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## IV

ARNALDO MOMIGLIANO

### THE PLACE OF ANCIENT HISTORIOGRAPHY IN MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY

A more exact title of this paper would probably be : "how classical historiography survived the Renaissance of classical historiography". No doubt, we have to ask ourselves—not only as a routine exercise in self-awareness—what the tradition of classical historiography means to us to-day. But we can do that only if we know : 1) what the Renaissance of the ancient models of historiography meant in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries ; 2) how the trends in historical writing changed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the classical historians remained masters—but no longer unchallenged masters—of the historian's art ; 3) how unusual, both in historical themes and in historical forms, the new classicism of the early nineteenth century was (until about 1860) ; and finally 4) what the new historical trends are which have separated us from our ancient masters in the last 120 years.

It is the purpose of this paper to provide a brief and factual illustration of these four points in order to lead towards a discussion of the present situation. I presuppose that the authority of ancient historiography in the Renaissance was a circumscribed phenomenon, the momentum of which had already been largely spent before the end of the sixteenth

century. On the other hand I incline to believe that in judging the present historiographical situation of the year 1979 we are in danger of overrating the themes but of underrating the methods bequeathed to us by the Greek and Roman historians.

## I

Anyone who woke up on this western side of Europe on, say, 1 January 1530 with the New-Year resolution of writing a book of history or of biography would have had to take one stark fact into account. His potential readers had some notion of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius and Plutarch, not to speak of some fairly recent additions to Latin historiography, such as Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus. Besides, with the Greek historians, Greek treatises on how to write history had come on to the market, such as those of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the admirable Lucian. Indeed even Cicero's *De Oratore* and his letter to Lucceius had been added to the repertory within living memory. At the same time Hegesippus had been, if not replaced, at least supplemented by the authentic text of Josephus. Printing had of course already given new dimensions to the circulation of books.

The ancients carried with them an invitation to choose. The first choice was simple enough: it was contained in the implicit or explicit condemnation of what now became the ignorant and unkempt medieval chroniclers. But the ancients were not in agreement among themselves, and had not come back to simplify the lives of would-be followers. As a historian you were supposed to be both truthful and eloquent, you were supposed to be an expert on the arts of war and politics, and would have to travel in the lands where the events of your story had happened. Your readers would be aware of these requirements. Yet there had been no uniformity among the ancient historians who had transmitted these rules. If anything was evident, it was the

difference between the classical models themselves. Some of these had indeed criticized each other. The fact that the reputation of Herodotus and Thucydides had not been constant even in antiquity gave rise to thought. As one was invited by the example of the ancient historians themselves to consider them critically, it was easier to notice that they had not been immune from partisan attitudes. How could one write *sine ira et studio* if even the classical models betrayed *ira et studium*? Other scruples were added, as we shall see, by religion. But even without religion, there was enough accumulated material for Francesco Patrizi in 1560 to build up his ten dialogues on History on a keynote of scepticism. Fourteen years later in 1574 Uberto Foglietta, later the 'publico storiografo' of his Genoa, could give arguments both for and against what he called the «Polybian norm» of impartiality. After all even Tiberius had found his Velleius Paterculus. The rhetorical aspect of historiography, which Cicero had reconciled so easily (though not necessarily in good conscience) with respect for truth, was now recognized to be an authentic difficulty. The more so as the acceptance of the rhetorical requirements was a strong argument in favour of the use of Latin in historiography. To say the least, the choice of the language in which to write history was made more self-conscious by the acceptance of ancient standards of presentation.

The mountain of ancient historical texts which was recovered in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries made historical writing in Western Europe a far more complicated and questionable operation than it had ever been after the sixth century. It was accompanied by theoretical writing about the art of history to an extent which had been unknown in the Latin Middle Ages. According to a man who knew, Ludovico Castelvetro, the 'ars historica' had not yet been written, at least as it should, even about 1570. Castelvetro had good reason to make this remark because he thought, rather against his master Aristotle, that «non si può avere piena notizia della



poesia, se non s'ha prima notizia piena dell'istoria». But in 1570 Bodin had already published his *Methodus* (1566). Much of the new theory repeats or develops ancient points of view: *historia magistra vitae*, history providing examples to orators and to philosophers, history providing an anticipation of what man can expect in the future, history being the great judge, history providing praise and blame to last for ever—and therefore being the nearest approximation to immortality on this earth. But these themes are inserted into a larger context in which both the characteristics of human actions in history and the limits of historical objectivity are considered. What is more, through these discussions, the ancient historians (or at least some of them) are given a function as masters of political thought which in Antiquity they had seldom performed. Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Livy and Tacitus are used by men who want to learn and teach what politics is about and how wars must be fought. As guides to political action these historians are made to compete with Plato and Aristotle. The novelty is just in this turning to historians for instruction on matters which had seemed to belong to philosophers. Machiavelli turns to Livy, Bodin and Justus Lipsius to Polybius and Tacitus, Hobbes to Thucydides, Harrington again to Polybius (the only one who, as a result of his book VI, had been taken seriously as a theoretician of politics already in Antiquity). The phenomenon of Tacitism needs no further advertisement: it kept together what we may call middle-brow political thinking from the Atlantic to the Vistula between 1580 and 1650. Just because Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy and Tacitus were models, there was little inducement to re-write the history of the periods on which they had written, but there was every reason for using them as guides in writing about post-classical (and especially contemporary) events.

Socially, the historians who emerged from this return to Antiquity, in reaction against medieval models, were also nearer to their ancient than to their medieval predecessors. They were not clerics or laymen writing, often anonymously, the

chronicle of the corporation to which they belonged—as a part of their life in it. They were not registering events either to defend their corporation or simply to preserve the memory of what had struck them and their brethren. Like the classical historian, the humanistic historian is an individual left to himself—though he may establish personal relations and obligations to a sovereign or to a state, perhaps as a secretary or a chancellor. Even when he is commanded to defend a cause or to extol an individual, he does so in his own name. Furthermore he is normally committed to provide not only facts, but also interpretations which come under the general category of the educative function of history. It must not be inferred that the humanistic historian had more individuality or more ideas than his monastic predecessors. A glance at Ordericus Vitalis and William of Malmesbury is enough to show how rich the personality of a monastic historian could be. But the humanist historian had to prove his ability in order to earn his living and to be reputable. Though the humanistic historians who turn up in the courts of Europe are not necessarily political exiles, as the great majority of important Greek historians had been, they are, characteristically, uprooted men. They have a technical competence to sell. As long as good Livian style seemed to be the preserve of Italians, it was left to Italian historians to celebrate in good Latin the glories of Spain, France, England and Hungary.

Collective historical enterprises were not lacking even under the new dispensation, but they were like the translation of Greek historians patronised and subsidised by Pope Nicholas V, and not like the anonymous collection of materials on the history of France which was initiated at St. Denis by the Abbot Suger in the twelfth century or the compilation of *Grandes Chroniques de France* made in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In so far as they were cultural enterprises going beyond the immediate needs and reputation of the patrons, the historical enterprises of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries might recall the activities promoted by the courts of Alexandria

and Pergamum. The *Letter* of Aristeas was at this time generally (though not universally) considered to be an authentic account of how the Septuagint had been brought about : a good example for a king or a pope patronizing translations from classical texts.

It would be easy to indicate various aspects of the profession of historian in the Renaissance which would not fit the ancient model. For instance, the reputation of a classical historian would depend to a large extent on public readings of his work both before and after his death. But the one development which seems to be decisive in separating the modern historian not only from his medieval but also from his ancient predecessors was hardly noticed during its first stages in the Renaissance. It was the insertion of the historian into the teaching profession. As we all know, there was no professional teaching of history either in antiquity or in the Middle Ages, though grammarians and rhetoricians explained in antiquity what history was about and provided some factual information : in later times the *trivium* would offer some accommodation to history. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the teaching of history slowly takes root in the Universities. It gives a definite position to the historian within the corporations which now aim at educating the laity for professional purposes and either collaborate or compete with monastic and ecclesiastical institutions. The University of Mainz received a 'lectura historica' as early as 1504. We may anticipate here that the competition of the Universities with strictly religious institutions was to affect the attitude of University teachers of history to collective historical enterprises. Since for centuries the Universities were hardly in a position to compete directly with ecclesiastical institutions in the production of historical books, societies and academic printing-presses controlled by Universities or at least by University professors were called into being in order to do something comparable with the enterprises of Benedictines, Dominicans and Jesuits. The *Monumenta Germaniae* and the Cambridge

Histories are the distant products of the professionalization of the historians which is also an aspect of their secularization.

A by-product of this professionalization of the historian's work was the return of the ancient distinction between proper history and memoirs. This distinction had been played down in the Middle Ages, as far as I know ; the memorialist and the historian are certainly not distinguishable in Robert Clari and Geoffroi de Villehardouin, the chroniclers of the Fourth Crusade. In the Renaissance anyone remains entitled to write his own reminiscences, but only the man acquainted with the ancient historical models and duly equipped with rhetorical skills can turn such recollections into true history. The freshness and directness of the medieval chronicles receive a mortal blow. Commynes is perhaps the last historian to recapture some of the unsophisticated shrewdness and grace of the medieval chronicles in the middle of the Renaissance, and yet even he has to present himself as a memorialist, which is not quite his role.

But perhaps the most momentous aspect of the return to Antiquity was the recovery of the distinction between history and antiquities. On the one hand, it meant that ordinary history would once again be centred on military and political events as it had been in Antiquity—with little space for the miraculous, the edifying and simply the bizarre which had interested the previous chroniclers so much. But on the other hand, this development provided an opportunity to re-occupy and even to extend the enormous territory which the ancients had reserved to philology, archaeology, ethnography and whatever other name they used to indicate the systematic collection of information about certain branches of human activities. Political institutions (as distinct from political actions), law, religion, art, literature, language, folklore, chronology and even rudimentary forms of statistics had been legitimate subjects of research among Greeks and Romans. None of the important works of ancient philology and antiquarian studies survived into the Renaissance. But the genre was known : and St. Augustine could at least provide



some idea of what Varro's *Antiquities* had been. Aulus Gellius, Servius, Macrobius and Festus were further points of reference.

Slowly the extraordinary amount of information scattered about in scholia and other late compilations both in Greek and Latin was brought under control. There was no reason why the collection and sifting of the evidence should not be extended to the Dark Ages and even to the recent past. Flavio Biondo, perhaps the first man to master the methods of ancient antiquarians fully, was also the first to apply them to the study of medieval Italy. Consequently antiquarianism became more than a recovery of some aspects of ancient life by applying ancient methods of research. It provided the means of reconstructing other epochs and affected the perception Renaissance men had of themselves in relation to the non-classical world. It is enough to call attention to what that implied for Frenchmen and Germans in relation to their own Celtic and German past. Another chapter is the exploitation of classical categories of thought for the understanding of America. Because antiquarian methods proved to be capable of extension beyond the limits and scopes of classical scholarship, they also proved to be capable of further refinement. Comparisons between different ages became a tool of research. If the point of departure for the recovery of true Antiquity had been the realization that the medieval images of the ancient Greeks and Romans were not true to the facts, the point of arrival was a re-assessment of later ages—and also of Oriental antiquities. In all this process one principle remained constant. Evidence had to be sifted in order to separate its oldest strata from more recent accretions. It was harmless enough as long as it was a question of writing Latin in the spelling which inscriptions proved to be correct or using the grammar and syntax of the Ciceronian age. But if the method was extended, something more than the Donation of Constantine was bound to be called into question. The authentic text of the Bible, the powers of the Pope, the antiquity of certain dogmas,

the cult of the Saints—not to speak of the authentic biography of certain martyrs and saints—were open to doubt. It was through the recovery of ancient antiquarian methods, and their extension and refinement, that Renaissance historiography was to make its most direct contribution to the religious crisis of the age.

## II

The interest in pagan historiography could in fact clash with a Christian outlook in at least four different ways : 1) it could involve the modern historian in historical interpretations which conflicted with Christian ethics and even with Christian dogmas; 2) it could encourage the modern historian to give preference to the study of epochs and countries in which Christianity was unknown ; 3) it could impose a serious strain on the writing of certain types of history which medieval writers had Christianized with singular success, such as autobiography and universal history ; 4) it created problems for an exclusively Christian form of historiography—namely, ecclesiastical history.

Men like Machiavelli, and we may add the later Hobbes and Spinoza, who were determined to construct their theory of politics, and therefore their approach to history, on non-Christian presuppositions, were after all rare : and even they, with the exception of Spinoza, were not prepared to separate themselves from the Christian community to which they belonged. How Christian you remained when you turned to Livy or Tacitus or Thucydides for guidance was an open question. In practice what struck external observers most was the propensity of the historians, and in general of the scholars, to prefer non-Christian to Christian subjects. The preface by A. Sabinus to the *editio princeps* of Ammianus Marcellinus published in Rome in 1474 presents the late Roman historian as being more interested in Christians than modern Christian historians were likely to be : *Non possum non mirari... quosdam viros*



*ita deditos annalibus antiquis atque historiis ut si qua deinceps secuta sunt ea contemnent praecipue Christianorum tempore gesta.* Ammianus Marcellinus even acquired the reputation of having been a Christian or at least a sympathiser with the Christians: *aut saltem animo et voto a Christianis non alienus, de quibus honorifice in tota historia sparsim sensit et scribit*, as a pupil of Cujas, Claude Chifflet, observed in his *De Ammiani Marcellini vita et libris Rerum Gestarum Monobiblion*. The indifference of modern Christians to Christian historical subjects resulted in turning ancient pagans into Christians. The emphasis on political and military history which was the direct consequence of the revival of ancient historiographical models was in itself a significant contribution to the de-Christianization of the historical outlook. This became apparent also in the treatment of autobiography (and perhaps more generally of biography) and in the attitude to universal history.

No autobiography had survived from the pagan world, unless one took Marcus Aurelius' *Thoughts* as autobiography. There were, however, speeches in self-defence, from Isocrates to Libanius, which could count as autobiography; and that solitary Jewish product, Flavius Josephus' autobiographical sketch, was not unlike these apologetic orations. By contrast St. Augustine had created or perfected a tradition of Christian self-examination. Few were willing or able to imitate the *Confessions*: Guibert de Nogent was one of the few in his *De vita sua* (c. 1115)—and only partially so. But no Christian autobiographical writing could ignore them. Neither the *Historia Calamitatum* by Abelard nor the *Opusculum de conversione sua* by Hermannus (quondam) Judaeus (XII century) can formally be treated as deriving from St. Augustine. Abelard tells a story of punished incontinence of a kind which can perhaps even be traced back to Apuleius: subjectively he sees himself as a second St. Jerome. Hermannus presents his autobiography as the interpretation of a dream he had at the age of 13, the age when a Jewish boy becomes a Bar-Mizva. But the searching

introspection which such works display and the firm beliefs they presuppose are of course an Augustinian heritage. It may be symptomatic that the proto-humanist Petrarch sought the help of St. Augustine in his difficulties only to confess his failure to St. Augustine himself in the *Secretum*: St. Augustine gives him due acknowledgement, *Quo pede claudices agnosco*. But mature Renaissance autobiography definitely leaves St. Augustine out. Gerolamo Cardano, who wrote and re-wrote his autobiography at different stages of his life, mentioned only ancient pagan texts as his models in his final redaction of 1576: in a previous version he had also included St. Jerome and St. Augustine (1557).

This goes together with the revival of classical biography in general: Plutarch is now the model. But in autobiography, for the reasons we have mentioned, there was much less to imitate from Greek and Roman predecessors. Cardano goes his own way in defining his development and himself produces a significant model, to which Vico and Gibbon probably owe an indirect debt. Cellini, his contemporary, picks up in his turn, as only an undisciplined mind can, all sorts of suggestions from contemporary attitudes to artists, tramps and sinners. He has been described as one of the founders of the picaresque novel. If he is not one of the prototypes of modern individualism, as Burckhardt wanted him to be in company with Cardano, he certainly leads towards Casanova's memoirs. What is indisputable in Cardano's and Cellini's autobiographies is their non-Augustinian, even non-Christian, flavour. If a man with a humanistic outlook and education wanted to pursue introspection he had to write something different from autobiography. In fact he had to invent a new form—which, I suppose, is what Montaigne's *Essais* are.

The little sympathy humanists reserve for universal history is equally characteristic. It is also characteristic that the exception to the exception should be represented by Antonio Sabellico's *Enneades*. Universal history had been invented by the Greeks.

As far as we know, they were the first to speak of the succession of monarchies or empires. The idea had been taken over by the Jews in the third or second century B.C., and was given the special twist we can observe in the *Book of Daniel*. The Christians, of course, received the notion of universal history (or more exactly of the succession of monarchies) not from Polybius and Justin, but from Daniel: that is, they expected the succession of a limited number of empires to be terminated by God, as Daniel had promised. This notion was at the root of the theory of the *translatio imperii* and of the speculations about the Second Advent. It had been widely accepted and developed in the Middle Ages, but was of little use to humanistic historians: Machiavelli is explicit on this point (*Discorsi* II, 1). As the humanists had Polybius and Diodorus—not to speak of Justin—in their hands they might easily have separated the classical features of universal history from the Jewish-Christian accretions. But they had no inducement to do so—apart from the fact that it was not their habit of mind to look for conflicts between sacred and profane history. What they asked from history was a supply of permanently valid examples: they looked for paradigmatic situations, not for a scheme of succession of events. As Robert Gaguin said of Julius Caesar as a writer of commentaries: «il ne semble pas qu'il escripve les fais d'une nacion seulement, mais de tout le monde» (1485). Gaguin for one would not have seen the point of having a universal history when a memoir on a single war could sum up the whole of human affairs. Subsequently Bodin spelt out the other very pertinent reason for not indulging in universal history. The theory of the four monarchies supported the claim of the German emperors that they were the fourth and last monarchy willed by God—and described by Daniel—before the return of Christ. Bodin, as a good Frenchman, had no hesitation in declaring that he would have assigned the fourth monarchy to the Turks or to the Tartars rather than to the Germans.

This was done when the Reformation had already come to stay, and any illusion of combining « una lunga esperienza delle cose moderne et una continua lezione delle antiche », as Machiavelli would say, might seem out of date. But the dates of intellectual history do not exactly coincide with those of political or even religious history. Signs, however, of the change, even in historiography, were not lacking. In 1532 Melanchthon gave his blessing and his collaboration—to be perfected later—to the *Chronica Carionis* which a few years before would have looked like a piece of delayed medieval universal history. Later the new saints of the Counter-Reformation—St. Teresa of Avila most prominent among them—wrote their autobiographies with the model of St. Augustine before them. The opposite claims about the nature of the true Church had to be thrashed out by examining the evidence about the primitive Church. This meant picking up the threads of ecclesiastical history where they had been dropped in the early seventh century. The Magdeburg centuriators started the offensive, and Baronio replied. Humanistic erudition was welcome to provide any amount of philological arguments for the warring parties but could not offer a conceptual framework for the discussion. In fact scholars and antiquarians had to refine their weapons in order to cope with the demands which Church history made on them. There had never been before such a prolonged and heated discussion about the authenticity of texts and the meaning of words. The new saints did not render the Plutarchean heroes superfluous. Nor was the Polybian cycle of constitutions declared to be obsolete. But the religious wars showed for ever after that Machiavelli had for once been wildly optimistic when he declared: « fa ancora facilità il conoscere le cose future per le passate, vedere una nazione lungo tempo tenere i medesimi costumi » (*Discorsi* III, 43). In any case that peculiar *res publica*, the *res publica literarum*, had been split in the middle: the theologians had come back in strength, and there was no longer any security in reading the ancient texts.



## III

If our purpose were to establish at what moment the art of history ceased to be identified with the surviving pagan historians of Greece and Rome, we might well stop at about A.D. 1590 or even earlier. But our purpose is to account, if possible, for the paradox that classical historiography was not discredited or considered useless when the aims of historical writing became different—different from what they had been in the fifteenth and in much of the sixteenth century, but different also from what they had been in Antiquity. Let us therefore make explicit what has already been implicit in the previous pages. The house of history, once rebuilt in the classical style, had been pleasant to live in for a while and, like many other reconstructions, it had never been really identical with the original. When after two centuries some restructuring became necessary, the new architects did not want to make the place unrecognizable. War and diplomacy seemed to require a classical background. We should never stop marvelling at the fact that, with all the changes in military techniques and diplomatic practices, battles and international relations were still described in the nineteenth century according to classical models. Where the requirements were definitely different, erudition maintained continuity.

Erudition became the most important branch of historiography about 1600. Though much antiquarian labour went into collecting evidence about various aspects of the life of the classical world, a greater effort was made to present a coherent picture of early Christianity and medieval institutions. The books which characterize seventeenth-century erudition are *Hispania*, *Italia*, *Gallia Christiana* or *Sacra*, the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, the *Acta Sanctorum* and the editions of patristic authors. Consequently erudition was supported by religious orders, where they existed, or by sovereigns, where religious orders had been suppressed, or (as is partly the case of France)

they pursued aims which were not identical with those of the secular authorities. Oriental languages were increasingly appreciated. Scaliger had just shown exemplarily how they could be used for universal history and chronology. Erudition was a requirement of ecclesiastical controversy; at the same time it seemed to some extent to refute those sceptics who had concluded that if history was controversial it could not be trusted. Coins, inscriptions, and archival documents, just because they were so numerous, so repetitious and so casually discovered where one would least expect them, could not be so easily falsified as the literary texts of which there were few copies. If erudition was involved in controversy, it was also the remedy against the Pyrrhonism engendered by controversy. It even offered some answers (though not quite *the* answer) to the ironical remarks of the philosophers of the Cartesian variety who simply had no use for history. To those who agreed that truth was in mathematical formulae or in the immediate certainty of the *cogito*—or rather in both—the *érudits* could at least reply that, in their view, coins were no less certain evidence than the *cogito*. Old-fashioned humanists had some difficulty in reconciling themselves to the new situation: the personal stories of the men of the transition—Henricus Stephanus, Scaliger, Lipsius and Casaubon—teach us something about this. But the new erudition did not break with the classical world. Not only was it interested in the study of Antiquity but, to those who practised it, it also appeared to be an extension of the methods of ancient historiography—as in fact it was. At Antwerp among the Bollandists, at Saint-Germain-des-Prés among the Maurists and even in the Vatican Library there was always a place for the '*studia humanissima*'. Admittedly, there was no fusion of political historiography and of erudition in the seventeenth century, but both, in their relative independence, established the right of ancient historiography to survive when there was no longer any prospect of modelling modern life on ancient life. Altogether Christian education, whether Catholic,



Anglican or Protestant, remained based on the pagan classics, even if that ultimately implied a contradiction.

Erudition was therefore attacked in the eighteenth century by the philosophers who disliked it as an ally of religion. Voltaire's final argument was that the erudition of the previous centuries had only served to increase obscurity. His main objection even to a rationalistic critic of the Bible like Jean Astruc was: « Et de quoi a servi ce travail ingrat et dangereux d'Astruc ? A redoubler les ténèbres qu'il a voulu éclaircir » (*Dict. Philosophique*, s.v. 'Genèse'). One may even argue that with their belief in enlightenment and reason the philosophers were inclined to sacrifice Antiquity altogether and to replace Latin by French (or English). Speaking at Lausanne about Gibbon a few years ago (« Eighteenth-century Prelude to Mr. Gibbon », *Gibbon et Rome à la lumière de l'historiographie moderne*, ed. P. Ducrey (Genève 1977), 57-72), I had the opportunity of emphasizing the novelty of the problems and methods which characterized eighteenth-century historiography in relation to the classical tradition of historiography. Some of the basic questions the eighteenth-century historians asked about the development of legislation, ownership, taxation, trade, social relations, popular traditions and religion had no real equivalent in ancient historical texts. The mere fact of placing civilization at the centre of historical thinking was new. It implied a comparative study of pre-classical and non-classical cultures such as had not been undertaken before. One of the many results was the rediscovery of Indian literature and religion which opened the way to the notion of an Aryan civilization.

But neither Greco-Roman classicism nor the erudition which supported it was eliminated. Erudition was not something the philosophers could afford to despise for too long without risking their own necks ; nor was there any necessary connection between the methods of the *érudits* and the religious controversies in which they had been involved. Gibbon was of course the historian who gave the most impressive demonstration that

erudition, far from being incompatible with enlightenment, could become its best support. It followed that thorough knowledge of Antiquity and of the Middle Ages was compatible with a desire for reform and free thought. As it happened, there was a whole wing of radical thinkers and politicians who looked upon republican Rome, on Sparta and even on Athens as desirable models for a reformed world. A little later, in reaction to Napoleon, the struggles for national independence evoked memories of Thermopylae, Marathon and Chaeronea. The new fact was the support to national and liberal movements provided by the adroit use of classical history and historiography.

In any case, at the dawn of the nineteenth century there was once again agreement on the point that in one way or another classical historians were relevant to modern social and political problems. Some of the connections were traditional. Polybius, via Montesquieu, remained the classic theorist of the mixed constitution; Xenophon went on teaching about the ways of Sparta, Tacitus about tyranny, Plutarch about a variety of politicians from Lycurgus to the Gracchi. What perhaps stood out in the new situation was the use of Herodotus as an authority on Oriental despotism and the Greek struggle for freedom, and of Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus as sources for the ascent of the Roman plebs. But what was possibly most characteristic was the emergence—as early as the eighteenth century—of Thucydides in Germany and England as the archetype of the true historian. As Hume said (and Kant more or less repeated): « The first page of Thucydides is, in my opinion, the commencement of real history ». A modern historian like Ranke, an economist like Wilhelm Roscher and an educationalist like Thomas Arnold of Rugby were agreed on this, for which there is no simple explanation. Thucydides was of course good at describing revolutions, knew how to deal with demagogues and might seem to support the Rankean doctrine of the primacy of foreign policy. He was admirable at reporting parliamentary debates and in Pericles' speech had outlined what a modern

'Kulturstaat' should be. Finally, he had the two qualities which seemed more than ever essential to the making of a historian. He knew human nature and never retailed easy wisdom to his readers. He was better than Polybius because Polybius was a philistine (and, as Fustel de Coulanges later observed, not exactly a courageous patriot). He was also better than Tacitus who judged events from a narrow aristocratic point of view.

The reappraisal of the ancient historians went together with the exciting new subjects they helped the moderns to discuss. Niebuhr made the origins of Rome, and more precisely of plebeian Rome, one of the most fashionable historical subjects of the new century. Grote and Mommsen turned the party politics of Athens and Rome into stories symbolic of nineteenth-century Europe. It is instructive to see what happened to Livy as a consequence of Niebuhr's intervention. He could no longer be credited with true stories about the origins of Rome. But Niebuhr presented Livy as the historian who had naively and faithfully preserved the ancient popular ballads about the Roman archaic heroes. The rather more solid aspect of this new historiography must not be forgotten. Niebuhr, Boeckh and Mommsen were involved in antiquarian works aiming to clarify the legal, economic and institutional features of Greek and Roman civilization. Once again modern erudition, based on ancient erudition, came to supplement the classical historians.

#### IV

We can begin to feel a different atmosphere about 1860. Ranke may have started from Thucydides, but ultimately became himself the model of a new historiography: this really meant independence from classical models for modern history. In every country of Europe medieval history was revalued by historians in search of national roots, and as such not greatly interested in the cosmopolitan culture and institutions of

imperial Rome. What had happened during and after the Germanic and the Arab invasions was more urgent. Furthermore, new historical methods affected the evaluation of the ancient historians adversely. The Hegelians of the right and of the left had their own methods, which owed little to Thucydides. Neither Ferdinand Christian Baur nor Karl Marx were in the tradition of classical historiography which had ignored dialectics. Any great name of the cultural history so characteristic of the second half of the nineteenth century—whether Burckhardt, Taine, Dilthey or Comparetti—will confirm this independence from classical historiography. If Niebuhr had managed to reconcile Classicism with Romanticism in his reinterpretation of early Roman history, his great contemporaries Savigny and Jakob Grimm and even more their disciples created a tradition of study of law and language which broke with classical canons. The new disciplines of sociology and social anthropology were in a sense rooted in the works of Herodotus and Aristotle, but gained authority in a context of evolutionary theories unknown to the ancients.

In short, during the first half of the nineteenth century the classical historians were read again with that joy of discovery with which they had previously been read in the early Renaissance. They were also used in some of the most revolutionary interpretations of ancient history ever propounded. All this changed in the second part of the century. Historical research, even about Antiquity, continued to be daring and far-reaching, but was less and less guided by the ideas and assumptions of the classical historians themselves.

With one important difference, which I shall make explicit at the end, the situation is still the same in our century. I am sure that any one of us can produce some names of eminent historians of the last eighty years who would still consider Thucydides or Tacitus or maybe even Plutarch as their masters. Eduard Meyer is one of these names, Ronald Syme perhaps another. But there are far fewer of them than one would expect.



For instance, a close look at Toynbee, who has so often been accused of being the slave of his classical education, shows how little he depended on classical models for his study of history. I am fairly certain that two such students and theorizers of historiography as Meinecke and Croce owed nothing to classical historians, though at least Croce knew them very well. In this century historians have gone into the study of the ancient world with ideas and problems derived from other areas and other epochs. They did not derive their outlook from the study of the classical historians. No ancient source suggested to Rostovtzeff his interpretation of Roman imperial history : it was suggested by the Russian revolution. Scholars have undertaken research on land-tenure, inflation, race relations, the position of women, or on imperial strategy in the ancient world because they had already met these problems in the modern world. Even the so-called primitivists had already found primitive forms of economic activity in pre-capitalistic societies outside Greece and Rome. Marc Bloch was the son of an ancient historian, but the school of the *Annales* which he and Lucien Febvre created has no classical roots—which has not prevented its becoming enormously influential in classical studies as well as medieval and modern history. In America, the famous report of the Social Science Research Council on 'Theory and Practice in Historical Study' published about 1945 was so remote from anything resembling ancient historiography that it would seem indecent to express wonder. Even more interestingly, structuralism has opened up a variety of approaches to the analysis of the ancient world which renounce the basic assumption of ancient historiography, the consideration of the time factor.

Such a situation has of course multiplied works on ancient history. We are in no danger of seeing ancient history become derelict territory. Any problem affecting modern life is being transferred to ancient history, whether the classical historians were aware of it or not. To the multiplication of the approaches to history, which is characteristic of our age, we must add the

multiplication of the groups interested in the history of the ancient world. For good reason the classical world is no longer confined to its traditional heirs : the outsiders are taking, quite rightly, a keen interest in it.

Two questions are raised by this situation in which the subjects for research on the classical world are less and less suggested by the classical historians, and more and more derived from the interests and the worries of modern society.

The first question is familiar to any student of ancient history today. How are we going to assess the impact of certain phenomena on the ancient world if the classical historians were not aware of these phenomena ? In certain cases the answer is relatively easy. If Thucydides was not aware of a crisis of parental authority in Athens, perhaps Aristophanes was. Inscriptions and papyri after all throw light on aspects of society which are not mentioned by any literary source. If quantitative history is so seldom possible in Antiquity, appropriate quantification can be suggested by analogy with comparable societies for which data exist. The technique of approach to Roman society of Keith Hopkins is guided by such an assumption. The question, however, cannot always be answered or eluded in these ways. When classical historians are no longer the recognized guides to the trends and characteristics of ancient society, the production of satisfactory models of description and explanation is bound to be more difficult. Elias Bickerman has amusingly shown more than once how easy it is to compel the ancients to hate each other under the pretext of generational or racial conflicts simply because we are in the bad habit of behaving in that way. The discipline of historical psychology from which J.-P. Vernant took his start is a warning against assuming *a priori* that there are universal psychological constants.

The second question is even more delicate. Clearly, nobody is going to throw the classical historians out of the window because they no longer guide our research on the classical world. To say



the least, Thucydides, Sallust, and Tacitus will always be used as evidence for the mentality, the ideologies, the language and the self-image characteristic of the time and place to which they belonged. Furthermore, though this is not equally certain, we may assume that historiography, like philosophy, will always be considered a typical creation or at least formalization of Greek culture, which it is therefore interesting to study in its Greek context. Hence I expect a steady flow of works on the origins of the historical spirit among the Greeks—if not among the Romans. At this point, however, I must make explicit the novelty of the twentieth century to which I was alluding. I left it to the last, because it is the crux of the matter. So far I have talked of methodological questions arising from the loss of authority of the classical historians. What is, however, new in our time is that there exist important currents of thought which relativize all the historians—whether belonging to the classical world or to other ages—and consider them the mere exponents of ideologies or even more narrowly of centres of power. Historiography is therefore deprived of any value in the search for truth. One may suspect that the authors of such statements about historians, being themselves historians, make a secret exception for themselves. But this would be poor consolation, as self-contradiction is no solution. It is, I believe, the combination of the decline in authority of the classical historians as guides to the classical world with the decline in authority of any historian as a potential transmitter of truth that really characterizes our situation.

If the net result of this situation were to make Herodotus and Thucydides the victims of a simplified history of political ideologies or of a simplified sociology of knowledge, I fear that our loss would be great. It seems to me that every historian must be judged according to the truth he transmits (or discovers), and the element of truth in a historian can never be separated from the principles of organization he chooses in representing the facts. Thucydides is worth much to me not

only because he tells me something about the ideologies of his own time, but because he interprets facts in a manner which satisfies me. Nor is he valid only for his own time, but also for previous ages which he tried to define and outline. In the same way Herodotus and Livy give me valid accounts and points of view also for the times in which they were not yet born, though it seems to me that Thucydides does this better than either, or at least certainly better than Livy. Indeed it seems to me that Thucydides, being a better historian than Livy, can teach me something about understanding archaic Rome and Italy. The fact that Thucydides can instruct me about the ideologies of the age of Pericles just as much as Livy can about the ideologies of the age of Augustus does not yet put their methods of thinking on the same level.

The way in which ancient history will be written in the near future will depend on the answer we are going to give to these apparently simple questions : 1) how are we going to proceed where we cannot be guided by the ancient historians ? 2) how are we going to evaluate the classical historians if and when they are no longer our guides and we are thereby tempted to reduce them to the rank of ideological evidence for their own time ?

We must start from the frank admission that we are writing a different history from Thucydides' history. And we must admit that our inspiration is in our own problems rather than in ancient sources. But we are still concerned, at least it seems so to me, with the problem of what is *right* with Thucydides, or any other classical historian. It is implicit in my point of view that the same question can, of course, and must, be asked not only about Thucydides or any other traditional master of Western historiography, but also about historians of different traditions. Long ago we were warned that in order to understand the Crusades we must also read the Arabic accounts. Assyrian chroniclers, Ibn-Khaldun or Ssu-ma-chien can and must interest us not only as representatives of certain ideologies,

but as interpreters of realities capable of transmitting truths. We shall, however, have to worry less about them if we are clear about the value of the historians who created for us the category of history.

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## DISCUSSION

*M. Dover* : The fact that Thucydides came to be treated as the classical historian *par excellence* may be due to his first twenty-three chapters : cool, assured, magisterial, saying in effect, « *this* is my task, and *this* is how I have set about it ». And I am deliberately including the ἀρχαιολογία, and not just thinking of the methodological chapter and the statements about the causes of the war. The *whole* opening of Book I seems to me to impose upon the reader the authority of the writer, because it generalizes so confidently and conveys an *impression* of deep and wide historical knowledge. No other ancient historian succeeds in conveying such an impression.

*M. Momigliano* : You are probably right, but at the moment I do not remember when the ἀρχαιολογία began to be the object of special admiration. Hume's words seem to support you.

*M. Dover* : Certainly historians from the mid-nineteenth century onwards differed increasingly from the ancient historians because they asked new questions. To that extent one can characterize the ancient historians negatively : they did *not* ask the questions which we ask. But now suppose a historian said to himself, « I will write the history of such-and-such in the ancient manner ». What are the *positive* characteristics of the ancient historians *as a whole* ? I am not speaking, of course, simply of an imitation of Xenophon in particular or Livy in particular ; that is a different matter.

*M. Momigliano* : On certain subjects—say the history of a war, a biography, the analysis of a revolution—I think that even to-day a historian could go very far by a free use of ancient historical techniques. Ancient historians knew how to narrate wars, clarify com-

plex diplomatic dealings, describe foreign nations, analyse the causes (or certain causes) of revolutions, tell the life story of an individual and evaluate his character, account for institutions, etc.

*M. den Boer* : It is obvious that modern enterprises in historiography, such as 'History of European Expansion' lead to asking questions which cannot be 'controlled' by ancient sources.

There is a general erosion of history as a discipline which has to be mastered. Quite often new ideologies *constitute* the erosion. Ideologies derived from the philosophies of history are paramount. Can one save the vulnerable science of history from ideologies ?

*M. Momigliano* : We should have to define what we mean by ideology. Let us, however, assume that every historian has class interests to defend. What makes him a historian remains his ability to defend his own class interests by historical research conducted according to methods which can be subjected to rational discussion and verification.

*M. Burkert* : Wenn wir diese 'Erosion' der Geschichte, diese Verflüchtigung des Sachgehalts in der ideologischen Problematisierung feststellen, stellt sich die Frage nach den Ursachen dieser Entwicklung.

Hängt die Weg-Entwicklung der modernen von der antiken Geschichtsschreibung zusammen mit der literarischen Form und dem Publikum, für das man schreibt? Antike Geschichtsschreibung seit Herodot und Thukydides war immer auch Literatur, für ein breites Publikum von literarisch Gebildeten geschrieben und dem literarischen Stilurteil unterstellt — auch Thukydides wurde ja weniger als politisches Lehrbuch denn als Schriftsteller geschätzt. Mir scheint, Geschichtsschreibung bis etwa Eduard Meyer hat noch ein ähnliches allgemeines Publikum von Gebildeten zumindest mit im Auge. Heute könnte man fragen, ob Geschichtswissenschaft nicht im wesentlichen von Professoren für ihresgleichen und für Studenten getrieben wird — ein weltweites intellektuelles Ghetto.

Hängt es damit zusammen, dass Geschichte als Geschichtserzählung so aus der Mode gekommen ist und die theoretisch-ideologische Diskussion so überhand nimmt ?

*M. Momigliano* : I may be wrong, but my impression is very different. It seems to me that nowadays more than ever serious historians write with a large public in mind and do reach it in reality. The extraordinary success of the difficult and scholarly *History of Italy* published by Einaudi in the last years is not an isolated phenomenon.

*M. Burkert* : Was lässt sich sagen über die Ursachen der hier konstatierten Entwicklung, dieses Realitätsverlustes in der Geschichtsschreibung ?

*M. Momigliano* : I wish I knew. My paper would have been different, and our discussion too.

*M<sup>me</sup> Patlagean* : Nous sommes tous héritiers des historiens de l'Antiquité, en ce sens que nous appartenons comme eux et après eux à une société, ou plutôt à une civilisation, qui a l'exigence de formaliser son passé d'une certaine façon. Cela dit, l'historien me semble avoir éclaté en plusieurs personnages, que différencie leur situation par rapport au pouvoir : acteur direct de celui-ci, de Guizot à Trotski ; porte-parole d'un pouvoir auquel il ne participe pas, mais dont il est un auxiliaire proche et indispensable, dans un régime totalitaire par exemple ; enfin, le professeur d'histoire, libre de liens explicites avec le pouvoir, et néanmoins inévitablement partisan. Je crois qu'il n'est pas insalubre d'en prendre conscience chez autrui ou chez soi-même, de l'enseigner, et d'avoir perdu les illusions qui permettaient à Fustel de Coulanges ou Ernest Stein de se proclamer absents de l'histoire qu'ils écrivaient. A ces personnages de l'historien s'ajoute maintenant celui qui raconte l'histoire au public, à la radio ou à la télévision, et dont le prestige est loin d'être érodé, ce qui est un sujet non de satisfaction, mais de vigilance.

*M. Momigliano* : At any time any historian (like anybody else) is in some relation, positive or negative, with the sources of power. In other words, any historian represents some interests. The essential question, however, is whether a historian cares for the truth and tries to organize his research in order to reach the truth. As I have said elsewhere, a historian is good not because he shares my political and religious convictions, but because he *proves* his point by proper scholarly methods.

*M<sup>me</sup> Patlagean* : Je suis frappée du manque d'*Histoires ecclésiastiques* à la Renaissance. Eusèbe paraît n'être guère entré dans le cercle des lectures historiographiques de cette époque.

*M. Momigliano* : Unless I am grossly wrong, in the West there was very little oecumenical ecclesiastical history after the sixth century and before the Reformation. To say why is another matter. I have discussed the subject elsewhere not very successfully.

*M. den Boer* : It has been a long session, in which we have heard a fellow-historian 'in an age of anxiety'. We admire his intellectual integrity, his respect for historical truth, his opposition to ideologies which abuse historiography by deliberately choosing distorted historical evidence to propagate their modern philosophies. He is right. *Historia magistra vitae* does not mean that history is the hand-maid of ideologies.

I remember that Oswald Spengler gave a lecture at Leiden. Huizinga was in the chair. Our guest's subject was connected with European Prehistory and maritime navigation in the second millennium B. C. Huizinga thanked him in a few words, from which I remember the last sentence : « Wir in Holland sind mehr atlantisch als nordisch orientiert. »—Can this be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to modern theories and the humble task of the historian ? The gap seems to be unbridgeable.



