art are fairly obvious. Sumptuous arts, where rich silks, gold, or precious stones play a prominent rôle, can only exist when wealth is there to pay for them and taste to control. The great cathedrals of Christendom could never have been built without the patronage of prosperous religious communities. Many of the paintings of Italy or the Flemish world could never have assumed exactly the appearance we know had there not been a prosperous international trade at the time, which provided oriental carpets for the painter to copy, which brought rich patrons from overseas to order or to buy, and which made it possible for works of art, artists, and styles to move freely from one region to another. Similarly the effect of surroundings on art has exercised influences that have long been recognized. For example, in a region where there is no stone, an architecture of brick or wood is likely to develop, while in one

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where stone is abundant and wood scarce, vaulted or domical roofs are likely to appear at an early stage, whereas in an area where timber is plentiful, the development of such features would probably be retarded. Or again, in an area where there is no stone, like Mesopotamia, sculpture is not important, whereas in one where it is plentiful, like Egypt, it becomes the most outstanding art. Again, the situation of a city is of great significance with regard to its art. Venice, for example, stood at the end of a great maritime trade route, and this was responsible for the presence there of a mass of objects imported from the East, first from Byzantium and then from the Islamic world. These were not only used in Venice, but were copied so repeatedly, that their style, their very essence, was to a great extent assimilated, and it is actually the presence of these elements more than anything else that makes Venetian art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries so different from Florentine, Sienese, or Roman art of the same period.

It is, indeed, possible that the rôle that can be assigned to the influence of geographical surroundings frequently exercised an important effect not only on the material character, but also on the spiritual basis of art. Sir Charles Holmes for example once suggested that the firm, essentially sculpturesque, nature of Florentine painting in the fifteenth century should be to some extent attributed to the proximity of marble quarries which made sculpture in many ways the most outstanding art of the city, whereas the more aetherial character of Sienese painting was in accordance with the spirit of an area where marble was less readily to hand and where sculpture was not in favour. Again, it might be said that palaces of the eighteenth century in St Petersburg and Moscow, extending as they do over a vast area of land on plan, reflect quite definitely the immensity of the Russian landscape, whereas the tall, five- or six-storied castles of Scotland, which seem almost like natural growths on the crags or in the narrow valleys where they stand, seem in close accord with the build of the surrounding landscape, where economy of space is essential. True, economic and social conditions, great wealth on the one hand, comparative poverty on the other, security as opposed to the needs of defence, also had their rôles to play. But it is tempting to sug-

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gest that the nature of the countryside also had an influence, though its effect was exercised on the subconscious mind of the artist, and is therefore something which it is impossible to estimate in concrete terms.

Another fascinating line of research, which has up to now been but little touched on, concerns the relationships between art and race. If it can be admitted that the basic nature of the build of a countryside may have exercised something more than a purely material influence on the character of its art, we are surely on even more secure ground if we suggest that the fundamental character of a nation has always been reflected in its art. Italian art is thus different from French, German from English. Indeed, Professor Pevsner has recently delighted us with a series of lectures, afterwards put together as a book, on 'The Englishness of English Art'. The differences between the various national arts are easy enough to see when once one is familiar with a mass of the products of typically national artists, but it is by no means easy to describe in concrete terms just what form the differences take. The character of German art is perhaps the most easy to define. It has, through the ages, shown almost invariably a great mastery of technique and a profound love of craftsmanship for its own sake; Dürer's work is particularly striking in this respect. There has also more often than not been a tendency to dot the i's and cross the t's, perhaps with an excess of assiduity; one may cite Grünewald's Isenheim altar-piece, where the scratch of every thorn, the tear of every lash, is indicated on our Lord's body, all too realistically. And there is too, very frequently, a curious preoccupation with underlying ideas as opposed to visual form, so that the works of art are often virtually psychological problems in themselves; one may cite some of Altdorfer's engravings, or the works of German painters of this and the last century, which are equally permeated with a strange mysticism and preoccupied with a search for inner significance. English art, on the contrary, has been but little concerned with any of these factors. It has always been elegant and delicate; it has usually adopted a straightforward approach, in which a love of line and a gentle decorative colour-scheme have been to the fore; it has shown, very often, a vivid feeling for the

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story, whether it be that of the Christian faith in medieval times, or that of the moral tales of Hogarth in the eighteenth century; always there has been a tendency towards a certain amateurishness, even in the most accomplished works; always there has been a touch of humour. All these features are in close conformity with the national characteristics of the Germans on the one hand and the English on the other, as we see them exemplified in thought, word, and action through the ages. French and Italian art are similarly distinct; the exuberance of Indian sculpture seems to reflect the profusion of its vegetation and the teeming nature of its population. Chinese art has always been pacific and contemplative, Japanese, through much of its history, is of a harsh, violent character which reflects something of the warlike disposition of the society which sponsored it. So the story could be continued, perhaps with greater precision and exactitude than these generalities suggest.

If an enquiry along these lines leads the art-historian into spheres which are near to the preserves of the sociologist, investigations in another direction lead him to those of the psychologist, and the whole study of the process of looking, of the antithesis between vision and illusion, or between knowing and seeing, has recently begun to occupy the minds of investigators. Roger Fry was one of the first in this country to point out the possibilities of enquiry along this route, and the title of one of his most important books, *Vision and Design*, indicates the lines on which he was working, for it contrasts the two elements which have throughout history been at conflict in the artist's mind—how to equate what he sees with what he knows to be there. This problem of seeing and knowing has recently been reopened with exceptional brilliance by Gombrich in his book *Art and Illusion*, and though his approach is not really historical, a knowledge of art-history in the narrower sense of the term is an essential to the understanding of his thesis.

In contrast to these lines of study, all of which are complicated and highly specialized, is an approach which has assumed increasing importance in recent years, owing to the demands of what may be summarized under the heading of extra-mural studies. Art-appreciation is perhaps the best term

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by which to describe this aspect; it may be defined as the popular application of the discipline of art-history. It is a very important branch of the subject which sometimes tends to be forgotten by the specialist, or at times even derided as 'vulgarization'. Ill-informed or inadequate instruction of a popular character can, of course, very easily be second-rate; but the best popularization is usually done by the greatest experts, as Sir Kenneth Clark has shown us recently in a series of outstandingly brilliant television talks. As the reading public which is interested in art and art matters gradually increases in number—the degree to which it has done so in recent years is astonishing—the popularity and importance of art-appreciation as a subject is likely to increase correspondingly. Already extension classes, 'popular' lectures, and elementary study groups, provided they are well conducted, attract enormous audiences, and these are likely to grow as time goes on and the needs for the utilization of leisure become more clearly defined. The popularity of the subject has also been increased by the growing ease of travel, when visits to museums and galleries or excursions to fine houses or cathedrals serve to bring actual works of art before the eyes of thousands who had never before suspected the delights awaiting them. On their return home many of these people seek to learn something more about what they have seen, both because of its interest and as a preparation for further trips at a future date.

In this age of specialization, when the mass of literature in every branch of the field of art-history is increasing to almost astronomic proportions, it is hardly possible for a single individual to be an expert in all the fields; for him to be at one time an authority on aesthetics, a connoisseur, a critic of the modern movements, an art-historian who knows intimately the work of every phase from the Palaeolithic to Picasso, and a good popular lecturer, is a rarity, if indeed he can be found at all! Inevitably a man must choose to specialize along some particular line and to occupy himself in the main with some particular period. Indeed, specialization must often be very narrow if the man is to become a master, and one who is concerned with the Italian Renaissance can today hardly hope to be an expert in the fullest sense of the word on more than one

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of the greater schools comprised by that term in a portmanteau sense; he will thus first concentrate on the study of a limited subject, the painting of Florence or that of Venice, for example; or again, one who specializes on, say, the twelfth century can hardly expect to know the art of Byzantium, of the Western and the Northern worlds equally well. Interdependence and a high degree of reliance on the work of others is thus an inevitable aspect of art-study today.

But in spite of this, certain qualifications are essential to the art-historian, whatever the subject on which he chooses to specialize. First, he must be schooled in historical method and have a knowledge of how to make the best use of written sources, both primary and secondary; and to do this he must normally be possessed of a reading knowledge of quite a number of languages. Secondly, he must make himself familiar with the age with which he is concerned in all its aspects: political, economic, religious, or social history; all serve alike to provide a vital part of the background against which art is reflected, and today it is impossible to make any serious study of art in isolation, without paying attention to the numerous outside elements which may have exercised an influence upon its development. And thirdly, he must know the artistic material not only intimately, but also at first hand. Photographs and other reproductions are of course essential and today it is well-nigh impossible to attempt to work without them. But they can be very misleading, and the tendency to rely on these things alone is one that must be condemned. Work in the 'field' is as essential to the art-historian as it is to the archaeologist, though in the former case 'the field' may well be some comfortable museum or gallery, twenty yards from a bus-stop, just as well as a church at the summit of a mountain many days' journey from a railway terminus. Little reliance can be placed on the judgement of a man who is not thoroughly familiar with his material at first hand and who does not know it in all its aspects.

And finally, the art-historian must have a feeling for the object itself. He must, in fact, be possessed of sensibility, for he is dealing with works the creation of which was inspired by man's most intimate and subtle urges, works that have in

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addition to their material form a spiritual content, works inspired by an ideal, whether that ideal be a belief in a universal creed like Christianity, or in some more limited faith of a personal and individual character. "I believe in Michel Angelo, Velasquez, and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of colour, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting, and the message of Art that has made these hands blessed," said Louis Dubedat in Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma*. As a man Dubedat was an unprincipled scoundrel, and such men have, contrary to popular belief, been rare in the story of art. But the essence of Shaw's plot was that he was a sincere and an outstanding artist, whose work as a painter was governed by a profound belief, whatever that belief may have been.

A faith of some sort underlies all great art, and faith is an essentially spiritual thing. It is something that the art-historian must be able to discern and appreciate, and without sensibility he will never be able to do more than scrape the surface of understanding. Method, knowledge of history, familiarity with his material; these are all essentials, but they are essentials which can be learnt from lectures or from reading. Sensibility, judgement, are more complicated and less easy to instil. They are factors which to some degree require to be born in the man. But the seeds of sensibility can lie dormant or be made to flourish through external contacts, and a good teacher can set the fire smouldering. The man's own work will fan the blaze, till eventually he himself will in turn inspire. This handing on of the flame is, indeed, an essential part of the process, for sensibility that is entirely selfish is something that is hardly possible in this universal age. The danger is that our affection for the mechanical means, our reverence for the universal and for all that is material, will tend to obscure the need for the spiritual and lead us to forget the rôle of sensibility.

Such, then, is the scope of the subject. It is a discipline closely allied to that of the historian proper. As we attempted to show at the outset, the conclusions reached by the art-historian can often provide an essential part of the evidence vital to the historian of events. A study of the basic material of art, its initial poverty or wealth, the use of paint as against mosaic,

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of pottery as against precious metal, can provide evidence of great value to the economic historian. Sculptures, paintings, manuscripts are often the most valuable source of evidence for a reconstruction of social history, while the study of art itself is one which can often illuminate history, giving to the written record a new vividness and a new significance. But art-history is more than this. It is something which stands on its own right as a serious discipline, with a specific object and purpose at its end. It is something for which there is ample room in the setting of serious study today, and it is something which can produce concrete results of real significance in the ultimate search for basic truth.

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THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

By A. Rupert Hall

PARADOXICALLY, modern science was born of historicism. No matter which root of its development we examine, whether the philosophical speculations of the Middle Ages, the outright classicism of the Renaissance, or even the revolutionary ideas of the seventeenth century, we find the glance of science cast backwards as well as forwards. So long as Galen, Aristotle, and Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Plato, and Archimedes were read and taught—that is, until about the mid-seventeenth century—the history of science was part of the fabric of science itself. Some of the sharpest innovations were inspired by antiquity: Copernicus found hints for a new system of the universe in ancient astronomers, while Stevin and Galileo turned to Archimedes for a model of procedure in mechanical science. Paracelsus's bonfire of old authors at Basle was not at all typical of the early stages of modern science. Far more common was the appeal from one element in the past of science to another: from the Arabs to the Greeks, from the schoolmen to the mathematicians, from Ptolemy to Aristarchos. If Aristotle sank in the balance of influence, Plato correspondingly rose. Greek ideas of nature which had been ignored or suppressed in the Middle Ages were revived because they seemed to express the new outlook: so Lucretius and Pythagoras were rediscovered.

Even the 'moderns' of the seventeenth century could not foresee how completely they were to raze one structure of thought, nor how different the new edifice, whose foundations they laid, was to be. Galileo and Newton were fully conscious of their Greek antecedents and sought to make their own work

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equally solid. Even the mathematization and mechanization of nature—the two great accomplishments of seventeenth-century science—had been anticipated in antiquity. Inevitably both moderns and their conservative, Aristotelian critics were *parti pris*: they were not historians trying to understand the past, but propagandists trying to exploit it. The same may be said of that history of recent science which began to be written in the seventeenth century, springing from disputes about discoveries, like Borel's history of the telescope. It has been necessary to recognize almost in our own day that what the seventeenth century thought of its own past, or of itself, requires profound qualification. Bacon's views of scholasticism are interesting to historiographers, but doubtful material for historians. Only in the eighteenth century did the remoter past become a distinct element in the dimension of time, and the history of science something more—and less—than a preface to present science. It is in the rapidly maturing mathematical sciences, where the achievements of Newton marked an epoch, that this is soonest apparent, as in Montucla's *Histoire des Mathématiques* (1758). There already the ancient world could be neatly cut off, in a volume by itself. Its issues were no longer living ones. Something similar happened in chemistry after the revolution effected by Lavoisier: once a watershed has been crossed, a new kind of history becomes necessary and possible. The extent to which such watersheds are valid is still a debated issue among historians of science. Evolution or revolution? The question cannot be escaped.

The first half of the nineteenth century added little but industry to the historiography of science. Its accounts were overpowered by the notion of progress, and dazzled by the success of recent science in improving the arts and comforts of mankind. They envisaged two brilliant periods: that of the Greek miracle, and that of modern triumphs too easily attributed to 'induction' and 'experiment'. All else was primitive or superstitious darkness. The history of science tended to become an epic drama in which truth fought endlessly with obscurantism, a romantic yet hapless pursuit of the golden key to nature that only the nineteenth century possessed, or a scoreboard on which, like schoolboys, natural philosophers

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were awarded good marks for the questions they answered correctly and whipped for their mistakes. Writers on the history of science easily out-Whigged Macaulay. It was scarcely understood that men at different times have asked different questions about the strange scene on which they live, and have therefore formulated different answers. With rare exceptions among the philosophically literate, including William Whewell, little attempt was made to penetrate through the semantic screen created by such words as 'deductive', 'inductive', 'proof', and above all 'experiment'. It was hardly asked for what more subtle reasons than ignorance and prejudice men in the past had believed what the nineteenth century did not believe: as though scientific error was like original sin, something to which man was born and which he could only discharge, by progress through the practice of virtue, until he attained a Victorian rectitude. So, too, no one could have been successful in science—without cheating—unless he approximated to the nineteenth-century ethical image.

Perhaps because of its up-to-date hagiographical tendencies, the impact of modern scholarship on the historiography of science was delayed. (The scientific texts of antiquity are still, probably, those most in need of modern re-editing.) As in other branches of history the greatest riches of new material have related to the pre-Hellenic and the post-Hellenic world. Archaeological discoveries not only made possible the extension of the history of man's attitude to nature—in fragmentary fashion—back to the Palaeolithic: they empowered historians to speak of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine under the empires that preceded Alexander's. Similarly, archival research revealed the thought of the European Middle Ages for the first time, the reading of almost forgotten mathematicians and philosophers proving no less illuminating for history than that of charters and court-rolls.

How recent the study of the 'pre-history' of science is may be gauged from the fact that when George Sarton began his monumental *Introduction to the History of Science* in the 1920's he excluded everything before Homer because knowledge of earlier times was too insecure. Indeed, though the efforts of pioneers who published the medical *Papyrus Ebers* in 1875

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and the mathematical *Papyrus Rhind* in 1877 should not be undervalued, exact scholarly study of Egyptian science and medicine has only been possible within the present century. The remarkable surgical *Papyrus Edwin Smith* was first described in 1922, and printed in 1930. The position for Babylonia and Assyria is not dissimilar. Legends about the 'Chaldean astronomers' rolled down the centuries, and early decipherments (accompanied by some fantastic theories) were made in the nineteenth century, but again exact scholarship is hardly more than thirty years old.

Modern knowledge of medieval science was founded by a French physical chemist, Pierre Duhem, whose first great work, with the deceptive title *Études sur Léonard de Vinci*, was published in 1906–13. Duhem originated the idea that modern science was born in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: not that its accomplishments began so early, but that the seeds of the modes of explanation that proved so successful in the hands of Galileo are discoverable then. He was the first to tackle the formidable tomes of near-forgotten scholastic philosophers, whose works had lain undisturbed since the first century of printing, discovering in them concepts and procedures that appeared to anticipate the thriving mechanical science of the seventeenth century. To about the same period also—the last decade of the nineteenth and first of the twentieth centuries—belongs the first serious exploration of Arabic science, and of the intellectual relationship between Islam and medieval Christendom. German scholars were outstanding in this field, as they were also in the study of medieval medicine, led by the great Sudhoff.

One of the surprising results of research among Arabic manuscripts was the recovery of 'lost' Greek texts—portions of works by Archimedes and Galen, for example, of which Arabic versions had survived unregarded. The classical scholarship of the nineteenth century had not neglected scientific writers—the Kühn edition of Galen (1821–33) is still the standard text, and until 1913 the only version of the *Almagest* in a modern language was that of the Abbé Halma (1816)—yet again the end of the century saw renewed activity and the application of modern textual criticism by such scholars as

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Heiberg and Heath. Even more important was fresh interpretation, the true art of history. Here also the work of an amateur French scholar was pre-eminent. Paul Tannery, whose writings range from the Greeks to the seventeenth century, exercised one of the strongest formative influences on the modern development of the history of science. Profoundly learned, master of elegant prose, he had a penetrating insight into the intellectual processes which led men, at different times, to work by reason or intuition from the information available to them to the theories of nature they propagated. Perhaps more than any other single scholar he raised the history of science from the level of a chronicle to intellectual history.

Half a century later this is still the major problem confronting the historian of science. In the life-span of scholars still active, who received their inspiration soon after the turn of the century from those who rendered the history of science a genuine branch of learning, the subject has grown enormously. It is taught or studied in all major universities. Its publications figure more or less largely in a couple of hundred periodicals. There has been an avalanche of monographs, specialist articles, biographies, textbooks, bibliographies, facsimiles, translations. As in other branches of history, the apparatus has become enormous, almost overwhelming. The contemporary historian of science owes a great debt to his predecessors of the last two generations who devoted themselves to the more exacting and less exciting aspects of historical scholarship: to cataloguing manuscripts, editing and annotating texts, clearing up confusions of date and authorship—in short, laying the foundations of a subject which had suffered too long from amateurishness (in the pejorative sense), nationalist bias, and sheer incompetence. Such work is still going on, and it cannot be valued too highly. Probably few who have not attempted to familiarize themselves with the history of science realize the enormous mass of material to be explored. Perhaps (at a very rough guess) about half the surviving literature of antiquity, about a third of all the manuscript material of the Middle Ages, and a tenth of all books and periodicals ever printed are of interest in greater or less degree to the historian of science. Certainly the major classics of science, like those of literature,

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can all be represented in a single small collection; but these are almost meaningless without the immense submerged mass, often accessible only with difficulty. For to measure the altitude of a peak requires an extensive survey of the whole mountain, and the country around it.

Accordingly, as in other branches of history, a very large proportion of the total energy expended has gone and still goes into hacking off the brushwood. And rightly so. History cannot be created without detailed scholarship. In 1959 we have an architecture of facts which is a great deal more solid, and more closely interlocked, than it was half a century ago. Scholars have analysed carefully works that were indeed mentioned long before, but which were known only casually, by repute or by tradition. They have traced the genealogies of scientific ideas through the centuries. They have struck careful balances between what a man received from his predecessors and what he in turn handed on to those who followed him. They have swept up and garnered many dusty leaves, and found much that was unexpected written upon them. But the making of history does not consist of industrious scholarship alone. Much of that is mechanical: checking facts, verifying quotations, comparing passages in different authors, discovering the hidden sources of a particular book—all historians must do things like this, that are not part of the act of intellectual creation. Again, much scholarship, in the form of translation, exposition, annotation, writing of textbooks, is communication: it causes nothing to exist that did not exist before, but gives what was known to the few a currency among the many. This is indispensable to education—and nearly all scholars teach. It happens that the mechanical and communicative aspects of scholarship are the easiest to learn, and perhaps the most notable achievement of historians of science in the last fifty or sixty years is that they have mastered these aspects, and utilized them productively.

Sarton's *Introduction to the History of Science* (1927–48) is the supreme achievement, in one form, of such learning. Intending to survey the whole history of science, in 3,792 large pages with 399 pages of index (including Greek and Chinese characters), Sarton reached the end of the fourteenth century

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without ever attaining his goal of illuminating the development and nature of modern science. He was possibly the most learned man in the world. His knowledge of science, and books about science in all languages, was encyclopaedic. And his *magnum opus* is, in fact, not a history but an encyclopaedia. Sarton had two passions, for bibliography and for biography. He had a warm human interest in the historical figures whose vicissitudes he studied, and a precise love of ordering properly their intellectual fruits. His *Introduction* is composed of thousands of bio-bibliographies (even the most humble contributors to science rarely escaped his net), a pattern repeated in his shorter, more eloquent writings. Each of them is, like the great *Introduction*, essential as a work of reference to its subject, yet none gives the reader the sense of acquiring a new, deeper historical insight. His wise and just sentences on Leonardo da Vinci, a favourite figure of Sarton's to whose enchanting notebooks he loved to return, in the end convey no clearer image of that strange, erratic genius. The gift of creative interpretation in history was one that Sarton did not possess, or did not care to exercise. He proceeded like a microscopist, by cutting slices out of time, so that the continuous process of change rarely appears in his writings, in which it is exceptionally difficult to follow the evolution of any single scientific idea, theory, method, or outlook. Perhaps under the influence of the positive philosophy of Auguste Comte—so strong, partly directly, partly by reaction, upon many of the earlier historians of science—Sarton seems to have envisaged the historical process as a crystallization of the atomic facts, not the creation of a vision in perspective of the past. Yet it must be added that he more than any other historian of the age ardently advocated the "new humanism" in which scientific knowledge is rounded by union with the history of thought and civilization.

Lynn Thorndike's *History of Magic and Experimental Science* (1923–58), an equally staggering enterprise of modern scholarship in the history of science, offers some interesting contrasts—all the more because Thorndike's volumes largely cover the same chronological period as Sarton's. Apart from the identity of many personal names the reader is hardly

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conscious of this, however. Though Sarton devoted twenty-five years to the Middle Ages, he never worked in an archive, and hardly at all with manuscripts. The *Introduction* was compiled from secondary sources of almost infinite range. Thorndike's *History* (apart from the two final volumes) is virtually a digest of archival exploration. No one has come near his familiarity with the content of scientific manuscripts scattered over all parts of Europe, nor done so much to categorize the materials that all his successors must use. Unlike Sarton's *Introduction*, Thorndike's work is written with a thesis: that modern science is an outgrowth of primitive magic. Even in the work of Galileo, Boyle, and Newton he has found shades of magic, mysticism, atavism. The thesis—whatever its strength and merit—is one that imposes attention to the thought of a physician or philosopher. In his later volumes Thorndike has gone beyond it to emphasize the real solidity of medieval science, to indicate unsuspected misinterpretations of its most familiar features, and to find continuity, rather than abrupt change, in the transition from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Thus Thorndike, from very different materials, has brought support to the views of Duhem in the previous generation; with the important difference, however, that whereas Duhem demonstrated continuity by making the fourteenth century appear modern, Thorndike has discerned it in the medievalism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

These are two great works, assured of a permanent place in the history of learning. Yet both fall short of the most complete history of science. They are unrepeatable, and in failing to create a model of history for others to follow—the pattern of historiographical development—they fall short of shaping a subject. Sarton illustrates the danger that the scholar may overwhelm the historian, so that a scaffolding rises instead of a building; Thorndike the peril of the over-mighty subject, whereby the natural growth of a history is cramped by the purpose for which it is written. Thorndike's eight volumes are not a history of medieval and early modern science, indeed many parts of them would be unintelligible to a person not already familiar with that history. They do not trace the history of experimentation and the experimental method in

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science, nor did their author intend that they should. Instead an immense erudition is used to show how painful and confused have been the steps of intellectual progress; how the rational and irrational have intermingled; how men have deceived themselves and others into thinking they were other than they were. If we would learn how difficult and complex was the development of science we should turn to Thorndike's *History*—and it is important that we should learn this: but we cannot learn from it how, in fact, modern science did come into being. It leaves the critical, huge historical fact towards which it is directed, the emergence of modern, rational, experimental science, unaccounted for and indeed almost unrecognized.

I have discussed two products of recent American scholarship[1]—the bulk, and much of the best, work of the last generation in the history of science has been done in the United States—because no enterprises of a similar magnitude have been undertaken by single scholars elsewhere. At least for European science: Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China* promises to be equally monumental and important. It is even more significant as the first attempt to make a comparative study of the development of science in two distinct civilizations. The vast number of smaller books and innumerable articles of the present century, so far as one individual has had occasion to sample them, substantiate the judgement that far more progress has been made in historical scholarship than in historical interpretation. The portrait of scientific development has been strengthened by an infinity of meticulous brush-strokes, but the outline has remained much the same for half a century. The remodelling of features accomplished by great historians in the years about 1900 has been confirmed here, modified there, by those who were (and still are) essentially their pupils, without rendering the works of the masters redundant. There have been tactical gains, but the strategy of ideas remains almost the same. The historian of science—who has sometimes been inclined to belittle diplomatic and political history as kings' and queens' stuff of little relevance to the true story of man—has in fact been rather less successful than his

[1] Sarton emigrated to the United States from Belgium in 1914, and did all his important work there.

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colleagues in finding new ways of analysis, fresh points of perspective, different types of question to answer. The economic interpretation of the history of science has been attempted, and proved a feeble tool. Every non-platitudinous generalization it has attempted (of the kind: Greek science failed because of slavery) has been demolished. Sociological analysis, though informative for limited purposes, is more useful in the external than the internal history of science: no one has been able to indicate any kind of correlation between mathematical ideas or the concepts of atomism, for instance, and the structure of the society that entertains such ideas or the social origins of the individuals who develop attitudes to them. The perennial argument about the connection between Protestantism and the rise of modern science—a step-son of Werner Sombart's—has proved sterile and indeed irrelevant; it is pointless to ask why Galileo was a suspect Catholic and Newton a heterodox Protestant. Or Mendel a monk and Darwin an agnostic.

This is not to deny the occurrence of constructive developments in the history of science. On the contrary. But its historiographical limitations have to be recognized. It resembles closely the history of philosophy or of political thought, despite the obvious distinction between science and any other mental activity. Its cohesion can never derive from narrative. Merely narrative accounts of science are dull and unilluminating, and attempts to render them otherwise result in meretricious history. The *Quest for Corvo* detective approach can be exploited for literary effect (oddly enough, it was originated by one of the greatest mathematical astronomers, Johann Kepler) only at the cost of coherence and simplicity. The personal lives of scientists have been in general placid and uneventful, Darwin's couch-borne existence being far more commonplace than the tension and turbulence portrayed in Cardan's autobiography, so that human drama is lacking. The efforts of popularizers notwithstanding, the development of science has rarely hinged on moments hovering between triumphant success and desperate failure: scientists have lost sleep through their absorption in work, rarely through egocentric nervous tension about its results. Excitement is more likely to follow the process of discovery than accompany it, for a scien-

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tist making a critical experiment or calculation has anticipated the answer it will yield. Flashes of inspiration or comprehension, moments of wild surmise, the brilliant mental image that springs apparently unbidden from the unconscious whirring of mental machinery with facts suddenly arranged in a new intelligible pattern—these, however important, however dramatic, lie beyond the barrier of history as they are beyond that of literary or artistic criticism. Archimedes in the bath, Newton in his orchard where the apples fall, Kekulé dozing before the fire seeing snakes swallow their tails, Darwin with Malthus open on his desk: these are familiar, even critical, incidents that the historian has to accept and not account for. They are psychological phenomena. They are not merely inaccessible to the historian but irrelevant to him since he is concerned not with mental states but with what results from them. Newton's apple would have no conceivable significance if he had not ground his way through the geometrical demonstrations that compose the *Principia*.

It seems, then, that the historian of science encounters insurmountable difficulties when he tries to press too deeply into the process of individual discovery, or to extend himself too widely over the social context in which it is made. The uncertainties of psychology and sociology are so great that he cannot speak confidently in either respect, though attempts at further exploration may well be profitable. Then there are other historiographical limitations arising from the nature of science itself. At one extreme science can be considered as providing a mass of organized factual information about the constitution of the universe; at the other extreme it can be characterized by its ability to offer explanations of why things happen as they do. These two aspects are not mutually exclusive and any degree of compromise between them is certainly possible; but it will often be found that attitudes adopted, say, by a theoretical physicist and a geologist will show marked variation. This in turn is reflected by historians of science: the historian who sees science as essentially knowledge may attach little importance to a piece of speculative thinking that adds nothing to the known range of fact, while one who is preoccupied with the history of scientific ideas may devote little attention to the

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laborious researches by which the solid body of scientific information has been put together. Recently, for instance, it has been argued that the thirteenth century is a critical period of development in science because then new ideas of method were advanced; critics have objected that whether or not fertile new methods were proposed, they were not applied in such a way that knowledge was increased, and so science remained as rudimentary as before.

A related issue of the same kind is that of precursorship. A good many articles have been published with such titles as 'A Fifteenth-Century Precursor of Freud' (so far as I am aware this one has not been discovered yet). The search for precursors touches strong emotions in historians: professional pride (Breasted thought the ancient Egyptians knew the circulation of the blood); national pride (Italians will never allow this discovery to William Harvey); an odd reluctance to believe that the traditional discoverers really found out anything much (an animus particularly directed against Newton and Darwin). This rather lamentable issue of precursorship is practically limited to the ideas of science, for no one would say that the astronomers Roemer and Bradley were precursors of the physicists Fizeau and Foucault in the measurement of the velocity of light in such a way as to imply that the latter were mere mechanical drudges. The occurrence of a new idea is more nebulous than the performance of a new experiment, and ideas more or less similar have occurred to men at different times when confronting the same or unlike problems. While it is obvious that the nineteenth-century kinetic theory of heat is not just a restatement of seventeenth-century speculation, other cases of precursorship are less easy to resolve, especially when they are close in time to the major event. Writers of one cast of mind, therefore, may say: "The idea was voiced ten, twenty, thirty years before it was formulated by Harvey (or Newton, or Darwin), it did not need to be discovered but at best demonstrated." Writers of another cast will argue conversely: "Science is not framed from loose speculations, of which a score may be current at one time; a scientific idea emerges only when it correlates existing facts definitely, and permits the discovery of new ones." To the former an idea is

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registered, so to speak, in history whether it is verifiable at the time or not; to the latter only when so formulated as to be capable of verification or falsification. Such disputes are usually futile in so far as they turn on questions of definition and semantics, but part of the reason for their occurrence is certainly the difficulty of agreeing on the true character of science. It is obviously useful to learn how patterns of explanation have repeated themselves; how the speculation of one generation becomes indispensable to the correlation of formerly unsuspected experimental facts in the next; but the nature of the historical process is equally restricted whether ideas are rendered subservient to facts, or facts to ideas.

A great part of scientific activity is, and always has been, essentially descriptive. If it is agreed that the virtue of the scientific image of the natural world is its demonstrability or verifiability, then the progressive development of this image requires a progressive development of descriptive capacity. A scientist engaged on description—making measurements, carrying out analyses, classifying biological specimens—is not necessarily stimulated by a novel idea. He may simply wish to add to knowledge. Some sciences at some periods in their history have been able to advance only by fact-gathering. Slow progress towards accuracy and definition in such sciences as anatomy and astronomy may properly be reckoned no less significant historically than the transformations of concepts effected by the great figures of scientific history; indeed not only would such transformations have been impossible in some cases without improved knowledge, but those who wrought them have at times only been able to do so because of their wide command of such knowledge. But just as theoretical science does not flourish in a vacuum of descriptive information, so equally the growth of scientific description does not take place in an intellectual vacuum. Nothing can be described systematically or even depicted without some consideration of what is relevant, what irrelevant to the description, of language and procedure, and even of the purpose which the description is to serve. Such assumptions may be obscure but nevertheless real and important. The atmosphere of the chronicle that pervades earlier histories of science and still

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lingers here and there in more modern scholarship seems to derive from the belief that thought and activity in science are wholly distinct, as though observation and experiment could be done without reflection; than which nothing is more false.

Science is both descriptive and explanatory. The problem of the philosopher of science is founded on this duality—on the derivation of universal generalization, theories, and laws from particular observations of discrete phenomena. So also the historian of science has to relate the development of ideas on one level with the development of descriptive science on another. This is the only possible route to interpretation, in which inevitably (if we hope to understand the science of the past and not simply record its ups and downs) ideas must ultimately figure more largely than description. (I mean by "ideas" besides speculations and theories all the thought and assumption that lies behind an investigation.) The accumulated material on plant species which a seventeenth-century botantist needed to know does not have to be recapitulated point by point in a history of seventeenth-century botany, for the balance between ideas and facts in such a history will be very different from that in the science it traces. Similarly the historian of astronomy does not need to reprint Tycho Brahe's star-tables: he will have occasion to analyse their accuracy, but his greater problem is to discover the conceptions that brought them into existence—that is, to reconstruct the outlook of an observer of genius.

Thus the history of science derives its coherence less from the temporal succession of events than from the continuity of ideas; while not neglecting the work of the scientist's hands the historian has to look more deeply for the thought that guided that work and gave it a theoretical structure. To envisage the history of science as intellectual history is certainly not new. William Whewell did this in his *History of the Inductive Sciences* as long ago as 1837. It was done in Merz's *History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (1896–1914) and in the works of Wohlwill, Duhem, Tannery, and others of the same period. These men were scholars and historians. Since their generation intellectual history (or the history of ideas) has taken a wider compass under the leadership of Arthur Lovejoy

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and his pupils. It is perhaps difficult to see how an idea can be treated as an abstract entity, for certainly scientific ideas, theological ideas, aesthetic ideas, and so on are very different in character and function. Perhaps there can be no unified history of ideas that does not break down into fragmentary contributions to the history of science, theology, and so forth. In practice however the approach and methods of the history of ideas have proved invaluable to the history of science, not least by broadening its perspective. Lovejoy and others have shown that scientific ideas, such as the idea of *scala naturae* and the related concept of organic evolution, can be discussed historically like any other abstract concepts; they have shown too the success of tracing the history of ideas in both scientific and non-scientific literature. For it is not only true that *Newton demands the Muse* but that a poet may disclose the popular currency of an idea much before its scientific expression. Three are dangers here, as there are in all adventures crossing the formal tram-lines of scholarship. When applied to science the history of ideas can become nebulous, losing touch with the solidity of observation and experiment. If the distinction between speculative and theoretical thinking is weakened, scientific theorization may appear to recede indefinitely into the past. It may be tempting to forget that a scientific idea matters not so much in its form of words (like the apocryphal *omne vivum ex ovo*) as in the material on which it is based and the use to which it is put. Copernicus's idea that gravity is a universal concomitant of material substance is not at all the same as Newton's universal gravitation. Nevertheless it is true that the history of ideas insists on the importance of asking questions that some historians of science, influenced by the need for detailed scholarship and scientific history, were inclined to ignore.

This was particularly true in the years between the world wars, a period enriched by the work of scholars who were tacticians rather than strategists in history. Beside their careful study of transverse sections through the nodal points of a science, the history of ideas offered the longitudinal study of a concept or theory in its development through time, a method that has been adopted more generally by historians of science

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during the last twenty years. Neither method excludes the other. But the most exciting and fertile historiographical trends of recent years have been towards strengthening the continuous threads in the development of science and towards the interpretation of that development in terms of intellectual problems and attempts to solve them.

Lovejoy and other founders of the history of ideas were philosophers in the first place. Participation in the history of science of scholars not primarily educated in one of its branches was almost unknown before the twentieth century, and is one of the signs of the enhanced status of the subject. Thorndike's *History of Magic and Experimental Science* is the major achievement of a professional historian so far, but as the potentialities of the history of science and its bearing on other aspects of the past have become apparent it has won the attention of many other non-scientist historians. Fresh insight and different kinds of outlook have been imported. What can be done by an original and experienced historian is illustrated by Butterfield's *Origins of Modern Science*, a book which only ten years ago seems to have furnished some historians of science with a new conception of the shape their subject could assume. Its author claimed no great depth of learning in the field, and in its first form it contained some notable misstatements; but as a reviewer wrote, "the *Origins of Modern Science* shows us—for what may be the very first time—how the history of science can be presented in a unified, coherent historical frame . . . Thus Mr Butterfield has rendered historians of science a very special service in showing them what their field may eventually become." And the reviewer hoped that, with this work as their guide, historians of science would write histories "rather than the collection of summaries of specialties which has hitherto been all too often the case."[1] One's first feeling is that such a comment, admirably just as it is and though linked with a reasoned detailed criticism of Butterfield's handling of his subject, is simply an admission that the writing of the history of science has hitherto lacked sophistication. Such a reaction is rather unfair. There has been much detailed work of the highest quality in the history of science, which Butterfield him-

[1] I. Bernard Cohen, in *Isis*, XLI, 1950, pp. 232–3.

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self used, and the history of scientific ideas is not the whole history of science in any case. The problem, unique in this field, of combining the history of ideas with that of experimental and observational science cannot be resolved by imitation of other types of historiography; it is one that can only be solved by the historians of science themselves.

The penetration of philosophers into the history of science has been even more potent than that of historians. Philosophy of science is as old as science itself, and since the stamp of Aristotle wore off an interminable discussion has ranged over the centuries from Descartes to Popper. Like history, philosophy has attracted professional scientists from Whewell through Mach to Bridgman, though it has proved repulsive to some others. Like history, philosophy seeks to illuminate science. When historians try to account for the emergence of the distinguishing features of modern science their task comes close to that of philosophers attempting to analyse the nature of those features, and may be dependent on it. From the other side philosophers of science have found that historical examples of scientific method are useful ones to consider, for sometimes the special characters of scientific thinking may be seen more clearly in their early appearances. Thus while the essential difference between the historical and the philosophical approach remains, there is a tendency for them to approximate and mutual understanding is certainly profitable. It is hard to understand how a historian can hope to analyse the intellectual processes of a particular scientist without some acquaintance with philosophical analyses of scientific thinking. It is not for him to force the thought of Copernicus or Berzelius into a retroductive or a hypothetico-deductive or any other philosophic system, but he does need to know what kind of light such systems throw on the scientific process.

Again, some philosophically trained scholars have shown what can be done. They have turned to the question of what it is, in the scientific attitude of an age or an individual, that makes the overcoming of some obstacle possible or prevents it from being overcome. They have sought to dig down into the substrata beneath empirical achievements and their related theoretical superstructure to discover the roots of changes of

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perspective concerning the scientific image of nature. They have shown sufficiently how short-sighted a history must be that ascribes the progress of science solely to empiricism, or even to the pursuit of ideals clearly and consciously formulated. Burtt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (1924) is a classic of this kind. There have been historians and scientists who were suspicious of the word metaphysics, as though it detracted from the positivism of scientific knowledge. But it has become increasingly hard to deny that the perception of a metaphysical world-order precedes the formation of a scientific world-view. This is equally true for the Greeks, the scholastics, and the moderns. One cannot comprehend Galileo or Kepler without understanding their metaphysical confidence—Platonic or Pythagorean in origin—in the submission of nature to mathematical order and geometrical harmony. It is possible to argue that the success of modern mathematical physics arises from this confidence, but not that it is innate in human thinking. Nor can anyone be blind to the fact that Descartes's science rests on a metaphysical foundation; equally Newtonian physics is incomprehensible without recognition of the fact that Newton too was a metaphysician.

Such studies, rapidly multiplying during the last two decades, have been better represented in Lovejoy's *Journal of the History of Ideas* than in the periodicals wholly devoted to the history of science. A strong lead has been given by the work of Alexandre Koyré, who has demonstrated the power of intellectual analysis when allied to minute dissection of texts. Altogether renouncing positivism, and believing that "l'empirisme pur—et même la 'philosophie expérimentale' ne conduisent nulle part; [car] ce n'est pas en renonçant au but apparemment inaccessible et inutile de la connaissance du réel, mais au contraire en le poursuivant avec hardiesse, que la science progresse sur la voie sans fin qui la conduit à la verité," Koyré has nevertheless made scholarship the indispensable foundation for an interpretative history of science. For him "l'histoire de cette progression de la science moderne devrait être consacrée à son aspect *théorique* au moins autant qu'à son aspect expérimentale." The great revolutions in science have been intellectual

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revolutions.[1] Yet at the same time Koyré has written with great effect and insight on the interplay of measurement and mathematics in the creation of scientific ideas; indeed his writings reflect brilliantly the possibility of a unification in history of philosophical science, theoretical science, and experimental science.

For Koyré as for many other historians of science the central problem of the subject is the emergence of modern science in Europe during the seventeenth century. It is a truism that this is an event of unique historical importance; the greatest turning-point in human history, whether political, intellectual, or material. The transformations of philosophy, theory, and method involved in it are not only unparalleled in the course of science at any other time or in any other civilization, they are unpredictable from the structure of science as it was in Greece or China or medieval Europe. I do not mean to suggest that it is impossible to discover any causes for the scientific revolution or still less that it is hopeless to trace its antecedents. On the contrary more causes—from the advent of a capitalist economy to a revolution against Thomist philosophy—have been proposed than can possibly figure in a single synthesis. The historian is overpowered by contributory causation: the unsolved problem is to penetrate to the heart of the matter. Similarly antecedents crop up wherever one looks—anticipations of discoveries that played a critical rôle in the scientific revolution, examples of a modern metaphysic or a modern use of experiment. Together they do not constitute modern science. It seems that just as no two philosophers of science agree on the precise nature of the modern scientific process, though this is daily applied by scientists to promote the growth of science at an ever increasing rate, so no two historians can agree exactly on the sum of factors that brought that process into being, though they can define its stages and accomplishments. Inevitably historical ideas have polarized about two opposite theses: those of gradualness and abruptness. Undoubtedly both positions are correct despite their mutual contradiction. It is equally true that the scientific revolution was

[1] Alexandre Koyré, 'Les Origines de la Science Moderne', *Diogène*, no. 16, 1956, pp. 30–1.

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in preparation from the time of the renaissance of Graeco-Arab science in the thirteenth century, and that when that revolution came it was effected with enormous rapidity and involved the overthrow of nearly everything that had gone before. Perhaps one might say that the long work of preparation of medieval philosophers required the exercise of a critical faculty, whereas a supremely creative faculty is obviously at work in the origins of modern science.[1] Thus the medieval philosophy of motion was certainly critical in character, but the new, modern science of dynamics was Galileo's creation. A complex and fertile relationship of this kind between criticism and creation is by no means limited to science or philosophy since it occurs in art and literature too.

Undoubtedly the long-neglected and singular alliance of science and philosophy in the European Middle Ages merits all the attention it has received during the last few decades, as exemplified by the two great works of scholarship already discussed and by many others which have brought about a remarkable revision of historical ideas on the intellectual history of that period. Nothing is more deserving of close study than the background of the scientific revolution, unless it is the scientific revolution itself. An essentially critical age is more amenable to history than one bursting with creativity, and it is therefore not surprising that interpretation of medieval science has advanced more rapidly than that of seventeenth-century science. Or that, as regards the latter, sheer scholarship is likely to be less productive of fresh historical insight. The same is true of the swift achievement of Greek science, which if less momentous is not less dramatic nor less enigmatic than the scientific revolution. Here, in comparison with what is already known, future additions to knowledge must be infinitesimal. And because of the irreparable inadequacy of the record history must always be limited and uncertain.

From the Greeks to the seventeenth century the contemporary historian of science has a clear path cut for him by the founders of his subject at the turn of the century, and by their

[1] It may be just worth pointing out that what may be creative thought philosophically is critical thinking as far as science is concerned. Thus Mach was a critical thinker, Planck and Einstein were creative thinkers.

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predecessors. There are other areas, however, far less well explored that challenge his attention and are now beginning to receive it. One of them is the history of the biological sciences, at present far behind that of the physical sciences both in scholarship and in maturity of historical interpretation. There are, of course, good reasons for this comparative neglect, not least the greater complexity and richness of the physical sciences during three millennia. It seems as yet (and the fact, if true, is strange enough to merit fuller investigation than it has received) that the world of living things has offered great stimulus to the intellect in two periods only: in the fourth century B.C. and in the seventeenth century and since. Medicine should be excepted since interest in health and disease is perennial, but medicine without biological science proved sterile, not to say ineffectual. Moreover, it happened that the pioneers of the modern history of science were for the most part physicists and chemists, and in their day the potentialities of biological science were less readily apparent than they are now. Scientific exploration of the living state and of living processes was retarded until the necessary intellectual and material tools had been perfected in other branches of science: chemistry must precede biochemistry. Hence after a magnificent but misconceived beginning in Greek antiquity the biological sciences only began to attain maturity in the seventeenth century, and so their most exciting period falls within the last century, which has hitherto been little examined.

Thus the weakness of biological history can be referred to the backwardness of the history of science since Newton. A local concentration of interest on Lavoisier and the origins of modern chemistry is the most prominent feature of eighteenth-century history, but the really remarkable fact is the low level of the historiography of nineteenth-century science. The gibe that historians leave off just when science got going has not been unjustified; though some of the younger ones are now starting to belie it. The difficulties of the history of science during the last hundred and fifty years are indeed very great. Not only does the mass of material become enormous, as in all aspects of history, but its content becomes increasingly resistant to any but specialist treatment. One or two themes have

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been much discussed; for instance the history of the evolutionary theory in biology can be presented in a fairly broad way, but even so, far more has been done on the development of the theory than on its actual use in science after 1859. There have been good fragmentary studies in other fields of nineteenth-century science, but nothing that adds up to a coherent history of one science, certainly not to a view of science as a whole.

For the latest period the old lament of a shortage of books on the history of science is still justified. Elsewhere it is not. The student, particularly the English-reading student, can now be offered ample material through the stretch from the Greeks to the nineteenth century. While there is as yet no work in English of the *Cambridge Modern History* type on the history of science, such an enterprise on a smaller scale nears completion in France. A one-volume survey of the quality of Pirenne's *History of Europe* is much to be desired. So are ample first-class histories of the separate sciences; it seems fantastic that none has been attempted for at least eighty years. Prolific writing appears to be generally unfashionable in history nowadays; the quatrain has replaced the epic. But the needs of the non-specialist reader are perhaps better served by the variety of limited surveys and monographs on particular topics that have appeared in the last twenty or thirty years. For all that, there is still much to do, and many unsolved problems remain to challenge historians of science of all aptitudes and interests. There is much that requires exacting scholarship, but still more that demands the highest kind of historical imagination. The history of scientific thought is still in its infancy despite energetic nursing during the post-war years, and it is to its future growth that we must look for the next step towards a more thoroughly interpretative history of the long course of science.

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ARCHAEOLOGY AND PLACE-NAMES

By F. T. Wainwright

APPROACHES to history from archaeology and place-names need no justification today. They make available to the historian much information that he could not otherwise obtain. They throw light on many aspects of the past which are illuminated faintly or not at all in the written record, and a conjunctive approach leads to conclusions more detailed and convincing than any that could be reached by a single approach in isolation. Consider, for example, how little we should know about the burial practices and artistic achievements of the Anglo-Saxons if it were not for the contribution of archaeology, and how little we should know about the scope and nature of the Scandinavian settlements if we had to rely only on the written record. Consider how much archaeology and the study of place-names have increased our comprehension of the problems surrounding the Anglo-Saxon settlement and how much they have contributed to a fuller understanding of the Pictish north. From archaeology the historian may expect information about the material aspects of life, about the economic arrangements of a people, their houses and villages, their implements and weapons, their skills and crafts, their food supply, and their control over natural resources. He may also hope for a certain amount of oblique information of a political nature, and he may even seek to advance through archaeological evidence to a clearer perception of the motives and aspirations of men. From place-names he may expect more than information about language and linguistic developments; he may hope

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to trace boundaries and movements of peoples, to disentangle confused political relationships, and to recover details of a social and economic character. And by co-ordinating the evidence from various sources he may hope to reconstruct a more complete and a more accurate picture of the past. Hopes and expectations of this kind are entirely laudable, but they involve greater problems and difficulties than is generally realized.

Before considering these problems and difficulties it is necessary to explain how the words 'history' and 'historical' are used in this essay, for they have many meanings, most of them legitimate. They are normally used by historians in connection with evidence preserved or recorded in written sources and they cover the story of human activity in so far as it may be recovered from a study of written sources. But the word 'historical' is used sometimes in the sense of authentic or reliable as distinct from untrustworthy, sometimes to distinguish what purports to be true from what is imaginary, sometimes to distinguish what is true from what purports to be true, and sometimes to distinguish coherent narrative sources from other written sources. Sometimes it has relevance to content, sometimes to context, and sometimes to method. Sometimes the word 'history' is used, especially by archaeologists, to cover all aspects of and all forms of enquiry into the human past, and sometimes it is even extended to include non-human phenomena, as in such terms as 'natural history'. In this essay the words 'history' and 'historical' are used in one sense only: 'history' is the story of the past as it is revealed by the written record, and 'historical evidence' is evidence preserved in written sources.[1] Quite unexceptionable terms like 'historical syntheses', meaning conclusions arrived at by co-ordinating evidence preserved in different sources, including non-written

[1] Inscriptions on stones and coins are sometimes regarded as archaeological evidence, but by the above definition they are historical evidence. They occur in an archaeological context, it is true, but so does all historical evidence, for vellum and paper are archaeological material as clearly as are stones and coins. Early spellings of place-names are usually preserved in the immediate context of historical documents, but their ultimate context, whether they are preserved in manuscripts or on stones, is an archaeological context. On the nature of archaeological and place-name evidence see below, p. 200.

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sources, are here avoided—not because they are wrong, but simply because they might be thought confusing in the present context.

The advantages offered by approaches through archaeology and the study of place-names, independently or in co-ordination, apply to all periods of history, but their impact is greatest in the Dark Ages. It is here that historical sources are most fragmentary and intractable, and it is here that archaeology and place-names have come to be regarded as more or less equal partners with history in the elucidation of the past. In this period, too, the difficulties are most formidable, and the three partners often appear to be competing rivals rather than natural allies. Historians, archaeologists, and philologists tend to be critical of each other, of each other's methods, and of each other's conclusions. This is by no means a universal attitude, and within recent years there has been a *rapprochement*, a conscious effort on all sides to understand other points of view and to co-operate at different levels in the common task. But old rivalries die hard and rigorous training leaves its mark. There have always been scholars willing and anxious to peer over barriers, and their number increases steadily, but a legacy of distrust remains. Philologists are still heard to condemn archaeology as a waste of time, its methods as unscientific, its conclusions as suspect, and its practitioners as mountebanks. Some historians are bemused by archaeological *expertise*; others adopt an attitude of dignified disapproval and align themselves with the philologists; but the aggressive philologist of the old school scorns their support and is apt to assail them as incompetent bunglers who mishandle their own evidence and disregard their own canons of criticism. Archaeologists are not slow to defend themselves, and, stripped of its colourful abuse, their defence usually amounts to a complaint that historians are either too gullible or too cautious to reach useful conclusions and that philologists are too quarrelsome to reach any conclusions at all. Strictures such as these, uttered privately as a rule and now sounding faintly in the brave new world of collective effort, represent points of view which still tend to divide those who ought to be striving together to solve their own and each other's problems. The fulsome mutual praise now

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conventional in public utterances is often a façade that barely conceals private distrusts.

These inter-disciplinary distrusts arise from and reflect an accumulation of differences which separate history, archaeology, and philology. The fundamental fact is that historical evidence, archaeological evidence, and linguistic evidence are essentially different in character. From these differences in character arise different methods and techniques, different bases of interpretation, and, above all, different kinds of conclusions. At each stage there are difficulties, enough to daunt most scholars, but they are magnified and thrown into high relief as soon as any attempt is made to co-ordinate the evidence and the conclusions of the three separate approaches into a single synthesis. It is the purpose of this essay to examine these difficulties, especially in so far as they affect the problems of co-ordination. By design the discussion is limited to examples drawn from the Dark Ages, where the difficulties of co-ordination occur in their most pronounced forms. By design also the discussion is limited to a consideration of historical evidence, archaeological evidence, and place-name evidence. It should be remembered that there are other approaches to an understanding of the past.

There is no need here to examine the different kinds of historical evidence. It may occur in an original document or in a copy; it may offer a coherent narrative, a reasoned exposition, or a simple record; it may present information intentionally or provide it incidentally; its aim may be to inform, to record, to entertain, to amuse, or even to deceive; its author may be a competent witness conversant with the situation which he describes; he may have been unaware of the true situation; he may have misjudged it; he may offer an official or censored version of it; he may be deliberately trying to deceive. Whatever its category, all historical evidence has one thing in common: it is direct evidence only of a state of mind. It may be true or false, trustworthy or untrustworthy, and in this lies one of the historian's major problems.

Archaeological evidence is quite different in character. It is essentially material evidence. Whether it consists of pieces of

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pottery, broken implements, bones, pins, books, manuscripts, huts, and towns, or merely of disturbances in the ground, it is essentially material evidence—visible, tangible, and free from duplicity. It is direct evidence not of a state of mind but of practical skills, technological processes, aesthetic interests, and physical sequences. It cannot lie and it cannot mislead. It can be misunderstood or misinterpreted, of course, and so can historical evidence, but its interpretation in terms consistent with itself (that is in material terms) is as simple and straightforward as the interpretation of historical evidence is complicated and difficult.

Place-names are essentially linguistic evidence. They are direct evidence of language, speech habits, and linguistic developments. Like archaeological evidence they cannot lie and they cannot mislead, but unlike archaeological evidence they usually come before the investigator at second hand as it were. Place-name evidence consists primarily of sounds, but, except in so far as the place-name scholar can hear pronunciations of place-names in current speech, he is dependent upon the forms or spellings preserved in written documents. In point of fact all but an infinitesimal proportion of the place-name scholar's material comes to him as written early forms, not as the sounds themselves but as representations of them. The place-name evidence itself cannot mislead, but the forms or representations of the sounds may be misleading. That is to say, they may be accurate or distorted. And, like archaeological and historical evidence, the evidence of place-names can be misinterpreted.

The three kinds of evidence, being entirely different in content and in character, require the employment of entirely different sets of methods and techniques. And as these do not all equally command the confidence of scholars, they both aggravate the mutual distrusts and increase the difficulties of co-ordination. The historian is usually aware of the complicated critical processes that alone enable him to check the trustworthiness of his sources, to assess the reliability of the evidence offered by them, and to reach valid conclusions that take into account all the known relevant factors. Neither he nor the philologist is necessarily aware of the equivalent problems

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encountered by the archaeologist, especially as they are different in their incidence as well as in their character. The aim of excavation, only one of several forms of archaeological investigation but undoubtedly the most important, is to recover and record archaeological information in its proper context and under conditions of scientific control. It presents extremely complex problems of lay-out and organization, it requires the marshalling of resources of many kinds, and it is carried out under conditions that sometimes excite the admiring wonder of the historian and the philologist. They would also be appalled if they stopped to think how different are the conditions which attend their own researches—if only because their own methods, though less spectacular, are not in the same way subject to external pressures and do not in the same way involve the destruction of their basic evidence.

The methods adopted by the place-name scholar are entirely different from those of the historian and those of the archaeologist. The primary object of the place-name scholar is to reveal the original forms and subsequent developments of place-names, and this he seeks to achieve by the collection and examination of early spellings of each name. The historian and the archaeologist often regard his derivations as tendentious and unconvincing, but what they do not always realize is that he is able to bring to bear on his material the very considerable resources of phonology and comparative philology. He is fortunate in that his conclusions usually have a precision and a wide applicability which the historian and the archaeologist are seldom able to attain in their own studies. If they attempted to base their conclusions to the same extent on other manuscripts and other sites respectively the results would be catastrophic.

In assessing the validity of conclusions reached in any field of study it is necessary to bear in mind not only the nature of the evidence but also the methods by which it is obtained, the resources available for its elucidation, the conditions that exist to control both the methods and the resources, and all the many difficulties encountered in recognition, collection, identification, and interpretation. Scholars may be conscious of these factors in their own fields, but they are not always conscious of the corresponding factors in other fields. The historian and the

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archaeologist, for example, may suspect the precision of the philologist; he, on the other hand, may be critical of the tentative nature of their conclusions, and he may sometimes condemn their methods as careless and unscientific. The archaeologist frequently fails to comprehend the complexity of historical evidence, assuming that a statement in a chronicle is fundamentally as simple and straightforward as a piece of pottery. Both the historian and the philologist frequently mistake the true nature of archaeological evidence, and indeed it is difficult to see how anyone other than a practising excavator can fully appreciate either the problems presented by excavation or the nature of the evidence obtained by it.

Reports on excavations are sometimes described as secondary archaeological evidence, but by the definition here adopted they are strictly historical evidence; they introduce questions of trustworthiness and reliability, questions of what is true and what is false, and it is in the light of these questions that their reliability must be assessed. It is difficult to see how any scholar can assess the reliability of excavation reports with confidence unless he has, in addition to other information, a clear idea of how and under what conditions excavations are carried out. No one condemns incompetent excavation more severely than does the excavator. The trouble is that those who do not understand the intricacies of excavation are often unable to distinguish between competence and incompetence. And what is true of excavations and excavation reports is equally true of methods practised and conclusions put forward in all the fields of history, archaeology, and place-names. If a scholar attempts to assess or criticize conclusions reached in any field of study he is on dangerous ground unless he has himself achieved a certain competence in that field, a competence which cannot be adequate unless it is based upon the experience of handling the relevant evidence and of meeting the relevant problems. Mistakes and misconceptions arising from ignorance are common. They are of no importance if the offender is merely amusing himself by passing comments on a field of study from a distance. But co-ordination at any level requires the bringing together of evidence and conclusions from different fields, and this cannot be done from a distance. It is of the greatest

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importance that co-ordination, if it is to be effective, should not be vitiated by mistakes and misconceptions.

More mistakes and misconceptions arise from failures to recognize the limits imposed on inference by the nature of the evidence. Archaeological evidence is direct evidence only of practical skills, technological processes, physical sequences, and aesthetic interests, and place-name evidence is direct evidence only of language and linguistic developments. Neither archaeology nor the study of place-names can provide the precise narrative of events, the interplay of cause and effect, the motives and aspirations of men, the formal details of political allegiances and social obligations, or specific information on all those interesting aspects of human acitvity which, under ideal circumstances, may be illuminated by trustworthy historical sources. It is impossible to obtain information of this kind by direct inference from archaeological and linguistic evidence.

By indirect inference, of course, it is possible to wrest from archaeology and place-names a considerable amount of information about population movements, political boundaries, social relationships, and economic arrangements. But conclusions reached by indirect inference always involve assumptions and some assumptions are less reasonable than others. It is true that distribution maps of cemeteries, brooches, pottery, and certain place-name formations are used to illustrate the progress of the Anglo-Saxon settlement, that symbol stones and *pett*-names reflect Pictish political boundaries, and that place-names effectively delimit the areas of Scandinavian settlement, but in all conclusions of this kind assumptions have been added to the evidence itself, and the validity of the conclusions cannot be greater than the validity of the assumptions. Conclusions of an economic nature based on archaeological evidence are usually both convincing and reliable, and so close is the correlation between archaeological material and the economic activities of man that many would hold that archaeology's most important contribution to knowledge of the past lies in its provision of information of an economic character. But even in this field invalid assumptions can produce misleading conclusions, for some archaeological material which is assumed to have an economic significance undoubtedly had an

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entirely non-economic significance for the people who made or used it. When it comes to reading the thoughts, emotions, and aspirations of men in such archaeological material as their graves and grave-furniture, then we are nearing the point of self-delusion. Archaeological material of this kind may illustrate certain aspects of historical evidence, but of itself it is incapable of producing reliable conclusions about beliefs and mental attitudes.

It must be accepted that there is not necessarily a determinable relationship between some aspects of human activity on the one hand and archaeological material or place-names on the other. Political boundaries may or may not be reflected in the distribution of brooches or by the incidence of specific place-name forms and elements. Even when they are, the reflection may be too faint to be recognized or identified, too faint or too ambiguous to form reasonable bases for inference. Non-archaeological conclusions from archaeological material and non-linguistic conclusions from place-names are interesting in themselves and immediately relevant in attempts to construct syntheses by co-ordinating conclusions based on different kinds of evidence, but they must be treated with reserve, for the assumptions involved in some conclusions are so strained that they render the conclusions invalid. In general terms it may be said that political conclusions based on place-name evidence are more reliable than political conclusions based on archaeological evidence, but all conclusions reached by indirect inference are based to a greater or less extent on assumptions, and in each case the assumptions must be scrutinized carefully before they are tentatively accepted as valid. Therefore difficult problems of interpretation must be added to the many other problems that face the scholar who seeks to co-ordinate evidence and conclusions from history, archaeology, and the study of place-names.

It is the existence of these many problems that makes co-ordination such a formidably difficult business. If their existence is ignored co-ordination at once becomes a comparatively simple business, an amusing exercise but one without any point or purpose. The fact of the matter is that different kinds

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of evidence belong to and reflect entirely different conceptions. There is no point of contact between historical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence, and therefore they cannot be equated in the sense of being identified with each other. The best we can do is co-ordinate them, or equate them in the sense of bringing them into such close association with each other that the conclusions based on the different kinds of evidence illustrate the same idea, not the same aspects of it from the same angle, but different aspects or the same aspect from different angles. The closer the association we achieve the more effective will be the co-ordination. And it is a very difficult thing to bring entirely different conceptions into close association with each other, especially as there is not necessarily a recognizable correlation between them.

The most common attempts at co-ordination are those which propose to associate battles and persons mentioned in historical sources with specific sites on the ground or with specific place-names. The possibility of associating historical battles with collections of skeletons or weapons, historical persons with specific graves, and both with specific place-names, has provided happy hunting-grounds for ingenuity over the centuries. Historians are always pleased to have their 'lost' battles located, archaeologists are always pleased to have historical contexts provided for their material, and place-name scholars are always gratified if they can add information or precision to what is known of historical events and people. The more detailed definition of historical, archaeological, and linguistic material is a serious business, and when it can be achieved by bringing two or more conceptions into close association the results of this co-ordination are always important. It is not just an amusing pastime for those who want a change from their crossword puzzles. But it has always proved a great attraction to puzzlers, and the exercise of uncontrolled ingenuity in this field filled the local histories of the last century—not to mention a few more ambitious and more recent works—with proposed associations as fascinating as they are unsound. The curious may collect examples by the dozen. How few of them are accepted today is some measure of the difficulty of co-ordination even at this level.

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It is not sufficient to see or imagine a similarity between two or more conceptions. If it were, every historical battle could be given a site, every historical figure could be given a grave, and recognition in place-names could be found for them all. Many battles of the Dark Ages have been associated with prehistoric burials, the chronological incongruity being glossed over by describing the latter as "memorials of the battle," or with bones reputed to have been found in an earlier age, bones which "mouldered into dust" upon their discovery and so might have been anything at all if, indeed, they ever existed outside some local legend. Similarly to assume that a famous and historical Edmund is commemorated in the Leicestershire place-name Edmondthorpe suffers from the fatal objection that the first element of Edmondthorpe is the personal name *Ēadmǣr*, not *Ēadmund*. To assume that the first elements of Ednaston (*Ēadnōð*) or Allaston (*Ælfrǣd*) preserve references to a historical Eadnoth or Alfred is less obviously absurd but scarcely more reasonable, if only because both were very common names and must have been borne by hundreds of men who never achieved either mention in historical sources or commemoration in place-names.

With regard to historical battles, the archaeologist knows how difficult it is to recognize clear traces of them on the ground, for neither dead warriors nor valuable weapons were usually left lying where they had fallen. As for graves, archaeologists know also how difficult it is to bring a group of burials into firm association even with another archaeological site, such as a settlement, unless they are bound together stratigraphically or by recognizable cultural links between, say, the grave-goods of one and the surviving equipment of the other. It need hardly be emphasized how much more difficult it is to associate graves or skeletons with a historical conception that has neither stratigraphy nor cultural content. The point is that similarities alone, real or imagined, and proximity unsupported by any other evidence do not provide sound bases for co-ordination. It is not enough to say that associations are "possible," that a battle "could have" been fought here, that "archaeology does not contradict" a conclusion, that the various approaches "do not conflict" with each other. The most fantastic conclusions are

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open to those who are content if the evidence does not formally disprove their contentions, and to those who believe that half-a-dozen possibilities add up to a probability and that two or three probabilities add up to a proof. If co-ordination is to be effective it requires positive support from the evidence under consideration.

How difficult it is to bring the required positive support to a co-ordination may best be illustrated by two or three examples. On 26 May 685 the Picts inflicted a crushing defeat on the Northumbrians at a battle which is called the battle of *Nechtanesmere*, *Cath Duin Nechtain*, and *Gueith Linn Garan* in English, Irish, and British (or Pictish) sources respectively. It is of considerable historical and political importance to know where the battle took place, and it would be of considerable archaeological interest if we could locate its site. The three forms of the name quoted above may reasonably be brought together in the modern name Dunnichen, now a village in Angus and in 685 a fortified site within the boundaries of the Pictish kingdom. The hill on which once stood the "fortress of Nechtan" may be seen today, but where is the "mere of Nechtan" or the "pool of Garan," and where exactly was the battle fought? A careful examination of the ground, including a survey with dumpy levels and other instruments, coupled with a search through local records for references to draining, marling, and peat-cutting, made it possible to draw the outlines of the vanished mere on a large-scale map, and the accuracy of this reconstruction was later confirmed by an air-photograph. So much for the lost "mere of Nechtan." But what about the battle? A considerable amount of archaeological material—bones, urns, graves, "rusty daggers" and the like—has been reported in the area, but none of it can today be brought into association with the battle. Perhaps it would be surprising if it could. A running fight would have no fixed battlefield, bodies and weapons would be collected, the weapons would no doubt be used again, and the bodies would perhaps be thrown into the mere, where, unless they were dug out in the eighteenth-century draining operations, they may still remain. Whatever the reason, it is true to say that "the battle seems to have left no archaeological trace of itself." It has been noted above that

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what is clearly reflected in one conception may produce no reflection in another conception—or a reflection too faint to be recognized today. This is a state of affairs often encountered by those who try to locate the sites of historical battles on the ground.

In 921 King Edward the Elder built a fortress (*burh*) *æt Cledemuþan*. Suggestions that this fortress was in South Wales, in East Anglia, or on the Clyde are all open to serious historical and linguistic objections, but there are no such objections to the recent suggestion that it was "at the mouth of the Clwyd" in North Wales. A detailed study of political conditions not only demonstrates that Edward was in a position to build a fortress in North Wales in 921, but also provides most compelling reasons why he should have done so. The linguistic problem is whether or not the element *Cled* (*Clet*) can represent a tenth-century English form of a contemporary Welsh *Cloit* (*Cluit*) or whether it is an anglicized version of an earlier British-Latin **Kleta* (**Cleta*). There are other complicated aspects to the linguistic problem, but they need not detain us here; it is enough to say that the Old English *Cledemuþa* can be accepted as referring to the "mouth of the Clwyd." But where is the fortress itself? Where is the archaeological reflection of an important event clearly reflected in a successful historical-linguistic synthesis? A fortress is more spectacular, if sometimes less enduring, than an entry in a chronicle or a place-name form, and one might expect that it would be a comparatively simple matter to find Edward's fortress of 921. It has not been found yet. Perhaps it was on the site now occupied by Rhuddlan Castle. Perhaps it was on the site of the adjacent Toothill. Perhaps it was an enclosure which included part of what is now the town of Rhuddlan. We do not know. We are not even sure that it was at Rhuddlan.[1] We are still looking for an unmistakable archaeological reflection of what clearly was an event of considerable historical and national importance.

[1] Rhuddlan is certainly "the place most attractive in possibilities," but the door cannot be closed against any suggestion. Some five years ago Mr Arnold J. Taylor kindly drew my attention to an apparently significant minor name in Rhyl, *Birchloyt*, which he had noticed in a Flintshire Plea Roll for 1310. The second element is the river-name Clwyd, which

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In 915 Edward's sister, Æthelflæd, built a fortress *æt Cyricbyrig*. It is fairly certain that *Cyricburh* is represented by the modern name Chirbury in Shropshire (despite doubts occasioned in some quarters by what looks like an intrusive genitival inflexion in a few medieval forms), and at Chirbury there are the remains of a rectangular enclosure which bears every superficial appearance of having been Æthelflæd's fortress of 915. It might well be thought that an excavation would surely place this historical-linguistic-archaeological association beyond range of argument and dispute. The promising site at Chirbury was subjected to excavation in 1958, and it cannot be said that its promises were altogether fulfilled. Details of plan and construction were recovered, with much other interesting information, but the excavator failed to bring the structure into a sufficiently close chronological association with Æthelflæd (or with anyone else for that matter). Too many doors had to be left open. Some of them can be closed by negative evidence and by general arguments, it is true, and on the whole it is a fair conclusion that the site is that of Æthelflæd's fortress. But if the objective had been simply to bring an archaeological conception into close association with a historical-linguistic conception, then it would have to be written off as a failure. Fortunately this was not the only objective.

Another of Æthelflæd's several fortresses was built in 913 at *Tamaweorðige*, and there is not the slightest linguistic hesitation in accepting *Tamaw(e)orðig* (*Tamaworð*) as Tamworth, the principal city of the Mercian kings and the thriving modern town on the Tame. It has long been thought that the fortress of 913 stood on the great mound, now crowned by the castle, which towers above all who enter Tamworth across Lady

appears in the fourteenth century variously as *Cluyt*, *Cluit*, *Cloith*, *Cloyth*, and *Cloyt*, and if the first element were OE *burh* we should at last have a specific reference to the "Clwyd fortress," even though the site itself may now lie beneath the modern town of Rhyl. But it is not so simple as that. There is a strong presumption that *Birchloyt* is not "Clwyd *burh*" at all, but a normal reduction of *Abercloyt*, "Clwyd mouth," a descriptive name exactly paralleled by OE *Cledemuþa*, in which case it need not have any direct connection with Edward's fortress of 921. Every possibility, however, deserves careful examination, and the fact that the two names have the same meaning may be significant.

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Bridge from the south. It is today called Ethelfleda's Mound, but the name is just another mistaken association, for it is not Æthelflæd's mound at all. The *burh* that Æthelflæd built was (so it now seems) a great bank and ditch which in 913 probably enclosed the whole of the Anglo-Saxon town. There is little to be seen of it today, but recent excavation (in 1960) has shown that it has features in common with other Anglo-Saxon fortified sites of this period. In the Middle Ages it was called the King's Ditch, implying that it was built by King Offa, another mistaken association which is perpetuated on some modern maps in the name Offa's Dyke or Offa's Ditch. Excavation at Tamworth is still proceeding, and despite the discovery in 1960 of a tenth-century coin immediately behind the bank here attributed to Æthelflæd, it is yet too early to say how closely it will be possible to bring the archaeological conception into association with the historical conception of Æthelflæd's *burh* of 913.

By considering another example specifically from the point of view of what conclusions may legitimately be drawn from different kinds of evidence it may be possible to illustrate more clearly the nature of the difficulties that underlie all attempts at co-ordination. A document of the reign of Edward the Elder, generally known as the Burghal Hidage and now surviving only in later copies, gives a list of some thirty fortresses in southern England; to each is attached a number of hides, which indicates the number of men required for maintenance and defence on the basis of one man for each hide or four men for every pole of wall. This enables us to calculate the length of the wall of each of the listed fortresses. One of them is at *Crecgelade*, and there are no linguistic doubts that this is Cricklade in Wiltshire. What exactly can we conclude from this trustworthy historical evidence? We can conclude that there was a fortress at Cricklade early in the tenth century, we can conclude that it was part of an organized system of defence, we know how many men were thought to be required for its maintenance, and we know that the length of its wall was rather less than a mile and a third. Now there exist at Cricklade today faint traces of a rectangular enclosure; it surrounds the old town, it occupies more or less the whole of a slightly raised

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area of ground immediately south of the Thames, its line is wrongly marked on Ordnance Survey maps but the correct line can be ascertained, and this is about a mile and a third in length.[1] Can the two conceptions be co-ordinated or brought into an association close enough to justify the conclusion that the visible archaeological remains are indeed those of the fortress listed in the Burghal Hidage? It provides a good example of the difficulties of co-ordination. Most historians would accept the co-ordination at once and without question. They would say it is self-evident—and they may well be right—but if we pursue the problem a little further it ought to become apparent how difficult it really is to bring two different conceptions into firm and formal association. The two conceptions in this case are, of course, the archaeological conception of a fortress in the material sense and the historical conception of a fortress as it exists in the written record.

For several years excavation has been in progress at Cricklade, and during the course of it a very considerable amount of archaeological information has been accumulated. Questions have been asked and answered about the structure of the defences, the bank, its facing of stone, its exact line, the existence of a ditch, its dimensions, its relationship to the bank, the methods of construction, the date of construction, the manner and date of demolition, and so on. The only answers that have been lacking in precision are those that concern the date of construction in terms of years; chronological limits can be given, but these could be narrowed only if it were possible to date late Saxon and early medieval pottery more precisely than it is at present; and this means that it is not possible by archaeological evidence alone to attribute the archaeological remains at Cricklade exclusively to the reigns of Alfred the Great or Edward the Elder. From the archaeological evidence it is possible, however, to say that there was a fortress at Cricklade, that its area cor-

[1] It will be realized that the exact length of the "wall" depends upon whether the measurements are taken along the inner face, along the outer face, or on the summit. It should also be noted that there is a discrepancy in the number of hides attributed to Cricklade in the surviving copies of the Burghal Hidage. These details, which cannot be discussed here, do not affect the accuracy of the summary given above.

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responds closely with that of the historical fortress, and that because of the limitations imposed by the ground the historical fortress must have occupied the same site as that occupied by the archaeological fortress. It might seem at this point that the goal of co-ordination has been reached and that it is reasonable to conclude that the two fortresses are one and the same. But suppose that another fortress was built, say, about A.D. 1150 and failed to achieve mention in the historical record? We must ask ourselves if there could have been two fortresses on the same site, one superimposed on the other, or if a fortress built about A.D. 900 could have been reconstructed about A.D. 1150. These are archaeological questions, and the answers (supplied by excavation) are, first, that there is only one fortress at Cricklade, and, second, that there is no evidence of its reconstruction in a period subsequent to that of its construction; indeed there is positive archaeological evidence that it is a unitary work. Now at last, perhaps, we are justified in concluding that the archaeological remains at Cricklade, the fortress about which we have a considerable amount of information, is in fact the historical fortress listed in the Burghal Hidage.

In the last resort the above conclusion falls short of proof, as it must, for the two conceptions are based on different kinds of evidence and there is no direct point of contact between them. Formal equations are always outside our grasp, and even close associations are always difficult to achieve. The example of Cricklade is dealt with in detail, not because there is anything unusual about it, but because it demonstrates how difficult it is, even under the most favourable conditions, to bring different conceptions together into more than a general association. There are always so many points at which the evidence behind one is not even faintly reflected in the evidence behind the other. If co-ordination is so difficult when, as at Cricklade, the two conceptions are comparatively well-defined, it cannot be a cause for surprise that failure attends so many attempts to locate lost battles on the ground and to give historical names to structures, skeletons, and other archaeological material. But if we ignore the basic requirements of effective co-ordination, if we are content to inject fantastic assumptions into the remotest of associations and into the flimsiest of evidence, we soon

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reach the point at which we can locate Arthur's battles in every parish and supply a name to the occupant of every grave.

To this point it may seem that co-ordination has been regarded as no more than the bringing into association of historical, archaeological, and linguistic conceptions for the purpose of throwing light on specific events, specific structures, and specific names. Important though this can be when it is successful, it is co-ordination at a comparatively low level. Far more interesting, far more difficult, and certainly far more important is co-ordination on what may be called a broad front, large-scale co-ordination of, for example, historical conceptions of peoples with the equivalent but distinctively different archaeological and linguistic conceptions. If length were to be the criterion of importance, at least five-sixths of this essay would have to be devoted to the problems of large-scale co-ordination at this higher level. But in the first place it is easier to draw attention to the general problems of co-ordination in the exaggerated and somewhat unreal form in which they occur in connection with lost battles and lost sites, and in the second place the problems of what is here called large-scale co-ordination have recently been discussed at some length elsewhere.[1]

The historian thinks of peoples as Picts, Scots, Saxons, and Normans. He thinks of them in terms of historical evidence, that is as groups of human beings who are recognized as groups in the historical record. He is not concerned with factors of race, language, or material culture except in so far as these factors have contributed to the formation of groups which have achieved recognition in the historical record. The archaeologist, when he thinks of peoples, is compelled by the nature of his evidence to think of them as broch-builders, souterrain-builders, symbol-stone-carvers, people who practise cremation, people who wear a certain kind of brooch or make a certain kind of pottery, or people who use a certain kind of sword. The linguist's conception of peoples is similarly controlled by the nature of his evidence; he thinks of them as Germanic, Celtic, Brittonic, Goedelic, English-speaking,

[1] In a volume entitled *Archaeology and Place-names and History* (forthcoming).

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Welsh-speaking, Danish-speaking, and so on. The anthropologist, the ethnologist, and other scholars have their own conceptions, each controlled by the nature of the evidence on which they are based. And as the evidence in each case is different in its nature, so are the conceptions different. They can never be equated in the formal sense of the word.

Political, social, economic, and other aspects of human activity are reflected in these different kinds of evidence, but there is no reason why the various reflections should emerge with equal clarity and precision in the different kinds of evidence, and as a matter of fact sometimes the reflections, if they exist at all, are so faint that they cannot be recognized. Historical evidence, for example, can offer the clearest and most definite information about political boundaries, political allegiances, and other political arrangements, but the reflections of these aspects of human activity in archaeological and linguistic evidence are often so faint that they can be recognized and given definition only by indirect inference, that is by adding large assumptions to the evidence itself. Economic arrangements, by contrast, are often very clearly reflected in archaeological evidence, whereas reflections of the mental processes of men are so faint that the archaeologist unaided by non-archaeological evidence cannot recognize them at all. The addition of assumptions to archaeological and linguistic evidence in order to produce conclusions of a non-archaeological and non-linguistic character respectively often produces an impression that conclusions from historical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence are similar in character. But this is a misleading impression. Political conclusions can be drawn from archaeological and linguistic evidence, but they remain different in character from each other and from political conclusions based on historical evidence.

It is not only the difficulty of recognizing reflections that are present but faint or irrecoverable; we must accept the fact that often there are no reflections at all. There is no necessary correlation between historical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence. There is no reason why political boundaries as reflected in historical evidence should coincide with racial boundaries, linguistic boundaries, or cultural boundaries. There is

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no reason why a people should not survive physically in a form recognizable to its neighbours and yet lose its political independence, give up its language, and adopt a completely alien culture. There is no necessary correlation between changing patterns of pottery, the language spoken by men, and the political allegiances which they accept. Sometimes political boundaries reflected in historical evidence coincide with racial, linguistic, or cultural boundaries. Sometimes they do not. Even when they do, the relationships are never so simple and uncomplicated as they may appear to be on the surface.

When boundaries and movements of peoples derived as conclusions from historical evidence are found to coincide or accord with conclusions inferred from archaeological and linguistic evidence, the resulting co-ordination is always impressive. The southern boundary of the Pictish kingdom is revealed and confirmed by a remarkable coincidence of conclusions separately derived from historical references, the distribution of symbol stones, and the distribution of the element *pett* in place-names. The rate and progress of the Anglo-Saxon settlement as suggested by the distribution of pagan cemeteries is in general accord with conclusions based on the distribution of early place-name formations, and together they both confirm and amplify the conclusions derived from historical sources. The evidence of place-names, again, greatly increases our knowledge of the scale, scope, and intensity of the Danish settlements, confirming and at the same time amplifying almost out of all recognition the curt and casual references to Danish settlement in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. There is no need to explain in these cases how co-ordination produces conclusions far more complex and detailed, pictures of the past far more accurate as well as more complete, than any that could be achieved by advancing along a single approach in isolation.

Conceptions that do not coincide with each other are not necessarily unrelated. It is often simply a matter of our not being able to recognize and comprehend the relationship between them. The Pictish kingdom supplies an example of an apparent conflict of this kind. Although the archaeological conception of a cultural boundary provided by the distribution

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of symbol stones and the linguistic conception of a language boundary suggested by the distribution of place-name elements coincide neatly to support the historical conception of a political boundary along the Antonine Wall, the archaeological and linguistic conceptions fall apart in the further north. The distribution of symbol stones covers the whole of Pictland from the Antonine Wall to Shetland, thus reflecting the political unity implicit in the historical conception of the Pictish kingdom, but the distribution of *pett*-names covers only that part of Pictland which lies between the Antonine Wall and south-east Sutherland. Here, it would seem, we have two linguistic provinces, the boundaries of which are not reflected in any historical or archaeological material known to us. It may be that the historical and archaeological reflections escape us and will emerge from more detailed researches, but it is at least equally possible that there never were political or cultural equivalents to the linguistic boundary indicated by the distribution of these place-name elements.

Apparent anomalies may be noted, though not yet explained, when one comes to examine in greater detail the historical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence for early Anglo-Saxon settlement. This is a complicated question, and it will suffice to draw attention to two points: the lack of archaeological evidence for early Anglo-Saxon settlement in Essex, where the equivalent linguistic evidence (place-names with the nominative plural termination *-ingas*) is common, and, by contrast, the lack of recognizably early place-name formations in Cambridgeshire and other areas where there is convincing archaeological evidence of early settlement. In this connection one may also mention the surprising lack of archaeological evidence for the considerable settlement of the Danes in England, the lack of archaeological evidence for the settlement of the Scots in Argyll, the lack of archaeological evidence for the migrations of the Britons to Brittany, and, apart from their symbol stones, the apparent absence of any archaeological reflections of the historical Picts.

Reasons why the different conceptions do not always present clear and well-defined reflections, why the reflections do not always coincide with each other, and why they are

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sometimes absent altogether, must be sought in the nature of the different kinds of evidence, and, arising from the different kinds of evidence, in the different kinds of methods employed by scholars, and in the different kinds of conclusions reached by them. Evidence may be lost or destroyed, or it may be there but not recognized by us because it appears in a form beyond the range of our imagination or beyond the range of our techniques of identification. Only a fraction of the evidence that once existed is now available to us, and the true significance of much of what remains is hidden from us. We do not yet recognize all the place-name formations that might be used as evidence of early Anglo-Saxon settlement; a fuller knowledge of inter-tribal migrations in that period might remove some of the apparent anomalies now presented by archaeological and linguistic material; and if we knew when the Danes in England adopted Christianity we might find in that knowledge the reason why archaeological traces of pagan Danish settlement are so rare. Then, too, it must always be emphasized that aspects of human activity clearly reflected in one conception need not necessarily find an answering reflection in another. Some archaeological conceptions, for example, probably reflect no more than pottery fashions or building conventions, and between these and the historical conception of a people the correlation cannot at best be more than tenuous.

The same applies to linguistic conceptions. To say that the evidence of place-names provides no support for the view that considerable numbers of Britons survived to live in Anglo-Saxon England is correct. To say that the evidence of place-names is against such a view is incorrect. If large numbers of Britons survived the Anglo-Saxon conquest the evidence for their survival must be sought elsewhere. There is no reflection of a large-scale survival of Britons in the evidence of place-names. But, if one thinks about it, there is no reason why there should be. Place-names can offer instructive comments on the relations between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons but no firm conclusions on the question of physical survival.

It has been sufficiently emphasized that different conceptions cannot formally be equated. It is equally clear that they cannot be in conflict. At least the evidence that determines the

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character of the conceptions cannot be in conflict, though it can be misinterpreted, and mistaken conclusions inevitably render co-ordination ineffective. Historical evidence and archaeological evidence, for example, cannot conflict with each other, but conclusions based on them are often in violent conflict—to the exclusion of effective co-ordination. Some archaeologists would discard the historical evidence preserved in the early annals of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle because, they say, it conflicts with archaeological evidence. This is an illogical argument. The conclusions drawn from the historical evidence may be in conflict with the conclusions drawn from the archaeological evidence, in which case either or both may be wrong, but the folly of rejecting the right kind of evidence, even though it is not fully understood or correctly interpreted, in favour of the wrong kind of evidence—for, after all, archaeological evidence can tell us about movements of peoples only by indirect inference and when supported by large assumptions—should be apparent to all. It is well to bear in mind that different kinds of evidence cannot conflict with each other. If, when correctly interpreted, they can be brought into association at all, they cannot do more than illustrate different aspects of the same problem.

Mistaken associations occur by the hundred, and examples can be found in every age. The errors inherent in terms like "King's Ditch" in medieval documents at Tamworth and "Ethelfleda's Mound" in historical sources of a later age can be paralleled in all areas and at all levels. We have "Pictish towers" (for brochs which may have been towers but were never Pictish), we have "Goedelic invaders" (for peoples whose language is quite unknown), and of course we have "Celtic brooches" (for ornaments which never spoke a word of Celtic). The last apparently extravagant example is included to draw attention to the common use by archaeologists and others of terms which are specifically and exclusively linguistic. It is a common practice, of course, and one cannot always keep the different conceptions separate in terminology, for many terms —English, British, West Saxon, Northumbrian, Danish, Norwegian, etc.—do not have a single connotation exclusive to one conception. The shared use of such terms is unimportant so

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long as the different connotations are kept separate. But this does not always happen. No one imagines that a brooch speaks Celtic, but in many cases the labelling of archaeological material as "Celtic" has been followed by quite absurd conclusions of a linguistic character.

Most mistaken associations, such as those mentioned above, arise simply from carelessness or thoughtlessness, but some deliberate attempts at co-ordination cannot be so easily excused. The common equation of the (historical) Picts and the (archaeological) broch-builders is a case in point. It is formally absurd. It reveals not only a failure to realize that two entirely different conceptions cannot be equated, but also a failure to appreciate the true nature of each. Leaving aside the probability that broch-building represents a cultural phase that cannot readily be brought into association with any single specific people, the Picts certainly cannot be identified with the broch-builders if only because they belong to a different chronological period. The Picts are a historical conception, they appear in the historical record in A.D. 297, there are no historical Picts before A.D. 297, and the historical Picts are the only Picts known to us. The projection of historical peoples beyond the limits imposed by their appearance in the historical record is a common proceeding, but it is never a wise proceeding, and it frequently opens the door to absurd associations. The same is true of the projection of archaeological conceptions into spheres to which they do not belong. There is a connection between broch-builders and Picts, but it will not be revealed by subjecting the evidence to strains which it cannot reasonably be expected to bear.

It is easy to point out faults and to draw attention to difficulties. It is not so easy to avoid the faults and overcome the difficulties. The truth of the matter is that co-ordination presents problems of the greatest complexity. We are trying to reconstruct pictures of human activity in the past, and human activity in all its varied aspects is inextricably complicated. Each of our conceptions presents only one facet of human activity, and that we try to recover with inadequate techniques from such fragments of evidence as happen to have survived. However pleased we are with some of our syntheses, we should

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do well to remember that we cannot at best achieve more than a rough approximation to the truth, a simplified version of events and conditions to a great extent beyond recall. After every conclusion we should do well to write "It was more complicated than that."

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