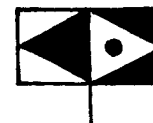


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HISTORIOGRAPHY

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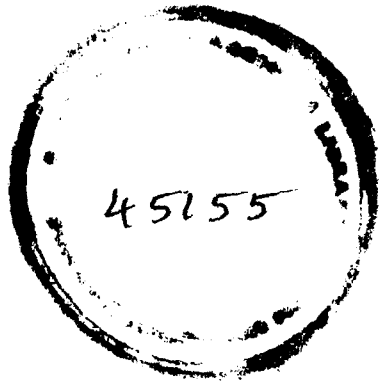


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PREFACE

Clio, the Muse was no native of India. The Muse came late to this country; and when she did so, the fortunes of this land were in foreign hands. When the country came into its own, the Muse had already had a controversial career here. She had to contend with handicaps which she has not yet overcome. The established and required style of history has developed a tradition here during the past century or so; but the latest sophistications have been very slow in coming or in being admitted. History of historical writings, historical theory, cliometrics, methodology of human science research etc. are now growing into vast new disciplines and these do not find a place in the Indian historical literature or in the curricula of most universities even at the highest level; though a humble beginning has been made in this regard in some places.

As a teacher of history and as a researcher in historical problems during the past two decades and more, I have always felt the urgent need for a literature on these aspects of historical studies. That is the justification for the work now in your hands.

It is not as if there is really no literature whatsoever on these matters in India; U N. Ghoshal, R. C. Majumdar, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and a number of less known but by no means less learned scholars have contributed in a pioneering way to certain aspects of this branch of knowledge. Dr. Ghoshal specialised in the Ancient Period; Dr. Majumdar wrote eminent papers on the subject and delivered three lectures under the Heras Endowment. Prof. Sastri in his *Historical Methods*, concentrated mostly on sources. Dr. S. P. Sen, editor of the *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* published a number of valuable papers on this subject, in the issues relating to 1963 to 1965. His recent edition of *Historians and Historiography in Modern India*, is not less welcome than Dr. C. H. Phillips' edition of *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*.

In fact the situation was such as to Provoke anyone to take up the challenge to write a comprehensive work on the subject from the Indian point of view. This does not mean that the familiar points of view associated with the west should be stood on their heads. The Indian point of view is merely a technique of explanation suitable for the Indian student keeping in mind his environment and equipment. The result of my taking up the challenge is this book. I have now told you how this unusual but necessary piece of literature on historiography came to be written. It is for the reader to state his reactions to it.

This book is in five parts and twenty-six chapters. It is concerned with four aspects of history: 1. Historical theory; 2. biographical notes regarding the lives and achievements of significant historians; 3. history of historical writing; and 4. the methodology of historical research and composition. In fact it deals with the science and technology of history. Beginning with a definition of history this work proceeds to consider history not in isolation but in the context of the totality of human knowledge; and tries to delineate the special features of History as a discipline. It proceeds to narrate the stages by which historical thinking and writing evolved from the days of heroic bardic poetry to modern times. European, Islamic, Chinese and Indian historians come in for chronological treatment and they are studied with reference to the times which made them and the forces which they set in motion. Finally historiographical methodology or what might be called thesis engineering is discussed in some detail, and the emphasis here is rather on the needs of an Indian researcher, whose needs, no doubt, are many.

It is inevitable that in a study like this more than the lion's share should be devoted to a recounting and criticism of western thinkers on History, for modern 'History' whether scientific or otherwise is the logical product of western experience and intellectual traditions; and oriental historiography-the

canons of which are now discarded in favour of the evolving western tradition—was at best an interesting parenthesis, amusing and irritating to impatient moderns but legitimately treated as part of man's intellectual experience.

In the making of this book, I have been encouraged consistently by my good friends Messrs. K. M. Natarajan, V. R. Sankarasubbu, S. Loganathan, M. Paramasivam and S. Jeyapragasam to whom my thanks are due. Mr. Ariyathambi, the able foreman of the Vaigai Achagam and Mr. S. Krishnasamy as well as other workers of the press have been largely responsible for the way in which the book has been excellently and expeditiously printed.

N. SUBRAHMANIAN

*TO THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER*

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Definition

It is a good and useful dictum that anyone who wishes to know the nature of an intellectual discipline should first define it for himself. Definition limits and enlightens the scope of the subject, sets its boundaries and distinguishes it from other disciplines. A failure to so define an area of knowledge for oneself will lead to errors and confusion; and to avoid these in respect of the subject of our study viz. History, we shall discuss herebelow attempts which have so far been made to define it and finally arrive at one for our purposes. We shall still bear in mind that even the most careful definition will remain tentative and will have to change when the conceptual complexion of the subject itself changes.

History has been defined by all kinds of persons, since it is a common belief (almost a superstition) that a 'popular'¹ subject like 'History' can be defined by anyone who has any interest in or against it. Angry, sober, scholarly, partisan definitions have all been made by professionals as well as amateurs who include ignorant generalists. Some definitions very striking by the mere fact of their emanating from eminent non-scholars - ones, have often been repeated and given much undeserved publicity, merely because they are funny; some have rightly been discussed at length since they set out the true bounds of the subject, but yet are controversial. But it is good to remember that an ultimate definition of History cannot yet be (or perhaps can never be).

Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c. 40-8 B. C.) was one of the earliest to speak of the essential function of History. He said "History is Philosophy drawn from examples"² Of course, by 'examples' he meant real ones from life and not imaginary tales for the edification of a reader or refutation or proof of a point; by 'philosophy' he meant the process of drawing a lesson. So according to him when lessons are drawn from real life which is also significant and when these lessons are ordered to form a coherent whole, then we have History.

Aristotle suggested that, 'History is an account of the unchanging past', thereby holding that it is an account, and the past is by its nature incapable of change. He said significantly 'even God cannot change the past'.³

Bacon said that 'History is a discipline which makes men wise' and this is saying much. Wisdom, according to Bacon, is different from mere intellectual alertness or even the accumulation of useful information commonly

¹ In the sense of its being non-technical.

² *Ars rhetorica*, 11. 2.

³ Quoted in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, 6.

called knowledge. According to Bacon, History produces a sobriety which he calls wisdom.

Sir Walter Raleigh said, "the end and scope of all History is to teach us by example of times past such wisdom as may guide our desires and action." In his equation of the function of History with the provision of wisdom he resembles Bacon in the latter's estimate of History.

Hegel was quite pessimistic in his estimate of History. 'What experience and History teach is this - that people and Governments never have learnt anything from History; or acted on principles deduced from it'.⁴ This pessimism, however, did not deter him from undertaking the delineation of the contours of Historical speculation.

Friedrich Von Schlegel described a historian as 'a prophet in reverse'.⁵ This means that according to him, 'History is prophecy in reverse'. This definition opens up endless vistas of thought on the subject. This presumes that looking into the past and knowing it is as difficult if not impossible as looking into the future and knowing it.

Lecky said, 'History is the record and explanation of moral revolutions'. His view is based on the theory that the evolution of mankind is ideological and not merely factual i. e., contingent.

A similar view was held by Leibnitz who said, 'History is the true demonstration of religion'.

R. W. Emerson said what Carlyle also was to say that 'there is properly no History but only biography'.⁶

Edmund Burke, who has been described by Acton as the most intelligent of our instructors, said 'History is a preceptor of prudence, not of principles'.

⁴ Quoted in G. B. Shaw's *The Revolutionists' Hand book*.

⁵ *Athenaum* 1. *Fragmente*.

⁶ *Essay on History*.

Sir Charles Firth characterised 'History as a branch of learning to be studied for its own sake in addition to being a kind of knowledge which is useful to men in their daily life'. He says elsewhere that, 'History is the record of the life of societies of men, of the changes which those societies have gone through, of the ideas which have determined the actions of those societies and of the material conditions which have helped or hindered their development.

Carlyle, the noted English Philosopher, declared, 'as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here'; 'social life of the aggregate of all the individual men's lives who constitute society; History is the essence of those innumerable biographies'.⁷ This definition will attract our detailed attention later.

J. B. Bury made a very controversial definition of History: "History is a science, no less and no more". No author who discusses definition of history misses a repetition of this definition. He again says, 'so long as History was regarded as an art, the sanctions of truth and accuracy could not be severe'; 'I may remind you that History is not a branch of literature.'

B. Croce the famous Italian Historian, made the well-known statement 'all History is contemporary history'.⁸ Croce said this because he felt that past events become History only when they are contemplated by the historian and so History materialises only in the historian's thought. Thus all history has to be contemporary history.

Seeley compared History with Politics and said 'History is past Politics; and Politics is present History',

⁷ Ibid

⁸ History as the story of liberty: P. 19

This is a half-truth and like all half-truths dangerous, since it deludes. The past and the present cannot be so easily distinguished from each other, for the present is constantly flowing into the past, and ceases to be the present even at the moment of contemplation. If Seeley included the recent past in the present perhaps there is some justification; but he does not seem to have done that. Possibly History and Politics are two aspects of the same social phenomenon.

Acton, the great Professor of Modern History at Cambridge gave a definition of History characteristic of the 19th century, i. e., History is the unfolding story of human freedom. This is a secular way of putting Bossuet's teleological view of 'Universal History as leading to the Christian revelation'.

Acton was the great architect of the monumental Cambridge Modern History. He said in 1896 writing a preface to that series: 'Ultimate history, we cannot have in this generation' indicating thereby that it may be within reach sometime later. But G. N. Clark said fifty years later, 'the exploration is endless and some impatient scholars take refuge in scepticism or at least in the doctrine that since all historical judgments involve persons and points of view one is as another and there is no objective historical truth'.⁹ But 'objective' is often used in two senses: 1. The objective absolute and all embracing and 2. the objective limited to the purpose. While the latter is recommended it is corrected by the impossibility of the former; that even the latter cannot be entirely satisfactorily practised also means little, for the objective after all is not the achievement but mostly the attitude of mind brought to bear on a piece of intellectual engagement on hand.

⁹ The New Cambridge Modern History: Vol. I, P. XXV, 1957.

A. L. Rowse said, "History is essentially the record of the life of men in societies in their geographical and their physical environment. Their social and cultural environment arises from the interaction of the one with the other, the society and its geographical conditions." Again he says, 'the history of every country is that of the civilization to which it belongs.'

York Powell is of the opinion that History must not be concerned with pleasant presentation. 'Style and the needs of a popular audience have no more to do with history than with law or astronomy.'

Seignobos agreed with the view that 'History was essentially a science of reasoning since all historical knowledge is indirect.' Hence he indirectly disagrees with logical positivism, when applied to historical speculation.

Collingwood the great British historical philosopher has the following to say about History: 'The Philosophy of History is concerned neither with the past by itself, nor with the historian's thought about it by itself, but with the two things in their mutual relations'. This definition admits that History refers to different things at the same time. This is true of History in another sense also: 1. History means the totality of the past doings of man, and 2. the account of such doings written down by historians. Similarly, Collingwood gives two meanings for 'Philosophy of history' i. e., 1. the discovery of the meaning and purpose of events; the 19th century historians generally held this view; and 2. The nature of a historian's thought and method followed by him. "From the beginning of historiographical accounts in different societies some attempts have been made to read a meaning into the procession of events - the Homeric legends treating of gods and men and the Hindu and Buddhist legends treating of moral values in human actions."

M. Oakeshott said, "History is the Historian's experience".¹⁰ This is akin to Collingwood's and Croce's view that 'History is what passes through the historian's mind. It is the historian's mind which gives history a meaning'.

Augustine Birrell talking about Carlyle and recounting his *Obiter dictum* laid it down that 'History was a great dust-heap'.¹¹ This is one of the few definitions of History which reveal either the author's ignorance, lack of sympathy or understanding, or cynicism. Carlyle, of course, must have made this *Obiter dictum* in a moment of some frustration which was not unusual with him.

Voltaire said, "All our ancient History, as one of our wits remarked, is no more than accepted fiction." Later on Napoleon I, the French Emperor, expressed the view that 'History is an agreed fable'. One should think that the Emperor, with all his experience and knowledge made a mistake in regard to the substantive as well as the adjective; for it is certain that History cannot be 'fable', nor need it be 'agreed'. In fact it must be neither a fable nor agreed. It should be a true account (real as far as the historian can discover) of the past and different historians must have the freedom to express different opinions on the same topics and proceeding even on the basis of the same set of data.

Sir Robert Walpole once told his son who offered to read to him that 'he could read anything but History, for History must be false'.¹² This Walpolian remark reflected the same frame of mind as that of Voltaire and Napoleon.

Voltaire said, "History is just the portrayal of crimes and misfortunes".¹³ A statement similar to this was made by Gibbon: "History is indeed little more than

¹⁰ Experience and its modes: p. 99.

¹¹ Augustine Birrell: *Obiter dicta*, Carlyle.

¹² Walpoliana, Vol. I. p. 60.

¹³ L. Ingenu, ch. X.

the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind". These definitions perhaps err on the side of cynicism, though written accounts of historical events often tend to exaggerate 'the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind'.

But the most offensive statement comes from Henry Ford who said that "History is bunk".¹⁴ Whatever he might have meant it shows at least that there can be a person who can so thoroughly misunderstand the nature and function of history as to call it 'bunk'. The philosopher, and if he knows humanity well, will certainly not expect any more than this kind of appraisal from a successful businessman.

James Joyce, the author of the remarkable work, 'Ulysses' has this on 'History', through one of his characters: "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awaken".¹⁵

E. H. Carr, a recent historian, pithily said that 'History means interpretation', and in a vital sense he is correct. If History were to be merely a catalogue of events without comment or an attempt to extract a meaning out of it or put a meaning on it, it will then not be much different from a grocer's list - perhaps it will be even less exciting. Interpretation is of the essence of History.

Some of the definitions given above, it is needless to say, reflect the passing moods of certain thinkers, while some others are wise and relevant. History is the entire past achievements (and failures to achieve) of *homo sapiens* as well as the written records of such activities studied by men who value knowledge for their own and others' edification and for the understanding

¹⁴ In the witness Box when serving the Chicago Tribune, July 1919
¹⁵ Ulysses, p. 31

of human nature. Man may not benefit by the experiences of others; but as Alexander Pope said, 'Man's proper study is man'.

We have so far considered only some of the more important definitions of History made by Western thinkers of a certain nature. Among westerners the idea as to what History is has not been the same during the past twenty five centuries and more when in different places in Europe it was practised in different ways and for different reasons. The Greeks were not worried about the ancient past. The more famous among them namely Herodotus and Thucydides wrote on contemporary politico-military themes, i. e., the Persian wars and the Peloponnesian war. They do not seem to have considered it a function of History to dig into the past and lay it bare before the present and the future for discussion and criticism. Herodotus had no objection to spicing his History with some fables while Thucydides would hold forth on matters of political wisdom through his characters. From those days to the present, when one talks about the scientific History of a Ranke or the meta-history of a Toynbee, it is a pretty far cry. The cry has resounded through twenty five centuries and more in different tunes. These we shall turn to in a later chapter. In the orient social memory of the past built itself up into strange myths and traditions, it is not as if the orient had a monopoly of myths; the west had them too. The middle west (or the middle east) in its Hebrew and early Christian traditions accounted for a number of myths. But India among the countries of the east had the distinction of bestowing a different definition on History. They did not necessarily associate factuality with History, but a moral, mythical capsule into which facts and fiction judiciously combined for purposes of religious and spiritual edification would be packed. As a convenient device to achieve this they changed the concept of time to make the future serve the purposes of the past and

the past was narrated in the form of prediction. Even now these attitudes to the nature and function of History have not changed in some quarters. History however means only a true account of what really happened in the past as well as a faithful account of such happenings.

History we have said is not only the entirety of past happenings but also its account. Looked at this way it is clear that the same word has stood for two different things: 1. a sum of events and 2. a narrative account of those events. It is always dangerous to allow a single word to stand for two ideas. This leads to dubiety and misunderstanding. Historiography on the other hand can be more simply defined. It has been defined as 'those accounts of historic events which have been composed in literary form of greater or lesser accomplishment for the instruction or edification of the author's contemporaries and of posterity.'¹⁶ Thus we can see that accounts of historical events, strictly speaking, belong rather to the realm of historiography than to that of History. This distinction if carefully maintained will avoid confusion.

Nature

and

Uses of History

i Nature of History

When we think of the nature of History there are certain permanent characteristics which make it *sui generis* and unique, and also certain transient features which may change from time to time. Considering the second aspect first, it can be stated that the nature of History will change according to the prevailing philosophy of history and even from historian to historian according to his predilection and training.¹ One's attitude to history is largely determined by experience. Pessimism or optimism in regard to the historical process will be decided by a period of war, pestilence and destruction or by plenty and prosperity as the case may be. Great changes in the fortunes of nations seem to call for rewriting of their history in the light of the new changes.

¹⁶ Chambers Encyclopaedia: Historiography.

For example, countries like India, liberated from imperial control, want to rewrite their History and are resentful of the kind of history written by the spokesmen of their erstwhile rulers. This is a very delicate job. This is an emotional attitude to the problem and one cannot say that it is devoid of justification. But when emotions control the mind the intellect is not likely to function dispassionately. The nationalist historians will tend to commit historiographical crimes which can be the opposite of those committed by the imperialist historians. The ignorance of Indian culture exhibited by James Mill for example, can be more than equalled by the cultural chauvinism of Hindu scholars too numerous to mention. The older histories also must be respected and preserved since they are direct proof of a certain point of view relevant perhaps to the age which produced them. Smith's Oxford History, especially its 'British period' is history in two senses. It is not only a record of the history of that period, it is itself original evidence of a certain attitude towards Indo-Anglian socio-political relations of those times. So to a genuine historian, whose genuineness consists in not being committed one way or the other, nothing is rejectable.

A cynical outlook will prevail when mankind faces defeat after defeat; on the other hand a boom will cheer the heart of a historian. For example, Acton thought it incumbent on him to pass moral judgments. That was when his empire prospered. A. J. P. Taylor

1 'St. Augustine looked at History from the point of view of the early Christian; Tillamont from that of a 17th century Frenchman; Gibbon from that of an 18th century Englishman; Mommsen from that of a 19th century German. There is no point in asking which was the right point of view. It was the only one possible for the man who adopted it'. R. G. Collingwood: *The Idea of History* (1946), p. xii

in the 20th cent. holds a view.² In an age of doubt and uncertainty, therefore, historical relativism becomes imperative or at least attractive. But the nature of History as a whole will be not only to adopt such passing, changing attitudes but also to know the changes and their *raison d'être*.

As for the permanent characteristics of History, like every other discipline it has its own immutable features. History can be distinguished from science on the one hand and metaphysics on the other, literature on the one hand and fine arts like music on the other. It is not rigorous in the sense that science has to function in strict conformity with the laws of nature, which are not alterable by man; nor is History intended to provide sensory delight as a beautiful piece of painting or a pleasant exercise in music. It does not proceed or thrive on mere hypothesis, incapable of empirical proof as much of philosophy is. It is not merely a scientific pooling together of existing or real data, but a construction of valid inferences thereon, with a considerable area of freedom of interpretation of the data so collected, reserved for the individual historian's judgment. Thus History's dominant role is *interpretative*,³ though at other stages it might involve the technological business of spotting and collecting evidence, and subjecting it to rigorous criticism and at another stage of using the literary art for the purpose of elegant communication.

2 'The clash between Acton and Sir George Clark is a reflection of the change in our total outlook on society over the interval between these two pronouncements. Acton speaks out of the positive belief, the clear-eyed self-confidence of the later Victorian age; Sir George Clark echoes the bewilderment and distracted scepticism of the next generation'. Carr; *What is history?*, p. 2

3 'The interpretation of the past becomes a prophecy in reverse demonstrating the past as a meaningful preparation for the future': Lowith, *Meaning in History*. p. 6, 'History means interpretation' and 'the element of interpretation enters into every fact of History.' E. H. Carr; *What is History?* p. 18

Thus it follows that 'History is man's attempt to describe and interpret the past.' Barraclaugh said: 'It is the attempt to discover on the basis of fragmentary evidence the significant thing about the past'.⁴

History is secular. It is concerned with temporal, mundane matters and not with spiritual efforts. It does not and cannot deal with events or personalities or situations which are not bound by time or space. That is the eternal and the universal (extending far beyond the known cosmos) are not the concern of the historian. Thus the historical process is said to be a time-space continuum'. The super-natural, the non-rational cannot be grist for the historian's mill, but even then if they come within the experience or record of man will be noticed with the scepticism, perhaps, but not disdain or impious disbelief.⁵

History is thus primarily interested in the affairs of this planet and would care for the rest of the universe only as a larger whole of which the earth, which is man's habitat, is a part. Even within this world of the normal, he is less concerned with the geological and the geographical (except in so far as they condition man's career on this planet) than with life itself. But life is essentially human life for the historian who studies the flora, the fauna and avifauna only in so far as

4 **History in a changing World:** pp. 29, 30

5 The historical jacket of time-space-causation: the trio have more than the usual significance in Indian thought. History is the occurrence of events in time and in space; it therefore is temporal and material. The events occur also in causal chain though each event is unique. But in Hindu thought the whole of this concept is removed from the historical plane to a metaphysical one where causation is held to mean moral causation. There are no 'accidents' and nothing absolutely 'unique' or 'erratic'. Everything could be predicted if only we knew all that happened before. The assumption of moral consequence makes causation spiritual and a matter of destiny with the additional assumption of inevitability in it.

they also, along with man, participate in the process of evolution; but not for their own sake or divorced from the interests of man. Thus the nature of History narrows down to nearly-exclusive interest in the affairs of man; that interest grows with the growth of man from the early stages in his evolution to modern times. It is man as a rational animal and as a social animal (a gregarious being) that ultimately forms the subject matter of History. Even then the public activities of man are the legitimate field of historical studies; what may seem to be a person's purely private activity may enter the pages of history if such activity has public consequences like Henry VIII's marriages, for instance. It must be noted that while Henry VIII and his wives belong to history, Blue Beard belongs only to children's horror-fiction. History has been at times called 'human science' which, however, is not a very pleasant way of describing it.

History is concerned therefore with the lives and doings of consequential persons, the consequences being social. These 'consequences' are also known as 'importance' in history. Important persons and important events, i. e., those which influence large bodies of other persons and events now and in the future are alone significant for history.

A chief characteristic of history is to be interested in the past. It makes the assumption that the future cannot be known—certainly not directly as the present can be known, nor through reliable testimony as in the case of the past—i.e., neither as a logical extension of the past and present, nor as inferable from the past. Prediction (fore-telling)—essentially the business of an astrologer—of course is out of bounds for history. The expectation of a Saviour, the recurrence of a Prophet, a new Buddha or a Tirthankara turning up or a Vishnu waiting to 'descend'—these are narrated in history as part of social beliefs but classified among myths. Attempts to recognize a vast historical framework which

includes the past, the present and the future in a pattern, though not incredible, is not history proper but is meta-history. It would be tempting to indulge in learned meta-history but a good historian's constant prayer shall be 'not to be led into that temptation.'

So history has to be rather interested in the past; while dealing with the past it must be borne in mind that one has to depend on large quantities of different kinds of evidence regarding what happened and when, in the past. It is easily seen that even the most assiduous collector of antiquities cannot hope to know all about everything relating to the past.⁶ It is impossible in the first place, it is undesirable in the second. The historian is not concerned with everything that happened nor everybody who lived in the past. He is selective in his concern. As we have noted already the significant alone interest him. Though the facts of the past may be brought to his notice and in their proper sequence, it is left to the historian to imagine the 'atmosphere' (the social climate), the context, the *Milieu* in which the facts existed. The passage of time might well-nigh make it impossible for one to recapture the past in its appropriate form. Further the historian chooses his facts and gives them a meaning depending on their antecedents, context and consequence. So it has been rightly said by

6 "Bacon said men 'mark their hits but not the misses'; they collect industriously the examples in which many and sometimes improbable circumstances have converged to a result which they consider good, and they simply leave out of their consideration the circumstances that tend in opposite direction": Lecky: **History of European morals**, p. 358. This is an instance of deliberate ignorance which is a historiographical crime. But the honest historian's difficulty is the non-availability of even wanted data. Bury, who knew the ancient and medieval periods well, rightly said: 'the records of ancient and medieval histories are starred with lacunae': **Selected essays** (1930), p. 52. In the case of ancient Indian history, however, it can be stated with some justification that 'the lacunae are occasionally starred with records'.

Carr that 'the belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy'.

Earlier we saw that history is 'social memory'; this is the memory of the collectivity. But it may not always be dependable. For social memory has been responsible not only for the preservation of historical facts but also perversions of those facts into myths, legends and allegories which are often red herrings in the path of true history. M. Eliade says that 'the memory of the collectivity is anhistorical. Some ancient Indian philosophers tried to escape from human history so well exemplified in the past, by abolishing history.' Eliade put it neatly: 'the Buddha said that all existence is pain and liberation from it is attained by suspension of History. The vedanta according to Sankara also makes all suffering unhistorical, i. e., illusory ... suffering was also justified because it was the result of curse. God cursed Adam and he brought his curse to this earth and suffered. The Hindu Gods also cursed the misbehaving members of their retinue and these were born on this earth bearing the curse.'⁷

While on myths, it may be stated that history should be straightforward and not camouflaged by allegorical meanings. It should not give a nonsecular meaning to a secular event. This would be historiographical false-personation. The *dramatis personae* in history must be the original delineation and the induction of imaginative presentation, though luring, must be resisted. Secondly, even as there should be no confusion of the secular with the non-secular, there should be no confusion between the past and the future. Unnecessary and misleading devices like narrating a past event as if it was a prediction,

7 **The myth of the eternal return.** Sundarar being born on this earth bearing the curse pronounced on him by Siva for misbehaviour in the celestial gardens towards a couple of female attendants on Parvathi reminds one strongly of God's curse on Adam.

a device notoriously adopted by the Hindu *puranas* or the creation of a mythological framework for the conveyance of moral ideas as in the case of the Buddhist Jataka stories, would be contrary to history proper. History obliges people to think and be responsible. Those who consider thinking difficult and responsibility painful have recourse to myths and content themselves with proverbial incantations which serve to save people 'from the tiresome obligation to think for themselves.'

We have noted earlier that the supernatural cannot be history. The early records of all nations are full of portents and marvels. We do not believe in them now. The Homeric poems are full of Olympian gods befriending or fighting earthly men. The Hindu *puranas* have many similar situations. The Hebrew scripture contain a great deal of theocratic history as well as myth. Till the rise of Greece this dominance of theocratic history and myth over myth proper was a conspicuous feature of early religious literature. Myths in fact are not concerned with human actions. They deal with either Gods or invented men. These must be carefully distinguished from scientific history proper.

History is secular, we said i. e. , it is bound by time and space. It was wisely observed that 'chronology and geography are the two eyes of history'. Chronology stands for time and geography for space. The time-space continuum provides the temporal base for History. But this base can be abused and imaginary mythological persons can be made to inhabit the earth and fictitious events may be made to pass through time. Collingwood says 'when a myth is couched in what seems a temporal shape because it relates events one of which follows another in a definite order, the shape is not strictly speaking temporal, it is quasi-temporal; the narrator here is using the language of time succession as a metaphor'. Such exercises cannot be history.

History should be concerned not generally with the past but only with the realities of the past. Now what is real is a relevant question. What is possible for the historian of today alone is conceded by him to have been possible in the past also. Hence his scepticism regarding the super-normal (the normal being what the historian of today is ordinarily accustomed to). That is why Trevelyan said 'in the matter of reality there is no difference between past and present'. This reality though in its general nature familiar to the historian never palls on him. Carlyle said: 'the reality is grander than fiction'. This reality about the past goes back deep into the dim antiquity and the historian's business is to delve into that past and to recover the unseen and to recreate it as it were. Hence History is concerned with origins. The man of theology cuts the Gordian knot of enquiry by the concept of Special Creation. We have either to accept a momentary starting point like the Day of Creation or accept evolution. Since evolution is capable of secular explanation historians prefer that to theological assumptions. Once evolution is accepted the beginnings from this distance of time are naturally dim and the historian seeks the aid of archaeologists, anthropologists and other pre-historians. But even so what they will know about man and his doings in those primitive times will be immeasurably less than what we know about him now. While dealing with the past the historian wishes to know the nature of the lives of men and women of the past ages and also how the present state of things evolved out of that past.

The importance of time in the historical process cannot be over emphasised. The facts and events of history occur in time and these are not isolated but interconnected. Some events generate other events which means that the historical process is marked by the phenomenon of causation. In the ancient past when mobility was poor the inter-tribal, inter-familial relations were sparse, the gamut of

causation would have been limited. But with the progress of time the whole world having come to be knit closely whatever happens anywhere affects people everywhere and so causation becomes more universal. Apparently there can be events which cannot be related to any cause and which may not be productive of obvious results. Such events are called 'chance'. It has been debated whether there can be chance strictly speaking. Usually when we do not know the cause of an event we say it was 'chance' or 'accident'. But if we probe deeply enough a cause can be discovered. But on this matter there has been difference of opinion. Montesquieu wrote that 'it is not chance that rules the world there are general causes at work all accidents are subject to these causes a dominant trend carries with it all the particular accidents.'⁸ Victor Hugo maintained that chance had a role to play in history. He held that there is a historical law according to which the affairs of mankind reach a particular point and then history changes its direction. To him the individual facts are unique. Their emergence can be the result of chance. But once they are there they are used by a cosmic force that uses the individual for its own end annihilating it when it no longer serves its purpose.⁹ Marx speaking of chance wrote: 'it would obviously make things very easy in history, if one had to engage in struggle only under absolutely favourable conditions These fortuitous accidents are a natural part of the general cause of evolution and their effect is ultimately offset by other accidents. But the acceleration and deceleration depend a great deal on such accidents'. But in Marx the effect of one accident is offset by another and the general course of evolution remains unaffected.

It has been stated by others that all history is contingent and that history is concerned with unique events.

⁸ Considerations on the causes of the greatness of the Romans
⁹ Quoted by Nicola Chiaromonte: *The Paradox of History* p. 26

It is one thing to say that an event is unique and another that it is uncaused. The uniqueness of every historical fact has to be conceded because no two events can occur simultaneously in the same place. Since space and time make up history, if we take space to be the X-axis and time the Y-axis on a graph, lines drawn from any point on XX' will meet its perpendicular from any point on YY' at only one point and that point is unique. Two persons can be born at the same time. Two persons can be born in the same place. But no two persons can be born in the same place at the same time. Hence everything has a natal uniqueness. Events may be caused by other events but still remain unique. The contingent is the unforeseen. History picks up the contingent but tries to discover a root for it. The totally unrelated event will acquire no meaning.¹⁰ Hence he recognises the unique but not the contingent or the accidental.

It is commonly stated and generally believed by non-professionals that history repeats itself. Nothing can be more wrong than this statement for if by history we mean historical facts no fact can repeat itself since every fact is unique. Identical facts occurring at different times are not the *same* facts but *similar* facts. Similar historical situations can recur but a situation once it has arisen and disappeared will not appear again. So instead of saying 'historical situations repeat themselves' it would be truer to say 'similar historical situations occur from time to time'. Trevelyan said that 'History repeats itself and History never repeats itself are about equally true.'¹¹ He illustrates it thus: 'It is not even true that a violent political and social revolution is always followed by a

¹⁰ 'Single events as such are not meaningful nor is a mere succession of events. To venture a statement about the meaning of historical events is possible only when their *telos* becomes apparent'. Lowith: *Meaning in History* p. 5

¹¹ *Autobiography*: p. 84

military despotism: George Washington was not a military despot'.

History cannot be static as it moves in time. This movement in time has been considered by different cultures in different ways. Some treat the movement as cyclical, always coming back to the starting point, a procedure beautifully expressed by the phrase 'eternal return'. Others have imagined this movement to be along a straight line starting from an unknown past and proceeding towards an unpredictable future. Whether there was any beginning or there will be an end is not categorically stated. But the movement along this line from the past to the future via the present is postulated. A third way is to clothe the word 'movement' with certain values and call it 'progress'. Literally progress is moving from place to place. But the word has come to mean 'movement from the less desired and less desirable to a more desired and more desirable condition'. Acton said 'all the world is by the very law of its creation in eternal progress; and the cause of all the evils of the world may be traced to that natural but most deadly error of human indolence and corruption that our business is to preserve and not to improve'. This idea not only accepts the concept of progress but wants it to mean movement towards a desirable goal. In another context he said, 'the law of all progress is one and the same: The evolution of the simple into the complex by successive differentiations'.

The idea of progress is related to the idea of evolution. Vico (1668-1744) wrote in his *New Science* that there is a certain evolution by stages in the development of human history: the ages of Gods, heroes and men. This is evolution by stages applied to the social organism. In one sense sociologists like Vico anticipated Darwin (19th century) and it may not be quite right to say that Darwin influenced historical thinking in the direction of evolution. Science as a whole had its impact on history but specifi-

cally the idea of progress had independently grown among the historians. According to Vico similar human situations recur from time to time at increasingly higher levels. This suggests that the progress is perhaps not linear but spiral. The elder Pliny, for instance, believed that the ages are progressively improving. The idea got its support among the encyclopaedists of France as well as the thinkers of the age of Enlightenment. Comte when he founded the positivist school stated that the scientific method was fully applicable to our study of the historical process. He himself enunciated three stages of progress in human history: theology, metaphysics and positive sciences.

The nature and purpose of history is to reveal the 'ultimate consequences of actions and movements in the past, their relation to later times haply to our own day. Napoleon and Bismarck cannot be judged in quite the same way by us as by contemporaries. For we know the end of that history or at least its next chapters. The second and more specifically historical function of the historian..... is to find out what people of the past themselves thought and felt and intended. To do this the historian has from time to time to strip himself as it were of his knowledge of what came after'.¹²

Some would say that history does not exist outside the historian's mind. Croce and Collingwood are the leading exponents of this view. This too involves a theory and needs extensive and separate treatment.¹³

History goes on changing the nature of its interest to man as time passes. Very ancient history of the pre-literate period for instance had only antiquarian interest. Very recent history will not be sufficiently dead to permit the historian to conduct clinical tests on it

12 G. M. Trevelyan: *Autobiography*, p. 78

13 Vide chapter on 'The Philosophy of History'.

without causing pain. Current events constituting contemporary history are sensitive and the desired objectivity will be very difficult to attain. In fact, there is a tendency to consider contemporary history as merely politics; it becomes history only when it is well settled in the past. This has led to some over-simplification which must be avoided; for, one must remember that the present is the heir to the past and certain areas of the past can also be sensitive in certain cultures,¹⁴ and broad historical trends can be detected even in contemporary history; for example, wise men knew that after Hitler's war the empires would vanish.

Whether history is literature or not, whether it is science or not are also questions which have engaged the attention of thinkers great and small. Seeley said that 'history faded into mere literature when not related to politics and politics would be vulgar when not liberalised by history'. This is in a sense a plea to keep history, literature and politics close to each other.

The continuity of the historical process is an important feature of history. The past gave birth to the present which will create the future. Past, present and future are strongly held by the chain of causation. It is possible to consider this continuity as pleasant and desirable or as painful or as erratic. The point of view would depend upon the observer. Max Muller said 'the present suffers from the past, and the future struggles hard in escaping from the present' and his statement reveals his mind. When great cataclysms like revolutions occur in society, one tends to feel that history is at a standstill. But as Acton said revolutions tend to destroy

¹⁴ Like the Dravidian origins; and certain others staking their all on somehow proving that the Aryans were autochthons of India. Though this is a cultural failing it is yet powerful and influences present politics.

history upto a point. But then they create new history. 'The unexpected truth, stranger than fiction, is that this was not the ruin but the renovation of History'. In regard to the fascinating question whether History is a science etc. varying opinions, most of them learned, have been expressed. Namier said 'the function of the historian is akin to that of the painter and not of the photographic camera: to discover and set forth, to single out and stress that which is of the nature of the thing and not reproduce indiscriminately all that meets the eyes what matters in history is the great outline and the significant detail; what must be avoided is the deadly morass of irrelevant narrative. History is therefore necessarily subjective and individual.'

The subtle distinction between history, metaphysics and science etc. is also a vast theme bearing directly on the nature of History. Everyone knows that history has two functions to perform at least: 1) collection of data and 2) interpretation. The first part has to be objective and therefore scientific. The second part will be necessarily subjective and therefore non-scientific. According to Trevelyan there are three distinct functions of History that we may call 1) the scientific, 2) the imaginative and 3) the literary. 'The scientific relates to the accumulation of facts; then comes the imaginative when he (the historian) plays with the facts that he has gathered, selects and classifies them and makes his guesses and imaginations; last, the literary function is the exposition of the results of science and imagination in a form that will educate'. Elsewhere in this book I have classified the intellectual function into the scientific, the critical (historical), and the metaphysical. History therefore is not merely collection of data in a scientific way with the help of archaeologists and others; its essential function is interpretation of the facts so gathered and which certainly will not speak for themselves. The interpretation of data which are 'realities' is a function of criticism which, in the

form in which it is employed by the historian is irrelevant and unknown to the scientist and the metaphysician.

Then there is the question whether history yields any lesson. Some hold that history has a didactic purpose. Here there are two senses in which the word History is used: 1) The historical process itself and 2) the written record called history. If it is said that historical writings must didactically hold forth, it must be deemed a pernicious doctrine. History must not be written to preach a doctrine, however desirable it may be. History must inform, it need not instruct at all. If it is the reader's desire to extract some instruction out of it he may be welcome to do so. But no lessons shall be thrust down his throat or up his cerebrum. Ranke, the German historian, was one of those who frowned upon didacticism in historical writings. On the other hand if we mean by history the historical process itself, it is within limits possible to draw lessons. Whether we could act on those lessons is another matter. The organization of international peace keeping agencies like the League and the U. N. was born of the lessons drawn from mass human suffering. From time to time in the course of history people try to learn from experience and try to avoid 'evitable' follies. But this is different from the larger question whether history has any verdict to pass or lessons to give. Here one should say that Hegel was right when he said 'the only lesson we learn from history is that there are no lessons to be learned'. To say that it is in the nature of history for man to expect some good in the future out of the sufferings of the present may not be quite right since this expectation is related to the nature of man rather than the nature of history. Polybius held that history has a lesson to offer. There is a moral lesson to be drawn according to him from the historical experience of alternating glories and disaster. The lesson to be learned is 'to be moderate in times of prosperity and to become wise by the misfortunes of others.' Boling-

broke called history 'philosophy teaching by examples'. The history of mankind so far has however not given proof that it is capable of learning by examples. Bolingbroke himself while emphasising the lessons of history did not want the historian to turn moral instructor.

Why do historians write histories? Eadmer in the preface to his *Historia Novorum* says 'I feel sure that great service is done to posterity by those who in their eagerness to serve the future have put on record the events of their own times. William of Newburg in his *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* says that his work was due to 'a desire to record notable events for the enlightenment and edification of future generations'. William of Malmesbury in the preface to *Historia Novella* asks 'what is more pleasant than to put on record the deeds of brave men as an example to others to stave off sloth and take up arms in the defence of their country?' Matthew Paris in his preface to the *Historia Anglorum* says that a record of events must be maintained so that 'we may shun the footsteps of the wicked and follow in the tracks of the good, whose deeds we describe'. Gervaise says that 'History provides examples of virtuous living'. Even now there are a few quasi-historians and publicists who say that the business of history is merely to record the doings of the virtuous. They still live in the days of Matthew Paris and evidently have not heard of the modern view of history that it is the historian's duty to record everything as it really happened. History is relentless. It punishes those who meddle with it — even those who are contemptuous of it. The Hindus who tried to by-pass history have been brought within it and their attempts to abolish history have become part of their history now. The truth about Shi-hwang-ti, the Chinese Emperor who destroyed all historical records before him to ensure his reputation as the First Emperor has been exposed by History. Hitler & co. destroyed records but in their turn they are destroyed and the records are restored. Mr. Ford

who committed unpardonable contempt of history and avowed it with 'such engaging frankness' is now identified as 'one who is himself the outcome of certain aspects of the social history of the United States in the 19th c.'¹⁵

There are many kinds of History. With the passage of time the scope of History has been widened and new areas are coming up. Cohen says, 'with the extension of the general scope of historical studies there naturally came a widening of the conception of the proper subject matter of History. Instead of the old restriction to the study of kings and dynasties, warriors and the like there came also a more human conception of the proper province of history to include ordinary social functions such as games, social manners, everyday business transactions, all the things which constitute the substance of the daily life of men, women and children.'¹⁶

Apart from the question of the relationship of history with allied disciplines we must also notice the different branches of history which a student of history must be familiar with. These we shall however turn to in the next chapter.

ii Uses of History

The ordinarily educated man and the student who is directed to a school of History for his further studies usually ask themselves and others the question: 'What is the use of History?' This question is annoying to the professional historian who cannot find a ready answer to this. But a moment's serious reflection will show that history has enormous unsuspected uses apart from

a few fairly obvious ones. Among the obvious it will be seen that a study of History at the University can fetch a degree which cannot be academically less useful than degrees in other subjects. He is ranked among educated men and with some effort he could even be a cultivated man, a person dependable for sound judgment. There are numerous avenues of life wherein he can be usefully employed; if he is a student of political and diplomatic history, the foreign office - if it knows its business - will look to him for assistance; if he is a student of religious history, the temples and other charitable endowments, especially the *mathas* which are centres of ancient learning and traditional culture, will deem his services invaluable; or if he is a student of art history on one can be more suitable than he to man museums, art galleries and so forth; if he is a student of local and parochial history, municipalities, townships and other corporate bodies, if they know their interests, will employ these men of local knowledge to understand and improve local conditions. Apart from these it is also proper that University faculties of history which need intelligent historians to preside over them and create further batches of historians to succeed them will be re-absorbing the best among the products. None of these things may really happen due to imperfections of social situations, but no reasonable person will dispute that all these things can and must happen. This is, however, not the kind of use we will be talking about here in connection with History. We shall be concerned with the more fundamental question of the basic utility of History as a discipline and a systematic course of study to an intelligent aspirant to a knowledge of History. So we will be embarking upon another set of answers to the question enunciated above.

For the devoted students of History, the very systematic pursuit of the subject gives a pleasure comparable to what a person solving a knotty mathematical problem

15 G. M. Trevelyan: *Autobiography*, p. 63

16 *Meaning of Human History*, p. 15

or playing a tough game of chess will feel. This pleasure apart history has its own special attractions. The artistry which is part of good history and the very fact of its taking the *present* reader into unsuspected areas of the *past*, constitutes high adventure and like all travel helps to cultivate the man. It not only educates but trains the mind in the habit of dwelling upon political and social problems and makes historical situations familiar to him. Langlois and Seignobos have said that 'by familiarising people with social and institutional change it cures people of the tendency to be too parochial. As for the idea of a study of history being useful for solving historical problems of the present the argument can be overdone; for it has not been demonstrably proved that lessons can be learned from history. But one who is aware of historical situations, problems etc. cannot at least be taken unawares when similar situations arise again. History is not a specialised or technical field of study and so it becomes a sort of ideal liberal education; and Bacon truly said, 'Histories make men wise'.

History is not a separate subject functioning in isolation. It is *inclusive*¹⁷ and every discipline has its history; and so no discipline can escape History. Hence History is useful not only to the professional student but to everyone else besides. It shelters all disciplines and itself becomes fascinating in the process. Camden wrote in his preface to *Britannia*, 'if there are any who desire to be strangers in their own country, foreigners in their own cities and always children in knowledge, let them please themselves. I will write not for such humours'.

17 Fustel de Coulanges said: "do not imagine you are listening to me; it is history itself that speaks." That means that whatever a person says out of experience is History. "History is not the rival of classics or of modern literature or of the political sciences; it is rather the house in which they all dwell".

The utility of History (which in one sense can be called social memory) will be most obvious if one thought about what would happen to a society in which no one remembered anything about the past; i. e., if the entire society suffered from amnesia; the horror will be evident only then. But society being inorganic it cannot have memory. So it must have a mechanism or an agency which will *remember* on its behalf and that agency is the historian.

Before we begin to understand or improve any system or idea the first thing we should do is to know the history of that system or idea, so that even a mathematician or a musician or a philosopher can do and understand his mathematics, music or philosophy better by learning the history of those things. Entire cultures, like the Judaeo-Christian, the Chinese and the Islamic, have grown out of the sense of history which the originators of those cultures possessed.

A meaningful social life at present would be impossible without reference to a knowledge of the past. Hence it is claimed that, 'an important justification for history is that it is *necessary*', for, to know one's own (and even other people's) past is a basic instinct in man. This instinct has been admirably described by G. M. Trevelyan as a sense of 'the quasi-miraculous fact that once on this earth walked other men and women as actual as we are to-day, thinking their own thoughts, swayed by their own passions, but now all gone one generation vanishing after another, gone as utterly as we ourselves shall shortly be gone, like ghosts at cockcrow.'

There is such a thing as 'historical sense'; some people possess it, some others don't. A statement of the reasons for this disparity will involve much social psychology and the entire early history of different cultures. We shall not enter into that now. But there can be no doubt

about the need for a sense of history among any people. Wyatt put the question: 'Is it important for a nation, do you think, to have a sense of history?' to Bertrand Russell who said in reply: 'Yes, I think it is enormously important; it gives stability and it gives depth to your thought and to your feeling'.¹⁸

The word 'use' is used differently in the two different contexts: 1) when we speak about the uses of history and 2) about the uses of science. The uses of science are practical and utilitarian. To be precise, we should speak of the uses of technology and not the uses of science in this context. Science is theoretical and has no more than educative, disciplinary and curiosity value, unless it is channelised into technology when its use becomes material and obvious. Even as pure science unless converted into technology has no material or commercial value, history too unless it is channelised into bureaucratic and diplomatic service its value will only be theoretical and purely educative.

R. G. Collingwood says, 'History has a value; its teachings are useful for human life; simply because the rhythm of its changes is likely to repeat itself, similar antecedents leading to similar consequents; the history of notable events is worth remembering in order to serve as a basis for prognostic judgments, not demonstrable but probable, laying down not what will happen, but what is likely to happen indicating the points

18 Bertrand Russell speaks his mind, p. 100 Russell adds in another context, 'I think British democratic approach a matter of History, most of all; and I think perhaps the most important element in it is the fact that we haven't had a foreign invasion since 1066. Practically every country on the continent has had foreign invaders and foreign invaders have a very very bad effect on the mentality of the people who suffer them'-If this be true India should have been very very badly affected by them.

of danger in rhythms now going on'.¹⁹ He answers a hypothetical question, 'what is history for?' and gives a straight answer: 'it is for human self-knowledge'.²⁰ Collingwood explains himself thus: 'Knowing yourself means knowing, first what it is to be a man; secondly, knowing what it is to be the kind of man you are; and thirdly, knowing what it is to be the man *you* are and nobody else is'.²¹

Renier observes that it is through history that man uses the accumulated experience of his species.²² One of those who had thought and expressed themselves on the 'uses of history for man' in the grand style was Acton, who has said that 'if the past has been an obstacle and a burden, knowledge of the past is the safest and the surest emancipation.' The general nature of history and its manysidedness save mankind (if it cares to be saved) from bias, obsessions and bigotry. Scientific and rational study of history can save man from even superstitions which are weak spots in his intellectual armour. Quoting Wolowsky, Acton says 'History preserves the student from being led astray by a too servile adherence to any system.' Lecky declared that, 'he who has learned to understand the true character and tendency of many succeeding years is not likely to go very far wrong in estimating his own',²³ and is supported by Harrison who said that, 'all our hopes of the future depend on

19 R. G. Collingwood: *Idea of History*, p. 23

20 This expression 'self-knowledge' is some what deceptive. The Hindu Vedantist also said that all spiritual endeavour wishes to attain 'self-knowledge' ultimately. But self-knowledge is used in different senses in these two different contexts. What R. G. Collingwood is referring to is relevant to the secular world, while the Vedantin thinks of the spiritual world.

21 R. G. Collingwood: *Idea of History*, p. 10

22 *History: its purpose and method*

23 *Value of History*, p. 21

a sound understanding of the past'.²⁴ Here Harrison actually goes beyond Acton and says that, 'History is useful not only for the present but also for the future.'

History apart from being materially helpful to one in picking one's way through life, personal as well as social, has nobler and more abiding uses. These are indicated by Trevelyan who forbids us from equating History with scientific technology whose sole aim is to add to the creature comforts of man. These technologies no doubt clean up the environment and make it possible for a man to function in healthier and cleaner surroundings and hence serve a very useful purpose. Without under-rating the utility of technology one can appreciate the value of historical studies. Trevelyan says that 'it is the tale of the thing done that stimulates by example youth to aspire and age to endure'. He further says that 'history has no ultimate philosophical purpose but is a delight in itself, a mental discipline, and adventure in the field of reconstructing the past or discerning the lost trends of past events', which can have no philosophical consequences or significance but is a purely temporal process with no material or spiritual gain thought of. He proceeds to another level and declares roundly that to him, 'History's chief but not only value is poetic as a great poem as an epic without beginning or end'.²⁵ and he writes poetically on this theme. At a slightly more mundane level Trevelyan considers that the first educational effect of history is to train the mind of the citizen into a state in which he is capable of taking a just view of political problems. Another educative function of history according to that distinguished Master of Trinity is that 'history enables the reader to comprehend the historical aspect of literature proper'; 'history and literature cannot be fully comprehended still less fully

²⁴ The meaning of History, p. 6

²⁵ Autobiography: p. 82

enjoyed except in connection with one another', and further 'the value and pleasure of travel whether at home or abroad is doubled by a knowledge of history'.²⁶ In short, Trevelyan says that, 'the value of history is not scientific; its true value is educational'. It is the business of history not only to provide the utility of education but the pleasures of contemplation. Practically everything that has been said above has been neatly epitomised by Sir Thomas Munro as follows: 'A few pages of history give more insight into the human mind and in a more agreeable manner than all the metaphysical volumes that ever were published'.²⁷

²⁶ Clio, a Muse and other essays: Uses of History

²⁷ J. Bradshaw: Sir Thomas Munro, p. 78

The Scope of History

i The Scope of History

History in one sense is wider in its scope than any other discipline and practically unlimited in its interest. 'History' is derived from the Greek word *Historia* which means enquiry or investigation. Since investigation about the future is not possible, the enquiry i. e. *historia* will have to be concerned with the past. The present is however a very thin line which is constantly becoming past and therefore it is only the past with which the historian is essentially concerned. But what part of the past? The very old past when man had not become *homo sapiens* is not only very dim, is practically dark and belongs to geology rather than history; but also there were no historical activities at that time since the historically active creature, namely, man had not assumed his

distinctive status among creatures as a rational and social person. Hence the main interest of history begins with the commencement of man's activities in a manner distinct from those of other animals. He continued to be a brute and shared many of the brute's characteristics even now he does. But the differences, as time passed, became more and more marked. The more human¹ man's activities became, the greater was history's interest in them. The palaeolithic, mesolithic, and neolithic ages and the early metallic ages during which man was laying the foundations of civilization and social life were the period of preparation for the fullness of his life he was to live later. This preparatory period is of absorbing interest, no doubt. But, it is not the history of man who has become conscious of his abilities as a social force and started achieving distinctive results which other orders of creation are barred from even contemplating. The early stage of society formation and later the organization of the civil state, the invention of writing and the discovery of certain basic mechanical principles which involved a knowledge of conversion of energy from manual to mechanical, agriculture, pottery, the use of fire, the making of sophisticated weapons and the building of a shelter: these marked man's humble but heroic beginnings. In these no doubt history is interested and involved. The archaeologists and the anthropologists are his closest associates in this field of enquiry. But later when man's life in the social field as well as in the personal became more complex and multifarious history also starts taking a fuller interest in man and his activities.

Necessarily history has to exclude from its purview, the study of natural objects and animals, birds, reptiles etc. since he confines his attention to the story of man's evolution from humble beginnings to complex achievement. But everything in nature will come within

¹ Not necessarily cultured, or civilized or humane

the interest of the historian if it has anything at all to do with man. In the course of man's progress towards modern times as the story of his achievements (which includes failures to achieve) as the story comes nearer to the historian's times it comes so near the eyes of the historian that his vision of what is happening or what very recently happened is necessarily dimmed by the too close proximity of the persons and events involved. At times the historian himself is directly or indirectly a part of contemporary phenomena. So it will be risky to judge since it will be difficult to perceive and comprehend. So there is some truth in what the historian Seeley said that 'history is past politics.'

The scope of history is to enquire into the origins of the past and to determine relationships and comparisons. He will try to discover the shapes and contours of the forces which are dynamic in society. He knows that 'social forces or human energies which 'originating in individual motivations' coalesce into a collective manifestation of power'² and is interested in discovering the sources of these powers.

History deals with, as we said, everything that relates to the past so far as man and his achievements go. This past looks differently to different persons. Some are proud about the past and talk about it and about golden ages. Some suppose that history begins with a brilliant start and slowly deteriorates to the days of the historian who laments the contemporary condition. Others are more hopeful and suppose that the historical process resembles the growth of a person from innocent childhood to knowledgeable and mature adulthood. They see that in spite of occasional pitfalls and regressions man has been generally progressing. A pessimistic view of the past and even the entire historical process has been taken

² Carl G. Gustavson: *A preface to History*, p. 28

by eminent historians like Voltaire and Gibbon. Voltaire said, "History is just the portrayal of crimes and misfortunes"³ and Gibbon echoed him, saying that 'History is indeed, little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind'.⁴ But history is not concerned with the quality of the past; but with the past as such, whatever it might be. Its scope is to include all, since the scope of History is to consider human achievement in all its aspects; science, technology, the discoveries and inventions which make man *sui generis* among creatures will also be relevant to him. But primarily the social life of man, his diurnal achievements, his constitutional arrangements, his economic endeavours—these will be the main scope of history, for they intimately affect the welfare of man from day to day and it is through the media of state and society that the personality of man fulfils itself. But of course, the history of science, the history of ideas etc. are quite as relevant to him as the history of man's political and economic activities. Even as the intangible forces of history operate through man, men in the mass function only through the great men, geniuses, (good or evil) leaders of men etc., so that greater concentration of the historian's attention will be on these leading and representative men. Very often they have held the fate of masses of humanity in their hands and have made or marred the happiness and contentment of the common people. So these are the active elements in society. Even in a democracy - as fullfledged as you want - their activities do not cease. But there is a grouse among modern thinkers that the common man has been too long neglected by the historian. It is true that the common man has done little to attract the attention of the historian. But he has suffered, endured, aided and abetted benevolence and tyranny, has played quite a decisive role in the making of his achievements. From the

³ *L'Ingenu*, ch. X

⁴ *Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*: ch 3

pyramids of ancient Egypt to the skyscrapers of modern times, from the production of corn in a primitive farm-yard to the manufacture of steel in a modern mill he has played perhaps an obedient but always considerable role in the total history of mankind and so as a significant part of society in which he was once a slave and now a voter he deserves in increasing measure to be brought within the scope of history.

Thus we find history generally being pre-occupied with political history and then its immediate aspects of dynastic, constitutional, diplomatic and military histories and then the political, international relations after which history takes interest in the economic motivation and arrangements for the social well-being of man besides the total history of society as a whole. Further it is concerned with human activities in various branches of social life like religion, literature, fine arts, science and technology. Again history is concerned also with the origin and development of institutions of all kinds. Moreover we have universal history or total history. Thus we find the historian interesting himself in a great variety of subdivisions of history. Apart from this sense of interest, historians have to be on good terms with neighbouring disciplines like economics, politics, sociology, psychology and at least have nodding acquaintance with abstract science and abstruse technology. But one discipline which history adopts as part of its household is literature. History often becomes literature and the history of literature also is written.

ii Kinds of History

1. *Political History* :- Traditionally this has been the favourite branch of history. This is understandable because a good part of human life has been in the past and even now is dominated by the activities of politicians

whether they be monarchs (benevolent or malevolent) or presidents or prime ministers, members of *samitis* or *sabhas*, folkmoets or parliaments, central government agencies or local government bodies, counties or shires or panchayats, at every turn from Homeric times—nay, from the first dynasties of Egyptian kingdom—to modern times; managers of politics calling themselves agents of God or representatives of people have been under one pretext or another dominating the life of mankind. It is no comfort to be told that in proto-historic times the chief was elected by the folk, that in medieval times there were oligarchies which discarded the hereditary principles of monarchical rule and in modern times we have senates, parliaments and soviets as the common man's representative to govern the former for his benefit. At all times under all circumstances and among all nations the one or the few have ruled the many. This is the political condition. In writing the history of pastoral communities the one shepherd who holds the entire flock together will receive more attention than the sheep collectively or singly. The king has not been called the shepherd of his people for nothing. Since society took its shapes and turns at the behest of these rulers they were the architects of the society. Every society willy-nilly grows an *elite* which the rest of society supports and defers to by different means known to different societies. Then we have the occasional genius, the great man, the hero who by virtue of his *charisma* leads others: thus the political aspect of human history whatever historians who generally belong to the category of common men might say about the historian's excessive pre-occupation with politics. There is another reason why for ancient and medieval periods at least politics gets the lion's share of the historian's attention. A good part of the source material we depend upon for writing the history of those times is derived from court records, histories written by court historians or born flatterers like Abul Fazl, orders and edicts issued at the instance of reigning

monarchs like Asoka, royally directed inscriptions praising the political achievements and military successes of royalty (like the Tiruvalangadu plates of Rajendra I)—these are the mainstay of our source material. This is not to deny that other sources deal with other matters like ecclesiastical chronicles dealing with church histories and so forth. But prominent persons' accounts become prominent and therefore easily accessible naturally, and humble persons' histories can be written only with the help of scattered material available only in obscure places requiring modern type of systematic research to deal with. Nowadays, of course, when we have come to believe that the common man can shape his own destinies and the political rulers are not the masters but servants of the people, there is a legitimate anxiety among historians to concentrate more on the non-political aspects of history. But political history is the mainstream of all history and it is a necessary backdrop for any other kind of history.

2. *Constitutional History*:- Next to political history constitutional history is important for an understanding of the polity. Constitution here means the political constitution of the rules and conventions which govern the activities of the government, the rights and duties of the citizens, law and the mode of justice, the executive functions of the state, the economic and financial implications of the government, the nature of the bureaucracy that will govern the people and so forth. It is a fashion now to have written constitutions for all states big and small and federal constitutions for large ones on the American pattern and these will be written down in basic documents called constitutions, which will be the fundamental law of the nation. Even in countries like England where there is no such basic document there are numerous statutes which express the governmental philosophy of the people. Constitutional history generally deals with the origin and development of political institutions like the

parliament, the bureaucracy etc. The evolution of the principles of constitutionalism is itself a subject matter for historical narrative. Dicey's **Law of the constitution** is an eminent example of a learned discussion of constitutional jurisprudence. 'Constitutional history is much more impersonal; and though it involves the lives of leading men and much light may be thrown upon it by their biographies, the biographical approach is not the appropriate one. Its subject is the history of institutions'.⁵ Some historians make a distinction between constitutional and administrative history. But it may be remembered that the distinction is puerile. They are indeed the same thing.

3. *Legal History*:- In all civilized societies where the Rule of Law is the way of life, law plays a prominent role in the lives and affairs of men. Blackstone's **Commentaries on the Laws of England** (1790), Holdsworth's **History of English Law** planned in fourteen volumes, and the contributions of legalists like Pollard, Maitland and others deserve to be remembered in this context. Apart from there being history of laws and jurisprudence we have also the history of the codification of laws like the Laws of Manu, the code of Hammurabi, Justinian's code, the Napoleonic code etc. The massive and scholarly **History of the Dharmasastras** by P. V. Kane is a recent addition to this respectable volume of literature on legal codification.

4. *Diplomatic history*:- This is a specialised branch of political history. This emerges as a special discipline in the field of international relations. Principles of international law are amorphous and incapable of codification and strict implementation in the context of national sovereignty. Ambassadors are the links between nations and they are the custodians and practitioners of diplomacy.

5 A. L. Rowse: **The Use of History**, p. 57

How they have been doing it constitutes diplomatic history. Political histories of different nations are clearly demarcated in the field of home affairs and policies, while the foreign affairs of countries belong to the diplomatic field. In modern times foreign affairs play even a dominant role in the affairs of many nations, for the world has become small consequent on rapid communications. The interactions of the political practices of countries on one another create world situations like the Cold War, Balance of Power, regional groupings of powers and convergence of world diplomacy in a single institution like the United Nations. Thus diplomatic history has its own field of specialization. The most important effort by a single historian to write such a history was in the 19th century by Otto Henneam-Rhyn who wrote between 1877 and 1897 his **General Cultural History** from the earliest times to the present in seven volumes. There was a co-operative effort on the **History of Civilization** edited by Henry Berr; it is called **The Evolution of Humanity** and it is in 100 volumes. Hammerton's **A universal history of the World** in eight volumes is profusely illustrated and very attractive and informative.

5. **Military history:-** This is no doubt a part of political history for, the waging of war has been a political activity. This deals with the causes of war, strategy and tactics in war, war weapons, divisions of the fighting machine, the service conditions etc. of the fighting forces, leading battles of the world and other matters associated with warfare. From ancient times historical writings like, **The History of the Peloponnesian war** by Thucydides, **The Great Rebellion** by Clarendon have dealt with military themes; still numerous valuable tracts have been written on the American Civil War (1860-64) and the Indian Mutiny (1857); and the more important military histories relate to the First and the Second world wars.

6. **Economic History:-** The economic activities of man are undoubtedly a decisive factor in the way society functions. There are economic urges in man like the need for personal betterment in the matter of his creature comforts. It is true that man does not live by bread alone; but it is equally true that without bread (or its local variations elsewhere) man cannot live at all. Man does many things to earn his bread and the totality of those things is equal to his economic activity. Some have imagined *homo economicus* as an ideal person. This is not to deny that man is subject to other urges in life like glory (which includes vanity and pride) and aggressiveness which are psychological and sex which is psycho-biological. But yet the economic is most obvious. Economic injustice leads to class struggles which alter the course of history. A slogan like 'we want bread' if not met satisfactorily could lead to the fall of the Bastille. Mass hunger, unemployment and serfdom can lead to the fall of an ancient dynasty, the Romanovs. From these instances we can get an idea how economic factors affect the society at its roots. The U. N. rightly stresses the importance of the Economic and Social Council and the Food and Agriculture Organization. In the modern industrialized world economic activities easily dominate national as well as international politics. Industrial magnates especially the armament manufacturers cannot but be interested in periodical wars and it is well known they can influence governments and elections. Since Darwin spoke of the struggle for existence which is to a great extent economically motivated and with the Marxian doctrine of the economic motivation in history, the tendency among modern historians is to give high priority to economic history.

Economic history has to be distinguished from social history. Some would say that the former tells you how a society produces its Consumable goods and social history how it consumes them. Sir William Ashley says, 'economic history

i. e. the history of man's economic activities is the history of the utilization by man of his environment, to obtain therefrom subsistence and the satisfaction of those material wants which are bound up with subsistence. But his activity in this direction from the very dawn of history has never been entirely individualistic; never altogether the operation of absolutely isolated individuals'. In this kind of history we generally mention the evolution of man from the position of food gatherer to that of food producer and transition from daily hunting to food preservation, thus at every step enlarging the scope of the economic activities of man.

7. *Social history*:- Social history can mean the history of human society. But then it will be obvious that social history must include all the activities of that society which cannot exclude constitutional, diplomatic or political histories. But that is not the current conception. Trevelyan gave a definition of social history, i. e., 'it is history with the politics left out.'⁶ It is a fairly operative definition in the sense that we keep strictly political, dynastic and constitutional histories in the background and deal with the other social interests like religion, the national economy, morals and manners, food and dress, art and letters, and so forth; and he set an example himself by writing the **Social History of England (the Five Centuries)**. There are a number of modern scholars who are allergic to Trevelyan and who would call his social history polite chat about the past. But if one can shed one's prejudices it will not be difficult to see what masterly use Trevelyan has made of the source materials available to him. These critics perhaps object because Trevelyan does not base his 'Social History' on statistics. But one does get a fairly viable and vivid picture of the evolving English society in the pages of that book. It is surely possible to create another kind of social history and

6. Social History of England : Intr.

probably a better one too. But it can certainly not resemble political history nor can it be total history.

Macaulay in the third chapter of his *History of England* almost pioneered a sort of social history of England of those times and John Richard Green in his *Short history of the English people* indicated the development of English civilization.

Social history will be concerned with the origin and development of institutions. It can function in two ways. It can use its source materials to trace the origins of institutions and record the stages of their development; or from a thorough study of those institutions as they function now a retrospective study could be made. Social history will emphasise the cultural aspects of the evolution of man from savagery to civilization. Thus it will be surely more comprehensive than any other kind of history mentioned above. In the vast literature on Indian history we have many books entitled *Polity* of which the *Hindu Polity* by K. P. Jayaswal (dealing largely with ancient upper Indian institutions)⁷ and *Sangam Polity*⁸ dealing with ancient Tamil institutions are the better known. The popular series of books called the everyday life series has one on ancient India too. In this context another definition of social history by Trevelyan may be noted - 'It is the daily life of the inhabitants in past ages; this includes the human as well as the economic relations 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, thought.'

7. But rightly suspected of unnecessary cultural chauvinism

8. By N. Subrahmanian

8. *Total history or Universal history*:- This is a recent development in historical writing. This will be a sort of world history with every imaginable thing thrown in. The sheer magnitude of the effort is bound to discourage even the hardest among working historians. Elton says, 'all good historical writing is universal history in the sense that it remembers the universal while dealing with a part of it'.⁹ H. G. Wells tried something like this in his *Outline of history* and he failed. He started the history of the world with an account of the Milky Way and beyond and took a hundred pages to come down to the earth. Then he raced rapidly through human civilization with snippets of biased judgment liberally strewn on the way. The sheer impossibility of doing any justice to such a subject must wean historians away from this job. In this context one must remember Buckle's famous book 'History of civilization in England. The UNESCO recently started an ambitious scheme of writing the cultural history of mankind.¹⁰ This project is made by 37 contributors and consultants. By any standard it is a hardy project. It has achieved the compilation of considerable material on human culture. But it has its adverse critics also. D. H. Fischer calls it 'Quixotic' 'for it promises to tell the whole truth about the ancient world from 1200 B. C. — A. D. 500.' Fischer continues to say 'the result is a catastrophe on an appropriately 'monumental scale'.¹¹ A critic wrote: 'rarely if ever can so many learned men have laboured so long on a history to so little purpose.' This is called the *Holiest fallacy* by Fischer. But the most magnificent effort in this direction which has also largely succeeded is Will Durant's story of civilization

9. *Intellectual history*:- Historians are entering into a field of great sophistication nowadays and it is a mark

of their interest not merely in the material structures and in the immediately obvious motivations but also a measure of their interest in fundamental ideas and ideologies which ultimately shape human history. This kind of history seeks to 'review the transformations of ideas, beliefs and opinions held by the intellectual classes from primitive times to our own.'¹² The idea is that even as the mind is the most important part of the rational human frame intellectual history will be the most significant part of history. Dr. Johnson said in his *Rasselas* 'there is no part of history so generally useful as that which relates to the progress of the human mind. The gradual improvement of reason, the successive advances of science, the vicissitudes of learning and ignorance which are the light and darkness of thinking beings, the extinction, resuscitation of art and the revolution of the intellectual world.'¹³ Among the works which deal with this aspect of history must be mentioned 'An intellectual and cultural History of the western world' (3 vols.) written by H. E. Barnes and others. Some would prefer to call this history the history of ideas. There are also works on particular aspects of human thought. Das Gupta's multivolume *History of Indian philosophy* is a notable example. Works on historiography and the history of the development of historical thought, history of political thought (Dunning's 4 volumes are an example), history of economic thought, history of mathematics and the history of science and technology belong to this category. Schiller said 'the genuine history of mankind is its history of ideas. It is ideas that distinguish men from all other beings. Ideas engender social institutions, political changes, technological methods of production, and all that is called economic condition.' Collingwood was of the opinion that 'History is the expression of human ideas'.¹⁴ Carl G. Gustavson said 'ideas may be described as the ulti-

9 The practice of History, p. 16

10 It is called *History of mankind, cultural and scientific development*.

11 *Historical Fallacies*, p. 67

12. H. E. Barnes : A history of historical writing, p 295

13. Quoted by H. E. Barnes, op. cit.

14. R. G. Collingwood : *Idea of History*

mate given of history, for organized social movements cannot appear and institutions cannot function without ideas. They are the cords which bind the minds of men together sufficiently for joint action to occur.'

iii Re - Writing of History

From age to age historical perspectives vary and with such changes coming in histories written in previous ages are rewritten by historians with a different outlook. Reappraisals are made of persons and events. Histories written on the verge of a revolution undergo change when the revolution has passed and the dust has settled. Momentary passions of nationalism create patriotic histories which become levelheaded with the return of sobriety. Jingoism and imperialism create an emphasis which will be blunted with the vanishing of the Jingoist enthusiasm. Kipling's as well as Savarkar's writings get revised. Even within a hard and fast system like the communist regime in Russia the history of Stalinist Russia is rewritten in the days of Krushchev who is in his turn completely shelved in the days of his successors. It must be admitted that history cannot be static and has to grow but its growth and change can be considered healthy under three conditions: 1. in the normal process of the development of historiography with new material coming in and setting right or at least questioning old perspectives, history will demand reappraisal. Secondly, when excessive personal bias has crept into a work of history, that does need setting right, but only to the extent of correcting the bias. Thirdly, when new values have arisen in society, past events will be critically reviewed anew and this may bring about rewriting of history. But much rewriting that takes place now in India is one of two undesirable varieties. It is attempted either to counter old bias by new and opposite bias of equal or greater magnitude or to create entirely new kinds of bias. This is an unhealthy trend and needs to be checked.

iv History and allied disciplines

All intellectual disciplines are interrelated. In ancient Greece 'philosophy' did not suffer from the delimited meaning we give it now and 'metaphysics' was literally everything beyond physics or physical science. The integral nature of knowledge was emphasised and Plato required even philosophers to know geometry. It is only with the passing of time that specialization set in, and compartmentalization of knowledge for the sake of convenience was resorted to. Bacon said that each department of knowledge had its specific function in improving man. He said 'poets make man witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral, brave; logic and rhetoric able to contend; and histories make men wise'. History, though a vast subject in itself, has intimate relations with a few other disciplines and peripheral contacts with some others. We shall see the extent of such acquaintance below:

1. *History and Political science:-* We are familiar with Seeley's statement that 'History is past Politics and Politics is present History' and we know that this is but a half-truth, for the stream of history runs right through and politics is but an aspect of history. There is another statement which also emphasises only one aspect of the relations between history and politics. 'History is the root and politics is the fruit.' Acton has said that 'the science of politics is the one science that is deposited by the stream of history like grains of gold in the sands of a river'. The river itself is history. In our consideration of the subject matter of political history we have seen how politics which is the science of government concerns itself with the whole gamut of relationship between the state and the citizen, between state and state and between citizen and citizen. Whenever these relations are controlled by law, notwithstanding the yet respected principle of state sovereignty, it is well known

that there are bound to be areas in human life which fall outside the scope of politics, i. e. in short, society is plural. But politics deal with but a part of it. History gives us examples of highly politicized states like ancient Greece and Rome and the post-Renaissance West as well as every state in the 20th century. But there have been periods when the claims of politics were countered by those of the Church as in medieval Europe and in the Hindu state politics became but a segment—not necessarily a major one at that—of the dharmic order. Thus we see that the pluralist tendencies of multifaced societies and the monolithic trends in highly centralised political societies exist simultaneously. But still it is true to say that the 'political' is but a part of the whole called 'History'. Even politicians can play their role better if they knew the history of their politics.

2. *History, Economics and Statistics:-* As we have noticed elsewhere the economic activities of man are not the totality of human concern. They relate only to the motivations concerned with the creation, distribution and consumption of wealth, this economic activity being undertaken by vast masses of men and regulated to a greater or lesser degree by the powers that be. A historian is naturally concerned with the principles of economics. An economic interpretation of the growth of society and the many vicissitudes mankind has passed through is valid within limits. The institutions of slavery, feudalism, imperialism, capitalism and socialism are such an integral part of human history, that unless a historian has sufficient acquaintance with economic theory his analysis of the economic factors cannot be complete. Conversely, an economist has to be acquainted with the history of economic thought. Historical source materials like price structures, interest rates and wage levels mentioned in ancient and medieval documents and inscriptions are immensely useful to the student of past economies.

Modern economic theory depends largely on statistical data and even the manner of expression of economic

laws has become mathematical, though it is somewhat odd that mere trends and tendencies, forecasts and probabilities should be attempted to be put within the tight jacket of mathematics. Statistics itself is largely a science of probabilities and averages, unlike mathematics proper. The statistical approach to economics serves two purposes: one serious and the other vain. The symbolic expression of economic laws saves time and space and provides a precision which narrative language cannot maintain. This is all for the good. In modern economic planning for instance, where data relating to national life in all its aspects is required to be given, the statistician armed with his computer is of immense assistance to the economist. But the economist while being thankful to the statistician must be wary of utilising the data, for he deals with not robots but human beings and the historian with his experience of man through the ages must be summoned to his assistance. Thus we see politicians who employ economists who take assistance from the statisticians but ignore the historians come to deserved grief.

This fever, however, wholesome and required for the economists has infectiously caught a few historians whose anxiety to be in the bandwagon of science has created new mores like Cliometrics which is said to mean the mathematical study of history. It is difficult to imagine a more horrible thing or anything more false. But if one should understand the mind which can approve of Cliometrics one should see what Lord Kelvin says: 'I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about and express it in numbers you know something about it. But when you cannot express it in numbers your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind.' This, combined with an irrational faith in the suitability of quantification as a process of understanding any problem has created this intellectual climate of opinion in favour of quantified history. But the very nature of historical studies unless they are consciously made to resemble some sort of sociology will resist these scientific

2. Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859.
3. *Das Kapital* was published in 1867.

All these three are concerned with evolution. The above chronology will show that even before Darwin historians knew of the principle of evolution, not necessarily of the species, but of institutions and ideas. Bury says, 'the growth of historical study in the 19th century has been determined and characterised by the same general principle which has underlain the simultaneous developments of the study of nature, namely, the genetic idea'. The most notable attempt to work out evolutionary ideas in the realm of social science was that of Marxism. Evolution in science reacted on and confirmed and contributed to the idea of progress in history. Prothero writing the inaugural in the *National Review* (Dec. 1894) stated that the historical or comparative method has revolutionised not only the sciences of law, mythology and language, of anthropology and sociology, but it has forced its way even into the domain of philosophy and natural science. For what is the theory of evolution itself with all its far-reaching consequences but the achievement of the historical method?

Man shares many of the characteristics of other animals and in the course of his progress towards civilization he has not only shed some aspects of brutal life but doggedly clung to the rest. As Will Durant put it ¹⁵ 'animals eat one another without qualm; civilized men consume one another by due process of law.' The struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest go on even to day.

Man must learn a lesson from biology. Nature creates unequally; man wants to evolve an equality on the unequal base provided by nature. In this struggle between man and nature while nature has persisted in its ways man has been satisfying himself with Utopias of equality. There are hereditary inequalities which

15. *The Lessons of History* P. 19

are biological and these create and sustain social inequalities. Ethical notions like the need for equal opportunity and treatment cannot wish these inequalities away. Another area in which biology compels the historian to take notice of biological realities is that nature intends life to breed. Biological reproduction according to the classical warning of Malthus will overtake food creation. This warning leads to man's struggle against nature, to attain parity between available food and number of mouths to be fed. A byproduct of this problem perhaps is the inverse ratio operating between population and civilization. Nature used to maintain balance in olden times by cutting down population with famine, pestilence and war. The situation has been greatly altered by medical science which has reduced births and modern techniques of agriculture which have increased food supply.

5. *History and Ethnology*:- Ethnology is the study of race and its characteristics. Race has played a great role partly because it is a biological reality and partly because it has created myths of competence, superiority etc. Which though false have influenced the course of history greatly. Gobineau was philosopher of the Aryan racial superiority. The varna system in India, apartheid in south Africa and the Nazi persecution of the Jews are ugly historical realities based on ethnic superstitions. whether race has a basis of inequality sufficiently to create permanently superior and permanently inferior cultures, these lead to acquired characteristics of a secondary nature like language, sartorial fashions etc. And these differences become antipathies and lead to race riots. Will Durant says that 'there is no cure for such antipathies except a broadened education.'¹⁶

6. *History and Literature*:- We have seen above that George Macaulay Trevelyan treated history as a branch

16. *The Lessons of History*, P. 30

modes of expression. The employment of scientific technique in archaeology and ethnology must not blind one to the essential nature of history as a humanist study.

3. *History, Geology and Geography:-* History is subject to geology. Since history is the story of the human species and as that species so far as our present state of knowledge goes is confined to this earth and since certain favourable conditions in the early days of the history of the planet were responsible for the creation of life and therefore of man, some understanding of geology becomes essential for the historian. The earlier epochs of history known as the ice or glacial ages related to the advance of extreme cold from the poles towards the equator; subsequent withdrawals and repetitions of these movements are geological phenomena. The very survival of man as a species in the process of evolution was conditioned by geology. Almost every day the sea recedes throwing up land masses or encroaches swallowing them up in the process creating new land for human habitation or destroying flourishing civilizations. The Coramandal coast and the Cape Comorin regions have been notoriously susceptible to these geological fancies. The earliest stages of history are indeed geological. But a historian would do well to be careful while dealing with geology; for the mistake of imagining that pre-historic geological holocausts occurred within the memory of man and were part of his experience must be resisted.

The influence of geography on history is a subject which every treatise on history deals with in its first chapter. One of the undoubted areas of geographical influence on history is the physical formation of a country. Britain, Japan and Greece are instances of countries with broken coastline. This has facilitated their naval strength and empire building activities. The Himalayas and the jungles of Assam have confined foreign invasions of India to the north-west. The Gobi and Mongolian deserts

together with the Himalayas provided an isolation for China. The Geography of Egypt has preserved her ancient civilization for the archaeologist's spade and the Sahara has cut off sub-Sahara Africa from contact with the rest of the world till recently; Australia was so thoroughly isolated that the Tasman, Kiwi, and the Kangaroo were unknown specimens to other parts of the world.

The Geographical discoveries of the later middle ages altered the history of mankind. An idea of the vast debt of history to geography can be gleaned from a work like Febvre's *Geographical Introduction to History*. Climatology has played a decisive role in national character formation and influenced human endeavours and achievements. Montesquieu, Buckle and Huntington believed in the effect of climate on civilization. But in modern times this influence of geography on history can be consciously controlled and even conquered because of scientific technological control over nature. Hostile environment in the shape of swamps, marshy tracts, inaccessible jungles, extreme cold and heat has been mitigated by modern medicine, transport, earthmoving techniques and air conditioning technology. Modern man can make himself comfortable anywhere. But he has not yet found an answer to failure of monsoons, periodical hurricanes and earthquakes.

4. *History and Biology:-* History is related to biology rather closely for many reasons. The most obvious and important one being that evolution is the common principle for both. Even before Darwin enunciated the theory of evolution historians knew something about evolution. R. G. Collingwood thinks that 'the evolutionary ideas in science were developed under the impact of history.' The chronology of this matter is as follows:-

1. Newman's essay on the development of christian doctrine (with its theory of *evolution* of dogma) was published in 1845. Coleridge and Herder even preceded him.

of literature and the Pandora's Box of criticism was immediately opened and many neo-historians like Barnes with a continental outlook on history and Rankeans to the core are up in arms against him. This is a pretty unequal war in which the wrong side can easily win as usual. These critics want to strip history certainly of its graces, but if possible of decent clothing as well. It was Ranke who denied that history was an edifying branch of literature. Bury gave it English expression. In the hands of Gibbon History attained a literary garb unprecedented and unparalleled in later literature. But from Herodotus and Thucydides to Trevelyan we have a number of historians whose literary art has enhanced the beauty of their historical writings. The objectors to the close alliance of history with literature have failed to see that the divorce of literature from history can do no good to history while it will certainly harm it. In history we get an account of the development of literature and in histories of literature we have an account of historiography. Literary men choose historical themes, Shakespeare being the greatest example and historians write on literary matters like Macaulay on Milton and Addison.

There is an important aspect of literature which has much to do with history and that is the historical novel. The greatest historical novelist in the English language was of course, Sir Walter Scott. Trevelyan said, 'it was Sir Walter who first showed us how not only clothes and weapons but thought and morals vary according to the period.' By the most rigorous standards of historical research it is possible to say that even his *Ivanhoe* suffers from some defects. But the pioneering master has not yet been surpassed. Scott added a new dimension to historical understanding. A student who has finished his Gibbon, if he passes on to Scott will get a profounder understanding of history. There are many other illustrious examples of historical novelists. Alexander

Dumas and Victor Hugo among the French and Tolstoy, the Russian, who wrote his *War and Peace* are eminent historical novelists. Among the 19th century English novelists C. Dickens and B. Lytton rank high. The historical novel is a curious combination of fact and fiction. It must not offend historical truth, the age and the morals and the characters of historical *Personae* must be true to the original. Trevelyan said 'historical fiction is not history but it springs from history and reacts upon it. Historical fiction writers make the past live. But it is not to make the events live and therefore it is not History.'

Inferior type of historical fiction is unfortunately mass produced in many languages nowadays. G. W. M. Reynolds wrote his *Mysteries of the court of London*. It was a rage in his times. But now serious critics have relegated it to its proper place, namely the back stage of literature. But since tastes, including literary, are fast changing even Reynolds it seems is being resuscitated. In the Indian languages we had an imitation of Reynolds in the *Mysteries of the Moghul court*. It was a tolerably good venture, for the characters of Jehangir and Nur Jahan were very well brought out and the atmosphere in Fatehpur Sikri was faithfully reproduced. But many other attempts in other Indian languages have to be condemned as neither literature nor history. In the Hindu and Buddhist periods of Indian history, since even history has not stabilised itself in the realms of social history and characterisation, a successful historical novel can at best be total fiction (pleasant and well-written it may be) but basing itself on historical unrealities utilising only historical *personae* and toponyms.

7. *History and Sociology*:- This is a new discipline in which intellectuals in the United States revel and which is not in favour in British universities. Sociology consists of some anthropology, ancient law, study of primitive social customs and habits and of social institutions.

Since these individual disciplines take care of these branches of knowledge the utility of an omnibus discipline like sociology is doubted. But sociology consists in its emphasis on the non-political aspects of human history. Sociology strictly speaking is directly concerned with 'social statics and dynamics'—phrases invented by Herbert Spencer (1851). The approach to the discipline is somewhat different from the historian's. It is topical rather than chronological. Carr observes, 'sociology, if it is to become a fruitful field of study, must like history concern itself with the relation between the unique and the general; but it must also become dynamic—a study not of society at rest (for no such society exists)¹⁷ but of social change and development. For the rest, I would only say that the more sociological history becomes and the more historical sociology becomes the better for both. Let the frontier between them be kept wide open for two way traffic.'¹⁸

Sociology, we have seen, studies group life. 'Embracing as it does both the causes and results of group life, it is the basic social science and the only one which can hope to give a generalised view of the social process and of social causation as a whole.....the insight of a historian would be materially enhanced by a knowledge of the elementary principles of sociology'.¹⁹ Sociology aims to describe social behavioural patterns, folkways and mores.

8. *History, Religion, Morals and Myths*:- In one sense there is an antipathy between history and religion. History is secular while religion is spiritual. While religion would go beyond the secular everywhere History includes religion within its scope, i. e., while it is not possible

¹⁷ Past society is surely society at well earned rest.

¹⁸ Carr: *What is History?* p. 60

¹⁹ H. E. Barnes: *A history of historical writing* p. 363

to have a purely man-bound religion²⁰ it is possible to have a history of religions. The origins of the religious motive form a legitimate subject matter for the historian. While the man of religion affirms that God created man the historian tries to discover how exactly man created God in various lands and in various times. The economic motivation for religions is also emphasised by some: 'as long as there is poverty there will be Gods.' Another motivation is directly psychological. It was fear that first made the Gods'.²⁰

It is contended that religion is necessary for morality. A natural ethic like the commandments is not enough to control the brute in man. It has to be checked by fear and that is what religion provides. The various means adopted by religion to keep human savagery under control are also studied by history. The need for religion has been often felt. It is only when there is no religion that society will feel the want. Voltaire said, 'if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.' Rationalists and atheists have often brought about the fall of religion. But it has always had a resurrection. The communists who abolished God institutionally have made their dogma a religion. We have the communist high priests, church, discipline, dogma and the bible. The French Revolution abolished the Christian Church and started worshipping the deity of 'Reason.' The inevitability of religion for history and the guardianship of history over religion are both historical. The supremacy of history becomes patent when it is seen that nothing can escape criticism. Western scholarship has created a vast field of knowledge indicated in Biblical criticism. Historians call it the higher criticism of the Bible; and the modern movement of Deism which equates

²⁰ The Buddha attempted the impossible and his religion ended up in the form of Mahayanism and it deified the Buddha.

²¹ Will Durant: *The Lessons of History* pp. 43, 51,

God with nature is a historical manifestation. Great religious movements have occurred bringing about vast changes in human history like the founding of religions by the Buddha, the Christ and the Prophet and later religious movements like the Bhakti movement in India and the Reformation in Europe. History records not only the origin and growth of religions but its decline too. This decline was brought about by the age of Enlightenment and the 19th century age of science. Darwin rewrote the opening sentence of the old Testament. Spiritual visions and God's dialogue with man were reduced to the condition of explicable dreams by Freud; and above all Marx said 'Religion is the opiate of man.' The 20th century has become more reasonable and is not quite sure it has won the battle against religion. It has become more humble. History is likely to record the role of religion in human life, in more sober terms in the future.

There is a sphere of political activity in which religion played a direct role i. e., when royalty assumed divine right to govern and often claimed divine origins. With the coming in of the new ethic regarding equality of man which is itself a romantic notion, these religious ideas of divine monarchy yielded place to secular constitutionalism, i. e., religion yielded to history.

Ethics has evoked different reactions from different thinkers. It is a body of morals. But what are morals? They are but the politely and conventionally expedient; except perhaps at an extremely basic level, morals are relative. Ultimately enlightened self-interest takes the form of morality. Here is an example of what the modern writer can say about ethics: 'Ethic has no status of assumed achievement as a science what pretended to be a science of conduct was merely a *a priori* philosophising and guess work, in most cases the rationalised defence of the bigotry, biases and complexes of the particular writer.'²² But Victorian

22 H. E. Barnes: *A history of historical writing*, p. 365

moralists like Acton were cock-sure about a rigid code of morality. Acton called upon historians to pass severe and stern judgments. It is difficult to imagine modern thinkers intellectually fed by Shaw, Aldous Huxley, Kropotkin and others can share Acton's confidence, for the principle of moral relativity seems to gain ground today. But let the fact be faced, can we not distinguish between a Hitler and a Gandhi? Still this is not really what is meant by the shift in a definition of ethics in modern times. The historian will be concerned with tracing the evolution of human ethics from the agricultural stage to the industrial, from the slave owning to the socialistic. The authority of the parent, the sovereignty of the state and even the pressure of public opinion are things of naught to the modern individual. The rebellious youth of today seeks an unprecedented autonomy; the sanctity of married life, the virtues of loyalty and the graces of chivalry undergo rapid change in the highly competitive and industrialised world. The growth of medical technology and the climate of opinion in favour of birth control have made chastity expendable. In the agricultural stage chastity was a virtue and in the pastoral stage killing of cattle was a sin. But when the economic base of society has altered radically, morals change. History records this change.

Myths are a by-product of religion. The incredible and the fabulous are the daily bread of religion which creates mythologies full of supernormal phenomena. History is concerned with the normal and the historian's conception of normality is governed by what he is familiar with. So to the historian myths are suspect. But he knows that societies create myths for various reasons. Religious societies had a way of poetising human experience and clothing it in supernatural symbology. Modern national states also create irrational symbolism like the national anthem, the flag etc. In all these causes what we do is to emotionalise social life and put it into a capsule of myth. History exposes this irrationality; what

is attempted to be done by the myth-makers is to convert a number of poetically effective ambiguities into a logical system. It is very operative and practical. Myths have influenced human life much more than rationalities.

9. *History, Psychology, Logic and Philosophy:-* History is related to psychology essential for the understanding of the particular turns history has taken. Mass hysteria in the context of popular submission to *charisma* is a psychological phenomenon. There is conflict in judgment regarding the validity of individual psychology as against mass psychology. Some like Socrates would urge that 'the individual character considered in isolation from its environment is an abstraction..... what a man does depends only to a limited extent on what kind of man he is. No one can resist the forces of his environment'.²³ But Carlyle insists that the hero is a phenomenon by himself and to him the lesser crowd defers.

Individual psychology is often approached from the psycho-analytical angle. Great men have been attempted to be understood on the basis of certain obscure events in their early lives. The puritanism of Hitler or an Aurangzeb, the non-violence of Gandhi etc. have been psycho-analytically studied and strange results achieved. It is possible to exaggerate this angle but to dismiss it would be risky.

There is another way in which history is related to psychology. Historians themselves are often motivated in their writings. The personal lives of historians have a direct bearing on their judgments. The natural bias of a historian though carefully hidden by scholarship can be traced back to certain events in the historian's life. This very clearly makes the much desired objectivity impossible.

All rational thinking is logical. Historical judgment has to be logical too. But can intuitive judgment be logical? Some scholars will not credit the historian with a peculiar kind of intuition and extra-logical perception, but will hold that he is also subject to the logical processes of deduction and induction. Apart from the objection it must be conceded that deductive process of reasoning named after Aristotle, started losing its respectability after Descartes and Bacon. The question however remains for the historian: How far is logic useful to him in the face of an urge to moral judgment? of course, there is a valid opinion which forbids the historians from morally judging, but then the alternative is immorally to judge, for there can be no *via media*. Silence may be prudent but will not betoken necessarily a right judgment.

Philosophical speculation like science is farthest from history, if by philosophy we mean metaphysical abstractions dealing with God and the like. Philosophy has an extended meaning also. That way there can be a philosophy of history. There are two kinds of questions possible in relation to history. 1. Questions asked within History and 2. questions asked about history. The former like 'when was the battle of Plassey fought?' are answered by chronicling historians. The ready answer of 1757 is a chronicler's answer; it does not require a historian to do it. But the second type of questions are answered by philosophical historians who are historians proper. The typical questions for them will be: 'what is meant by historical facts? What is the validity of historical interpretation? Can history formulate laws?' etc. so that it follows that philosophy of history concerns itself with the abstractions of the historical process. There is a doubt in certain quarters whether a historian is more competent to deal with such questions of historical abstraction or a philosopher had better do it. There can be no doubt that it is the former who must engage himself in this task since the abstractions apart,

a knowledge of the totality of the stream of history flowing through time is an essential requisite for any one who would dare to tackle such questions.

v History and its ancillary aids

We have seen above the major divisions of historical writing and the nature of history's acquaintance with allied disciplines. History has its ancillary aids like archaeology, numismatics, palaeo-botany and physical and cultural anthropology; ethnology and linguistics are also considered by some to be such aids. Of these botany, physics, chemistry and linguistics are sciences in their own right. Archaeology, numismatics and anthropology are only the hand-maids of history. Unlike the mother discipline History, these daughter faculties are scientific in nature and precise in their methodologies. The exploration of archaeological sites, the method of excavation, copying and reading of inscriptions, studying of coins, reading the legends on them and determining their grain, carrying out cephalic indices etc. are fairly scientific operations. These operations are not merely helpful but essential for the pre-historic and proto-historic periods. Physics is helpful in determining possible archaeological sites. Engineering and photography are summoned to the aid of the archaeologist whose business is to scientifically dig. The anthropologist with his ethnographic data deals with human races and their characteristics. The cultural anthropologist studies the human institutions - especially in their earlier stages. Palaeo-botany can decide the age of fossils and of dead wood. Medical science is helpful in determining the nature and possibly the age of skeletal remains. Linguistics is a science which deals with the evolution of language and along with palaeography it helps the historian to nearly date facts and events which are associated with language and writings. Some of the above mentioned aids are more precise

than the others, but by and large the historian except at the highest level of theoretical discussion has come to depend largely on these ancillary aids.

'To achieve accuracy the historian relies on the auxiliary sciences The historian however is not required to have the special skills which enable the origin and period of a fragment of pottery or marble, to decypher an obscure inscription or to make the elaborate astronomical calculations necessary to establish a precise date. These so called basic facts which are the same for all historians commonly belong to the category of the raw materials of the historian rather than of history itself.'²⁴

²⁴ Carr: *What is History?* p. 6.

4

The Function of History

i History: Science or Art?

This is a problem which has been agitating the minds of historical theorists for nearly a century and a question which practising historians have been aware of ever since Herodotus wrote his classic. But it has assumed the aggressive form of an acrimonious debate ever since a declaration was made in January 1903 by J. B. Bury in his inaugural address as successor to Acton at Cambridge. In that address he said 'if year by year history is to become more and more powerful for stripping the bandages of error from the eyes of men for shaping public opinion and advancing the cause of intellectual and political liberty, she will best prepare her disciples for the performance of the task, not by considering the immediate utility of next week or next year or

next century, not by accommodating her ideal or limiting her range but by remembering always that *though she may supply material for literary art or philosophical speculation she is herself simply a science, no less and no more*.¹ The last part of this passage, namely, that history is 'simply a science, no less and no more' has touched off a controversy which still rages. Bury himself seems to have been influenced by the German tradition of which in the 19th century Leopold Von Ranke (1795-1886) was easily the most distinguished spokesman. Ranke laid down the famous theory that the business of History is 'not to judge the past or instruct the present for the benefit of the future. Its business is only to show *what actually happened* (*wie es Eigentlich Gewesen*)'. This last phrase, 'to show what actually happened' in an objective way with the help of documents and eschewing subjectivity, is characteristic of Ranke; and he has had a very respectable following since he set an example in his own practice of History. This emphasis on the scientific nature of History seems to have been necessary in view of the previous approaches to history. History in the hands of the Romanticists like Macaulay and Carlyle stressed the literary virtues of that discipline and at the same time they took little care to look up their references and make sure of the documentation. Froude was a classic instance of a historian who could take liberties with his facts. This brought the Rankean reaction which was further strengthened by the prevailing 19th century scientific tradition. It is no wonder that the first enunciation of this need for a historian to be 'scientific' came from the Germans who seem to have a temperamental preference to laborious research leading to pin pointed precision and couched in fairly unreadable style of presentation, severe and heavy, unrelieved by a figure of speech here, a bit of imagination there or a stroke of humour anywhere.

¹ *Italics mine*

It can be seen that there is really no fundamental dichotomy in the two positions: 1. that History is a science and 2. that it is an art. No one could have realized it better than J. B. Bury who was a meticulous researcher and at the same time a fine stylist. His **History of Greece**, to mention only one of his important works, has pleased generations of students of history not perhaps, because he was telling the truth in a scientific way but his ideas are clothed in elegant literary attire. His conclusions regarding the justness or otherwise of the trial of Socrates or his characterisation of Alexander are still open to doubt and debate. But the new insight which he brought to bear on these problems was a subjective analysis of historical problems and not related to scientific absolutes.

Now, in this debate the word 'science' has been used in two senses and some participants deliberately and some ignorantly use this word confusedly. This has added much to an obfuscation of the subject. The word science is used in the English speaking world in a delimited sense, namely, to refer to physical sciences like physics, chemistry etc. and the absolute science of mathematics. On the continent, however, the word science is used to indicate any enquiry after knowledge and can be equated with knowledge in its totality as can be seen in the words omniscience, nescience and so forth. In that case *historia* which is also investigation or inquiry into the unknown can almost be equated with science, for the purpose in both cases is the same, namely, to mount an attack on ignorance, to discover the unknown. But beyond this point there can be no parallel between the two. It is surprising to see English speaking historians refusing to distinguish between the purpose, method, achievement and goal of science and those of history. Once the English distinction between science and history is granted—and one should think that it would be proper and necessary to grant it—that these two disciplines namely science and history, are different from each other.

whether history is art or not, it will be clear that it certainly is not science. In fact, Bury used the word 'science' in the continental sense for he had come under the influence of Ranke. But most others who align with him and are anxious to redeem history by equating it with prestigious science, use the word in its stricter sense. This is at the bottom of much mischief characterising this debate. This point has been very well brought out by C. E. M. Joad, the British philosopher, who when asked this question characteristically wanted to know what the questioner meant by 'science'.

Bury himself said that history is 'the oldest art and youngest aspirant to the claim of being a science'. Science i. e. physical science, deals with tangible facts which exist in the presence of the scientist and on which he could experiment. He can reproduce in a laboratory natural phenomena in miniature and under artificially controlled conditions, repeatedly experiment on them,² observe the reactions and draw general conclusions, and these conclusions will be valid in regard to the larger sphere of nature outside the laboratory. For example, the specific gravity of mercury determined with reference to a small quantity of substance in a laboratory will hold good for any amount of mercury anywhere else. Some critics point out the extreme cases like Einstein disproving some Newton or a Fred Hoyle proposing a new theory combating earlier scientists. But even so it must be admitted that as between Newton and Einstein if one is correct the other cannot be, so long as they contradict each other. There cannot be two simultaneous and opposite physical scientific truths. It will be quite

2 'The truths which science discovers are known to be true by being found through observation and experiment exemplified in what we actually perceive whereas the past has vanished and our ideas about it can never be verified as we verify our scientific hypotheses R. G. Collingwood: **The Idea of History**, p. 5

clear to anyone that this kind of possibility of one conclusion being altered by another is not analogous to two historians holding different opinions on the same subject at the same time, like Napoleon being differently estimated by different historians. Both can be valid for the assessment is subjective and not as in the case of a scientist, objective. Some critics like Marwick go to the extent of saying that 'after all the man who assembles the apparatus for a particular experiment effectively becomes a part of the experiment and even in physical sciences the human subjective element can never be excluded'.³ This is to say the least, funny. Trying to explicate this point of essential distinction between science and history, Collingwood put two questions, one scientific and the other historical: 1. Why does this red litmus paper turn blue? This is a scientific question. 2. Why did Brutus murder Caesar? This is a historical question. To the first question there can be only one answer. Even Einstein and Fred Hoyle cannot give another answer. If they gave one and if that were found correct, that would be the only answer, so that at no time can there be two simultaneously valid but different answers to this or any other scientific question. On the other hand for the second question, there can be many answers and all of them equally valid at the same time. The human motivation, the complexity of which will be incalculable even by an advanced computer or the most perfect of modern psychological tests is extremely elusive to quantification. Even if they can be, Brutus is not available for treatment by the computer or questioning by the psychologist. This is a special situation for the historian not shared by the scientist and this makes history essentially non-science. The scientist imagines a theme, or to be more precise, puts a question to himself like, 'why does this apple fall?' That he was attracted to the question shows keen observation and the sense of curiosity both

3 Marwick, *The Nature of History*, p. 99

of which are shared by the historian. But beyond that the scientist's procedure becomes different; for, from the question 'why does this apple fall?' he proceeds to the more general question 'why do apples fall?' and from that to the still more general question 'why do objects fall?' The historian too does frame a question to himself like, 'How did Clive win the Battle of Plassey?'; apart from many answers being available for this, he does not proceed to frame a more general question like 'why did British generals win Indian battles?' (which may or may not be an absurd question) and he does not proceed from there to another and a very general question 'why do generals win battles?' which is surely an absurd question. So the very purpose of historical enquiry and the purpose of scientific enquiry, 'except at the most banal level' (to use Marwick's phrase), differ and this constitutes the vital difference between science and history.

Seeley, another noted British historian, once told Trevelyan that 'History was a science and had nothing to do with literature'; he added that Carlyle and Macaulay were charlatans.⁴ To this of course Trevelyan could not immediately reply because he was a youngster then and did not want to. Seeley seems to have objected to the literary flavour of Carlyle's and Macaulay's histories and the error in that kind of argument namely that 'well-written Histories will lack authenticity' is the same as the error in the statement that 'a beautiful woman must be a bad character'. Bury seems to share the same prejudice against elegance in historical composition. He is highly suspicious of a good style though he himself was not free from the guilt. He said 'so long as history was regarded as an art the sanction of truth and accuracy could not be severe', 'I may remind you that history is not a branch of literature'. If Bury meant that good writing does not necessarily mean

4 G. M. Trevelyan: *Autobiography*, p. 17

accuracy it must be stated that no one made that claim; and secondly, even Macaulay and Carlyle did not pretend that their style would make up for other deficiencies or allowed those deficiencies to stay and for reasons unconnected with style; and thirdly, it must also be pointed out that bad writing, indifferent presentation, incoherent language, colourless and drab writing, in fact, unreadable stuff does not mean accuracy either.

The position can be clarified as follows:

1. As between a well-written good History and an ill-written good history the former is to be preferred, for it delights the reader with its style in addition to informing him precisely, while the latter compels the reader to swim upstream against a bad style.

2. As between a well-written bad history and an ill-written bad history the former could be preferred, for it at least has a pleasing style, while the latter has no virtue whatsoever.

Finally as between a well-written bad history and an ill-written good history a historian would call upon the former to check up his data and the latter to improve his style. For to a historian the style is as important as the content. The very picture of a relaxed mind deriving pleasure reading a well-written book of history annoys A. L. Rowse. He says 'ambling through Gibbon or Hume, Macaulay or Carlyle, deep in an arm-chair with the feet on the mantle piece was no way of training the mind'.⁵ Perhaps to Rowse the only sure way of training the mind is straining the body, putting the mind and body to torture and profusely sweating. But he proceeds to say also 'literary history is unscientific.' Here his classification is unscientific. For, being scientific and possessing literary merit are

5 A. L. Rowse: *The Use of History* p. 77

not mutually exclusive virtues. He says that literary history is ideal reading for the leisured country gentlemen' and is apt to become a soft option; no doubt unreadable history, whatever its other merits, can be pretty heavy option. But the demands of accuracy and reasonableness in interpretation are not necessarily met by a kind of writing which is positive infliction. The fact is it is possible to combine good style with accuracy as in Gibbon or Maitland. Dr. Keatinge says, 'in history as opposed to natural science the fact which is at hand for observation is not the historical fact but merely a description of it and in many, if not in most cases, a very unreliable one. The transition from the document to the fact is difficult..in history there is this additional and frequently a very uncertain step which is not to be found to the same extent in natural science'.

Science is characterised by conceptual precision and explicit rules to govern the technical jargon developed by each branch of science. While science adopts a *Paribhasha*, a native technical language peculiar to the branch of knowledge, history uses the ordinary language and expects even the ordinarily educated common man to follow what the historian says.

In fact, historians deal with ideas. They might be talking about facts of the past. But since they belong to the past they are only ideas now. So the historian whenever he deals with the past is concerned only with ideas. On the other hand, the scientist is really objective for he is concerned with objects outside of himself. The scientist can be objective and can enunciate general laws only by constantly repeating the qualifying phrase 'other things being constant'. So when variables are introduced the laws will vary. But since at any one moment only a given situation is contemplated an objective law becomes possible. But since history is concerned with realities in their entirety or at least

multiplicity it will make no sense to keep other things constant. 'History is not a deductive science and there are no rules for detecting facts. There are rules for detecting fiction. But that is a different thing altogether.'⁶

In this debate which was sparked off by Bury and in which in a great hurry many repeated his views, at a certain stage there came a reaction and G. M. Trevelyan was the hero of the counter-offensive. Trevelyan gives us in his *Autobiography* the family and cultural background which impelled him to join issues with Bury. He was up against this problem of 'whether History was a branch of literature or the youngest aspirant to sciencehood.' We have noticed how Seeley, who was his teacher, taunted him by referring to Macaulay and Carlyle as charlatans and that literary history was a thing of naught. Trevelyan was grandnephew of Macaulay and he had been brought up in the tradition of his uncle and his father, Sir George Otto Trevelyan. Naturally he resented Seeley's reference. Trevelyan himself says that he was brought up at home on a somewhat exuberantly whig tradition. Trevelyan truly suspected that the 'astonishing achievements of physical science led many historians, fifty years ago, to suppose that the importance and the value of history would be enhanced if history was called a science and if it adopted scientific methods and ideas and none others.'⁷ Trevelyan did not wait for long to combat Bury's and Seeley's view point. 'The fundamental question is whether history has any important relation to the reading public at all' or whether it is 'a science, no more and no less as was said in 1903 by Professor Bury... In 1903 I ventured to controvert his

6 James B Conant: **Science and Commonsense**

7 G. M. Trevelyan: **Autobiography**, p 56. This seems to have been the case when students of politics decided to call their discipline Political science

definition of history..... I argued that it was both a science and an art: that the discovery of historical facts should be scientific in method. But that the exposition of them for the reader partook of the nature of art: the art of written words commonly called literature.' Trevelyan says two things here: One that history is both a science and an art and this is what many of his critics fail to mention and two that the narrative form of history is a branch of literature. Trevelyan could understand Bury, a really scientific historian, making a plea for treating history as a science; but he could not understand Seeley's credentials to do so. As Trevelyan put it 'the cobbler can say that there was nothing like leather', but how can those who cannot even cobble say that?

In his inaugural address as regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1927, he pursued this matter further. He said history in fact, is more a matter of rough guessing from all the available facts and it deals with intellectual and spiritual forces which cannot be subjected to any analysis that can properly be called scientific. Trevelyan contributes the following ideas to the discussion. 'The functions of physical science are mainly two: direct utility in practical fields and in more intellectual fields the deduction of laws of cause and effect. Now history can perform neither of these functions no one can by a knowledge of history however profound invent the steam engine or light a town or cure cancer or make wheat grow near the Arctic circle history cannot like physical science deduce causal laws of general application ... the law of gravitation may be scientifically proved because it is universal and simple. But the historical law that starvation brings on revolt is not proved; indeed the opposite statement that starvation leads to abject submission is equally true in the light of past events'⁸

8 Price control leads to market stability under Allauddin Khilji; but it leads to the black market in modern India.

'Not only can no causal laws of universal application be discovered in so complex a subject but the interpretation of the cause and effect of any one particular event cannot rightly be called scientific. The collection of facts, the weighing of evidence as to what events happened are in some sense scientific but not so the discovery of the causes and effects of those events'. 'If you find out about one atom you have found out about all atoms and what is true of the habits of one robin is roughly true of the habits of all robins. But the life history of one man or even of many individual men will not tell you the life history of other men. Moreover you cannot make a full scientific analysis of the life history of any one man'.⁹ He summed up by saying 'what was wrong with the historical reaction at the end of Victoria's reign was not the positive stress it laid on the need for scientific method in weighing evidence. But its negative repudiation of the literary art which was declared to have nothing whatever to do with the historian's task'.¹⁰ He traced this influence on certain English historians to 'the Germanizing hierarchy which trained them to regard history not as a story but as a science'. Trevelyan deplored that these historians have so much neglected what is after all the principal craft of the historian namely, the art of the narrative. Trevelyan distinguished history as mainly a branch of literature and declared that the motive for history is poetic and its achievement is educative.

Dilthey according to Hodges was of the view that 'the human studies are knowledge in a sense in which natural sciences are not, because physical objects as known to us are merely appearances while minds are 'real realities' known to us as they are in themselves'. Dilthey says, 'the data of history not only are manifest-

ations of mind but are perceived as such and this makes an epistemological difference between historical study and natural science. The scientist observes things and processes but perceives no activities in them, no dynamic relationship' and A. L. Rowse declared categorically that 'however much historical writings may be supplemented by scientific methods and acquisition there will always remain history as an art'.¹¹ Geoffrey Barraclough says, 'to reduce history to a natural science is deliberately to leave out of account what we know. to be true, to suppress great portions of our most familiar introspective knowledge on the altar of a false analogy with the sciences'.¹² Acton goes to the root of the matter and is of the view that method in enquiry after knowledge is the same whether it be science or history. Ultimately it is logic and reasoning. Leibniz described his Organic Chemistry as an application of ideas found in Mill's Logic and a distinguished physician read three books to enlarge his medical mind and they were Gibbon, Grote and Mill.¹³ He goes on to say, 'if men of science owe anything to us we may learn much from them that is essential; for they can show how to test proof, how to secure fullness and soundness in induction, how to restrain and to employ with safety hypothesis and analogy ...' In both objections count, criticism is invaluable, contradictory facts help to progress. But all this is only at the ultimate or fundamental level. Once the start goes the rest is clearly different. Burckhardt said, 'clear cut concepts belong to logic, not to history where everything is in a state of flux, of perpetual transition and combination'.

It is however conceded that there are two areas: One preliminary and the other final in historical studies. The former, namely that of gathering evidence, is scientific

9 G. M. Trevelyan *Autobiography*, p. 56

10 *Ibid*, p. 55

11 *The Use of history*, p. 98

12 *History in a changing world*, p. 53 f. n.

13 Acton: *Study of history*, p. 53

in nature while the latter which is concerned with critical weighing and assessment of this evidence and conclusions according to one's judgment is clearly subjective and non-scientific. It deals with truth in its poetic sense rather than scientific. Hence the process of historical study and understanding combines in itself the virtues of science, as well as those of art. 'Herodotus and Thucydides regarded history as a science and an art although they may not have used that phraseology ... they took great pains in collecting facts, though travel and conversation were their sources rather than documents of which there were not many in those days. They then threw the results of what they had collected into the form of literature',¹⁴ says Trevelyan and concludes that we shall call history both a science and an art. He admits that 'in collecting and weighing evidence as to facts something of the scientific spirit is required for a historian.' Even Bury who started all this controversy and is usually pictured as a partisan has said 'science and art have found a meeting ground in history today. But there remains a certain difference of emphasis between literary and scientific historians. The former tend primarily to generalization and the latter to research.'¹⁵

There are certain obvious differences between a scientist and a historian and these everyone knows. A laboratory is to a scientist what a library is to a historian. The former writes short papers and uses a professional jargon which means little to the general reader. Generally his pages are full of symbols and equations, graphs and figures. But the historian writes long papers for he has to narrate and elucidate. But a fundamental difference between the two is the extent to which a scientist can prove a point and to which a historian can prove his point. When a scientist as

¹⁴ G. M. Trevelyan: *Autobiography*, p. 53

¹⁵ Bury: *Selected Essays*, Intro.

a result of his successful experiment states a law for example, the famous litmus paper turning blue, you can put him a question 'how do you know?'; he will answer readily 'you can see for yourself; let me conduct the experiment.' On the other hand, when a historian says possibly quite correctly that 'on the banks of the Hydaspes Porus was defeated by Alexander', the same question can be asked 'how do you know?' The historian cannot answer 'let me make Alexander and Porus fight again; you will see for yourself that Porus will be defeated.' He depends for his statement on Greek contemporary sources, the veracity of which is assumed on grounds of probability and not certainty. To clarify this position we shall equate a historian with a detective who has to discover a criminal. The crime has been committed and will not be repeated. The detective has some clues for identifying the criminal. They are personal and circumstantial. But ultimately when the detective catches the criminal and produces him before a judge he largely depends upon witnesses. He would be lucky if he can secure eye witnesses. But even so they are only *others* whose testimony has to be accepted or rejected on grounds of *probability*. We know that the ablest and the most conscientious of judges can go wrong. This can happen to a historian in different phases of his functioning; the historian behaves like a policeman-detective, a prosecutor or a defending counsel and a judge. But none of these functions is comparable to that of a scientist repeatedly experimenting on present materials, whose behaviour will not be erratic like man's but will conform to the laws of nature. Bearing the above in mind students of historical theory should ask themselves 'is it correct to say that "save on the most banal level, there are no absolutes in the natural sciences?"'¹⁶ Take Hooke's law, Ohm's law, Boyle's law and so on. Are these laws not absolute? Is the Pythagoras' theorem not

¹⁶ Marwick, *The Nature of History*, p. 99

absolute? Is even the most complicated theory of numbers not absolute? and can't we distinguish between the different usages of the word 'law' in different contexts like, in the physical, chemical and biological *laws* especially those relating to genetics on the one hand and Gresham's *law* Parkinson's *law* and so on, on the other? In the former case the laws refer to precise phenomena. In the latter they mean only trends or tendencies. Are there comparable laws or generalizations in history? Is there a law of war, a law of revolutions, a law which can predict success or failure of diplomacy? What then is the point in speaking as if the scientific absolutes have parallels in history and as if the variables occur at the same levels in both disciplines?

The differences between science and history can be stated as follows:-

To begin with, the scientist can repeat his experiments; historian cannot call for a repetition of the past.

The scientist can be objective towards the phenomena before him; the historian cannot be objective at all. This is certainly not a difference in degree, it is one of kind.

The ultimate objective in scientific exploration is the formulation of a scientific law. But there can be no laws in history. Scientific knowledge provides the power of prediction on the basis of such laws. The historian can't predict. He usually postdicts.

The material utility and the non-utility of science and history respectively is a valid point brought up by Trevelyan. It is wrong to ignore this difference and say that science is equal to history because both are somehow useful. The utility of a technologist is not equal to that of an applied historian.

The scientist makes no moral judgments. The historian can't help making them.

The historian has to communicate his findings in a language entirely different from that of scientists, and to write not merely serviceable prose but elegant prose which need not be artistic but will have to be at least readable. And the most important of all distinctions from which all other distinctions arise is that the material with which the scientist deals is mostly inanimate, and where animate, incapable of rationality. On the other hand the historian deals with the human material, which whatever the modern psychologists and their protagonists might say, defies analysis and can behave in such an erratic way as to be the despair of any precision-loving scientist. Marwick, for once hit the nail on its head when he said that 'some of the greatest social scientists (who are the great imitators of the scientists) are practically unreadable and are proud of it'.¹⁷

Prof. Bernadotte Schmitt¹⁸ remarked that science can be defined as 'systematised, organised, formulated knowledge' and history as one, the original meaning of which is investigation of the truth, if all relevant facts are diligently searched for, if presuppositions and prejudices are eliminated, if the constants and the variables are noted and plotted, with the same care that is the rule in the natural sciences.

I wish to emphasise a point made by Trevelyan that 'there are three distinct functions of history that we may call the scientific, the imaginative or speculative and the literary.' The first is concerned with the accumulation of facts and the sifting of evidence. The patient and diligent if somewhat [dull] practitioner of this

¹⁷ *Nature of History*, p. 106

¹⁸ *Fashion and future of History*, p. 23

part of the work was admirably designated by Carlyle as 'Dry-as-dust.' Stubbs, the great constitutional historian, said 'every great historian has been his own Dry-as-dust'. It is like the foundation of a building, invisible but important, fundamental but serving only the superstructure which is the ultimate objective though there can be no foundation without superstructure (in the sense that no one in his senses will lay a foundation unless he wants to erect a superstructure) and there can be no superstructure without a foundation (it is quite obvious) it must be conceded that, it is for the sake of the super-structure that the foundation was laid and not *vice versa*. So also it is for the sake of the well-written historical narrative setting forth the critical and learned views of the author 'that the facts are collected and sifted and not *vice versa*. Secondly, the imaginative or the speculative aspect and that is concerned with selecting and classifying the data and making generalizations. When Marx spoke about the class war there was no particular class war in History. He was guessing at a generalization. Ultimately one has to communicate these data and ideas and that has to be done according to Trevelyan in a form that will attract and educate people. This view of history taken by Trevelyan has been misunderstood by many of his critics who represent him as saying that history is only literature and has no scientific function to perform. From the above analysis it will be clear that Trevelyan said no such thing. He emphasised the literary aspect of the work because due again to German influence even literary scholarship was on the point of being regimented. Truly he said 'until quite recent times from the days of Clarendon down through Gibbon, Carlyle and Macaulay to Green and Lecky historical writing was not merely the mutual conversation of scholars with one another; but was the means of spreading far and wide throughout all the reading classes a love and knowledge of history, an elevated and critical patriotism and certain qualities of mind and heart But all that

has been stopped and an attempt has been made to drill us into so many Potsdam Guards of learning'.¹⁹

The foregoing discussion if it tends to emphasise Trevelyan's point of view a bit too much, it is designedly so because the dangers to the essential function of history which Trevelyan detected and dreaded in his days have now increased manifold and the warnings uttered by the great Master of Trinity are more appropriate now than ever before.

We have seen that History is not a science though it adopts scientific methods in the matter of collection of data, even as history will not be logic merely because in the matter of sifting evidence and arriving at proof it uses the canons of logic and even as history will not be literature merely because the narrative in the case of good historians must enjoy literary merit. When we analyse the question of the propriety of calling History a science we dealt with only the first part of the question. Is History a science or art? It remains to be seen whether History can be called an art. It cannot be exclusively called an art just as one can call painting, music, sculpture art. For, the kind of imagination which these arts require is different from the imagination which the historian should command. In one sense history is art. For, both happen to be 'criticism of life'. Unlike photography, painting has a human element in it; similarly, while chroniclers and annalists merely record what happens a historian thinks about what happened and makes issues out of them. But the really artistic part of the historian's craft is the manner in which he views his narrative. It is the art part of his history that has made Gibbon immortal.

ii. Does History repeat itself?

We have seen that in science experiments can be repeated. But past experiences in history cannot be repeated. These are very simple propositions; but yet, we often come across a dictum that 'history repeats itself.' This last statement is indicative of much loose thinking on the subject. History cannot repeat itself²⁰ for the reason that every historical event is unique and must be different from every other. Since historical situations involve human beings and since the influence of man on institutions will depend on his judgment and since the judgment of one man need not be the judgment of another, no two human situations can be identical. Only a very superficial observer with little historical sense will say that the Russian Revolution was the repetition of the French Revolution or that the second World War was that of the first. There can be only occurrence of *similar* situations and not *identical* situations. Strictly speaking the word repetition is permissible only if identical situations recur and not if merely similar situations recur. It is idle to say that in the private life of any man since his routine of work in the course of a day is the same, day after day, history is repeating itself for him. History only relates to what is socially significant. A concatenation of very similar circumstances can occasionally create a situation which very much resembles another but even then there is no warrant for the statement that history repeats itself. Therefore it may be said that history not only *does not* repeat itself but even *cannot* repeat itself.

20 It has been wittily remarked that whether history repeats itself or not historians repeat themselves and often repeat each other. But it may be charitably conceded that the basic postulates and problems of History being more or less the same some repetition of each other becomes necessary. It is true of all disciplines.

Now arises the question of the possibility of lessons being drawn from history or even the utility of drawing such lessons if history will not repeat itself. This is really no problem; because when a lesson is drawn from a particular situation in history and if the lesson is a warning it can be used to insulate the similar features in future situations. For example, the following lesson can be drawn from history. An overwhelmingly illiterate and politically uneducated adult population if clothed with electoral franchise will lead to despotism. This is a warning which Walter Bagehot gave. This lesson, there is no guarantee will be learned by people, though the situation may recur. The familiar expression, 'the writing on the wall' which arose with the inability of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar to learn a lesson from history though it was written in bold letters on a wall before him, shows that historical lessons and warnings will be there, situations which can be obviated or at least mitigated by the use of these lessons may also occur again and again, but there will also be a repetition of Nebuchadnezzars who will not see the writing on the wall, and even if they see will not take heed. Now, the ability to take lessons from history to meet similar situations differentiates the politically mature societies from the politically immature ones. Britain drew a lesson from the fate of earlier empires and before she could be compelled to forcibly part with it, gracefully gave it up. E. H. Carr says, 'One reason why History rarely repeats itself among historically conscious people is that the *dramatis personae* are aware at the second performance of the *Denouement* of the first and their action is affected by that knowledge.'²¹

21 E. H. Carr: **What is History?** p. 85

"He who does not know History is fated to repeat it."
G. Santayana

5

Historical Objectivity

'Can a historian be objective?' is not merely a theoretical question. It is the result of much experience and leads to many further questions. The ordinary run of writers of history books assume that they are very objective and that their writings are free from bias of all kinds. With a self-confidence worthy of of a better cause they declare 'the fact is ...' But most of these alleged *facts* will turn out to be just the opinions of those who mention them. Opinions are subjective. They are the result of judgments not necessarily compelled by fact but flowing from the *psyche* of the author. The subjective is particular while the objective is universal. The subjective varies from observer to observer while the objective is bound to

express the same value to all. The objective is outside of oneself and it relates to an object existing out there. The subjective is the mental reflection or reaction of the person. A true representation of the object will be achieved if the objective is identical with the subjective, if not there will be disparity. This disparity represents to a greater or lesser degree, a deflection from reality or factuality. The historian's avowed aim is to represent truly the object as it exactly exists, to narrate an event as it exactly happens, to delineate a thing in its true form.

Now this disparity can arise, as a result of the observer 1. misunderstanding or 2. misrepresenting. The former is a fault, the latter is a crime. Both come to the same in so far as erroneous representation occurs. How do these errors arise? A historian may have a particular motive for misrepresenting a fact. In his opinion the motive may be laudable. But to one who wants to understand the fact, serious damage is caused. For example, imperialist historiography defending the doings of empire builders (*vide*: Kipling) and patriotic historians applauding perversions of history to serve nationalist causes, (*vide*: Savarkar) historians of religion supporting the faiths they espouse—are instances of biased historical writing. Here the 'bias' consists in the historians taking sides. When he does so he is subjective; and what he writes can be either pure nonsense or dangerous stuff. But the question follows: Can the historian at all be objective? the 19th century German historian Ranke was of the opinion that once facts have been subjected to criticism and once these facts are cured of their dross by the historian's craftsmanship, the facts become pure and unalloyed historical gold. Modern psychologists have discovered that whatever the historian might do with his facts, he certainly cannot get rid of his own mind; and that mind is subjective. When any fact - even the Rankean fact passes through the historian's mind, the fact is coloured by the already

existing quantum of prejudice, predilection, bias in his mind so that the fact also becomes biased. This process of passing the fact through the mind is the third stage of historical investigation. The first stage is the selection of the fact. Why that fact and not any other fact is selected is itself the result of a bias. Secondly, when that fact is put in a certain context which makes the fact historical, the choice of the context is also subjective. Thirdly, when the fact passes through the historian's mind he is *contemplating* it; he is *giving a value* to it, i. e., he is *judging* it. This is value judgment, which is subjective. So at every stage the historian's mind plays on the fact and makes the fact a medium through which his mind acts. It is not as if the fact is clarified by the mind, it is only as if the mind is clarified by the fact.

What has been said so far may indicate that total objectivity is impossible for a historian as it is possible for a scientist. A given volume of material weighs the same in the same place at the same time to every scientist. But a historical fact like the revolt of 1857 is not the same thing to every historian. It is not necessary for one historian to be wrong for another to be right. Both can be right but in different ways.

I. Berlin has the following illumination to throw on the subject. 'We know what we mean by disparaging a judgment or a method as subjective or biased—we mean that proper methods of weighing evidence have been too far ignored; or that what are normally called facts have been overlooked or suppressed or perverted; or that evidence normally accepted as sufficient to account for the acts of one individual or society is, for no good reason ignored in some other case similar in all relevant respects; or that canons of interpretation are arbitrarily altered from case to case i. e., without consistency or principle; or that we have reasons for thinking that the historian in question wished to establish

certain conclusions for reasons other than those justified by the evidence according to canons of valid inference accepted as normal in his day or in ours, and that this has blinded him to the criteria and methods normal in his field for verifying facts and proving conclusions; or all, or any of these together; or other considerations like them. These are the kinds of ways in which superficiality is in practice distinguished from depth, bias from objectivity, perversion of facts from honesty, stupidity from perspicacity, passion and confusion from detachment and lucidity; and if we grasp these rules correctly, we are fully justified in denouncing breaches of them on the part of anyone ... all objectivity we shall again be told is subjective, is what it is relatively to its own time and place; all veracity, reliability, all the insights and gifts of an intellectually fertile period are such one relatively to their own 'climate of opinion'.¹

The above observations of I. Berlin point to the necessary relation between subjectivity and relativism and objectivity and absolutely valid precisions. Total objectivity we have seen is not possible. If so will it necessarily lead to subjectivity and therefore relativism? Relativism we may say is the dogma which holds that the values of each age must be judged with reference to contemporary beliefs, faith and value system and not with reference to a later day moral code. It will follow that each man is to be judged according to his values and not by an independent or objective scale of values. Then it will follow that a murderer or a robber cannot be judged by a magistrate for if a murderer is to be judged by a murderer's scale of values his behaviour will be impeccable. No one can judge another.

¹ Berlin: **Historical inevitability.** The above passages from Berlin point to two dangers which a historian faces: either he pretends to be objective and will in any case be accused of subjectivity or he will have to accept historical relativism as a valid dogma. This is a Problem to which we will advert in chapter VI.

There can be no right and no wrong, no sin and no righteousness. Rousseau's *Romantic Dream* of the state of nature of a savage can perhaps be realised. It is an eternal question; what is right? Whatever answer you give can be followed by 'why do you think so?' For similar reasons no one has yet succeeded in defining truth. Then one has to say it is a matter of conscience, nay, good conscience. Before the inevitable questions of 'what is good conscience?', 'how do you know it?' arise, one had better say that in these matters one has to be dogmatic and doctrinaire. Ultimately, right and wrong can be felt and not communicated or argued about at fundamental level. We know that the September massacres were wrong. On the ground that a historian shall not judge, should we refrain from saying that the Spanish Inquisition was cruel, that Mohammed Tughluq was not particularly gentle when he skinned people alive or that there was some difference between a Chingiz Khan and a post-Kalinga Asoka? When Acton called upon a historian to judge and to judge morally, he was only calling upon them to express explicitly the dictates of their good conscience and to call a spade a spade. Spades are spades howsoever our vision might cheat us.² It is this objective which a historian has to keep in mind when he deals with past situations which cry out for straightforward judgment. So Trevelyan said 'I do not mean that we should be impartial in the sense of thinking that all sides in the past were equally in the right'.³

Michael Oakeshott made a controversial statement in a paper read to the second and fourth Irish conferences of historians⁴ on the need for historians to call a spade

2 'It does not follow that because a mountain appears to take on different shapes from different angles of vision it has objectively either no shape at all or an infinity of shapes.' Carr: *What is History?* p. 21.

3 *Autobiography*, p. 65

4 and quoted by Marwick *'The Nature of History'* p. 101

a spade but Alfred Cobban countered this position by the following: "'It is admittedly difficult', says Prof. Oakeshott, 'to avoid the description of conduct in generally speaking' moral terms". This I take to mean that e. g., we cannot help describing the September massacres as massacres. The important thing is to avoid any suggestion that massacres are a bad thing, because this would be a moral judgment and therefore non-historical".

This is an extremely untenable position to take, for if this line is followed the result will be a historical effort which will make no distinction between Nero and Asoka, Hitler and Gandhi. This attitude of moral neutrality is abdication of a historian's duty to 'morally judge' whenever the judgment is not likely to be disputed by any but those devoid of all moral sense. Each one should satisfy himself that he takes the side of right as against wrong. To extend this sense of moral righteousness to the field of historical exposition is only logical and necessary and is certainly not non-historical as Cobban would have us believe. A.L. Rowse makes the issue clear when he says underneath all the change of circumstances and condition, there is a certain continuum to which all standards may be related for their validity. The nature of man *qua* man is that which gives substance to a real basis to our moral judgments, however conditioned by time so that we may as historians condemn Nero for a bad man and acclaim Jesus as a good man. Max Weber qualifies this attitude and suggests that our criticism should be confined to impersonal institutions and not extended to persons. He refers to 'the masterless slavery in which capitalism enmeshes the worker or the debtor'. He says that the historian should pass moral judgments on institutions but not on the individuals who created them. Toynbee is rather stern in his moral judgments. He describes Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 as a deliberate personal sin and I. Berlin insists that it is the duty of the historian to judge Charlemagne

or Napoleon or Genghis Khan or Hitler or Stalin for their massacres. Motley denounced Philip II in these terms: 'If there are vices ... from which he was exempt, it is because it is not permitted by human nature to attain perfection even in evil,' and Stubbs described king John as one 'polluted with every crime that could disgrace a man', but D. Knowles declared that the historian is not a judge still less a hanging judge.⁵ Croce is rather emphatic on this point and remarks, 'those who on the plea of narrating history buzzle about as judges, condemning here and giving absolution there, because they think that this is the office of history ... are generally recognized as devoid of historical sense.' Acton in our opinion, has said the last word on the subject. 'The inflexibility of the moral code is the secret of the authority, the dignity and the utility of history'. In the interests of civilization and human progress, it would not only be safer but right to agree with Acton.

There are two phases in historical enquiry: one relating to facts; the other interpretation. The first part can be and has to be objective. The second will necessarily be the subjective part; but even in this subjective part, we can recognize distinction between the reasonable and the unreasonable. It will be sheer perversity to say that even in the realm of morals what is food to one will be poison to another. Aggressive wars we know must be condemned. In ancient India unprovoked military aggression, deemed a royal virtue, was called *digvijaya* and was given religious sanctity and political validity. The historian of today is under no more obligation to defend this aggression than one is to approve of cannibalism on the ground that a cannibal must be judged by the canons of a cannibal's conscience.

The real difficulty arises not in such clear cut cases of absolutely right vs. absolutely wrong but numerous

borderland cases which fill the pages of history. It is difficult for one living today to feel and think like one's ancestors and when that is so it would be not only highly subjective but very unfair to impute modern motivations to ancient people. Historiographically this is unpardonable anachronism. For example, to accuse Omphis of Taxila who helped Alexander against Porus, of lack of patriotism is a case of lack of historical perspective and imputation of modern motivations to ancient people. Clear cases of subjectivity are partiality towards one's country, religion, community, race, linguistic group etc., i. e., 'doing unto others as one would not be wished to be done by'. 'It has been rightly said that the most odious form of the moral bias is found in the history that loudly condemns the crimes and persecutions of one side and conceals or defends those of the other.

The historian is subjective not because of his uniqueness of thought, but his emotions. It is easy to say that the mind shall be free from sentiments before it begins to judge. But the very act of judgment becomes subjective, when the judge has to choose among a number of possible decisions. Further the historian begins with hypotheses and assumptions. These are not the results of investigations, but their starting points. Carr said 'the bias of the historian can be judged by the hypothesis which he adopts.'⁶ To explain is to justify and to try to argue is to try to convert, though of course, prejudices and mere opinions often masquerade as unbiased statements.

Objectivity in dealing with a specific problem in history consists in one's capacity to see all sides of a question. It is a historian's obligation to do so and to refrain from exaggerating the virtues of one side and

denigrating the other suppressing the truth or suggesting the false. What is more dangerous than downright falsehood is a clever mixture of the false and the truth. 'Errors to be dangerous must have a great deal of truth mingled with them; it is only from this alliance that they can ever obtain an extensive circulation.'⁷

Some historians believe that the best way to escape from subjectivity is to confine oneself to facts and leave out judgment or perhaps even criticism. This is Ranke with a vengeance. But what are facts? They acquire the meanings the historians give, for the facts are placed in a context of the historian's choice and it is well-known that the facts just do not speak for themselves. Becker said: 'the facts of history do not exist for any historian until he creates them and into every fact that he creates some part of his individual experience must enter.'

'A certain modicum of inevitable bias thus naturally remains. One would go to the extent of saying that such a bias is not only inevitable but somewhat desirable too. 'I do not think it desirable; whoever writes completely free from bias will produce a colourless and dull book'.⁸

There is a kind of subjectivity which is dangerous and must be unequivocally condemned. History is often perverted to be used as propaganda to further one socio-political purpose or another or for the promotion of religious or other ideals. 'When history is used as a branch of propaganda it is a very deadly weapon'. This weapon is often used without regard to the damage one causes to truth, by patriots whose intentions are irrelevant to their achievement. For a historian patri-

7 S. Smith: *Moral philosophy*, p. 7

8 J. B. Bury: *A letter on the writing of history* to the editor of the *Morning Post*.

otism, communalism and other group loyalties are not virtues but a handicap.⁹ The wrongly written history books especially for children often circulate national self-glorification and a corresponding denigration of other people. This corrupts the youthful mind but what is more to the point, it destroys truth. It is on record that a secondary school boy in a West European country wrote down what he knew about a Jap: 'What I think of Japs? I think of the Japanese as a race of people who can build small things like radios. But they can also build big boats, like the world's largest tankers. The truth is that I hate Japs'. Every individual in most nations gets accustomed to some big prejudiced thought or other. To the Nazi German he was the superior Aryan; Mussolini thought and told that Caesar's land of glory will be revived. The British, especially those of the Kipling and Curzon school of thinking naturally thought they were the most superior people, that the empire they founded was for the benefit of others and they were only 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'; the Americans profoundly believed in a manifest destiny which made them somehow the guardians of others; and many Hindus inspired by some of their spiritual teachers sincerely believe that India is the land of destiny, 'punyadesa'. These superstitions are the antithesis of history. A strong reaction to this kind of subjectivism results in what may be called inverted subjectivism, i.e. exaggerating the virtues of one's own country and denigrating those of others is straightforward subjectivism; but falsely praising others for the sake of politeness or underrating one's own country due to humility will be inverted subjectivism which is worse than the former.

Finally, it may be noted that historical works rarely admit their subjectivism. They proclaim their objectivity.

9. 'Undoubtedly patriotism so called is the gravest danger to which civilization is at present exposed and anything that increases its virulence is more to be dreaded than plague, pestilence and famine'. Bertrand Russell: *Marriage and Morals*, p. 172

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But even a superficial glance will show that at almost every turn the author's predilections peep through. It is well-known that 'an American scholar once produced a book entitled an impartial history of the civil war, from the southern point of view'.¹⁰

The word subjective is very wide in its connotation. The historian can commit many errors of understanding, correlation, expression etc. as a result of one kind of subjectivity or another. Even conceding that a historian's approach to his work would be subjective or otherwise depending on his hypothesis or professional assumptions, there can be patent errors of a logical nature which it would be the duty of everyone to avoid. One of the first errors made by persons outside the field of history is that history merely consists of remembering some dates, a few personal and place names etc. And these are generally collected secondhand and that communication of historical truth is not different from a literate who has read his daily newspapers purveying the more sensational among the news to illiterate hearers. This widespread heresy has created a wrong image of history in the minds of the dominantly illiterate public in many educationally backward countries. This superstition, popularly facile but academically dangerous is widely shared—and that is the major calamity—by many persons trained in other disciplines and who may happen to be in positions of academic authority, educational policy-makers and so forth. It must be clearly understood that history is as much a unique discipline as any other. It has its own rules of the game and the game cannot be played by any who have not had considerable probation in it.

Social history is one area of historical writing which is most susceptible of subjective treatment and it is in that field that most writers affirm that they are objective.

10. F. A. Hayek: *Capitalism and the Historians*, p. 127

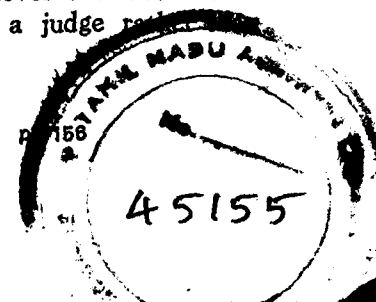
R. I. Crane says, 'when the social historian has made his decisions as to what are the relevant aspects of society to be studied ... he will be in a position to know what kind of information about society he has to find if his research is to come to fruition. It should be understood that this view point casts out the naive and misleading argument that history is objective, i. e., has no objects has no point of view and no aim. There is no such history. Those who claim that their history is, have either deluded themselves or are seeking to delude their readers.'¹¹

Objectivity in history is not the same thing as refusing to draw a conclusion or to interpret; only, the interpretation must be made not out of any prejudice in the historian's mind but arguable solely from the data and consistent with it. Thus the historian should not shirk the responsibility of reflecting on history and interpreting it; for 'if the accurate, judicious and highly trained fail to draw the lessons of history, the unscrupulous and the unqualified will do it for them.'¹²

The case for objectivity and subjectivity has been more or less equally argued so that the historian whether he be the former or the latter can defend himself to some extent. The final position however will be that every person though necessarily subjective in his writings must reduce it to a minimum and be non-aligned between the social camp to which he belongs and that to which he does not. Polybius treating the Romans and the Carthaginians alike in many places in his Punic Wars and Gibbon finding it possible to be critical about Christianity are instances of possible objectivity. Judges being human reflect their personalities in their judgments. But they do not descend to the level of advocates. A historian must try to behave like a judge not like an advocate.

11 *Studies in Social history*, p. 22

12 C. V. Wedgwood: *Velvet studies*, p. 158



Faraday said that 'scientists must expect nothing but observe everything'. This advice applies to the historian also. But since the historian has not only to observe but also to comment, and commentary will be mostly opinion the subjective cannot be avoided. The most diligent research can prove or disprove only facts but never opinions and when prejudices begin to prevail arguments can be of no avail.

Historical Fallacies:-

While practising the profession of history many fallacies are committed. Fallacy is a logical error usually subtle and therefore not easily or clearly spotted and rejected. Any historical exposition will consist of one or other of numerous fallacies unless great care is taken. A thorough grounding in logical system can be insisted upon as a basic qualification for a practising historian; for criticism is of the essence of his job and criticism involves careful logical analysis. There are some people who instinctively get into logical errors and apparently don't mind doing it. They can be called misologists (haters of logic). Logic-hating will include carelessness in the assembling of facts, slipshod arrangement and loose thinking. J. A. Froude suffered from an intellectual defect which Seignobos terms Froude's disease and that consists in failure to check up data, depending too much on memory and supplying gaps in knowledge with products of imagination. D.H. Fischer has listed a very large number of historian's possible fallacies in his book *Historian's Fallacies toward a logic of historical thought*.

According to him the following are the chief fallacies: Fallacies of question-framing, factual verification, factual significance, generalization, narration, causation, motivation, composition, false analogy, semantical distortion, substantive destruction. These are categorised under major fallacies relating to enquiry, explanation and

argument. He says that if a historian commits an error no catastrophe will follow, nor will the historian be punished as if he has committed a crime so that Fischer compares history to a game of chess, i. e., if history is not written according to the rules of the game the only consequence will be that such writing will not be called history. Among the many fallacies a historian can commit, one may consider a few as more important. The fallacy of false analogy by which the historian proceeds on the wrong assumption that if a certain set of circumstances led to a certain historical situation, similar sets of circumstances will also lead to similar situations, is to be discouraged. The attribution of later day motivation to earlier historical persons is another serious fallacy. Above all the error of pathetic fallacy is quite common especially among art historians. They use a language reminiscent of living persons capable of emotions and psychological appeal when they deal with stone, brick and mortar, marble etc. This is an attempt to convey the purely subjective experience at aesthetic level of one person to another. This involves no logic and therefore no conviction. The most unpardonable mistake which historians commit, however, is to draw more conclusions than the premises warrant and make generalizations though the evidence does not strictly permit it, in short, to ignore the sound advice contained in Ockham's Razor.

C.E.M. Joad, emphasising the difficulties in implementing the injunctions of Ockham, says, 'the writing of history must from its very nature be informed by a subjective element. For written history is a record of events seen through the spectacles of Mr. X. Y., a limited and partial personage living in a particular age, a member of a particular civilization, the child of a particular environment and the inheritor of a particular culture ... but accredited historians make every effort to minimise or at least to disguise this element of the personal.'¹³

13. C. E. M. Joad: *The Story of Indian civilization*, p ix

One must distinguish between the inevitably subjective and the deliberately subjective. The former being inevitable shall not be worried about. In the matter of interpretation it is permissible to choose one among many and even insist upon what most others may not agree to. For instance, there is considerable divergence of opinion regarding the process of modernisation of India which was evident in the early period of British rule here. Some say that it was natural for the British to export to the colonies and imperial outposts institutional developments and ideological changes occurring in their own country. Some others would say that it was an inevitable upshot of the impact of westernism and the British need not be credited with it. Still others—a somewhat pugnacious lot—would maintain that the British had a selfish motive in improving transport, introducing industries, encouraging a more widespread system of education, rearing a modern type of judiciary with equitable notions of justice and in building up an efficient civil service. All these, according to these men, were intended to boost and support imperial interest. In holding any of these opinions, however sincere and apparently dispassionate the holder of the opinion might be, the subjective element colouring these opinions can always be found out. In fact, there is no harm in this and one could even say that it is a privilege of historians to hold divergent views, provided the views could be logically supported by data. But a third kind of subjectivity is highly objectionable and that is conscious perversion and deliberate falsification. *Suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*, the well-known logical errors apart, withholding of relevant documents while discussing a problem or introducing a false document will amount to historiographical crimes. Many in authority have destroyed incriminating evidence. For example, the Chinese emperor Shi-hwangti thought his glory will be the greater if there was no record of any reign before his and he ordered all the previous literature to be destroyed. But the destruction in the nature of things could not be thorough and his intention and performance have also become history.

Strong prejudice for or against particular ideologies persuades people to hold partial views on matters of public interest and if they are in authority they can cause unjust destruction of even useful property. King Omar was convinced that nothing beyond the Quran deserved to be preserved in public libraries and the Alexandrian library suffered. Official attempts to write history have always tended to be partial to the interests of those who hold office for the time being. Priestly literature has been pro-Brahminical in India. Certain historians in England like Macaulay tended to write their histories from the Whig point of view; some others write from the Tory point of view. Laski always wrote from the socialist point of view and E.H. Carr takes the Soviet line. The government of India (post-independence) would like the history of India to be rewritten from the nationalist point of view and some other authorities would like communal histories to be written. These are natural like the brutal instinct in man and like that must be resisted.

The subjective in historical writing usually takes shape as a didactical error which consists in reading a pet theory in otherwise innocent situations or using only such material as will yield that lesson. The patriotic error forgets the defects of one's own country as well as the virtues of others. It takes two forms in India especially when it is written by Hindus. They run down the Islamic and British governments of India, but glorify the ancient Hindu past. A strictly scientific (supported by statistical data) study of any of these periods of Indian history can easily yield fundamentally different conclusions. Imputation of modern ideas to ancient institutions is best seen in some authors impelled by cultural chauvinism: for example, emotional criticism of the Hindu caste system which like the feudal system was needed at a particular stage of Hindu social development. Fustel de Coulanges, the French historian advises students of history: 1. to study the original text with minute care,

2. to accept only when they approve and 3. to keep out modern ideas from the past. To conclude we might summarise the different ways in which the objective and the subjective are related:

1. The subjective is inevitable i. e., it is a necessary evil imposed on us by nature, cannot be eliminated and is to be tolerated.
2. The subjective is not only inevitable but as a laudable purpose it is desirable and is to be welcomed.
3. The subjective need not be shied at or explained away but may be explained by conscious effort.
4. The objective is desirable but not attainable.
5. The objective is not even desirable; it need not be aimed at.
6. The objective is attainable upto a point at which the subjective becomes unavoidable. But upto that point the objective must be tenaciously maintained. The last of the viewpoints may be deemed to represent the truth of the matter.

6

Historicism and Historical Relativism

Historicism is an unusual word which is of recent coinage and has not yet acquired a universally accepted meaning. The need for coining such technical terminology is a measure of the growth of historical theory in modern times. Historicism originally meant 'development and continuity as fundamental characteristics of the historical process',¹ and is connected with the German word 'Historismus'. But it is also realised that this assumption of the development and continuity of the historical process is a deceptive half-truth and it has been stated emphatically that 'continuity is by no means the most conspicuous feature of history.'² Herein the basic fallacy of historicism was exposed. The theory of continuity which is a corollary of a pattern, a principle, a

philosophy is disproved by the occurrence of the fortuitous i.e., 'development and continuity are not a total explanation of the historical process'.³

Historicism has been given innocent and non-controversial meanings also. For example, Friedrich Meinecke uses the word to mean the rise of a new historical outlook, to denote the vital importance of intellectual history in the study of the development of nations and culture.

But the meaning which has been assumed by critics like K.R. Popper is different, and has become widespread because of the controversies it has generated. Popper is the greatest and most logical opponent of the doctrine of historicism which according to him means that 'it is the task of the social-sciences to propound historical prophecies, and that historical prophecies are needed if we wish to conduct politics in a rational way.' To him historicism is the relic of an 'ancient superstition even though the people who believe in it are usually convinced that it is a very new progressive revolutionary and scientific theory.' Popper levelled highly methodological criticism against the theories of thinkers like Comte (the positivist), Marx (the socialist) and Toynbee (the meta-historian) all of whom thought of historical laws. The essence of Popper's criticism is contained in his famous pamphlet entitled *The poverty of Historicism*.⁴ A well-known and a more fullfledged work by Popper is the *Open Society and its enemies* (1945). In a fine paper entitled *prediction and prophecy in the social sciences*⁵ Popper has made mincemeat of the Doctrine of Historicism. Popper says

1 G. Barraclough: *History in a changing world*, p. 4

2 F. J. C. Hearnshaw: *Medieval contribution to modern civilization*

3 G. Barraclough: *History in a changing world*, P.5

4 Originally published in the *Economica* in 1944-45 and republished in book form in 1957

5 Which is Included in P. Gardiner's *Theories of History* 1969

that Historicism is concerned with showing that some prediction is possible in history, i.e., even as we can prophesy solar eclipses with a high degree of precision and for a long time ahead, it should be possible to predict revolutions. Among those who made such claims for history Popper singles out Marx and treats him as a model for many others who believed in a historical pattern whose future course can be foretold provided we knew all about the circumstances. He says "this is an untenable position because a clear distinction must be made between 'scientific predictions', which are usually conditional and 'historical prophecies', which have to be unconditional. The historicist does not derive his historical prophecies from conditional scientific predictions because he cannot do so, since long term prophecies can be derived from scientific conditional predictions only if they apply to systems which can be described as well isolated, stationary and recurrent." "These systems", according to Popper, 'are very rare in nature and modern society is surely not one of them'. He further illustrates the point: eclipses for instance can be prophesied because the solar system is a stationary and repetitive system and scientific prediction is possible only in cases in which repetitive systems are involved and also if these are isolated from other influences. But in social science neither isolation nor repetition is possible. But Popper takes caution to say that for the social science to be useful it is not necessary for it to be capable of prediction.

Popper though he quotes Marx as an impressive example includes Spengler and Toynbee among those who believe in historicism. Popper's main argument against historicism is that, in history and for that matter in any social science, we are not concerned with social wholes such as groups, nations, societies, civilizations etc. Popper rejects this idea of study of social wholes on the plea that these social wholes mean nothing but postulates of popular social theories rather than empirical

objects, for example, 'middle class'. 'Middle class does not stand for any empirical group. It stands for a kind of ideal object whose existence depends upon theoretical assumptions. Accordingly, the belief in the empirical existence of social wholes or collectives has to be replaced by the demand that social phenomena including collectives should be analysed in terms of individuals and their actions and relations.' Thus it will be seen that the historicist position of predictability, which involves an assumption that historical events are 'determined', is untenable. Popper re-establishes the theory of the autonomy of events. However causally connected they do not yield an 'invariable pattern'.

Popper further says: 'The two most important modern versions of historicism are the historical philosophy of racialism or fascism on the one (right) hand and the Marxian historical philosophy on the other (left). For the chosen people racialism substitutes the chosen race of one's choice selected as the instrument of destiny ultimately to inherit the earth.⁶ Marx's historical philosophy substitutes for it the chosen class, the instrument for the creation of the classless society and at the same time the class destined to inherit the earth. Both theories based their historical forecast on an interpretation of history which leads to the discovery of a law of the development. In the case of racialism this is thought of as a kind of natural law ... in the case of Marxist philosophy of history, the law is economic all history has to be interpreted 'as a struggle of classes for economic supremacy.'

The above meaning of historicism was arbitrarily given by Popper. Other meanings given by others are also arbitrary and among them the equation of

⁶ Hitler chose the German people as the chosen race; Aurobindo's choice are the residents of India.

historicism with relativism is one. Barraclough said that 'historicism is the progenitor of relativism.'⁷ He says that 'as in historicism, in relativism also truth about a situation is sought to be understood in terms of relation to its context, environment, antecedents etc.' and not admitting the inherent value of a situation. According to this definition historicism asserts that there are no absolutes. The whole problem of historicism (of this meaning) is that there is no theory which would not need adaptation according to the needs of the times.

Burckhardt said that 'history signifies only relativism.' Philosophical and historical ideas differ in essence and origin; the former must be as firm and as exclusive as possible, the latter as fluid and open ... nothing wholly unconditioned has ever existed and nothing that was solely a determinant. At the same time one element predominates in one aspect of life, another in another. It is all a question of relative importance, of the dominant at any particular time'. Commenting on this A. L. Rowse⁸ says, 'a practical deduction that Burckhardt drew was that in judging the men of a particular epoch with their virtues and vices we must see them within the system of their time'. He further quotes Morley as saying 'the historian's method is non-moral, like any other scientific instrument. There is no more conscience in your comparative history than there is in comparative anatomy ... talk of eternal political truth or first principles of government has no meaning ... relative tests and standards are the keys both to real knowledge of history and to fair measure of its actors.'

One of those who made fundamental contribution to this idea of relativism was Wilhem Dilthey (1833-1911). According to him 'every age expresses its attitude

⁷ History in a changing world, p. 3

⁸ The use of History, ch. on historical thinking.

to life and the world in certain principles of thought and conduct which are regarded in that age as absolute and unconditionally valid ... the historian discovers these principles in every age which he studies but he also discerns that they vary from age to age and that in spite of the claim to absoluteness which is always made, changed circumstances always result in changed principles which are therefore historically relative ... history having recorded the relativity of all ideas and practices points to its own relativity and leaves us in the position known as historicism or historical relativism.' This relativist approach it is needless to say will result in cynicism and a reaction to it will lead to dogged authoritarianism. But Dilthey welcomes historicism for two reasons: 1. He thinks it is a deliverance from superstition and illusion and 2. he treats this as a revelation of the manifold capacities of human life. To put it in the words of A. L. Rowse 'Dilthey does not say that no one can ever know how to act or think but that in every situation man can find a way ... and the more he learns that every particular set of principles is the mind's reaction to a particular set of circumstances the more it appears that even historicism has to admit one absolute after all, namely, the marvellously adoptable human mind itself'.⁹

Croce gives another meaning for the word historicism, namely, the science of history. He says that 'the ideas or values which have been taken as the measure and the models of history are not universal ideas and values. But are themselves particular and historical facts elevated to the rank of universals'. Croce further says that 'the historical outlook completely undermines the superficial rationalism of the 18th and 19th centuries type, and in its place develops a profounder rationalism which realising how irrational men and events are would on the basis

of that knowledge the more satisfactorily subsume them and shape them into order.' In fact, Croce who has been dabbling in this kind of relativism made a statement which looks like his going back on everything he had said before. He said 'since every affirmation is a judgment and judgment implies category, the constitutive elements of historiography are the system of judgment categories'. Of course, we may agree as A. L. Rowse concedes that 'historical thinking liberates us from the transcendental and the wholesale intrusion of ethical judgments from one age and clime into totally different ones'.

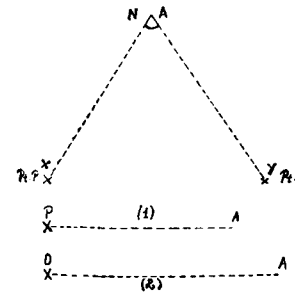
We noted above that historicism is usually equated with historical relativism. Relativism is the doctrine which holds that our judgments are, or should be relative to the age and the clime under consideration. In this context the word 'relativity' is avoided because it is reminiscent of the Einsteinian law. For the historical principle, therefore, the word, 'relativism' is coined. There are two meanings in which the word relativism is used: 1. that all manifestations are related to one another because they are all part of a larger and historical process of spiritual formation and 2. that there is nothing absolutely predictable or even dictable about the process of history and therefore everything is relative. One of the reasons for historical relativism is facts of history are all different and therefore have different meanings. As Sir John Neale put it 'all facts are not born free and equal.' The relativism in regard to the historian's task may be summarised as follows: 1. choice of the material to illuminate the subject, period or person, 2. choice of the method of illumination whether it should be biographical, sociological or institutional, 3. the nature of the value judgments he brings to bear on these, i. e., his assessments. All these will tend to make history so written relative. Even if the first two choices are identical historians will differ in regard to the third.

There is a subtle distinction between historical relativism and subjectivism which Cohen suggests. He says 'having chosen a given perspective that which the historian can truthfully quote is objective determinism.' This measure of objectivity preceded no doubt, by a certain amount of subjectivity in the choice of the premises must be possible. But there is another point of view which holds that 'unless we look at the past through its own eyes, we can be hopelessly misled by the differences in emphasis. For, the law of perspective seems to work contrarywise down the centuries; the figures grow larger as they walk away.'¹⁰ There is another kind of distortion which occurs in historical communication. Our misunderstanding of contemporary reporters will add to their misunderstanding of the situations they reported and thus lead to double distortion. Much of this is caused by semantic difficulties. There is a viewpoint found largely in the writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf¹¹ which is the general notion that the grammatical categories of a language determine or at least influence strongly the general manner of conceiving the world of those who speak it. This is not yet completely proven. Basic behaviour may be independent of language. But sophistication will decide and be decided by language. In collecting historical material from written records, from tape-recorded speeches or in oral history, the problem of correct verbal interpretation occurs. When a historian in modern times consults a record left by one who lived ten centuries ago, what he thinks the document conveys is his own interpretation of the contents of the document and not what the author of the document thought, or thought he thought, or even what he wanted others to think that he thought. The historian's interpretation can vary according to his needs and his prejudices. Differences

10 O. Lawson Dick: *Life and times of J. Aubrey*

11 Called Whorfianism, or linguistic relativity.

in points of view affecting understanding and therefore judgment can be illustrated:



X standing at Pt. O and Y standing at Pt. P are persons viewing object A situated at Pt. N. X's view of A and Y's view of A will differ according to angle ONP and the ratio between the length of ON—PN. If O and P coincide, ON=PN and angle ONP = 0; so that the disagreement will be nil. In illustration No. 2 the greater the distance (i. e., the time lag) between point of sight and A, the greater the chance of wrong understanding.

This postulate like all postulates scientifically stated depends on the assumption of constancy of other factors like difference in the medium existing between ON and PN. Here the medium will not be material as in the case of physics like water, glass or air, but will be language or any other mode of communication including art symbols.

Historical relativism often occurs because historians among others forget that there can be two or more sides to a problem. Protagonists of particular historical positions emphasise the validity of certain favoured positions, rather than recognise alternative ones. For example, a crusade has a crescentade and Whigs must not forget Tories, underdogs must not be overlooked by topones and so forth.

Certain differences in taste which can be purely aesthetic and personal lead to stern judgments at times. This is an area of human speculation in which dogmatism

will not help. Certain sculptures in Khajuraho are plainly erotic if not obscene. Trying to defend the sculptures from the criticism they will naturally evoke, K. M. Munshi wrote: 'I must however enter a caveat against people of one generation brought up with its own standard of tastes, sitting in judgment on the tastes of another generation, a different age or a different social and aesthetic tradition.'¹² This seems to be true on the face of it. But at this rate we must abdicate the right to judge; if we do not judge in history we can judge nowhere else. But indeed, comparisons are odious to those who suffer by the comparison. In the words of Karl Mannheim 'even the categories in which experiences are subsumed, collected and ordered vary according to the social position of the observer',¹³ and E. H. Carr summarised saying 'the point of view of the historian enters irrevocably into every observation which he makes; history is shot through and through with relativity'.¹⁴

Relative judgments are generally the result of different experiences which cannot be even with difficulty communicated and so remain isolated. An important example of this will be the persistent misunderstanding of Hindu India's dharmic values by non-Hindus and a reciprocal inability on the part of the Hindus (the more orthodox, pious and genuine they are, the more complete the misunderstanding) to understand Western secular values. In every day experience we see emotional reactions of different kinds cropping out, out of the same situations. The horror experienced by an observer hailing from a prosperous clean country of the poverty of an underdeveloped slum marked country is only *his* reaction. The horror is not shared by the local prosperous persons nor by the dwellers in the slums, even as the amaze-

12 Quoted on p. 137 of *Immortal Khajuraho* by Kanwarlal

13 *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 130

14 *What is History?* p. 64

ment expressed by the spectators in a circus is not shared by the performers. It has been pointed out as an object lesson in psychology that a piece of gold sovereign looks larger to a beggar boy than to a young prince of the royal family. The reason obviously is that the former unaccustomed to the dazzling sight is bewildered, his eyes dilate and so the object looks larger; and this does not happen to the latter. This is true also of larger experiences in history. Remote objects look small and remote events of no moment so that to fashionable internationalists the common poor man is no more than a slogan which helps him to his high political office for, with the best of intentions from his high altitude he cannot identify the worm. Similarly to the poor man international politics mean nothing. Fall of a government in a distant country is no concern of a peasant whose daily cares wear him down. So outlooks and judgment cannot be the same.

The vital distinction between arithmetical calculations involving mere numbers and events happening to living persons in human society will be obvious. In arithmetic for instance, the equation $2-2=0$ and 1 million -1 million $= 0$ are not as categories different. But if we could put it in human terms i. e., a person who has only Rs. 2 loses them and becomes a pauper, his condition may be arithmetically denoted as $2-2=0$. Another person who has a million rupees and loses the million can be denoted as 1 million -1 million $= 0$. But these two equations are not the same in the human situation since the person involved in the first equation is not in the least as much affected as the person in the second equation i. e., the two zeroes are not equal. Basing themselves on illustrations as above it may be tempting for some to posit relativism in all human affairs. It is not denied that statistical, arithmetical, pseudo-scientific approaches to history may be exciting but will not be illuminating. That is not the same thing as

saying that there are no moral principles at all which can and ought to control human actions and which can be understood as flowing from historical experience.

But this line of argument is somewhat off the mark when we are concerned with the historian's craft. He has access to the points of view of all. It is his function to stand beyond though he will decide where to stand and view the whole and judge impartially i. e. to say taking everything into consideration.

An eminent and early proponent of historical relativism was Carl L. Becker (1873–1945)¹⁵. Becker says that the notion that history could be written merely by recounting facts seemed flatly impossible. Snyder, however, is of the view that his emphasis on what he called relativism seemed to imply the dissolution of all absolute ends or values which might define the direction of social progress ... yet his profounder moral convictions were all on the side of a belief that some ideals were in substance unchangeable and were indispensable at least in a civilized human society.

A certain order of historians will deny the need for historical relativism if only the historian proceeds scientifically about his job. Fling holds that 1. the historian selects facts that are unique, 2. facts that have *value*¹⁶ on account of their uniqueness, 3. facts that are causally connected and 4. facts that reveal unique change or evolution. If a historian proceeds thus he proceeds scientifically according to Fling. Still, the use of the word *value* in this formula disquietens him. He says 'value' does not mean approval or disapproval. It is

15 His views on historical relativism are well presented in *Detachment and writing of history: Essays and letters of Carl Becker: on History and the climate of opinion*.

16 Italics mine.

not a position of partisanship but of *importance*: the protestants may love Luther, the Catholics may hate him. But they would agree that Luther is important for the Reformation'. But anyway relativism and subjectivism are inextricably mixed up and everything would depend upon the answer to the question: Do the concepts come first and select the facts or do the facts come first naturally leading to the concepts? A straight answer is not possible, because concepts are formed on the basis of facts known through experience and facts are gathered, rather selected according to an underlying idea. We have seen the many stances from which historical relativism is postulated by different thinkers. We shall now see how it will not be safe to push this doctrine too far. If one does so the logical fallacy of supposing that what is true of the part is also true of the whole. The theory of relativism has been ably controverted by able philosophers. C. V. Wedgwood quotes Michael Polanyi as saying in his *The Study of Man* that 'the historians by emphasising the relativity of moral standards and their inconstant shiftings from age to age have exercised an important influence in undermining or at least unsteadyng our capacities to make moral judgment. Thus the view that historical relativism cuts at the root of moral integrity is the first assault on that much battered theory.

Acton, among historians, was one who has peremptory views on moral absolutism. 'Mankind varies and advances in ethical insight. The virtue of today was once a vice and the code changes with the latitude. If King James burnt witches, if Machiavelli taught assassination as an art, if pious Crusaders slaughtered peaceful Jews, if Ulysses played fast and loose we are exhorted to remember the times they lived in and leave them to the judgment of their peers. Mobility in the moral code, subjection of man to environment, indefinite allowance for date and race are standing formulae from

7

Historical determinism

This is a doctrine which postulates that the historical process, i. e. the entirety of it, is predetermined. It also assumes that man, though he may boast of his freewill, autonomy and capacity to choose and decide, ultimately is obliged to act consistent with the demands of the predetermined course. Thus the problem of historical determinism is one of asserting the predetermined nature of the course of history or denying it. Some theorists have held the former view, some others the latter and still others a view that tries to reconcile the two positions. The whole idea of determinism is summarised in one word 'inevitability.' In history prediction is impossible, but once events have happened plausible explanations are possible. As in a detective novel we do not

know the end. But once we know it we know it could have happened only that way and not any other. 'Explanation is retrospective, prediction is prospective and the inevitability of determinism is explanatory rather than predictive'. Hence 'freedom of choice which is between future alternatives is not incompatible with the existence of causes for every event', says Scriven.¹ Historians have exercised their minds to discover whether the future could have been predictably different given a change at the starting point. Christians could try to imagine what would have happened if Satan had not interfered in the affairs of Adam and Eve. Many ifs of history like the famous 'If Napoleon had won the Battle of Waterloo' have engaged the attention of imaginative historians. But prophesying is not the business of a historian. The future cannot be considered to be determined if freewill has a meaning. 'The historian is only in his spare time a prophet'.

The most important manifestation of historical determinism is economic determinism. This theory is best summarised by Engels in his *Anti Duhring*.² Engels says 'it was seen that *all* past history with the exception of its primitive stages was the history of class struggles; that these warring classes of society are always the products of the modes of production and of its change—in a word, of the economic condition of the time; that the economic structure of society always furnishes the real basis, starting from which we can alone work out the ultimate explanation of the whole superstructure of juridical and political institutions as well as of the religious, philosophical and other ideas of a given historical period'. Once this is granted — and this has to be granted according to Marx and Engels—the coming of Socialism is inevitable. The economic determinist holds that the

¹ **Truisms as the grounds for historical explanations.**

² **Parts of which have appeared in English under the title *Socialism Utopian and scientific*.**

Schlegel to the realistic philosophy'.¹⁷ Froude held strong views on the eternal distinction between right and wrong. According to him opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall. But the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. Sir Thomas Brown exhorted 'think not that morality is ambulatory; that vices in one age are not vices in another, or that virtues which are under the everlasting seal of right reason may be stamped by opinion'.¹⁸ Mandelbaum says, 'there is a view of verification of truth known as the correspondence theory'. According to that theory, the only kind of verification is by direct confrontation. This direct confrontation is impossible in history. In history the common error that is made to obtain objectivity is to imagine that scissors and paste will avoid subjectivity. But what is scissored and pasted can be somebody else's subjectivity and then that is not the way to obtain objectivity. Synthesis which can be the product only of evaluation is essential if history is not to read like a grocer's bill. The distinction between the subjective element in history and the objective as one that relates to the factual and interpretative is merely plausible for there are no facts divorced from interpretation. The very manner of deciding on a fact, selecting it and presenting it are all products of subjective element. Hence all words are biased'. The same view about historical subjectivity is summarised by Richard Hobstadtor: 'the historical returns are never complete'.¹⁹ D. A. Fischer condemns historical relativism on the ground that it is an aspersion on scientific history: 'a great blight upon historical scholarship is remembered as a repudiation of the empirical aspirations of scientific history'. It is the insistence on subjectivity and relativism that has made some people despair of history. General George Mead once exclaimed 'I don't believe the truth will ever be known and I have a great contempt for history'. To

17 Acton: *Essays on modern history*, p. 355

18 *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 64

19 *The progressive historians*: Turner Beard

summarise the entire argument on this subject there is no better way than of calling upon I. Berlin to state his views in his inimitable way.

'We judge as we judge, we take the risk which this entails, we accept correction wherever this seems valid, we go too far, and under pressure we retract. We make hasty generalizations, we prove mistaken and if we are honest, we withdraw. We seek to be understanding and just, or we seek to derive practical lessons, or to be amused, and we expose ourselves to praise and blame and criticism and correction and misunderstanding. But in so far as we claim to understand the standards of others, whether members of our own societies or those of distant countries and ages, to grasp what we are told by spokesmen of many different traditions and attitudes, to understand why they think as they think and say what they say, then, so long as these claims are not absurdly false, the 'relativism' and 'subjectivism' of other civilizations do not preclude us from sharing common assumptions sufficient for some communication with them, for some degree of understanding and being understood. This common ground is what is correctly called objective'.²⁰

'The invocation to historians to suppress even that minimal degree of moral or psychological evaluation which is necessarily involved in viewing human beings as creatures with purposes and motives (and not merely as causal factors in the procession of events), seems to me to rest upon a confusion of the aims and methods of the human studies with those of natural science'.²¹ Thus it is that the subjectivism and the relativism inevitable in History can be avoided only in the highly objective enquiries associated with the physical sciences.

20 P. Gardiner: *Theories of History*, p. 328

21 G. Barraclough: *History in a Changing World* p. 53

economic system of a society determines the general character of its political, religious and artistic life. Leonard Krieger says that Marx and Engels distinguish class as an economic phenomenon, from class as something of which its members are conscious and to explain the latter by the theory of false consciousness. They concluded that history as written is the history of false consciousness and that the true key to understanding historical events is not history but dialectic. Thus Marx tried to circumvent history by dialectic. Gardiner draws a distinction between Hegelian determinism and Marxian determinism. In the case of Hegel determinism amounts to the need to *accept what necessarily is*; but in the case of Marx it is the need to *hasten what necessarily will be*. But though Hegel was in the world of metaphysical conception and Marx turned to the hard and concrete facts of life and experiences, still both subscribed to historical determinism. Popper discounts Marxian conceits and does not grant that the scientific method will do for history and therefore has no patience with determinisms of any kind. Popper elaborating his concept of historicism observes "I mean by 'historicism' an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal aim and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering their systems or the patterns, the laws or the trends that underlie the evolution of history".³

Plekhanov, who was an important and highly educated, intelligent and respected member of the socialist movement in Russia even according to Lenin, has an interesting paper on the role of the individual in history. Therein Plekhanov agrees that the great man has a big role to play in history. But its effectiveness depends on the social setting and the social forces operating at his time. But he has no answer to the question 'why does the great man exist at all?' He merely says that the social forces of a given period produce great men. He brings about

a compromise between the two views of 'determinism' and 'freewill'. He holds that the materialistic conception of, the human will recognises a certain compulsion which derives that will but also that on that account this will does not stop striving.

Kant, the famous German philosopher, was one who subscribed to the view that whatever metaphysical theory may be formed it holds equally true that the manifestations of the will in human actions are determined like all other eternal events by universal, natural laws.⁴ Buckle, the famous author of *The history of civilization in England* says that it is necessary to concede that when we perform an action we perform it in consequence of motives, that these motives are the results of some antecedents and that therefore if we were acquainted with the whole of the antecedents and with all the laws of the movement we could with unerring certainty predict the whole of their immediate results. Determinism has certain consequences for the theologian. If determinism is strict fatalism or an unalterable predestination there is no ground for God's mercy or interference. 'Necessitarianism', as G. K. Chesterton would call it, is opposed to 'grace' which is not bound by cause. Necessity is that which is impelled by a cause and is inevitable. If the natural chain of causation is to be broken, only the Lord's grace can do it. Hence determinism is not acceptable to those who believe in grace. But a compromise between the two is not impossible even as in national law even the sternest punishment prescribed by statutory law can be suspended, when the head of the state exercises his discretion to reprieve; God's grace may be thought of as the last resort in an otherwise inflexible operation of destiny.

Croce takes a different view of the expression 'historical determinism'. For him it was summarised by

4 Idea of a universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view.

the maxim of the 19th century historian Taine: *Apretary collection des faits, la recherche des causes* which means 'first collect the facts, then connect them causally'. Croce says 'facts are brute, dense, real indeed, but not illumined with the light of science, not intellectualised. This intelligible character must be conferred upon them by means of the search for causes. But it is very well known what happens when one fact is linked to another as its cause forming a chain of causes and effects. We thus inaugurate an infinite regression and we never succeed in finding the cause or causes to which we can finally attach the chain that we have been so industriously putting together.' By this Croce means that in view of the impossibility of tracing the causes of the events backwards, not only because of the multiplicity of causes but also because of the invisibility of many of them and therefore our inability to create a causal chain which alone can determine events, determinism as a principle is unacceptable.

The principle of historical determinism is of recent origin though men of religion everywhere have held some sort of fatalist doctrine but even this had to be qualified by the idea of grace. The ancient Greeks did not believe in the kind of determinism which became fashionable in later times. The intellectuals like Voltaire and Gibbon who spoke of history being merely the story of the follies and crimes of mankind, did not believe in a determined course of history. In one sense among the Romanticists Carlyle differs from Rousseau in that the former at least figuratively spoke about an impending and inevitable fate for revolutionary France and the great man as a man of destiny; while the latter said that man was born free but is now everywhere in chains suggesting thereby that man brings about a deterioration in his own condition. But it was with Hegel that very clearly an unerring and unchanging supra-material reason holds sway. Determinism became

an established faith with his followers and imitators, notably Marx. It is in Marx's materialist interpretation, and the idea of the dialectical process which he got from Hegel—and of course altered to suit his purposes—that one gets a glimpse of emphatic determinism. Oswald Spengler in his classic, *The Decline of the West*, enumerated the cultures and predicted a pattern of behaviour for them. This pattern was immutable for them. He was the first thinker to lay down the idea of historical determinism with such emphasis. Popper writing extensively on the determinist suggests that all closed societies like dictatorships and doctrinaire ones are deterministic in their outlook and proceed on the basis of a false theory. In his *Open Society and its Enemies* he severely castigates the philosophy that rules regimented society. Though he takes Marx as an example he mentions idealists from Plato to Toynbee who are Utopians or classifiers of inflexible social divisions and foretellers of one kind or another. He dismisses Spengler as a clever but not - so - learned a writer, To him Toynbee is a determinist. But Toynbee by his own statement is not one. In the B. B. C. debate between Geyl and Toynbee,⁵ Toynbee disclaims any tendency towards accepting determinism as a valid doctrine. He says 'Geyl has told you that I disbelieve in predestination and am at the opposite pole on that supremely important question from the German philosopher Spengler; ... that I am a believer in free will; ... well, that is what I do believe'. Toynbee is of the view that all the civilizations known to us so far have acted in a certain way which can be described; and that is what he does in his *Study of History*. But he takes caution to add 'even if all other civilizations that have come in to existence so far were to prove in fact to have followed this path, there is no known law of historical determinism that compels us to leap out of the intolerable frying pan of our time

5 The debate was entitled 'can we know the pattern of the past?, a debate'.

S

The Philosophy of History

It is agreed on all hands that the expression 'philosophy of history' was invented in the 18th century by Voltaire who meant by it according to Collingwood, 'no more than critical or scientific history; a type of historical thinking in which the historian made up his mind for himself instead of repeating whatever stories he found in old books'.¹ This meaning was distinct from the theological interpretation of history. The same name was used by Hegel and others at the end of the 18th century but they meant only universal or world history thereby.

This expression has three meanings: 1. it may relate to the fundamental assumptions a historian makes regarding particular historical processes like causation, progress etc., 2. it may also mean historical

methodology and the actual processes of historical research and writing and 3. it may be concerned with high level theorising about the fundamental currents of history. It is with the third meaning that we are usually concerned. Herein this term is used to mean 'a systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward an ultimate meaning.'² This way, philosophy of history can become theology of history, especially the theological view of history as a process of original sin, expiation, fulfilment and salvation. That is not different from saying that philosophy of history is concerned with the discovery of a meaning, theological or otherwise in history.

In this context we see another use of this phrase generally among the 19th century positivists for whom philosophy of history meant the discovery of general laws governing the course of the events narrated by history. When a philosophical or theological view of history is taken, the practice is to ask questions which cannot be answered on the basis of empirical knowledge. 'All the ultimate questions concerning first and last things are of this character; they remain significant because no answer can silence them.'³

Thus we see at least two different views being held in regard to the philosophy of history. In the broad spectrum of recent historiography, Voltaire and Hegel wanted philosophy of history to stand for certain ideas and functions to which history alone could be relevant; but the positivists were trying to make history 'not a philosophy but an empirical science like meteorology'.⁴ Thus to the latter, philosophy of history meant the discovery of uniform laws and to the former merely

1 Collingwood: *Idea of History*, p. 1

2 Lowith: *Meaning in History*, p. 1

3 Ibid p. 3

4 Collingwood: *Idea of History*, p. 1

of troubles into the slow and steady fire of a universal state where we shall in due course be reduced to dust and ashes'. In spite of this seeming disclaimer, the dismal picture he draws—Geyl in fact, had said 'Toynbee's view of history induces gloom'—of the dark clouds gathering in the west, which he seems to feel will quicken the act of self-destruction by man, seems to haunt him. It is difficult to disbelieve Toynbee's unmentioned and lurking fear that the inevitable might happen. Of course, he says that religion might yet save man. But when he asks whether man will respond satisfactorily to this challenge he seems to think he may not. Toynbee himself criticises Spengler and accuses him of being 'most unilluminatingly dogmatic and deterministic. According to him civilizations arose, developed, declined and foundered in unvarying conformity with a fixed timetable and no explanation was offered for any of these'

Tolstoy was another thinker who has contributed to this idea of determinism. He said the subject for history is not man's will itself but our presentation of it;⁶ history surveys a presentation of man's life in which the union of these two contradictions namely, freewill and inevitability has already taken place.

I. Berlin is perhaps the one thinker who has brought this question of historical determinism into proper focus. In his famous essay on *Historical inevitability* he defines historical determinism as the proposition that everything we do and suffer is part of a fixed pattern. He says that we have open alternatives and free choices and determinism. If their belief in freedom—which rests on the assumption that human beings do occasionally choose and that their choices are not wholly accounted for by the kind of causal explanations which are accepted in say physics or biology—if this is a necessary illusion, it is so deep and so pervasive that it is not felt as such'. He however feels that this controversy

between freewill and determinism may be a genuine issue for theologians and philosophers but need not trouble the thoughts of historians whose concern is with empirical matter. In short Berlin is impatient with 'the obstinate craving for unity and symmetry at the expense of experience'.

In regard to freewill no one can pretend that man is as free as he imagines he is or he would wish to be. In the social sphere where he is linked up with numerous other persons whose freewills impinge on him and *vice-versa*, the range of freewill is limited and is in inverse proportion to the familial, communal, national etc. issues involved and the extent of his involvement in them. But whenever he can take a decision without reference to and without affecting others his freewill can operate. But this question gets subsumed in the larger question of whether the historical process is determined; so long as man is a rational being and is capable of taking decisions and resisting external compulsions not to do so, he must be deemed a free agent and hence an indeterminate factor. Hence theoretically at least there cannot be any validity for the principle of historical determinism. But whether man will be able to do so at all times and under all circumstances is an empirical question which again will vary from man to man. This is different from drawing a picture of uniformity in the historical process and positing the possibility of prediction. This issue must be again separated from the other trend, i. e., to recognize a uniform pattern in the events of the past but leaving the future indeterminate.

independent and critical thinking. R. G. Collingwood disagrees with both and says that 'the philosophy of history is concerned neither with the past by itself nor with the historian's thought by itself. But with the two things in their mutual relations. The former is the sum of past events and the latter the enquiry conducted by the historian'. Collingwood in effect said that 'all history is the history of thought' and that 'history is the re-enactment in the historian's mind of the thought whose history he is studying'. According to this British philosopher, historical thinking is a special kind of thinking concerned with a special kind of object which could be provisionally defined as the past.

There are philosophers who frankly deny that any sensible pattern or meaning could be detected in the historical process. This is a kind of total scepticism like Froude's remark that 'history is a child's box of letters with which we can spell any word we please.'⁵ H. A. L. Fisher in his preface to the *History of Europe* disclaimed ability to discover 'a plot, a rhythm, a pre-determined pattern' in history. In fact, Froude and Fisher refuse to recognise a pattern in history. Reacting to this A. L. Rowse said 'No: there is no *one* rhythm or plot in history. But there are rhythms plots, patterns, even repetitions, so that it is possible to make generalizations and to draw lessons'.⁶ Prof. Butterfield imagined history as a force moving forward on its own account and he suggested that we historians must reckon with this process and use it—'must conceive of ourselves as co-operating with history leaning on events somewhat not resting idle indeed, but lying in wait for opportunity'; 'amongst all political crimes the attempt to fly in the face of history is the one that has suffered the heaviest retribution in the modern times'. This is a call to mind the warnings of history and implies that history issues

⁵ Quoted by Carr: *What is History?* p. 21

⁶ A. L. Rowse: *The Use of History*, p. 17

warnings and that those who are to mind the warnings can behave as if they were outside the process of history.

That in such a relation to the current of history the flows, the eddies, the whirlpools, the falls and so forth must be understood in the setting and their environment and explained with reference to their context, is a view taken by philosophers like, Burckhardt, who says that 'in historical deductions about men of a particular epoch with their virtues and vices we must see them within the system of their time (the *zeitgeist* of Ranke). It is a part of the historic sense to be able to judge an age in relation to its needs, its problems and its achievements, to see its failures against the satisfaction given'. Hodges said, 'inspite of the claim to absoluteness which is always made, changed circumstances always, result in changed principles which are therefore historically relative'. This is the relativist view of history. The phenomenon of *historismus* or historicism deals with universalisations of imagined principles underlying historical development. Marx, Spengler, and Toynbee developed theories which suggest historicism. Another philosophical query about history is: 'is there any way of arriving at a view of history that is true for all conditions?' If we can't do it, we are obliged to take a purely pragmatic view of truth; that would mean a decline in belief in absolute standards.

There is a dichotomy in the human situation namely that man is both free i. e., so far as he can make choices, and unfree in so far as his environment, tradition etc. limit the range of his choice very much; this is well brought out by Marx: 'men make their own history, but they make it not out of their own accord or under self-chosen conditions but under given and transmitted conditions'. He further says: 'individuals think of themselves and their ideas as the initiators of action instead of being mere agents or rather the channels through

which it came about.' There is a certain view of history which equates the historical process with human suffering which may be followed by ultimate salvation or remain in that perpetual condition of pain. The myth of Prometheus represents the rebel against suffering and Jesus, the one who invited and accepted suffering. In Indian thought also the Buddhist, Jaina and the Hindu concept of sacrifice emphasised the role of suffering. This is a kind of pessimistic determinism opposed to the idea of progress.

There are two views of history, one teleological and the other eschatological. These two views would destroy the secular nature of history. The theological interpretation of history partakes of the character of myth: 'The interpretation is outside history altogether. Grant all that theology claims: that Rome fell and England arose. That America was discovered or was so long undiscovered *because God wills it*. That does not enlarge our knowledge of the process. It satisfies only those who believed in absolutely unqualified Calvinism ... if man is a free agent even to a limited degree he confined the meaning of his history in the history itself—the only meaning which is of any value as a guide to conduct or as throwing light upon his actions'.⁷

The materialistic theory of history is that human beings whatever their beginning have emerged by very slow degrees from the condition of animals and that all their knowledge has been gathered by experience. This experience has formed the human character which determined the course of human history. Shottwell says, 'the materialistic interpretation of history does not, necessarily imply that there is nothing but materialism in the process any more than theology implies that there is nothing but spirit. It will be news to some that such

⁷ Shottwell: *Faith of our historians*, p. 78

was the point of view of the most famous advocate of the materialistic interpretation of history, H. D. Buckle; his *History of Civilization in England* (1857-61) was the first attempt to work out the influence of the material world upon the formation of societies.⁸ The transcendent view of history is that history has a meaning beyond appearances. As Lowith says if we abstract from any material object it becomes a meaningless combination of pieces of matter and so history will be meaningless without transcendent purpose. Croce said 'the search for the transcendental end is the philosophy of history.' The question of generalisation in history is cardinal. It is associated with the question of the lessons of history. In generalization what we do is we learn from a certain set of events a certain truth, and this we try to apply to other sets of events. When we do it we affirm our faith in the possibility of lessons from history. Those who deny the possibility of such lessons affirm the uniqueness of historical events. It seems to be equally true that we learn from history as well as we do not learn from history; i. e. we learn only small truths.

There is a view that history is the unfolding story of human freedom. This was characteristic of the 19th century and Acton was an illustrious exponent of this view. 'This view is in direct line of descent from Bossuet's teleological view of the universal history as leading upto the Christian revelation; and paradoxically enough is in direct line coming from St. Augustine whose emphasis was yet quite contrary to human freedom'.⁹ Hegel said the history of the world is nothing but the development of the idea of freedom. Another important theory, relates to the concept of the 'great man' as the mechanic who operates the wheel of history. Carlyle was the greatest exponent of this view. To him the hero was a demigod. A qualified hero theory is advanced

⁸ Shottwell: *Faith of our Historians* p. 83

⁹ A. L. Rowse; *The Use of History* p. 16

by Will Durant. He says that 'the hero grows out of his time and land and is the product and symbol of events as well as their agent and voice; without some situation requiring a new response his new ideas would be untimely and impracticable. When he is a hero of action the demands of his position and the exaltation of crisis develop and inflate him to such magnitude and powers as would in normal times have remained potential and untapped. But he is not merely an effect. Events take place through him as well as around him; his ideas and decisions enter vitally into the course of history. At times his eloquence like Churchill's may be worth a 1,000 regiments; his foresight in strategy and tactics, like Napoleon's may win battles and campaigns and establish states. If he is a prophet like Mohammed wise in the means of inspiring men, his words may raise a poor and disadvantaged people to unpremeditated ambitions and surprising power. A Pasteur, a Morse, an Edison, a Ford, a Wright, a Marx, a Lenin, a Mao-Tse-tung are effects of numberless causes and causes of endless effects. The 'great man' theory is put forward in two ways. In the first place, some consider that human progress is regarded as being primarily due to the work of the geniuses who may be generals, statesmen, saints or intellectuals but who seem to tower over the men of the times in their vision and ability to lead others. Secondly, as a variant of and in contrast to this theory we have the concept of the supermen whose leadership is more apparent than real and whose superiority consists in gauging correctly the direction in which history is moving and then leading in that direction. Each of these theories has something to offer and the truth lies in between these. Since history is the story of the successful and only incidentally that of the unsuccessful and that too in the context of the successful, heroes seem to be the controlling agents in history. Mill in his system of logic referred to Lord Macaulay's

observation on the role of great men¹⁰ and quotes him 'the sun illuminates the hill while it is still below the horizon and the truth is discovered by the highest minds a little before it becomes manifest to the multitude. This is the extent of their superiority. They are the first to catch and reflect a light which without their assistance must in a short time be visible to those who lie far beneath them'. Mill retorts and says that 'if this metaphor is to be carried out it follows that if there had been no Newton the world would not only have had the Newtonian system but would have had it equally soon...I believe that if Newton had not lived the world must have waited for the Newtonian philosophy until there had been another Newton or his equivalent. No ordinary man and no succession of ordinary men could have achieved it'.

The philosophy of history is a search for a meaning in history. I. Berlin holds the view that this search is a naive craving for unity and symmetry at the expense of experience. But Sir. M. Powicke had said earlier that 'the craving for interpretation of history is so deep rooted that unless we have a constructive outlook over the past we are drawn either to mysticism or to cynicism.' The philosophy of history means according to C. A. Beard 'the investigation of the rational principles which it is assumed or disclosed in the historical process due to the co-operation and the interaction of human minds under terrestrial conditions.' Bury had no sympathy with the attempts of thinkers like Hegel and Krause to disclose the rational element in the general movement of humanity. Bury characterised these attempts as 'special failures' because 'their systems were marked by insufficient knowledge of facts and details and both writers sought to impose on the story of social development a rigid framework or scheme'. G. M. Trevelyan said that there

is no philosophy of history. 'Philosophy must be brought to history, it cannot be extracted from it'.¹¹

* Much of the theorising about history has happened during the 18th and 19th centuries and this reflected the 17th century philosophical thought. The immense popularity of the physical sciences under the aegis of Newton, Harvey and others and the systems of 'philosophy of science' developed during the interval between the two Bacons gave a fillip to a new approach to social philosophy. The suggestion was made that social and therefore historical phenomena are subject to ascertainable laws and open to treatment familiar in the case of the natural sciences. The idea that history was a mere collection of contingent events (an exaggerated view of the uniqueness of events) was given up and the search for a pattern or purpose started. But there were others who would not agree to the location of the purposeful agency outside the historical process and to clothe it with transcendental character. In fact, causal laws like those which govern the world of natural science were attempted to be discovered in the realm of history. The problems involved in the search were 1. what were these factors? and 2. how are they to be discovered? There were two approaches possible. One was the empirical method established by 'the careful examination of different societies and comparison between various stages of development through which men had passed'. On the other hand the theological interpretation of history had not yet lost its hold; only it got itself changed into some sort of transcendental purpose as can be seen in Bossuet's *Discourse of universal History* (1681). The teleological view masqueraded under talk of nature. The language of pathetic fallacy and personification of nature hid all the teleology it could. The Enlightenment thinkers wrote as if they had been

¹¹ *Autobiography*, p. 82

* This section is largely based upon Patrick Gardiner's: *Theories of History*, pp. 4 to 8

emancipated from the theological or teleological view. But they made it appear as if they were referring only to an inner necessity; i. e., Reason was to be the basis for recognizing something as meant to happen which implied that it must happen. The discovery of basic principle which directed history towards a goal was different from the mere cognition of uniformities in the historical process. This meant that the goal and the direction were determined by extra-historical process, and that any deviation therefrom would be an aberration and needed special explanation. Now this fixed goal and therefore this prescribed direction were not neutral i. e. they were treated as morally accepted though why they should be so treated was hard to explain. This was reflected in the 18th and 19th century social and political reform movement and also in the growth of the idea of progress. But in spite of this moralistic undercurrent on surface the Enlightenment swore by empiricism and reason. During the 18th century the rejection of the patently theological was the most obvious achievement. The three ideas of human perfectability, the inevitability of the historical process and the possibility of human control of the social process side by side existed. Among those who were in a pioneering way responsible for these changes, one could mention Turgot and Condorcet. Their endeavours led to the formulation of social theories in the 19th century by men like Saint Simon, Comte and Marx. But this was not all. Vico, Herder and Montesquieu put forth theories which are not strictly speaking rationalist but provide other insights into the historical process. Vico clearly rejected 'the mathematically inspired Cartesian criterion of true knowledge denying that the test of clear and distinct conceptions was universally valid or applicable'. He would not approve of the abstract concept of *man* being imagined to be a criterion for all *men*. Vico and Herder refused to concede that the past could be interpreted by the yardstick of contemporary reason. The imposition of 'present' notions on 'past' events resulted in the creation

of myths even as the past when recognized to be different from the present was called a myth (unreasonably of course). They said that to create an artificial construct called human nature and then blindly apply it to the past to explain it was methodologically fallacious to them.

Comte and his positivist philosophy were most influential in trying to bring history within the ambit of science. Marx was directly influenced by him. But Hegel who also influenced Marx had made it plain that the historical method was different from and not inferior to the scientific method. 'Hegel's key concepts — the concepts in terms of which he professes to be able to describe the underlying character of the world — are concepts which play a central role in historical explanation and understanding, by assigning a pre-eminent position to notions like reason, development, process and freedom by setting limits to the applicability of the mathematical and quantitative concepts, by drawing a sharp line between historical and natural phenomena. 'In formulating his own dialectical logic he can be interpreted as trying to express a dissatisfaction with the belief that because certain frameworks for describing and ordering our experience operates successfully in some domains, it follows that they are equally well adapted to all departments of our knowledge.'

The term philosophy of history has meant two things: 1. that it is to discover a meaning in history in the sense that all that has happened or is going to happen has been or is pre-ordained or intended by some hidden hand and 2. that while the past does reveal an unmistakable pattern, that if man does not interfere the pattern may continue in future. Spengler falls in the former group and Toynbee in the latter.

The philosophy of history is not a single discipline consisting of well defined problems. The speculative systems of the earlier periods gave rise to conceptual

problems towards the end of the 19th century; questions of criticism and appraisal became more important. Queries regarding the nature of historical knowledge, the relations between history and science and so forth were raised. Dilthey, Croce and Collingwood tackled the question of the nature of historical knowledge (historical epistemology) and tried to establish the autonomy of history as a branch of knowledge. They 'conclusively showed that it was fallacious to think that history either could or should emulate methods analogous to those adopted in the natural sciences. At the commencement of the present century philosophy of history had split into two parts: 1. speculation and systematisation as seen in Spengler and Toynbee and 2. The analysis of historical procedures, categories and terms.

The concept of the philosophy of history began roughly speaking with the Romanticists though they did not create the concept and it was implicit in the earlier writings of Christian historians from Eusebius (A. D. 260—340) to Bossuet (1627—1704). The mystical and sentimental attitude of the Romanticists provided an interest in the human past which was suitable for speculation about that past. Beginning with Vico philosophy of history took a more recognizable shape. Important philosophical reflections on historical development can be noted in the writings of Rousseau, Turgot etc. Herder (1744—1803) wrote his massive *Ideas for the philosophy of the history of humanity*. Kant (1724—1804) also elaborated on certain aspects of philosophy of history in his *Idea of a universal history*. Nationalist idealists belonging to the romantic school like J. G. Fichte spoke about the superiority of the German nation implying providential arrangements. Schelling (1775—1854) was influenced by Fichte and he considered history as essentially a process of the self-revelation of the absolute. An influential philosophical interpretation of history was contained in the *Philosophy of history* by

Schlegel (1772—1829). He said that the business of philosophy is to find out how unity and harmony may be restored to the inner life of man. 'The major task of history is to trace this restoration of the image of God to mankind through the successive stages of human history'.¹² Hegel's *Philosophy of History* was a record of the unfolding of the self-consciousness of freedom in the human spirit. Friedrich Krause (1781—1832) wrote the *General Philosophy of History* and he held that humanity passes through stages of development which may be compared with the life of man.

Theodore Jouffroy (1796—1842) wrote the *Philosophy of history* in which he held that man is different from the other animals in that the former advances while the latter remain unchanged—a pre-Darwinian notion. According to Jouffroy changes in human ideas underlie and determine all other phases of human development. This idea is also expressed by Edgar Quinet (1803—75) in his introduction to the *Philosophy of history*. Among French thinkers Turgot, Saint Simon and Comte were the more famous in the field of the philosophy of history.

Except in Collingwood England has produced few real philosophers of history. Herbert Spencer the sociologist, H. T. Buckle, Bagehot and Leslie Stephen have made some contribution of peripheral nature to this subject. But Robert Flint (1838-1910) wrote his *The Philosophy of history in Europe: France and Germany* which studied in a systematic way the history of the development of the philosophy of history in modern times.

The most eminent application of Hegelian dialectic to create the materialistic interpretation of history was that of Marx who said in effect that economic factors ultimately determine human and social development.

¹² Barnes: *History of historical writing*, p. 195

B. Croce was a student of art. But he wrote extensively on *Theories of history*. To him history is a manifestation of reality in present which contains in itself the impression from the past and germs of insight into future. To Croce 'history is the story of the human mind and its ideals in so far as they express themselves in theories and in works of art, in practical and moral actions. Spengler's and Toynbee's contribution to the philosophy of history are too vast to be studied in a brief sketch like this but will be dealt with elsewhere in this book. Paul Barth, a German historian and a sociologist distinguished between philosophy of history and history and included the former under sociology. His work *The Philosophy of history as sociology* is a significant contribution to this subject. Pitirim Sorokin's *Social and cultural dynamics* in four volumes portrayed social evolution as wavering between constantly reappearing doomsdays and the intervals of temporary wellbeing.¹³

¹³ Comparable to a Hindu Yuga between two pralayas

9

Time

History is 'Secular' and 'temporal' i.e., it is limited by space and time from which it follows that the universal which is not bound by delimited space and the eternal which is not limited by time do not belong to the realm of history. Thus space and time become essential for the historical process. The word temporal is derived from *tempus* meaning time and the word secular from the Latin *saecularis* meaning 'of generation' or 'of age' relating also to the times. Hence time is related to the events of a wordly nature. The word *time* itself is from a common Germanic root from which *tide* is also derived. It can be surmised that the regularity of the ebb and flow of the tides must have suggested to the minds of the primitive men a unit of duration which they called time.

History being wedded to time cannot be concerned with the eternal and since it pertains to life it will ignore the spiritual on the ground that the spirit is eternal. Hence history has been called the temporal process and so it can have no use to those whose ambitions and expectations are non-temporal. In space which was once considered distinct from time, the adjacent or the neighbouring is analogous to the succeeding or the preceding, the latter or the former in time. Now, the distinction between time and space is breaking down and in fact, while we have three dimensions in space, time is considered to be the fourth dimension, i. e., to say the distinction between time and space is superficial. We speak of three dimensions in space: length, width and height. These are theoretically separable. But in reality we cannot have length without width or depth; width is only another form of length; or depth is also necessary for length and width. A length illustrated merely by a straight line AB is a mathematical abstraction and does not exist in fact. These three dimensions are the joint characteristics of any object in space, whose volume will be in cubic content. Such an object characterised by these three dimensions exists not only in space but also necessarily in time.

There are differences between the first three dimensions and time which is called the fourth dimension. They are: 1) the latter is irreversible, while the former can be projected forward or backward; and 2) the former is visible and material, the latter invisible and non-material.

The passage of time is a matter of experience. It is only inferable from the effects of time. A living organism grows, and growth occurs during time. From growth we infer time. So from birth to death, from the origin of growth to the end of it, there is a march of events which occurs in time. Thus the words duration, period

etc., signify the passage of time. The fact of time is the result of observation or experience and if this experience itself is not trusted, the result of such experience will also be untrustworthy. If the *validity* of such experience is admitted, the next question is one of the *utility* of being interested in it. The acceptance of the former does not necessarily lead to the latter. Unless the utility of time is also admitted faith in history will not be established.

The Greeks referred to history as Clio, a muse and Khronos was an attendant on Clio. Descartes, the French philosopher, said, 'I am a thing which thinks'; and it is thinking which makes the awareness of time possible. This is an improvement on the Upanishadic dictum, 'I am that': for, Descartes said that awareness created existence while the latter merely suggested an equation. Bergson treated time as real and said, 'I am a thing which continues' thereby somewhat modifying Descartes. Bergson really dealt with the durational aspect of history. Historical Time is related not to 'being' but 'becoming'; 'time' is the quality of 'becoming'.

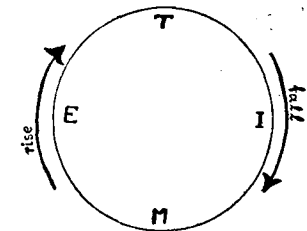
Time is usually divided into the past, the present and the future. Experience, we saw, creates the awareness of time. This means that, memory creates the past, observation the present and anticipation the future. These are the three ways in which time is perceived. What is past and cannot be regained, what is present and will not endure and what is future and cannot be foretold belong to history. Bergson said 'the past gnaws into the future and swells as it advances.' So experience series is a 'one dimension continuum', part of which is accounted for by memory and the rest by imagination. The total range of the former is history.

The traditional notion of time as an absolute phenomenon has yielded place to the relativity of time since Einstein enunciated the general theory of relativity.

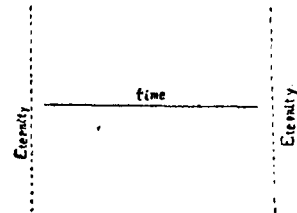
So far as space is concerned it is quantitative and concrete, and experiments are possible therein. But time is qualitative and eludes intellectual grasp. Life is bound up completely with time and during time it goes on changing. This change is history. The inanimate which is not bound up with a rational motivation has no history, because it is not ravaged by time and it has no mortality.

Time among the ancients was conceptualised in two ways: 1) cyclical, periodically regenerating itself *ad infinitum*; 2) finite time, i. e., a bit between two non-temporal eternities. Plato speaks of cyclical time. He was perhaps influenced by early Babylonian thought; but the Christians changed the cyclical motion into a linear motion beginning from the fall and ending with redemption. From the 17th century onwards the linear view of historical progress began to assert itself. Kepler, Bruno and Campanella still clung to the old cyclical theory, but Francis Bacon, Pascal, and others adopted the linear theory of progress. Leibniz declared the theory of infinite progress, and he represented the age of enlightenment. Spengler and Toynbee in recent times posit theories of periodicity of rise and fall of cultures or civilizations. But these theories are ultra-historical because they deal with patterns and meanings in history for which there is no clear warrant. But even the linear theories pin their hopes on their fulfilment.

The cyclical theory is opposed to the idea of progress; it represents the idea of alternating rise and fall i. e., rise when the curve goes up and fall when it goes down. It would mean a net condition of non-change, the rises and falls



cancelling one another, while the rise prevents excessive exuberance in view of the impending fall and the fall prevents excessive dejection in view of the expected rise.



The concept of time is closely mixed up with the idea of causation. It is a matter of common knowledge that during a period of time events occur. Some events occur earlier and some later. Of these some earlier events *may lead to* some later events. Then the former are called the causes and the latter the results. The causes and the results are said to be causally connected. But if there be two events, one earlier and the other later and if there is no reason to suppose that the later was *due to* the earlier then they are not causally connected. In history we have a whole complex of events all the time happening, some influencing the others, and some influenced by others, some revealing a direct causation and others indirect causation. There are apparent causes and real causes. A single historical event like the French Revolution consists of myriads of events and each one must have had its causes and to fish out all of them one might have to 'go down to hell and up to heaven' as Trevelyan said. P. Gardiner also puts this question 'why did the French Revolution occur?' and elucidates as follows: 'when this question is pushed sufficiently backward and every answer to a *why* further confronted by another *why* the ultimate *why* will have no answer; for that *why* is not asking for an enunciation of a preceding group of events causing an effect but is a question regarding the in-built nature of phenomenon for which human knowledge or ingenuity can have no answer'.¹ Events occur at different points in time and the historians want to relate them causally. Meaning in history arises only out of

¹ Nature of historical explanation.

such causal relations. Every preceding thing is not necessarily related to every succeeding thing, though causes are earlier and results only follow. Though this is generally true, there are results which are coterminous with their causes; but there can be no result logically preceding its cause. The historian's function is to detach these causal relations and make meaning out of historical happenings. The theory of moral causation perhaps necessary for the moralist and the man of religion has no appeal to the historian; for there is no necessity of temporal logic for good to be repaid to good and evil to evil. Inefficiency and ignorance have more compelling and identifiable consequences reacting harshly on the inefficient and the ignorant than wickedness. Apart from these easily (or with some effort) detachable causes and effects, there is what is called the 'contingent' in history. If there were no 'contingent', history would be totally predetermined and become an unbearable tyranny. Man's autonomy is real and his autonomous action cuts across the chain of causation and creates change unwarranted by causes; in this case however the sole cause will be man's will. Thus, the impossibility of proving merely with the help of secular logic the phenomenon of moral causation, the autonomy of man and the consequent presence of the contingent are inter-related. Collingwood has contributed to the discussion on the idea of historical causation. He mentions three characteristics of causation. That which is 'caused' is an event or state of things standing to it in a one to one relation of causal priority i. e., relation of such a kind that (a) if the cause happens the effect also must happen or exist even if no other condition is fulfilled; (b) the effect cannot happen or exist unless the cause happens exists and (c) in some sense the cause is prior to the effect for without that priority there would be no telling which was which. But one should note that in all causal relationship the connection between cause and effect is not 'necessary' but 'probabilistic'. Collingwood speaks of the analogy of a road accident

for which a cause is to be discovered. There may be many causes each one throwing the blame on the other. But a historian, when he seeks historical causes, is not a participant and he cannot control any antecedent. When a 'conscious' and 'responsible' person's 'free' will deliberately acts, even that act must have a cause. That cause is merely the provision of a motive for thus acting. This applies, however, only to deliberate and free acts and such acts are but a few in history.

Everyone has heard of the observation that history would have taken an entirely different course, had Cleopatra's nose been somewhat shorter. This kind of search for causes is a caricature of genuine historical causation. If there is a rigorous chain of causation and if man is caught in this inflexible mesh it will amount to his being denied his autonomy; he will then have no will for, when he is 'willing' he is exempt from the law of cause and effect. Gustavson said that 'the problem of causation is inextricably connected with the whole question of movement and change in history and some facility in dealing with it is indispensable for an understanding of the course of events. Historical movements, however much they are impelled by economic and social factors are after all carried through by men'. Lecky said that 'history is not a mere succession of events connected only by chronology. It is a chain of causes and effects'.² It has been rightly remarked that 'to give a causal explanation of a certain event means to derive deductively a statement (it will be called a *prognosis*) which describes that event using as premises of the deduction *some universal laws* together with certain singular or specific sentences which we may call initial conditions... from an analysis of causal explanation we can see that we can never speak of cause and effect in an absolute way; but that an event is the cause of another event which is its effect relative to some universal law.'³

² **History of European Morals**, Vol. I (p. 332).

³ K. R. Popper: **The open society and its enemies** Vol. II (p. 249)

Mircea Eliade maintains that the purpose of myth and ritual is to abolish what he calls 'profane time' and to situate man in an eternal setting.⁴ M. Eliade elaborates the cyclical theory with copious quotations in his *Myth of the Eternal Return*. 'Eternal' shows the perpetual nature of the operation; 'return' (in so far as time is concerned) suggests reversibility which is false, and 'myth' indicates that it is not history. Thus that book stands for a repudiation of the idea that perpetual reperformance of rituals has any historical significance. But this myth was part of the culture of primitive man and continues to be part of societies which are even now primitive. Eliade says that traditional and archaic societies revolt against concrete historical time ... these societies refuse concrete time and are hostile to autonomous history i. e., history not regulated by archetypes. These societies depreciate history, reject profane and continuous time. According to Eliade, archetypes in concrete three dimension and repetition in the fourth, are characteristic of myth, created by the pre-Socratic 'Man of myth' and all traditional societies elsewhere.

Time, as the scale on which history moves and is in progress, is of relatively recent origin. 'We only have to go a few centuries back in the history of Europe to the Middle ages to find men forming their thought and action on entirely different assumptions. For them the individual life was set not in time but in eternity; ideas and action were to be thought of not in terms of time past and time future, but in terms of eternity in heaven or hell. From this it would follow that myths abolish time. J. B. Bury writing on the idea of progress, which is however secular, says that "the belief in a steady advance towards human perfection was put into more concrete form by the philosopher Fontenelle when he stated that 'the sound views of intellectual men in different

⁴ Quoted by Zaehner in his **Hindu and Muslim Mysticism**, p. 22

generations will continually add up', and concluded that 'progress is a national and necessary effect of the constitution of the human mind'.⁵ This idea of progress which we shall elaborate elsewhere⁶ is largely the product of Darwinianism. But it is not as if everyone is hopeful about an unfailingly bright future gradually unfolding itself in the course of the process of history. H. G. Wells wrote despairingly 'that *homo sapiens* as he has been pleased to call himself is in his present form played out;...mankind would give place to rats or unclean intrusive monsters equipped with Streptococci for our undoing'. The dismal picture is reminiscent of Swift's *Last voyage of Gulliver* in which the Yahoos are abject slaves of their equine masters.

The Hindu view of time is somewhat unique and needs special attention. In Sanskrit *Kāla* means time and *Kāla* also is *Yama*, the God of Death; and he spans human life and ends it on time. Punctuality, which is consciousness of time, is his special virtue. *Kāla* corrupted later into *Kālā* the female personification of Time and *Kālo* together indicate time for the Hindus. The Atharva Veda *sūktas* speak of time generating of old what is and what is to be. To them 'infinite time is a non-entity objectively considered, being only a construction of the understanding based on the relations of antecedents, and sequence in which the members of the phenomenal series intuited to stand to one another.' The Buddhists however considered Time to be a purely subjective concept.

The Brahmins held to Eternity, omitted Time and lost History. Brahminism therefore is incapable of progress, for progress takes place in time. Believing in

5 J. B. Bury: *The idea of progress*.

6 Chapter 10.

7 XIX: 53, 54

spirit or infinite unlimited substance, it loses person or definite persons whether infinite or finite.⁸ Summarising the Hindu view of time A. L. Basham, 'a friendly Mleccha' says 'for the orthodox Hindu the world is infinite in duration and immense in size;...the Christian universe was created by the act of God about 4004 years before Christ, according to the orthodox and traditional Protestant calculation and at any time it might come to an end when a new and better world would take its place. On the other hand the Hindu believes in an endless series of cycles within cycles throughout all eternity in an immensely large universe containing many worlds; and within this enormous cosmos each being has innumerable chances of achieving perfection or of damning himself for a very lengthy period and so in Indian eschatology and cosmology there is not the same sense of finality as in the traditional western religions, in which I include Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism; in those religions a man is born once and only once and his future status for all eternity is decided according to his behaviour or his faith in his one life. These differences have conditioned the attitudes and the approach to life of the people of the civilizations concerned'.⁹

Hindu speculation speaks of the *Yuga* and a *Mahāyuga*. The four yugas being the *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali*. A *Mahāyuga* is 12,000 years in duration. There is progressive deterioration in longevity of life as well as a corruption of morals and a decline in intelligence as the *yugas* succeed. Between two *yugas* there is a twilight. The last *yuga* being followed by a *pralaya*. Each year of the *yuga* is a divine year. Each divine year is equal to 360 human years. A 1,000 *mahayugas* are equal to one *Kalpa*. Fourteen *Kalpas* are one *Manvantra*. One *Kalpa* is equal to one day in the life of Brahma, the

8 J. F. Clarke: *Ten great religions*, Part I, pp. 136, 137

9 *Aspects of ancient Indian culture*, pp. 40-41

Creator; another *Kālpa* to a night; and Brahma has hundred such years. According to the Hindus cosmic time is cyclical. The process of creation, destruction and recreation go on during this period. The Buddhists and the Jainas also accepted the notion of cyclical time. Indians especially the Buddhists started chronicling events without being bothered by history. The Jataka stories also reveal a concern with the life cycle of the Buddha. The Hindus later took over from the Buddhists and started chronicling without ever becoming historically minded.

The *CHATURYUGA*, its characteristics and the periodical decline in morals and their restoration by divine agency, the *AVATARS* and the constant swing from one end of the moral scale to the other of society necessitating the divine moderator to intervene on behalf of the righteous and against the unrighteous—indicate a standard theory of cycles. This theory avoids the pessimism characteristic of a perpetual irredeemable fate as well as that of a movement along an upward plane towards the goal expected to be desirable. It takes glee and grief out of the human heart and helps to create a philosophy of non-morality and ethical neutralism which Hindu metaphysic largely yields. E. H. Carr is certain that the cyclical theory is characteristic of societies in decline.¹⁰

Time becomes significant only in the distinction between past and future for the historian. He begins by stating that the 'past can be known' and 'the future can be known only when it becomes the past' and 'the future cannot be known so long as it remains the future'. We can say 'a was b'; we cannot say 'a will be b'.¹¹ A scientist when he speaks of a general law holding

good for the past, present and future prefers to use the present tense like the specific gravity of gold is 19.3 or the sun rises in the east. But when a historian makes a statement about the future it has to be in the form 'a will be b' and such a statement cannot be made, for in the world of history there is *certainty* in the *past* and only *possibility* in the *future*. All propositions about the future coming from a historian will be not statements indicating certainty but merely possibility which means doubt and ultimately ignorance.

J. H. Plumb has an interesting thesis about the past being different from history. He wishes to make a distinction between the mythological use of the past and history. He includes among such mythological use king - lists, part of which are divine and part temporal and similar genealogies. The myth of the golden age which often creates a halo around specific ages in the past is also past being used as a handmaid by the annalist. From this the point is drawn that the past has been used for propaganda. But history will be objective. 'The past has only served the few, history may serve the multitude'.¹² This view however treats of only one use to which the past has been put, namely, its exploitation by a certain section of the present. It ignores possibly deliberately the fact that time as represented by the past is neutral and if it can serve propaganda it can serve history as well.

10 What is history? p. 37

11 These statements like 'a will be b' are more of the nature of prophecy than prediction.

12 The death of the past, pp. 15, 16

10

The Concept of Progress

The word 'Progress' means walk forward (from *Pro*: forward *gradi*: walk—Latin) and signifies 'movement at required pace in a desired and desirable direction, the movement itself being linear. The concept of humanity moving forward towards a state of perfection or near perfection. This concept is modern and has to be contrasted with a few others which in earlier times were deemed to represent the historical process. If it is held that secular history functions cyclically human movement would have started at a no longer identifiable point, move in a circle, return to the starting point and go on revolving like this. The differences will be indicated by the distinct points on the circumference but once the first revolution is over there will only

be repetitions. This was the view taken by the ancient Greeks, the Hindus and others who posited a cyclical theory of historical process. The medieval Christians more or less on the lines of the Hebrews started thinking of an identifiable goal towards which humanity move. But the theory of continuous human development leading to perfection as a result of man's own efforts is a modern concept.

There can be valid doubt as to whether the development of man as it actually occurs is either improvement or deterioration, and also within broad limits difference of opinion regarding what improvement connotes. The third view point is that while there is development, improvement is not balanced and that while in some fields of human activities, there is improvement, in others there is none or there is positive retrogression. Many persons hold the view now—but it is not universally accepted—that 'in the modern age there is great improvement in technology which has made possible environmental satisfaction and physical comfort to man to a large extent; but his moral sensitivity has not been proportionately refined; and that the savage inside the civilized man is still a danger to mankind as a whole.' In different ages in different countries there has been phenomenal progress in certain directions and stagnation in the rest. Those who consider the progressive segments of those societies as most agreeable to them and relevant to man call them Golden Ages. People who may not share this view of the content of civilization will hold a different view about the golden nature of the age. It is also well-known that with the changing values of peoples and times the nature of the progress made by human society among those peoples and in those times differed greatly.

The word 'progress' can relate to an assertion of the quality of certain occurrences in the past. By an

imaginary or wishful extension (or by a denial of such extension) of the same trend in the future, improvement in the future can be posited or denied. But the retrodiction about the past though subjective can at least be based on verified facts. But prediction about the future cannot deal with facts and can relate only to a non-rational projection of the past into the future. To some thinkers essential history belongs to the future and they believe in history as prophetism. Those who would create a new heaven and a new earth are hopeful visionaries in whose thinking the idea of progress is implicit. 'Instead of a golden age in the mythological past the true historical existence on earth is constituted by an eschatological future'.¹ Lowith feels that to the critical mind neither a providential design nor a natural law of progressive development is discernible in the tragic human comedy of all times. It is to be granted that very often hope is believed by experience. Hope itself is not always desirable for it might be hope for the wrong thing in which case no-hope is to be preferred to hope. While antiquity did not think in terms of linear hope and Christianity had a determinate goal the moderns indulge in what Lowith calls 'the illusion that history can be conceived as a progressive evolution which solves the problem of evil by way of elimination'.²

Wherein does progress consist? Does it consist in environmental improvement caused by nature facilitating furtherance of human wishes and aiding their achievement or development in the realm of ideas. It may be contended that environmental facility will be useless if the human mind cannot imagine ways of utilising or improving on them; and that all progress is that of the human mind, from reason to human experience in the field of science and technology to social organization. It is possible to believe that nature can be conquered

by man sufficiently to free him from the hazards of wayward nature; and we find Condorcet saying 'in the experience of the past, in the observation of the progress that the sciences and civilization have already made, in the analysis of the progress of the human mind and of the development of its faculties, we shall find the strongest reasons for believing that nature has set no limit to the realisation of our hope'.³ A. Comte is certain of human progress and speaks of the natural progress of civilization which determines with entire certainty for each epoch the improvements of which the social state is susceptible whether in parts or as a whole. Commenting on Vico the celebrated author of the *Scienza Nuova*, Mill characterised him as one conceiving 'the phenomena of human society as revolving in an orbit; as going through periodically the same series of changes, though there were not wanting circumstances tending to give some plausibility to the view which would not bear a close scrutiny; and those who have succeeded Vico in this kind of speculations have universally adopted the idea of a trajectory or progress in lieu of an orbit or cycle ... the words progress and progressiveness are not (necessarily) to be understood as synonymous with improvement and tendency to improvement. It is conceivable that the laws of human nature might determine and even necessitate a certain series of changes in man and society which might not on the whole be improvements'. But Mill is optimistic. He says 'it is my belief indeed that the general tendency is and will continue to be, saving occasional and temporary exceptions, one of improvement; a tendency towards a better and a happier state. Carr agrees that progress is certainly not an unbroken straight line towards a goal and that periods of regress are natural.

Progress must be distinguished from mere change. It can be defined as 'movement at required pace and

1 Hermann Cohen: Quoted by Lowith: **Meaning in History**, p. 18

2 Lowith: **Meaning in History**, p. 3

3 Sketch for a historical picture for the progress of the human mind, Quoted in P. Gardiner: **Theories of History**, p. 58

of required nature in a desired and a desirable direction. So the sense of direction which one discovers in history will measure progress or a deviation from it, according to the norms one has set for himself'. Bury describes the idea of progress as a theory which evolves a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future. But theoreticians like the Marxists hold that a heaven on this earth and the perfectability of man are quite possible, nay, are on the agenda of history and certain to happen. Whether there is warrant for such a belief or not if man is to be sustained in his earthly endeavours faith in progress is necessary, according to Carr. The past will be justified by the future and this has led some people to say, paradoxically, that the future provides the key to the past.⁴

Summarising the origin in modern times of the idea of progress C. A. Beard says, 'among the ideas which have held sway in public and private affairs for the last two hundred years, none is more significant or likely to exert more influence in the future than the concept of progress. With a few exceptions ancient writers were imprisoned in a vicious circle: they thought that mankind revolved in a cycle through some series of stages. In the Middle Ages thought and practice were cramped by the belief that man was a sinful creature born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, that the world would come to a close sometime, and that life on earth was not an end in itself but a kind of prelude to heaven or hell. It was not until commerce, invention, and natural science emancipated humanity from thralldom to the Cycle and to the Christian epic that it became possible to think of an immense future for mortal mankind, of the conquest of the material world in human interest of providing the conditions for a good life on this planet without reference to any possible hereafter. In due course when conditions were ripe, the idea of progress arose in the Western world'.

4 Carr: *What is History?* p. 119

Bury made classic contribution to the idea of progress in his famous book *The Idea of Progress*. To him any concept to be valid must be based on facts of life as recorded in history and not vague feelings and preferences. He says 'evolution itself does not necessarily mean as applied to society the movement of man to a desirable good. It is a neutral scientific conception compatible either with optimism or pessimism. According to different estimates it may appear to be a cruel sentence or a guarantee of steady amelioration, and it has actually been interpreted in both ways. He warns against the illusion of finality. But when progress is supposed to mean the stream of history flowing in a desirable direction then 'at once we are plunged in the middle of ethics'. Bury was aware that dogmas like that of the Marxists or theories like that of Hegel consider human history essentially as movement. 'It is evident that the *Idea of Progress* is both an interpretation of history and a philosophy of action. Whether the evolution of mankind is at bottom a progressive revelation of the spirit of God, an unfolding of the Idea, as Hegel taught or a continuous adaptation to changing material circumstances as Marx emphasised, it is essentially 'movement' and defenders of progress must assume that on the whole it is in a desirable direction. The crux of Bury's *Idea of Progress* has been summarised as follows:

'The Idea of progress was a useful one but it was not strictly scientific nor identical with the Darwinian conceptions. Bury speaks indeed of the countless stairs man must ascend in the future and believe perhaps that the movement would be upward. But his belief in the future was rather a hope than a conviction and even if he had felt a conviction he would not have maintained that it was scientifically defensible'.⁵

5 Harold Temperley: *The editor of Bury's Selected Essays*

PART I

Historians

of

the West

II

European Historians

i. English Historians

There was very little chronicling or historical writing in England prior to the Norman conquest. Of course, the solitary but magnificent exception is the venerable Bede's (672-735) Ecclesiastical history of the English people in five books. He based his history on careful research. His purpose in writing that work was to record the triumph of Christianity in England. But it is not merely a church history; he has also much information on the social and political histories of those times. Though he did not write dramatic or colourful history he wrote a reliable chronicle. He was a great scholar and though his history suffers from some false sense of chronology, the sacredness of the theme has provided him a caution which makes his work dependable.

But after the Conquest, during the 12th and 13th centuries, many Latin chronicles were compiled. T. F. Tout has made a fine study of medieval chronicles. In England the greatest was the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* written in the Anglo-Saxon language and bringing the events down to 1154. Some of them are real literature and they started a tradition of English national historiography. English traditions were reflected in those chronicles and during that period England stood in the vanguard of such writings. The first important chronicler in the 12th century was Simeon of Durham. Among his followers Richard of Hexham wrote the *Acts of King Stephen* and the *Battle of the Standard* Eadmer (d. 1124) who was the first to write a real work of history wrote in six books a history of his own time down to 1112. It was called *Historia Novorum in Anglia*. But William of Malmesbury (d. 1143) was a superior historian from the point of view of style as well as of judgment. His work is in two parts and eight books, and covers the period from 449-1142. The first part is called *De gestis regum Anglorum* and the second part *Historia Novella*. He wrote a fine style. He was fond of story telling and his account of the first Crusade is remarkable. Geoffrey of Monmouth (1100-1154) known as the Father of the English fiction wrote the *History of the Kings of Britain* (*Historia regum Britanniae*). It is from him that we learn about the legendary kings of early Britain like Lear, Cymbeline, and King Arthur and also of Merlin the wizard. His history was completed in about 1139. William of Newburg (1136-1198) denounced Geoffrey of Monmouth in a preface to his *Historia rerum Anglicarum* which covers the period from the Norman conquest to 1198. But unmindful of the denunciation, Geoffrey is still popular. Among the monastic historians of the 13th century must be mentioned Matthew Paris, who in his *Chronica Majora* showed that he was a born historian. He took pains with his facts. He is not only a recorder of events but a critic and

judge of public men and events. For the reign of Henry III we are indebted to Henry of Bracton (d. 1258), whose *De legibus et constitutionibus Anglia* was the most authoritative English law book of the time. This work has been greatly praised by Pollock and Maitland in their *History of English law* though they are rather impatient of his cocksureness.

During the 16th and 17th centuries a new historical literature devoted to a description of the Geographical discoveries sprang up. Of these Hakluyt and Purchas are the most reputed. During the Elizabethan period chronicling and antiquarianism reached new stages of improvement. The first among Tudor chroniclers, Edward Hall (d. 1547) wrote the famous chronicle *The union of the two noble and illustre families of Lancaster and Yorke etc.* For the earlier period of that chronicle it was not in the historical form but a recitation of facts; for the contemporary times it was more than a chronicle. He praised Henry VIII as 'the undubitate flower and very heire of both the sayd linages'. Queen Mary ordered the first print to be burnt. The second print which came after the death of Hall became more popular than ever. Another important chronicler was Raphael Holinshed. His *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* embraces a larger theme and is a sort of compilation. Holinshed was one of those who contributed to it. It was patriotic in tone and served as a store-house of information for later writers to draw from. Harrison's description of England found in that chronicle deserves special mention. John Speed (1552-1629) wrote a *History of Great Britaine* which was also a highly patriotic piece of writing. He calls England 'the fortunate Island, the paradise of pleasure and garden of God'. This tendency to glorify the motherland was common among the English writers of those times. This is evident from Spenser to Raleigh through Shakespeare. Surely the English nation was in the making then.

William Camden (1551-1623) was the greatest among Elizabethan chroniclers. His *History of Elizabeth* 'is a genuine piece of modern history in which events are set in proper perspective and proportion'. He wrote his books in Latin. His *Britannia* gives an account of his journey through England. It is interesting to note that Englishmen read his Latin works in French translations. Camden's fame rests mainly on his *History of Elizabeth*. Among others mention must be made of John Foxe (1516-1587) whose *Book of Martyrs* which is partial in its tone against the Catholics and Sir Thomas More, George Cavendish and Sir John Hayward who were mature historians. More was the author of the *History of king Richard the Thirde*; Cavendish wrote *The life and death of Thomas woolsey*. The *Cambridge history of English literature* calls it 'the first specimen of artistic biography'. Heyward was the author of the *Histories of Henry III, Edward VI and the early part of the reign of Elizabeth*. With these three writers the art of writing history in England passed from infancy to maturity. The case of John Leland (1506-1552), who was an extensive traveller in search of antiquities and historical records in England is extraordinary and tragic. Having collected a lot of material he did not know what to do with it. Like some Indian archaeologists, he had a lot of unconnected material but could not piece them together in readable historical form. The first bit of writing which he published in 1546 was pompously entitled *The Laboryouse journey and serche of John Laylande, for Englandes antiquities given of hym as a new yeares gyfte to kynge Henry the VIII in the XXXVII year of his reigne*. He never finished this work. He realised that he could not do so. So he went mad and died. His material was put together and published in 1710-12; but it is a failure.

The historical plays of Shakespeare are a class by themselves and the history they embody is by no means negligible.

In the 17th century serious historiography began in the English language. Bacon's *History of the reign of the king Henry the seventh* which was published in 1622 has all the merits of Baconian diction and a fresh approach to historical writing. But his fame rests on his *Novum Organum* (1620). In this work he deals with the methods and philosophy of science. He presents a criticism of science and a plan for the future. Bacon as a whole is much more than his historical work. Lord Herbert of Cherbury wrote his *Life and reign of king Henry the eight* in 1649 and for the first time that work shows evidence of effective use of original sources. Thomas May (to be distinguished from Sri Thomas Erskine May, author of the *Parliamentary Practice*) who was associated with the Long Parliament as its secretary was in addition to being a dramatist the author of *History of the Parliament in England*: which began Nov. the third, 1640; with a short and necessary view of precedent years. This gives an idea of the long titles which those writers liked to give their works. An important feature of this history is that it contains in addition to the main narrative, quotations of relevant speeches in parliament and is documented with original papers. Peter Heylyn (1600-1662) was a religious controversialist and he wrote the *Ecclesia Restaurata* or *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*. Scotland which was then undergoing the process of Protestant Reformation produced a considerable historical literature on the changes in the church there. *The booke of the universal kirk of Scotland* and Archbishop Spottiswoode's *History of the Church of Scotland* are important works of ecclesiastical history.

Edmund Spenser wrote an uncritical book on Ireland entitled *Veue of the present state of Ireland*.

Perhaps the first English writer to compose a piece of literature which he seriously intended to be history was Sir Walter Raleigh. He was an extraordinary man,

which he has become the most intimately known private English gentleman. It has been observed that John Evelyn's diary was a personal record of events, while the diary of Samuel Pepys was a personal self-revelation of the frankest kind.

Till David Hume (1711-1776) wrote his *History of England*, there was really no great historian in England; and this can be said in spite of Clarendon. Voltaire said in 1724: 'as for good historians (in England) I know of none as yet; a Frenchman Rapin has had to write their history.' But Englishmen in the early 18th century were really interested in history and it is the material they had gathered which Rapin used. Very soon Voltaire's own influence on English thinkers came to be felt; and with David Hume commenced the age of Enlightenment in England for historians.

Hume was Scottish as Robertson his contemporary also was. They were both influenced by Voltaire and Hume was basically a philosopher. He had faith in the essential integrity of man and easily believed that ancient man was not different from modern man in his attitudes or aspirations and so could be straightaway understood by the modern historian. Hume wrote a *History of Great Britain from Julius Caesar to Henry VII*. It soon became a standard historical work. It is true that he did not make substantial use of some of his sources. But the brilliance of his achievement cannot be doubted by any but those who because they themselves cannot write well call well-written history unsound. Hume had no sympathy with superstition and orthodoxy and he believed that the middle ages were a barbaric period. He has been properly judged by T. P. Peardon who said: 'Hume saw that much might seem legal and constitutional to a Stuart monarch that would be correctly regarded as an attack on public liberty in the next century and he emphasised the fact that the constitution was not clearly outlined until after 1688. By so doing he brought a

breadth of realism into the atmosphere of rabid partisanship surrounding previous discussions of the 17th century'.¹ Black has pithily summarised the virtues of Hume's historical efforts: 'the wonderful ease, directness and perspicuity of the style in which they are expressed, together with the depth, wisdom and concentrated experience distilled into them to make them as Hume hoped they would be, instructive and amusing in the highest degree'.²

Hume, we noted above, started the historiography of the Enlightenment in England. According to Collingwood: 'by the Enlightenment, *aufklärung*, is meant that endeavour, so characteristic of the early 18th century, to secularise every department of human life and thought'. The Enlightenment thinkers thought poorly of religion and to them reason was everything. This objection to religious faith was naturally shared by Voltaire, Hume and Gibbon, the three great practitioners of the historiography of the Enlightenment.

Mill criticised Hume for his failure to picture the past in clear human outline. 'Take for example Hume's *History* certainly in its own way one of the most skilful specimens of narratives in modern literature and with some pretensions also to philosophy ... does any reader feel after having read Hume's *History* that he can now picture to himself what human life was among the Anglo-Saxons? ... what were his joys, his sorrows, his hopes and fears, his ideas and opinions on any of the great and small matters of human interest?' Mill levels the same criticism against Hume's treatment of civil war in England.

Closely associated with Hume was his compatriot William Robertson (1721-93). He was a competent

¹ *The transition in English historical writing (1760-1830)*, Columbia University press, 1933, p. 20

² *The art of History*: p. 116

famous in his own time as a man of action as well as a man of letters. He was as intellectually alert as he was physically active. He had read, observed and travelled widely. He was a favourite of the queen almost till his execution. He was a poet as well as a fine prose writer. It is surprising that at the age of fifty he started writing *A history of the world*. Raleigh wished to write something about the world which was not a mere chronicle. He wrote it in fine English and the story covers the period from the Creation to 130 B.C. when Rome made Macedonia a province. The book was very popular in his times. For the first time the Persian wars and the Punic wars were introduced to the English reading public through pure English. No one can say what the final shape of his *History of the world* would have been if he had lived to finish it. But as it is, it is a fine piece of writing but it certainly cannot be considered worthy of comparison with Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*.

Next we pass on to the first great English historian, Edward Hyde, first Earl of Clarendon (1609–1647). He studied at Oxford and was called to the bar. He counted Ben Jonson among his friends. He was the Father of English History. Like Thucydides and Philippe de Comites before him, he wrote a history of great events in which he had himself taken part. He lived through the Stuart period and was closely associated with the royalists and for that reason was expelled from England. His policy was justified by the Restoration. Hyde entered London with king Charles II after the Restoration and became speaker of the House of Lords. He married his daughter Anne to James, Duke of York (James II) and thus 'became grandfather of two English sovereigns', Queen Mary and Queen Anne.

Later he became a supporter of the parliament and on both occasions it would seem that his convictions on constitutional matters were a liability to him. For the failure of English foreign policy towards France under

Louis XIV and the British naval disaster in 1667 caused by the Dutch, Hyde was held responsible and he was banished from England. He died at Rouen on Dec. 9, 1664 in exile and in disgrace and the English nation, which had by then come into being, did little to save this gifted man from this fate. His fame rests mainly on the *History of the Rebellion and Civil wars in England* which was posthumously published in 1702. He wrote not only 'The History' but also his life. The two were put together by him to form the *History of the Rebellion* as it stands. Clarendon's history reveals an original style and an uncommon capacity for presenting biographies of important persons. Sir Charles Firth has found fault with his 'History' on the ground that he has omitted to expatiate on religious matters while dealing with a war caused mainly by religious considerations. But it must be remembered that religious or economic considerations singly and by themselves are no answer to a vast rebellion like what happened in England in the 17th century. The political motivation was more in the fore-ground and it was right for Clarendon to have written the 'History' as he did. His history lacks the remarkable architecture of Gibbon's work or the sparkle of Macaulay's. He was a troubled man who wrote in troubled times and yet, his History scores high among similar works in English historical literature. His History is composed in a grand style and is authoritative as History and delightful as literature.

It is well-known that the diary is a form of self-expression for observant persons which also is a chief source of historical material. Maintaining a diary is an art which is attained not by many; and which very few ever perfected. The 17th century England produced two private gentlemen who maintained diaries which have become world famous: 1. John Evelyn (1620-1706) and the other Samuel Pepys (1633-1703). Evelyn was more of a public figure than Pepys. Of the two Pepys, who wrote his diary in short-hand, maintained in diary through

technical historian and had a great regard for 'accuracy and general truthfulness'. He too belonged to the Rationalist school and it is claimed that his language persuaded Gibbon to write history. He dealt mainly with political history, though he occasionally touched on topics relating to cultural matters. His major works were *The history of Scotland* (1759), *The history of the reign of the Emperor Charles V* (1769), *The history of America* (1777-94) and *An historical disquisition concerning ancient India* (1791). There is difference of opinion as to whether *Charles V* was his best work or *America*. Parts of his *Charles V* excel even Voltaire's *Essay* and are surpassed only by Gibbon. Robertson objected to Catholicism though it was nothing compared to Voltaire's venom. Robertson's style is lucid and easy and his descriptive powers are well seen in the treatment of the voyage of Columbus. He was the first historian to depart widely from the conventional areas of historical writing. Hume and Robertson prepared the way for the greatest historian of all times.³

Edward Gibbon⁴ (27th April 1737-16th January 1794), was the eldest of seven children to Edward Gibbon and Julia Porten. He was born at Putney. His grandfather was a speculator who became wealthy during the South Sea 'boom' and became poor when the 'Bubble' burst. More than his parents his aunt Catherine Porten was greatly devoted to him. Gibbon speaks with great respect and affection about his aunt and this disproves the accusation that he was unemotional from childhood. From the start he began educating himself. He was put to school at Westminster and he later entered Magdalen college, Oxford. But Oxford completely failed him. His indictment of Oxford of those times is classic and repeatedly

3 Some may consider this eulogistic but none will dispute that he was the greatest among English historians by a wide margin.

4 Gibbon is his own best authority as seen in his autobiography. Next comes Bury's Introduction to the *Decline and Fall*.

read by his admirers in his memoirs. Unable to find consolation in the Church of England he took refuge in the Church of Rome. He broke with Oxford for ever.

His father who was always severe and unsympathetic sent him away to Lausanne where he studied French and particularly Voltaire. Ultimately it was Voltaire who drew Gibbon away from the Roman church. While thus engaged in moving from religion to religion and ultimately flying into the arms of Rationalism, the brief chapter of romance in his life started. He fell in love with Suzanne Curchod, daughter of a Protestant pastor. 'Having no means, they naturally contemplated marriage'. Gibbon consulted his father who, as could be expected, vetoed the proposal and so he 'sighed as a lover but obeyed as a son'. The Suzanne whom he gave up married the French statesman Necker whose dismissal was an immediate cause of the French Revolution. Her daughter by Necker was the famous Mme de Stael whose writings influenced Carlyle. So what Gibbon denied unto himself he gave to history.

He returned from Lausanne in April 1758. A few years later he joined the Hampshire militia in which he first held the rank of captain and then major and colonel. He never learnt the Greek language till the age of twenty four, though he had already become a great Latin scholar. There was something in him which was suggesting that his great mission in life was to write history. He did not know what history it was to be. His militia was soon disbanded and he went out on a continental tour. He reached Rome in October 1764. Then one day i.e., 15th October 1764, the call came to him from among the ruins of ancient Rome: he then knew that he was destined to be the author of the *Decline and Fall* of the Roman Empire. He returned to England to find himself without any property and in the meantime his father had died. But in 1774 he entered parliament and was a supporter of Lord North. He was appointed as Commissioner of Trade and Plantation in 1779 and he held that

position till it was abolished in 1782. Thus his political career was not a bright success. His situation was greatly altered for the better when the first volume of his great work appeared in 1776 and immediately took the literary world by storm. Three editions of the work were quickly sold out. Further instalments of the history were eagerly and anxiously awaited.

It was at once evident that the author of the great history of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was a rationalist rather unwilling to be enthusiastic about religion and particularly orthodox Christianity. It was certain that the author was unique in his arrangement of the theme, discussion of problems and the excellence of literary garment he provided for the framework of his ideas. Chapters XV and XVI of his history seriously offended orthodox Christians and he rightly took the attitude of indifference towards that criticism. After part of the work had been completed in England he retired to Lausanne in 1783 and set himself to the task of completing the rest. He did so in the most magnificent way possible. The immortal passage in which he describes the conclusion of the great history is extremely moving. The entire work was published in England in April 1788. For a short while he returned to Lausanne only to leave it again for England. By 1791 he had decided to stay in England. Soon his health declined largely because of neglect. He died in London in 1794. Gibbon never married, reminding us of Hobbes and Locke and again of Macaulay.

The best edition of the classic is J. B. Bury's. His *Autobiography* is one of the best in English literature easily comparable with that of J. S. Mill. Gibbon is misrepresented by those who say that he was incapable of friendship or affection. His gratitude to his aunt his love to Suzanne, his fraternal affection to Lord Sheffield and his warm advice to William Mitford to write a history of Greece and above all his membership

of the Johnson 'Club', all prove the warmer aspects of his character.

The *Decline and Fall* is such a perfect piece of historical composition that it has been admired greatly and declared the historian's craft at its best. But still he has had his denigrators then as well as now, in his own times and in the succeeding generations. The main points of criticism levelled against his work were: 1. That he was unfair in his treatment of the history of Christianity and 2. that he had no sympathy with the very theme of his history, namely, the Byzantine empire.

In regard to the first criticism it may be pointed out that Gibbon's rationalism and his temperamental objection to writing enthusiastic history prevented his taking a view of Christianity which men of religion think it natural and proper to take. A. L. Rowse states the case like this: 'he can never do justice to Christianity and what it did achieve;—the civilization of the barbarians for one thing—because he could not accept its supernatural claims; the author of the *Decline and Fall* uses every opportunity to denigrate the Church and its adherents and to present them in a ridiculous light; the book is full of sly remarks subacid inflections, dubious jokes, pin pricks'.⁵ G. M. Trevelyan puts the same case in a different light and is more just to Gibbon: 'Gibbon was onesided, because he was by nature insensitive to religious feelings. His early conversion to Romanism had been purely intellectual, not at all emotional; nevertheless his analysis of the causes of the growth of Christianity was very valuable because he redeemed the balance against the heavy weight of pietistic flapdoodle that passed for ecclesiastical history'⁶; he taught and encouraged scepticism to study the history of religion with scholarly

⁵ A. L. Rowse: *Use of History*, p 204

⁶ The kind of thing one calls *Guruparamparais* in Hindu religious literature

method, although in his own case his studies had been handicapped by want of sympathy'.⁷ But one should agree with H. E. Barnes when he says: 'he adopted Hume's notion that one should look at religion as he would at any other social institution - in a naturalistic fashion. He treated the rise of Christianity for the first time in a fully objective manner. He accounts for its growth and development as he would have treated the evolution of any other religion or any secular institutions; in short he dealt with the problem historically and not theologically...as to the historical effects of Christianity Gibbon was naturally critical and hostile. He regarded the Roman Empire as the greatest creation of mankind and felt that Christianity had played an important part in weakening and undermining it'.⁸ It should not be forgotten that Gibbon was aware of the services of Christianity in the cause of European cohesion as well as its cultural services. But it was inevitable that as a rationalist he should have no faith in the Age of Faith. That he had no religious partialities is clear from the manner of his treatment of the rise and growth of Islam.

The second point of criticism relates to his treatment of Byzantine empire. This is also a misplaced criticism since Gibbon was within his rights to treat his subject as he pleased in so far as he did no violence to facts.

Gibbon was convinced about the incorrigibility of mankind. He thought that History 'is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind'. But it must be remembered that he was the child of his age, an age marked by enlightenment, scepticism and disillusion. Gibbon thought that history exhibited anything but human wisdom. To him human irrationality is the driving force in history and as a culmination of this he finds the triumph of barbarism and

religion. He is midway between the humanists of the Renaissance and the Romanticists at the close of the 18th century.

The *DECLINE AND FALL* is a great classic noted for painstaking research, accurate facts, brilliant arrangement and a fascinating style, harnessed to a moving and tragic theme. The narrative is detailed for the period from A. D. 180 - 641; from A. D. 641 - 1453 the development is summarily sketched. But it summarises also 'the cultural and institutional results of the Reformation'. This work made such a deep impression that Frederick Harrison wrote: 'he was the consummate literary artist who transmutes mountains of exact research into a complex mass glowing with life in all its parts and glorious to contemplate as a whole'. Black⁹ says 'the specific gravity of his style is so high that it seems capable of floating anything, from the interminable Persian and Byzantine wars to the abstruse theological disputes of the early Church, and the technicalities of Justinian's legal reforms'. H. E. Barnes pays a tribute to Gibbon's industry and scholarship and says that 'over a century and a half since his work appeared it is still highly regarded by scholars and is today perhaps the best and certainly the most readable general survey of the broad field he covered'. The *CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE* pays deserving tribute and says 'THE DECLINE AND FALL' is not only the greatest historical work in the English language, it is perhaps the greatest piece literary architecture in any language. It is faultless in design and in detail and its symphonic narrative power is superb...in the main Gibbon is still the master above and beyond date. His power of narrative is equalled by his gift of argumentative statements and in all parts of his work his style is one which holds the reader spellbound by its stately dignity relieved by a subtle personal character'.

7 *Autobiography* p. 73

8 *A History of historical writing*, p. 161

9 *The art of history* p. 175

Speaking on the historical novel with particular reference to Scott's influence on History Trevelyan says 'the difference between Gibbon and Macaulay is a measure of the influence of Scott. Gibbon's work comes as near to perfection as any human achievement. It is able to approach perfection partly because of its limitations... Gibbon belonged to the 18th century with its cosmopolitan outlook untroubled by national or sectarian prejudice... 'Gibbon's history is like the procession on the Parthenon frieze. But Scott's mind is the strained glass of a medieval window that breaks the light into a hundred hues and flashes'.¹⁰

THE DECLINE AND FALL and its author were not merely popular; both have become immortal. As a sound piece of advice to the student of history it has been truly said that 'whatever else is read Gibbon must also be read'.

Gibbon largely belongs to the 18th century and the Age of Enlightenment. The 19th century saw a different category of writers on historical themes. But Gibbon like Rousseau belonged partly to the Intellectual and partly to the Romantic age, in that both of them were directly responsible for a new tradition in their respective fields of thought. At the later end of the Intellectual age stands Gibbon and heralds a new era, even as Rousseau born to the intellectual tradition ushered in his own way the Romantic age in politics as in history. The commingling of Intellectual and the Romanticist traditions in the Revolution of 1789 in France - a strange spectacle which witnessed the Romantic slogans of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality simultaneously with the intellectual deification of Reason - expresses the transition from the 18th to the 19th century. The grand and tragic themes which came to be handled by master craftsmen like Gibbon were to yield place to constitutional, institu-

tional and legal histories - as appealed to a Hallam, a Stubbs, a Maitland or a Holdsworth - and were to become fashionable after the epic tradition of Gibbon had passed; but when some grand themes like that which Macaulay chose or tragic themes like that which Carlyle chose were dwelt upon, it only confirmed that those themes were of perennial interest to man and so necessarily an integral part of world historical literature.

Gibbon's extraordinary success did not provoke immediate imitators in England. Interest in ancient Greaco-Roman history was caused not by the example of Gibbon but by the enthusiasm kindled by the translations of German historians like Niebuhr - Connop Thirlwall and Julius Hare translated the *History of Rome* of Niebuhr (1828). The consequence was a flood of eminent literature of ancient Greece and Rome. Thomas Arnold wrote his *History of Rome*. But he died suddenly after he accepted his appointment as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford. Charles Merivale wrote the *History of the Romans under the Empire* in seven volumes; and George Long followed with his *Decline of the Roman Republic*. Thirlwall's *History of Greece* in 8 volumes and George Grote's (1794-1871) *History of Greece* in 12 volumes followed. Grote's work is generally considered to be the better history though Thirlwall as a writer, is superior.

Grote was not merely the historian of Greece. He was particularly the historian advocate of Greek Republican institutions - the democracy which Plato denounced and Aristotle scoffed at. He started by stating that the Greek democracies must be fairly judged; and revealed what he meant by 'fairness' in the following observation: 'Compare them (the Greek democracies) with any other form of government in ancient times and we have no hesitation in pronouncing them unquestionably superior. That the securities they provided for good government

10 G. M. Trevelyan: *Autobiography*, p. 201

were lamentably deficient we fully admit, but the oligarchy and the monarchy afforded no security at all'.¹¹

Grote was to begin with a clerk in his father's banking house. He was early influenced by James Mill and Jeremy Bentham and then he was in parliament from 1833-1841, representing the city of London. But politics did not suit him much. He held important academic positions from 1860 i. e. he was Vice-Chancellor of the London university and was an elected trustee of the British Museum.

Grote like Mill was a liberal. But he was more of a liberal verging on radicalism than the utilitarians. When he visited Paris on the eve of the Revolution of 1830 he added charity in the shape of five hundred pounds to sympathy in the shape of encouraging statements. This background of revolutionary zeal should be known if Grote's particular treatment of Athenian democracy should be understood. From 1843 he began his *History of Greece*. The first volume appeared in 1846 and the 12th in 1856. It is perhaps the most exhaustive and illuminating *History of Greece*. It begins with the early traditions of Greece and ends with Alexander. The admirers of Grote have been unqualified in their admiration and Grote has survived as the greatest authority on Greek history for more than a century and even the sober Gooch adapts the deserved tribute to Gibbon and declares that 'whatever else is read parts of Grote must be read also'. It is true that Grote was not blind to the faults of the Athenians. But he leaves the impression that he is prejudiced against heroes like Philip and Alexander and draws a curious picture of

11 We know of societies which needed no security from any government, monarchical or republican like that of ancient India and we also know of some ancient oligarchies which could not have been worse than the Athenian democracy. Students of Greek history might ponder what after all was the connection between Greek democracy and Greek achievement.

Socrates wherein he skates on thin ice holding that 'that Socrates was a good man does not prove that the Athenian democrats were bad men'. (It does when the latter poisoned the former!) He pays a tribute to intolerance when he suggests that only Athens would have tolerated Socrates so long. Gooch is right when he says 'that Grote's book is rather Athenian than Hellenic... his hatred of usurpers blinded him to the fact that the rule of the tyrants was not the result of mere personal ambition but met a certain need; ...finally the conception of the work of Alexander is radically false'.¹² Grote set a good example when he made an exhaustive study and presentation of Greek legends and mythology. Though he held them to be incredible and useless for purposes of history, he was right to have held that the myths of a people are useful as revealing the minds of the authors of the myths. Grote can be compared to Macaulay only in so far as both were liberals. But an extension of the analogy between the two would be unjust to both; for, while Macaulay did not utilise the source materials carefully, Grote was immeasurably inferior to Macaulay in the literary qualities of his work which is couched in, no doubt, 'direct, forcible and readable language'.

The diligent researches of the antiquarians of the 18th century made it possible for a new kind of history to be written in the 19th century. History came to be written from a new angle namely placing it on a firm foundation of social movements, institutional growths and of economic motivation. Another and a welcome development was the new tradition of criticism. As new records relating to what were previously considered to be dark periods came to be unearthed and published the illusion that non-availability of records indicates lack of events was dispelled. Among the pioneers of the new school of history specialising in the origin and growth

12 *History and historians in the 19th century*, p. 294

of institutions Sharon Turner (1768-1847)¹³ must be mentioned.

Sir George William Cox wrote under the influence of Grote his *History of Greece*. Among others who dabbled in Greek history may be mentioned George Finlay (1799-1875) whose works were collected into seven volumes covering a period of 2,000 years. Edward Augustus Freeman's *The History of Sicily* and George Rawlinson's *The Five Great monarchies of the Eastern world* covered a wider field. H. H. Milman (1791-1868) wrote his *The History of the Jews* (1829) and introduced the German tradition treating the Bible as a historical document. He also edited Gibbon. Thomas Hodgkin (1831-1913) wrote his *Italy and her invaders* in eight volumes. John Bagnell Bury¹⁴ became famous as the author of a *History of Greece*, *History of the later Roman Empire*, *History of the Eastern Roman Empire*, *History of freedom of thought* and a great edition of Gibbon.

But the greatest among these pioneers was Henry Hallam (1777-1859). He led an easy life in the early part of his career and it was not till 1818 when he was 41 years old that his first work *Sketch of Europe in the middle ages* appeared. It was also the first important historical work written in England since Gibbon, and it became at once famous. The work begins with Clovis and ends with Charles VIII, thereby surveying European history during ten centuries. He begins by saying that 'the chief object of the work is to survey the modes of government and the laws of different countries'. Evaluation of this work varies from Mignet's old compliment that it 'exhibited the severely judicial qualities' which marked off 'the magistrate of history

¹³ Author of *History of the Anglo-Saxons from the earliest period to the Norman conquest*.

¹⁴ Who Will be noticed again.

from other historians' to Gooch's characterisation of this work as 'the immature scholarship of the early 19th century.'¹⁵ What seems to worry the adverse critics of Hallam is his severity of judgment which consists in a certain aloofness devoid of sentiment and logic bereft of sympathy. Gooch says 'the work' concludes with a comprehensive survey of the state of society and literature, education and commerce, which forms one of the earliest models of KULTURGESCHICHTE. The picture is dark, and the historian confessed in later life that he had been perhaps a little too severe. As an attempt to record the ideology and character of the Middle Ages it is scarcely more successful than the endeavour of Robertson, for both were utterly lacking in the sympathetic imagination which brings distant ages near and renders the unfamiliar intelligible. He cultivates a calm, judicial attitude, equally sparing of eulogy and invective. He is a lawyer, not an artist. 'He has rather the intelligence than the sentiment of the past' declared Mignet in his sketch of a man whose temperament and methods had much in common with his own. 'He does not exhibit a drama; he draws lessons'.¹⁶ Hallam's substantial reputation depends on his *Constitutional history from the accession of Henry VII to the death of George II*. This has been hailed as the first work on modern England of national and international importance. Though a liberal, Hallam was among the whigs nearest to the Tories. He had no sympathy with 'political and ecclesiastical tyranny' but he had no confidence in the wisdom of the people'. Sathe in an article in the *Quarterly Review* denounced 'its acrimony and its arrogance, its injustice and its illtemper' and Hallam reacted strongly to this. The ambivalence of Hallam between liberalism and conservatism is evident in his characterisation of Henry VIII. He depicts him as 'an able and a ferocious despot' on the one hand i. e., 'one of the many tyrants and

¹⁵ Gooch: *History and historians in the 19th century*, p. 265

¹⁶ Ibid p. 266

oppressors of innocence whom the wrath of heaven has raised up and the servility of man has endured'; and on the other hand he speaks of the second Tudor monarch as 'the majestic lord who broke the bonds of Rome'. Again, in dealing with the early Stuart monarchs he is neither an unqualified supporter of that monarchy nor does he condemn it totally. Though a liberal and a supporter of freedom, he is of opinion that the civil war broke out just when there was no need for it and that Charles I had almost reformed. But at the same time he admired the parliamentary opposition to personal government. Hallam conceived of the developing English constitution as subject to the opposing influences of crown and parliament. But a more serious view would be to consider the crown's position and claims also as no less reasonable than that of the parliament; for, while the parliament represented popular will and possessed the legislative power, the crown stood for prerogative and functioned in the field of diplomacy and foreign affairs as parliament could not. Instead of sympathy for both crown and parliament, Hallam shows angry antipathy to the former. Macaulay said 'he is a hanging judge. His black cap is in constant requisition.' Hallam's depiction of Cromwell as Napoleonic was perhaps unfair to both - be it remembered that Carlyle depicted both of them as heroes, and rescued Cromwell from the odium and illfame to which the great Protector had been condemned by Hallam and his like. His *Constitutional History* however, became a standard work very soon and has remained so since then. Hallam by his temperament could not have written the *British Constitutional history* of the 19th century. At the end of his career Hallam moved on to literature from history.

Among those who continued English historical writing on constitutional matters and the 17th century constitutional politics may be mentioned Thomas Erskine May who has become famous as the author of the standard work, *The Rules orders and proceedings of the House*

of Commons (1854), known popularly as *Parliamentary practice*¹⁷ and Sir James Mackintosh (1765-1832) author of *History of England* and an unfinished *History of the Revolution in England* in 1688.

Among authors of lesser importance whose reputation is not greater than their achievement one should think of John Mitchell Kemble (1807-1857) and Sir Francis Palgrave (1788-1861). They belong to different and even opposite camps namely the Romanists and the Germanists. Kemble was the first among the British Germanists as Palgrave was among British Romanists. The Romanists believed that the English monarchy derives from the monarchical power of Rome and the limitations of Teutonic practice. 'It was the Roman element which saved the British from becoming a nation of loose aggregates, and the Teutonic element which delivered them from absolutism'. The Germanists thought that 'the Englishmen had inherited the noblest portion of their being from the Anglo-Saxons; in spite of every influence they bear a marvellous resemblance to their forefathers.' This attitude is the Germanist view and Kemble's work *The Saxons in England* (1849) has this view for its philosophy. He tried to demonstrate that Anglo-Saxon England was essentially Teutonic. In Germany its influence was considerable and in England it dominated historical study for a long time.¹⁸ Palgrave emphasised the Romanist view in an uncompromising way. His major works were *The History of Normandy and England*, *History of the Anglo-Saxons* and *An essay on the original authority of the King's council*. No doubt Palgrave's works suffer from some faults like his unreadable style and an uncritical use of authority. But to decry him as Gooch does¹⁹ because he emphasised

17 Father of the famous anthologist who made the *Golden Treasury*

18 Gooch: *History and historians of the 19th century* :
p. 271, 272

19 Ibid, p. 271

more often institutions and rulers than the so - called national life would be anachronistic. Palgrave considers law as the basis of national character. But he was too early in the field. Maitland, a great name among English legists, humorously remarked that Palgrave would have been a great commander if an army had been forthcoming. As a Romanist however he was unrivalled. As Freeman declared 'when drawn within the magic circle of imperial Rome he rises to the full power. Critics of Palgrave have treated the Germanist school of writers as superior to the Romanists and consequently Palgrave has suffered. His position however among pioneers cannot be doubted.'

Hallam, no doubt, was an uncompromising whig. But the triumph of whiggism in history was to be achieved by another and a greater man. Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1858), politician, essayist, critic, poet and above all historian was born at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire on October 25th, 1800. He was the son of Zachary Macaulay, the famous proponent of the anti-slavery movement. He had fortunes and genius on his side from the beginning. He was endowed with natural qualities which gave him a tremendous advantage in life. His memory was unsurpassed and as Gooch says 'it was as difficult for him to forget as for other people to remember'. Gooch remembers the following about Macaulay's miraculous memory: 'On one occasion he wrote out a list of the senior wranglers with their dates and colleges for a 100 years. He declared that any fool would say his archbishops of Canterbury backwards. He once remarked that if every copy of *Paradise Lost*, *The Pilgrim's Progress* or *Sir Charles Grandison* were destroyed he could reproduce them from recollection'. But this was not his only gift. Of greater use than this dubious gift of memory was his capacity for expression. His diction has earned a unique place in the history of English prose and young students aspiring to artistic expression read avidly not only his

verses but memorised his prose passages and took pride in reciting them. The style is his own, to be admired and not to be imitated.

Before he was eight years of age i.e., when most other children were in the nursery he wrote a *Universal History* and a romance after Scott in three cantos entitled *The Battle of Cheviot*. He read all kinds of books, some of them in the book shops and remembered all of them. He had a power of preception which helped him to absorb the contents of a printed page at a glance, so that even on the most trivial matters he had quite a lot to say. His first serious attempt was made quite early (1842). In *The Lays of Ancient Rome* evidently he had been inspired by Scott's *The Lay of the last minstrel* which he once read and remembered for ever. Macaulay's *Lays* are so well written and are about the best of their kind, that generations of readers mostly schoolboys learnt the *Lays* by heart and if there was a single work which evoked interest in Roman history in Indian universities and colleges it was the *Lays*. But his father, who was a serious minded man, was disappointed when the young Macaulay broke out in verse. But he was soon mollified when his son came out with his famous *Essay on Milton*. This essay introduced Macaulay to the world of letters and criticism as a new star on the firmament of critical review. The dazzling brilliance of the language introduced a new era of English expression which lasted till the Philistines under inspiration from the Germans started decrying beauty and elegance and enthroned dry-as-dust to rule over the realm of historiography.

Macaulay contributed regularly to the *Edinburgh Review*. These articles captivated the leading publicists so much so that Macaulay could easily find his way into Parliament (1830). Though he held some minor offices in the English government of the day the chief

political office he held was a seat on the Governor-general's council of India as law member when the famous utilitarian, Lord Bentinck, was the Governor-general. Some passages in his celebrated Minute on Education have irritated some self-complacent Indians, but spoke many home truths; and he is rightly famous for his penal code which has needed till now little change in substance and less alteration in diction. He stayed in India from 1834-1838. He knew Madras, Mysore and Calcutta well. After his return to England he became member for parliament for Edinburgh in 1839 and became Secretary for War. From 1846-48 he was Paymaster-general; though he was defeated in 1847 at Edinburgh, the same constituency re-elected him later. In 1857 he was raised to the peerage.

From the first it was evident to himself and others that he was to be the historian of England. Ever since he returned from India he had been contemplating a History of England, from the beginning of the Stuart period to his own times. The first two volumes of his Magnum opus, *The History of England* appeared in 1848. But then he was 48 years old. He must have known that at the rate at which the History was progressing, the grandeur of the theme and the vastness of the canvas would have prohibited the completion of his masterpiece. The third and fourth volumes appeared in 1856. He passed away in 1859 and the fifth volume appeared in 1861, posthumously. He had taken the story down to the beginning of the reign of Queen Anne. It was left to his grandnephew²⁰ who wrote the famous trilogy *Blenheim* etc. with such distinction to write the History of England of the early eighteenth century. But the world of history has lost the story which Lord Macaulay alone could have told in his inimitable way. Even this unfinished work immediately made him take rank with

Gibbon. It has been rightly said 'Macaulay's history remains one of the most triumphant literary masterpieces of the Victorian age.'²¹ Writing on the merits of Macaulay as a historian Gooch repeats the sentiments of Macaulay and says 'to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions'. Macaulay wrote an essay on History in which he concluded by saying that 'the ideal historian must know how to paint as well as to draw and must embrace the culture as well as the actions of mankind'.

Macaulay's contribution to history broadly divides itself into two parts: 1. his masterpiece, *History of England* and 2. his *Historical essays*. Some of his essays are brilliant and of permanent value; the others are brilliant and are now read only for their style. Macaulay represented the Whig view of English history and this he brings out not only in his great history but also in some of his essays like that on Hallam. He was the great lover of liberties and therefore an unreasonable opponent of even the virtues of those whom he chose to denigrate like Charles I, Laud, Cranmer and Strafford. His praise of Cromwell redeemed the Protector from an oblivion to which less seasoned historians had condemned him and thence he paved the way for Carlyle. Among his essays many subjects are covered. Milton the poet, Frederick the despot, Pitt the Prime Minister, Warren Hastings the Pro-consul, Boswell the biographer and many others come under the sway of his inimitable pen. Whether in his History or in his biographies or in his other Essays, he was at his best when dealing with Stuart or later times. He shows his limited judgment and unlimited prejudice when dealing with Boswell or Bacon. His contact with India persuaded him to write the two famous Indian essays: Clive and Warren Hastings. In one sense his Warren Hastings is the most colourful

20 G. M. Trevelyan

12 *Concise Cambridge history of English literature*, p. 667

and balanced of his historical essays. Perhaps it has become so famous because of the literary painting rather than by any great accuracy of judgment. Gooch rightly calls Macaulay's Warren Hastings 'the most dazzling work of art in the author's gallery'; but he adds that it was the most inaccurate of his portraits. Macaulay however, was entitled to his judgment of Warren Hastings. Reviewing a work on Frederick, the Great and his times, edited by Thomas Campbell in 1842, he wrote what has been called 'the worst of his writing,' and this criticism of Macaulay is based on the historian's uncritical use of the *Memoirs of Wilhelmina*. Macaulay is criticized for presenting the rough exterior of the Prussian monarch and holding back the virtues hidden therebelow. It may be partially true that Macaulay presents a wholly unfavourable picture of Frederick, the Great. But in the case of an enlightened despot, how much of the despot is saved by the enlightenment it would be difficult to say. Macaulay, the lover of liberties, had no patience with despotism though it might be mitigated by a certain enlightenment.

The historical essay as a form of literature owes everything to Macaulay. As Gooch says²² 'his articles glitter like diamonds in the dusty pages of the *Edinburgh Review*.' Macaulay's historical essays it is said suffer from three limitations: 1. that he was a stranger to the efforts that were going on in Germany under the leadership of Ranke to make history a science. One should rather be thankful for his ignorance of what was happening in Germany to history, for if he had chosen to be a faithful disciple of Ranke his essays would not have been written in their present form and their virtues far outweigh some of their alleged defects; 2. his political bias namely in favour of Whiggism is supposed to convert his historical essays to the level of political pamphlets, and 3. Macaulay's phrasing and his invectives are intolerable to some of his critics. True

he was carried away by the brilliance of his own phrases and for the success of those phrases he would not mind doing some injustice to his political opponents. Truly has it been said that Macaulay's was a one-track mind. He could never understand a point of view different from his or imagine the possibility of genuine difference of opinion. But it is surprising that some of his denigrators suffer from the same traffic regulation. Gooch said Macaulay was 'neither a thinker nor a prophet but a humane and cultured philistine'.

Speaking of the remarkable nature of his essays it is said that a traveller in Australia recorded that the three works he found on every squatter's cell were the Bible, Shakespeare and the 'Essays' and explaining this phenomenal success Gooch says 'the secret of his power is that he is the most fascinating story teller who ever wrote history'.

The second and the more famous part of his historical writings is the *History of England*. Originally he had planned a History of England from the Restoration to the death of George IV and in 1839 he started writing. He was so absorbed in his history that he wished he were for sometime more in the opposition i. e., till he finished his history. He had himself not expected that his undertaking would be so onerous. He stopped writing for the *Edinburgh Review* and declined the honour of Professorship of Modern history at Cambridge and was solely concerned with the production of his *magnum opus*. The first two volumes came out in 1848. He said with understandable pride 'I have had the year 2000 and even 3000 often in my mind' and wrote to M. Napier the famous sentiment 'I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies.' In a most surprising way and most completely the ambition was realised. The book went into translation into most of the European languages. A chorus of praise and congratulations poured in; with

the solitary exception of Croker²⁴ every other reviewer of this book praised it and some called it a noble book though agreeing that it was onesided. It took its place immediately as one of the finest pieces of historical literature in the English language and he stood shoulder to shoulder with Gibbon to create a new tradition of historical writing embellished by literary merit to be carried forward later on by Carlyle, Froude and Trevelyan. But when the storm of surprise had abated cooler judgment prevailed. While realising and appreciating the enormous merits of this work its demerits were also brought out, at times sympathetically, at times rancorously. His *History* related to the history of the people as well as the history of the government and tried to trace the progress of useful and ornamental arts to describe the rise of religious sects and the change of literary taste and to portray the manners of successive generations. The third chapter on the condition of England in 1685 has become rightly famous. In his history he tells the story of England before the Restoration briefly. Then he gives a short but brilliant account of the reign of Charles II and begins in earnest with James II. His main theme seems to have been to praise the Revolution of 1688 which after the fashion of Macaulay had been called Glorious and Bloodless by successive generations of scholars. To him that Revolution stood for the highest point of constitutional development in England. He said 'it has been of all Revolutions the least violent and of all Revolutions the most beneficent'.

The dimensions of his *History* were so enormous that he had not reached the end of William III's reign when he laid down his pen and his life. If he had continued the story through Anne's reign he would have written a story which none could have written so brilliantly. But as things are it is fortunate that the trilogy on Anne

should have been written by his illustrious grandnephew who seems to have been the last exponent and practitioner of the art of writing history well. Macaulay did not lack severe critics. Mill wrote that 'Macaulay on William III constituted pleasant reading but not exactly history'. Carlyle in his characteristic way exaggerated and said, 'four hundred editions could not lend it any permanent value, there being no sense of depth in it and very great quantity of rhetorical wind'. Macaulay had his failings, just as even Gibbon had his and just as even his selfconscious critics have theirs. But his virtues are not shared by any. The chief criticism of Macaulay centres round the point that he had no regard for his sources and where he wrote sincerely his picture was vitiated by prejudice. It must be however conceded that he wanted to be in touch with his sources as completely as possible; at least in his *History*. He wanted to read and to travel, to visit many countries, to ransack archives, to visit battlefields and cities and to turn over hundreds of thousands of pamphlets. And he did all this. Gooch himself conceded that to this direct knowledge of the localities the *History* owes much of its vitality. Macaulay is now somewhat corrected by the Tory historians and this tradition was started by Ranke. Of course, admirers of Ranke cannot appreciate Macaulay for the illustrious twain take important and valid but opposite points of view in regard to the purpose of *History*.

Macaulay like Gibbon was the child of his age and was controlled by the ideals of his party. To say with Gooch that his *History* was the greatest since Gibbon's is not too high a praise though the scientific historian of today with his prejudice against properly attired historical writing may not agree with that view. Thompson has said 'Greece had but one Thucydides; Rome had but one Tacitus and England has but one Macaulay'.

It is fortunate that the life of Macaulay should have been written by his nephew, Sir George Otto Trevelyan

24 Whose enmity Macaulay had earned by his furiously hostile and even ill mannered review of Croker's edition of Boswell

who was the son of Hannah, Macaulay's sister. Sir George himself, the author of the *American Revolution* and George III and Charles Fox had the literary traits of his uncle and his writings can always be read at least for pleasure.

Even as Macaulay championed the Whig cause in English History, Sir Arichibald Alison (1792-1867) emerged as a pro-Tory historiographer. Among his works *History of Europe during the French Revolution* and the *History of Europe from the fall of Napoleon to the accession of Napoleon III* are the more important and it has been said that they were written to show that providence was on the side of the Tories. His Tory sympathies were frankly stated by him in his preface to the *History of Europe during the Revolution* as follows: 'If there is one opinion more than another impressed on the mind by examination of the French Revolution it is the perilous nature of the current into which men are drawn who commit themselves to the stream of political innovation'. He was an uncompromising Tory and to him Macaulay's Glorious Revolution was an outburst of anarchy; but his view on democracy seems to be especially apposite in the case of Hindu society: 'Democracy cannot exist and never has existed for long in an old society. It must either destroy the community or be destroyed itself.' His book was immensely popular till disinterested historical scholarship relegated it to near oblivion. He himself had little doubt that the success of his work was due to the great interest of his subject which he was one of the earliest to treat. Sir William Napier wrote a fine military history *History of the war in the Peninsula*. Napier was a soldier who believed in the glory of war and so far as the 19th century is concerned his history shares the honour of being the best book on military history with Kinglake's account of the Crimea. He had such high opinion about Napoleon that he treated him as the greatest man in history.

Edward Augustus Freeman (1823 - 1892) was a Germanist and his best book is the *History of the Norman conquest*. According to him the German invasions had made England; and the Norman conquest added little to it.

Before we pass on to one of the greatest English historians (Carlyle) who along with Gibbon and Macaulay share the highest honour in English historiographical tradition we might make a passing reference to James Mill whose fame as a historian rests on his *History of British India*. It was one of the earliest books written on modern India and we shall take it up for detailed consideration in part V of this work.

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was in the 19th century the greatest moral force in the world of English letters, and with the solitary exception of Macaulay combined historical scholarship with literary force to a remarkable degree. Himself a controversialist he became the centre of passionate controversies the like of which had never disturbed the reputation of Macaulay.

He was born on the 4th December 1795 in Ecclefechan, Scotland and this accident of birth in Scotland it is said influenced, in fact made, Carlyle the man. 'His independence of spirit, his rocky, impliant, unconceding nature could have come from only one country in the world'. 'Carlyle strove and starved as a poor student at Edinburgh University and though he got little from his classes or teachers he won for himself by hard reading the freedom of literature'. In 1814 he left the Edinburgh university and without taking a degree. Surprisingly enough he took to mathematics—for it has been rightly said that we do not usually consider Carlyle in a mathematical light—and at Kirkcaldy he met with romance in the person of Margeret Gordon, his own student whose social standing was much higher than his. The girl's family intervened and ended the romance and this

was a great blow to Carlyle²⁵. To Carlyle this was not merely a personal blow; it led him to reflect on the social system which acted as a tyrant on the individual's freedom of choice in life. By 1817, he had wearied of teaching and he returned to Edinburgh and started writing miscellaneous stuff. His philosophy had not yet been made and there were conflicting forces in his system of moral values. This however continued to the last to some extent. He hated poverty, snobbery, hypocrisy, misery, but he also had great contempt for the masses i. e. while disapproving of victimisation, he had scant regard for the victim. But this contradiction is not incapable of resolution. His moral indignation was intense but he was also aware of the deficiencies of the suffering. The same moral confrontation was noticeable earlier in Edmund Burke whose sense of moral indignation made him impeach Warren Hastings and denounce George III's government for its attitude towards the American colonies and still condemn the excesses of the mob during the French Revolution. Really this is no contradiction but two various manifestations of the same moral feeling.

The first and abiding influence on Carlyle came from Germany. *De s'Allemagne* a book by Madam de Staël²⁶ introduced German philosophy and poetry to Carlyle as to many others. Then Carlyle knew Goethe, Schiller and many other representative German thinkers. Idealism was and has been the hallmark of German thought and the youthful Carlyle responded warmly to it.

He started writing for the Edinburgh Encyclopaedia and made a study of German writers, particularly Goethe

25 This reminds one of another great English historian who too smarted under disappointed love, Gibbon.

26 She was the daughter of the lady whom Gibbon did not marry, it is interesting that two women, mother and daughter, should have influenced two of the greatest historians of England in strange yet different ways.

and his past. He wrote a very good life of Schiller. In 1827, he produced the *German Romance* in four volumes. His writings on German literature are now collected in the *Critical miscellaneous essays*.

Edward Irving who later became a famous preacher was a good friend of Carlyle; under his influence, he was introduced to the socially superior world of London and Paris. In 1821, he was introduced by his friend to Jane Welsh of Haddington; acquaintance matured into love and in 1826, it resulted in marriage. Jane Welsh then married not merely Carlyle the sage but solitude, poverty and unintended neglect. From 1828 to 1834 they lived in a farm in Craigenputtock, Dumfriesshire Moors, 'the loneliest place in Britain, 6 miles removed from any one likely to visit me'. In 1833, the Carlyles left Scotland and came to London where refusing to earn monetary plenitude by subscribing to ephemeral literature he laboured hard and unceasingly on his *French Revolution* under the banner of poverty. Having written the first volume he sent it to his friend J. S. Mill for scrutiny and comment. But the manuscript while in the possession of Mill was accidentally destroyed. Mill was greatly upset but Carlyle was obviously unmoved²⁷. He started working on the same theme with redoubled zeal and we have the *French Revolution* as he wrote it for the second time. According to Carlyle's own admission, 'the book came direct and flamingly from his heart'. This work has been described as 'one of the savagest written for several centuries, a book written by a wild man'.

After a long career of poverty and reputation he reached something like real prosperity when in 1865 he became Lord Rector of the Edinburgh University. His rectorial address was on the choice of books. At this hour of triumph he met with his worst tragedy in life. Before he returned to London he was informed that his

27 This reminds one of the loss of some of Newton's manuscripts and his defence of Diamond, which had caused the destruction

wife had been found dead in her carriage while driving in Hyde Park. He knew he had neglected her. J. A. Froude his great biographer mentions how Carlyle then realized how deeply he had loved his wife and how he bitterly reproached himself for his neglect. But perhaps that is a penalty which any woman who marries a dyspeptic genius given to melancholy and reflection must pay. Jane Welsh wrote fine letters and these were edited and published in 1883. But now they are occasionally read only because the author was Mrs. Carlyle. In 1875 he wrote his last important work the *Early kings of Norway*. His health had then begun to decline. In recognition of his services to English letters, Disraeli offered him a title which he duly declined. He died in 1881 at the age of 87 and brought to a close the most remarkable career among English historians.

Carlyle's main works were: 1. *Schiller's life and writings* (1823-24), 2. *Sartor Resartus* (1833), 3. *The French Revolution - A history* (1837), 4. *Critical and miscellaneous essays* (1839), 5. *On heroes, hero worship and the heroic in history* (1841), 6. *Past and present* (1843), 7. *Oliver Cromwell's letters and speeches* (1845), 8. *Letterday pamphlets* (1850), 9. *Life of John Sterling* (1851), 10. *History of Frederick the great, 6 volumes* (1858-65), 11. *Early kings of Norway* (1875) 12. *His reminiscences* published posthumously in 1881. Of these numbers 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, & 11 are related to history. As in the case of Macaulay criticism of Carlyle has ranged from excessively enthusiastic encomia to ill-natured denunciation. The German influence on Carlyle has been overrated. Goethe it may be admitted, influenced Carlyle; it would be truer to say that he provoked him rather than to say that he was his mentor. Carlyle no doubt called Goethe his master; but he could never fawn upon the highly placed as Goethe was wont to: 'Goethe obsequiously sought the society of princes; Carlyle, dutifully apologising for his age sat down in the presence of Queen Victoria, who was prepared to let him

stand'. It was a strange amalgam of romance and philosophy which Carlyle got from Germany. He was the romantic historian of the 19th century in England *Par Excellence*. His sympathies as well as his criticism were part of his romantic spirit. We shall consider here only the historical works of Carlyle for he was not only a historian but an eminent man of letters.²⁸

The French Revolution was an immediate sensation. It became a success only very slowly after passing through the fire of often adverse and occasionally malicious criticism. The style and the manner were both handicaps which were overcome by the history with the help of sympathetic and farsighted reviewing by persons of no less eminence than J. S. Mill and Emerson. The book has been read for over a century and will always be in demand among those who decry inequity. He was never in fashion for he could never be imitated and he could be read only with difficulty by the methodical and the logical. His style was staccato like the speech of a person in great anger. The French Revolution is not like any other history. It is an epic in prose flashing with the lightning and reverberating with the thunder of the stormy events. But he produced therein a thrilling story and a collection of marvellously vivid portraits.²⁹ It begins with the exit of Louis XV from and the entry of Napoleon I into the French scene. The French Revolution became an eminent theme for study and discussion for the English-speaking world with Carlyle's *French Revolution*. Among his denigrators Lady Sydney Morgan, a fashionable sentimental novelist wrote: 'Faith, he says, is gone out; scepticism is coming. Now faith and scepticism had nothing directly to do with the affair i. e., the French Revolution. It was want and misery and oppression in the lower class, utter corruption and incapacity in the higher that made the Road'. And on his style she wrote 'as to style amidst an all pervading absurdity

²⁸ Like Macaulay

²⁹ A concise Cambridge History of English Literature, p. 574

of mannerism, there are passages of great power and occasionally of splendid though impure eloquence'. She rounded off by saying originality without freshness of thought is but novelty of error; and originality of style without sound taste and discretion is sheer affectation.' This was countered by a favourable review by J. S. Mill who wrote an unsigned review, in 1837. Mill wrote: 'This is not so much a history as an epic poem, and notwithstanding or even in consequence of this the truest of histories. It is the history of the French Revolution and the poetry of it both in one and on the whole no work of greater genius either historical or poetical has been produced in this country for many years.' He concludes: 'A most original book; original not least in its complete sincerity, its disregard of the merely conventional; every idea and sentiment is given out exactly as it is thought and felt fresh from the soul of the writer and in such language it is most capable of representing it in the form in which it exists there'. Thackeray finds fault with Carlyle's style but rightly says: 'above all, it has no cant; it teems with sound, hearty philosophy (besides certain transcendentalisms which we do not pretend to understand) it possesses genius, if any book ever did'.

It must be admitted that Carlyle's *French Revolution* suffers from important faults some arising from the circumstances of the time and others from the particularity of his philosophy. His knowledge of details was limited. He did not consult the archives; so some ridiculous errors crept into his narrative. Dealing with the flight to Varennes he makes the distance from Paris to Varennes 65 miles instead of 150. But to find fault with his beginning, development and end of the story on grounds of abruptness and patchiness is to say the least unsympathetic. His history does not deal with the causes of the French Revolution, the economic factors and foreign relations. Gooch says Carlyle exalted the pageants but condemned the history. The criticism that Carlyle misunderstood the nature of the event is subjective for it

is open to a historian to choose his point of view and to emphasise an aspect. Modern critics would say that Carlyle missed the fact that beneath the horrors of the Revolution lay the seeds of a benign future. But this is to overlook the facts that the Industrial Revolution, imperialism, advancement of science, progressive liberalism—all of which were independent of the French Revolution—tended to make the 19th and 20th centuries forward looking. Often the objection to style was confused with disagreement on matter. Wordsworth exclaims unjustly, no doubt, that no Scotsman could write English; and that in spite of Scott—Hallam declared that his style was detestable. Prescott declared that the whole thing was perfectly contemptible. But the admirers of Carlyle were warmly enthusiastic and the chorus of praise was long and loud. Kingsley said it was the single epic of modern days; Southey is said to have read it through six times. An important quality which characterises this eminent work is that there is no political prejudice in it. It is a contrast to his later *Cromwell* in that it is 'insufficiently informed but singularly impartial'.

His *Cromwell* which is an edition of the Protector's speeches has served to rescue the Great Republican from the obloquy and obscurity to which he had been consigned by earlier writers. He said 'I say to myself a great man does lie buried under this waste continent of cinders'. This was perhaps Carlyle's greatest historical contribution. 'It was the proudest achievement of the historian's life to restore to England one of the greatest of her sons'. Carlyle however did not admire Cromwell because he was a republican and fought against Charles but because he was a hero who towered above his contemporaries. His *Cromwell* has been praised by Green as characterised by the learning of an antiquary and the genius of a poet and as being no less remarkable for the resourcefulness of a showman.

His largest attempt at the biography of a great historical personage was his *History of Frederick*, the

Great. Carlyle did go to source materials but cared little for German predecessors in the field. He dismissed them as 'dark, chaotic, dullards'. The Germans like Ranke wrote the History of Frederick's policy and administration. But it was Carlyle's privilege to paint a historico—literary picture of Frederick. Both in Cromwell and in Frederick he proved himself an able military historian. This work also has elicited its share of praise from admirers as well as critics. Mrs. Carlyle herself a severe critic declared it the best of her husband's work. Emerson pronounced it the wittiest book ever written. He laboured as hard and long over his Frederick as the perusing of it is to his readers.

His interest in Cromwell and in Frederick was the result of his philosophy of history which is that history is the biography of great men. He elaborated this thesis in his *Heroes and hero worship*. When this work appeared it was received with mixed feelings of adverse and favourable criticism. He mentions among his heroes such persons as Shakespeare, Cromwell, Napoleon, Mohammed etc. William Thompson in an unsigned review said that the identification and worship of heroes was not the invention of Carlyle and that from Plato to Lockhart there had been Socrates and Scotts. His main objection is not that Carlyle takes us to contemplate false heroes as that he puts them in a false light. 'It is a curious coincidence that his heroes all offend against magistrate, priest or law and agree in no other respect but ... it is idle to insist on minor errors when one predominant error poisons the whole book. It is not a Christian book'. Evidently this reviewer has in mind the inclusion of Norse Odin, a Scandinavian pre-Christian God and Mohammed, the Islamic prophet in the list of heroes.

Carlyle has been compared with Macaulay. It is true that both were literary historians who specifically insisted on literary effect and whose writings are not merely history but also literature and it is also true that neither

had any great regard for source material. They were both able portrait painters the colours of whose paintings have not yet dimmed. The force of their writings in the middle of the 19th century popularised history as no historian before or after did. But the comparison stops somewhere there. The contrast between the two is quite impressive. Macaulay's style though inimitable was well structured and its architecture was rational. Carlyle's however was incoherent but full of fire. He coined words to suit his ideas. Macaulay brought political party bias to bear on his historical judgment while Carlyle was impartial especially in his French Revolution. Macaulay wrote like a politician and had little of the romantic about him. Carlyle was the most representative of the romantic in English historical writing and he wrote like a philosopher. The social condition in the 19th century England no doubt attracted Macaulay to whom 1832 was a great symbol of progress but to Carlyle the social condition was an obsession. It was quite appropriate that Dickens should have dedicated *Hard Times* to him; and Ruskin called him his master.

Modern historians like Pieter Geyl and H. J. C. Grierson see him as a forerunner of fascism and racism. But these are retrospective musings. Carlyle must be studied totally and not seen in patches. Modern historical research techniques have no doubt made Carlylean writing obsolete. But Carlyle possessed virtues as a historian which Ranke and his school have unfortunately destroyed.

J. S. Mill (1806–1872) was the first son of James Mill, the utilitarian who educated his son most rigorously. The son discovered in course of time that under his father's tutelage he had become a thinking machine and had forgotten that he had a soul. His revelation of this discovery of himself is found in his famous *Autobiography*. Mill himself wrote no history like his father who wrote one of the earliest of the *Histories*

of India. Mill transcended the hedonistic complexion of classical utilitarianism. His famous essays on Liberty and Utilitarianism revealed his mind in regard to problems on public morals. He wrote a system of logic in 1843 and therein we get his ideas on history. He was a great friend of Carlyle and he had read Guizot and Michelet. He said that understanding of a social phenomenon was impossible merely on the basis of a historical facts. He felt that the determination of the different stages in civilization could be an empirical matter. But the phenomena themselves cannot be understood except with reference to certain social laws, understanding of individual nature cannot help us to know the historical process and *vice-versa*. He felt that an attempt to scientifically treat a human discipline like history will run counter to the principle of freewill. He also felt that human nature to some extent is autonomous though in the social context this autonomy becomes futile and loses much of its meaning. This is how nature works it out and he sees no dichotomy here.

Following on Carlyle, Froude (1818–1894) seems to be a sort of natural successor. He had many things in common with Carlyle whose life he wrote. He, like Ruskin, came to look upon Carlyle as his master. But he was also influenced by Newman for both of them, the latter essentially and the former for some time belonged to the Oxford movement and were interested in ecclesiastical matters. Froude wrote his *History of England* from the fall of Wolsey which closes with the defeat of the Spanish Armada. To him Henry VIII was the great hero and James I 'the late son of a bad mother'. This antipathy towards the Stuarts and sympathy towards the Tudors coloured his history. Froude wrote on other subjects also like the English in Ireland in 18th century, The divorce of Catharine of Aragon etc. But his reputation was established only by his *History*. He wrote the *Life of Carlyle* which is standard and can still be read with profit. Froude was called

the national historian of England by a Belgian critic. His main point in his *History* was his desire to defend the English Reformation. He regarded with Carlyle the Roman Catholic church as 'a gigantic imposture'. So he had to show that Henry VIII was responsible for the greatest event and Henry became a very desirable person. Gooch says 'the volumes on Henry VIII were the most brilliant historical work produced in England in the middle of the century with the single exception of Macaulay'. The success is largely due to the simple, transparent and easy style coupled with an extraordinary capacity for telling a tale. But the work suffers from the influence of Carlyle, for the worship of naked force here. It has been said that 'Carlyle has a good deal to answer for by his splendid and dangerous example of spoiling what might have been so good a book'. His later volumes on Elizabeth reveal an unenthusiastic picture of the queen. He started with prejudice against Henry and ended in admiration. As a youth he was devoted to the Queen; in his volumes on Elizabeth contempt dominates the narrative. To him Burghley (Burleigh) was the author of the glory of England and Elizabeth. He is throughout a zealous protestant and a fierce anti-catholic. He wrote the history in 12 volumes and it appropriately ends in Protestant England's dramatic victory over Catholic Spain. Freeman denounced Froude in 1870 and declared that 'Mr. Froude is not an historian. His work consists of four volumes of ingenious paradox and eight of ecclesiastical pamphlet'; Froude reacted and asked two competent experts to verify his references in any hundred pages, for Freeman had complained of utter carelessness as to facts and the experts discovered five real mistakes in twelve volumes which included 'i's not dotted and 't's not crossed. Freeman who would not leave the charge, again accused Froude of an in-born and incurable twist which renders it impossible for him to make an accurate statement on any matter. Froude's rejoinder was as dignified as the critic's was malicious. Froude shared with Carlyle a certain partial-

a brilliant and original institutional historian. He practised law and his legal acumen was evident even at the age of 29. Sir Frederick Pollock who was a close ally of Maitland edited Bracton's 'note book' brilliantly and he said rightly that 'legal documents are the best, often the only, evidence we have for social and economic history, for the history of morality, for the history of practical religion'. Maitland's work had inspired a number of scholars specializing in legal history like Vinogradoff, Seebohm etc. Maitland's work on Township and borough was a less important work but it no less proved Maitland's grasp of legal problems. Apart from dealing with the development of law historically he was also concerned with the theory of law as well as the routine functioning of law courts. His edition of the *Select pleas of manorial courts* was a major contribution to legal studies. Maitland died at the age of 56 creating a void in legal scholarship which was never completely filled. He elicited warm tributes from every scholar of repute. He wrote also *Constitutional history of England* which has been popular with students of constitutional law. For an intelligent student of institutions with a partiality for scientific precision and a taste for literary flavour, Maitland was the obvious choice. He was a combination of the analyst and the artist, the scientific and the literary, the Stubbs and the Froude; and none has achieved it in that measure since the days of Gibbon. To Maitland the history of law was the history of ideas. With a slight exaggeration, Pollard declared that he was the greatest historian that England had possessed. The end of the 19th century was a series of political biographies like: Basil William's *Chatham*, John Morley's *Burke* and Holland Rose's *Lives of Napoleon* and Pitt and Spencer Walpole's *Lord John Russell*.

Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829—1902) specialised in Stuart history. His *History of England from the accession of James I* appeared in 1833. The work

was reissued in ten volumes as the *History of England from 1603 to 1640*. This was followed by the *History of the Great Civil War* and *The History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate*. Gardiner was totally devoted to his strenuous research work. He refused the Regius professorship at Oxford on the death of Froude.

Buckle (1821-1862) was the author of *History of civilization in England* which has become a classic. It is interesting because he tries to show that historical developments are governed by universal laws. He was influenced by Comte and had faith in scientific procedures. According to him scientific study of history is inhibited by two dogmas: 1. that of freewill and 2. that of predestination. The second doctrine according to him is puerile since 'being beyond the province of our knowledge we have no means of ascertaining either its truth or falsehood'. According to him it is necessary to consider the interaction of man and nature. But as P. Gardiner rightly says Buckle does not distinguish between trends or tendencies and laws. Civilization according to him is not reflected by moral opinions of men but by their technical advancement since moral opinions have been the same mostly while technical advancement has been a variable factor.

Buckle worked very hard at his study so that his health was impaired. Burckhardt reminds us that Buckle's deep study of the Scottish divines of the 17th century led to paralysis of the brain'.

Buckle and Lecky (1838-1903) are a complementary pair in their philosophy of history and contribution to history. Buckle applied to history the Darwinian technique and he agreed with Comte that there were natural laws in human societies. By its very nature Buckle's work could not be complete. Lecky was indignant of theological dogmatism and religious persecution which followed such dogmatism. His *History of Rationalism* was written

lity for heroes and this became evident in his work on Caesar. His *English seamen of the 16th century* is a popular work. With Froude the era of colourful historians came to an end.

The new school of historical writing could be said to have been heralded by William Stubbs (1825-1901) who was Bishop of Chester and later of Oxford. He was a close friend of Freeman, the author of *The history of the Norman conquest*. Freeman and Stubbs were so different in their academic aptitudes and attitudes that their close association has been called a theme of academic jest. Stubbs started with *The Councils and ecclesiastical documents of Great Britain and Ireland* which he edited in collaboration with A. W. Hadden. But his reputation as a scholar became durable with his edition of *The Select charters and other illustrations of English constitutional history to the reign of Edward I*. His outstanding work *The constitutional history of England in its origin and development* however became and for a long time remained the standard work on the subject. Stubbs' interest in early English history started even while he was at school where he learnt Anglo-saxon. He soon became the greatest English mediavelist of his times, Stubbs was appointed Professor of modern History at the University of Oxford in 1866 and his holder of Professorship at Cambridge namely Charles Kingsley. Stubbs considered history as a stern discipline of the mind. His philosophy of history is best brought out by his lectures on medieval and modern history. His *Constitutional History* was however the finest attempt to deal with the whole range of English constitutional problems of the middle ages and like every successful constitutionalist his was a legal mind.

He has been complemented by Maitland, the greatest name in 'English constitutional history as follows: 'To read him is a training in justice'. On English

constitutional history following Stubbs, there was a spurt of historical scholarship in that direction by learned continentals like Vinogradoff, who specialized on the manorial system and the Frenchman Petit-dutaillis. Stubbs was a matter-of-fact historian whom Carlyle would have straightaway called Dry-as-dust. Stubbs, Freeman and Green formed a combination of scholars who were collectively called the Oxford School. But among themselves there was no scholastic unity. Freeman was a believer in the unity of history. Stubbs was a stranger to such sophistication. When Buckle's work appeared Stubbs remarked: 'I don't believe in the philosophy of history. So I don't believe in Buckle'. Profound believers in German historiography especially of the Rankean type heralded Stubbs as the 'greatest British historian of his age'.

John Richard Green (1837-1883) was also a Germanist. His fame rests on his *A short history of the English people* and it attained an immediate popularity. The book was deservedly popular for, for the first time, it dealt with the total development of the people. His style was attractive and the manner of treatment novel. Originally he had planned to become the historian of the English church but luckily, he gave up the idea and wrote secular history. He enlarged his history into *A history of the English people*. But it never became as popular as the shorter original. He wrote also *The making of England* and *The conquest of England*. The latter was completed by his wife, Alice Stopford.

A number of specialists wrote on legal histories and Sir Henry Maine (1822-1888) author of *Ancient Law and Village communities in the east and west* was a pioneer. Frederick Seebohm (1833-1912) wrote two valuable works: *The Oxford reformers* and *The English village communities*.

But the greatest student of law in the 19th century was Frederick William Maitland (1850-1906). He was

when he was only 27. His *History of European morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* is an important work which attracted Tennyson's encomium. The poet said 'it is an wonderful book for a young man to have written; a great book for any man to have written'. Having dabbled in the history of ideas in the early part of his career he wrote *The history of England in the 18th century* in 8 volumes. The majority of the work is devoted to a period of three decades from the accession of George III to 1793. His narrative of the American war is notable. He also wrote on Irish history in his great work. In this work he considers Burke as a great hero, and incidentally analyses the causes of the French Revolution. He was noted for his impartiality.

Sir John Robert Seeley (1834—1895) attained fame as the anonymous author of *Ecce Homo*.³⁰ He succeeded Charles Kingsley as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1869. His fame, as historian rests solidly on his *The expansion of England* which he began with the famous declaration that history should be scientific in its method but pursue a practical object. In his inaugural address he devoted his attention to the study of Politics. He said 'an university is and must be a great seminary of politicians. Without at least a little knowledge of history no man can take a rational interest in politics and no man can form a rational judgment about them without a good deal of history. Hence his dictum. Politics he said were vulgar when they were not liberalised by history and history faded into mere literature when it lost sight of its relation to practical politics.

Seeley was not an imperialist though his major theme was imperial history. His *Expansion of England* which was treated as a sort of Bible by the imperialists however did not support imperialism but merely explained

it. He was of the view, that the greatness of a country did not depend on its bigness. Truly he said 'if by remaining in the second rank of magnitude we can hold the first rank morally and intellectually let us sacrifice mere material magnitude'. He had a dislike for the universal state and a liking for the national state and so he detested Napoleon and praised Stein. He wrote a biography of Stein which was not very successful as also a short life of Napoleon written for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He was at home dealing with vast areas and many centuries and in the interpretation of great movements.

He did not produce quantitatively much. He seems to have been influenced by Ranke to the extent of being obliged to inform his young pupil George Macaulay Trevelyan that Carlyle and Macaulay were Charlatans, grave impertinence in the eyes at least of Trevelyan. But Lord Acton later corrected this prejudice of Seeley and told Trevelyan 'do not believe those who depreciate your great uncle, because for all his faults he was on the whole the greatest of all historians.'³¹

Trevelyan had a rather poor opinion of Seeley and for a person of Trevelyan's temperament it was but natural to do so. He said 'Seeley's *Ecce Homo* whatever its merits and its use, was one of the least 'scientific' works ever written on a historical subject, and his *Expansion of England* however important was merely a clever and timely essay. It was on those works that his fame rested, not on his *Stein* which may have been a scientific history for all I know' Trevelyan knew both Seeley and Bury and he knew also that both of them were preaching scientific history. He used to wonder, however, that while Bury who was a master craftsman who practised what he preached had every right to prescribe scientific history, he did not

30 Man, the hero

31 G. M. Trevelyan: *Autobiography*, p. 18

know by what right Seeley was talking of scientific history. He said 'the cobbler has a right to say that leather is wonderful and not others'. We should remember that Seeley had angered Trevelyan by impolite references to Macaulay. Seeley did not belong to the first rank of English historians and was succeeded at Cambridge as Regius Professor of Modern History by Lord Acton, a man greater than he by any standard.

Goldwin Smith (1823—1910) wrote *The Empire* which advocated the separation of the British colonies from the mother country and in that sense supported a political philosophy opposite to that of Seeley.

P. F. Tytler wrote the *History of Scotland* and Andrew Lang *The History of Scotland from the Roman occupation* and these were specialist works on the *History of Scotland*.

But before we pass on to Lord Acton we must refer to Mandell Creighton (1843—1901). He was Bishop of London and he appropriately chose ecclesiastical history as his field of study. He wrote the history of the papacy during the period of the Reformation. Though in a sense his subject matter was religious his treatment of the subject was political and by his own statement he wanted to bridge the gap between Milman and Ranke. He approached his subject in the Rankean spirit, i. e. to realise his ideals of historical scholarship by throwing light without generating heat which is another way of saying by being coldly non-committal and confronting the reader with mere facts. The third and fourth volumes dealing with the Renaissance Popes were the most brilliant of his compositions. He was lukewarm in his attitude to moral problems, again non-committal. A typical statement of Creighton is 'the good are not so good as they think themselves; the bad are not so bad as the good

think them' - a case for moral relativism. This attitude of moral ambivalence naturally infuriated Acton who said 'he is not striving to prove a case or burrowing towards a conclusion but wishes to pass through scenes of raging controversy and passion which is serene curiosity, a suspended judgment, a divided jury and a pair of white gloves'. A correspondence ensued between Creighton and Acton in which Acton, the stern moralist, could not accept Creighton's indifference to judgment. Creighton's book never attained true fame because the author was indifferent to the transcendental experiences of religious life.

Trevelyan holds that Creighton must be supplemented by Carlyle to restore history to life. 'In Creighton's treatment of Luther all that he says is both fair and accurate. Yet, from Creighton alone you would not guess that Luther was a great man, or the German Reformation a sterling and a remarkable movement. The few pages on Luther in Carlyle's *Heroes* are the proper complement to this excessively dispassionate history'.³²

Following Creighton a few remarkable books were written relating to the church. Richard Watson Dixon wrote *The History of the Church of England from the abolition of the Roman jurisdiction*; J. A. Overton was the author of *The English church in the 18th century*; and W. F. Hook wrote the *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*.

The Cambridge school of Modern History played a great role in modern English historiography. A series of brilliant scholars held Regius Professorship in that distinguished university and among them may be mentioned Seeley, Acton, Bury and Trevelyan. Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) who held that position for a while had little qualification to do so; he is more noted as a novelist

than a historian. His *Hypatia* and *Westward Ho* are very great novels, full of charming characterisation and facile expression but Kingsley's contribution to serious history is very little.

Acton is a great name in English historical tradition and scholarship. He was a vastly learned man noted for his deep erudition and great powers of expression both oral and written. He was a great teacher, a great organiser of historical studies; and the editor of the most remarkable series of volumes on modern history. John Emerich Edward Dalberg Lord Acton (1834-1902) did more to the cause of modern history ever since history became a discipline in Western Universities than any other man but wrote practically nothing. Hence he has been described by some people as a great tragedy. The ill-consequences of his quantitatively poor authorship belongs to his readers. Noted as the most learned historian of his time he resembles Dr. Johnson in the sense that he has become and remains a myth and a legend, for his personality was greater than his achievement. Acton was nobly descended. He was the descendant of the Prime Minister of the kingdom of Naples of the Napoleonic era and he traced his descent also from the ancient German house of Dalberg. He had his early education at Munich where he studied church history and later attended the lectures of Ranke at Berlin. He toured the United States extensively. His mother had married Lord Granville and this helped Acton to go to Russia to attend the coronation of Alexander II accompanying his stepfather.

He was appointed regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in February 1895 in succession to Sir John Seeley who had held that chair for more than 25 years. This elevation he owed to Lord Rosebury. Acton, however, held that post for just six years only. In the capacity of Professor of Modern History he delivered the Lectures on Modern History during

1899-1901. His inaugural lecture on *The Study of history* was delivered on June 11th 1895. Besides these, he is famous for the letter to the contributors to the *Cambridge History* which is considered to be a classic statement on historical research. His major contribution to history which has survived in written form is his lectures on the French Revolution. Trevelyan graphically describes his lectures to his students and says that his lecture hall was a stage on which through the vividness of his lectures the past was brought to life. Except these sporadic writings nothing remains of Acton as a writer. But the immense personal influence he exercised over his colleagues and students had become legendary even in his times. By his personal life as a professional historian he disproved many superstitions for example when he started teaching at the age of 61 at Cambridge, he had no prior experience of examining or guiding students or even of administration but he became the greatest name in all these fields of academic activities. John Pollock, one of his students says the following of Lord Acton's lectures at Cambridge: There was a magnetic quality in the tone of his voice and a light in his eyes that compelled obedience from the mind. Never before had a young man come into the presence of such intensity of conviction as was shown by every word Lord Acton spoke. It took possession of the whole being and seemed to enfold it in its own burning flame and the fires below on which it fed were at least for those present immeasurable ... he pronounced each sentence as if he were feeling it, poising lightly and uttering it with measured deliberation. His feeling passed to the audience which sat enthralled'. He loved history. If any one denigrated it he took it as a personal insult. To him history was 'not a pursuit but a passion; not a mere instrument but a holy calling'.³³ His views on historical writing are summed up in his letter to the contributors wherein he

says 'we shall avoid the needless utterance of opinion and the service of a cause'. Soon after he assumed the Professorship he was called upon to organize the Cambridge Modern History series. The task was onerous; under its impact his health broke down. The five chapters which he had allotted to himself in the Cambridge history were never written by him.

Acton came very early under the influence of Dollinger who was a great catholic scholar. Acton was inspired by him with a deep love of historical research and profound idea of its role as a critical instrument. From an early age Acton collected a magnificent historical library. He had long thought of writing a History of liberty but like many other projects which he dreamed of, he never realised it in his lifetime.

Acton had always been an ardent liberal and an admirer of Gladstone. The two had the very highest regard for each other. Matthew Arnold once said 'Gladstone influences all around him but Acton; it is Acton who influences Gladstone'. In 1869 he was raised to the peerage by Gladstone as Baron Acton. He sat in the Parliament but never spoke much there. He was member of Parliament till 1865. He became the editor of the Rambler, a Roman Catholic monthly and entered into controversies with Roman Catholics on the continent. Weighed down by the enormous amount of responsible academic work he had to perform unceasingly, Lord Acton passed away on June 9th 1902. His great library was bought by Andrew Carnegie who presented it to John Morley who immediately made a gift of it to the University of Cambridge.

Acton was a passionate lover of liberty and he thought that on moral issues there can be no compromise. He said 'I exhort you never to debase the moral currency but to try others by the final maxim that governs our own lives and to suffer no man and no

cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong'. No historian can afford to forget his resounding warning. If we lower our standard in history we cannot uphold it in church and state. Two of his works call for particular attention, his *Lectures on Modern History* and his *Lectures on the French Revolution*. His *Lectures on Modern History* deal with developments from the Renaissance to the eve of the French Revolution; though intended for undergraduate students the lectures contain ringing statements and profound judgments on the main issues of modern history. Liberty is such an important criterion of civilization with Acton that he declares 'the emancipation of conscience from authority to be the main content of modern history'. His *Lectures on the French Revolution* are most inspiring. It was a very suitable topic for him. 'It is difficult to convey an adequate idea of the strength, the eloquence and the wealth of reflection in this fascinating book'.³⁴ He saw through the central theme of the French Revolution and made the most obvious, absolutely correct, but least suspected of the eminently true fact that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. According to him French theory and American practice led to the event of 1789. Acton's insight is clear from the following passage where he speaks of the declaration of rights. 'It is the triumphant proclamation of the doctrine that human obligations are not all assignable to contract or to interest or force. This single page of print outweighs libraries and is stronger than all armies of Napoleon. But it sacrificed liberty to equality and the absolutism of the assembly took the place of the absolutism of the king'. According to Acton the Revolution was caused by the unmitigated absolutism of the king who was advised by a bad queen. The intrigues of the Emigres and the double talk of the king provoked

34 G. P. Gooch: *History and historians of the 19th century*, p. 362

the girondins who yielded place to the Jacobins in face of the Brunswick manifesto; one thing led to another, every succeeding thing a worse thing. Even Danton could be excused because he was not as bad as Robespierre. Acton does not try to whitewash the stains caused by Robespierre and his ilk; nor does he tolerate those who try to do it. With characteristic sarcasm he said 'the strong man with the dagger is followed by the weaker man with the sponge'. The Revolution however was remarkable, for it was inevitable, but as he said 'the best things that are loved and sought by men are religion and liberty ... yet, the paths of both are stained with infinite blood'. The above and many others were the learned opinions he expressed in the course of his duties as professor. He had hoped to live to see the publication of the *Cambridge Modern History*. But in 1901 he had a stroke and before his death in 1902 even the first volume had not appeared. He carried to the grave a vast quantity of unused knowledge. We have it from Gooch that Henry Sedgwick used to say that however much you knew about anything Acton was certain to know more.

Acton was a believer in the moral absolute. He declared 'the inflexible integrity of the moral code is to me the secret of the authority, the dignity and the utility of history' and so he said the great achievement of history is to develop and perfect and arm conscience. His love of liberty and hatred of tyranny and absolute power made him despise the heroes and so he had a harsh thing to say about Carlyle, the hero worshipper. On the death of Carlyle he wrote 'excepting Froude I think him the most detestable of historians'. Acton who lived through most part of the 19th century and died at the opening of the 20th century combined in himself the rhetoric of literary historians, the exacting standard of scholarship of the Rankean school, the scientific spirit of a Bury and many other virtues which were to bridge the gap between the departing school of history and the incoming one. Summarising Acton, Trevelyan

says, 'Acton was not a medievalist; liberty of thought and conscience was what he cared about and therefore he said history for him began to be interesting with Luther. Though he was not a Protestant he valued everyone's right to protest. Modern history to him was a record of the slow evolution of freedom and the rights of conscience through a balance of rival forces'.³⁵

John Bagnell Bury (1861—1927) succeeded Acton at Cambridge as Regius Professor of Modern History. At the age of 27 he wrote *A History of later Roman Empire from Arcadie to Irene*. This was soon recognized as a meritorious work and became deservedly popular. He was a lover of Greek poetry and he edited the Nemean and Isthmian odes of Pindar. As Professor of history at Trinity college, Cambridge he wrote a *History of the Roman empire from its foundation to the death of Marcus Aurelius*. With the publication of his *History of Greece* his reputation as a scholarly historian was established. He became famous as a scholar as well as a teacher. 'His early training in the old fashioned school of classical linguistic scholarship had equipped him with a mind of unrivalled accuracy in detail'. His brief *History of Freedom of Thought* is a stimulating work. It reveals his attitude to the philosophy of human personality and optimism. The *Idea of Progress* by Bury shows that he was interested optimistically in the concept of Progress in the same way as Acton was attached to the Idea of liberty. His history of the later Roman Empire from the death of Theodocius II to the death of Justinian superseded not only his earlier treatment of the same subject but every other in the field. Gooch describes him as the most erudite of British scholars and the only scholar who contributed to the three *Cambridge Histories* - ancient, medieval and modern. His *History of Greece* was the most important since

Grote and he utilised therein the latest researches including the archaeological excavations of Sir Arthur Evans. His most notable contribution to general literature was his edition of Gibbon, which has superseded all other editions.

Bury, however, by his own choice became a centre of controversy regarding the nature of history. In his inaugural address he said that 'History was a science no less and no more'. He himself practised scientific history and was entitled to speak on it. But his dissociation of history from literature drew pointed criticism from G. M. Trevelyan to whom this dictum was anathema. Trevelyan compared Bury with Acton and said that these two men had one marked peculiarity in common besides matchless erudition - 'I mean the value they attach to freedom of opinion and their own partisanship of that cause in every epoch of history. Acton indeed laid most stress upon the evil of coercing conscience, Bury on the evil of fettering the search for truth'. It must be noted that Bury succeeded Acton to the Regius professorship at Cambridge. Striking a comparison between these two in regard to their publications, Trevelyan continues to say 'In productivity as an author the younger man surpassed the older. Acton will live to posterity in a few articles contributed to magazines and in the posthumously published of his Cambridge lectures which display his peculiar power enough to make us long for the unwritten masterpiece of which he dreamed. Bury's published work on the other hand is his best title to fame.'

James Bryce (afterwards Viscount Bryce) (1838-1922) was a many-sided personality. He was ambassador to the U. S. and he appropriately wrote the *American Commonwealth* in 1888. The *Holy Roman Empire* is a classic and his *Studies in history and jurisprudence* are even now read with affection and care. John Horace Round (1854-1928) specialised in the study of pedigree and family

history. Economic history like the trilogy on labour by J. L. Hamund and his wife Lucy Barbara Bradby was followed by the writings of Sidney³⁶ and Beatrice Webb who wrote the *History of Trade Unionism* and *The English poor law History*, etc. They looked at history from the sociological point of view.

Among writers eminently scholarly and readable who produced classics must be mentioned H. A. L. Fisher (1865-1940). His short but brilliant *Napoleon* must be read by professional students of history for profit and every educated man for pleasure too. His *History of Europe* is one of the best in the field and surveys the entire course of European history with masterly skill. His famous sarcastic statement in that book, so often quoted, is indicative of his philosophy of history. He said: 'One intellectual excitement has, however, been denied me. Men wiser and more learned than I have discovered in history a plot, a rhythm, a pre-determined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one great emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave, only one great fact with respect to which since it is unique there can be no generalizations, only one saferule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen. This is not a doctrine of cynicism and despair. The fact of progress is written plain and large on the page of history. But progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by the next. The thoughts of men may flow into the channels which lead to disorder and barbarism.'³⁷

Commenting on this passage in his *Study of History*³⁸ Toynbee accused Fisher of professing to find no pattern in history but himself imposing patterns when

36 Lord Passfield

37 Preface to *History of Europe*

38 Vol. V, p. 414 and Vol. IX, p. 195

for instance he thinks of the history of Europe as an intelligible unity. Toynbee's comment is beside the point for Fisher's recognition of a pattern in European history is not of the same order as his own discovery of a pattern in history. 'This is like saying that a person who agrees that there is meaning in what he is doing from hour to hour or day to day should also be ready to recognize a meaning in his life as a whole. 'It is one thing to look for meaning in history, another to seek for the meaning of history'.

Robin George Collingwood (1889—1943) studied in Oxford and became Professor of metaphysical philosophy there. But his approach to the then current philosophical problems was idealist in general with Green and Bradley but he later developed an independent attitude towards philosophy which is best reflected by his statement 'the chief business of 20th century philosophy is to reckon with 20th century history'. He concluded that historical theory had reached the stage where philosophy could no longer neglect it. He was interested in archaeology and in art. He dealt in problems raised by aesthetic experience in judgment. He wrote an *Idea of Nature* and his miscellaneous papers relating to history were posthumously published in 1946 under the title *Idea of History*.

Collingwood is not a historian in the ordinary sense. He wrote little history. But he was a historical philosopher, probably the only eminent one in England. He was influenced by B. Croce even as Tawney was influenced by Max Weber. On surface there is a lot of similarity between Crocean ideas and Collingwood's philosophy. But there are important differences too. He is definite in his view that 'history is an autonomous discipline with its own procedures and categories'. He rejects therefore the positivism of Comte and the attempts by Spengler and Toynbee to categorise historical tendencies as if they were laws. To him the historian's thought has the fundamental concept of a historical enquiry. To

understand a historical situation he contended that it was necessary to know the thoughts of the historical personae concerned and the historian must rethink these thoughts in his mind. He says "why did 'x' occur?" has different answers in science and history and so he desired that history must be released from its 'state of pupillage to natural science'. Collingwood has been criticised on the ground that he claims a certain intuitive access to the minds of persons in the historical past. It is also pointed out that the historian cannot infer merely on the basis of his rethinking the thoughts of his ancestors but must get them confirmed by suitable evidence. But the supporters of Collingwood contend that this is not ignored by Collingwood who however was merely stating the conditions under which historical knowledge is possible and wished to state 'what is logically involved in and presupposed by the concepts of historical knowledge and understanding'.³⁹

His most important work which concerns students of historical theory is his *Idea of history*. In 1936 he wrote 32 lectures on the Philosophy of history. In the earlier part of that work he gives an account of how the modern Idea of history has developed from Herodotus to the 20th century. The second part consists of 'philosophical reflections on the nature, subject matter and method of history'. In 1940 he revised this work, particularly the parts on Greece and Rome, and called it *The Idea of history*. In this work he has maintained that history is a special science and that it has cognisable relations with other sciences as well as philosophy. According to Collingwood science, philosophy and history are independent disciplines. But the method of history is nearer to that of philosophy than science. Collingwood naturally has been compared to Croce and it has even been suggested that he owed his final ideas on history to the Italian historiographer. But Collingwood

was not a follower of the Italian thinker. He had himself expressed his indebtedness to Plato and Vico; but not to Croce. Collingwood considered history not only as a special and unique intellectual discipline; but also held that it was superior to other intellectual processes. To him science proceeds from certain presuppositions and builds general laws on them which can neither be true nor false and therefore they are neither knowledge nor error. He went even to the other extreme to claim that history was the only source of knowledge which is the opposite of the contentions of the scientist. He does not yield to the kind of relativism popularised by Dilthey that 'a man's psychology leads to his philosophy'. Collingwood understood that any form of historicism is confronted by the difficulty of avoiding complete scepticism. This is well brought out by the following: 'If Hegel's philosophy is due to his own psychological make up or is a function of conditions, economic or other prevailing in his own time, the same is true of the historian's own methodology and of any possible standard of criticism. In these circumstances questions of truth and falsity cannot arise. According to Collingwood there are two mental processes: 1) a thought and 2) our awareness of that thought. He calls the first 'thought of the first degree' i. e. history and the second, thought of the second degree i. e. philosophy. From this his analysis of reasoning follows. He held 'reasoning is self critical at least to the extent of being able to criticise and revise its categories and to detect its own errors; to be aware that one has a bias is already to have transcended that bias'.⁴⁰

As noticed above Collingwood held that historical thought has an object with peculiarities of its own and that it differs from theology and mathematics. The past cannot be comprehended by theological thinking since the object of that kind of thinking is a single infinite object and historical events are finite and plural. Further

the past cannot be apprehended by mathematical thinking either. For it consists of particular events in space and time which are no longer happening. Mathematical thinking however apprehends objects that have no special location in space and time and it is just that lack of peculiar spacio-temporal location that makes them knowable. Karl Lowith explaining Collingwood's view of the historical process says 'it seems as if the two great conceptions of antiquity and Christianity, cyclical motion and eschatological direction have the basic approaches to the understanding of history. Even the most recent attempts at an interpretation of history are nothing else but variations of these two principles or a mixture of both of them'.⁴¹

Collingwood however has a view of history as a special process. He says this cyclical movement is not merely a rotation of history through a cycle of fixed phases, but a spiral; for history never repeats itself. It comes round to each new phase in form differentiated by what has gone before. The most central idea of Collingwood's philosophy is that 'history cannot be scientifically written unless the historian can re-enact in his own mind the experience of the people whose actions he is narrating'. There is thus in Collingwood (and earlier in Croce) the inevitable link between the past and the present. Renier disapproves of Croce and Collingwood and says 'the delight in the linguistic accident⁴² which has caused men to call both by the name of history, led to the Crocean identification between past and present and we lay ourselves open to the influence of fancy tales about a four dimensional world in which past history can be influenced by those who contemplate it from the observation post that is called the present'.⁴³

41 **Meaning of history**, p. 19

42 The German word *Geschichte* stands for both historical events and historical narratives.

43 **The purpose and method in history**

Falladon and a small book on the English Revolution of 1688. During the three years 1923-26 *The History of England* was his sole work. He admitted that 'the past about which I knew least was the long stretch of time before the 14th century'. So his English social history which is one of the most famous of his works is still six centuries of social history. Speaking of his *History of England* he himself said 'some day very soon perhaps it will be replaced. But it will have served its generation'. It has not yet been replaced and it will serve many generations to come. He was an optimist. 'I used to look askance on Gibbon's dreadful saying that history is little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind ... but the war of 1914 enlarged and saddened my mind and prepared me to write the English history with a more realistic and less partisan outlook.' In 1927 Acton's successor Bury died and the Regius Professorship of Modern history at Cambridge was offered to Trevelyan by Stanley Baldwin. During his professorship he wrote the three volumes of *England under Queen Anne* which he himself declared was 'my best work except perhaps the *Garibaldi's*'. The first volume of *Garibaldi's* defence of the Roman Republic was the work of barely more than the 12 months of 1906. The two later volumes were: 1. *Garibaldi and the one thousand* and 2. *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*. So *Queen Anne* and *Garibaldi* were historical trilogies. He had a special fascination for military histories and the Marlborough wars were among its (England under Queen Anne) greatest themes. His *Clio, a Muse and other essays* is a collection of beautiful essays on various subjects some of which like *Clio, a Muse and the Present Position of History* are historical. In these essays he makes a strong plea for providing history with becoming literary garb. He has no patience with the too assertive followers of Ranke and to him the purpose of history is educative, its nature poetic; its benefit the very study of it. Carr rightly calls him the last and not the least of the

great English liberal historians of the Whig tradition. His insistence on the literary value of history though correct in itself was valuable as an effective counterpoise to the excessive claims of the 'scientific' historians. Though Trevelyan himself and many others of his discerning readers considered his *Queen Anne* as his best work there are a few who hold the view not wholly untenable that his social history is the best of his works. His famous definition of social history that 'social history is history *Minus* political history' has been quoted by everybody who has done some social history, and denounced by a few who do not countenance Trevelyan for various reasons.

He was awarded the order of merit in 1930 and it is interesting to note that his father too was an O. M. His wife was a C. H. (Companion of Honour) so that his family enjoyed full royal fame. Trevelyan passed away in 1962 probably bringing the liberal and whig tradition of historiography to a close.

The tradition of social history which Trevelyan did so much to shape has had varying fortunes. The very definition of social history provided by the master is objected to. Trevelyan's definition is considered by some moderns misleading and insufficient. They go to the extent of dubbing his own performance 'pious gossip' but forget that essentially Trevelyan's definition and his performance which lives up to his definition are likely to survive as educative forces, the neo-sociological techniques which are valuable as providing new angles and comprehension of the complex social phenomena. Among social historians Eileen Power was an extremely competent scholar unfortunately removed by early death. Gooch who is always moderate in his praises says 'Eileen Power's early death removed a social historian with something of Maitland's imaginative flair'.⁴⁶

46 Gooch: *History and historians of the 19th century*, Intro. XIX

Collingwood makes an essential distinction between history and science by suggesting the difference between the process of answering the question 'why does the apple fall?' from that which relates to the question 'why did Louis XVI fall?' He has been criticised for his re-enactment-of-the-past theory. This criticism has been met by saying that Collingwood was merely trying to say that we should know the condition for historical knowledge. He says specifically that 'for history the object to be discovered is not the mere event but the thought expressed in it' and 'all history is the history of thought.' Carl G. Hempel says 'the historian we are told imagines himself in the place of the persons involved in the events which he wants to explain by this imaginary self-identification with his heroes he arrives at an understanding. This method of empathy is frequently used in history but it does not in itself constitute an explanation. It rather is essentially a heuristic device.'

H. Fischer, author of *Historical fallacies*, considers Collingwood as indulging in the idealist fallacy. He calls it the new idealism. According to Collingwood, as understood by Fischer, thoughts alone are events and in which an historian knows them by a process of rethinking. The criticism of Collingwood is that his method would exclude the non-intellectual problems which are characteristically neither rational nor irrational but transrational. According to Collingwood the historian thinks what, not any single person thought but the whole past thought; and so the fiction of a corporate mind becomes necessary for him. He speaks of the scissor and paste historian who is really not a historian for he is putting together other people's thought and is not passing the past to his own mind.

A certain change in his attitude to the philosophy of history is noticeable between 1936 and 1938 as a result of which the scholar who started by objecting to Croce ended by becoming his greatest exponent in England.

From 1938 onwards his health began to suffer greatly. His tragic end may be described in the graphic words of T. M. Knox: 'tiny bloodvessels began to burst in the brain with the result that the small parts of the brain affected were put out of action. It was only an intensification of this process when in 1938 he had the first of a series of strokes which eventually reduced him to helplessness so that his death from pneumonia in 1943 when he was 52 was in some way no unfortunate end'.⁴⁴

G. M. Trevelyan (1876-1962) was the third son of Sir George Otto Trevelyan, the nephew of Lord Macaulay. So he had to bear the burden of two eminent historians, reputation and live up to it. He did more than that. He was educated at Harrow and at Trinity College, Cambridge. He was through and through a Cambridge man and was profoundly influenced by Lord Acton. Early in his career at Oxford he contacted Seeley who spoke disparagingly of his father and his granduncle. He developed an aversion to Seeley's views immediately. Later in his Autobiography writing about Bury he said "Bury in his inaugural lecture (1903) spoke to the effect that history was simply a science, no less and no more .. unlike Seeley he was a real scientific historian and had therefore a perfect right to say, like the cobbler, that there was nothing like leather." From his early days he had developed Whig sympathy which had become part of family tradition. He wrote 'like my father and great uncle before me I always hated mathematics'. In this respect he resembled Winston Churchill also.⁴⁵ Among his works we must mention a life of John Bright and a life of Lord Grey of the Reform Bill. He wrote also a life of Lord Grey of

44 Preface: *The Idea of History*: p. XXI

45 Born historians seem to develop an allergy to mathematics; to mathematical geniuses like Srinivasa Ramanujam (history was a bugbear. Perhaps this has something to do with the difference between the mental processes of a historian and that of a mathematician.

from the external to the internal. Important events in history with which eminent heroes are associated are conditioned by a movement of 'withdrawal and return'. He speaks of the decline being caused by lack of suitable response and he does not share the view that there is any iron law of fate such as governs the physical world. To him there are universal states larger than civilizations, and universal churches larger than local faith. Though he speaks of civilizations as a unit of study he is definitely of the view that it is human individuals and not human societies that make history. Toynbee never forgets God who plays the ultimate role in his *Study of History*.

In a certain sense Toynbee's system is analogous to that of Spengler; while the latter speaks of *Cultures* Toynbee speaks of *Civilizations*. The latter has 21 civilizations while the former has 8 cultures. Though he is not as pessimistic about western civilizations as Spengler, according to him the west is not yet out of the woods. His conclusions are not the result of empirical observations. They are mere illustrations for his principles. Further he seems to suggest or at least imply that external forces determine the course of history. At that point he seems to go beyond the range of secular history.

The whole of Toynbee is comprised in his *Study of History*. A criticism of that *Study* from various angles will reveal the present estimate of that great thinker and his contribution. There are two very important sources of adverse criticism of Toynbee. One is that he recognises the vital role of suprasecular forces in the historical process. The other is, he has a pre judged view of the historical process to confirm which he assembles a vast array of historical data. This is an inversion of the correct logical system of proceeding from premises to conclusion. Lowith adverting to the former line of criticism says 'one wonders how these cycles can be integrated into that progression and how

the dismal results of his historical study can be harmonized with the hopeful assumptions of Toynbee as a believer'.⁵⁰ Acton quoting Thirlwall, however, said that 'the belief that the course of events and the agency of man are subject to the laws of a divine order, which it is alike impossible for anyone either fully to comprehend or effectually to resist - this belief is the ground of all our hope for the destinies of mankind'. Hereby Acton merely confirms that when man despairs of history he can take refuge in religion; it cannot mean that history can be explained on premises exclusively religious.

The very concept of life cycles is biological. Walsh reminds us that in dealing with the life cycles of civilizations Toynbee resembles Vico and Herder. These latter thinkers set out to understand history in quasi-biological terms; for instance Vico sought to trace what he called an ideal human history, a sort of life cycle which according to him was experienced by all human societies.

Toynbee had a certain spiritual experience not dissimilar to that of Spengler. The latter was moved by the events of the first world war to his pessimism about the future of the West. Toynbee, also was moved by similar events in the west; the first and the second world wars persuaded him to make up his mind in favour of the theories he sets forth in his *Study of History*. Hence, William H. Mc Neill said 'Toynbee's volumes may be better understood and their discrepancies appreciated only if the reader sets them against the background of the years in which they were written'.⁵¹

50 *Meaning in history*, p. 15

51 *Some basic assumptions of Toynbee's A Study of history* p. 39

In the symposium *The intent of Toynbee's history*

It was quite appropriate that Trevelyan should have dedicated his *Social History* to Eileen Power.

We now pass on to consider the latest (and happily still living) among British historians who has dabbled in conventional history as well as the broadest spectrum of metahistory, who has been administrator as well as scholar, and who has been the most enthusiastically admired and the most powerfully criticised among living historians. Arnold Joseph Toynbee (b. 1889) was born in London on April 14th 1889. He was educated at Winchester and Balliol, Oxford. He taught at Oxford and London; worked for the British government in the foreign office as a diplomat and at the universities as a professional historian. He was a member of the British delegation to the Paris peace conference in 1946. As a teacher he started with Greek literature and history and soon became thoroughly steeped in classical scholarship of every imaginable kind and familiarised himself with an unparalleled wideness of reading with all the aspects of every civilization of ancient, medieval and modern times.⁴⁷ He was director of studies in the Royal Institute of International affairs and research Professor of International history at London. Among his major works one could mention *Nationality and war*, *Greek historical thought*, *Civilization on trial*, *Experiences*, an autobiographical work, *A historian's view of religion*. But his magnum opus is *The Story of history* in twelve volumes⁴⁸ praised by *The Cambridge history of English literature* as 'the greatest single handed historical achievement since *The Decline and fall*'. In this immense

47 The far-east and India are the Achilles' heel of his massive scholarship.

48 The full text of Toynbee's work in many volumes can be read with patience, provided one has the grace to skip passages of obscure classical references. But Somervell's abridged Toynbee which is a marvel of condensation and was approved by the author of the original is too concentrated for anyone with merely average learning and patience.

work he studies not the fortunes of an empire, a people or a country; but he is concerned with all the great civilizations he has listed for his purposes of study. There is little doubt that he is the most learned among living historians and his *Study of History* 'is the most ambitious project in historical synthesis ever attempted by a single author'.⁴⁹ For the learning and erudition, capacity for comprehension, for classification and interpretation his work is unrivalled.

Toynbee's interesting personality is totally reflected in his *Study of History*. To us it is his major contribution to historical theory copiously illustrated and fully documented that matters. His work has two aspects: 1. a massive collection of historical data and 2. a meaning that is put into them. The former is unquestioned and is readily accepted as an indication of the author's immense scholarship. The latter is severely mauled by critics who object to his methodology. In his remarkable work he has a few fundamental generalizations to make. He begins with the advice that a historian's unit of study of total history must not be a nation or a country but a civilization. To him the change from primitive to civilized society is a transition from a static condition to dynamic activity. In the case of growth and disintegration of civilizations they are to be understood in the context of the twin and associated principles of challenge and response. Growth and disintegration then depend upon the nature and extent of response to challenge. He defines growth as a situation in which there is a challenge evoking a successful response generating a fresh challenge evoking another successful response and so forth. In disintegration the process is just the opposite. To begin with in primitive societies hostile environment poses a challenge and invites a response. But when man masters nature 'etherealisation' follows. The external environment becomes progressively less important and action shifts

49 Unlike *Studies of individual civilizations*, for example, *The history of Spanish Civilization* by Raphael Altamira.

A rough summary of the general criticism of Toynbee can be had in the following words of A. L. Rowse: 'A Study of History imposes a sociological schematism a kind of straight jacket upon the diversity, the rich variability, the concreteness and unpredictability of history. Toynbee imposes 'his' patterns upon the subject, seeks to be a prophet and provide answers to the contemporary problems that distract us; and he adds rather insultingly to the gallery, especially American—'hence its uncritical popular success, especially in America. But this object is neither the province nor the function of history. It is indeed contrary to its nature...to impose a thesis upon the facts is antithetical to the true nature of history where we should follow the facts accurately, patiently without prejudice. Thesis—history is false history'.⁵² Referring to the idea of challenge and response in Toynbee, Trevelyan said 'Mr. Toynbee's Study of History is indeed very suggestive. But it does not pretend to be a complete explanation of the past for challenges are so often made that make no response'. In regard to the basic objections to Toynbee the criticism as well as the defence have been admirably summarised in the famous debate between Toynbee and Pieter Geyl organised by the B. B. C.,⁵³ wherein Toynbee stoutly repudiated the allegation that he was a determinist. He said he was not one. But he also said that the fate of human civilizations will be 'determined' by the manner of response to the challenge that it posed. He said that the response is not predetermined. It was the result of freewill of man and can defy challenge

in a variety of ways. But perhaps he keeps in the back of his mind the view that the nature of the response will be heavily conditioned by the backlog of history influencing him at every point. In the course of that debate the Dutch historian criticised the British historian as follows: 1 Toynbee bases an argument on twenty cases selected at random from the histories of all peoples and all centuries. The impression produced may be ever so convincing. But the twenty cases are selected cases, selected out of 200 or 200,000.

Secondly, even the twenty cases selected could be presented in a different way with the result that they would no longer support the argument. According to Geyl Toynbee's view of the future is not very optimistic though not as gloomy as that of Spengler. Toynbee detected in Geyl another brand of pessimist and retorted that "'the human intellect,' sighs Geyl, 'is not sufficiently comprehensive' I say, we can't afford such defeatism". Toynbee accused Geyl of taking a 'nonsense' view of history thereby meaning that Geyl refused to admit that there can be a single pattern in history. But Geyl answered by saying that one of the great things to realise about history is its infinite complexity and 'when I say infinite I do mean that not only the number of the phenomena and incidents but often their shadowy and changing nature is such that the attempt to reduce them to fixed relationship and to a scheme of absolute validity can never lead to anything but disappointment'. Walsh in another context referring to Toynbee says 'we must realise that despite his own repeated assertions he is neither a post-modern western historian nor any other sort of historian and that his main conclusions can neither be established nor refuted by the simple historical research. It is true that Toynbee's case is a complicated one... his methods are highly individual: witness his reliance on mythology to establish that the "geneses of civilizations" are particular beats of a general rhythmical pulsation which runs all through the universe. Already here

52 This debate was broadcast on the 3rd programme of the B. B. C on January 4th and March 7th, 1948.

53 Compare this with the Hindu dharmic view according to which Karma determines man's subsequent status while simultaneously his present action can alter the course determined by past Karma. This may be called the theory of quasi-determinism i. e. **Prarabdha** and **Sanchita** cannot be rejected but their limited mitigation hereafter is possible by proper use of discretion still vesting in the human being.

we seem to have to do with a personal vision rather than a scientific hypothesis with the deliverances of a poet or philosopher-hierophant (Toynbee's own description of Spengler) rather than a sober investigator with both feet on the ground and the impression is confirmed when we observe the remarkable twist given to the 'Study' in the last four volumes where the interest is shifted from establishing laws of history to discovering the meaning of history as a whole and where the intensely personal character of the whole enterprise is made distressingly evident. What then are we to do about Toynbee? I incline to rate him as neither a new Vico nor a new Hegel; but rather as another Herbert Spencer".⁵⁴ But referring to the religious instincts of man Bertrand Russell regrets the absence of the spirit of cosmic piety in man; Einstein said to know that what is impenetrable to us really exists and that it manifests itself in the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty of which only the most elementary forms can be grasped by our faculty' — this sentiment is at the centre of true religiousness. It is perhaps in this spirit that Toynbee ultimately took refuge in religion.

It is tempting to institute a comparison between Toynbee and Marx. Both of them are at least to some extent determinists and to them the historical process is finite. To Toynbee religion must take over and to Marx history will cease with the class war. But the differences between them are more serious and seem to irk communist historians considerably. Kosminski⁵⁵ after a careful study of Toynbee makes certain observations which are fairly representative of Marxist reaction to the *Study of History*. He says that even friendly critics of Toynbee content themselves with paying compliments to his poetic vision and his olympic flight down the centuries. He reminds us that 'Toynbee's

melancholy speculations on the transitory nature of earthly civilizations began at an early age when he was travelling in the east and saw the ruins of the places of Venetian dignitaries in the vicinity of relics of the Minoan civilization (2nd millennium B. C.) and compared these two thalassocracies of the past with modern Britain who at that time was still mistress of the seas .. he believes that the meaning and purpose of history is revealed outside the bounds of history, and that history is the spectacle of the creation of God, in its movement away from God its source and towards God its goal... the great lack of clarity in stating what he means by 'civilizations' allows him to deal with them as he likes, to unite and divide them as he sees fit...

Toynbee however warns his readers that he does not believe in fatalistic cycles, as described by Lucretius and other writers of antiquity; nor does he believe in Spengler's theory of a civilization as a living organism that is born, grows, becomes senile and dies. Toynbee tells us that the developmental cycles he discovered was evolved empirically from the comparative study of the history of civilizations. He believes that this cycle has until now always been repeated. It is not, however, historically inevitable. As we shall see, this proviso plays a very important part in Toynbee's approach to history .. Toynbee calls the stages in the development of a civilization of birth (genesis), growth, breakdown, dissolution and death ..

To him all history is the fulfilment of some divine plan. Within the bounds of this plan, however, man is allowed freedom of will, freedom of choice. The individual therefore is the direct creator of history i. e. ...the direct creator of civilization he says that man cannot live outside society although history is made by individual and not by society'.

Now Kosminski, the Marxist, begins to speak in his authentic Communist voice. The bourgeoisie science of

⁵⁴ Patrick Gardiner (Ed.): *Theories of history*, p. 306

⁵⁵ Prof. Toynbee's philosophy of history; Moscow, 1955

history at the peak of its development strove to consign the objective laws governing the development of human society and thus turn history into a science... but it was left for the Marxist philosophy of history to demonstrate that society is not a fortuitous assembly of individuals creating their own history as they will. But that the historical process follows certain laws which are ultimately determined by the development of the forces of production and the overcoming of the contradictions between the relations of productions and the forces of production'. Having given the Marxist panacea to the intellectual ills of western thinkers the Marxist proceeds to arraign Toynbee in by no means polite language: 'the mountains of facts and flirting with objectivity are pushed to oneside to make way for the main issue - the justification on quasi - scientific lines of the policy of the imperialistic powers in the west and their struggle against the U. S. S. R. He comes to the conclusion that such society can be created only by a miracle and that religion must be the miracle worker. Toynbee says that the one reason for man's sojourn on earth is to prepare his soul for the future life and not to establish a better social order on earth⁵⁶ ... Toynbee's magnum opus with all its addenda is not history, it is not science; it is a theological—metaphysical fantasy on the destiny of mankind theme that is monstrously verbose, overburdened with an inconceivable mass of names, titles, dates, quotations, addenda, notes, excursions, unverified facts, groundless hypotheses, historical anecdotes, figures from the Bible and mythology, mystical visions, whimsical modernisms; it is a fantasy that at times is amusing but from the scientific point of view it is completely fruitless and furthermore is harmful. We are told in all seriousness that Spengler and Toynbee discovered the quantum structure of world history. They put an end to the idea of continuum, the uninterrupted progressive development takes place by means of quantum

56 Civilization on trial by Toynbee

-like bursts of energy ... in the case of Toynbee, the historian turns more and more into a visionary and a clairvoyant. This is the path of degeneration of bourgeois historiography. Toynbee owes his fantastic success to the mass reader and not to students of history. His philosophy of history takes the form of a poem mainly dedicated to the glorification of God and the higher religions.

Hugh Trevor-Roper of Oxford says: "theories are stated, often interesting and suggestive theories; then facts are selected to illustrate them (for there is no theory which chosen facts cannot illustrate;) then, the magician waves his wand, our minds are dazzled with a mass of learned details and we are told that the theories are 'empirically' proved by the facts and we can go on to the next stage in the argument."

H. E. Barnes is among those who delight in ridiculing Toynbee. He quotes Joseph Hergesheimer to say 'Toynbee studies the rise and fall of some 22 civilizations, the net result being to bury the universe in an Anglican churchyard'; 'Toynbee's suggestive programme of comparing the rise and fall of civilizations was ruined by his extreme theological premises which made his vast work a theodicy rather than a history'; 'Despite the fact that Toynbee is unquestionably the most learned living historian, his historical framework rested on theological aberrations, oddities, curios and vestiges which should appall any reasonably well informed college student'.⁵⁷

There are weightier lines of criticism levelled on entirely different grounds against Toynbee. Fischer is of the opinion that Toynbee's work suffers from the holiest fallacy; that all meta - historians by definition are guilty of this mistake; Toynbee, Spengler, Marx etc. and others who have tried to discover the meaning of the

57 A history of historical writing, pp. 388, 396

whole past. The fallacy of archetypes is conceptualising change in terms of the re-enactment of primordial archetypes which exist outside of time. Toynbee conceived all civilizations as being fixed archetypal patterns which transcend time.⁵⁸ Fischer also says that the very size of Toynbee's work and the calculated obscurity of the style make it respectable in the eyes of admirers many of whom might not have read him.

In spite of all the criticisms we have mentioned above the very fact that he is the most discussed among historians today shows that his influence is enormous.

It now remains for us to mention the Cambridge history series in many volumes inaugurated by Acton and now available for the ancient, medieval and modern periods. It is the most impressive achievement of co-operative historical writing. Biographical history is as old as the 18th century when William Roscoe wrote *Lorenzo De Medici*; Many historical biographies of Macaulay and the *Life of Gladstone* by John Morley set the pace for similar works in subsequent years. The most important among biographical works in the English language is the dictionary of national biography founded by George Smith in 1882. The *Eminent Victorians* by Lytton Strachey (1918) became an immediate success and was followed by *Queen Victoria and Elizabeth and Essex*. This book has been criticised as a combination of biography and novel and so written by an eminent fictioneer. Winston Spencer Churchill (1874-1964) statesman, soldier, author and painter wrote novels, biographies, Histories of the two world wars, a History of the English speaking people and an Autobiography. His biography of his father *Randolph Churchill* and the great Duke of Marlborough marked him off as a great historian. His great historical sense and the immensely

58 Fischer: *Historical fallacies*, pp. 151, 287, 288

eloquent English he wrote secured for him the Nobel prize for literature in 1953. He was one of the rare few in the history of the world who not only wrote history but made it. He was the Prime Minister of England during 'their finest hour'.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1969), the greatest among recent English philosophers and rightly reputed as master of practically every branch of knowledge has incidentally contributed to historical thought also. He was essentially a mathematician. He taught philosophy at Harvard, and Economic and Political science at Oxford. His *Principia Mathematica* is a classic. His books on *Freedom and Organization* and *Power* are significant contributions to historical and political theory. Of the two Marxian doctrines one relating to surplus value and the other dialectical materialism he was of the view that the latter was more important.

Now we shall attempt a general and rapid survey of English historiography in the 20th century. T. F. Tout became rightly famous for his chapters in *Medieval Administrative History*. Powicke wrote his *Henry III and Lord Edward*, and it is an authentic portrait of the 13th century. Holdsworth was the undisputed master of the study of English law and his *Laws of England* is a classic. Eileen Power was great enough as a social historian to deserve a dedication from Trevelyan. Steven Runciman's *History of the Crusades* is deservedly reputed. Tawney wrote his famous *Religion and the rise of capitalism*, inspired by Max Weber. Keith Feiling wrote a series of volumes on *The 17th and 18th centuries from the Tory point of view*. His *History of England* is a good foil to Trevelyan. G. N. Clark who in one sense was a lineal successor of Lord Acton wrote a brilliant volume on later Stuarts in the *Oxford History of England*. Louis Bernstein Namierowski changed his name to Sir Louis Namier and wrote brilliant books like *The structure of politics at the accession*

of George III, England in the age of the American Revolution and In the Margin of history. 'He discarded the traditional view that George III attempted to revive some form of dynastic autocracy'. C. Oman's History of the peninsular war, Adolphus ward's History of Germany from 1815, and E. H. Carr's multivolume History of the Bolshevik Regime are all notable efforts at foreign history. On the two world wars apart from official histories Lloyd George's 8 volumes on the first world war and Winston Churchill's prose epics on the two world wars are extremely valuable. Many classics were written on pre-History, proto-History and ancient-History by eminent archaeologists from Flinders Petrie to Arthur Evans. The former in his Seventy years of archaeology described the archaeological achievements in Palestine. Leonard Woolley described in his Ur of the Chaldees the tower temples of Mesopotamia. Arthur Evans described his Discovery of Crete in the many volumes on the palace of Minos. John Marshall's 3 volumes on the Indus Valley civilization and Rostovtzeff's Social and economic history of the Hellenistic world are themes relating to proto-historic and early historic periods.

In spite of German and other continental claims to historical writings and philosophising, by far the most considerable historical writings belong to British writers and those who wrote in the English tongue. While history was written from various points of view by the above mentioned authors special mention must be made of a few who contributed to the history of historical writing. Robert Fling's The philosophy of history in Europe. France and Germany was the earliest attempt in modern times to treat this subject at some length. James T. Shottwell wrote his Introduction to the history of history and it must be read together with his famous article on history in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. John B Black's The Art of History, George Peabody Gooch's History and historians in the 19th century and Herbert

Butterfield's The Englishmen and his histories are excellent works on historiography. J. W. Thompson's The history of historical writings (1942) and H. E. Barnes A history of historical writing are remarkably good treatises on the subject though a good part of Barnes, perhaps necessarily so, reads like a very long annotated bibliography.

Apart from Collingwood and Toynbee a number of British scholars have dealt with historical theory and contributed to the fast growing literature on the philosophy of history. Among them we shall consider herebelow three thinkers as representative samples:

1. Isaiah Berlin: Born in 1909 and educated in London and Oxford served as lecturer in philosophy, Oxford. Among his publications the 'Hedgehog and the Fox' - an essay on Tolstoy's views on history (1953) and the 'Historical inevitability' (1954) which was a series of lectures in memory of Auguste Comte are the more important and the better known. The second of these deals with historical determinism, relativism and historical judgments. Berlin deals acutely with problems of historical determinism and moral responsibility. Whether to blame a person or praise one, whether to hold a person responsible for a thing or exonerate him would depend upon the assumption of the reality of human choices. If determinism were a valid theory of human behaviour ascription of moral responsibility to persons would be as inappropriate as the attribution of such responsibility to the planetary system or the tissues of the living cell. He says that while it is possible to disagree with the theory of unfettered human choice we must recognize and accept the notion of free act; otherwise there can be no moral responsibility. To Berlin if determinism is accepted our whole experience of the workaday world will become meaningless. He thinks that to make a serious attempt to adopt out thoughts and words to the hypothesis of determinism is scarcely feasible as things are now and have been

within recorded history. Speaking of blame and praise he says 'because blame can be unjust and the temptation to utter it very strong it does not follow that it is never just nor does it mean that we are mysteriously doomed to a degree of relativism and subjectivism in history from which we are no less mysteriously free. We are told that we are creatures of nature and environment or of history and that this colours our temperament, our judgment, our principles. Every judgement is relative, every evaluation subjective ... but relative to what? Subjective in contrast with what?'

2. W. H. Walsh (1913): Among his major works relating to history 'An introduction to philosophy of history' is significant. Walsh says in his paper included in *Theories of History* by Patrick Gardiner 'that history has a meaning, that there is point, significance, intelligibility in the historical process as a whole or we must accept the view that history is a chaotic aggregate of unconnected events and processes lacking all rhyme or reason'. To him history is meaningful or it is unintelligible. If unintelligibility were accepted no history would be attempted. To make sense of a given piece of history one has to see connections between different historical events, the causal connections between them. It is not only the *what* but also the *why* that has to be set forth by the historian. It is not always that the *why* follows *what*. It often happens that the *what* is collected and presented as an answer to or an explanation of an already perceived *why*. Prof. Oakeshott (in his 'Experience and its mode' held that the word *cause* is no part of the historian's vocabulary. When he held that view, he was thinking of causation which is appropriate to the natural sciences. He and those of his line of thinking overlooked the fact that the primary concern of historians is with the actions of human beings, questions about purposes, intentions, policies and ends. To explain is to render intelligible. There are occasions when the historian cannot go beyond the stage of describing the situation in which

the man about whom he is writing found himself. He cannot fully reconstruct the thought behind his actions, cannot see how he came to act as he did. On these occasions explanations in terms of external and internal factors of a kind which could be broadly classified as psychological not merely supplement but actually replace explanation in terms of purposes.⁵⁹

As a matter of fact those who have asked the question 'Does history make sense?' have been concerned with two distinct enquiries: One is to discover certain constant factors governing all historical change. They have wanted to find a single plot or pattern in the whole course of historical development. But despite everything that has been said on the subject in the last 200 years no one has yet produced a reputable example of an historical law. The instances of supposed laws of history which immediately come to mind namely Comte's law of the three stages, Marx's law of the operation of the economic factors in history, Toynbee's law of challenge and response do not fulfill that description.

3. Christopher Blake (1926) taught at Princeton and Edinburgh Logic and Metaphysics. The problem of objectivity is stated by Blake as follows: 'It is frequently argued that written history can never be objective. Even if the personal bias of the historians can be overcome (which many doubt) it is still inevitable that what is written must be relative to the tastes, customs and prejudices of the creative moment ... This argument is sometimes called historical scepticism'.

The following are questions framed by him: 1 what kind of objectivity might be expected of the historian? 2. Why have so many philosophers and historians taken seriously the suggestion that history might never be objective. Blake rightly associates relativism with

⁵⁹ A sort of psycho-analytical study of men like Caesar, Nero, Napoleon, Wilson, Gandhi and Hitler has been attempted wherein their behaviour is treated not as an aggregate of individual choices but as products of psychological internal compulsions.

objectivism as well as scepticism. The first characteristic of the practising historian is that wherever the latter may begin he is forced to select from the total information present to him in records of all kinds and however he may explain his choice there must be a personal factor involved. Prof. Oakeshott says, 'we know nothing of a course of historical events apart from some system of postulates... what is known is always in terms of what is presupposed; he is represented as starting from a 'bare fact' whereas it is safe to say that he never does so because such a starting place is impossible—he begins with an interpretation which he reinterprets'. Another form of attack on objectivity is that the individual element is a bar to objectivity. It must be conceded with Dewey⁶⁰ that to be intellectually objective is to discount and eliminate merely personal factors in the operations by which a conclusion is reached; where it is claimed that history cannot be objective, it cannot be meant that there will be no area of agreement at all in historical matters between such opposites like Communists and Liberals etc. They will both agree for instance that the Russian revolution occurred in 1917. But the objectivity that is denied is one that can never be achieved.⁶¹ The attack of the philosopher of history as it is written is the complaint that written history is not objective, because it is relative to the mental climate of an era or to the personal bias of the historian; since neither can be eliminated objective history would become impossible. If objectivity is ruled out as impossible a choice between objective and subjective is meaningless.

In fact, relativism is related to objectivity and it has been stated that 'either relativism is wrong or if it is correct then it is itself only a relative verdict'.

60 *Logic* p. 44

61 One must also remember the view that objectivity of a complete nature is not desirable in subjects like history since it would mean merely rubber stamping by everybody else of one pioneer.

Objectivity is decided by what Karl Pierson would call 'the final touchstone of equal validity for all normally constituted minds'.

When this question about the objectivity of history is asked at the back of the question is the confusion regarding the analogy of natural sciences; that the objectivity that is required in history is the same as the objectivity that is obvious in science. But history is not a science and so the analogy with science will not do.

ii. European Historians other than English

Hecataeus (b. 550 B. C.), a native of Miletus, was the earliest Greek historian who wrote the *Genealogies*, answering very nearly to a modern definition of history. He himself profoundly disbelieved the Greek myths and wished to discover and communicate the truth i. e., the reality of the past. He wrote, 'What I write here is the account which I consider to be true: for the stories of the Greeks are numerous and in my opinion ridiculous'. Both Greek prose and Greek critical philosophy and ultimately the European tradition of communication of dogma through the medium of common speech were born in Miletus and it was not an accident that European historiography should also have begun there. Hecataeus, though very impressive in his declaration, does appear gullible in his writings. He was greatly learned and in spite of his laudable assumptions regarding history, he seems very naive indeed at times. Heraclitus, a contemporary of his, included him among men who illustrate the principle that 'much learning does not teach common sense'.

Herodotus of Halicarnassus (c. 484-425 B. C.) was born six years after the battle of Marathon in which the first Persian invasion of Greece was beaten off. He

Father of History. He was impelled by a genuine historical motivation. He declared that his aim in writing the History was to 'prevent the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the barbarians from losing their due meed of glory; and withal to put on record what were their grounds for feud'.

Second in importance only to Herodotus was Thucydides (456—396 B. C.) a son of Clorus, an Athenian. He was a junior contemporary of Herodotus whose public readings of his own history were heard by a number of young men in Athens of whom Thucydides was one. Thucydides was wealthy and well-connected. He was distantly related to Miltiades, the victor of Marathon and Cimon, the conqueror of the Persians in the Battle of Eurymedon. Hence there is little wonder he chose the Civil War as the theme for his history. Though he was influenced by Herodotus the influence was perhaps restricted to the excitement of the sense of history in him. But in almost every other respect the two great historians differed from each other and have stood for very different styles of historiography.

His contribution to historiography was the History of the Peloponnesian War (431—404 B. C.) The author was a contemporary of the events he so vividly portrayed. He participated in it and he wrote on things, men and events of which he had personal knowledge. The Peloponnesian War marked a transition from dominance to decline in the annals of Athens. He was moved, as a witness to this transition, to record the struggle between Sparta and Athens, which brought the glory of the Periclean Age to a close.

His History comprises eight books. It gives the immediate and prime causes of the war and the author's idea of History. He deals with momentous events like the Theban attack on Plataea, the plague at Athens, the funeral speech of Pericles and his death and the

naval victories of the Athenians under Phormio, the revolt of Mytilene, the surrender of Plataea, the sedition in Corcyra, the Athenian expedition to Sicily, the Spartan peace proposals and their rejection by the Athenians, the exploits of Brasidas, the Battle of Delium, the peace of Nicias, the role of Alcibiades, the Sicilian expedition. The eighth book is less polished and finished than the rest and ends abruptly, in the middle of a campaign, 411 B. C.

He was more scientific than Herodotus in his treatment of the subject; and more explicit in the statement of his philosophy of History than his illustrious predecessor. He cuts out myths and scornfully rejects incredible hearsay and the irrational. Possibly for that reason he is not as eminently readable as Herodotus. He is not the invariable refuge of the lovers of the human tale that Herodotus was. The very appellation 'scientific' seems to apply aptly to Thucydides and not necessarily as a compliment. A great feature of his work are the speeches which his characters deliver, especially the funeral oration of Pericles. These are polished and well-rounded speeches, which had evidently been touched up by the expert hand of the historian. These speeches surely contain the substantial core of what were said. But how scientific is a historian who writes out the speeches of his characters? - for he is apt to have put in his own views however unconsciously into them, and this would detract from an objective treatment of a situation or a policy: a historiographical procedure which Thucydides so much advocates. This is the reason why R. G. Collingwood rates Thucydides much lower than Herodotus, and calls him a 'psychological' historian who is more concerned with the discovery and description of motives, causes etc., all of which were ultimately the historian's reaction to his study of the events. Thucydides was an improvement on Herodotus in his sense of chronology. But Herodotus scores heavily as a total historian. He had however an advantage in having chosen a

was four years old when the second invasion under Xerxes occurred. So he grew in an atmosphere surcharged with Graeco-Persian conflicts. He travelled widely and collected data on a variety of subjects from numerous persons and visited many places. Athens was his second home. He wrote his History which in nine parts narrates mainly the Graeco-Persian conflicts but incidentally is an encyclopedia on socio-historical themes of ancient times. The division of his work into nine parts was the work of later editors. The work is a finished product of a mature mind well-equipped with diligently collected and carefully sifted information both instructive and entertaining and naturally endowed with a capacity to clothe his material in a very attractive literary garb. For entertainment value his work has perhaps not yet been surpassed.

His work is divided into three divisions: The first, dealing with the rise of Persia and the second the ambitions and failure of Darius, and the third the second Persian attack, i. e., by Xerxes and the ultimate defeat of Persia. Herodotus did not stick strictly to this time-table of events, but went far astray to include whatever he thought was worth telling. Some of the material in his History seems to have been included more for entertainment than for instruction. But this will not mean that Herodotus has no concern for truth. He himself says 'any person who finds such stories credible may adopt the attempt given by the Egyptians; for my part it is my principle throughout the whole of history to record what I have heard said by each of my informants'. Elsewhere he says 'I feel obliged to tell what is told to me. But I do not feel at all obliged to believe it: Let this hold as the governing principle for the whole History'. He leaves the decision to believe or disbelieve these stories to the readers. Some other facts which he did not care to verify or even question, according to some, detract from the value of his work. For instance he speaks of the army of Xerxes being three million

men. But in such cases, he throws the responsibility on his informers. The final impression of his History on the readers' mind is to focus the nature of the Graeco-Persian conflict which resolves itself into a conflict between two cultures or value systems the outcome of which was to decide the fate of human civilization.

Maurice Croiset summarises the significance of his work: 'From everything which he had seen, read and heard he produced by the power of his genius, by his keen sense for beautiful things, by his talent as a story teller and by the charm of his style a truly admirable work in an immense frame; as in a sort of moving panorama he gives his readers a picture of the life of twenty different peoples. How much instruction was offered in this encyclopedic collection wherein the variety of human types, the multiplicity of religions and the history of diverse institutions were so interestingly set forth!'¹ Shotwell described Herodotus as the 'Homer of the Persian wars'; only his epic was written in prose. He was an admirer of Athenian democracy. His true title to fame is that he was the first constructive artist in the field of historical writing and 'was the first writer to imply that the task of the historian is to reconstruct the whole past life of man and was one of the most absorbing story-tellers in the entire course of historical writing'.² These achievements have earned for Herodotus the universally recognized title, 'The Father of history' (*Pitirum Historia*), a title conferred on him by Cicero. It has been wittily remarked that the Father of History had no sons in the field of historiography, for since the time of Thucydides and Polybius other motivations had set in and other styles of writing had become popular. It is also true that till now there has been no historian comparable in all respects to the

1 Hellenic civilization: pp 143. 144.

2 H. E. Barnes: A History of Historical Writing, p. 29.

strictly contemporary event. His basic proposition that it is the historian's duty to discover the truth and to pass its significance to his readers made his task easier and more difficult at the same time. He said in a passage which has become a classical enunciation of scientific historiography as follows: "Most men receive and pass on information in an uncritical spirit. Hence most Athenians are misinformed even concerning comparatively recent events in their own history; and because historical events are legitimate material for poets and others, who are more concerned to adorn and exaggerate than to present them truthfully, they become irretrievably lost to posterity. Therefore no realistic historian who cares for the truth will attempt to describe events of which he does not have first-hand knowledge or reliable informants whose accounts he can check. This has been my principle, though it has not made my task easy. It has produced a work which will give but little pleasure to those who seek mere romance or sensationalism; but if it is of some use to those who wish to have a clear view of the past, and through it a guide to the future, since human nature is a constant factor, I shall be satisfied".³ Thucydides' achievement as a historian has been summarised by Stephen Usher as follows: 'His achievement consists primarily in his reconciliation of the rival claims which were already being made upon history by literature and science: by steering a middle course between the scylla of colourless chronography and the charybdis of sensationalist romanticism, he struck the ideal balance and left his successors with the unenviable task of measuring up to his standard'.⁴ J. B. Bury's estimate of Thucydides is: 'The work of Thucydides marks the longest and the most decisive step that has been ever taken by a single man towards making history what it is today'. This opinion, an unqualified eulogy of Thucydides is in keeping with Bury's

famous dictum that 'History is a science, no less and no more'. Hume said that 'the first page of Thucydides is the beginning of all true history'; perhaps Hecataeus and Herodotus were of no moment to him. Ferdinand-Schevill quotes Thucydides' views about himself; the Greek historian referred to his history as 'not an essay planned to win the applause of the moment but as a possession for all time'.⁵ These opinions and eulogies of Thucydides have to be qualified by the present day view that it is not enough for history to concentrate on military or political events but must extend its interest to include all aspects of man's evolution towards civilization. If this view is correct Herodotus was after all not dethroned by Thucydides.

Xenophon (430–354) another historian of merit, was a disciple of Socrates. His title to fame as a historian rests on his works, the *Anabasis* and the *Hellenika*. His literary ability was very high and he was a master of the art of writing memoirs. His *Anabasis* (march up-country) is the story of how Xenophon marched with a few Greek mercenaries to take service under Cyrus, the Younger, the Persian prince and returned to Greece after disagreement among the adventurers; Cyrus who wanted to seize the throne of Persia from his brother Artaxerxes was however killed in the Battle of Cunaxa and the Greek commander suffered execution. Xenophon then led the remaining band of ten thousand Greek soldiers back home and this retreat is immortalised in his 'Retreat of the Ten Thousand'. The *Anabasis* and the *Katabasis* are in the form almost of a diary of events. The *Cyropaedia* is a political and philosophical romance describing the boyhood and training of Cyrus. In his *Hellenika*, he tried to continue the narrative of the events in Greece from where Thucydides had stopped; i. e., from 411 to 362 B. C.

⁵ Essay on Thucydides in 'Six Historians'.

³ Stephen Usher: *The Historians of Greece and Rome*. p. 28

⁴ Ibid : P. 64

It is a valuable source book for the history of Greece of that period. But H. E. Barnes condemns it as superficial since Xenophon had followed the method and arrangement of Thucydides. But one does not know if Barnes wishes to disparage Xenophon's lack of originality or Thucydides' 'method and arrangement'. A tribute, however reluctant, has been paid by the aforesaid critic to Xenophon: he says, 'It would not be fair, however, to deny the remarkable versatility of Xenophon's literary talents, which were exhibited in memoirs, biographies systematic history, constitutional analysis and economic theory'.

The next great historian of ancient Greece was Polybius (c. 198-117 B. C.) of Megalopolis. Unlike his Greek predecessors, he wrote on the history of Rome but like them in the Greek tongue. In the intervening period between Xenophon and Polybius history in Greece was written by admiring contemporaries and associates of Alexander, the Great: Callisthenes, Nearchus and others. Alexander's exploits gave birth to a new kind of history 'pioneered by Xenophon in his *Cyropaedia*-the historical romance'. Nearchus and others who wrote on Alexander and his campaigns were themselves so much dazzled by his exploits that they could write with no more certitude than historians of later generations. Polybius continued the tradition set by Thucydides of scientific historiography. The main theme of his *History* (written in forty books) was 'the Expansion and constitutional Development of the Roman Empire to 146 B.C.' Like Thucydides, he also maintained that 'a historian must be an eminent man of affairs, preferably a general and a statesman'. He was an impartial historian and he treated the Romans and the Carthaginians, as well as, Greece and Rome equally. In the course of his work he dealt with the Roman political ideals and military methods; he was of the view that Roman greatness was due to their unique genius to adopt a mixed form of government: monarchical aristocratic and democratic. He was expert in sketching

characters like for example, that of Hannibal. He insisted on sound principles of historical methodology and the utility to a historian of a knowledge of geography and topography. He was also interested in the problem of causation. 'He was a relentless foe of rhetoric' and this was a great virtue in him according to some critics. Polybius believed in moral consequences for national behaviour and he approved of Scipio's famous saying that 'after the fall of Carthage, the same doom will eventually be pronounced on the victorious Rome'. 'In a certain sense he approached the modern concept that all events lead up to a definite end: to Polybius, the world domination of Rome'.⁶ Shotwell summarised Polybius, with a rare measure of unintended humour, that 'his discussion of the guiding principles of historical writing are the first and noblest statement of scientific ideals for the historian until the days of Ranke'. But his style is laboured and taxes any reader except an antiquarian. He lacked literary taste, talent and a reading of Polybius must be enough to prove the importance of a readable style to historical writing. Among the Greeks writing serious history in the Greek language, Polybius was the last most important.

Before we pass to Roman historians, we should consider Plutarch of Chaeronea (c. A. D. 50-125) whose 46 *Parallel Lives* have been perennially popular and whose fame as historical biographer has not yet been surpassed. Among the more noted of his biographies are the parallel lives of Theseus and Romulus, Demosthenes and Cicero and Alexander and Caesar.

Arrian (Flavius Arrianus of Nicomedia) (c. A. D. 95-175) wrote the history of Bithynia; a Parthian history; Trajan's Campaigns in the east; a history of Alexander the Great. He wrote the *Indica*, too.

6 Lowith: *Meaning in History*, p. 7

Appian of Alexandria (c. A. D. 116-170) was an imperial civil servant under the Antonine Emperors. He wrote a History of Rome from its foundation down to at least the death of Trajan.

Dio Cassius (c. A. D. 155-235) was a Roman senator, general and provincial governor. He wrote a History of Rome in 80 books from the foundation of the city to his own times. Of his work books 36-50 alone survive.

Ammianus Marcellinus (c. A. D. 330-401) was perhaps the last of the great Greek historians. Though a Greek he wrote in Latin. He came from Antioch and served in the army in Mesopotamia. He fought on the German frontier and against the Persians. His great historical work related to the Roman Empire. Like Herodotus he had travelled widely and was quite qualified for the immense work he had undertaken. He wrote his history in 31 books of which 1-13 are not extant. Gibbon used this history and was of opinion that Ammianus was an accurate and faithful guide. He has been criticized as being partial to his military chief Ursicinus. To him Julian, the Apostate was a hero. But Ammianus neither forgot nor forgave his hero's faults. He carried the History of the Eastern Roman Empire down to A. D. 378. Though he did not use exhaustively his predecessors' work, the mine of valuable information he gives is unsurpassed.

Among the Roman historians the first considerable figure was Julius Caesar (100⁷-44 B. C.), the leader of all Romans in point of ability, unique as an orator, writer, diplomat, statesman and warrior. The impress of his personality is evident in his work. His Gallic War is among the most illustrious contemporary accounts by participants in great events. He wrote on the great

war he fought and with which he was personally and intimately connected not merely as an observer or marginal participant as in the case of Thucydides and Polybius but as designer and commander. His theme was the Gallic War which was as important as dealt with by Polybius or Sallust and he wrote a style which is considered possibly the best in Latin composition. But he narrates some events in his notes but avoids comments, characterization or analysis of motives. His Gallic War gained universal commendation so that other writers found they had lost rather than gained a field for their talents. Cicero said 'While Caesar wanted to provide potential historians with a readily available source of material though he did a favour to fools he scared away sensible men from writing.'⁸ Caesar did not share Cicero's support of the Isocratean school of history that bald unadorned narration was not suitable for history, a view which greatly influenced the Roman school of historiography. But Caesar while reverting to the tradition of Greek historians used to advantage his mastery of Latin rhetoric in his composition. His fame as a historian rests upon the seven books of Commentaries on the Gallic War and the three books of Commentaries on the Civil War. It seems his Commentaries were written over a period of time for there is an evolution of style in the narrative. Mommsen says that Caesar's Commentaries were 'the democratic general's report to the people'. They have even been compared to 'coherently ordered and edited military despatches.' The Gallic War has for its subject matter 'the conquest and to a large extent the pacification in the short space of the eight years of one of Rome's most important provinces'. In this case a great theme produced great writing.⁹ Caesar occasionally digressed from his main theme; for example, the geography of Gaul and Britain, description of ships, bridges and defences, German customs and habits etc. He keeps himself and his

⁸ Brutus: 75, 262.

⁹ T. A. Dorey: Caesar: *The Gallic War*, p. 71

⁷ 102 B. C. according to Mommsen.

generals in the background, and concentrates on events thereby escaping the charge of self-glorification. 'The Gallic War is a history with a limited scope confined to a certain geographical area and a certain span of years. It deals in full with all relevant happenings within that restricted scope.'¹⁰ 'Caesar had strong political reasons, say in 50 B. C. for publishing an account of his Gallic campaigns which would win him support; and again, in 47 B. C. it was important for him to show how his vanquished enemies had brought an unnecessary war on the Republic'¹¹

Cato the Elder wrote the *Origines* in seven books; it was a History of Rome, the first in Latin prose from its foundation to his own times. He wrote about all Italy.

Cicero (106—43 B. C.) who was a contemporary of Caesar made no contribution to historical literature, but commented learnedly on matters pertaining to historical writings. He set out some basic rules for writing history: 1. The historian must never say what is false; 2. he must never suppress the truth; 3. he should never be partial and never entertain any hatred. These principles indicate canons of moral attitudes but do not touch upon the need for critical judgment, practical knowledge or narrative skill. Cicero also said that a historian must not only describe events but explain them and comment on them. Cicero wrote down in the form of notes (i. e., in the form of commentaries, but in a connected way) the events of the year of his consulship. Though a master of rhetoric, Cicero did not possess the technical skill of a historian; in this respect Caesar was immeasurably his superior.

The last great historian of the Republic was Sallust (Gaius Sallustius Crispus) (86—34 B. C.). He was born at Amiternum (near modern Aquila) in the Sabine

country, we do not know much about his personal life. After 52 B. C. he became politically active and was a tribune of the Plebs in opposition to Cicero. His interest alternated between literary and political. Sallust says he decided to become a historian, since he did not want to waste his leisure after his retirement from politics. He says that he started writing history since he wished to provide an impartial account of Roman history. His chief work a History of Rome from 78 to 67 B. C. is lost but his Conspiracy to Catiline and the Jugurthine War survive.¹² G. M. Paul accuses Sallust of cynicism and pessimism regarding the future of the Roman State. But it is quite possible that both in his Catiline and in the Jugurthine War he is just stating facts and is not cynical. Perhaps Rome was really in a condition of decadence which Sallust describes. Sallust is accused of regarding his own experiences as symptomatic of the political malaise of late Republican Rome. The *Bellum Jugurthinum* goes back to the events of the second century B. C., and his censoriousness fastens on the chief feature of Rome's political decay: the inefficiency of senatorial government. Sallust, like Thucydides, adopts the device of inserting speeches in the narrative and for that reason has been criticized by critics from Pompeius to Trogus downwards. 'The chief characteristics of Sallust's style are brevity bordering on obscurity and the use of Greek archaisms. He is rated low as a historian since he is careless in chronological details. He is also accused of hiring secretaries to do his historical research. But one ought to be grateful to him for presenting what G. M. Paul calls the 'anti-Establishment' view of late Republican life in Rome.

Livy (59 B.C.—A. D. 17)—Titus Livius—was born at Padua. He was a teacher and is called 'one of the greatest storytellers of all time; and he wrote the History of Rome from its foundation to his own times; he

¹⁰ Ibid; p. 84.

¹¹ Stephen Usher: *The Historians of Greece and Rome*, p. 138

¹² T. A. Dorey (ed): *Latin Historians* p. 89 ff.

called his work *Ab urbe condita libri*. 'Biographically Livy is the most obscure of the great historians. He is however known to have been born in Padua; he was a contemporary of Augustus. He wrote much all the time and that for a long period of time. He narrated the 770 years of Roman history in 142 books. Parts of his work relating to his contemporary times is lost but whatever has survived is enough to prove his eminence as a historian. Livy wrote very well and his style is admirable. H. E. Barnes says that Livy wrote to glorify Rome, to flatter national vanity, and to inspire in Roman youth patriotic ardour and affection.'¹³ This view is not universally held now. No doubt it was he who started the story about the golden age of Augustus but within the framework of the sources available to him, he did very well. He believed implicitly in the myths of Rome mentioned by earlier authorities; but the comprehensiveness of his History is marvellous. He gives an account of the Roman colonies, besides mentioning the wars, the treaties and other diplomatic and political activities of the Roman state. Livy wished to carry out—and largely succeeded in doing so—a vast historiographical project not inferior to that of the best and he scored everywhere except in critical evaluation. 'It is unhappily too often true of historians that accuracy is a synonym for dullness' and Livy deserves praise for refusing to be a bore while he took as much care of his facts as he could.

Quintus Curtius Rufus wrote the *History of Alexander the great* in 10 volumes. Elder Pliny's historical works are lost. He wrote on the *German Wars* in 30 books; his *History* in 31 books.

Tacitus (Publius Cornelius Tacitus) (c. A. D. 55—120) was the last great Roman historian. Pliny, the

younger, a close associate of his, gives us more particulars about his early life like, e. g., his marrying (A. D. 77) the daughter of Julius Agricola, the famous governor of Britain. He was a public man of some importance in Rome. He was quaestor, tribune (or aedile), priest and proconsul in turn; in 97 he became consul; and with the assistance of Pliny, the younger, he successfully prosecuted Marius Priscus a provincial governor for extortion. The last office he is known to have held was the proconsulship in Asia in 112—113. He spent the evening of his life in writing his historical works.

Tacitus wrote a *Life of Agricola* which is an example of what a biography should be. His dialogue on *Orators* bears witness to his early literary interests. His *Germania* gives an account of Germany and the institutions, beliefs and customs of the Germans as a whole, and was an excursion into the field of descriptive sociology. His *Histories* deal with the period from the death of Nero (68) to that of Domitian (96); then he wrote the *Annals* from the reign of Augustus to the point where the *Histories* begin. His *Histories* are more detailed in their narrative than the *Annals* since the former deal with contemporary events: He was one of the best historians Rome produced, since in many passages of his works we discover, though not the workmanship of a scientific historian, the true instincts of a historical mind. He was an admirer of Republican institutions and a typical Roman aristocrat, but he knew that the Republic brought about its own end. His position as an accurate and objective recorder is midway between Polybius and Livy. 'With Tacitus we feel less sure as to the impartiality of his statements, though he was pre-eminent among Roman historians in literary power'.¹⁴ In the delineation of character, there was none to excel him. His portrait of Tiberius is unparalleled in ancient historical writing; and this was certainly more important than the scrupulous collection of bits of insignificant data

¹⁴ G. M. Trevelyan : *Autobiography*

scientifically. He was a master of rhetoric and employed dictional devices to produce particular effects. 'Readers of Latin will note how Tacitus had underlined the contrast (between the Emperor Vitellius Germanicus and his Roman troops) with short syllables, historic infinities and clipped clauses in his description of the mood of the army, while that of Vitellius is rendered in the imperfect tense, larger clauses and a greater frequency of long syllables, in order to portray inertia'.¹⁵ It would be appropriate to end an account of Tacitus with a passage from him which shows clearly his historical instinct and bearings. "The Greeks left licence unpunished as well as freedom—or at most, words were countered by words. But among us, too there has always been complete, unmeasured liberty to speak about those whom death has placed beyond hatred or partiality. Cassius and Brutus are not in arms at Philippi now. I am not on the platform inciting the people to civil war. They died seventy years ago! They are known by their statues—even the conqueror did not remove them. And they have their places in the historian's pages. Posterity gives every one his due honour...things unnoticed are forgotten; resentment confers status upon them".

Besides Tacitus there were a few minor historians of some repute in Rome. Seutonius Tanquillus (A. D. 75-160) wrote the *lives of the Caesars* covering the period from Augustus to the Flavians. These lives bristle with episodes and personal descriptions mixed with the spice of local scandal and diffuse gossip. Lucretius (95-55) B. C.), the Latin poet, in his *De Rerum Natura* gave an assessment of universal evolution and Shotwell says that it is 'perhaps the most marvellous performance in all antique literature'.

This brings us to the close of Graeco-Roman historiography. From then till the Age of Rationalism began

15 Stephan Usher: *The Historians of Greece and Rome*, p. 229.

in the the 17th Century, there was a gap of at least 10 centuries. It was a long period marked during the earlier half by Christian theological historiography and the later half by a mixed fare of historiography characterised by faith, scepticism, humanism, a varied interest in theology following the Reformation and travellogues and tales of distant lands. This progress in uneven stages of medieval historiography is briefly traced in the chapter on 'History of historical writing'. Here we shall be content with mentioning the major historians of the medieval period.

Gregory, Bishop of Tours (538-594) wrote the *History of the Franks*. He was contemporary with the last fifty years of his narrative. He wrote simple Latin which was understood by even the average educated person. His work is important for its realization of the central position which the Church was coming to occupy in Frankish affairs. 'In short, Gregory provided the modern reader with the best history of the transition from the Roman to the Medieval culture, and one reason for his success lay in the fact that he was himself so perfect a personal reflection of this transitional age'.¹⁶ Isidore of Seville, a Spanish bishop wrote a *History of the kings of the Visigoths and Vandals* which was inferior to the *History of the Franks* by Gregory of Tours. Einhard (c. 770-840) was a friend and an official of Charlemagne; and he wrote the *Life of Charlemagne* which is a most distinguished historical biography.

Among French medieval historians Vincent of Beauvais (1199-1264) wrote the *Speculum Historiale* divided into 31 books and 3793 chapters. It drew its material from several medieval chroniclers; thus, though not very original it was a skilfully compiled account of all of human history from the Creation to St. Louis. Jean Froissart (c. 1337-1410) was a poet as well as a chronicler;

16 H. E. Barnes: *A History of Historical writing*, p. 61.

the medieval religious influence and made it truly secular. He wrote the *History of Florence* in eight books. He was quite familiar with Polybius and Livy, and the former influenced his historical method greatly. 'It is doubtful if any previous historian ... had exhibited such power in grasping the nature of historical causation in its political aspects or in presenting a clear picture of the process of political development.'²⁰ F. Schevill, on the other hand frankly states that 'Machiavelli was not a historian'. It will suffice to examine his best known work of this kind, his *History of Florence* to justify this unqualified rejection.' He was fully acquainted with the historical background of political developments in Italy particularly. He was devoted to the ideal of united Italy; and he was not sympathetic to the Papacy for he considered it an obstacle to Italian unity. His greatest achievement was to have substituted a frankly materialistic theory of causation to the old religious supernaturalism.

His political and historical philosophies are reflected in his *The Prince*. *The Prince* may be called a work on the grammar of power and what he wrote was coldly rational (as distinct from the warmly sentimental) and that not only of the 16th century but for all time. All those who have exercised power freed from non-materialistic considerations had gone to school to Machiavelli. In the world of political thought he achieved what Bacon did for the theory of science and the 17th century scientists for the world of nature. Hegel, who followed Machiavelli in his cult of the state said that 'the course of world history stands outside of virtue, blame and justice'. It is not as if Machiavelli invented secularism and materialism; he merely discovered them. Power politics existed before Machiavelli even as gravitational force existed before Newton. He merely recognized it and put it to scientific and rational study. He was

a realist who exposed the nature of power and power holders. He said that ends are more relevant than means in the pursuit of any policy or goal; he called upon those who desire to reap the benefits of power to note the distinction between what is desirable and what is possible. The modern secular state everywhere has graduated in the Machiavellian school and it is no longer fashionable to equate Machiavelli with chicanery, fraud and cunning. His historical works however were not as important as his single slim book *The Prince*.

Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), a contemporary of Machiavelli also wrote a *History of Florence* which is a more truly historical work. He avoided the philosophical comments and digressions so frequent in Machiavelli but concentrated on 'a vigorous and incisive narrative of events and a candid criticism of men and policies'. He wrote with rare impartiality. A dry and somewhat cynical humour marks his observation as he says that 'no reproach attached to Ferdinand of Aragon save his lack of generosity and faithlessness to his word.' Paying high tribute to this work Fueter says 'with the *Florentine History* modern analytical historiography and political ratiocination in history began'.²¹ This work however was published only in 1859. He wrote a *History of Italy* which was the first general history of Italy written. Guicciardini's work reached the highest level of historiography before the era of Camden and Clarendon.

Ranke too severely criticized Machiavelli and Guicciardini for their dependence on secondary sources, tendency to plagiarism and obvious lack of concern for accuracy of fact. But the very insistence and on expectation of the 19th century historiographical virtues in 16th century pioneers was a defect in the critical apparatus of Ranke.

21 Eduard Fueter: *Historie De L' historiographic Moderne* p. 131

his *Chronicles of France, Flanders, England, Scotland and Spain* was typical episodic history and it has been deservedly popular. Masson observes that "in point of style and brilliant colouring Shakespeare alone can be placed on the same line with Froissart."¹⁷ His work is the best contemporary account of the Hundred Years War. Philippe de Commines (1445–1509) was an able French historian whose *Memoirs* reflect a transition to modern historical writing. The work covered the periods 1464–1483 and 1488–1490. It is the best source material for the reigns of Louis XI and Charles VIII. Hallam said of him: "He is the first modern writer who in any degree has displayed sagacity in reasoning on the characters of men and the consequences of their actions, and who has been able to generalize his observation by comparison or reflection."

Albertinus Mussatus (1261–1330) of Italy wrote the *Historia Augusta* which describes the struggle between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. He wrote a fairly objective account of the struggle. Giovanni Villani was the greatest Italian historian of the Middle Ages. He wrote the *Florentine Chronicle* and it dealt with the entire history of Florence from very early times to 1346. Ferdinand Schevill remarks that Villani had a feeling for factual reality which no medieval writer before his time possessed in the same degree... his immense achievement is the accurate description of the town under his eyes, history of its trade, its industry, its social classes, its religious customs etc.¹⁸ Lambert of Hersfeld of the 11th century, a Benedictine monk wrote the *Annals* which were the most important contribution to the history of the relations of Germany and the Papacy. His work was not a mere chronicle; it took on the form of real history, especially for the later periods. With the available technique of criticism and the paucity of

17 G. Masson: *Early Chronicler of Europe; France*. p. 176

18 F. Schevill: *A History Florence*. p. XIV

source material and his own particular bias in favour of the Papacy, he did as well as he could.¹⁹ It is possible, in the light of modern theories of criticism to adversely criticise Lambert, as Ranke did.

Bishop Otto of Freising (c. 1114–1158) uncle of the Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa) wrote his *Chronicle* (i.e., *Book of Two Cities*) and his *Deeds of the Emperor Frederick I*. Inheriting the historical method of Orosius and the historical philosophy of St. Augustine, he based his *Chronicle* on the antithesis of the City of God and the City of the Devil. It was an attempt to force 'the whole story of humanity into a foreordained system of causes and effects'. But it must be said to his credit that he systematically tried to explain the present with reference to the past. His *Deeds of the Emperor Frederick* is valuable as contemporary source material for the history of the 12th century. He wrote well in spite of an occasionally affected style. Franz von Wegele says of Otto. 'whatever one may think of his philosophy, he was the only medieval German historian who was able to grasp in a philosophical manner the march of world history and who sought to give its progress a judicious exposition. And he occupies no less conspicuous a position as a narrator of the history of his times'.

With Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) we enter the modern world, in more than one sense. He was the son of a Florentine judge. At the age of 25, he took up a position in a government office. The fall of the Republic and restoration of the Medici led to his imprisonment and possibly torture. When Cardinal Medici became pope Leo X, his release became possible. He then retired to his villa where he died on 21. 6. 1527.

He belonged to the Age of Humanism, an early phase of the Renaissance. He liberated politics from

19 Lambert was responsible for the story of the alleged Penitence at Canossa by Henry IV before Gregory VIII.

The Humanist Age produced some good historical biographies and a few autobiographies useful for writing the history of those times. Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) wrote the *Life of Dante* which is helpful for an understanding of Dante as a literary artist. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) was perhaps the greatest human biographer and he was the author of the *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1568). He was himself a painter and architect and he travelled widely and studied great pictures and monuments to help him prepare the *Lives*. 'The work as a whole was the first important and comprehensive history of art of which we have any record in the whole history of historical literature'.²² Among German Humanist historians Samuel Pufendorf (1632-94) must be mentioned as the leading. He wrote a *History of Sweden*, a *History of Charles Gustavus X*, a *History of Frederick William the Great Elector* and *An Introduction to the History of the Leading Powers and States of Europe*. He influenced history from the personal and biographical point of view and his style was lucid and classical. He was a sort of court historian and he projected a picture of unified Imperial Germany for the instruction of the world outside Germany. Pufendorf observed with some truth that Pufendorf wrote 'for the empire rather than about it'.

Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) was a distinguished Dutch humanist historian who wrote on the Goths, Vandals and Lombards; he wrote also on the *History of Belgium and Poland*. He took a secular view of history and considered religious wars as a hindrance to the national development of the Netherlands. Grotius, however, was eminent as the father of International Law which was his main forte.

Grotius naturally reminds one of Jean Bodin (1530-1596) who was also an early thinker on international

law. He wrote a *Method for easily understanding History*. It was the first elaborate work on historical method with special reference to interpretation. He laid great stress on the influence of geography on history and thus anticipated Montesquieu and Buckle. He divided man's historical development into three stages: 1. that of the Oriental peoples, 2. the Mediterranean nations, and 3. the ascendancy of the northern Europeans. This reminds one of Hegel's three epochs, i.e. the Oriental, the Graeco-Roman and the modern or Germanic.

The Duke of Saint-Simon (1675-1755)²³ wrote a brilliant account of France under the Bourbons. In spite of minor factual errors easily to be found in any work of history, his work was one of the most entertaining historical compositions ever written. Gooch says it was 'hypnotic' in its influence.

This brought the Humanist period to an end. This was followed by the Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, during which the little liberation which humanists had attempted from the influence of religion was lost and religion started engaging the attention of scholars once again; so that after the immediate effects of the Reformation were over, foundation for the modern historiography had to be laid again. Still the Reformation period saw a kind of historiography which is worth recording.

Soon after the Reformation, Robert Barnes (1495-1450), an English author who had taken refuge in Germany wrote the *Lives of the Popes of Rome* in which he tried to show that the Popes were responsible for the disasters of the Middle Ages; this was just Orosius' technique, 'i.e. when he wrote against the pagans' being directed against the Catholic Church, *The Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs* by John

23 To be distinguished from the Count Claude Henri de Saint-Simon

Foxe (1516-1587) listed the acts of persecution suffered by the Protestants beginning with wycliffe. John Knox's *History of the Reformation of Religion within the realm of Scotland* was an excellent work both for its style and its arguments. The *Magdeburg Centuries* edited by Flacius (Matthias Vlacich Illyricus) was a protestant work of defence against catholicism. All the facts which could be gathered to be used against the Roman Church were collected and used for the sole purpose of discrediting the Church. John Sleidanus' *Commentaries on political and Religious Conditions in the Reign of the Emperor Charler V* is notable for its being the 'first primarily political analysis of the Reformation Movement;' to some extent it anticipates the present view of the Reformation, namely that 'it looked more distinctly towards the political adjustments of the Peace of Augsburg and the Treaty of Westphalia than towards the triumph of justification by Faith alone.'²⁴ Heinrich Bullinger (1504-75) wrote a *History of the Reformation* dealing with the early years of the movement. Though he was a protagonist of the Protestants, he wrote objectively of the movement.

While the above mentioned writers wrote to support Protestantism of one form or another, Jacques Benigne Bossuet (1627-1704) wrote his *History of the Differences among Protestant Churches* in favour of the Catholic Church. He endeavoured to show how division of the Church was not going to benefit anyone but would only weaken religion as such and ultimately lead to atheism. Bossuet's fame more securely rests on his *Discourse on Universal History*. In this work he dealt with universal history in three parts: 1. History of man from Creation to Charlemagne, 2. God's direction of religious movements, and 3. rise and fall of kingdoms also directed by God. The *Discourse on universal History* was the last great attempt to provide a divine and theological

interpretation of universal history. This system of writing came to an end when Voltaire wrote his *Essay on the Manners and spirit of the Nation* in the middle of the 18th century.

With the passing away of the 17th century, the effects of the geographical discoveries, added to the new scientific ones, created an intellectual climate in Europe which discredited the theological approach to history and heralded the rationalist school of historiography of which Voltaire was the accredited chief. The extensive travels of adventurers like Marco Polo of the 13th century resulting in his famous *Travels* let the Medieval Europeans know much truth about the Orient; and after Columbus' discovery of the New World, appeared to instruct the Old World about the New. Superstitions regarding space, not only cosmic but earthly disappeared thanks to Kepler and Newton. The prestige of science swept away theological cobwebs from the still wavering human mind and introduced the rationalist tradition of which Voltaire was the high priest.

Before we proceed to consider Voltaire, it would be profitable to know a few other historians who preceded him.

Rene Descarte, the French philosopher, in his *Discourse of Method* (1637) questioned the validity of any historical effort. He argued that it was impossible to capture the past with any degree of certitude; '...These narratives tell of things which cannot have happened as if they had really taken place, and thus invite us to attempt what is beyond our powers or to hope for what is beyond fate. And even histories, true though they be, and neither exaggerating nor altering the values of things, omit circumstances of a meaner and less dignified kind in order to become more worthy of a reader's attention; hence the things which they describe never happened

24 H. E. Barnes: *A History of Historical Writing* p. 124.

exactly as they describe them and men who try to model their own acts upon these are prone to the madness of romantic paladins and meditate hyperbolic deeds. History therefore, according to Descartes, lacks the means to accomplish its ends, the presentation of events *exactly* as they occurred'. So he preferred a mechanistic explanation of the evolution of man.

Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744), the Italian jurist made significant contribution to the theory of history. He was a Neapolitan. In 1699 he became professor of rhetoric at the University of Naples. He was influenced by Plato, Tacitus, Bacon and Grotius; he wrote the *Scienza Nuova* (New Science) in 1725. The obscurity of exposition made him unfamiliar even to scholars till recent times. He criticized Descartes when he said it was wrong to 'subject everything to the method of Geometry' and that everything must have an appropriate method. He is usually associated with the cyclical theory of history which holds that societies pass through certain recognizable stages inevitably; but it is really a spiral theory. He distinguishes between knowledge of physical science and the knowledge of history. To him the physical world is understood only by God who made it, while History can be understood by man who has much to do with its creation. So historical enquiry to him differs from investigation in other branches of knowledge. According to him men vary from time to time and place to place and so to imagine that history is produced by human minds identical to ours and therefore intelligible to us is wrong. Hence human nature is recognized through history and the contrary is not true that history can be constructed by the comprehension of the human mind. Even men's approach to problems and assumptions underlying it vary. Vico thinks that from myths and traditions to modern scientific analysis there is a definite historical development. Primitive societies can be compared to children whose minds work in terms of myths and fables. But the

modern mind has to interpret the past in terms of such a mind.

Vico struck a fundamental chord when he said that historical methodology was essentially different from the scientific. Vico does speak about providence. But his providence is not an external force directing the course of historical evidence in a transcendental sense: but merely the spirit embodied in the direction manifesting itself in the history of nations. The progress from the imaginative to the rational, from force to justice and from privilege to law is common to all nations and this commonness is related to Vico's providence.

Montesquieu (1689—1755) was a French philosophical historian. His main historical work was the *Causes of the Greatness and the Decadence of the Romans*. It ably interpreted the fact that Roman imperial decline was caused by its excessive territorial expansion which taxed its economy too much. He was ever, more of a political philosopher and a sociologist than a historian. But along with other Enlightenment thinkers, he laid the foundations for a historiography divorced from theology. He was an admirer of English political institution and he thought that lack of such institutions in France was responsible for the miseries of that land. He pleaded for a constitutional monarchy and separation of powers in the political constitution. This way he was one of the basic causes for the intellectual unrest which made the French Revolution possible.

The founder of the Rationalist school of historians was Francis Arouet, popularly known as Voltaire (1697-1778). The Rationalist school believed in science and reason and generally discredited the Middle Ages, when according to them civilization was suspended. Like Montesquieu, Voltaire also admired the contemporary English civilization and he was a fearless critic whose

biting satire and keen wit chose for their special victim the established Roman Church. He was absolutely free from cant and never felt any need to respect any institution out of a mere reverence for the *status quo*. He was greatly admired by Frederick the Great of Prussia in whose court he stayed for sometime. He was indirectly responsible for converting Gibbon to the views of the Enlightenment. He was not a mere historian. His interests were many and achievement immense. He was an essayist, novelist, critic, historian. A life of Charles XII of Sweden was his earliest attempt at historiography. It was excellent as a piece of literature; it was fit to inaugurate the Enlightenment era, though his later works were greater. 'Brevity, precision, lucidity characterise his writings. And the result is that the person of Charles XII stands out from the text as if he had been etched on steel' says a critic. Voltaire's the Age of Louis XIV is the most polished of his works. It has been called 'the first modern historical work.' The civilization of France and its greatest king are described adequately and satisfactorily. He was fair to Louis XIV whose defects he deprecates and whose virtues he praises. His *Essay on the Manners and Spirit of the Nations* was a sort of universal, cultural history. It was the real foundation of the history of civilization in the modern sense. Voltaire not only sired the Age of Enlightenment but gave currency to the expression 'Philosophy of History'. The era of Enlightenment in historiography which began with Voltaire soon spread like a Gospel; and it produced such eminent historians like David Hume, William Robertson and Edward Gibbon.

Rousseau, among the intellectualist trio who exposed the hollowness of the *ancien regime* was the most colourful both in his ideas and in his exposition and his *Social contract* is a famed classic. He was a combination of an intellectualist who shared the views of the Enlightenment in so far as he condemned a theological view of history and had no sympathy with the pretensions of the Church

or the claims of the Nobles and stood also at the threshold of Romanticism since he was a firm believer in the noble savage and his views on pre-contract Man were nothing if not romantic. He was a deadly enemy of despotism. He himself wrote little directly by way of history but his thoughts and writings influenced thinkers in many countries.

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1806) was a German disciple of Rousseau. He wrote the History of the Rebellion of the Netherlands against the Spanish Rule, and the History of the Thirty Years War. Schiller was essentially a dramatist and a poet and when these faculties were harnessed to a rightly conceived and well-executed history, the result was that in the History of the Dutch 'he found an epic theme of deliverance' from oppression, while in the description of the Thirty Years' War he saw in Gustavus Adolphus and Wallenstein the central figures of a great historical drama.²⁵ In Schiller the transition from the Age of Enlightenment to that of Romanticism becomes evident.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the greatest German philosopher was born at Konigsberg. He was basically a student of theology, philosophy and Mathematics. He had deep knowledge in a variety of disparate subjects ranging from physics to metaphysics. In his famous analysis of knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason* he was concerned more with scientific and mathematical knowledge. He wrote a small pamphlet in 1784 on the idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan point of view. Therein he suggests a teleological principle according to which historical movements can be justified. Even Hegel was later on influenced by this idea. According to Kant, there are certain instincts in man which make him create and submit to social institutions. He felt that 'the greatest practical problem for the human race to the solution of which it is compelled by nature is the establishment of a

25 H. E. Barnes: *A History of Historical Writing*, p. 168.

civil society universally administering right according to law.'

Johan Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) was one of the founders of the Philosophy of History. He studied theology and was influenced by Kant in his early life though later on he was engaged in controversies with the great German philosopher. Herder was interested in literature, art, language (comparative philology) religion and historical development. His major work on historical theory was the *Ideen - Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity*. He emphasised the idea of national individuality and maintained that people differ from one another in regard to climatic conditions, blood mixture etc. and particularly national character. He combined in his theory Rousseau's obsession with freedom from authority, Montesquieu's idea of the relation between national character and milieu and the Hegelian notion of evolutionary progress towards freedom. But he was the herald of scientific geography and rational ideas on folk art. He had the Romantic idea that contemplation of the past could lead to perfection in the future. To him civilization unfolds as naturally as a flower; man fulfils himself by reaching the highest stature he is capable of. But the problem is to reconcile the operation of natural laws and man's fulfilment through his own effort.²⁶ Herder was on the border line between Rousseauistic Rationalism and Romanticism. He 'believed the historical process to be the product of the interworkings of external environment and *Geist*, the latter being the dynamic totality of subjective impulses'.²⁷

Turgot (1727-1781) the French Rationalist who wrote the *Discourses on the Historical Progress of the*

26 This reconciliation was to some extent effected by the Karma theory of the Hindus at the metaphysical level where inevitability of Fate and the limited autonomy of man are reconciled.

27 H. E. Barnes: *A History of Historical Thought*, p. 193.

Human Mind suggested that human progress from the superstitious and the theological to the Rational and the scientific formed part of the historical process; and in this way anticipated Aguste Comte's famous three stages of the intellectual progress of mankind; the theological, the metaphysical and the scientific. Gooch says that no one has a better title than Turgot to be considered the father of the philosophy of history. Count Claude Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), an original thinker improved on Turgot's contention and postulated a 'development from theological conjecture to positive knowledge' (which began clearly with Francis Bacon and Descartes). He also believed in the organic theory of history and that the analogy of the growth of the individual was suitable to social development according to him. The social changes which occur from time to time often accompanied by unsettlement of established institutions resembled the growth of the individual marked by changes in the physical and psychological climate.

Antoine Nicolas Condorcet (1743-1794) was born in France. He received a Jesuit education, and studied mathematics and science. He wrote his first work on mathematics at the age of 22. He actively participated in the French Revolution. He worked on a sub-committee of the Committee of Public Safety. He protested against a new Jacobin constitution which the Convention adopted. He had to go into hiding consequent on this and it was then that he started writing his sketch for a 'historical picture of the progress of the human mind. He was arrested and jailed in 1794; the next day he was discovered dead in his cell. It was suspected that he took poison.

Condorcet conceived history as a progress towards high intellectual and artistic attainments which are individualist in nature and directed to goals like universal suffrage, freedom of expression, equality before law, equitable distribution of wealth etc. which are social. To him, certain desirable ultimate values will be reached

by the historical process in the future. He thought that human affairs were controlled by universal laws which could be discovered and this knowledge could be used to forecast the future. He felt there was no limit to 'the perfection of human faculties', but man could fall into error where he would be kept by forces interested in the *status quo*. The historical forces destroy it. It is only that man's perfection becomes possible. He objected to the equation of history with the activities of the great, ignoring the feelings of the masses. These views seem to lead directly to Marx. But still, he did not reach conclusions resembling the communist dogma. On the whole, Condorcet's intellectual sympathies were rather with Voltaire and Turgot.

Goethe (1749–1832), the great German poet was by temperament a pessimist. He wrote on the poverty of history as follows: 'Even if you were able to interpret and investigate all sources, what would you find? Nothing but one great truth which has long been discovered and for whose confirmation one does not need to seek far; the truth, namely, that in all times and in all countries things have been miserable. Men have always been in fear and trouble; they have pained and tortured one another... that which perhaps gave or gives them some degree of attachment to life was and is the fear of death...' Goethe thought of history as the most absurd of all things, a 'web of nonsense for the higher thinker.' In a letter to Schiller (March, 9, 1802) he complained of history's failure to explain Napoleon. Goethe however was not a practising historian or even a historical theorist.

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) was educated in the university of Tübingen where he studied Rousseau and Kant. He taught at the University of Jena between 1801 and 1806. By 1818 he had become professor of philosophy in Berlin and in 1831 he died of cholera.

As a professor lecturing to his students he was a contrast to Lord Acton. 'He is described as sitting crumpled up and with head hanging down...his constant hemming and coughing disturbed the flow of speech; each sentence stood by itself and emerged after an effort disjointed and disorganised.' His writings however have left a greater impress on later thinkers than those of any one else. His Lectures on the Philosophy of History are his only contribution to the philosophy of history. Hegel is famous for his formulation of the dialectical reasoning process. This process assumes that a concept may be said to generate its opposite or contradictory. These two together create a third thing which is essential to both. This third thing generates its opposite and results in a fifth. Thus it goes on. Thus we have the famous thesis, antithesis, and the synthesis of the dialectical process expounded by Hegel. It was Hegel's view that by understanding certain fundamental categories which are interrelated in a self-determining manner the basic structure of the world can be comprehended. These relations were not logical but dialectical.

To Hegel the process of human history is a 'rational' process which means the unfolding of the idea of freedom. Freedom was the essence of the spirit. He shares the Enlightenment view that History is a progressive development towards desirable ends. His historical norm is the Nation. Each nation has its own spirit. The nation motivates and acts and not individual leaders who are but the product of national forces. They are the instrument and to some extent the interpreters of that force. This emphasis on the nation and its spirit later influenced such different philosophers like Marx and Rosenberg.

Jean Charles Leonard Simonde de Sismonde (1773–1842) of Switzerland, was influenced by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau and Gibbon. His History of the

Italian Republics of the Middle Ages praised the spirit of independence of the Italian city-states and showed its importance for their commercial supremacy. To Sismondi, the growth of the Italian communes marked 'the rise of human liberty out of the muck of feudal degradation and tyranny'.²⁸ He wrote also a *History of the French*. It was the first comprehensive *History of France*. Chateaubriand (1768-1848) wrote the historical, political and moral *Essay on Revolutions* from the point of view of the French Revolution. He held no doubt the view that the French Revolution was inevitable, but in that work he was opposed to Christianity. In 1799 there came over him a remarkable change and like Augustine he was converted to Christianity and he wrote his famous *Genius of Christianity*. He wrote a vivid account of early Christianity in his *Martyrs*. He has been called the Father of French Romanticism.

Madame Anne Louise de Stael (1766-1816) was the daughter of Necker, the pre-Revolution French Minister of Finance. She was influenced by Rousseau and she in her turn influenced Carlyle. She wrote the *Literature in its Relation to the Moral and Political Condition of Nations*. She wrote also *The History of Germany* in which her attachment to Christian Romanticism is manifest.

A. Thierry (1795-1856) wrote the *History of the Conquest of England by the Normans* and the narratives of the Merovingian period. He was influenced by Chateaubriand's *Martyrs*. He was an opponent of the Aristocracy and he favoured the Middle Classes and Republicanism. 'He had great powers of constructive historical imagination, an artistic sense and a lucid and attractive style.'²⁹

Jules Michelet (1798-1874) of France can be compared to the English Gibbon. He wrote the famous *History*

of France and it was an eloquent exposition of French history. It is a brilliant piece of literature as well as inspiring history at the same time. It is a remarkable piece of literature, but it is extremely polished and lovely. Michelet had developed a romantic and dramatic attitude to history. He started as a devout Catholic but ultimately became a devotee of science and literature in the first instance and in course of time even anti-clerical sentiments grew in him for he had known with bitterness the Roman Catholic attitude to French democratic demands during the French Revolution. He ardently supported the principles of the Revolution. To him, history was the 'drama of human liberty'. He wrote: 'Augustine Thierry saw in history a narrative, Guizot an analysis; I call mine a resurrection.' His work 'The People' is a good example of romantic nationalism. His *History of France* was an epic in prose in which successive historical scenes are depicted with marvellous word-power. His chapter on Joan of Arc is historical, romantic word-painting of a very high order. But this attitude of warmth towards the religious episodes of the Middle Ages cooled down when he wrote his *History of the French Revolution*. It was 'both a marvellous literary performance and a liberal and anti-clerical polemic'. He praised Danton and supported the aspirations of the French commonalty and treated the Revolution as a triumph over monarchical despotism as well as the privileges of the Church and the Aristocracy. In general, Michelet was a great romanticist endowed with a literary eloquence of a rare order and in that sense was comparable to Thomas Carlyle but he did not share Carlyle's undisguised contempt for the crowd.

The Romantic movement in historiography was represented in Russia by Nicholas Karamazin (1766-1826) who wrote the *History of the Russian State* down to 1611. He laid special stress on the oriental nature of the Russian people and the role of the Eastern Church; he criticized

28 H. E. Barnes: *A History of Historical writing*, pp. 170-171

29 Ibid: p 186

the intellectual tradition of the west and so his work became popular among the critics of the west in Russia.

Johann Gottliet Fichte (1762-1814) was a German philosopher who presnted his view of history in the *Characteristics of the Present Age*. He divorced philosophy from history and spoke of five epochs in human history: 1. The Age of Innocence (operating not on reason but on instinct), 2. The Age of Authority (blind submission of reason to obedience), 3. The Age of Indifference to truth (rejection of reason), 4. the Age of Science and 5. the Age of Art. Fichte was a supporter of the romantic myth of German superiority as a people. While his doctrines led to intense nationalism in Germany, it also cleared the path to cruder manifestations of that nationalism as under Hitler.

Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) wrote the *Philosophy Of History* which became very popular. He said that his 'philosophy of history was to point out the progressive restoration in humanity of the effaced image of God, according to the gradation in the various periods of the world, from the revelation given at the beginning, down to the middle revelation of redemption and love (the coming of Christ) and from then to the final consummation.' He was highly critical of Protestantism.

Francois Laurent (1810-1887), a professor at the University of Ghent, wrote an eighteen volume compilation *Studies on the History of Humanity*. In the last volume of that immense production, he propounds his philosophy of history. His work was universal history. He was a very learned man and knew a lot of natural history but he had a deep-rooted theistic attitude which could see nothing but fatalism even in Rationalist and Enlightenment attitudes. While he was himself developing a philosophy of history which H. E. Barnes calls 'theological

fatalism', he was accusing others of faith in different kinds of fatalism. His own philosophy of history was an extreme theistic version based on the idea that 'History declares the glory of God.' He emphasised the importance of nationalism.

Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) wrote his *History of Germany* in the Nineteenth century which is comparable to the monumental works of Macaulay, Michelet and Froude. It dealt with not only the details of German political history but also the cultural forces at work making up modern Germany.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857), a Frenchman was trained as a mathematician. He was familiar with the Enlightenment thinkers. His first volume on *Cours de Philosophie Positive* was published in 1830; the last and sixth volume came out in 1842. His ideas were spread in England by his friend J. S. Mill. His books, though rather heavy and dull, produced a permanent impress on thinkers who came after him. 'Positivism' means that human knowledge cannot go beyond human experience. So any enquiry has to be restricted to the empirical scientific mode; and the purpose of this enquiry should be to discover the rules governing the relations among phenomena. This led to the coining of the expressive phrase 'social physics' which according to Comte is the ultimate stage in a development passing through the theological, metaphysical and the positive (the scientific). The main objection to Comte is that there is no place in his scheme for theoretical postulates. He was, however, right in saying that social phenomena have to be treated as objective phenomena requiring observation and analysis. We have similarities between the 'social group' of Comte the 'nation' of Hegel and the 'Proletariat' of Marx.³⁰ He was the inventor of the word 'sociology'.

30 It is interesting to note that Hindu thinkers considered the rational the least important and the theological the most important and the metaphysical of intermediate importance.

Comte said that in the finally evolved state the positive alone will survive to the exclusion of the metaphysical and the theological. But he overlooks the possibility of their cooperating in a single realm of thought and belief. Still contemporary sociology owes its existence as a separate discipline to Comte.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) was a German who under the influence of Ranke took interest in history and philosophy. His *Introduction to the Human Studies* and the construction of the historical world in the *Human Studies* are of interest to historiography. He was one of those who spotlighted the essential distinctions between the methodology of the human studies and that of the natural sciences and he was concerned with the problem of determining the quality of historical knowledge. Gardiner summarises Dilthey's beliefs about the nature of historical judgment as follows: 'All physical expressions of mental events or states and the job of the understanding (which is a faculty as well as a process) is to link up any given expression with its appropriate mental expressions: To him 1) 'judgments' are easy of understanding but do not tell anything; 2) 'actions' reveal intentions but not doubts or passions; 3) 'expressions of experience' are the communication of the objective mind. The process of communication itself consists of language, social systems, conceptions and other things capable of objectification. Expressions of experience result in the revelation of pain or pleasure or the creation of literary or musical composition etc. There are two levels of understanding according to him: 1) which deals with elementary data and 2) the higher understanding at which level general theories are formed. To Dilthey belongs the credit of having drawn the attention of practising historians to the problem of what it was that the historical thinking involved and to evaluate its meaning. Dilthey made a very significant statement that 'the objective mind and the power of the individual to interpret it together determine the

world of mind. History rests on the understanding of these two'. He also feels that a special personal gift is necessary for the historian to make it possible for him to relive the events of the past i.e., what is outside one's immediate experience. But this personal gift can be to a large extent acquired by practising a technique of historical understanding which develops with the development of historical consciousness. He says, 'there is a necessary internal connection between criticism and exegesis of written records. Criticism develops to help solve the problems of exegesis by establishing correct readings and of official documents and popular traditions which involves questioning. Of the problem of interpretation which involves mastery of philology, he has the following to say: 'When hermeneutics succeeded in systematising itself, it passed into the historical stage in which it tried to establish general methodological rules which conceived of this creation for all fields. To these rules correspond theories of artistic creation as an activity which was itself subject to rules. In the great period of the beginnings of the historical consciousness in Germany, this methodology of hermeneutics was placed on a new footing by the philosophical idealism of Friedrich Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Boeckh which based its new more profound understanding on the observation of intellectual creations, a technique made possible by Fichte and which Schlegel sought to set up in his outline of the science of criticism. Schleiermacher's bold insight that it is possible to understand an author better than he understands himself is founded on this new observation. This paradox contains a truth which is capable of psychological demonstration.

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) was neither a philosopher nor a historian by profession. In his novel *War and Peace* he makes statements on the nature of historical enquiry which deserve our consideration. To him ideas, movements and forces are more important than heroes and individuals. He rejected the great man theory of historio-

graphy. But he was subjecting himself to valid objection when he expected history to be respected only when it could produce results as tangible as physical science. His views on the compatibility of human freedom with determinism is interesting. Tolstoy says that history gives answers like a deaf man to questions which have never been asked. He thinks that the only question that has been asked is 'what is the power that moves people?' Biographical historians and historians of separate nations think that the will of a Napoleon or an Alexander creates events. But this is satisfactory only if historians are concerned with particular persons or nations. Writers of universal history are confronted with the problem of location of causes outside great men. 'According to Tolstoy', says Patrick Gardiner, 'the historical process is a continuum, made up of infinitely small actions and events.' He says that 'power is the relation of a given person to other individuals. Why war and revolution occur we do not know. We only know that to produce the one or the other people combine in a certain formation in which they all take part and we say that this is so because it is unthinkable otherwise, or in other words people combine in a certain formation in which they all take part and we say that this is so because it is unthinkable otherwise, or in other words that it is a law; even as speaking of the interaction of heat and electricity and of atoms, we cannot say that it is so because it is inconceivable otherwise, because it must be so and that it is a law. Tolstoy wrote at length on freewill and necessity. He said that if there be a single law governing the actions of men freewill cannot exist, for then men's will is subject to that law. If the will of every man were free i. e. if each man could act as he pleased all history would be a series of disconnected events. In this contradiction lies the problem of freewill.' Externally as an object in society man has no freedom. Subjectively man feels free, i. e., in short his will is free, but his capacity to translate his will into action is restricted by the interaction of social forces.

In fact the relation of freewill to free action is that between abstract science and applied technology. Technology would be controlled by the availability of the material; even so action would be controlled by other forces in society. Thus there is a relationship between necessity and freedom of will. This can be demonstrated under three heads, according to Tolstoy: 1. The relation to the external world of the man who commits the deed, 2. his relation to time, 3. his relation to the causes leading to the action.

A penetrating study of Tolstoy's views on history is made by I. Berlin in his *The Hedgehog and the Fox*.

Benedetto Croce (1866—1952), Italian philosopher, critic, editor, political leader is the most important name among modern European historical theorists. He was interested early in history and archaeology. He was the minister of public instruction in the Giolitti cabinet. He was a liberal. After Italy's surrender in the Second World War, he became a member of the committee of National Liberations, continuing the liberal role which he boldly maintained even during the dictatorship of Mussolini.

Croce was an art critic, historical theorist, and a fastidious student of Italian culture. His style like that of Dilthey was obscure and even crude. His historical theory is based upon the idealistic conception of history (*idealism* from *idea*) History for him is the creation of the present, not an account of the past; history is the highest form of philosophy. To him nothing exists except the mind; an historical account will be philosophical because it will be the present interpreting the past.

In an essay written as early as 1893 he said that history resembles art rather than science. The artist

and the historian perceived the unique and the particular. To them individual instances are not to be used for drawing general conclusions and these particular instances cannot be thrown into abstract classifications. To Croce scientific propositions are neither true nor false but merely useful. In the case of historical judgment recognition of the universal and understanding the particular are combined and he says somewhat dogmatically that all true knowledge is historical knowledge. He also distinguishes between history and chronicle. The historian when he functions as one 'lives again in imagination individuals and events'. Thus it is the inwardness of history that becomes a condition for the possibility of historical interpretation. R. G. Collingwood of England takes this idea of the historian reliving the past in his mind and discusses it elaborately in his *Idea of history*. To Croce all history is contemporary history, in the sense that while the historian thinks of the past, that past event is contemporary with the act of thinking. It is this which makes history different from chronicle. Contemporaneity of history is achieved the moment a person takes interest in the event.

Croce objected to historical theories which attempted to portray history as a scheme moving towards a planned goal or as conforming to a causally determined scheme. He called such theories the philosophy of history. According to Croce, facts are brute and mute. A meaning is given to them and they are linked by the historian's philosophy.

Niebuhr (1776–1831) was a Danish historian (who wrote in German) of great repute. Along with Ranke he has been praised as the founder of modern scientific historiography in Germany and who set an example to aspirants to such achievements in other countries. Devotees of Ranke will not easily yield this place of honour to Niebuhr. Barnes while saying that with Ranke 'the foundations of modern historical scholarship were finally

laid'.³¹ argued in the case of Niebuhr that 'no single personality or school can be regarded as having brought into existence the totality of modern historical science.'³² But G. P. Gooch, also a great devotee of Ranke is more forthright in his compliments to Niebuhr. He says: 'the first commanding figure in modern historiography, the scholar who raised history from a subordinate place to the dignity of an independent science, the noble personality in whom the greatest historians of the succeeding generation found their model or their inspiration, was Niebuhr. He was familiar with the techniques of criticism made popular by Wolf in his *Prolegomena to Homer*.

Niebuhr's greatest contribution was his *Roman History*. It combined the best of the modern critical methods with 'the constructive principles of institutional history'. Ranke and Mommsen were influenced by his work.

Niebuhr in his early life had an experience similar to that of J. S. Mill who was made prematurely a scholar by his father; early in life he knew his destiny and declared 'if my name is to live it will be as an historian and publicist, as a classicist and philologist.' The very heavy scholastic responsibilities which followed and continuously engaged him largely accounted for his early demise at the age of fifty five. As Gooch says, 'he had begun to live ten years earlier than other men'. As a teacher he was not impressive and was a contrast to Acton. His *Roman History* was enthusiastically welcomed by such eminent men like Macaulay and Cornwall Lewis. His *Roman History* (even in its second edition) is very heavy and encumbered with notes which ought to be consigned to the foot. But he was a most conscientious historian. He wrote the famous sentence: "In laying down the pen, we must be able to say in the sight of God, 'I have not knowingly nor without, earnest investigation written anything which is not true'".

31 H. E. Barnes: *A History of Historical Writing*, p. 246

32 Ibid: p. 244.

Gooch summarised the reactions of his successors as follows: 'Ranke admitted that Thucydides, Fichte and Niebuhr were his masters; Grote said that it was impossible to pronounce his name without reverence and gratitude; ...In the words of Mommsen, all historians, so far as they were worthy of that name, are his pupils.'

Niebuhr lived at a time when the shadow of Napoleon was falling on Europe rather darkly and the historian emotionally reacted to the situation. He was reminded of the conquest of Greece by Macedon and deprecated both situations. In his treatment of the *History of Rome*, he was not obviously worried so much about personalities as about the institutions and the structure of the state.

Meinecke, an able German historian, is noted for his remarkable studies of political ideas through the centuries. He wrote on European thought since the Middle Ages. 'No German scholar since Dilthey has analysed ideologies with such insight and subtlety.' He fell a victim to Nazi wrath and was dismissed from the chairmanship of the editorial board of the *Historische Zeitschrift* which he had occupied for four decades.

Eduard Meyer (1855-1930) wrote a *History of the Ancient World* written from the sources and with an attitude of mind suited to his task. H. E. Barnes perhaps exaggerates when he says that 'he will probably rank as the foremost scholar that historical writing has produced down to our day;' but there is some degree of truth in it. His volumes on Greece were his masterpiece. He treated Greece as part of the Mediterranean world. 'European History begins on the Aegean' said he. He was an authority on the proto-history of the Greek world.

Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903) 'revolutionised the study and writing of Roman History.' Since Niebuhr wrote on Rome, it was Mommsen's work which alone

was capable of improving on it. He visited Italy and toured that country for inscriptions. The '*Roman History*' (three volumes) which he consequently wrote was about the best that was written either on the Republic or the Empire. What Grote did to Athens, Mommsen did to Rome. 'No part of the *Roman History* possesses such vitality as the tale of Caesar with his enemies, for the historian steps down from the conning tower and leaps into the fray. Pompey, Cicero and Cato are scourged as if they were the living chiefs of a hated political faction, while his idol dominates the stage, radiant, peerless, irresistible, the saviour of society... Caesar was the man of destiny, seeing and doing what was needed, desiring neither to conquer the world nor call himself king.'³³ 'Caesar was the complete and perfect man'. He, however, was not a blind supporter of Caesarism.

Mommsen is famous for his Samnite and Neopolitan inscriptions. He also wrote the *History of Coinage*. His *Roman Public Law* is a masterpiece longer than his *History* and esteemed by its author as his best work; he was as much a lawyer as a historian. The Fifth Volume of the *Roman History*—The History of the Roman Provinces from Augustus to Diocletian published posthumously became at once a classic. His last great work was an edition of the *Theodosian Code*. He was noted for 'accuracy of detail, felicity of expression and audacity of conception.'

Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) is the best known historian since Gibbon and is the greatest historian Germany has produced, not excepting Mommsen. At the university he studied philosophy and theology. By temperament and choice he took to history. He was an ardent student of Scott who amused him for a while but later irritated him by his 'factual inaccuracies.'

33 G. P. Gooch: *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 462.

Ranke was by nature given to detachment from bias. He said that general historians and secondary sources are undependable and so archival and other original documents must be used and indicated. He wrote the History of Germany, England, Prussia, France, histories of war, biographies etc. His complete works comprise 54 volumes. His History of the Popes is the best and best-known of his works. 'It was not only a great achievement of historical research but a work of art'. His works became deservedly popular soon after publication. In 1880 when he was 85 years old he informed his publishers of a new work on Universal History; 'the world was astounded at the audacity of an octogenarian sitting down to such a task.' Seven volumes were issued before he died and the story was brought down to Henry IV. Some of his last dictated words are a justification of Carlyle: 'General tendencies alone do not decide; great personalities are always necessary to make them effective'. Gooch is a great admirer of Ranke and he sums up his services to history as follows: 1) he divorced the study of the past as much as humanly possible from the passions of the present, and tried to describe how things were as *wie es eigentlich gewesen*; 2) he stressed the necessity of founding historical construction on strictly contemporary sources; 3) he founded the science of writing history by the analysis of authorities, contemporary or otherwise, in the light of the author's temperament, affiliations and opportunity of knowledge and by comparison with the testimony of other writers. 'He was the greatest historical writer of modern times ... he remains the master of us all.'³⁴ But Eduard Meyer severely criticized Ranke's Universal History. He said, 'He lacked real preparation for his task. He had only occupied himself with antiquity in his youth, yet felt himself justified in virtually ignoring the scientific work of half a century. Under such circumstances the attempt could only issue in total failure.' His much vaunted objec-

34 Ibid, p. 97

tivity was also somewhat limited in view of his undue enthusiasm for Luther, the Hohenzollerns and Prussia. But he was not unrealistic in his call for objectivity. He said, 'Don't bring up the argument that it is not possible to be objective. It is a known fact ... but try to be more objective.' He strongly disapproved of historical fictions in whatever form they might be brought up, and romantic histories. He would not exempt even Scott from the charge of corrupting history. His view was that 'while it is a gain for fiction - writing, it is a loss for history.' It was Ranke's privilege to have made history an autonomous discipline.

Ranke was a poor teacher and in oral communication he had great deficiencies. But he is famous for the seminar which he organised and conducted in his university and of which the more famous of his students were the product. This system was introduced with great success in the United States and other centres of historical scholarship.

Among the disciples of Ranke Waitz and von Sybel deserve mention. Waitz surpassed even Ranke in his 'thoroughness of exact scholarship.' When help was needed for the editing of the Monumenta (a collection of German historical source material inaugurated by Stein and made largely by Ranke), Ranke recommended Waitz. Waitz wrote the 'German Constitutional History' which appeared in 1844. Sybel (1817-1895), though a devoted pupil of Ranke later held rather pronouncedly unRankean views and tried to reestablish the connection between history and politics. He loved Burke 'who was a permanent influence in my political orientation'. Sybel wrote the Origin of German Kingship. He wrote a brilliant work on the First Crusade; his History of the French Revolution was a tirade against the movement. His magnum opus however was The Foundation of the German Empire by William I; it was highly defensive of Bismarck.

Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) was the son of a postal official; he studied mathematics and the natural sciences. He completed the first draft of the famous 'Decline of the West' in 1914. The first volume appeared in 1917 and the second in 1922. He spoke of destiny vs. causality and culture vs. civilization with a preference to the former in both cases. His work is theoretically muddled and highly pretentious. He said he was indebted to Nietzsche and Goethe. In his work appears the theme of continual emergence and dissolution of different cultures. This is a kind of circular, spiral or wave theory of rise and fall. He has great contempt for the traditional division of history into ancient, medieval and modern. He lists cultures which have already emerged in history namely the Egyptian, the Chinese, the Semitic, the Indian, the Magian, the Appollonian consisting of the Graeco-Roman classical and the western which covers the last 1000 years. He thinks that the history of west European mankind is definitely closed. He feels that the investigation of historical phenomena could not be done by adopting procedures used by natural sciences. Like the idealistic philosophers of history, he thought that history was unique, for the subject matter of history comprises the 'becoming' as contrasted with the 'become'. He says with some truth that historical understanding is innate and creative. A. L. Rowse observes that 'The Decline of the West' is ineradicably tendentious and inspired by the gloomy genius of German *Schadenfreude*. Because the Germans were facing military defeat, western civilization itself is to be regarded as coming to an end. His influence on Toynbee is superficial; Toynbee himself has repudiated the influence.

Spengler has been justifiably called a determinist, for the course of the cultures he discusses and traces is such as to rule out the possibility of a predetermined pattern and goal being altered by human free will. Toynbee's position on the other hand has been a delineation of the past (which has a pattern) and warning mankind

of the future. Spengler's impact on later historians has not been considerable though he has been the subject of much discussion.

Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883), the German jew, considered to be the father of scientific socialism had his early education in Bonn and Berlin but his final ideas on history, economics and philosophy materialised during his studies in London. He gave up the idea of becoming a lawyer like his father but applied himself to history and philosophy. In Paris where he was working as a journalist, he contributed articles on Hegelian philosophy. In 1845 he was expelled from France and he retired to Brussels. There he organized the German Working Men's Association. In 1848 in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, he wrote The Communist Manifesto. In his Philosophy of History Marx laid down the principle that social relationships depend upon modes of production and that the principles and categories thus created merely express historical and transitory situations. The Manifesto of the communist party tried to prove that the Industrial Revolution had made feudal conditions obsolete and concluded with the resounding words: 'The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have the world to win; workers of the world, unite.' In 1859, he spent much time in the British Museum collecting material for his classic that was to come: *Das Kapital* the first volume of which was published in 1857 and the third in 1894 under the editorship of Engels. Marx did not specifically write on historical problems. His general account of the materialist concept of history is found in a few pages of the introduction to his critique of political economy. He says that the historical process is determined by the economic background. To him the history of all societies is the history of class struggles. Marx borrowed the idea of dialectics from Hegel and said that human history falls into phases distinguishable by different forms of social organization and which are

replaced successively by a dialectical process. Marx's influence has been tremendous in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, for his argument was valid upto the then state of industrial society. It is losing its fascination when it has been proved that welfarism is possible by side tracking the class struggles. A major defect in the Marxian thought on the historical process is that when the classless communist society is achieved the dialectical process comes to a dead end. But theoretically it cannot do so. Marx, Spengler and Toynbee are all determinists, though Toynbee denies that he is one and in effect admits that his is a qualified fatalism. Marx by outlining the development of human society from the state of slavery to that of socialism through feudalism and capitalism, emphasises this development as inevitable and automatically becomes a determinist. Spengler however did not give a remedy and Toynbee put his hopes in God's grace. Marx stresses the logic of history which is bound to take all societies to a communist heaven.

Marx rejected the notion that history can be explained with reference to any spiritual process. His labour theory of value makes the autonomy of *Homo economicus* a part of history. All other social ideas according to him are derivable from these premises. Marx was indebted not only to Hegel but thinkers like Feuerbach who said that ideologies can be explained only with reference to their material environment and Saint-Simon who held that economic relationship and class conflicts determined historical change. According to Marx the class struggle at present could be between the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. The overthrow of the former by the latter results in the dictatorship of the Proletariat, which incidentally Marx approves of.

Economic interpretation of history is different from providing economic causes for particular events. It is only the suggestion of the dominance of the economic factors

over others. He does not mean that man can live by bread alone. He only means that man cannot live without bread. Marx took from Hegel two ideas: 1. the dialectic and 2. the organic relationship of social life. Marx twisted both these ideas to suit his own purposes. But he cannot be proved or disproved without reference to historical realities. As Walsh says, 'the proof of the Marxist pudding is in the eating and it is not philosophers whom Marx invites to sample his dish.'³⁵

It must be remembered that Marx developed his theory in opposition to Hegelian idealism. To him 'men make their own history; but they make it not of their own accord or under self-chosen conditions but under given and transmitted conditions. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a mountain on the brain of the living.' The result is as A. L. Rowse points out 'man can determine superficially in history but the fundamentals whether predetermined or not are beyond him'.

Marx has been criticized from various angles. Of these B. Russell's is about the most relevant. He demolishes the Marxian insistence on the changes in the methods of production as the only causes of historical change. He says, 'methods of production appear in Marx as prime causes and the reasons for which change from time to time are left completely unexplained. As a matter of fact methods of production change in the main owing to intellectual causes, owing that is to say to scientific discoveries and inventions. The intellectual causation of economic causation is not adequately recognized by Marx'.

Marx was often a very obscure writer, for example *vide* the following passage: 'in the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will;

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these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production.

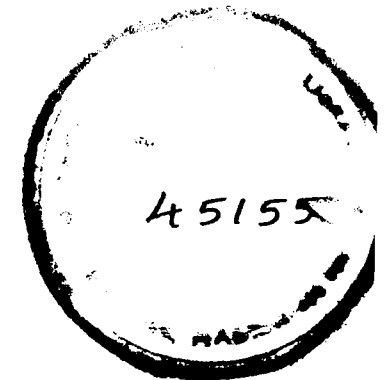
Marx along with Darwin and Freud has been responsible for significant revolutions in three different vital areas of scientific thought. The practical consequences of Marxism on world history have been considerable.

Jacob Christoph Burckhardt (1818—1897) was a Swiss scholar who studied history under Ranke but still is noted for his artistic and literary tastes. He wrote the *Civilization of the Renaissance* and it brilliantly brought out the role of the individual which the Renaissance as a movement made possible. Even now it is the best work on the Renaissance. He dealt with it as if it were a suddenly emerging bout of activities and not a process. He said that the gloomier aspect of the Renaissance was the price to be paid for its brilliant achievement. His *History of Greek Civilization* a longer work than the Renaissance was an abiding achievement. He did not treat the Hellenic civilization with romantic reverence as Grote did. Burckhardt's interests were varied, wide and incisive. Lowith brings out Burckhardt's unerring foresight in the following passage: 'this fine century (i. e., the 20th) is designed for anything rather than true democracy. The vulgarisation and standardisation of life seemed to him inevitable. Instead of a liberal democracy he foresaw the totalitarian state governed by *terribles simplificateurs* who will overrun old Europe and rule with absolute brutality, scornful of law and quite unconcerned with the people's freedom and sovereignty. He thought that a radically egalitarian democracy could not lead to individual liberty and responsibility but to a pretentious mediocrity and a new type of despotism. He feared that economic

socialism would promote an overdeveloped state machine which any bold demagogue might easily seize and exploit.'³⁶

Following Burckhardt, J. A. Symonds (1840—93), an Englishman wrote the *Renaissance in Italy* in seven volumes.

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12

American Historians

The New World whose historical existence does not go beyond the colonial period has in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries produced a number of great historians and a tradition of historiography which may be called American. American history mostly means the history of the United States and a large majority of the historians of the New World were only the historians of the United States. American historians have not been much interested in historical philosophy or theory, but were often influenced by the contemporary European thinkers like Hegel, Comte, Herbert Spencer and the methodology of history like that of Ranke. Occasionally historians like Henry Adams 'suggested the subjection of historical data to scientific laws

especially the second law of thermodynamics which elucidates the doctrine of degradation of energy.'¹ Generally speaking in recent times American historians have been more concerned with regional and parochial histories than national history. Their methodology also has depended largely on statistical data and the method of oral investigation.

In the matter of collection of source materials the United States made no attempts comparable to those of Europe. In fact the source materials were readily available and archaeological efforts were naturally confined to the colonial period. Peter Force early in the 19th century created the American Archives which contained a collection of the sources of American History from Columbus to Hamilton. As time passed collection of diplomatic correspondence like that of Jared Sparks began to appear. In the direction of multi-authorship and editorial ability the United States has been ranking high.

American History came abreast of European historiography with Bancroft (1832—1918) who was a great national historian. He graduated in Harvard and visited Europe and contacted Hegel and Goethe. He was a nationalist to the core, and declared that the popular voice is the voice of God. He wrote the *History of the United States* in ten volumes. Carlyle however complained of the didactic tone of the work. Ranke said that it was the best book ever written from the democratic point of view and Von Holst said that, 'every historian of the United States must stand on Bancroft's shoulders'. In 1882 he added two volumes on the constitution. He studied carefully all the relevant archival material. He found Washington a perfect man and the American citizen 'a marvellous blend of strength and flexibility'. He wrote 'in America a new people had risen up without kings, princes or nobles. They were more since-

¹ H. E. Barnes, *A History of historical Writing*, p. 204

rely religious, better educated, of purer morals, of serener minds than the men of any former republic'.

Palfrey wrote a *History of New England* wherein he praised the colonists blindly and forgot the need to be critical. Hildreth wrote a *History of the United States* in which he tried to moderate the nationalist enthusiasm of Bancroft. He declared that the period before 1789 'was mostly the domain of myth and his sceptical volumes, like a cold north wind, blew away many a patriotical legend.'² He is a powerful and needed foil to Bancroft.

The *Narrative and Critical History of America* edited by Justin Winsor treats the history of the United States from the aborigines to the settlement of the United States. It is a compilation in fact of the efforts of earlier historians in the field. Hubert Howe Bancroft was responsible for the vast collection of source material for *American History*; and based on this *A History of the Pacific States* was compiled in thirty four volumes. They incorporate material found in a considerable collection of documents. But it does not belong to the category of higher historical writing. As for biographies of eminent personalities the studies of Jefferson and Madison by Henry Adams in his *History of the United States of America during the administration of Jefferson and Madison* (in nine volumes) are extremely valuable. James Ford Rhodes wrote a *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850*. It deals with the early stages of the slavery struggles and describes their end. While he rejoices in the termination of the inhuman institution he has no harsh words against those who fought for its retention.

Washington Irving, famous as an essayist and a humorist and the creator of Rip van Winkle, was also

a historian of note. He wrote a *Life of Columbus* which was the first scholarly account of the great discoverer.

It is not a mere historical biography but is 'a poet's appreciation of a great dreamer.' Irving's *Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada* was regarded by him as the best of his works. Therein he deals with the Spanish conquest of the Moorish Kingdom of Granada. Though he is not great as a historian his reputation as the father of American literature is secure. He is famous as the man of letters who reversed the achievement of Columbus by discovering Spain for America. He was contemplating a *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, but on learning that Prescott was engaged in the same task he abandoned his and he was right in doing so.

William H. Prescott (1796—1859) was the author of the *History of the Conquest of Mexico* and the *History of the Conquest of Peru*. These were literary masterpieces comparable to the writings of Froude and Motley. During his stay at Harvard he lost the sight of one eye and got the other irreparably damaged. From then on reading became almost impossible for him but his interest in history grew unabated. Ultimately he determined to write a *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella*. He collected a vast library on the subject. But the period of preparation for the writing of that work took more than ten years since every line of the source material had to be read out to him. His style was not inferior to that of the leading men of letters. The area of his subject was very wide; his learning was deep, and the work at once became a classic. His history begins with the history of Spain before Ferdinand, touches on the discovery of America, the formation of United Kingdom and Spain, the character of the king and queen of Spain, the story of the inquisition etc. Isabella is delineated in full stature as a perfect woman with the brain of a man. 'Her only weakness, religious

2 G. Gooch, *History and Historians in the 19th century*, p. 381

intolerance, was the fault of her time'. Though he denounces the inquisition he does not show prejudice against Catholicism. The arrival of the book was greeted with splendid tributes. Daniel Webster declared that 'a comet had suddenly blazed out on the world in full splendour.' Lord Holland considered it the most important historical work since Gibbon. It was translated into many languages and the first historical work of an American to become internationally reputed. The greatest merit of that work is that it is so perfect that since it was published it has not needed any revision, and is still the most authoritative work on the subject. Gooch has the following to say on the historian and his work: 'He possessed a gift of stately narrative and knew how to choose subjects which gave full scope to his talents. He was not always critical in the use of his authorities, nor was he a philosophic historian interested in social evolutions. On the other hand, while Grote and Macaulay, Carlyle and Froude, Bancroft and Motley made their histories vehicles of political and religious propaganda, his pages are free from hero worship and party bias. He stood aloof from public life and had no ambition to play the prophet or the moralist.'³

While Prescott was writing the *History of Spanish Conquest of Mexico and Peru*, Motley (1814–1877) who was a friend and the fellow-student of Bismarck wrote the *History of the rise of the Dutch Republic*. He was encouraged in this effort by Prescott himself. The result was a classic which surpassed even Prescott's works. He spent much time in the archives of the concerned European countries. He describes his work in the archives graphically, 'I go day after day to the archives; here I remain among my fellow-worms, feeding on these musty mulberry leaves, out of which we are afterwards to spin our silk'. He has been described as the most distinguished representative from the school of Carlyle

and Froude. In his work he revealed a passion for liberty which was the most suitable temperament for the subject he chose. He is famous for his arresting descriptions of historical situations and admirable portrayal of characters. But his very passion for liberty was a handicap to the sorely needed objectivity, the lack of which has made Motley propagandist for a cause however noble and denigrator of personalities who had other virtues than were deemed noble by Motley. William the Silent was his hero and Philip and the Duke of Alva his villains.

Motley was a student of Bancroft; he learnt German and proceeded to Germany for higher studies. His *Rise of the Dutch Republic* was followed by an equally famous and popular *History of the United Netherlands*. His life and death of John Barneveldt was motivated by the same love of liberty and allergy to despotism which he displayed in his other works. It was the story which praised Barneveldt who supported the right to determine its official cult for each province of the Netherlands and therefore incurred the wrath of the Statholder Maurice who got him executed after a farce of a trial. Motley naturally praised Barneveldt and criticized Maurice. This led the Dutch Calvinists to strongly object to Motley's handling of the theme. While Motley's prejudices are undoubted, the sincerity with which he held them is equally unquestionable. The brilliance of his style and the flawlessness of the author's character in its relation to his work have made Motley's works truly famous.

Parkman (1823–93) was born in Boston and educated at Harvard. These circumstances entitled him to be included among what some critics have called 'a Brahmin caste of New England'. He made the struggle between France and England in North America and especially Canada as his favourite subject. The work he started at the age of twenty in 1843 awaited completion in

3 Ibid: p. 388

1892. The Oregon Trail, the Conspiracy of Pontiac, the Pioneers of France in the New World and Half a century of Conflict were his major works. Among the themes dealt with by him the struggle between Wolfe and Montcalm was the most famous. He was very slow to earn his deserved reputation. Some critics like Hart called him the greatest of American historians. Goldwin Smith compared him to Tacitus.

Parkman was followed by Mahan (1840-1914) who wrote the Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783. This aspect of European and in fact world history had been neglected till Mahan wrote this classic. The 17th and 18th centuries had witnessed a struggle of West European powers for the mastery of the sea. The entire history of colonialism and imperialism centered on maritime supremacy. The seven years war and Wolfe's victory at Quebec, the defeat of Napoleon and the founding of the Indian Empire were based on sea power. Mahan wrote almost poetically on Nelson and his achievements. The importance of Mahan to modern historiography is due to his discovering and presenting a new angle on the sinews of military power.

Among other historians one could mention Carl Becker, C. A. Beard, Von Holst, John William Burgess, Fiske and Henry Adams. Carl Becker is famous for his attack on the insistence on 'hard facts' of history which he says do not exist till a historian makes them. C. A. Beard wrote the famous article That Noble Dream⁴ in which the problem of the philosophical bias towards objectivity, that is, the German *Historismus* is discussed. The American Historical Association has been a pioneer in developing historical studies in the United States. Until very recently American interest in non-American history has been negligible. But that attitude of historiographical isolationism is slowly wearing out and American

historiographical activity now includes themes relating to every age and every clime.

In the 19th century many American historians derived their inspiration from the Germans especially Ranke. This influence was responsible for the introduction of the seminar in the American schools of history. But the other great influence of Ranke relating to objectivity in historical writing was repudiated by C. A. Beard in 1933 who spoke with the authority of the President of the American Historical Association. Since then a debate has raged in the United States on this question.

4 The American historical Review for October 1935.

PART III

History

of

Historical Writing

in the West

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The pre-Christian non-classical Tradition

Literally it is the art of writing history that is meant by the word historiography (Historia; grapho: to write).¹ This word is a recent coinage intended to signify an account of the development of historical writing through the ages. Once we say that there is development or evolution we mean that the successive stages of progress in this art of historical writing have been different, without necessarily meaning that every stage in that process was an improvement on the previous. In different ages different quantities and different qualities of historical writing have appeared and these were responses to the calls of the times. It may also be remembered that the nature and pace of change in this field of writing were influenced by changes generally in society and

particularly in other areas of writings: For example, in the Homeric times it was inevitable that anyone who thought of writing history was influenced by the epic tradition; that historical writings in the middle ages were influenced by religious faith; and such writings in the 18th century, *vide* Voltaire and Gibbon, by a harsh reaction to religion etc. Historiography traces these changing prospects of the tradition of historical writings from ancient to modern times. It may also be borne in mind that like other traditions in human societies like the political, the scientific, the religious, historical tradition also has varied from place to place depending upon the prevalence or otherwise of what may be called the historical sense. Hence some peoples have produced more historical literature, some others less and still others little. Ancient Greeks, Chinese, medieval Muslims and modern Europeans belong to the first category and the Hindus of ancient India have the distinction of belonging to the third. Historiography in this manner will let us into the intellectual aspirations of different peoples at different times. It will therefore be not only a useful study but an interesting discipline; specially so for those whose professional study is history.²

Historiography by virtue of what it literally means cannot relate to any period earlier than man's literary endeavours. The period served by archaeology can have little to do with historiography. It will also be clear that even after man had become literate and had known to inscribe on pots and stones such writings however useful to the historian today cannot be considered to be pieces of historical literature. So historiography begins

1 H. E. Barnes in his **History of Historical Writings** called the word 'Historiography' unlovely; Marwick called it clumsy. But he admitted that it was useful. Modern 'scientific' historians who prefer utility to loveliness surely cannot object to this word.

2 Marwick thinks that historiography is a much less interesting study than history itself. However that might be he is right when he adds that it is a preliminary to any important historical endeavour.

with the early compositions of advanced literate societies which grew literature in its various forms like the Greeks and Chinese of ancient times. From the humble beginnings a thousand years before Christ to modern historiography is a far cry. The ancient historiographer was handicapped in many ways like the want of an era, a system of chronology and an apparatus of criticism. In modern times these have changed the very nature of historical writing and even created new philosophies of history.

In a sense the Greeks must be deemed the earliest among European historiographers. But for purposes of this study we may consider the Egyptians and eastern Mediterranean people, in Asia Minor who came under Hellenistic influence as also part of the European tradition. It is well-known that the Egyptian civilization is one of the oldest in the world. The Egyptian attained high levels of material civilization and the pyramids are a sufficient testimony to their technological achievements. But it is surprising that in the earlier periods of their civilization though they wrote literature they produced not a scrap of history. Their hieratic tradition prevented the emergence of any kind of critical sense among them. A scribe of Thutmose III described the achievements of that monarch in a historical way. 'About 275 B. C Ptolemy Philadelphus called upon an Egyptian priest Manetho to do into Egyptian the Greek annals and he compiled an Egyptian chronology and a narrative history of Egypt which considering the times was of much historical value. But the work does not survive except in scrappy parts. The Babylonians and the Assyrians like the Egyptians did not produce any worthwhile historical writing till Berossos, a Babylonian priest wrote the *History of Babylonia* in the third century B. C. No doubt in the earlier periods there were lists of kings and priests, names of kings and lists of their achievement. But these lists while

giving some information do not qualify as histories.³ The Hittites had some history as early as 1100 B. C. when Telepinus wrote his history. But really serious historical writing was produced by the Hebrews of ancient Palestine and much of it is found in the Hebrew Bible. Moses has been supposed to be the author of a part of the Old Testament wherein he tells his own story and it is believed that he wrote the Pentateuch. Much criticism has been made of the genuineness of the Mosaic authorship and it is now almost settled that the Old Testament as it is now stands has suffered heavily at the hands of early editors. Hence the pious view that the Pentateuch was dictated by God to Moses who lived in the 13th century B. C. is given up and it is now accepted that the Pentateuch was written by many authors during the five centuries between the 11th and the 6th century B.C. Speaking about the development of historiography among the early Hebrews George Foote Moore says 'we may well believe that great historical events gave an impulse to the writing of history in Israel and that the beginning of Hebrew historical literature in the proper sense of the word was made with Saul and David';⁴ Prof. Breasted comments: 'The Pentateuch, the books of Samuel and the first book of kings are the earliest example of historical writings in prose which we possess among any people and their nameless author is the earliest historian whom we have found in the early world. The History of David written by the high priest Abiathar was an outstanding example of genuine history written by a pioneer. According to A. T. Olmstead the author of this work wrote 'not propaganda for his

³ H. E. Barnes in his **History of historical writings** makes no distinction between 'written material which can be used as sources for history and historical writing. But this distinction is vital and archaeological paleographs must not be treated as historical writings.

⁴ G. F. Moore: **Literature of the Testament**, p. 96

monarch but an account of the facts for coming generations'. His objectivity in dealing with the character of David is almost uncanny. 'Whether Abiathar or not he is our first great historian.' As Barnes says 'the Book of Kings was the first practical illustration of the notion of history as philosophy teaching by example'. 'One of the ablest products of Hebrew historiography was the first Book of Maccabees...this narrative written about 125 B. C. ... tells the stirring story of Hebrew history from the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great to the accession of John Hyrcanus'.⁵ The work is reputed for its secular attitude, for it attributes the success of the Palestinians to the personal exploit of human heroes and not the direct intervention of God. The last great Hebrew historical works were *The war of Jews* and *The antiquities of the Jews* by Flavius Josephus (c. A. D. 37–105). He wrote in Greek and with great literary skill. It is to be noted that the Egyptian Manetho, the Babylonian Berossos and the Hebrew Josephus had all been influenced by Greece and wrote in Greek. The Jews developed the idea of a divine messiah who was to save the faithful from their suffering and this gave the Hebrews a historical future to look to. The Apocalypics of Jewish history belong to the core of divine process beginning with the alienation of man from God and his ultimate redemption.

Summarising the above it may be said that while climatic conditions made Egypt an ideal place for preservation of archaeological material, Egypt produced very few historical writings.

The Babylonians were concerned with the arts of peace and the Assyrians dealt with military matters in their annals and inscriptions.

⁵ H. E. Barnes: **A History of Historical writing**, p. 23

The Hebrews of ancient Palestine were the first to produce a truly historical narrative of importance and veracity. But Hebrew historiography as seen in their old Testament writings became really a basis for historical criticism and reconstruction only after the Christians took over the sacred books of the Jews and used them for historical purposes in addition to theological.

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Graeco - Roman historiography

The earliest tradition of historiography belongs to the Greeks, even though they were still in the experimenting ground. The motivations, methods and achievements of the Greeks in this field of writing must not be judged by the standards of the 19th or 20th centuries. But there were common features between the earliest among the Greek historiographers and even modern ones and that is what makes of the former take a place among the truly historically-minded. One of the first requisites of a historian, according to Lytton Strachey, is ignorance. It means that curiosity persuading a person who 'does not know' to 'try to know', is an essential characteristic of a historian. The Greek historians especially those who lived after the 6th century B. C. were

concerned with providing information on matters of public importance to those who 'wished to know' them. In this process naturally the Greek historian selected his theme,¹ reduced it to presentable proportions, clarified the facts, included what was deemed essential and omitted the rest. Even now these are the main functions of a historian.

The earliest stratum of Greek historiographers were the bards. Some genuine historical writing might justifiably be attributed to Homer. His poems contain historical information about the culture of the contemporary society. Hesiod was another Greek poet of very early times who gave a sketch of five ages of the world namely the golden, silver, bronze, heroic and iron of which according to him we live in the last and worst-some-what like the four *yugas* of the Hindus of which we live in the last and the worst. Hesiod gave a respectable ancestry to the Greek gods and this could be later imitated by those who wished to provide similar ancestry to the nobles of the land.

Greek history proper begins in the 6th century B. C. and with the emergence of the *logographoi* i. e. the prose-writers. Poetry could not be a satisfactory medium for explaining social phenomena. Further it was then that the necessary cultural background existed for the growth of critical historiography. That means a rejection of belief in mythology and a creation of interest in social origins. With the *logographoi* prose developed a conventional mode of presentation of the story of society. Further the 6th century B. C. witnessed a wave of free thought and social criticism. Bury rightly said 'our deepest gratitude is due to the Greeks as the originators of liberty of thought and discussion...the history of European science

1 **Idea of History**, p. 26 R. G. Collingwood says the Greek historian's method precludes him from choosing his subject; but in one sense he did choose his subject though of course he had his reason for choosing only contemporary themes.

and of European philosophy begins in Ionia...they began the work of destroying orthodox views and religious faiths.² The first great Greek historian, Hecataeus (b. 550 B. C.), was influenced by his wide travels which developed the critical spirit in him. The Persian occupation of Ionia widened the intellectual horizon of the Greek. In the eastern Mediterranean there were many peoples whose cultures were various enough to merit comparative study.

The origin of Greek historical literature as we see above synchronised with the rise of the *logographoi*. The more important aristocratic families of the region either out of a true historical sense or out of sheer vanity tried to discover genealogies for their families.

Hecataeus introduced two principles essential for historiography: 1. That truth is the aim and 2. that conventional myths should be critically questioned. He had a proper appreciation of the nature of early Greek myths and the need to critically test them. He wrote: 'what I write here is the account which I consider to be the truth: for the stories of the Greeks are numerous and in my opinion ridiculous'. The interval between Hecataeus and Herodotus saw the development of this critical spirit. By the time Hecataeus of Lesbos began to write the importance of chronology had been recognized. Herodotus was the first Greek historian to recognize the value of important international episodes and he developed a system by which he could omit the irrelevant and spotlight the major events. The need for a *purpose* in historical study was understood by him. Herodotus was, without knowing it himself, the author of the first universal history. He wrote not only about political affairs but about numerous social practices found far and near. He travelled widely in search of historical

2 J. B. Bury: **The History of freedom of thought**, pp. 22, 23

evidence, as it were. He no doubt was credulous, believed some absurd stories and recorded them. But his deficiency was caused by the general deficiency of the times. One of the greatest achievements of Herodotus was to have started the tradition of introducing the history of one nation to another, here that of Persia to Greece. It is a general theory held by some scholars that the Greek historians were not interested in the past but only in contemporary history. This is true of Thucydides and Polybius, but not strictly speaking of Herodotus for he was only six years old when the Persian wars had ended. He wrote the history of 'recent times' rather than that of 'contemporary times'. The earlier stages of the Graeco-Persian wars had become definitely the past when Herodotus wrote his history. Herodotus did not mind pleasantly writing on what reached him as rumour or gossip provided it had human interest above all. Herodotus was superior to Thucydides in that he is certainly more readable. As for objectivity he was fair as between the Persians and the Greeks to the extent of provoking patriotic Greeks.

If Herodotus wrote the first real history, Thucydides gave it a new shape and dimensions. He could tell a story as well as Herodotus. But he wrote matter of fact history interspersed with fine speeches which he himself made up and put in the mouths of his characters. He was concerned with the problem of historical causation and the question of motivation. While Herodotus tried to fill in details in attractive colours on a wide canvas, Thucydides painted on a limited canvas a dependable picture in dull colours. Thucydides' contribution to Greek historiography consisted in his methodology. He was rather consisted with cutting out everything that was not directly connected with his subject on hand. One may agree now when this is pushed too far it can cease to be a virtue. He was in one significant sense inferior to Herodotus i. e. he was not concerned with social history of any kind. Between Herodotus

and Thucydides a great advance had been made in the tradition of Greek historiography. Thucydides however did not develop a true sense of the past and he lacked Herodotus' interest in the geographical factor in history. In one sense Thucydides was an advance on Herodotus but in many senses his work fell short of the achievement of Herodotus.

Polybius wrote a laboured style but his concept of history was an attempt to objectively present the conflicting interests in society; he was superior to his predecessors. He treated the Greeks and the Romans equally. Polybius said 'the science of history is threefold: 1. dealing with written documents and the arrangement of the material thus obtained. 2. Topography..., 3. political affairs...a bare statement of an occurrence is interesting indeed but not instructive; but when this is supplemented by a statement of cause, the study of history becomes fruitful'. Polybius considered the question of the reliability of the sources as of paramount importance. Xenophon is usually rated inferior to the three great Greek historians since though he was endowed with literary talents, he was only a memoir writer. Greece in addition to these historians produced some rhetoricians like Ephorus. Dionysius of Halicarnassus who wrote the Roman history early in the first century A. D. for the first time specifically stated that history is philosophy teaching by example. Some Greek historians developed biography as a means of communicating history. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* written in the latter half of the first and first quarter of the second century A. D. still remains the best work on historical biography. The historical value of these lives is attempted by some scholars to be underrated on the ground that his main aim was not historical accuracy but the reader's edification. The last great Greek historian was Ammianus Marcellinus. He had to write in Latin as he was catering to a Roman reading public. The Greek historians must be credited with the use of chronological

devices like the cycle of Olympiads. Erosthenes of Alexandria of the third century B. C. introduced a system of periodisation of Greek history.

There were eminent Roman historians like Livy and Tacitus, Caesar and Sallust and Seutonius Tranquillus. Caesar condemned by some as an apologist for himself wrote accurate history in excellent Latin. Sallust followed Thucydides, Seutonius set up a model of historical style and arrangement of matter. Lucretius wrote *De rerum Natura* which he wrote about universal evolution which in its importance as a theroetical postulate was outdone only by Herbert Spencer in the 19th century. Generally speaking the Roman historians continued the traditions of the Greeks though few among them rose to levels attained by Herodotus and Thucydides. The importance and excellence of Roman historiography can be understood only when it is compared with the Christian historiography that was to follow.

Now some general considerations about classical historiography will be useful. Carr observed that like the ancient civilization of India the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome were basically unhistorical. This is exemplified by Lowith who says: 'with the exception of some philosophers nobody in antiquity questioned the truth of oracles, ominous dreams and portents foreshadowing future events. Since the ancients generally believed in a predestined fate future events and destiny were only slightly hidden from them under a veil which an inspired mind could penetrate'.³ To the ancients the future was knowable not only by consulting oracles etc. but by inference from the past. Though Herodotus wrote about an event of which strictly speaking he was not a contemporary most Greek and Roman historiographers

did write on contemporary events. Much philosophising on this accident has been done by eminent historians of historical writing. But it must be borne in mind that one of the reasons why the ancients could not write the history of the distant past was that they lacked the kind of source material which we now have for major happenings of the distant past. They had to depend upon social memory for much of what they wrote and social memory was not facilitated by records as extensive and varied as are available to modern historians. In fact the Greeks were concerned with giving a record of things that had happened, 'in order that the memory of the past may not be blotted out from among men by time', and 'that great deeds may not lack renown'. Langlois and Seignobois said that the Greeks wrote history 'to preserve the memory and propagate the knowledge of glorious deeds or of events which were of importance to man, a family or a people. Such was the aim of history in the time of Thucydides and Livy'.⁴ Hence to them contemporary history was safer. But as Collingwood said 'the historiography of the Greeks was not legend. It was research. It was an attempt to get answers to definite questions about matters of which one recognizes oneself as ignorant'.⁵

To the early historians like Plato history moves in a definite circle, i. e. a cycle of eternal recurrences. Time and again, society returns to monarchy after passing through other forms of government. Polybius also believed in this.⁶ Philosophers like Collingwood have attributed certain characteristics to the early Greek historians. He

4. Introduction to the Study of History, p. 297

5. Collingwood : The Idea of History, p. 18

- 6. The ancient Indian similarly thought of an unchanging reality and considered changes as myth. The cyclical concept of creation and destruction was favoured by the Puranas. The concept of time in the Yuga scheme also fitted in this framework.**

³ Lowith: *Meaning in History*, p. 10

says they recognized not the value of the individual but the 'essence that is immutable in the fleeting figures of history'.

This is called substantialism. Substantialistic metaphysics was defined by Collingwood as a theory of knowledge according to which only what is unchanging is knowable. But what is unchanging is not historical. What is historical is the transitory event. He therefore concluded that the attempt to think historically and the attempt to think in terms of substance were incompatible. Collingwood illustrates the substantialistic principle with particular reference to Livy. He says Livy set himself the task of writing a history of Rome. Now a modern historian would have interpreted this as meaning a history of how Rome came to be what it is, the history of the process which brought into existence the characteristic Roman institutions and moulded the typical Roman character. It never occurs to Livy to adopt any such interpretation ...Rome is the heroine of his narrative. Rome is the agent whose actions he is describing. Therefore Rome is a substance, changeless and eternal. From the beginning of the narrative Rome is readymade and complete; to the end of the narrative she has undergone no spiritual change.⁷ ... the nemesis of this substantialistic attitude was historical scepticism: events as mere transitory accidents were regarded as unknowable; the agent as a substance was knowable indeed but not to the historian .. as the Greeks put it power does not alter a man's character; it only shows what kind of man he already was.⁸

Another characteristic of Greek historiography to which Collingwood draws our attention is its humanism and this is according to him the chief merit of Greek

7. R. G. Collingwood: **The Idea of History**, p. 44 Compare the Hindu notion of **Kanni** the eternal virgin and of **Bharatamata** the universalised type.

8. This may be contrasted with Acton's dictum that power corrupts.

historical writings. Thomson summarising says the Greeks wrote history of all characters of all dimensions. The history of men are things of great nations and small cities, universal annals and local chronicles, political, literary and military memoirs. There is nothing which they forgot or ignored; the Greeks first learnt the art of writing real history and perceived its purposes, its duties, its laws. The Greeks were the originators of history as they were of science and of philosophy'.⁹

9. **History of historical writing**, p. 24

15

Age of Religious Dominance

The transition from the classical age to the age of religious dominance was significant in the field of historiography as in others. Christianity put an end to the age of Greece and Rome and the values it represented. The superficial distinction that the Christian age was religious and the classical age was secular was not the significant distinction and was less important than the distinction in philosophical attitude. The idea of equating Emperor with God¹ reached its climax with Augustus Caesar. His great contemporary Christ declared that there was only one God above and spoke of the concepts of sin and punishment rather than crime and punishment. Religion, if it is to be religion, demands faith and discipline. This faith related to something

which is beyond man and which is not amenable to logical proof. But the ancient Greek thought that Gods shared with men secular interests. Men and Gods for the Greeks were different only in degree. Some men could become God, like Alexander and most Gods behave like men. The great gap between God and men peculiar to the middle ages existed as a narrow chasm between the two in the classical age. In short humanism characterised Greek and Roman thought and was to reappear in the European intellectual tradition only during the Renaissance. Man to the classical tradition was a person endowed with the capacity to will and be able to achieve without divine intervention. From the reign of Augustus in the Mediterranean world and about six centuries earlier in India, the Christ and the Buddha respectively tried to discover an answer to the miseries of man. Christ said that the solution to the problem of misery lay beyond man, while the Buddha said that it lay within man. The Hindu Upanishadic teachers said more or less the same thing and these modes of thought agreed among themselves in that they rejected social criticism as any answer to man's ills. The Greeks thought on the other hand that man in the company of the Gods who shared his joys and griefs could solve his own problems. After the Graeco - Roman age insistence on the role of God made humanism irreverent and irrelevant. The dividing line between the classical age and the following Christian age was vital. Europe became Christendom. The popes became more powerful than the emperors. Primacy of God was essential for spiritual welfare. Government was incidentally necessary. It was but a tool to organize man for social peace to secure the conditions essential for the pursuit of religious values. Christianity introduced a new kind of authoritarianism i. e., the authority of the Book and its interpreter. Pope was the authority. Luther a thousand years later questioned this authority and it was then that humanism also was

1 What in India would be called the Devaraja Cult.

revived. The classical age was marked by an order which was man-made and obeyed in the interests of man himself. But Christian subordination sprang from religious considerations. The rise of Christianity and the decay of the Roman empire brought about this change. The latter was caused when Christ questioned the authority of the earthly emperor, and papal authority also fell back when it was questioned by the reformers. The age of Christian dominance lasted therefore from Augustus, in fact from somewhat later, to the fall of Constantinople and the rise of Luther. This was the age during which historiography like other intellectual disciplines and academic practices underwent a great change.

With the passing of classical scholarship and the coming in of Christianity reason which played such a dominant role in Graeco-Roman thought was substituted by faith. Shotwell remarked 'there is no more momentous revolution in the history of thought than this in which the achievements of thinkers and workers, of artists, philosophers, poets and statesmen were given up for the revolution of profit and a gospel of worldly renunciation ... a revolution was taking place in the history of historiography. Homer and Thucydides, Polybius and Livy, the glory of the old regime shared a common fate. The scientific outlook of the most luminous minds the world had known was classed with the legends that had grown up by the campfires of primitive barbarians. All was pagan. it was therefore a calamity for historiography that the new standards won the day'. The early Christian fathers however were different from the later ones in that the former were educated in pagan literature and to some extent influenced by it. Judaism and classicism had a charm for them. In fact, the ecclesiastical polity of the early Christians was modelled on the Roman Imperial structure. The Christians did not crudely reject reason but brought Platonism to their support and held emotion and intuition superior to reason; hence their

objection to the process of understanding of the temporal historical process through reason. The Christian philosophy was developing an attitude of hostility to the scepticism which is a characteristic of historical knowledge. To the early Christians history meant a process in which God and man participated. Their history started with the creation of man and is to go on till his redemption. Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430) in his *City of God* represented the historical process as a struggle between good and evil, virtue and vice and the divine and the demoniac.² In fact Saint Augustine suggested that the struggle was between the city of God and the city of Satan.

There were two features which characterised Christian historical attitude; first, since they were antipagan, they could not be objective. Secondly, they developed a special method for treating inspired and sacred writings. They could not treat the Christian religious stories with the same critical attitude which the Greek historians brought to bear on the sources. But if some of those religious tales were incredible new meanings had to be found for them and so they developed an apparatus of interpretation suitable for the religious literature.³ The oligarchical method of interpretation became popular with and even necessary for Christians. Allegorization bypasses criticism and a good example of this is to be found in the *Moralia* or *Commentary on the book of Job*, written by Gregory the great (6th century A. D.). Isidore of Seville (7th century A. D.) wrote on the allegorical meaning of sacred scripture. They divided history into sacred and profane, the former relating to religion and the latter the activities of the secular world. General intellectual decline was a feature of the age of Roman imperial decline and it related to the pagans as well as the Christians though

2 Compare this with the Deva-Asura concept in Hinduism.

3 Vide the Mimamsa technique for the interpretation of the Vedas.

in the case of the Christians they were doubly affected by one the general decline and the other the nature of Christian dogmas.

One of the earliest Christian writers who tried to provide a suitable chronology of the human past designed to suit Christianity was Sextus Julius Africanus (A. D. 180-250). According to the chronology of Africanus, Creation took place 5499 years before Christ. Eusebius Pamphilus wrote the chronicle which was to provide the proper background for his church history and he wished to establish that Moses lived before the Greek and Roman sages. Eusebius was indebted to Africanus greatly. Christian chronology usually began with Creation. Then it divided the historical period into 1. from Abraham to the Trojan war, 2. from that war to the first Olympiad, 3. from the first Olympiad to the reign of Darius, 4. from the reign of Darius to the death of Christ and 5. from the death of Christ to the reign of Constantine. Eusebius wrote in Greek. But in the 4th century A. D. it was necessary to write in Latin. Jerome who translated Eusebius' Chronicle in 379 did this important service to historiography in Latin. Jerome's translation was further revised by Joseph Justus Scaliger in 1583. Isidore of Seville wrote a chronicle in the early 7th century and it was based on Eusebius. He however was indebted to Saint Augustine for his division of the history of the world into six parts corresponding to the six days of creation. The venerable Bede wrote a work on Christian chronology in the 8th century *de temporum Ratione*. He too divided history from Creation to his days into six ages. Dionysius Exiguus of the 6th century A. D. was the first person to use the birth of Christ as the dividing point in historical dating. Bede gave wide currency to this practice. Christian historiography achieved a certain unity (which was theological) and meaning for history. But they had to sacrifice the secular perspective and accuracy. J. H. Robinson says 'the Amorites

were invested with an importance denied the Carthaginians. Enoch and Lot loomed large in a past which scarcely knew of Pericles'.⁴

The Christian fathers in addition to compiling chronologies wrote history of a sort. This they were obliged to do because the pagans were accusing Christianity of the responsibility for the fall of Rome. They had to vindicate Christianity. This vindication in its most famous form came from Paulus Orosius (c. 380—c. 420) a Spaniard who settled in Africa and became a disciple of Augustine. He wrote *Seven books of history against the pagans*. Orosius based his history on the theory that ultimately the destinies of mankind, pagan, Jewish or Christian are controlled by God. In writing this work Orosius relied more on Eusebius than historians like Herodotus. But all these histories linking man's fortunes with God's will started with Creation. Orosius' method was effective since he had a *purpose* in writing that history. It was Orosius' thesis to prove that even pagan societies had suffered calamities. As Robinson said all the achievements of Egypt, Greece and Rome tended to sink out of sight in the mind of Augustine's disciple, Orosius; only the woes of a devil-worshipping Heathendom lingered. Orosius' work created a prejudice against pagan nations and their culture.

Christian historiography suffered from two defects, 1. that it was written to a purpose and as part of that purpose paganism was discredited and 2. their chronology was based on theological and not secular assumptions. But their ecclesiastical histories were more dependable. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* was based on his own *Chronicle*, and on traditional material which had reached him. The work received its final edition in 323 A. D. Casiodorus wrote his *Historia Tripartita* and this was the

⁴ Robinson, *The New History*, p. 30.

standard church history which was used in the middle ages. Sulpicius Severus wrote his sacred history which was characterised by literary merit. In these church histories the belief that human history is guided by God prevented a secular analysis of human motivation. They treated primarily of miracles and saints. This kind of historical writing is called Patristic historiography. Among Christian historical biographies one could mention Jerome's *Life of Paul the 1st hermit*; of course the great autobiography by an eminent Christian was the *Confessions of Augustine* which is to be classed among the greatest autobiographies. R. G. Collingwood commenting on Christian historiography said 'the medieval historiography looked forward to the end of history as some thing fore-ordained by God and through revelation fore-known to man. It thus contained in itself an eschatology'.⁵

⁵ R. G. Collingwood, p. 54.

16

Medieval

Historiography

Patristic historiography which was in the hands of the Christians was not the only aspect of historical writing which characterised the Middle Ages. There was, especially in the last centuries of that period, a body of historians who starting from humble chronicling achieved a fair measure of secular historical writing. These two traditions co-existed. The former however persisted in its ways and as Burr says: 'The Middle Ages did not discover history and theology; nay, to forbid it there grew to completeness that consummate preserver of the unity of thought, the procedure against heresy. And to the end of that long Age of Faith history did not escape the paternal eye'. The Christian Epic maintained its image for nearly ten centuries till the Classical Age revived under

the Renaissance. It was laid to rest only during the Age of Enlightenment'.

During the Middle Ages, the shift from Christian methodology to secular did not mean really an improvement; since many of the modern writers who were merely chroniclers retained all the defects of the Patristic tradition but were also deficient in scholarship which was the hallmark of the monks. They represented a certain emancipation from theological obsessions but revealed a crudeness born of dissociation of cultural values. But it would be unfair to be critical of these historians.

A consequence of the decline of the Roman Empire was the study of classical learning due to the loss of ancient Graeco-Roman literature by neglect or design. The Christian orthodoxy did not mind this, in fact was happy about the field being cleared for theology. Hence the Christian monks had a monopoly of historiography. Further the medieval historians were themselves a small elite group of scholars who wrote to inform or please another small elite group of readers.

This situation developed as a natural corollary of the decline of classical scholarship which was used by Christian interests for their benefit and the incidental loss of the critical tools needed for secular enquiry and criticism. The vacuum thus created in the intellectual tradition of Europe cut new generations of medieval scholars away from the founts of classical examples.

The transitional period from the decline of Rome to the end of Charlemagne represented the first half of the medieval period and the centuries from Charlemagne to the Renaissance stood for the second half of that period; and each had its distinctive characteristics. The earlier period saw historical writings like Cassiodorus' (c. 480-c. 570) *History of the Goths*, Procopius' (c. 500-565) *The History of His Own Times*, Paulus Warnefridus

(c 730-800) *History of the Lombards* etc. The later period witnessed the vast literature on Annals and Chronicles. These began in the earlier stages as notings in diaries but developed into well-organized chronicles. The word Annals means 'annual information', particularly the astronomical records determining the exact date of the Easter festival. This was no more than a kind of almanac table. It is said that this practice started in England in the early Carolingian period and later spread to the Continent. Along with these religious data, contemporary secular information like the more important events of the day was also provided indirectly. Roger of Hoveden's *Annals of English History* (13th century) is a perfected example of what medieval Annals could be while the Annals were annual accounts of information deemed essential by contemporaries. The chronicle which followed was concerned with a place or an event. T. F. Tout who has made a study of medieval chronicles observes that 'its object in general was not a piece of literary composition but to fulfil a practical need, to supply information or to prove some case.' Chronicles could give authentic information on contemporary happenings but not on past events; nor could they discriminate reliable evidence from unreliable sources. But of all the chronicles produced during the medieval period the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (coming down to about 1154) is the most famous. (The *Chronicle of St. Albans* relates to the events from 1250 to 1422.) The *Chronicle of Otto of Freising* and the *Greater Chronicle of Matthew Paris* are other important chronicles of this age. In the later Middle Ages some chronicles dealing with the histories of important cities appeared; the *Chronicle of London* and the *Chronicle of Florence* belong to this category.

The Medieval historians could not write the kind of history which a modern critic can approve of, because, his values were different; his sources were scanty; the method of source and text criticism developed in recent

times did not exist then; and the natural sciences and the social sciences had not grown their later day features then.

Medieval historiography was 'characterised by dogmatic interpretation, primitiveness of literary form and want of scientific method'. These defects ultimately were got rid of in Europe only by the beginning of the 19th century. The medieval historians of Europe did not distinguish between mere annals on the one hand and chronicles and histories on the other. The churchmen or the monks were the only persons who had the learning and equipment, leisure and inclination to apply themselves to this work and the basic prejudices which marked them off from others naturally coloured their writings. Since a body of source material as such for historical writing was absent, they could write only contemporary history. Apart from these deficiencies, for which it would be hardly charitable to hold them responsible, they wrote only histories dealing with significant events or episodes like the Crusades, for instance; but it would be anachronistic to expect them to have delved into historical causes and analysed economic and deeper psychological reasons for historical events. But one should be thankful for the medieval historians for having preserved the history of their period at least in the shape in which we find it; since, but, for that, the Middle Ages would be singularly devoid of the historical works of any kind

17

The beginnings of modern historiography

1. The Humanist Age

In the later Middle Ages, particularly after the Crusades, a change was coming over Europe which heralded to observant persons the return of the pagan past. With Roger Bacon and Machiavelli at work, it was not slow in coming. When in 1453 the Turks took Constantinople they did a signal service to European intellectual tradition by obliging it to recover and cherish pagan classical literature (including history). The New Learning which originating from Constantinople and side-stepping Christianity spread over Europe like a dawn dispelled the superstitions and theological dogmas of the Middle Ages and turned man's attention from God to his fellow-creatures i.e., from theology to humanism. This was quite a revolution.

7. Romanticism A reaction to no. 6 when the latter becomes exaggerated as a creed; but temporarily halting the development of historiography along scientific lines, though setting right the rigidities of no. 6
8. Criticism Born of scholarly and scientific scepticism and going back on the cocksureness of 6 and the vagueness of 7 but sure of nothing but the method and tending to plant both its feet firmly in the air.

From 1 to 8 it will be seen that all the stages of opposite things as well as scepticism are gone through.

ii. The Reformation

Precisely when Machiavelli was planning to write the History of Florence, Martin Luther was burning the Papal Bull at Wittenberg and bringing about the Protestant Revolution. The former was emphasising the secularisation that was inevitable in course of time, while the latter revived interest in theological issues. The Reformation of the Christian religion and the counter-Reformation which it provoked complemented each other and constituted an exciting chapter in European theological controversies. The Reformation halted though for some time, the advances made by Humanism towards modern historiography for it once again turned man's attention from his fellow-men to religious and spiritual interests. But it is possible to overdo this argument. The Reformation was needed since Humanism by itself would not have controlled or destroyed the stagnation caused by medieval theology; this needed service was unwittingly rendered by the Reformation which by weakening the then most powerful religious institution

indirectly strengthened its other enemy, secularism. The last great effort to write history from the religious angle was that of Bossuet who wrote the Discourses on Universal History; he tried hard in that work to establish the hand of divinity in human history. It has been called the 'last serious attempt at a providential interpretation of universal history in terms of the old theology'. This kind of writing tried to show that 'the march of history was to terminate in the Roman Church'.

Even as the abuses prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church provoked the Protestant Revolution, the clash between the two created the greatest product of the counter-Reformation, namely the Jesuit Order or the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits made considerable contribution to religious history. The autobiography of Ignatius Loyola who founded the Jesuit Order was a confession of his faith and the result of honest introspection. Niccolo Orlandini's History of the Society of Jesus is a good example of conscientious historiography on the part of a man of religion. Belgian Jesuits under the leadership of Jean Boland (1596-1665) started collecting the lives of the saints - the Acta Sanctorum - but did not finish the collection. It still goes on. But what has so far been collected is a considerable quantity of hagiology. Bishop Burnet's History of the Reformation of the Church of England was a good account of the Reformation movement in any of its aspects; it dealt with non-religious causes and effects of the Reformation too. Thus Reformation as well counter-Reformation used history as a tool for propaganda and not as a value in itself. The Megdeberg Centuries of Flavius were an attack on the Papacy. The Ecclesiastical Annals of Baronius in 12 volumes was a reply in kind to this attack.

iii. The Age of Intellectualism

This could be called the Age of Erudition or Rationalism, and the 18th century saw its flowering and passing. Rationalistic historiography was the result not

Some modern critics tend to underrate the significance of this revolution by saying that the methods adopted by humanistic historians were not different from those of the monks of the monasteries who wrote ecclesiastical history or tried to fix the date of Creation. This is not fair criticism; one cannot expect the 13th, 14th and 15th century historians like Mussatus, Giavanni Villani or Leonardo Bruni to have attended Ranke's seminars. They are criticized on the ground that they had not given up hero-worship i. e., that they changed the attitude of worship of God Almighty to one of Man, the Hero; i. e., they ceased talking about the City of God but began talking about the City of Man. But even if they had done only that, it was revolution enough.

This change which resulted in the secular attitude called Humanism was achieved by the direct access they had now secured to pre-Christian classical thinkers like Aristotle and Plato and to historians like Herodotus and Thucydides. The emancipation of human thought from medieval Christian theological shackles and a re-harnessing of it to ancient modes familiar to the classical Greeks and Romans was part of the Renaissance. But for this change which was accelerated by the invention of printing, the discovery of new lands, and the Protestant Reformation which weakened the authority of the Church, works like Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World would not have appeared. Critics who are allergic to good writing and always suspect it as a camouflage to bad history deplore the absence of the scientific technique in the Humanist Age; they forget that that was the age which through men like Bacon and Machiavelli made the secular and the scientific respectable. The Humanists did great service to the European intellectual tradition by restoring to its rightful place classical thought and by denigrating the superstitions and the miracle-mongering of the Middle Ages. It may be stated that the Humanist Age was a necessary prelude to the Age

of Intellectualism, i. e., human attention could shift from faith to reason only after theology had yielded place to Humanism; even as the Age of Intellectualism was needed before the present age of criticism could dawn.

It may again be noted just as the Age of Reformation was a damper on Humanism since the former again emphasised religious values as against secular ones which Humanism stressed, Romantic Age was a reaction against the 18th century intellectualism but this foil was to be swallowed up by the age of scepticism and criticism. This was what had happened to the Reformation attitude of 'my doxy being the right one' at the hands of the rationalists and the intellectualists. Hence, it will be seen that in the development of European historiography we have the following pattern:

1. Pagan classicism Poor criticism but humanist
2. Medieval Christian Unity of thought, censorship of heresy and enthronement of Faith (in opposition to No. 1)
3. Medieval chronicles and annalists Secular not in opposition to No. 2; only another and different phase of it.
4. Humanism in opposition to medieval Christian: secular and human instead of religious and divine and signifies a reaction to and admiration of No. 1.
5. Reformation A variation of No. 2, not in opposition to it but by implication and performance in opposition to No. 4.
6. Intellectualism Clearly and dogmatically opposed to nos. 2, 3 and 5 and built upon the premises of no. 4

The five centuries roughly between 1300 and 1800 witnessed the most crucial changes in European historiographical tradition. The Renaissance, Humanism, the Reformation, the geographical discoveries, growth of scientific knowledge and the invention of printing and the progressive use of gunpowder in war - these were the major constituent parts of a revolution which occurred in European attitudes to human problems during this period.

18

Modern Historiography

i The Romantic Age

Among the great intellectual forces which prepared the ground for the French Revolution, Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu are usually listed as the most important. Of these Voltaire and Montesquieu clearly belonged to the Intellectualist school, the former mounting an attack on the Church on grounds of Reason and the latter calling for a revision of the constitution and drawing attention to the importance of ecology in the study of history. Rousseau however was not that simple. He was in the intellectualist camp in that he shared Voltaire's and Montesquieu's objection to the *status quo* but behaved like a Romanticist in his general attitude, though as a staunch opponent of despotism of all kinds. Just as the Age of Divinity created the reaction of Humanism,

only of the scientific discoveries of the 17th century but also the geographical discoveries which made Montesquieu, Jean Bodin and others attribute great influence to geography on the character and fortunes of nations. The expansion of Europe into the New World and the new routes to other parts of the Old World created new interests to historians; added to them, the scientific discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo, Kepler and Newton brought into existence a new orientation to European intellectual effort. All these efforts were reduced to scientific formulation by Descartes, Francis Bacon etc. Clarendon and Burnet wrote histories divorced from religious consideration but lacked the rationalist fervour which marked the 18th century writers. Vico, Hume and Turgot thought of an orderly development of human evolution on this earth in all its aspects, social as well as natural. Hobbes and Spinoza spearheaded a new historical enquiry by introducing Biblical criticism; the latter maintained that the Old Testament must be treated like any other historical text.

The writings of Voltaire, Montesquieu etc. gave a definitely new direction to European historiography. These writers were the historians of the Rationalist school or the historians of the Aufklärung. They belonged mostly to the 18th century. The emergence of the Encyclopaedists - Diderot, d' Alembert etc. — questioned the authority of tradition and assailed the infallibility of inherited beliefs. But Voltaire, Hume, Robertson and Gibbon were the greatest luminaries among the Rationalists. The Deists had said that God created the universe as well as certain laws which governed that universe; thereafter the laws controlled the universe, of course under God's direction. The rationalists also believed in something like this; but held chiefly that ideas or the intellectual forces were the dominant and deciding factors in history. They were capable of an objectivity

of outlook which historians of any earlier age lacked. The idea of progress and the notion of continuity grew out of the convictions of the Rationalistic school. Vico in his *Scienza Nuova* said that the historical process was cyclic; Turgot thought that history was but the biography of humanity constantly moving forward through decay and revival, frustration and hope; and some scholars hold that he was the 'father of the philosophy of history.' An excellent example of hope peeping through loss of faith and patches of optimism in a broad canvas of pessimism is, provided by Condorcet who while waiting for the guillotine wrote his *Esquisse du progrès de l'esprit humain*. Herder spoke of the evolutionary process even before Darwin. Montesquieu mentioned need for a balanced constitution which would be relevant to the times and the people; Edmund Burke wrote of the organic growth of society and state.

The Rationalist Age had however its serious limitations. In fact it was an age of conceit and unbounded faith in human reason. That age looked down upon the Middle Ages with scorn and considered the Age of Faith as a period of barbarism. Hence they little understood that age; and since their own faith in reason was unlimited they did not care to improve the methods of historical research. Voltaire thought that the pre-16th century history had no basis worth investigation; and Gibbon held that the decline of the great Roman Empire signified the triumph of religion and barbarism. In the later half of the 18th century the emergence of man from darkness to light as exemplified by the Age of Enlightenment was stressed. But the Rationalists being fully absorbed in the contemplation of their own perfection never thought of perfecting the system of enquiry, source utilization and criticism so essential for scientific historiography.

even as the Roman Catholic domination led to the Protestant Reformation, even as the Age of Faith led to the Age of Reason, the rigorous and almost mechanical intellectualist approach to human problems brought about its reaction in Romanticism. The historical assumption of Romanticism was the idea of the slow, sure and steady evolution of man (or any group of men) in the historical process. The nation as a unit of human culture appealed strongly to the Romanticists. Their objection to the rigorous secular logic of the intellectualist manifested itself in a kind of mysticism which maintained that the historical forces are ultra-rationalist in their ways. They thought that the deeper mystical happenings can never be satisfactorily intellectually analysed. They spoke about the 'genius' of a people which exhibited itself in its arts and letters. They romanticised all national activity. When they spoke about the totality of the past experience of a people creating a character for them from which they cannot escape, they are positively a supra-rational fatality which determines the nature and therefore the future of every nation. 'From this we get the myths regarding national superiority-the imperialist Rudyard Kipling attitude of Anglo-Saxon superiority is born of this; and in the imagination of such people are born the myths about the drawers of water and the hewers of wood; the idea of the German race being somehow pure and superior - a myth later fostered dangerously by the Nazis; some Hindus still believe in the myth of Aryan superiority and generate opposite myths in those who are upset unduly by this myth. This is very clearly anti-intellectual and dangerously romantic.

Among romantic historians apart from the immediate disciples of Rousseau, we can mention Madame de Stael who in her turn influenced Thomas Carlyle of England, who was undoubtedly 'the greatest of English portrait painters.' The literary works of Sir Walter Scott were eminent products of this romantic medievalism which

did great service in that it dispelled effectively the prejudices of the Age of Enlightenment against the Middle Ages. He brought before the readers mind's eye extremely vivid pictures of medieval life in all its particular colour. Chateaubriand of France could be compared to Scott. The History of France was a typical romanticist piece of historical literature dominated by an intense patriotism on the part of the author. To this distinguished group of Romantic historians belongs J. L. Motley the American author of *Rise of the Dutch Republic*. The main achievement of the romanticist school was to have aroused unprecedented interest in nationalism among historians and to have held the field largely in the 19th century. No doubt this had its evil influence in creating the kind of literature represented by the notorious *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* by Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau. Though much of the achievement of nationalistic history may be considered to be wholly evil, leading to nationalist egotism and international jealousies and tensions. But the impetus that this attitude of mind gave to the collection of source material for the writing of nationalist histories can be considered to be an attenuating factor in this otherwise sordid situation. But patriotic history in the hands of giants like Macaulay, Michelet, Froude, Bancroft or a Churchill played a significant role in paving the way for the next stage in the development of western historiography. But unfortunately hundreds of persons have been charmed by the naive but vicious bumptiousness of third rate text book compilers who have imitated the bias of the masters without their literary virtues.¹ A lot of third rate and sorry stuff passes for history in countries which do not have a sound historiographical tradition and the most dangerous aspect of this is that much of this stuff is either officially sponsored or produced by officially constituted

1 H. E. Barnes: *A History of Historical Writing*, p. 236.

committees and so reflect not only nationalistic partisanship but even political party prejudices which in the hands of unscrupulous writers and immature readers can become cultural propaganda weapons.

ii Recent and current trends in Historiography

The middle of the 19th century saw the decline in Romantic historiography though in one form or another Romanticism continues. But whatever justification it might have had then, it has ceased to have much relevance in modern times when the historian's job is recognised as an intellectual effort at honestly searching for and obtaining the source materials for the presentation of the truth, in so far as it can be discovered, keeping an eye on factuality and eschewing the subjective as far as possible. The Rankean ideal modified by the need to be elegant in the process of communication is and ought to be the constant aim of the good historian. This state of affairs has been reached after a lot of experimentation, trial and error, debates and discussions, vacillations and determined attempts. Some of the most important aspects of modern historiography are philosophising about history, discovering the latent principles which do or ought to guide historians, and the formulation of credible theories of history. That is, Croce and Collingwood have given a new dimension to historical thought. Nationalist histories prompted by exuberant romanticism have thinned and history has struck roots in opposite directions leading to parochial as well as universal histories, the former enabled by local archaeology and the latter fed by a spirit of cosmopolitanism. This process has resulted in some gains and in some regrettable losses. We miss now the grandeur of a Gibbon, the brilliance of a Macaulay, the fervour of a Carlyle, the charm of a Michelet and the fascination

of a Froude; but at the same time rigorous discipline of a Niebuhr or a Ranke also seems to be too much for the historian of today. In fact the accumulation of an impossible quantity of source material has made the task of modern historians onerous, and they have to cut down their scope if any kind of meaningful history is to be written. The greatest gain on the other hand is that we are entering a new era of historiography in which heuristics, and narration play a necessary but not dominant role; criticism takes the place of honour among the many anxious concerns of the historian. 'Honest and responsible criticism is as essential as it is difficult to achieve. The present position of historiography in the world at large can be best understood by tracing its growth from the Age of Intellectualism to the present day, which may be called the Age of Criticism.

The 17th century was essentially a century of development in the physical sciences in Europe. The intellectual history of Europe at that period proceeded on lines of controversy determined by scientific advancement of that age, especially in mathematics and physics. Newton was in one sense the harbinger of this intellectual revolution. Harvey's breakthrough in biology added to this. These demonstrable scientific truths disturbed the foundation of and set up new pedestals to philosophy and theories of knowledge. The vital area of this new development was the one of reconciliation of the new knowledge with the till-then held beliefs. The Copernican revolution (16th century) meant not only that the planets revolved around the sun but also that the new system of knowledge revolved around science. The system of deductive reasoning based on shrewd hypotheses which were themselves justified by scientific conclusions—a methodology of knowledge which goes back to the days of Aristotle—set the pace for other areas of knowledge also. There were no doubt often minor and occasionally major differences among the philosophies of individual thinkers from the 16th century onwards. But as Patrick

Gardiner observes, 'although the differences between, say Hobbes and Descartes or between Spinoza and Locke are immense, the soil that nourished their philosophies was the same.' A consequence of this approach to the nature and function of knowledge was that the human mind came to be treated as being nearly equal in its function among all rational beings and that its functions could be listed or compartmentalised and that generalised theories of knowledge are possible. The study of the individual human mind in isolation was the basis of the studying of the mass mind or social psychology. The basic assumption that human nature remains constant for ever and every where had to be made if generalisations were to be possible. The need for and the manner of human organization into civil societies and structured states could be deemed a constant and invariable phenomenon only if this assumption is made. From a description of human society as it is, the philosophers passed on to a prescription for that society as it ought to be.

In one sense the historians of the 18th and 19th centuries derived their metaphysical sustenance from the philosophical postulates of the 17th century thinkers whose main contribution to the theory of knowledge was that social phenomena are not unlike physical phenomena, in that generalised laws are possible in both cases. It is on this assumption that we proceed from the discovery of scientific law to the interpretation of history. It was possible for historical thinkers to hold 1. that the events of history are merely contingent; 2. that the aggregate of historical events has a total perspective which is ultra-secular and transcendental; or 3. that there were immediate as well as ultimate laws which *a priori*, that is, causally connect the events of history i. e., whether they have a transcendental meaning or not they are at least predictable within limits. The impact of science on the modern theories of knowledge had made the first of these unacceptable to the modern philosopher. So historical

speculation has turned around either the second or the third of these beliefs. The 18th century writers preferred to take an empirical view of the matter i. e., they held that the historical purpose if there be one can be discovered only with reference to the observed and verified facts of history. The Enlightenment thinkers were not quite certain however of this point of view; under the influence of science the Age of Enlightenment thought that it had emancipated itself from the grip of theological notions. Though it was so felt the emancipation was neither real nor complete as can be seen in Bousset's *Discourse on Universal History* (1681) or Turgot. At times what was expected to happen was not clearly distinct from what was wished to happen. Thus the teleological came in by the backdoor even in the new speculation. The theory of final causation, the notion of a certain direction in which history is moving at times involving the additional feeling that the direction was a desirable one characterised strangely enough a part of the Enlightenment. Writers like Condorcet thought that the future was bound to be pleasant. Historically the thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries were deeply involved in problems of social reform and progress so that this latter came at the hands of some even to be identified with the purpose of history. The Enlightenment historians linked climate, ecology or the inherited knowledge of men as influential in determining social and historical events. They depended on facts and evidence for this. Though they did not believe in a necessarily golden future, the perfectibility of man and the inevitability of progress were coupled with a pragmatic approach to secular phenomena. Turgot and Condorcet by taking this kind of attitude paved the way for the 19th century thinkers like Comte, Saint-Simon and Karl Marx. But this is only one aspect of 18th century historical speculation. Vico, Herder and Montesquieu held views much different from this. Vico rejected the Cartesian mathematicalism and the

universalism of valid knowledge. Vico and Herder clearly saw that events and men of the distant past could not be judged by the standards of historians of later times. Vico knew that the historian of the Enlightenment had to struggle against the myths and the pseudo-myths created by historians of earlier ages. He also saw that human nature is to be generalised by a study of historical events and not the other way about; i. e., historical events are not to be interpreted from the point of view of a generalised human nature for which there is no independent truth. Here we see an attempt to depart from the methodology of science. The more modern view is to admit that historical studies are validly different from scientific ones but also to hold that on that account they are not inferior and that it is certainly not incumbent on the historian to try to tow the line drawn by science. Hegel contributed greatly to this notion of the autonomy of history. In the 16th and 17th centuries, scientists emancipated science from ancient and medieval myth and non-reason. Similarly the historians like Hegel by drawing distinctions between the function of natural science and that of history saved history from science. He spotlighted the essential differences between the historical and non-historical targets and methods. His dialectical logic at least destroys the view that because certain methodology is successful in certain areas of human assumption, observation and generalisation they will be equally applicable to all departments of human knowledge.

Philosophy of history can be of four orders; i. e., 1. to say that history has a meaning because all that has happened or is likely to happen is preordained by some unknown force. It may be providence, it may be Hegel's, 'cunning of reason', or 2. that the course of history upto now has been under certain direction and that the future trends can be predicted on the basis of this tendency, or 3. that because of the causal law operating in history, past events can be explained and future predicted in

terms of these laws; or some historical processes have been described as being merely contingent and as if they could be treated in isolation or 4. these can be understood only in the context of a larger scheme of which these are parts. Hegel proceeds on the basis of the last postulate. In view of the manifold nature of the philosophy of history, historical speculation cannot be compared to areas of knowledge like sociology or morals. The philosophies of history have been concerned with discovery of past, interpretation of historical phenomena, speculation about the ultimate nature of history and so forth.

By the end of the 19th century, however these attempts led to speculations on questions of criticism, systematisation of historical knowledge, the relation between history and science etc. Thinkers like Dilthey-a German, Croce-an Italian and Collingwood-an Englishman stressed the idea of the autonomy of history emphasising that the historical method was quite different from the scientific. It was the process of historical thinking which they were trying to unravel. Speculation and categorisation were the characteristics of determinists like Spengler, Toynbee and Marx. But there has also arisen another aspect of historical analysis concerning itself with historical methodology and procedure.

Upto a certain stage discussions about philosophical activity consisted of structuring metaphysical theories. At the height of the period when this was the most fashionable intellectual exercise it was supposed that the world was an integrated system, the nature of which could be decided by purely *a priori* reasoning. Of late, however, all metaphysical thinking is being subjected to reassessment. This reassessment judges not only the views stated above but also the positivist view that philosophical problems are amenable to scientific treatment, i. e., by the process of observation and experiment. Now, philosophical problems are not of the nature of physical

science wherein one observes how phenomena occur under given conditions. It is simple-minded to imagine that all philosophical problems can be solved by purely analytical reasoning. While it is true that such problems cannot be simply decided by techniques special to the empirical sciences, it must also be conceded that philosophical problems pertaining to history baffle simple analytical logic. To quote Gardiner: 'they are rooted in issues and difficulties connected in essential ways with our forms of language and with the categories and concepts in terms of which we think and express ourselves.'² In fact there is a difference between the sort of questions which a physicist or a biologist attracts and the sort of enquiry to which a historian is subjected. The confusion generally arose because in case of physics as well as history factual questions were put and appropriate answers expected. But when it was realised that philosophical-historical questions required answers of an interpretative nature it was at once recognised the analogy with not only science but also metaphysical concepts of a purely theoretical nature were misleading. Problems of history which could be framed in philosophical language had to be encountered at a level at which though the historian's head like that of a philosopher could be in the clouds his feet had to be firmly planted in matter-of-fact earth like those of a scientist. For the historian it was not only his subject matter that is different from that of a scientist but also the methodology of organizing his thought and the modes of communication and expression. Thus the latest approach to philosophico-historical problems is neither merely experimental-correlative nor analytical-logical but critical. This distinction will be dealt with at greater length later.

What has been said above reflects that considerable changes have occurred in philosophical outlook during recent times. These changes have occurred generally

2 *Theories of History* p. 265.

in two ways. In the first place there has been a tendency to present history as conforming to an overall scheme. Many such attempts have been made. But all of them resemble each other in imagining an ultimate purpose or a cognizable and integrated pattern. In describing such things typically philosophical parlance is used. But the most respectable among them have made it appear as if all the hypotheses have been formulated in strict accordance with inductive reasoning. Auguste Comte, Karl Marx and Arnold Toynbee have been among the most respectable among those who tried this kind of reasoning and have popularly succeeded. These attempts have been severely and successfully criticized by great thinkers like K. R. Popper.³ It must be conceded that the laws which writers like Toynbee speak of⁴ have nothing to do with the laws of natural sciences, but resemble sociological laws which merely reflect certain tendencies in given groups.⁵ In the case of the trends which are elevated to the level of laws by thinkers like Toynbee they are to be understood as much less than even predictable tendencies. Many 19th. century philosophers of history made the naive assumption that there were laws of historical development. These when properly scrutinized reveal that they represent merely a group of facts and do not constitute any statement of law. It must also be clear that many of these theories of history have for their central theme ideas like civilization (as in Toynbee), culture (as in Spengler), race (as among the Nazis), productive forces (as with Karl Marx) etc. But these terms have been very loosely used.

These 'laws' which the concerned philosophers say they have discovered lay down a deterministic pattern for history. A century ago or even a half century ago

3 **vide:** *The Poverty of Historicism and the Open Society and its Enemies*.

4 For example, the law of challenge and response.

5 When Parkinson designated his statements 'laws', he knew he was merely drawing attention forcibly to those tendencies.

these claims seemed to be credible. But now few theorists are willing to concede that decisions in history are determined in advance by factors beyond man's control. There was a class of historians like Dilthey, Croce and Collingwood who understood and proclaimed the autonomy of history introduced new concepts like 'all history being history of thought', 'all history being contemporary history' etc., none of which was free from confusion. Croce even made it appear as if there was a special faculty among historians (one does not know whether it is some sort of esoteric experience or intuition) by which the nature of history could be understood. But this will certainly clash with the necessity to consider history as an objective study employing cross-checks and verification.

In recent times historians, i.e., most of them treat their enquiries as mainly conceptual in nature and have tried to distinguish questions involving logical analysis from those of evaluation and estimation. Doubts have arisen regarding the very nature of historical knowledge. Amazing questions have elicited sceptical answers. Some questions are typical of the modern age. 1. Can history be objective? 2. Is history a science? 3. Can historians ever experience the thoughts of the past? 4. Can historians ever know anything about even the tendencies of the future? The problem of causation in history has been another thorny point. All these questions arise probably because the boundaries of history, its objectives and distinguishing characteristics have not been settled. The question of truth being ever available to the historian has bothered him and his critics so that the question assumed two forms: 1. Whether each historian deals with and presents only one aspect of Truth or 2. whether he presents a picture of alleged reality created by the subjective in him but called true by him. He might well believe that it is truth but will it on that account become truth? In either case historical speculation as well as writing assumes a relativist character i. e., to say that history has only relative validity. From

this arises the usual assertion that history has to be rewritten from time to time. If every version of a phase of history is true within limits and for the age concerned, what then is the ultimately true version? This is followed by the skeptical answer; there is perhaps none. Associated with this principle of relativism is the group of deterministic beliefs regarding the nature of the historical process itself.

Mixed with this problem is another modern tendency to treat all disciplines as merely different parts of knowledge which is only a modern restatement of the ancient Greek view of the integrated nature of philosophy. When history gets mixed up with sociology, economics etc. we get phenomena like Spengler and Marx. The theory of historical relativism found its ablest advocate in Karl Mannheim, a sociologist, according to whom the social locus of the historian decides the area and nature of his knowledge. It is generally stated by relativists that historians of different ages and different lands (separated in time as well as in space) hold different views on history and write different histories because they belong to different cultural milieus and so standpoints vary. It is suggested here that this variation is due to a shift (a necessary one because of passage of time, involving the constant flow of complicated events changing the nature of human experience) in value systems, i. e., the scale of values regarding what is essential, what is non-essential and even what is right and what is wrong. Whatever be the validity of this suggestion especially when it is made in an unqualified and dogmatic manner can it also be suggested that the methodology of investigation and interpretation will also vary? The theory of relativism emphasises the fact that irrespective of the premises on which conclusions are reached and of the nature of the conclusions reached, historians can make only statements whose truth is relative. If this is a universal proposition, that is to say, if there are only relative conclusions in

history, what would they be relative to? Are there no norms judged by which they will be relative? Or are they relative to each other only? This debate on relativism has a way of being resumed from time to time inspite of a lot of discussion by eminent scholars.

The latest emphasis, however, has been on historical explanation. The nature of historical explanation, its method and structure, the logic which controls whether it is merely a description or should also take on the character of a prescription or an ascription—are matters of current interest to students of historical theory. It is here that the methodology of historical analysis comes in for comparison with methodologies in allied subjects or any intellectual discipline for that matter. The distinction between explanation and prediction can be understood only if the meanings of these two terms: description and explanation are understood. In fact, the function of explanation is not to make the unknown known but to render the unintelligible intelligible. Intelligibility is the receiving-end-product of communication which is a verbal exercise. It has also been rightly pointed out by Hempel that the function of explanation is the opposite of that of prediction. It happens thus: In explanation one tries to clarify an event that *has happened* and to discover the causes that led to the event. In the case of prediction, however, given the complex of causes one tries to anticipate the kind of event that is likely to follow. In historical explanation since 1. the same set of causes can never recur and 2. since in the future the interference of new causative factors can neither be posited nor ruled out, the nature of the future cannot be categorised. It must be patent to anyone that either historical explanation follows the general law of explanation or it has its own unique character. If there is no uniform theory of explanation, how can the validity of historical explanation be tested? Historians differ among themselves because of their different evaluation of the capacity for certain causes to lead to certain events.

In this context a very important idea namely the distinction between explanation and justification must be grasped. The essence of the matter seems to be that no explanation can be final until *all* the attendant factors are known and the nature of explanations will vary with the quality as well as the quantity of our knowledge of attendant factors. Apart from 'explanation' and 'justification' there is a third area namely 'significance'. Thus we see that every event has a character different from that of every other event and the significance of each is unique. 'Significance' consists of the difference between event and event; 'significance' would be impossible of comprehension if 'explanation' is not full. In ordinary narrations in history the historian does not consider it necessary to give an explanation for every event he narrates for discovering its significance. In evaluation of positive factors historians vary from one another since some consider some causes more important than others in the making of an event. The Marxians for instance consider the economic factors more fundamental and important than any other in the chain of historical events.

Again the distinction between explanation and interpretation must be remembered. While interpreting a fact it is not merely explication or clarification that is involved but the provision of a meaning out of many possible ones which the historian considers is the most apposite. The significance of a fact resembles meaning or interpretation though the former is generally the revelation of character of an event *vis-a-vis* other events surrounding this fact of history. Interpretation takes on the larger role of making a historical fact meaningful from the point of view of the historian's cherished philosophy of life.

The many penetrative studies that have been made by eminent scholars on the basis of problems of historical enquiry have not led to the creation of a framework of knowledge special to the human sciences as distinct from

the natural sciences. There is an area of historical explanation whereby the historian attributes motives and indulges in psychological 'rationalism' of one sort or another. These can never be brought under any categories of general laws. It must be obvious to anyone that the absence of a technical vocabulary or terminology is both the cause and result of the absence of general laws. In the case of philosophers like Hegel, Comte and Marx the totality of social phenomena is deemed more important and significant than individual or unique cases. Popper demolishes the exaggerated claims of 'holism'. Obviously the numerous problems we have examined hereabove have been experienced by practising historians from the beginning of historiography. But their formulation in clear terms is of recent origin.

One of the characteristics of modern, i. e., recent European Historiography is social realism. Modern European Historiographers have interested themselves in political, diplomatic, intellectual, economic, social and cultural histories. Except political and diplomatic, the rest can all be considered social. The biographical approach in historiography has been prominent in spite of much talk about collectivist theories. C. V. Wedgwood said with reference to Richelieu as follows: 'The part played by the great man in history is usually over-estimated'. On the other hand the modern fashion of allowing no influence to the individual at all and ascribing all historical developments to social or economic process seems equally mistaken. If forces beyond individual control—the spiritual force of a great religious revival, the economic and social forces driving France towards national consciousness and expansion—played an important part in the French monarchy, it is difficult to imagine quite how these forces should have found expression under other guidance than that of Cardinal Richelieu. It is the measure of his greatness that it should be so difficult to imagine the growth of the French monarchy or the

development of Europe in the 17th century without him'⁶

Among recent historians Rafael Altamira who wrote on Philip II and G. P. Gooch (1873-1968) who wrote on Frederick the Great, Maria Theresa, Catharine the Great, and Louis XV can be mentioned. Opposite to this tendency to consider the biographical approach important is the other conception of History which regards 'Collectivities, classes, conditions and circumstances' as the major propelling force of the historical process. Karl Lamprecht (1856-1915) was dissatisfied with the individual in History and sought historical laws through investigations of the mob psyche in different periods. To him the masses counted for more than the individual. He said, 'the multitude domineered over the genius'. Henri See (1864-1936) a pupil of Fustel de Coulanges, who wrote on 'Louis XI and his relations with the Towns' was of the opinion that individuals were powerless against 'the force of things'. In spite of these views the emphasis on the role of the individuals is only a manifestation of a partiality for political history. The others develop a preference for socio-economic. The current tendency, however, is to recognize the interdependence of the many aspects of history. But still the emphasis on politics was sought to be justified by social power being concentrated in political hands. This was bound to create a reaction. Frederic Harrison once said, that 9/10 of the past history of mankind had been ignored by those who concentrated on political history. Altamira who wrote his 'History of Spanish Civilization' gave an integrated picture of the life of the Spanish people. Schmoller (1838—1917) was one of those who emphasised the close relationship between economic phenomena and the life of the individual in society. This approach was a strong practical support to the Marxian ideology.

The History of Ideas had attracted historians like Gooch and See. But the domain of ideas is on the borderland between history and metaphysics and naturally historians like Gooch indulged in a limited sense in this field of writing.

Diplomatic history which is an auxiliary to political history normally has been further developed by making diplomacy stand for relations between peoples and peoples in addition to links between state and governments.

Military history assumed special importance after the First World War during which special and modern techniques of war developed. Concerned with the art of war tactics, strategy, battles (land, sea and air), armaments, (nuclear and conventional have) been proliferating. But the interdependence of non-military and military factors like linking economic motivation with armament manufacture has been growing.

Religious history which is by no means new or novel has been revived also. Even as some historians thought that economic motivation was the prime cause of the French Revolution, others have emphasised the religious aspect of it.

Local or regional history has been in the forefront in recent times. The history of localities, research into toponyms, research on merchant and trade guilds, trade routes etc. have become important in determining the cause of a large segment of social interest and activity.

PART IV

Oriental

Historiography

Chinese

Historiography

The Chinese produced some of the most gifted historians and their tradition of historiography goes back deep into pre-Christian centuries. The Chinese had a double streak in their genius. One was the 'ethical-philosophical' of which the Confucian tradition is the most illustrious, and the other is the 'historical' which has preserved for us a large mass of Chinese history chronologically written from pretty early times. The Chinese divided their classics into five and History was one of them. It corresponded to the Clio of the Greeks. Early Chinese history was therefore written in the classical style and Chinese scholars of those times and for a long time thereafter deemed it beneath their dignity to write in the language of the common man.

There are specialist histories on different aspects of Chinese life. The Chinese have produced a large volume of local histories and gazetteers. Some of them relate to the whole of China. They are descriptive and statistical geography of China. We have Chinese chronicles on the dependencies of the empire as well as of the histories of the peoples of non-Chinese extraction within the empire. Some of them deal with the Chinese foreign relations. In all nearly 5,000 gazetteers exist. Some of them are exceedingly detailed in their information and in their description of the governmental machinery of the Chinese. The Imperial political structure from the emperor to a common government servant including the civil services is described. China has a large volume of inscriptions. These have been compiled and studied. Treatises have been written on them by the Chinese themselves. But a really important innovation the Chinese introduced in their art of historiography is historical criticism.

A great part of the Chinese historical literature is of first rate quality even when it is judged by the severe standards of modern scholarship. 'The student of China's history is confronted by an embarrassment of riches'.³ The Chinese have also produced encyclopaedias and anthologies which contain a large fund of historical material. The modern historical tradition of China is influenced by communist ideology. But it is tinged with a strong streak of nationalism.

3 Latourette: *China, its History and culture*, p. 780.

20

Islamic Historiography

In the Medieval period, while European historiography was in the hands of Christian theologians, Muslims in the Middle East were creating their own tradition of historical writing which was theological in some respects and scientific in many others. The Arab tribes before Muhammad lived in an atmosphere of perpetual and dynastic feuds and the sense of vendetta made them remember the Past. But serious historical chronicling started only after the founding of Islam by the Prophet. When a new religion is founded and it represents a radical and important departure from the previous culture and faith, the new religion feels obliged to justify itself by resorting to a kind of historiography which designedly denigrates the past and praises the new

In fact, this attitude continued till 1911. The earliest phase of Chinese historical literature was in the form of folklore and numerous proverbs, and these proverbs represented the essence of Chinese traditional wisdom. The mass of historical material collected and displayed by the Chinese over such a long period of time recording in careful detail which they considered important is unparalleled among ancient people. The historian Latourette compares the Chinese with the Hindus and says 'in marked contrast with the peoples of India the Chinese have been historically minded.'¹

In the reign of Wu-ti, Ssu-ma-Chien the greatest among Chinese historians wrote his great history called *The Shih chi*, which means 'historical records'. Ssu-ma-Chien was born in c. 145 B. C., son of Ssu-ma-t'an who was a court astrologer. Ssu-ma-Chien when he was young had memorised the texts of antiquity and he used these as his source material. Ssu-ma-Chien travelled extensively. He may be called the Father of History in Oriental lands and like his opposite number in the West, namely, Herodotus who also extensively travelled, he used the experiences of travel as also his source material. He succeeded his father to his office as court astrologer and he brought about the reform of the calendar. For daring to support a general who was out of favour with the emperor he was emasculated, and that was a common punishment in those times. Part of his famous History was written before this event and part after. *The Shih chi* covers the history of China from the beginning to Ssu-ma-Chien's own day. It includes not only significant political events but gives the biographies of important persons; chronological tables of battles, economic data, the calendar and so forth. *The Shih chi* was later altered and added to by many scholars and this has created serious textual problems. But anyway the bulk of that work was a model for later dynastic histories. The

entire body of Chinese dynastic histories drawing from and modelled on *The Shih chi* is more extensive and reliable than the historical literature produced by any other people over so long a period. *The Shih chi* of Ssu-ma-Chien has been rightly treated as a famous standard general history of China. It gives the story from the beginning and is based on earlier Chinese works. It was written at the close of the second and the beginning of the first century B. C.²

The histories of China following *The Shih chi* are a continuation of each earlier history and are generally planned on Ssu-ma-Chien's history.

The Tso-chuan is another kind of history. It is in the form of a chronicle and the events are listed year by year. The most reputed among such chronicles was the *Tzu-chih-tung chien* by Ssu-ma-Kuang (1019-1086). This chronicle covered the history of China's development from late in the Chow to the beginning of the Sung periods. This work illustrates the historical-mindedness of the Sung dynasty in a remarkable way. It covered the period from the 5th century B. C. to the close of the five dynasties. Ssu-ma-Kuang was a politician; and he wrote his history when he was not in power. What these historians thought of history can be gathered from the names they gave to their works. Yuan-chu prepared a history called *Tung-chien-chishipenmo* which means 'root causes and effects of affairs recorded in the universal mirror'. This shows that the Chinese were concerned with the causes and effects of historical phenomena which again means that they believed in the chain of causation. Their likening of history to a mirror is significant and reminds one of the Hindu literary tradition which uses the word *Dharpana* (mirror) to mean a comprehensive work.

2 This has been translated into French with full apparatus of commentary by Edouard Chavannes: Five volumes, Paris (1895-1905)

1 K. S. Latourette: *The Chinese, their history and culture*, 1951

dispensation. The founding of Buddhism was followed by Buddhist chronicles, Jataka stories, the Vamsas etc. The Christian theologian mounted an attack on the pagans as Orosius did and wrote a sort of history from the Christian point of view; similarly, the Muslims started a historiographical tradition from the Islamic point of view. The early Khaliphs wished to discover and record their ancestry to establish their legitimacy; and for this purpose they encouraged chroniclers and historians in their courts. Thus commenced the tradition of court historians in the Muslim governments in India. The successors of the Prophet wished to establish their dynastic links with the founder of Islam on a sure footing by proper genealogical derivations and this required chronicling effort. The pre-Islamic oral traditions got stabilised and the anecdotes connected with the Prophet became a chief source of early Islamic history for Muslims of later generations. The desire to record the story of the cultural and military expansion of Islam during the centuries immediately following the founding of the Khaliphate, the glories of the conquering heroes and the sins of the infidels was a dominant motive for the early Muslims to start writing their histories.

Serious historiographical efforts among the Muslims of the Middle East began only after A. D. 750 i. e., after the founding of the Abbasid Khaliphate. This took the shape of biographies, anecdotes and episodic history, genealogies as well as collections of tradition. The oldest historical biography in Arabic is that of Ibn Ishaq who wrote the Prophet's life. Ibn Hisham (d. 834) who also wrote a biography of Muhammad incorporated in his work a good part of Ibn Ishaq's 'Life of the Prophet'. Thus started the Muhammadan Epic which was intended to justify the triumph of Islam.

In the earlier stages, Muslim system of chronology was more accurate than the Christian, for it could easily and readily date its events from the Hegira without

having to discover the date of Creation or settle the knotty problems like the date of birth of the Prophet etc. problems which the Christian historians had to face. Early Muslim historiography was concerned mostly with the rise and spread of Islam and the political consequences of that event. As is naturally to be expected, they believed in the providential direction of the historical process.

Al Firdausi (935-1020) wrote in Persian the *Book of Kings* and this served as a model for the Arabian historians. Al Waqidi (747-823), a historian in the Abbasid court wrote the *History of the Wars of the Prophet*. Al Baladhuri of the 9th century put together the early achievements of the Muslims in his *Conquests of the Countries*. This is an authoritative work on the expansion of Islam. Almost simultaneously was composed the *History of Arabia and Persia* by Dinawari; and Ibn Abi Tahir (d. 902) wrote his *The History of Baghdad and its Caliphs*. This is a standard work on the Khaliphate of Baghdad.

Al Tahari (838-923) was a towering historian among the early Muslims. He was a very learned man who had travelled widely. He equipped himself thoroughly for his task of writing this famous work *The Annals of the Apostles and Kings* and brought it down to A. D. 915. He wrote a poor style but collected a large fund of material which was used by most of the later historians. He has been wrongly compared to Livy by critics who had overlooked the narrative qualities of the Roman historian.

Al-Masudi (d. 956) was an encyclopaedist and a historian. He divided his vast quantity of historical material into convenient divisions like kings, events and dynasties. His *Meadows of Gold* contain social historical material also and in this respect he broke new ground. He has been called the Herodotus of the

Arabs but here again the analogy fails for the Father of History was more truly a historian.

Ibn Miskawaihi (c. 970) wrote the *Experiences of the Nations* which is noted for its impartiality. A critic has praised his work as follows: 'In the work of Miskawaihi Arabic historical composition seems to reach its highest point.' But on the whole he was inferior to Ibn Khaldun.

Ali Al-Tanukhi wrote in the 10th century his *Collections of Historians* and Ali-Hasan brought out in the 12th century his *The History of Damascus*; Makrisi (1360-1442) wrote a *History of Muslim Egypt* and has given much topographical information about that country. Abu-l-Faraj al Ispahani (897-967) wrote a *World History* while Ibu-al Athir (1160-1232) showed a capacity to comprehend the problem of causation in history.

Baha al-Din (1185-1234) wrote a good biography of Saladin and Yaqut of the 12th century composed a *Dictionary of learned Muslims*. Ibn Khallikhan (1211-1282) prepared the *Biographical Dictionary* in which the biographies of nearly 900 Islamic personages were collected.

Al-Biruni (973-1048) who lived in the court of Mahmud of Ghazni and stayed for some time in India studying her culture, was an able sociologist and astronomer. He placed Muslim historical chronology on a sound footing. He was the author of the *Kitab-ul-Hind* (1030) in which while he expressed his admiration for the cultural achievements of the Hindus, he did not shrink from spotlighting their deficiencies. He speaks of the lack of historical sense among the Hindus and says that they were so self-satisfied that they would not believe or admit that there were other people in the world as gifted as they. 'The work of Al-Biruni is unique in Muslim literature as an earnest attempt to study an idolatrous world of thought'.

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was the ablest Arab historian. He could reflect on the purpose of History. H. E. Barnes calls him the Roger Bacon of medieval historiography. He believed that History must relate not only to political developments but must be concerned with social problems also. In the *Prolegomena to Universal History* (*Mukadamat fi'l tarikh*) he sets forth his views on history. According to him history was the science of the origin and development of society and civilization. Robert Flint holds that he can be considered the 'founder of the science of history'. He wrote his *Universal History* in seven volumes.

Abu Zaid (1332-1406), a Tunisian who was a contemporary of Timur, wrote an autobiography in which a lot of contemporary political developments are discussed. He may be said to have discovered the law of growth and decay of social groups.

21

Indian

Historical tradition

Even a casual student of Indian history cannot fail to note that the people of this country in the ancient period somehow or other had failed to write their history but during the medieval and modern periods of our history historiography has made notable progress. But still we would try to decide the factual issue of availability of Hindu historical literature and then if it is found that such a literature is not available try to find out the causes for such a situation.

P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar observes "If chronology is the eye of history ancient Indian history will have always to be blind".¹ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri says "literature is in other countries, the bedrock of history; in India it is often a snare".² Such forthright comment could not have

been made if the situation were not pretty serious. But Surendranath Banerjee, among others, has held that it would be wrong to suppose that Ancient India did not produce really good historical literature but that these works have been for some reason lost. It is rather difficult to believe that only historical literature has been singled out for total destruction by nature or by man. The incredibility is further strengthened by lack of references to these works in later literature: the practice of referring to *purvacharyas* could not have missed the historical literature if one had existed.

Foreign geographers and historians like Pliny, Ptolemy and the author of the *Periplus* give us important historical and topographical information about South India; the South Indian sailors and merchants who must have gone to foreign places like Egypt, Mesopotamia, Ceylon etc., do not give us such information. Alexander's invasion of Northwest India would go unrecorded if we depended on Indian sources only.

History has been mainly political history all these days; and even early societies, if they were so inclined, could have written political histories of a sort. Political history which is fundamental gains significance only in a society which is politically minded; Indian (Hindu) society which is largely non-political in character i.e., a society which is minimally influenced by the political fortunes of the state, therefore, could not interest itself in rearing a tradition of writing political history. So the Hindu tradition of writing Puranas and the Buddhist tradition of writing the Vamsas and the Jatakas had nothing to do with the social instincts which brought forth the writings of Thucydides, Caesar or Clarendon.

1 P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar *History of the Tamils*—introduction

2 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: *The Colas* (2nd edition), p. 11

While we are left without historical literature as such, we have abundant historical material in lithic inscriptions, copper plates, coins etc., which help us partially at least to reconstruct the past history of the country. But, for the general political, social and economic history of any country well documented and substantially written out historical literature is absolutely necessary. Archaeology, epigraphy and similar non-literary sources of history can yield only limited, narrow and local, though precise and dependable, information, which however, cannot be a substitute for good historical literature.

Our political history for the ancient period has not yet been fully written out; crucial dates are not yet found. Some of the greatest sons of India like Panini, Kautilya, Kalidasa, Tiruvalluvar have not found their definite places in the chronological framework of history. The Hindu author of the Gita is still a mythical figure while the Buddha has been helped by Pali and Chinese chronicles to find his place in the 6th century B. C.; lack of chronologically arranged historical data makes the task of writing the political history of the ancient period very difficult. Some sort of social history can no doubt be attempted, by pooling the many allusions in literature which have no declaredly historical purpose. But these references and the social history based on them become jejune when they are not related to a well-arranged political history; it is like flesh without bones all the time falling out of its place. The interrelation between literature (giving data regarding the social life of the people), and history (supplying the frame-work of political history) is fundamental. Trevelyan remarks: "Those who write or read the history of a period should be soaked in its literature and those who read or expound literature should be soaked in history".³

3 G. M. Trevelyan : *The Present Position of History*, (1927)

Viewed in this light, as we know pretty little about the political and social history of the age contemporary with the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, to that extent, our appreciation of that literature is deficient in understanding and enjoyment, even as our study of Chaucer would be handicapped greatly if we did not know the historical background of the pilgrimage to Canterbury. But if it is suggested that ancient Indian literature was written neither for understanding nor for enjoyment but for recitation and for worship, the matter is taken out of the hands of the historian.

The Puranas and the heroic poems are the most typical among the sources giving some consolidated historical material; and Pargiter remarks: "It is true that the accounts of dynasties and genealogies given in the Mahabharata and the Puranas and the heroic poems composed by the court poets of ancient India do contain elements of historical data".⁴ This claim is not disputed; and Fleet says: We can trace a use at least of Vamsavalis in the historical chapters of some of the Puranas.⁵ Gilbert Murray says: 'If the Iliad and the Odyssey were all fiction we should still learn from them a great deal about early Greek customs, about practices of war and government, about marriage, about land tenure, worship, farming, commerce and above all the methods of seafaring',⁶ though we suppose that Homer knew no more about the Olympians than we do. This is true of our epics also; and the social information we gather from the epics and the Puranas, will be true of the age contemporary with the authors of these epics and the Puranas; as we do not know for certain the dates of these authors, the information regarding social conditions cannot be fitted in a chronological scale in their proper places.

4 F. E. Pargiter : *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*.

5 Dr. J. F. Fleet : Introduction to Vol. III : *Corpus "Inscriptionum Indicarum"*

6 G. Murray : *The Rise of the Greek Epic*

Therefore, R. C. Majumdar, referring to the Puranic chronology says that this must not, of course, be confused with history proper.⁷ This adverse criticism of the Puranas took the form of ridicule at the hands of Macaulay who made fun of the Pauranika's notion of geography and history (which might after all have been allegorical) and sneeringly referred to Hindu History 'abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns thirty thousand years long-and geography, made up of oceans of treacle and seas of butter'.⁸

Here it would be relevant to quote the words of A. B. Keith, the historian of Sanskrit literature: 'In view of the antiquity and the developed character of Indian civilization it would indeed be ridiculous to expect to find India destitute of historical sense; but what is really essential is the fact that, despite the abundance of its literature, history is so miserably represented, and that in the whole of the great period of Sanskrit literature, there is not one writer who can be seriously regarded as a critical historian.'⁹

But it seems this situation deserves neither uncritical acceptance nor unsympathetic derision. The relevant question would be 'what was the purpose of the puranas?' While they do contain valuable historical information in their genealogical or dynastic lists, these lists (perhaps interpolations) tell us nothing of the background which could help us to understand them and interpret them properly.

The Pauranika in one sense does resemble the historical novelist. The author of the historical novel uses historical material to give credence and support to a story and thereby not only to delight and entertain but

also create an atmosphere of conviction. The Pauranika, like the historical novelist, allows fiction to dominate facts. So they lack credentials from the point of view of the historian.

The Hindu princes of ancient India maintained in their courts Sutas and Magadhas whose business was perhaps to maintain a sort of official records; but their exact functions are not quite clear, though possibly they were some sort of genealogists. Materials collected and maintained by these men constituted the nucleus of the Vamsavalis. The Gopas who were expected to maintain a detailed account of the courts and institutions of all villages must have maintained some sort of registers. But we have none of them now. Even if we had them, we would not call them historical literature.

A significant difference between the ancient Indian Pauranika and the modern Indian historian is that the former prefers to take the view that 'We would soon all be dead as the ancients' while the latter prefers to take the view that 'our ancients were once as much alive as we are'; so that the former thinks more of 'death' and the 'hereafter' and is obviously unconcerned with temporal affairs and the latter thinks more of 'life', takes a materialist view of the things and asks for more and more records of past events. The Pauranika did not distinguish between myths, legends and supernatural events, and history proper; he betrays a lack of ideal of factuality in him. And it is not his fault that he confounds the historian; for he never professed to serve the purposes which a modern scientific historian keeps in view; but it is the historian's misfortune that he has to depend on the Pauranika.

The Buddhists and the Jains have recorded certain events in their Vamsas; and their Jatakas are not totally devoid of factuality. But even they, at the slightest

7 R. C. Majumdar: **Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon**, (ed. by C. H. Philips), pp. 24 etc.

8 T. B. Macaulay: **Minute on Education**, (1835)

9 T. B. Keith: **History of Sanskrit Literature**.

temptation tend to corrupt biographies into Jatakas. The tendency to make miracles and legends the daily bread of history is extremely annoying to the modern historian.

It is said that ancient Indians had a sense of history but left no historical writing. But those who say so, forget that historical sense can be inferred only from historical motive, and not merely from the availability of historical information. The Prasastis which preface inscriptions are the result of an anxiety to recount the achievements of a king incidentally while recording a simple transaction like a gift to a temple or a transfer of some property; it was not disinterested desire to record a historical detail. The inscriptions had no contemporary historical purpose; they served only a legal purpose like assigning a privilege, recording a grant etc. The information given in the Prasastis is not (with rare exceptions) chronologically arranged, either. This makes one doubt if the motive was historical after all or merely legal and laudatory.

In spite of innumerable inscriptions and a considerable volume of literature, they do not help us to get a proper perspective of events or personalities of ancient India. Asoka is shrouded in misty dignity; Chandragupta of Visakhadatta is not unlike the Henry IV of Shakespeare. Harsha is the hero of a romance by Bana comparable to the Coeur de Lion of Scott. The system of recording administrative instructions on pillars and stones, it is suggested not without justification, was learned by the Mauryas from the Persians whose arrangements for provincial administration were a sort of prototype.

The position could be summarized. Historical documents of an incidental nature do not constitute historical literature.

In the realm of history 'the moment we have reason to think that we are being treated to fiction instead of fact, be the fiction ever so brilliant and ever so

allegorically significant "our interest collapses like a pricked balloon."¹⁰ To hold our interest, you must tell us something we believe to be true about the men who once walked the earth—and the epics and the Puranas contain so much of the stuff that one cannot believe to be true; and to that extent they are not history. History must not degenerate into gossip. History starts from the proposition that 'there is no difference in degree of reality between past and present'; so that the 'supernatural' is always suspect to the historian. If the supernatural is but an embellishment to an otherwise historical core, the overgrowth could be removed and the history understood; but if the supernatural is the essence of the story, it ceases to be of interest to the historian.

Lack of an era or the use of many eras which are not among themselves correlated was not necessarily a serious cause; for in the pre-Christian age there was no era in Europe. But the record of events in a systematic way with chronological precision helps one to relate events to one another and connect them finally with the Christian era. For the events of national importance like the founding of Rome or the institution of the Olympic games served as historical spring boards in ancient Europe. The Parinirvana of the Buddha has been such an event in India and has been helpful in corroborating data based on foreign testimony. But the historical use to which that event is put shows only the modern historian's resourcefulness; the ancients did not make much use of the event; otherwise the Parinirvana itself could have easily become the starting point of an era as important as the Christian era or the Hegira. The Kalia era is important and possibly the oldest of the Hindu eras. But its use was never widespread; and the traditional date 3102 B. C. is a relatively late invention.

10 G. M. Trevelyan: *The Present Position of History*, (1927)

The Saka' Salivahana and Kollam eras were more popular than the Kali era. Thus the absence of a sense of chronology is the most serious pointer to a lack of historical sense in ancient India. The cynic in India who peeps into distant eternity seems to draw our attention to the final futility of all knowledge about the activities and ideologies of men and women and thereby ridicule all historiography.

Histories are written on the basis of a sense of homogeneity in the land of the historian. Thucydides and Xenophon could write their histories in Greece where a sense of unity in the face of Persian menace existed. In India the unity that existed was 'cultural' which is a generalized and currently euphemistic way of saying 'religious'. A sense of religious unity could produce only a purana type of history. Political history could come only in the wake of a sense of national unity. That unity came to this country only during the British period and most probably as a result of British rule and the impact of British thought and institutions on indigenous thought and institutions. R. C. Majumdar observes: "It must be remembered that the study of history in India received its first impetus from nationalist sentiment and was largely sustained by it throughout the British period."¹¹

People with a dynamic history (or who engage in foreign conquests or establishment of colonies or building of empires or who unite to resist) possess the urge to record their temporal achievements. Greece, Rome expanding Islam and modern Europe are examples. But in India such achievements were not emotionally associated with the whole people but only with particular heroes who received their meed of praise. This praise though probably historical was surely not history.

11 R. C. Majumdar: *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*; (ed. by C. H. Philips), p. 427

Lack of curiosity about secular affairs as such among the Hindus can be thought of as a possible cause for this situation. Humanistic studies as such were generally not known to ancient India. Every activity (except the most basic) of the Hindu was determined by religious exigencies and requirements: to support a metaphysical argument or to serve a religious ritual; the sciences like astronomy, technical and architectural skill like that of building temples, devotional music, painting of Jataka themes or the glory of the Avatars or doings in a Hindu Heaven, or bending the art of sculpture to making icons; the dominant note in these varied sciences and arts was religious. The aspirations of Dharma, Artha and Kama were to be fulfilled in a Moksha which literally means 'release' from temporal attachments. At the periphery of all this activity there was a secular touch which was at respectable distance from history. The praise of man, i. e., the patron king, was indulged in only after equating him with Vishnu. This attitude stunted the growth of science and technology also; they did not develop beyond the point determined by the requirements of religion. The Cambridge History of India, summarizing said, 'The explanation of this arrested progress must be sought in a state of society which tended to restrict intellectual activity to religious orders'.¹²

It is often said that Ancient Indians lacked the scientific attitude of mind. It may not be quite correct to say that. They had to their credit scientific discoveries like the earth's rotation round the sun, and technological achievements like the iron pillar. But the genius required for this type of scientific achievement is different from the attitude of mind required to write history based on a well regulated chronology and a system of secular values.

The Hindus had a cyclical theory of successive chaturyugas, coming over and over again in the same

12 *The Cambridge History of India* Vol. I, p. 58

order; and experiencing the same quality and pace of deterioration. It was essentially a pessimistic view though it is pointed out that when the extreme limit of deterioration is reached a merciful God will rescue creation and give it a fresh start which in course of time will go down as the previous one, only to be once again rescued. When Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says 'The world fulfils itself in self-destruction' and 'Another drama may commence and go on for ages', he is only expressing the ancient cyclical theory in modern English; and when he says 'History is the working out of a purpose', he evidently means a cyclical purpose. This view is the opposite of the modern theory of progress which is best expressed in the words of J. B. Bury: 'The belief in a steady advance towards human perfection was put into more concrete form by the philosopher Fontenelle, when he stated that 'the sound views of intellectual men in different generations will continually add up' and concluded that progress is a 'natural successory effect of the constitution of the human mind'.¹³ This theory of progress was largely the product of Darwinism. But even H. G. Wells who had been usually optimistic about the future of mankind wrote despairingly that '*Homo sapiens* as he has been pleased to call himself, is in his present form played out' and 'mankind should give place to rats or unclean intrusive monsters equipped with streptococci for our undoing'.

It has also been said that the Indian (Hindu) mind was peculiarly susceptible to fatalist doctrines and this frame of mind precluded interest in historical interpretation. The fatalist view is akin to the teleological and believes in a cosmic purpose driving man relentlessly on to a predestined goal willy nilly. This view is theoretically countered by saying that the doctrine of Karma does provide ample scope for self-determination for the individual; and so human life is not hide bound and restricted to any compulsorily predetermined patterns of

Karma; and it is countered by reference to the material achievements of the Hindus. Neither the fatalist doctrines deemed to be endemic to Hindu society nor the pessimism of the Buddhists ever prevented large sections of Indian society from contributing to pronounced material advancement. But while bearing this in mind, it will be right also to point out that the general mass of people in India did hold fatalistic views (even of the perverted type) and this situation naturally led to lack of secular or temporal history.

"While one might legitimately say that the Hindu understanding of history is 'different' from what one has come to mean by that term in modern thought, it is hardly justifiable to conclude that the Hindus had no view of history at all" — is a view usually put forward by scholars who detect in Hindu thought a philosophy of history. Here we are using two distinctly different definitions of history: one, the modern scientific definition of 'temporal history' and the other opposed to or at least different from this concept. It is illogical to adopt two different definitions for a term while employing it in the course of a single argument.

In the Hindu thought while the principle of re-incarnation (and so of transmigration) is a definite expression of a fundamentally individualistic characteristic of the Hindu attitude to history, the social organization was totalitarian and at least theoretically immutable. This view of history suffered from the disadvantages of both views, viz., the indifference to history bred by a preoccupation with personal problems of salvation and the impossibility of history in a determined and unalterable social order. The Hindu social order was not only philosophically nonegoistic but also sociologically anti-individualistic. Society as an organic whole was never considered as being the locus of the meaning of history by the Hindu or his variant, the Buddhist or the Jain.

13 J. B. Bury: *The Idea of Progress*, (1920).

It may be suggested that the static nature of the Hindu society prevented speculation. In any rigidly determined order of society (i. e., totalitarian), metaphysical speculation in the nature of historical or political theories becomes a sort of heresy. Anybody who speculates about change or approvingly contemplates the complex possibilities of social evolution will be a 'revisionist'. And in the Indian (Hindu) society where the social arrangements are taken for granted, the people naturally lack the initiative and the urge for the chronicling of secular events; for such chronicles could serve no purpose in such a society.

Historiography as a conscious product of a historical sense is possible only in a free society which permits of deliberate alteration of an established order. The Indian social arrangements (and these included political arrangements) under the wide and pervasive umbrella of Dharma, the roots of which were lost to human memory and were supposed to originate in the Creator, were fixed and total in their control over the societies. In such an atmosphere, history or historical interpretation, except within the framework of that foundational arrangement, was inconceivable. Science and technology, metaphysics and literature of a type could flourish in that atmosphere, but not social criticism which is the lifebreath of history. So that B. Croce's thesis that 'History is the story of Liberty' assumes a new significance.

Our ancients had built an eternally stable and conservative society closely knit by the Dharma whose total hold on the members of that society would not permit freaks and eccentrics, who are the very essence of a free society, to function therein. Permanent, continuous and absolute conformity was the demand on the individual by that Dharma; aberrant ones were sinners. In a free society such non-conformists are not only to be tolerated but welcomed and encouraged. Objective and impartial

history is possible only in a free society. The managers of unfree societies have need for another kind of history no doubt, i. e., the propagandist history which serves their political purposes.

The faculty of social criticism as distinguished from a mere scientific bent of mind, metaphysical and speculative mind (both of which the Hindus possessed in abundance), was a gap in the Hindu mental make-up. The scientific mind is concerned with drawing conclusions from observed physical data got by repeated experiments; and the metaphysical, speculative mind belongs generally to the realm of abstract thought incapable of empirical control. But the faculty of social criticism is concerned with imaginative interpretation of secular data within the four walls of empiricism, like literary criticism (which would be incomplete if it operated without reference to historical background or the social milieu), political theory or historical interpretation. This is a third faculty. In Greek thought all these are found e. g., the first is seen in Archimedes, Euclid etc., the second in Socrates, Plato etc., and the third in Thucydides, Xenophon etc., but above all in Aristotle. It is true that the human mental faculty is one integrated whole; but it is still possible to imagine that on given occasions of intellectual effort, the thinking process is dominated by a particular methodology; e. g., either strict adherence to facts and close logic in the matter of deductions from empirical data; or building up of metaphysical theories on hypotheses like which cannot be proved or rejected on grounds of temporal experience or interpretation (within the bounds of ordinary reason) of past facts and events over which one has no control. Here, it might be said that though these functions are not capable of strict compartmentalization in the human mind, still one methodology dominates the rest on particular occasions; so that while physical science is one's concern, observation and derivation of generalized formulae is the methodology; in metaphysical speculation, formulation of hypotheses beyond ordinary reason and building up

of theories which are logical beyond the point of empirical testing is the methodology; in historical interpretation, the dominant faculty is humanist interpretation of real and well-attested facts of history; and it is here, I should imagine, that the truly critical function of the human mind is at play. This methodology was singularly absent from ancient Indian schemes of investigation. It governs not only this study of the historical process, but also criticism of literature with reference to the social milieu or the historical background as also our appreciation of political theories of the kind evolved by Locke, Rousseau or Bentham. Lack of an apparatus of social criticism naturally prevented the growth of a tradition of historiography. It will not be too much to say that this third faculty is the most strenuous and taxing of intellectual efforts in the performance and the most educative in the reward. Thus it is obvious that in Hindu India there was neither a tradition of criticism nor a criticism of tradition.

The consequences of this situation are suffered by the modern historian. The Hindu period in the history of India is full of gaps which have not yet been filled satisfactorily; e. g., the dark period before the rise of the imperial Guptas, after the fall of the Satavahanas in Andhra history and after the close of the Sangam age in Tamil history.

R. C. Majumdar says "Historiography was practically unknown to the Hindus at the beginning of the 19th century. Historiography in modern India, at least among the Hindus is thus barely a century old".¹⁴ Although the term 'Itihasa' is now regarded as equivalent to History, it was used at that period in a very different or rather more comprehensive sense.

When we have said all this, we should remember that in the 12th century A. D. there lived in Kashmir

a brahmin by name Kalhana who wrote the famous *Rajatarangini* - and that work can easily be considered to be a historical work of course within limits. If we are to write a 'History of Indian Historians' we should properly begin with Kalhana. He had his limitations and he is useful only for the history of Kashmir. But even he wrote only after the Muslims had introduced into India a tradition of Historical writing. Kalhana of Kashmir could easily be influenced by the ancient Chinese tradition of historical record-keeping and a similar Muslim tradition.

When we pass from the ancient to the medieval period of Indian history we pass to a period which witnessed a sort of historical literature growing up in the country thanks to Muslim chroniclers. They wrote mostly political history, often biased, occasionally trustworthy, but always revealing a historical sense. Muslim contacts during the middle ages introduced systematic historical writing into India; and Kalhana himself was only the most distinguished beneficiary of the gift. Foreign travellers visited ancient India at rare intervals, but now from the later middle ages onwards such visits became more frequent and their notices constitute a valuable source of historical information supplementing local writings. But still on the native side, except for Kalhana, not a piece of standard historical writing can be mentioned. Though the art of writing history had become known to the Indians in the middle ages, the business of writing history and preparing reports and notes fell to Muslim scholars and travellers like Al-Biruni, Barani, Ferishta and others. Dodwell paying a great compliment to medieval Muslim historians said, 'The Muslim chroniclers are far superior to our own (English) medieval chroniclers'. The Muslim historian Barani said "My life has been spent in a minute examination of books, and in every science I have studied many literary works both ancient and modern, and after the science of Quranic commentary, the study of tradition, jurisprudence, and

¹⁴ R. C. Majumdar *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (ed. by C. H. Philips), p. 416

the mystic path of the shaykhs I have not seen as many benefits in any other form of learning or practical activity as I have in the science of history". This language was not heard before in India. Though to Barani history has a didactic and religious purpose and he feels that the historian has a duty to teach the lesson of history, we cannot seriously differ from him, when he says that 'History is a means of strengthening reason and judgment by the study of the experience of others'.

Though this was Barani's intention, in the actual writing of history, P. Hardy detects in him something like a parable or a 'medieval morality-tale'. From this it is only an extension of thought for Hardy to illustrate with appropriate examples that 'Barani treats history as a branch of theology'. Speaking about Amir Khusru, the poet-historian, P. Hardy says that "Amir Khusru wrote not to fulfil a historical purpose but an aesthetic purpose; he did not write history but wrote only poetry".¹⁵ In essence, it looks as if, from Hardy's point of view, the medieval Muslim historians wrote no better history than the Puranas. But still, that the Muslim chroniclers generally kept their narrative within a chronological framework is really a great advance on the earlier Hindu writers. If it is said that the Muslim historians record the fortunes of the powerful and the great only, it is certainly more consoling than recording nobody's. While the Muslim historians observed temporal affairs through religious spectacles, the Hindus wore a kind of blinkers which by some strange process of mental refraction prevented chronologically arranged temporal affairs from gaining their cognition. Hardy says that "Barani's study of History was the study of God, not of man." It seems he is emphasising his point a bit too strongly, i. e., he treats the purpose as the achievement. In the case of the Hindus while we can only guess at the purpose,

15 P. Hardy: *Historians of Medieval India*.

the achievement is definitely associated with the non-temporal process. It is true that modern historians treat the medieval Muslim chronicles as readymade and impeccable historical narratives, and give them the status of 'authorities'; it is also true that there is need for us to go to the sources for writing a true and comprehensive history of the middle ages. But still the right of Muslim historians to be called historians will become evident not when they are compared to the highly sophisticated historical theorists of today, but when they are compared with the Hindu writers. Amir Khusru's observation about the different standards of economic life led by nobles and the common people is noteworthy; and Aini-Akbari will definitely disprove the statement that Muslim historians were interested only in political history.

In the case of human authorities our difficulty is in properly assessing and eliminating the subjective element in the authority; when we deal with non-human, monumental authority, the problem is one of eliminating the subjective element in our own thoughts. These difficulties are not easily overcome. They will confront us in one way or another. So to the historical researcher eternal vigilance is the price he pays for spotting and preserving truth.

When we pass to the modern period, the sun of historiography begins to rise in the West. The tradition of historiography in early British period when Mill and Elphinstone were writing, was to accept the medieval Muslim historians as authority for their history; and authors who came still later like Smith, Lanefoole, and the editors of the third and fourth volumes of the *Cambridge History of India* drew mainly upon the medieval Muslim historians.

Though the Muslims introduced the occidental system of historiography in India, modern scientific goals of history were recognized only during the British period. Systematic investigation into India's past was facilitated

under Dalhousie and to speak with admiration and pride about the no less dictatorial integration achieved a hundred years later. It is possible that the nationalist point of view received its impetus from British historians and biographers like Elphinstone and Tod; and more recently Sardar Panikkar who wrote on 'Asia and Western Dominance' was obviously influenced by British authors like P. T. Moon. Currently, no doubt serious scholars are agreed that 'even nationalist historians must develop an elevated and critical patriotism' and not the cheaper and the easier one.

British scholars like A. L. Basham who approvingly notes the Belgian historian of India, Poussin, stresses the need for historians really understanding India's past with sympathy; and of late the clouds of mutual misunderstanding are dispelling. Poussin was a sympathetic friend of Indian culture and he detected nationalist feeling in the internecine feuds of medieval Hindu India. But Basham does not refrain from cautioning, "Indology needs historians of the school of Bhandarkar armed with a technique of source criticism subtler than that which has hitherto been employed on Indian material". Historians, like Faraday, the scientist, have a duty to set about their jobs as a 'Nishkamya Karma', 'expecting nothing, but observing everything'. It yet remains for India to build up a school of non-aligned historians who will worship at the altar neither of imperialism nor of nationalism but at the altar of Clio, the Muse.

Modern trends in historical research and the scientific methods adopted in conducting such research, have brought about a branch of studies, viz., methodology of historical research; that is the technical aspects of historical research. Another aspect is the study of the evolution of historiography as such. Again, works like P. Gardiner's *The nature of historical explanation* and W. H. Walsh's *Introduction to philosophy of history* are essays in historical epistemology and have no counterparts in India.

The Hindu view of History as its sometimes put, can be summarized as follows: they had a concept of time - measured in terms of Yugas, and in terms of eternity-in which the short spans of time, millennia and centuries in an ordered fashion with reference to human events of no cosmic significance are naturally rejected as useless. They had a law of Karma, which has, by definition, an all-pervading influence on man's duties and responsibilities. "It operates on the human life with the inevitability of fate from which there is no escape". The very concept of divine interference in mundane affairs in the shape of Avatars takes history out of its temporal moorings. Then the concept of Maya, made famous by Sankara, held that empirical experience is unreal. Beyond the Maya (i. e., after the removal of the veil - Maya) is the real truth which is eternal and divine: while on this side one has the unreal and apparent truth (which is the temporal). The latter is historical and, therefore, those who wish to move from the falsely temporal to the truly spiritual naturally see no significance in temporal history. This concept of Maya is Vedantic and was made classical by Sankara, and has greatly influenced Hindu thought. Some modern thinkers, probably mortified by the inescapable and inconvenient conclusions to which this theory inexorably led one, have tried to contradict or modify Sankara's stand in the matter: e. g., Aurobindo said "Any uncompromising theory of illusion solves no problem of our existence". But Sankara was not offering a solution but defining a situation. Again, Dr. Radhakrishnan, agreeing with Sankara, who in regard to 'Maya' is surprisingly near the Buddha, offers as usual a compromise and says "The world is not a phantom, though it is not ultimately real".¹⁶ This precludes all meaning from empirical history. The Dvaitas and other philosophers who held different views on the Vedantic message had nothing to do with history, for the purely temporal experience of the *atman* was no concern of theirs.

16 S. Radhakrishnan: *Eastern religion and Western thought*.

by the efforts of persons like Warren Hastings, Sir William Jones, James Prinsep, Max Muller, Wilson, Cunningham, Marshall and others; Curzon's interest in the preservation of ancient monuments made archaeological research possible. Mill Elphinstone, Grant Duff, Sir W. W. Hunter and other European scholars led the way in modern Indian historiography. Hunter set the pattern in his 'History of British India' (1900) and in his series of 'Rulers of India', for professional historical writing in Modern India. Smith started a new school of Indian historical writing not wholly sympathetic to India; and the Cambridge History of India was a monument of historical erudition. On the Indian side R. G. Bhandarkar started the tradition of scientific historical writing.

It is, perhaps, correct to say that the genius for historiography was dormant in the native people of this country; and now that this faculty is kindled and drawn out, it is becoming patent and significant and modern India is producing historians of international stature. Monumental works of history which stand to the credit of Sarkar, Sardesai, Krishnaswami Ayyangar, R. C. Majumdar, S. N. Sen and Nilakanta Sastri are only some outstanding examples of Indian historical scholarship. A shift of emphasis from mere contemplation to reasoned action and from ideas to events is a significant feature of modern thought in India and it is largely due to the new contact with the West. But still it is clear that to most people it is very difficult to shake off the shackles of tradition, and objectivity and scientific methods in historical research have not developed to the extent necessary and desirable. There are still students and writers of history who do not distinguish between logical conclusions and opinions, disinterested statements and propaganda; in fact, to put it bluntly between fact and fiction; who still consider it blasphemous to enquire into the authorship of the Vedas (though the Suktas in the Vedas themselves mention the names of their authors), and hold that Ravana and Udayana

had air wings to their armed forces. Rationalization is a common feature in a certain order of historical writing in modern India.

In the early days of British rule, British scholars like Mill, poets like Kipling, and administrators like Curzon, took an imperialist view and provoked angry reaction in men like Tilak, Savarkar, Basu, etc., who took the extremely nationalist view. R. C. Majumdar dealing with modern trends in Indian historiography mentions the impact of party politics on the historian, a turn towards orthodoxy in interpreting ancient institutions (e. g. K. P. Jayaswal's theory of parliamentary government in ancient India), extreme nationalism (e. g., V. D. Savarkar) etc. The repudiation of the Black Hole incident and rechristening of the Mutiny as a war of independence etc., are but the reverberations of patriotic hearts.

While early British historians were frank and uninhibited in their writings, after the turn of the century their attitude changed, and the tradition of Smith began to take root. While the excesses of British rule were spotlighted by Indian nationalists, British historians like Lyall and even Dodwell began to assume the defensive in the interpretation of the British mission in India and subject native institutions to thinly veiled sarcasm. This produced a chain reaction and mutual mudslinging was a fashion for a few decades. The modern Muslim historian of medieval India began to reinterpret the much maligned Ghazni, Tughlak and Aurangzeb while Hindu historians took delight and pride in mentioning the resilience of their culture which baffled foreign cultural onslaughts. The British scholars laid stress on the advantage of Pax-Britannica to the subject people in India; Indian historians drew pointed attention to the economic drain caused by foreign domination. Non-academic considerations, one suspects, led people to angrily comment upon 'the inwardness of British annexations' of native states

The question of set patterns in history is of no less importance than the ones we have encountered above. The problem of the modern historians is one of reconciliation of the physical and final causes, of nature and of grace. Scriptural history for example would not treat Jesus as the son of God, but as merely 'ecce homo'; a perpetual swing from the immediate to the ultimate cannot be sufficient basis for a philosophy of history. Geoffrey Barraclough says: "There is no more certain road to misunderstanding of the past than the teleological view of history, the doctrine that historical developments are the result of an overriding purpose and design and that what stands aside from this purpose and design is accidental, irrelevant and negligible; and having smuggled into history in this way a purpose or objective it is fatally easy to extract it again from history as a 'lesson'. The fallacy of any so-called philosophy of history lies in professing to discover certain immutable laws; for except the law of change, no other has ever existed or can exist. Speculations that have to do with primal causes and ultimate goals transcend the range of ordinary reason".¹⁷ Thus it follows that 'metaphysical historicism' is incompatible with any kind of 'scientific empiricism' and there can be no excuse for confounding the two. In the matter of positing a causal relationship in History there can be no objection to strenuous search for immediate causes and consequences which come on the heels of events; but to try to enunciate a basic, cosmic causality is waste of effort. Great historians have been votaries at the altar of determinism; but their theories break on the rock of empiricism, observation, and experience. Marx, Spengler and Toynbee have suffered the same fate. 'This obstinate craving for unity and symmetry at the expense of experience' is the chief and fatal tendency among philosophers of history.

If scientific and objective history is to become the standard tradition of historiography in this country, it

17 G. Barraclough: **History in a Changing World.**

is necessary to know that the purpose of history is neither materialistic utility nor moral instruction but merely education of a humanist nature; and as Acton said 'it provides neither compensation for suffering nor penalties for wrong', and care should be taken to avoid converting schools of history into either information centres or tools of propaganda. They should be institutions of sound education. "History cannot be used as propaganda even in the best of causes". The historical sense is a call of the spirit, a type of intellectual curiosity to know what really happened long ago in the land of mystery, which we call the past".¹⁸ History which combines in itself the inspiration of poetry with the passionate curiosity of discovery is the truly educative discipline which is a goal in itself and needs no ulterior purpose to commend it.

We have considered above in a general and comparative way the reasons for the paucity of historical literature in Hindu writings in particular and in Indian literatures generally. But this is not to deny that we have an abundance of historical material in the shape of incidental references in other kinds of literature. In fact the source material for the reconstruction of ancient and medieval Indian history is not poor; epigraphy in particular is a very rich source of evidence for our history. The abundance of this kind of literature and the absence of a humanist literature and historical literature proper has made Indian history what it is; that is devoid of human interest and does not allow the historian of India to draw credible human pictures of even the chief *dramatis personae*, not to speak of serious social history.

The Vedas are surely the earliest source of some historical information for us. In the *Rigveda* we get some account of military raids and battle scenes. There is an account of the battle of the Ten Kings against the

18 G. M. Trevelyan: **The present Position of History** (1927)

tribal leader Sudas; but this is quite an unusual account, though it whets our appetite for more information of this kind. U. N. Goshal says:— 'To judge from the preserved specimens, however, they contain little or nothing of historical material'.¹⁹ The Itihasas are really epics and we know of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as the Itihasas in Sanskrit literature. The word Itihasa means 'thus it happened' and has been used to 'substantiate the sentimental theory that we had histories in Ancient India. Whatever the etymological meaning of the word and we do not know the sense in which the ancients really used this word—the fact that even very early in our history it had come to stand for works like the *Ramayana* shows that if they intended the word Itihasa to stand for history, it must be deemed to stand for something radically different from what we mean by history. Itihasa occurs even in the *Atharveveda* (XV:6, 4). These accounts we find in the Itihasas are merely fables and stories about gods and demons. Of course Herodotus also was writing fables in his work but when he did so, he thought that he was writing sober history and was in the world of reality. But the authors of the epics were deliberately indulging in allegories and moral tales for the edification of the readers and they knew they were concocting stories. That their intention was perhaps laudable from a certain point of view will not entitle the works to be called history. These Itihasas obtained vedic status by the *Mahabharata* being called the Fifth Veda and the *Ramayana* being called the Charanagati veda; Kautilya however equated the Itihasas with the Puranas; and the Puranas means literally 'ancient accounts'; Purana has often been identified with Akhyana, which means an edifying story. A shorter Akhyana is an upakhyana. The puranas contain genealogical lists, which of course have some historical value, though surely they must be used with the utmost caution. 'The puranic

19 "Landmarks in Ancient Indian Historiography" in the "Studies in the Cultural History of India" ed. by Crouzet.

lists of the royal dynasties cover a broad period from what is held to be the Creation down to the beginning of the *Mahabharata* war and thereafter in the form of prophesies in accordance with the puranic chronological scheme, down to the beginning of the Gupta period in the first quarter of the fourth century after Christ'. These chronologies cannot be used as they are found in the puranic texts but must be corrected with the help of more authentic data derived from original sources like the *vedas*. These must be studied also alongside the Buddhist and Jaina canon, which will further qualify the value of these sources. The later puranic genealogies, must be more carefully used since epigraphic and reliable literary sources discredit many of these mythological lists. This does not mean that the puranic dynastic lists have no value at all. Pargiter has done a good job trying to utilise these materials as well as he could.

The Buddhists and the Jainas by virtue of their having to maintain and propagate the principles of an established church, wrote sacred biographies and a kind of church-history, i. e., the history of the monastic orders established by them as well as lists of apostolic succession. Once they broke ground like this the habit of recording events in a truthful way became part of their religious endeavour and we have the *Mahavamsa* and the *Dvipavamsa* of Ceylon, which have no parallel in Hindu literature. There are 18 Hindu puranas with an equal number of upapuranas, of which much is not known. Only seven of these contain historical lists of kings etc. and these alone are of some interest to us. These puranas it is said got their information from *suta*, which is a common term for a group of persons of a mixed caste of heralds and minstrels with duties in royal households. Most of these genealogies are in the nature of prophesies. In spite of their limited utility, their sense of chronology is nil and their geography fantastic. Thus the *vamsas* of the Brahmanas and the genealogies of the puranas have a limited value.

The Tamils shared the general lack of historical sense with the Indians elsewhere. But the system of recording public events on the stone walls of temples which became quite a craze in the medieval period in the Tamil country and in the Chola land in particular has provided the historian with a lot of historical material. The Sangam literature which evinces a fine secular sense also gives a lot of incidental information on events of a historical nature; but it will be wrong to categorise these as historical literature.

There was a tradition among the Tamils by which accounts of victories in the battlefields were inscribed on the anklets worn by soldiers. The heroic deeds were inscribed on the hero-stone which was a sort of memorial stone, and it could also be a cenotaph. Maintenance of records (how and on what material we do not know) of various kinds in royal courts in the Tamil country are known. They remembered the king's birth day, the day of his accession to power, his exploits etc. The maintenance of records on stones and on copper plates evidences the practice of public documentation of legal transactions prefaced by political accounts. But in the whole Tamil country in the medieval or ancient times we do not come across a chronicle which deals with avowedly historical occurrences.

In the medieval period of Tamil history, we have works like the *Nandikkalambakam*, *Periapuranam*, *Kalingattupparani*, *Muvarula* etc. All of which confuse history with either religion or romance. Adverting to such works, Nilakanta Sastri says: 'The Hindus' accounts of the world began with the creation, traversed the whole domain of the myth and fable they cherished about gods and their avatars and the numerous classes of superhumans and gave only a very subordinate place to what we should call history ... This tendency accounts for the fact that even professedly historical works like Bana's *Harsha Charita* etc., often move on the border

land between fact and fiction.²⁰ Al-Biruni said long ago: "they (the Hindus) do not pay much attention to the historical order of things. They are careless regarding the chronological succession of kings'.

In spite of all that has so far been said opinions like the following are still held: 'There are indications that the ancient Indians did not lack historical sense. This is proved by the carefully preserved lists of teachers in the vedic texts as well as in the writings of the Buddhists, Jainas and other religious sects'.²¹ But another and a better known scholar says: 'Summing up our estimate of the early Buddhist contributions to historical biography, we may observe that while some texts give us matter-of-fact and evidently genuine accounts of the life of the master, other accounts are embellished with much legendary dogmatic matter.'²² If this is the judgment on Buddhist works the opinion about Hindu efforts in the direction of historiography can easily be understood,

With Bana we move from the stage of mere historical material to some sort of historical writing. Of course historical writing never attained in India the levels to which Greek historiography reached but for those who are accustomed to the puranas and the allegorical grandmothers' tales of 'spiritual India' even Bana is a relief; he wrote what we shall consider his patron's biography. Bilhana, another important name in early Hindu historiography, also wrote in conventional style the biography of his parton Vikramaditya VI. These were grand eulogies. The next great figure was Kalhana who may be considered to be the last of the Hindu

20 K. A. Nilakanta Sastri: *Historical Method*, p. 6

21 A. K. Majumdar: *Sanskrit Historical Literature and Historians in the Studies in the Cultural History of India*, ed by Crouzet. p 215-239.

22 U. N. Ghoshal.

historiographers or the first of the modern ones; he was undoubtedly influenced by the Chinese and Islamic historiographical traditions which could easily be expected to meet in Kashmir; the brahmin writer had some personal knowledge of what he was writing about. The *Rajatarangini* is a land mark in Indian historiography. But this father of Indian historiographical tradition had no offspring to perpetuate the tradition. It soon passed into other and alien hands.

Medieval historiography is really Muslim historiography. In India it played a very important role not only as the supplier of essential historical material for medieval history but also as the pace-setter for historiographical traditions that were to follow. Mahmud of Ghazni contacted India at the turn of the first millennium after Christ. Al-Biruni a contemporary of that interesting invader and iconoclast wrote extensively and well on Hindu India. Unerringly he spotted the reason for the lack of history in India by recognising that a people who consider themselves perfect can have no notion of history. With the founding of the Sultanate in Delhi, a large literature consisting of court chronicles and official records began to grow. The age of Muslim historiography in India could be broadly divided into two: the early Pre-Mughal and the Mughal. The Muslim writers in India never wrote in Arabic but only in Persian. They knew the tradition of universal histories which was becoming common in Europe in the Middle Ages and in the Arabic Islamic world outside India. Apart from the general histories of the Muslim world, they wrote also regional histories, biographies of important persons including rulers, didactic history, history in verse clothed in artistic poetic attire and so on. In the Mughal period a considerable quantity of Muslim history was written; though it tended to develop upon the previous tradition and introduce some new elements it cannot be said to be a new development altogether. Of course we do not get in the Mughal age; the artistic

type of writing represented by Amir Khusru; but we have the autobiographies like those of Babur and Jehangir and also works like the *Aini Akbari* which deal with non-political matters as well. Then we have the general histories of India, the chronicles of particular reigns, the local and regional chronicles, as well as biographical literature like the *Akbar Nama*. During the period under review we have not only Muslim writers writing in Persian but also Hindu writers composing in that language of the ruler. Ishvardas Nagar (born, 1655) who wrote the *Fatihat-i-Alamgiri* was an example of such authorship. While the Muslim writers had their own well-known deficiencies in their approach to and performance of historiography, their Hindu imitators did worse; and this has been pointed out by Sir H. Elliot: 'They do not throw light on the feelings, hopes, faiths, fears and yearnings of the oppressed Hindus' and 'they wrote to order or dictation; and every phrase is studiously and servilely turned to flatter the vanity of an imperious Muhammadan patron'; and 'they were wedded to the inflated language and the set phrases of the conquerors'. But J. N. Sarkar gives a more complimentary picture of these Hindu writers, for he is of the opinion that they were 'living near enough to the Great Mughal officers to learn the historical events of the time accurately, but not near enough to the thorne to be lying flatterers'. During the Mughal period official correspondence grew enormously and these records are a big source of historical material. Then we have the official histories, i. e., the officially sponsored ones like the *Akbar Nama* which then as now were bound to be protagonists of the official view point. Non-official histories like the *Tarikhi Ferishta* supplemented by literary works in Persian complete the picture of Muslim historiography in the Mughal period. Passing a general comment on these histories Sir Henry Elliot (1808-1853) said: 'These are for the most part dull, prejudiced, ignorant and superficial', and 'deficient in some of the most essential requisites of history.' But perhaps this view is biased

by too high an expectation and the consequent disappointment, and also a comparison with western historiography. But when one takes a total view of Indian historiography as it developed through the ages, as we do now, it will be clearly seen that Muslim historiography came as a novelty to India, for the earlier Hindu literatures were strangers to that kind of writing. The Muslim historian had a decided advantage over even contemporary Hindu writers as the former had a clear grasp of chronology and used an era.

Before we pass on to consider the nature and development of historiography in the British and post-British periods, it would be useful to summarise the general trends of Indian historiography till the modern age began. During the Hindu period, which includes the ages of Buddhist and Jaina dominance in certain parts of India, history as such was not written at all; since there was no motivation for them to write an account of the past it is usually presumed with justification that the pre-Muslim Indians lacked a sense of history, which though a mere statement of fact is often mistaken as an insult to the genius of the early Indians and therefore unnecessarily resented. What is commonly taken to be Hindu historiography is denied that title because the writers of that literature did not intend it as such; though the modern historian by dint of his cleverness is able to make even that stuff serve his scholarly purposes. Further much of the early Hindu writing related to the doings of gods and not men. Both these aspects of that literature have been mentioned by Collingwood, who says: "The knowledge furthered by such a record is not, or at any rate is not primarily, man's knowledge of man, but man's knowledge of the gods; and from the writer's point of view, therefore, this is not what we call an historical text. The writer was not writing history, he was writing religion. From our point of view it can be used as historical evidence, since a modern historian with his eyes fixed on human *res gestae*

can interpret it as evidence concerning actions done by' persons mentioned therein. 'But it only acquires its character as historical evidence posthumously as it were, in virtue of our own historical attitude towards it in the same way in which prehistoric flints or Roman pottery acquire the posthumous character of historical evidence, not because the men who made them thought of them as historical evidence, but because *we* think of them as historical evidence.'²³ This is about the clearest account of what we should think of Hindu historiography, though Collingwood was thinking of the Sumerians rather than the Hindus in this context.

A comparative study of the Hindu puranas and the Buddhist accounts will justify the statement of C. H. Philips that 'we find that the Buddhist tradition is more historically reliable, than the puranic'²⁴

With the arrival of the Muslims, somewhat real history came to be written though it cannot be said to have attained modern standards or was even on the way to modern historiography. The autobiographies, the biographies, court histories, private histories etc. no doubt indicate a historical sense, a desire to record events and even to comment upon them and to bring to bear a system of chronology on these efforts. Muslim historiography of the medieval period may be said to be a half way house between ancient Indian futilities and modern Indian fullfledged histories.

Modern Indian attempts at writing the history of our country were made by the western scholars, some of whom were non-professionals and administrators; and the necessary spade work which should precede historiographical writing was also done by them. The Indologists of 18th century Bengal, the Orientalists like Sir W. Jones,

23. R. G. Collingwood : *The Idea of History*, p. 12

24. C. H. Philips (ed.): *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* p. 4

pioneers in deciphering ancient scripts like James Prinsep, part time archaeologists like Cunningham who later matured into historians and many others like these paved the way for modern Indian historiography. That Indian scholars were rather slow to follow the example set by these pioneers becomes clear when one notes that a whole century lay between Orme and R. G. Bhandarkar. Though Orme, Gladwin and Robertson wrote even in the 18th century, Mill may be considered to be the first serious historian of India. From Mill to the present day Indian historiography has been growing in volume, content, quality, outlook and even in regard to the motivations for different kinds of history that were written. The output, not inconsiderable by any standard, when taken as a whole and scrutinised yields an intelligible answer to the many doubts which frame themselves in the minds of the students of this history.

The chief underlying principle seems to be that British and Indian historians have been reacting to each other and by some sort of tacit agreement, as it were, taking opposite positions in their attitude to the writing of Indian History. But since the British were the first to start writing the history of India, they acted first and soon after, that is after they had been initiated into the art the Indians (a further distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims would be needed at a later stage) began to react. Till now they have only been largely reacting to whatever was deemed anti-Indian at the moment and systematically failing to evolve a stance of their own. We shall consider later what historical philosophies hold the ground today in India.

Robert Orme who wrote on the *Military transactions of the English Nation in Indostan from the year 1745*, was concerned with contemporary events i. e., events on which he could write with personal knowledge and an amount of unassailable authority. His ideas about the Hindus and their ancient institutions were necessarily different

from what they can be today because serious research on that subject had not started then. Some writers like Robertson were not even aware of their rather amusing ignorance of many things which today are common knowledge even to school children.

Then came James Mill who can be considered to be the first great historian of India. It is general practice among Indian historians who feel called upon to comment upon Mill to acknowledge his competence as an informed historian but castigate him for his views on the Hindus and their institutions. Undoubtedly there was an element of Hinduphobia about him, but that was perhaps understandable in one who heard about the kind of Hindu India that existed in the middle of the 19th century. One should feel however that Mill had no axe to grind in holding these views; it was a common notion among the Utilitarians-*vide* Macaulay, too, and a frank Utilitarian like Bentinck - that Britain of those of times was incarnate on this earth as the sole and most competent schoolmaster to the rest of the world; and when this game was tried on the Hindu who had a settled notion that he was the favourite creation of God Almighty, the result could be imagined and the chain reaction we have referred to above started. The trouble with Mill however was that he did not know India personally, but largely guessed about it from his homeland. This kind of guessing could be both unfavourable as in the case of James Mill, and very favourable as in the case of Edmund Burke, neither of whom had seen India or known its peoples personally. The case of Elphinstone was quite different since he was in India in various capacities and had learnt to tolerate many things which a fresher would revolt against. His work became a standard work almost immediately and it deserved that reputation. But Elphinstone wrote naturally and without inhibition, and this was a characteristic of all British historians of India in the first half of the 19th century.

But then came the Great Mutiny. The Mutiny was the result of a desire on the part of certain vested interests

to restore the *status quo ante* the British. But for historical reasons the attempt failed. The enduring result of this abortive attempt was to leave a considerable bitter taste in the mouths of both the nations, which thereafter began to treat each other as natural foes in every walk of life. The British began to justify their existence here and the Hindus began to doubt the justification for their existence anywhere. This attitude which on the British side found its supporter in Kipling in the field of literature, and Lytton and later Curzon in politics and administration was reflected in the historical literature that followed the Mutiny. With the formation of the Indian National Congress, Indian nationalism began to gain an identity it lacked before; and its spokesman began to think out economic and political arguments to assail British Imperialist pretensions; in both cases anger was more evident than logic.

Cunningham was a typical product of the empire - in-the-making in India. He was basically a military man, but was so well-informed and conscientious that he became the first great archaeologist here and he even became a historian. The British Government's objection to his *History of the Sikhs* shows how nervous that government had become in the face of simple truth. Their opponents however tried all means to discredit them. At the scholarly level, the appearance of V. A. Smith introduced a new era of historiography which combined in itself sound scholarship and pro-British attitudes, especially while dealing with the British period, and a quiet anti-Hindu slant which was reflected in his treatment of Asoka as well as of Akbar. On the Indian side there could be no immediate and effective move for a counter-attack since Indian historians were just then qualifying themselves for the difficult task of serious historiography; R. G. Bhandarkar and his immediate followers were historians of irreproachable integrity and were just then engaged in unravelling the nearly impossible puzzles of ancient Indian History. P. E. Roberts, Dodwell and the *Cambridge History of India*

only confirmed the suspicions of Indian scholars that the British were establishing a tradition of anti-Hindu historiography. The Muslims shared this to some extent but soon were to be more anxious to rehabilitate the Medieval period from historical criticism which was not always favourable to them.

From the beginning of the present century two kinds of Indian historians emerged. One group was engaged in rescuing the past history of India from the oblivion where it was, by hard research following modern methods of historical enquiry. This group followed the lines of research laid down by eminent scholars like R. G. Bhandarkar. Many non-professionals like L. D. Swamikannu Pillai and V. Kanakasabhai (so far as the Madras Presidency was concerned) joined this enthusiastic group and did very substantial service to the cause of historical research. There were British scholars like Sewell and Tod who unmindful of the politics of history went ahead with their difficult and useful work in reconstructing different aspects of Indian History. The Bengal school which produced a J. N. Sarkar and the Madras school which produced an S. K. Aiyangar together with the Mahratta school which cultivated Mahratta history through veterans like M. G. Ranade and Sardesai gave hopes of a sound tradition of historiography in India. But at the same time there was emerging a group which was rather loose, dispersed and lacked cohesion but was still very effective because of its political appeal to pseudo-patriotic elements. V. D. Savarkar is a shining example of this category of writers. But they are not more objectionable than the cultural chauvinists like K. P. Jayaswal whose undoubted scholarship has not prevented their doing immense damage to the cause of history in this country. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar in Madras somewhat later was to do the same damage; and historians like him are not likely to be mentioned in a work like this but for their fantastic performances in the field of pseudo-history. These forces along with others whose intentions

were frankly political and communal prevented the consolidation of real scholarly work. Debates of a controversial nature centred around topics like the Black Hole of Calcutta, the Mutiny of 1857, the Palayagar Revolt in the South and so on; and politicians started dictating the guidelines of research on these and similar topics. But all this did not prevent the publication of monumental works by British as well as Indian scholars, J. N. Sarkar's 'Aurangzeb', Sardesai's 'Maharattas', K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's 'Cholas' were more than enough to show that Indian historiography was fundamentally healthy, in spite of strong adverse winds blowing in all directions.

1947 saw India free of British rule. Great expectations were entertained by all in every field of activity. But what has happened subsequently is not such as to enthuse even the most incurable optimists. D. C. Sircar writing a paper on the 'Deterioration in Indian Historical Scholarship'²⁵ traces the reasons for such deterioration since independence, and says that lack of dedication to the subject, insufficient equipment and failure at the level of character are some of them. One wishes very much he was wrong; but unfortunately he seems to be very much right. R. C. Majumdar delivering the Heras Memorial Lectures in 1967²⁶ mentions the 'shortcomings in Indian Historiography'; and among these he mentions the anxiety of politicians to use history for political purposes and the consequent prevalence of an atmosphere of fear which inhibits even eminent historians from speaking the truth as they see it. But it may not be right to hold the government or the leading politicians responsible for all these ills from which history is suffering now in this country. Those who are responsible for serious historical research at the universities have been progressively failing the discipline. While the Bengal school still goes strong thanks to stalwarts like R. C. Majumdar and the late

S. N. Sen and the Mahratta school has an eminent galaxy of scholars like Dr. Potdar, the Madras school of which I have the misfortune to know rather intimately, has after the retirement of Sastri fallen on evil times and has ceased to be any sort of school now. The only hope seems to be for individual scholars to keep up the tradition by hard and persevering effort in the face of institutionally organized adversity. While professionals are in this predicament others, like D. D. Kosambi, whatever their ideology be, have set an example of purposeful research into the problems of the past. K. M. Panikkar, though often prone to play to the oriental gallery and for reasons which might range from pure conviction to convenient expediency has been a scholar interested in his subject till the last. Independence brought its bill with it; and it has been quite heavy in many respects; but, for historiography it brought a mixed fortune in the shape of opposing ideologies and these have become so compulsive for some people that they must perforce strive to write history with a view to upholding these ideologies. One however remembers that history is capable of taking care of itself, and the historian who keeps away from these disturbing influences and follows the Rankean dictum of honestly searching for truth will still survive and make the future safe for history.

One area of historiographical effort which Indian historians have missed and have rather not cared about also happens to be the most important; that is, historical theory. There has been very little Indian literature on that subject, and much less by way of original contribution to the subject which has become a major concern of historians abroad. Another disquieting feature is that even after nearly a hundred years acquaintance with and experience of historical studies and writing, in important circles there is the feeling that archaeology is all that history is. As a half-hearted concession physical

25 *The quarterly Review of Historical studies*, Vol: III
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26 *Historiography in Modern India*, 1970

anthropology is given a second place. Historical criticism, theoretical speculation on the bounds of history, characterisation, sociological enquiries, correlation of economic factors with other aspects of social life etc. which though formally accepted as legitimate areas of historiography, are rarely incorporated into historical literature. There are some attempts recently made to concentrate on these aspects of history, but when scholars return to microscopic and argumentative writing on obscure areas of dynastic history there is an obvious sigh of relief. The old habits which were common and understandable in an earlier age die hard but become irksome now. These facts add substance to the thesis that the Hindu mind is aesthetic, literary, scientific, religious etc. but far from historical-critical. Even now the trend is to avoid criticism and to indulge in pleasant rationalisation and dream romantically and to use all the intelligence that the community can muster to defend itself against everything and everybody. The charge that still the bricklayers of history are in charge and that the architect is not yet in sight is valid up to now. This is also due to the fact that Indian historians have become insular, cut off from modern trends elsewhere and imagining that non-acquaintance with other disciplines is an academic virtue. The gravity of the situation can easily be grasped when important (that is, men who matter irrespective of the fact whether they should matter) persons is authority and those who for the nonce manage faculties of history in centres of higher education hold that anyone (literally *anyone*) can teach history at the highest level and any sorry stuff, for which an unfortunate publisher can be found, is historical literature on which students pursuing the study of history at the highest level should be compelled to browse for their academic sustenance, thanks to some obliging Board of Studies in some University.

Another tendency in modern India, especially after Independence is to be unduly concerned with rewriting

the History of India. When the suggestion comes from historians themselves it can be treated as an academic desire; but when governments feel obligated to do this, while many favourites can thrive on public funds, history will languish. But these are travails to which history is no stranger, and surely one can take comfort in the thought that history will have the last laugh.

22

Indian Historians

Considering the nature of Indian Historiography in the pre-Muslim periods either one has to say that we had no work-Kalhana excepted-which could be treated as history proper or must stretch a point or two in favour of the quasi-historical works of the early period. Some of the historians mentioned herebelow are no doubt called historians by courtesy, but an account of their writings can at least give an idea of the development of historiography in India.

Banabhatta, a court poet of Harsha (c. A. D. 590-c. 647) was a brahmin of the Vatsyayana family, a native of Pritivikuta on the banks of the Son. The boy who was orphaned early in his life sought service in the court of Harsha, the ruler of Kanauj; once he was dismissed from the court, but he managed to get back to the

court again. He was essentially a man of letters who wrote in Sanskrit. He is more famous as the author of the *Kadambari*, a romance written in a style admired by Indian critics but deemed involved and pedantic by others. His *Harshacharita* is a 'historical' work in the sense it deals with the life and doings of Harsha, a historical figure. It is in eight chapters and does not tell us all about the hero. S. K. De says 'The sum total of the story is no more than an incident in Harsha's career - it cannot be said that the picture either is full or satisfactory from the historical point of view'.¹ Dr. A. B. Keith says 'what Bana supplies to history is the vivid picture of the army, of the life of the court, of the sectaries and their relations to Buddhists and the avocations of Brahmins and their friends'.² The work may be classified as a historical novel dealing with high political matters by a contemporary. Bana is guilty of exaggeration and flattery and of omissions like the failure to mention Rajyavardhana's accession to the throne of Thanesvar. He has to be naturally suspect but corrected by Hieun Tsang, the Chinese Pilgrim.

Vakpathi's *Gaudavaho* ('Death of the king Gauda' of Bengal) is a semi-historical poem recounting the victories of his patron Yasovarman of Kanauj (c. 730-770).

Bilhana was a Kashmiri who wrote his *Vikraman-gadeva Charita* before 1088. He was patronised by Somesvara I father of Vikramaditya VI (1076 - 1126), Chalukya king of Kalyani. This Vikramaditya was the hero of the *Charita*. The patron conferred on the poet the title Vidyapati. His play *Karnasundari* is a comedy dealing with the marriage of Karnadeva I of Anhilvad with Mayamalladeva. But his fame as a romantic biographer in verse rests on the former work. It is evident that he was influenced by the Kashmiri tradition of chronicling which was later to influence the author of the

1. *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 227

2. *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 319

Rajatarangini. His work is helpful to us to verify certain historical facts we get from other sources regarding the career and achievements of Vikramaditya VI; but the author is no historian, nor is the work history. This work ends with the first two years of his patron's reign and the king plays amorously with his wife through three cantos. The poet is unreservedly partial to his hero and often makes poorly veiled attempts to justify him and on more than one occasion Vikramaditya's wickedness towards his elder brother is justified on the ground that Lord Siva appeared in the dreams of this prince and bade him behave so. The *Charita* mentions a few historical facts like the battles fought by Vikramaditya VI against his brother Somesvara II. The historical value of this work is nearly nil, though the author by Indian standards was possibly a good poet.

Sandhyakara Nandi ((c. 1075-1130) wrote the account of the revolution in N. Bengal during the reign of Mahipala II and its later history under Ramapala (1084-1126.) It was the *Rama Charita* in 38 verses. Like Bana, Sandhyakara Nandi also puts in a bit of autobiography in his epic poem; we learn that his father Prajapati Nandi was an official in the court of Ramapala. He was himself only a village scribe. The *Rama Charita* is a kind of epic which deals with the story of how Mahipala II lost his throne and his life, and with the accession of Ramapala to the throne. This poem is so dexterously written that each line therein yields two meanings and is a long and sustained pun ('slesha') wherein the story of Rama of the Ramayana and that of the other Rama i. e., Ramapala are simultaneously told. It is for each reader of the poem to decide for himself how much of a poem it is. The account ends with the reign of Madanapala. As a chronicler Sandhyakara Nandi was not inferior to Kalhana.

The *Rajataranginis*; i. e. the Chronicles of Kashmir (Raja: King; taranga; chapter, or river). There are four

Rajataranginis; the earliest was by Kalhana who started his work in A. D. 1148 and completed it in two years. He was a conservative who preferred the *status quo* in politics and advocated royal aggression which was a duty cast on the rulers of Hindu India by their politico-moral code. He was jealous of the traditional privileges of the brahmins and their institutions. He says rather understandably (for he was himself a brahmin): 'The prosperity of kings will be lost and will be never regained if they disregarded brahmins'. His praise or denigration of rulers is based on considerations valid enough for his times. Kalhana was not inhibited by any excessive sense of chivalry; he derided women and was of the opinion that 'women are by nature wicked and immoral, and therefore are not to be trusted'. Some queens of Kashmir rent credibility to his prejudice.

His notion of historiography is a clear improvement on that of romantic chroniclers like Bana and Bilhana; he says: 'He who restricts his narrative to the exposition of facts is alone worthy of praise.' His historical method is laudable; he consults earlier works in the field and reads inscriptions and royal grants and observes that Kshemendra, an earlier authority on Kashmir was 'not free from error' for he did not use his sources carefully.

Kalhana was not free from credulity; he says a certain king of Kashmir ruled for 300 years. A.K. Majumdar exonerating Kalhana says that such longevity was not impossible in India and quotes Troyer as authority.³ It is, however, not quite clear why Indian ignorance and error should be defended by quoting European ignorance and error.

A satisfactory feature of Kalhana's work is that he sets out his narrative in proper chronological order; he does not merely record events; he judges them too. He had for his primary source *Nilamata* (the teachings of Nila), a collection of Kashmiri hieratic lore.

In the 15th century Zain-ul-Abidin of Kashmir commissioned a history of Kashmir which was written by one Janaraja. This chronicle narrates the story of Kashmir from the reign of Jayasimha to that of Zain-ul-Abidin. The author died in A. D. 1434.

His pupil Srihara Pandita continued his work. This Pandita in addition to being a scholar was a musician and successful courtier. He was of the view that a chronicle should have distinctive literary merit which he lamented his work lacked and he compared dry-as-dust to Kayastha's (book-keeper's) accounts.

Two authors Prajyabhetta and Suka wrote the later history of Kashmir. The former wrote the history of Kashmir down to A. D. 1489 (the reign of Fath Shah). The history of Kashmir was taken by Suka (son of Buddhyasraya) down to the reign of Akbar; but some scholars consider the later portion of this work an interpolation.

The Taranginis were treated as dependable sources by later Persian historians like Ferishta and Abul Fazl; and they constitute undoubtedly the only really useful chronicles in Sanskrit.

There are numerous minor works written by poets who wrote on grammar or religion but incidentally put in some historical material if praising a patron was opportune. There are numerous accounts of Jaina saints which are of the nature of hagiologies and not political or social history, and can be compared to the Peria Puranam of the Tamils.

The Madhura Vijayam (or Virakamparaya Charitram) by Gangadevi describes the conquest of Ma'bar by Kumara Kampana son of Bukka I of Vijayanagar. The author was the wife of the hero of the poem. She put her poetic talent to the use to which poets usually put it, viz., hyperbole, which is anathema to historians. The relationship of the author to the hero was perhaps an impediment to objective

narration. But the main trends of her narrative are quite credible.

Jayanaka's *Prithvirajavijaya* deals with the Chahamana ruler Prithviraja and was probably written during 1191 and 1192 i. e., between the two battles of Tarain. The other work on Prithviraja III is in Hindi and was written by Chand. It is an epic in that language and is called *Prithviraja raiya* but is inferior to the Sanskrit work, mentioned earlier, for historical purposes.

Nayachandra Suri's *Hammiramahakavya* commemorates the achievements of Hammira (c. 1282-1301) of the Chahamana dynasty of Ranthambore. Hemachandra's *Kumarapalacharita* was written in Avanti or Ujjain in 1555; herein the story of Mallikarjuna's defeat and death at the hands of Kumarapala is recounted.

Apart from the above mentioned works there are numerous writings in the regional languages of India which though useful to some extent as sources of regional histories do not amount to history as such. In Tamil, for instance, we have ballads called *Ammanais* and *padals* which are poetical renderings of popular events. Indigenous literatures of India developed historical writings in the later medieval and modern periods following the examples of Muslim and Western European Historians.

The medieval period was characterised by phenomenal increase in the quantity and improvement in the quality of historiography in the land. The Persian historical literature which was produced in India since the Ghaznavid invasion of India was a model for possible aspirants, but Hindu literature still fought shy of this branch of literature. Slowly, however this literature had its impact on the Hindus and some of them like the 18th century Anandaranga Pillai loved to maintain a diary, which one should think was a practice unknown to Hindu India before Babur's dairy came to be known.

There were many varieties of history which the Muslim chroniclers in India wrote. Most of them were officially sponsored and hence well-organised eulogies. Some chroniclers did maintain a private account of the happenings in the country. Some of the monarchs like Babur and Jehangir maintained diaries which are as good as full-fledged histories. The earliest instance of Muslim historical writing in India was the 12th century *Chachnama* which is a historical romance connected with the Arab conquest of Sind. This was followed by a spate of works in Persian, the more important of which we shall review herebelow.

Amir Khusru (1252–1325) was a poet who wrote some books which give us a peep into the political and social history of his times. He was born in the Uttar Pradesh and was a Turk. He had seen the reigns of Sultans Balban to Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, and was patronised by Kaikubad, Jalaluddin Khilji, Alauddin Khilji, Mubarak Shah and Ghiyasuddin Khilji. He was a prolific writer and the quality of his poetry did not suffer by the quantity. He styled himself the parrot of Hindustan. Of his historical works the *Miftah-ul-Futuh* deals with the victories of Jalaluddin Khilji. The *Tughluq Nama* deals with the events of the early days of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's reign, and the *Tarikh-i-Alai* with the victories of Alauddin Khilji's Deccan campaigns. He had some personal experience of that campaign. The quality of his poetry is so superb that it completely eclipses the historical value of his work. His capacity for innocent flattery in exquisite Persian verse retained for him the coveted position of a favourite of five sultans.

Maulana Ziyauddin Barani (1286–1359) belonged to a family of nobles who had rendered notable service to the Khiljis. His uncle Ala-ul-Mulk was kotwal at Delhi in the reign of Alauddin Khilji, and had dared to give wholesome advice to that autocrat dissuading him from world conquest and imitation of the Prophet. Barani

was a courier of Mohammad bin Tughluq who lavished royal favour on him. But he had the misfortune to be known to that Sultan's successor, Firozshah who stripped him of all the honours and wealth. At the age of 73, the historian died in poverty.

Barani was a friend of his contemporary poets and scholars like Amir Khusru and Amir Hasan. He was a devotee of the Sufi Saint Shaikh Nizamuddin Aulia and he was himself buried in the graveyard of that saint. His sunni predilections were quite strong. He was also anti-Hindu to a great extent. It is possible that his judgment in some of his works was adversely affected by these prejudices.

Barani was a great scholar learned in law and philosophy. He was particularly interested in history. He was one of the few Muslim historians who dilate upon the nature and uses of history. He shared with Bacon the view that history made men wise, and he believed that men learned from and benefited by experience. He maintained the valid distinction between *theology* and historical literature, though he rightly mentioned that they were each in its own way important.

It is usual to mention eight works of Barani, but only two are extant and they are most useful to the historian of that age: 1. *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi*, and 2. *Fatawai Jahandari*.

The former is invaluable for the life and times of Muhammad bin Tughluq, a great controversial figure in Indian history; any opinion would be and has been held about that monarch, for he was almost everything at the same time. There have been supporters and denigrators of that Tughluq, but on the whole it may be said that Barani is impartial and quite anxious to speak the truth, though his inability to do so completely and always can be understood. He completed that work at the age of 74, i. e., in 1357. The *Tarikh-i Firozshahi* covers the period from Balban to

the sixth regnal year of Firozshah. In this work the history of Muhammad bin Tughluq is an eye witness' account; the rest he got from his father and his uncle. Barani describes not only the political history of those times but also administrative and economic matters; he contrasts the reign of Muhammad with that of Firuz, by implication. His inordinate praise of Firuz need not have been caused by love of or necessity for flattery; but a genuine feeling of relief at the expiry of the wayward Muhammad to whom anybody could be preferred. Though his chronology and sequence of events generally is unimpeachable the early part of Muhammad's reign is quite confused and possibly reflects the confusion in the mind of the historian about the sultan's true character. He is very elaborate in his treatment of Firoz' benevolent Government and appreciative of the measures he adopted to that end.

The second work of Barani is homiletic and is full of political advice to Muslim rulers. It consists of principles and ideals of administration, and examples from history to illustrate them. He comments on his own work as follows: 'old writers had written many works on administration, but the way in which I have explained the principles and ordinances of administration for the guidance of kings, ministers, Maliks and Amirs has not been done so far by any writer'. He was a firm believer in controlled economy and praised the steps taken by Alauddin to control prices.

Barani like any other writer wrote subject to his prejudices, omitting or abridging events he did not approve of and dilating upon what he liked. His chronology is occasionally defective; he wrote mainly on political and administrative matters; he had strong religious bias and so he judged people of other denominations harshly; his contemporaneity with the events and men he was describing made it difficult for him to write objectively. With all these handicaps he wrote admirable histories.

Minhaj Siraj wrote the political history of the Khilji period and called it *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*. *Tabaqat* meant collection; here they are collections of biographical notes; they relate to some Kaliphs, pre-Islamic kings, the dynasties since the Prophet, and the sultans of Hindustan, the Mongol raids and other matters of historical importance to Muslims. The book is not a model of historical writing but throws considerable light on North India under Muslim domination.

Abdullah bin Fazlullah Wassaf wrote the history of the Mongols of Persia and called his work *Tarikhi Wassaf*. It was completed in 1312. Though the work is mainly a history of Persia it narrates many events relating to India. His references to Alauddin Khilji's Deccan expedition are valuable. His observations on the social life of the people of Ma'bar are largely corroborated by Marco Polo.

Ibn Batuta (1304-1378) was a great scholar hailing from Tangier, N. Africa. He was an Arab and he travelled extensively in India and wrote an account of what he saw and heard. He started his travels in 1325; and reached India in 1333. The next year, he was in Delhi where he won the favour of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. He was the Kazi in Delhi for eight years. Temporarily when he lost Muhammad's favour he was imprisoned; but soon he was restored to royal favour and was sent to China as the Sultan's envoy. We do not know if he ever reached China, for the ship in which he travelled is known to have been wrecked and he was then in Ceylon and Madura. While in Madura he married the daughter of Jalaluddin Asan Shah the Sultan of that place. He returned to Morocco in 1349. There he produced his *Rihla*, meaning the Travels. His *Rihla* is most important for the Indian historian as an original document. His reliability is unimpeachable and his picture of Muhammad bin Tughluq is completely corroborated by the account of Barani.

Sirat-i-Firozshahi is an account of the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah by a courtier of that sultan, who remains anonymous. The information contained in this work is reliable because it is based on the author's personal knowledge. The style of this work is elegant. The work seems to have been completed in 1370 in four parts: the first deals with the political events of the reign of Firoz Shah in proper chronological order; the second narrates the administrative reforms and ameliorative measures of that sovereign; the third deals with the state of agriculture in those times as also the building activities of the sultan; the fourth and last chapter describes the weapons of war, arms and ammunition etc. It is an account generally of the state of affairs then and incidentally praises the sultan for his achievements. We find some information here about the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq also.

Futuhati Firozshahi is a short account of his reign by Sultan Firoz Shah himself and the title of the book means 'Victories of Firoz Shah'; the Sultan rightly includes his victories of peace as the main content of his work. It is a sort of official account of the king's benevolent administration. This work along with the *Sirat-i-Firoz Shahi* gives us much needed information about Firoz Shah's reign. Among the Sultans of Delhi Firoz Shah was the only one to try his hand at the difficult art of writing about himself and his administration without inviting adverse criticism.

Shams-i-Siraj Afif was born in 1350 almost when Firoz Shah began his reign, and therefore was a junior contemporary of that monarch. His most important contribution to historiography was his *Tarikhi Firoz Shahi*; he was the author of a few more works like the *Manaqibi-Alai* and the *Manaqibi-Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq*. The *Tarikhi-Firoz Shahi* was written quarter of a century after the end of Firoz Shah's reign. Of the ninety chapters into which the work was divided we

have only fifteen chapters of the fifth part extant. This work may be considered to be continuation of Barani's *Tarikhi Firoz Shahi*. In fact however it presents a full account of the reign of Firoz Shah, and serves as a sort of compendium of the different aspects of political and social life of those times. Incidentally it refers to the activities of the Sultan Alauddin Khilji as well as of Muhammad bin Tughluq. 'Afif gives the details of the politics of the reign of Firoz Shah, describes many events of his reign, the general administration, the organization of the army, the evils and the corruption that developed under Firoz, the various Karkhanas, the employment and the maintenance of the slaves, informs us about the construction work of Firoz...' He gives a graphic description of the condition of women in his times and speaks of the miseries of the parents of girls. Afif had a special advantage in his attempt to write this piece of history for his father was serving the government of Firoz and so possessed intimate knowledge of the state of affairs in the country at that time.

Khwaja Abd Malik Isami was born in 1311 and was a protege of Alauddin Hasan Bahman Shah, the founder of the Bahmani dynasty. He is noted for his *Futuh-us-Salatin* which was written in the form of an epic. In 1327 when Muhammad bin Tughluq ordered the transfer of the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. Isami's grandfather was one of those fatally affected by that order; for on his way from Delhi the old man died. This impression in the mind of the young man left a bitterness which is evident in his work. Isami was a bachelor, was interested in literature, tried to forget his early experiences by going on pilgrimage to Mecca, but returned indefatigably to the charge and has left one of the worst indictments of that controversial monarch. To say he was biased because he had suffered at his hands is not a very fair way of putting the matter since the opinion of a direct victim cannot be less important than those of flatterers, courtiers and latter day rehabilitators of the maligned sultan. Isami's account of the

reign of Alauddin Bahman Shah is quite reliable. It is lucky for the modern historian that Ibn Batuta, Barani and Isami wrote on nearly the same reigns and rulers for it gives one an opportunity to make a comparative estimate of these men and their institutions. Isami follows Firdausi the famous author of *Shah Nama* in his epic portrayals. The efforts of the above-mentioned historians to give an account of the doings of Muhammed bin Tughluq are supplemented by the poems of Badruddin, a native of Tashkand; he wrote a book called *Shah Nama* on Muhammad bin Tughluq. But the work is worthy of the historian's attention only because it can be used to supplement the writings of greater writers like Ibn Batuta.

We shall now consider three historians who wrote on two Deccani dynasties; Sayyid Ali Tabataba and Ferishta wrote on the Bahmani kingdom; and Abdur Razzak, a foreigner wrote on the conditions in Vijayanagar when he visited the Hindu court.

Tabataba: was a foreigner who came to India in 1580 and entered the service of the Sultan of Golconda first and then that of Burhan Nizam Shah II after whom his *History Burhan-i-Ma'asir* was named. From the work itself we learn that it was commenced in 1591-92 and completed in 1595-96. He was much indebted to Isami for his narrative regarding the early years of the Bahmani rule. Tabataba's account is useful in supplementing the account of Ferishta. One should not mind his inordinate praise of his patron for it was a common failing of most medieval Muslim historians.

Ferishta (Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Astarabadi) came to Ahmadnagar in the reign of Murtaza Niam Shah I and then left for Bijapur the next year. He joined the army there, was wounded in battle and taken prisoner but returned to Bijapur after escaping from prison. Soon afterwards he began collecting materials for the *Tarikhi Firishta*, a general history of Muslim power in India. He

referred to a very large number of source books for his *History*. By and large he is quite dependable for his information. He pays a compliment to himself and speaks of, 'these simple and unadorned annals, founded on truth, but devoid of all pretension to elegance of style, or beauty of composition'. He was encouraged in this vast and laudable objective by his patron Ibrahim Adil Shah of Ahmadnagar.

Tarikhi Firishta has an introduction, twelve books and a conclusion. This work begins with the Ghaznavids and comes up to 1609, the year of its conclusion. Ferishta is still the most comprehensive authority on Vijayanagar; but Hindu historians as a rule will not accept his authority whenever his statements are uncomplimentary to the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar.

Abdur Razzak (1413-82) came to Vijayanagar as a Persian ambassador. He wrote about the splendour of Vijayanagar under Devaraya II; and this account is found in his *History of Persia*. His eulogy of the city of Vijayanagar is famous: 'The city of Bijanagar is such that eye has not seen nor ear heard of any place resembling it upon the whole earth'. He mentions the costly throne, the powerful elephants, the fragrant roses, the well organised administration, the seven-walled capital city-the licensed brothels, the populous harem etc. His dazzling account of Vijayanagar must be read with Ferishta so that one could arrive at a reasonable average estimate of that City and the Empire.

Babur was the founder of the Moghul Empire in India. His full name was Zahir ud-din Muhammad Babur. He was a descendant of Timur on the one hand and of Chingiz Khan on the other and so combined in himself the pure savagery of the Mongol and the sophisticated ferocity of the Turk by birth, but also possessed certain charming qualities which are best seen in his *Memoirs*. He wrote them originally in Chagatai Turki, his mother-tongue; this was translated into Persian by Mirza Abdur Rahim

Khani-kanan, son of Bairam Khan. The translation was completed in 1589. His memoirs are known as *Baburnama* or *Tuzuki-Baburi* (Babur's diary). There are some gaps in this account, and altogether we have authentically from himself an account of only 18 years of his life. The rest must be gleaned from *Tarikhi-Rashidi* of Mirza Haider, a cousin of Babur and the *Humayunnama* of Gulbadan Begum (his daughter). It seems Babur started writing his diary only after his invasion of Hindustan. The *Baburnama* divides itself into three parts: 1. From his accession to the throne of Fargana to his exit from Samarkand; 2. from then to his last invasion of India; 3. his activities in India.

Babur was an adventurer, a born soldier and a talented writer. His observation is keen and his style pleasant and his expression forthright. He describes even minute things with such meticulous care that readers of his diary feel transported to Babur's days. Elphinstone observed that the *Memoirs of Babur* are 'almost the only piece of real history in India'. Lane-Poole says 'No reader of this prince of autobiographers can doubt his honesty or his competence as a witness and chronicler'. It is nearly equalled by that of his descendant Jehangir. The following observations by Elliot and Dowson are worth noting: 'Babur's memoirs are infinitely superior to the hypocritical revelations of Timur and the pompous declamations of Jehangir - not inferior in respect in any respect to the *Expedition of Xenophon* and rank but little below the *Commentaries of Caesar*'. His impressions of Hindustan so honestly set forth in uninhibited language are a commentary on the man's character. 'Hindustan is a country that has few pleasures to recommend it. The people are not handsome. They have no ideas of the charms of friendly society...they have no genius, no politeness of manner...no skill or knowledge in design or architecture; they have no horses, no good flesh, no grapes or musk melons, no good fruits, no ice or cold water, no good food or bread in their bazzars, no baths or colleges, no candles or torches, not a candlestick, their

peasants and the lower classes all go about naked..' For the early period of Moghul history in India, Babur's memoirs are invaluable.

Gulbadan Begum was the daughter of Babur and the younger sister of Humayun. She was born in 1523. She wrote the *Humayun nama*, the history of her brother Humayun, and it is the most authentic account of Humayun's reign especially in regard to events closely connected with the Emperor. She wrote this work at the behest of Akbar: the work is in two parts, one relating to Babur and the other Humayun. This account coming as it does from an eye witness and a participant in the events narrated is very valuable to the historian, and if we consider the *Baburnama* as merely a diary, this is then the first real history we have from the pen of one who knew the contents of the work personally. Gulbadan Begum composed this work in Persian. This work should be supplemented by the *Tarikhi-Rashidi* of Mirza Haider Dughlat, a near relative of Babur. The *Tarikhi-Rashidi* gives not only an account of the times of Babur and Humayun but is also partly autobiographical.

The most illustrious name among the historians of the Moghul period was Abul Fazl, who wrote the *Akbarnama* and the *Aini Akbari*, two very important sources for History of the reign of Akbar. Abul Fazl was born in 1551 as the son of Shaik Mubarak of Nagaur; he was the younger brother of Abul Faizi who also was attached to Akbar's court. Abul Fazl started life as a teacher. Soon after his introduction to Akbar the Emperor took such a strong liking to him that thereafter he remained his greatest favourite. This very fact was responsible for the untimely death of Abul Fazl, since Salim who was jealous of Abul Fazl's influence with the Emperor secretly ordered the murder of the courtier to be accomplished by a hired assassin.

Abul Fazl was an accomplished writer in Persian; in addition he was a diplomat, a warrior, a controversialist and above all a finished courtier. He has been justly accused of flattering his imperial patron, and making his *Akbarnama* a long panegyric. This is true; but possibly his attachment to the Emperor was as genuine as the latter's affection to his friend, whose death was responsible for quickening his own end. The *Akbarnama* is a detailed account of Akbar's reign. Akbar ordered that the history of his reign should be recorded 'with the pen of sincerity' and that there should be an account of 'the glorious events and of our dominion's increasing victories.' He took much pains in collecting the sources and critically analysed them. He wrote his History in brilliant Persian. He took seven years to write this History and completed it in 1596. Elphinstone wrote about Abul Fazl's performance as follows: 'He is a most assiduous courtier, eager to extol the virtues, to gloss over the crimes and to preserve the dignity of his master and those in whom he was interested. His narrative is florid, fickle and indistinct, overloaded with commonplace reflections and pious effusion generally ending in a compliment to his patron.' In spite of its tedious rhetoric and unblushing flattery the chronology of this work is superior to that of Badauni or Nizamuddin, according to V. A. Smith. The *Ain-i Akbari* which means the Institutes of Akbar is really the third part of the *Akbar Nama* and gives a lot of gazetteer information about the then prevailing social and economic conditions in the Empire. This work is in five books, dealing with Akbar's household, the military and civil services, the army administration, the rules and regulations regarding the judicial and executive departments, land survey etc.

In addition to these works Abul Fazl translated the *Gita* also. Many of his private letters are collected into the *Ruqqati-Abul Fazl*.

Abdul Qadir Badauni, son of Muluk Shah, was born in 1540. He entered the court of Akbar in 1574 and was favoured by that Emperor. He was given extensive lands at Badayun and respected for his scholarship; but with the arrival of Abul Fazl there, he fell out of favour and had to recede to the background. This is a circumstance he neither forgot nor ever forgave. But it is not necessary to imagine that this feeling of frustration affected the veracity or objectivity of his account. He held the view that 'the science of history was essentially a lofty science and an elegant branch of learning.' But he was also of the view that history must be written subject to the law of Muhammad. He knew that he was writing harshly about the great and the exalted and so he took care to say that 'I have made bold to chronicle these events, a course very far removed from that of prudence and circumspection. But God is my witness, and sufficient is God as a witness'. Badauni is a necessary corrective to Abul Fazl.

His works are the *Tabaqati - Akbari* and the *Muntakhab - ul - Tawarikh* both of which yield valuable information for the reign of Akbar. He was a Sunni and had no love for the Shiyas. The defenders of Akbar and his policies prefer Abul Fazl to Badauni as a source, and accuse the latter of prejudice.

Khwaja Nizamuddin was born in 1551 and died in 1594; his father had seen service under Babur, and helped Humayun to obtain the Moghul throne in succession to Babur. He fled from India with Humayun and returned to India with him. Nizamuddin saw service in Akbar's army; he enjoyed the patronage of that monarch. The work which has made him famous is the *Tabaqati Akbari*, completed in 1593. The book is in nine parts and tells the history of the Muslim conquest of India and brings the story down to his own times. He utilised the materials provided by Barani,

Afif, Abul Fazl etc. Nizamuddin wrote a simple style and was free from the usual prejudices of his class of writers.

Jehangir (1569-1627) succeeded Akbar on the Moghul throne in 1605. His life was full of vicissitudes, suffering, enjoyment, frustration, realised hopes and was the centre of treachery, gratitude, love and extreme cruelty. Two great factors were responsible for the stability of his government as well as the troubles which he had to face: One, Akbar and two, Nurjehan. Akbar's empire was built on grantie but had within itself the seeds of decay, especially in the form of the Mansabdari system. Consequently Jehangir lorded it over a vast empire but in the evening of his life fell an easy victim to one of his feudal barons, Mahabat Khan. Similarly, Nurjehan provided the enormous strength which the government of which he was an indifferent emperor stood in dire need. She looked after the government when he could not, and governed perhaps better than he could have. She kept in control his ferocious temper and exuded culture and civilization all around her. But she was also the author of palace plots and harem intrigues which shook the empire to its foundation. A sensitive and cultured man like Jehangir, a connoisseur of the delicate arts and a keen student of human nature could not but note down his reaction to life and nature. Hence the *Tuzuk-i-Jehangiri*. It is the *Memoirs of Jehangir*. It is also called *Tarikh-i-Salim Shahi*, and *Jehangir Nama*. These were written by the emperor himself and cover the period from 1605-1617. The first copy of these was presented to Shah Jehan by his father. The later portions of the memoirs were continued later by others. The memoirs were first published in 1864. His diary is the primary authority for the study of his reign and his personality. All official matters are systematically mentioned and the details of his private life candidly and frankly set forth.

Mirza Mohammad Kazim was the son of Mirza Amina, the author of the *Padshah Nama*. Aurangzeb appointed

him as Munshi and ordered him to write the annals of his reign. After he had come up to the eleventh year the emperor forbade his continuing his work. We do not know why. Anyhow, soon afterwards the emperor developed an aversion to history. He said, 'the cultivation of the internal piety is preferable to flattery and abuse.' Anyhow the *Ain-i-Munshi* is a detailed and dependable account of the first ten years of Aurangzeb's reign.

Mohammad Hashim Khafi Khan wrote the *Muntakhab-ul-Iubab* or *Tarikh-i-Khafi Khan*. It is a voluminous history covering the period from the Ghori invasion of India to 1733. The book is in three volumes. In the third volume we have a full account of the reign of Aurangzeb. He wrote the work largely without the knowledge of the emperor Alamgir i. e. concealed it from him, and it is said that he was called 'Khafi' on that account (*Khafi—Concealed*). Khafi Khan is said to have taken over Sadiq Khan's history of Shah Jehan's reign bodily and used it for his purposes. The forgery is fortunate since what was purloined was an eye witness account. Khafi Khan is said to have used in entirety the work of Abul Fazl Mamuri. This again is fortunate since what was taken over was written by a public servant in the reign of Aurangzeb. J. N. Sarkar says 'Khafi Khan's reflective style, description of the condition of society and characteristic anecdotes save his work from the dry formality of the court annals and is specially informing with regard to Deccan affairs'.

The above mentioned Muslim historians from the author of the *Chachnama* and Amir Khusru down to Badauni and Khafi Khan are a representative lot among the medieval Muslim historians of India. But for them the history of Islamic India of that period would remain dark except for official papers, for in the *Khagazraj* of the Muslims, especially the Moghuls, inscriptions had no place and we would be at the mercy of foreign observers.

Not that their observations are of no value. But the Muslim period is fully recorded, though in the background of Islamic orthodoxy, personal prejudices and fulsome flattery. They are certainly not inferior to the kind of history known to the pre-Renaissance period in Europe.

The medieval period saw a number of foreigners visiting India carefully observing and hearing and noting down what they saw and heard with an amazing amount of frankness which might look like quaintness today. The accounts of Marcopolo, the prince among medieval travellers, Nicolo Conte, Nikitin, Abdur Razzak, Fr. Monserrate, Bernier, Tavernier and many other Muslim and Christian visitors are invaluable and are a necessary corrective to the embellished accounts of local chroniclers. Modern historiography begins no doubt, with the arrival of the English.

The English like the Muslim rulers before them had need to maintain a day to day account of their commercial and political transaction. The correspondence with the home offices and the inter-factory correspondence among the settlements in India together with the official notings on state papers constituted the nucleus of the valuable archives maintained in India now and which relates mostly to the British period.

Apart from these sources of history we have actual modern type histories written in the later part of the 18th century and throughout the 19th Century by the British. That was the period when the English Rationalists like Hume, Robertson and Gibbon were perfecting modern Historiography. The tradition was taking root in India.

The opening up of the study of Indology by Western scholars after the advent of the British in India stimulated a welcome interest in the history of India's past. European

linguists, philologists, archaeologists and administrators massively contributed towards the discovery of Ancient India. Details about India's cultural past were collected from the dusty shelves of ancient libraries of Sanskrit and Persian works and material evidence obtained from the bowels of the earth by ardent archaeologists. This was a long and strenuous process but it has repaid amply by giving us a fairly coherent picture of the beginnings of Indian culture.

Early in the 18th century, some missionaries of the Jesuit order like Fr. Hanxleden who prepared (1732) the first Sanskrit grammar in a European language; and Fr. Coeurdoux (1767) who discovered the basic affinity between Sanskrit and the European languages, started the monumental history of European discovery of ancient Indian culture. But scientific and systematic work in the field of Indology begins only with Sir William Jones who was a judge of the supreme court in Calcutta, when Warren Hastings was the Governor-General. Warren Hastings himself was an admirer of Muslim and Hindu cultures and was interested in Persian and Sanskrit studies; it was fortunate that Warren Hastings and Sir William Jones should have been friendly contemporaries in India. Each aided and improved upon the work of the other. Jones was convinced about the need for a systematic study of Sanskrit leading to the discovery of Ancient India and he founded in 1784 the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Through the pages of the learned journal of this society, many Sanskrit classics were translated by European scholars. In 1784 appeared Wilkin's translation of the *Ehagavad Gita* which was followed by a translation of the *Hitopadesa*. Soon after, Jones translated Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, the *Gita Govinda* and the *Institutes of Hindoo Law*.

Thus Jones and Wilkins have been described as 'truly the fathers of Indology'. Their successors in the field of Indological studies were Henry Colebrook and

H. H. Wilson. It was a sheer accident that Alexander Hamilton, one of the original members of the Asiatic society of Bengal, taught Sanskrit to students in France during the Napoleonic wars; and it was one of the indirect blessings conferred on mankind by the wars of Napoleon. Friedrich Schlegel, a great German scholar learnt Sanskrit. From Hamilton In France, a chair of Sanskrit was founded in 1814; and Sanskrit was being taught at the training college of the East India Company at Hertford. H. H. Wilson was the first Boden Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford where the Sanskrit chair was founded in 1832. By the efforts of such scholars as these, Sanskrit as a course of study became popular in Europe and Ancient Indian culture came to be slowly discovered through Sanskrit.

By a critical and comparative study of Sanskrit and other European languages, Franz Bopp a Bavarian scholar, following the methods of Sir William Jones, reconstructed the common ancestor of Sanskrit, Latin and Greek. This was the beginning of the systematic study of comparative philology. The Royal Asiatic Society in London and other learned societies on the continent like the Russian Imperial Academy of sciences seriously started work on Sanskrit Lexicography. The English translation of the *Rig Veda* and the publication of the *Sacred Books of the East* by Friedrich Max Muller (1823-1900) the great German who worked at Oxford as professor of comparative philology, were landmarks in the discovery of India.

In the meanwhile, in another and a more tangible direction evidence of Ancient Indian culture was being unearthed; and that was archaeology. Evidence yielded by written records came to be supplemented by evidence supplied by ruins, coins, monuments and inscriptions; dead cities buried deep below when exposed by the

archaeologist told the grim tale of ancient history to the curious student. Working on this material was, if anything, more arduous; long dead scripts had to be read. The Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts and the Vatteluttu of the south were such defunct systems of writing brought to light and explained by the laborious research of generations of scholars.

In 1837, James Prinsep, secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal deciphered the Brahmi script in which the Asokan inscriptions, for example, are written. Variations of this script have been used all over India and its decipherment was an event of the greatest importance in the history of Indological studies.

General Sir Alexander Cunningham aptly described as 'the father of Indian Archaeology' was a colleague of Prinsep and he was appointed in 1862 as the first Archaeological Surveyor; from then till 1885 he worked with a single-minded devotion in the cause of Indian Archaeology. Though he made no epoch-making discoveries and his methods were primitive he was a great pioneer and it was on his work that his illustrious successors like Sir John Marshall built. By 1900, a good beginning had been made in the matter of archaeological survey, and collection and decipherment of inscriptions.

Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India (1899-1905) infused new enthusiasm into this work of archaeological survey and excavations. The Viceroy was personally interested in archaeological survey and the post of Director-General of Archaeology was created (1902); the Preservation of Ancient Monuments Act was passed (1904) and more than all this, the talented John (later Sir John) Marshall was appointed to that post. The greatest achievement of Marshall is the discovery of the Indus Valley Culture. Though Cunningham had already detected the existence of the protohistoric culture in the Indus Valley, it was Marshall, assisted by a brilliant band of Indian officers

like R. D. Banerji, that made systematic excavations at Mohenjodaro and at Harappa during 1922-1931). The places have not yet been fully excavated. But recent work has yielded new evidence on the ancient culture of the Indus Valley. Evidence of Neolithic culture has been brought to light by excavations in parts of Bellary, Anantapur, Cuddapah and Salem Districts and in Tirunelveli District at Adittanallur; at Adittanallur we have 'the most extensive prehistoric site so far discovered in India'. The discovery of a trading station at Arikkamedu near Pondicherry revealed trade contacts between Tamil Nad and the Roman Empire in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Robert Orme (1728-1801) wrote the oldest work which can be called purely historical in modern times in India. His work was *A history of the military transaction of the British nation in Indostan from the year 1745*. It was published in 1764. Orme had his education at Harrow. He entered the service of the East India Company in 1743 and rose to become a member of the Governor's council at Madras. He held that office from 1754-58. He was the official historiographer to the English in India from 1769-1801. In 1782 he published the *Historical fragments of the Moghul empire of the Morattoes and of the English concerns in Indostan from the year M. DC. LIX*. Orme's papers revealed a knowledge of a contemporary of the political condition of India in the later half of the 18th century from the English point of view. What are called his prejudices are only patches of his ignorance and in all probability he was not himself aware of it. Still his dispatches are indispensable for a knowledge of the late 18th century India. That period was the most chaotic in Indian history when British power had not stabilised itself and Moghul and Mahratta authority had been questioned by Abdali, the Afghan invader.

The next great historian among Englishmen who wrote on India was James Mill (1773-1836). He was

the son of a shoemaker. Educated in the Edinburgh University, he became a leading utilitarian, being a friend of Bentham, Ricardo, Joseph Hume and George Grote. Above all he was the father of the great John Stuart Mill. He wrote much and wrote well whatever he wrote. He was practically the founder of philosophical radicalism. His chief contribution to Indian history is his *History of British India* which is also his greatest literary work. His narrative brings the history of India down to the end of the 18th century. He wrote with poor sources of information and he had never visited India. So as is naturally to be expected he held strong, uncomplimentary notions about the Hindus. But he was not justified in indicting a nation. Macaulay however, referred to his work as 'the greatest historical work which has appeared in our language since that of Gibbon'.⁴ But H. H. Wilson who edited the fourth edition of that book wrote, 'with very imperfect knowledge, with an implicit faith in all testimony hostile to Hindu pretensions, he has elaborated a portrait of the Hindus which has no resemblance whatever to the original and which almost outrages humanity'. In spite of this Wilson says also that 'it is a composition of great industry, of extensive information, of much accuracy on many points, of unrelaxing vigour on all'.

Mount Stuart Elphinstone (1779-1859) wrote the *History of India* in 1841 for which he has been called the Tacitus of Modern historians and he wrote also the *Rise of British power in the East*.

He was educated at Edinburgh, went out to Bengal as a writer, narrowly escaped being murdered by the agents of Vazir Ali in 1799. From 1804-1808 he was a resident of Nagpur. In 1810 he became the Resident of Poona and after the conquest of the Peshwa's terri-

⁴ Statement made in the House of commons in the course of a debate on the Charter Act of 1833.

tories he was made the Governor of Bombay. He was governor for eight years. He has been described by Bishop Heber as follows: 'Mr. Elphinstone is in every respect an extraordinary man possessing great accuracy of mind and body, remarkable talent for and application to public business, a love of literature and a degree of almost universal information such as I have met with in no other person similarly situated, and manners and conversation of the most amicable and interesting character'. Elphinstone suffered from the same handicap which bothered Mill. His sources were poor. He knew contemporary India well and the Mahrattas best. To him ancient India was a puzzle—to many even now it is. But the history that he produced in spite of these difficulties has stood the test of time. It continued to be prescribed in the Universities for a long time. It would indeed be a travesty of scientific criticism to expect modern standards of scientific historiography in Elphinstone who lacked much of the source material for the ancient period.

Sir John Malcolm's *Political History of India* (1826), Peter Auber's *Rise and progress of the British Power in India*, Montgomery Martin's *The Indian empire - its history, topography etc.* were some of the works written during the first two quarters of the 19th century. Some regional histories also were written then. For example F.B. Hamilton's *Account of Assam*, Marshman's *History of Bengal*, Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs*, Stirling's *History of Orissa*. J. G. Duff's *History of the Mahrattas*, Tod's *Annals and antiquities of Rajasthan* are some of them.

Grant Duff (1789-1858) came of a Scottish family; was educated at Aberdeen, went out to India at the age of 16 and joined the Bombay military service. In 1810 he was admitted by Elphinstone who was then Resident at Poona to join the small band of his associates who were later to serve the cause of the British in India so well. He was

always attached to Elphinstone to whom he dedicated his *History of the Mahrattas*. That was all what he wrote. He never paid much attention to his style of presentation but confined himself to writing what he thought was true about the Mahrattas. Elphinstone was constantly asking him to improve his style. But he never worried. To him Khafi Khan was a great authority and the Mahratta Bakhars were of no moment. Grant's was the earliest history of that people. No Mahratta scholar, and certainly not M. G. Ranade and his like, is likely to treat Grant Duff as a sober chronicler of the Mahrattas. Duff's book did not become popular in his times. In fact he lost monetarily fairly heavily on it. But subsequently in spite of numerous other works in the field like Kincaid and Parasnis, Sardesai, J. N. Sarkar, and S. N. Sen, and so on Grant Duff is still an eminent authority on the Mahrattas.

James Tod (1782—1835) was born in Islington. His father had settled in the Uttar Pradesh as a planter. His uncles were in the East India company. James Tod himself entered the company's military service. By 1800 he became a lieutenant. In 1805 he was assigned to the service of the English Agent at the Sindhia's court. In 1818 he became political agent to the western Rajput states and was in that position till he retired in 1822. During 1812-1817 he collected a large quantity of historical material on central India and Rajasthan. During his service in Rajasthan he developed a close friendship with many Rajput chiefs and equipped himself for the masterly work on Rajasthan which was to make him immortal. He was in one sense compelled to retire since the government at Calcutta was displeased with his pro-Rajput attitude and even suspected him of corruption. He worked very hard at the desk in his official capacity. He knew that he was not equal to continued service with the company. In 1824 he became a major; in 1826 a lieutenant-colonel. In 1835 He passed away while doing business in a London Bank.

Tod was naturally attracted to researches into Indian antiquity. His contribution to history consists of the annals and antiquities of Rajasthan and the travels in western India. The latter was published posthumously. The former were published between 1829 and 1832 in two volumes. It immediately became a classic. It is one of the most sympathetic accounts of India written by a foreigner. It deals with the history and sociology of the Rajputs. He was attracted by the glittering glamour of Rajput feudalism and the romantic veneer which covered the surface of their feudal life. More than these treatment of the geography and the socio-economic conditions, his treatment of social history of the Rajputs in areas like religion and tribal practices are interesting and important. He gave a realistic and true picture of the Rajasthan he knew and a romantic picture of the Rajputana he imagined. He was different from Grant Duff who wrote on the Mahrattas and J. D. Cunningham who wrote on the Sikhs in that his interest in the political history of the Rajputs was much less than his interest in their social life. As its name indicates it is annals and not history and even as annals very imperfect. But it was a curious new kind of composition which was comprehensive enough to defy definition. He depended largely on hearsay and the bardic poetry of Chand and others. He knew that the bardic literature was unreliable but was obliged to treat them as primitive historians of mankind. He represented the contemporary romantic historiography in India and his work was a combination of a lot of gazetter information written with the romantic pen of a Sir Walter Scott. He does make many errors in regard to chronology and even geography. But his greatest error was to have begun with a strong prejudice in favour of his subject from which he was unwilling to be deflected. Statements like 'there is not a petty state in Rajasthan that has not had its Thermopylae and scarcely a city that has not produced its Leonidas' are quite common in the pages of his work. To the

extent to which he was pro-Rajput he was naturally anti-Moghul and particularly Aurangzeb. A typical sentence of Tod runs as follows: 'Aurangzeb accumulated on his head more crimes than any prince who ever sat on an Asiatic throne... he was never betrayed even in the fever of success into a single generous action.' He identified himself with the Rajputs so much that he shared their very natural anti-Mahratta attitude. Tod has infected his latter day admirers who imitated him by romantically writing about him. Dr. Qanungo says 'in Tod the hellas of Hindustan found a Herodotus'.

Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893) was a pioneer in Indian historical research and in archaeology. Educated at Christ's hospital, he came to India in 1833. He began his career as a military engineer in the Sikh wars. In 1862 he was appointed the Director of Archaeology and he was 'the superintendent, who undertook a complete search over the whole country and a systematic record and description of all architectural and other remains that are remarkable alike for their antiquity or their beauty or their historic-interest'. Between 1862-84 he published annual reports of his work. He started serious archaeology in India and he is truly the Father of Indian Archaeology. All his efforts are embodied in the 23 volumes containing the results of his survey of the central and northern parts of India. He edited the *Corpus inscriptionum Indicarum* i.e., Asoka Inscriptions, and was the author of the *Ancient Geography of India*, the *Stupa of Barhut*, the *book of Indian eras* etc. General Cunningham was thus laying the foundation for the collection and publication of non-literary sources. The rapid strides which historiography was making during the British period and under the leadership of British scholars become evident when the historiographical output, its nature and quantity, from Orme to Cunningham are considered.

Joseph Davey Cunningham was eminently the historian of the Sikhs. He was born in 1812. As a student he

had a weakness for mathematics and good conduct. But he had to come away to India to join military service with the East India company. By 1845 he had risen sufficiently in official position to become the British agent to the native state of Bahawalpur. He had served for long in the vicinity of the Punjab. He later became political agent at Bhopal.

He cultivated a taste for History from his brother Sir Alexander Cunningham who had already become famous as the first great archaeologist in India. He wrote his *History of the Sikhs* and published it in 1849 and immediately became an irreplaceable authority on the subject. It however lost him his job for though he became famous as a historian he was censured as an official, suspected of disloyalty and without much ceremony dismissed from service consequent on a Parliamentary discussion. The British government found fault with him for unauthorisedly utilising secret documents of the government. But in fact, it was chagrined at the publication in his work of certain minutes and documents which for reasons of expediency the government had purposely withheld. He was informed that his case was 'a gross one and the penalty would be wholesome'. He was accused of breach of trust and dismissed. His fault was he spoke unpleasant truth and every historian who does it should be thankful to his stars if he does not lose his job and every one who rises swiftly in the ladder of official favour may be truly suspected of avoiding the greatest handicap to success, namely a predilection to truth. Cunningham is a standing example of what price conscientious historians will have to pay.

Cunningham's treatment of the *History of the Sikhs* is systematic and accurate in so far as the availability or absence of source material could permit him. He is sympathetic to his subject without being fanatical about it. His expression of the Sikh organization as a theocratic

confederate feudalism is quite apt. He may be said to be the first scientific historian of India.

William Wilson Hunter was one of the Indian civilian officers who while helping to build the British empire in India were also anxious to understand the people of India and write their history with skill and sympathy. He is famous for his comparative dictionary of the non-Aryan languages in India and high Asia. It was considered to be such an important contribution that it earned a doctorate for him. Lord Mayo entrusted to him the difficult task of preparing a statistical survey of India. He toured the whole of India and found information sufficient to put into the fourteen volumes of the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*. But by the very nature of the enterprise it could not be completed. *The Annals of Rural Bengal* was another of his great works. It was perhaps the first attempt to write the history of the unknown masses of the country which had been plunged into chaos, as a result of the breakdown of the Moghul empire. Immediately it earned the encomium 'Mr. Hunter's name will one day be a household word among those who are interested in Asiatic history'. In his famous *Rulers of India* Series of which he was general editor he wrote the *Life and Work of Lord Dalhousie* and followed it up with a *Life of Lord Mayo*. He had already published a two volume life of Mayo. The *Rulers of India* Series consisted in all of 28 volumes which are even now popular. On the whole Hunter was sympathetic to India, though the British patriot in him and the natural instincts of an empire builder somewhat qualified his sympathy. He studied the people of India, the habits and their achievements. He wrote about the Brahmin for instance as follows; 'He is an example of a class becoming the ruling power in a country not by force of arms but by the vigour of hereditary culture and temperance. Dynasties have risen and fallen, religions have spread themselves over the land and disappeared. But since the dawn of history the Brahmins have calmly ruled; swaying the minds and receiving the homage of the people

and accepted by foreign nations as the highest type of Indian mankind'.⁵ He was a friend not only of the Hindus but of the Muslims and of the Christians. He showed his sympathy for the Muslims in his *The Indian Musalmans*. At the instance of Lord Ripon he was appointed head to a commission on higher education in India. It is well known as the Hunter Commission. He submitted his report which was accepted in full by the government and it has been the basis on which higher education has progressed in this country since then. A book on the History of India begun by him was completed by P. E. Roberts as the *History of British India*. He created many historians of India i. e., brought them to light. G. B. Malleson, Stanley Lane-poole, Meadows Tylor and many others were brought to fame by him.

Vincent Arthur Smith (1843-1920) was the last great English historian of India of the old school. The school began a tradition in the days of Jones and Wilkins, both of whom found time to ponder the history of this country and create a tradition of writing it. Smith, a civilian officer whose duties were no doubt onerous and heavy, found time to become one of the greatest historians of India. Historiography since the days of Orme had passed through many vicissitudes. Post-Mutiny British writers started defending themselves against the accusations of a progressively nationalist India. V. A. Smith stood on the shoulders of the whole army of British historians, archaeologists and anthropologists who worked on India. Mill and Elphinstone, Tod and Duff, and Cunningham had gone before him taking full advantage of the latest researches in history, archaeology, art and letters. Smith wrote his early *History of India* (1904) from 600 B. C. to the Muslim conquest with special reference to Alexander's campaigns in India. It made him at once famous as the author of the first really complete history of India.

5 *A Brief History of the Indian people*, 1897 pp. 61, 62

Smith came of a large family and was fifth of thirteen children of his father. He did very well at College and joined the Indian Civil Service in 1871. He held a number of important administrative posts in that service. He became even the Commissioner of a division. He married Mary Elizabeth and became the father of three sons and a daughter. After an unsullied official record he retired in 1900. He lived for 20 years after retirement and spent his time in his favourite pursuit of Indian historical studies. He became a C. I. E. and a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. But he was not elected to the Readership in Indian history at Oxford. This is a measure of what Universities are capable of. They will deny a lectureship in political science to Aristotle or even a position of a laboratory assistant to Archimedes. This funny incident cannot detract from the greatness of Smith as a historian of India. His major works are 1. *Asoka the Buddhist emperor of India*, 2. *Akbar, the great Moghul*, 3. *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, 4. *Catalogues of coins in Indian Museum* and above all his *Oxford History of India*. His *Asoka* inspite of many subsequent publications on that subject remains a masterpiece. He has translated the Asokan inscriptions and included them in that work. His catalogue of the coins is a unique work on numismatics and his work on *The Fine Art in India and Ceylon* was an advance on his predecessors, Fergusson and Havell and has not been surpassed by his successors in that field of study. In *Akbar* he is occasionally controversial for he prefers the *Missionary* accounts to some Indian chronicles. He is realistic in his estimate of that emperor and does not try to whitewash him. His *Oxford history of India* published in 1918 was the first full history of India written with an accuracy and in a style not known before. His British period has been much criticised. The latest edition of that work by T. G. P. Spear substitutes entirely new material in the place of Smith's contribution but even now Smith's own

British period has its charms as the window to the author's mind. Some of his ideas have been irreplaceably correct. For example, he said the cession of the northwest frontier region by Seleucos Niketar to Chandra Gupta Maurya secured a scientific frontier, and he said that it is time that History of India was written beginning with the south. Time alone will judge the correctness of his statement that 'autocracy is substantially the only form of government with which a historian of India is concerned'. Probably he may be judged correct. Every historian who wrote after him either agreed with him quoting him or criticised him again quoting him and this was the greatest compliment that could be paid to that administrator scholar.

Since his time and before him there have been such men like Hunter, Tod, Sewell and a few Indians among whom one should with pride mention contemporary young men like N. Ramesan, and I. Mahadevan.

E. J. Rapson's (1861—1937) interest in Indology started early and he entered the British museum as an assistant in the department of coins. He was a master of the Kharoshti script. In 1906 he became Professor of Sanskrit, Cambridge. He was the editor of the first two volumes of the Cambridge History of India. He was a co-editor of the Kharoshti inscriptions, along with Aurel Stein. His work in the field of numismatics is distinguished. He wrote his *Ancient India* in 1914 which is not a major work but is readable and trustworthy.

Rev. Henry Heras S. J. (1890—1955) came to India from Spain in 1922 when he was 32 years old. He became professor of Indian history at St. Xavier's college, Bombay. He spent more than three decades in this country studying and expounding the history of this land. He was quite versatile and spoke as eloquently as he wrote. He wrote on the Pallavas; the early aspects, Vijayanagar; the fourth dynasty; but his *magnum opus* however was his work on the Indus Valley civilization. He pioneered

the view that the Indus seals bear a script the language of which was proto-Tamil, a controversy which has been gaining momentum since then. Fr. Heras is already a legendary name in Indian historical studies in western India and has left behind a second line of scholars who are now in the first line like Prof. Sankalia, Dr. Moraes etc. Fr. Heras was famed as an eloquent speaker, impressive teacher and original thinker.

R.G. Bhandarkar (1837-1925): Among Indian historians writing on India the first name, both in point of chronology and in point of reverence, the primacy of place goes to Sir R. G. Bhandarkar. He was a Mahratta Brahmin. He was educated in the Elphinstone College, Bombay where later he became Professor of oriental languages. He retired in 1893. He was a member of the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic society. He was a great Sanskrit scholar and in 1884 he wrote his *Early History of the Deccan*. His *Vaishnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems* was published in 1913. He was a most respected citizen of Poona. He made the study of Sanskrit popular by his first and second books of Sanskrit. He was so greatly respected in his times that academic honours came crowding in on him from such different places as England, Germany, America and France. Even India honoured him by starting the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, the most appropriate memorial to a scholar of his mettle.

Sardesai, G. S. (1865 — 1959) came of the family of Mavalankars. 'Sardesai' means a hereditary office held in Maharashtra. It is stated that Sambaji was captured by the Moghuls while he was staying with an ancestor of Sardesai. Before young Sardesai left the secondary school he was married to Gangu Bai. His collegiate education was taken care of by his father-in-law. He graduated in 1888 and from 1889-1925 he served the Baroda state by taking up an assignment in the Gaekwad palace. He was personal clerk to the ruler and so he

had abundant travel facilities. The Gaekwad recognizing the abilities of Sardesai asked him to translate Machiavelli's *Prince* and Seeley's *Expansion of England* into Mahratti. Sardesai did the translations reluctantly and it is interesting to note that he presented a copy of his translation of the *Expansion of England* personally to Seeley himself. Thus he developed his ability to compose in Mahratti.

His greatest contribution to the history of the Mahrattas is known as *Mahratti Riyasat*. A number of books went into the making of the *Riyasat*. These presented the history of the Mahrattas from beginning to 1848 in eight volumes and represent his labours for over three decades. He has been called the *Riyasatkar* on this account. He wrote the history originally in Mahratti and this recreated Mahratti nationalism. He attempted the estimates of Sivaji and Sambaji and in both cases significantly failed. His style is remarkably lucid. Sardesai was a great friend of J. N. Sarkar. Their freindship is reputed for its sincerity and utility. It was Sarkar who persuaded Sardesai to write in English. Sir Jadunath and Sardesai were the first to recognize the value of the Mahratti *Rumals* bound in cloth. Sardesai was appointed to edit these Mahratti state papers. But hostility came from an unexpected quarter. The patriots of Poona had no great love for Sarkar's *Sivaji* and his times. The friendship between Sardesai and Sarkar made the former also suspect in the eyes of Poona. They would not recognize him as a historian. Sarkar added to the troubles by describing Sardesai as the greatest Mahratta historian which however was a true description of that man. After the publication of the Peshwa daftar, Sardesai and Sarkar jointly edited the Poona Residency correspondence. This was published in fifteen volumes of which Sardesai was responsible for five. 'Thus the Sarkar-Sardesai combination gave 62 volumes of original documents to the students of Mahratta history'. Finally, Sardesai wrote the one book which every student of Mahratta history reads, *The*

New history of the Mahrattas in English. At the age of eighty true wisdom in regard to historical writing dawned upon him and he wrote very correctly 'till now I proceeded on the idea that I was to point out the good or the bright side of the picture, as the western writers had sufficiently described the dark side. I will now allow documents to speak rather than impose my views upon the readers'.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar (1870-1958): Jadunath's name is inseparable from that of Sardesai. More than even what Sardesai had been to the Mahrattas, Sarkar had been to the Moghuls. In one sense, as Gooch said in another context, 'he has been the greatest Indian historian and he remains the master of us all'. He was born in 1870 in an eastern district of Bengal now in Bangladesh. He had a distinguished academic career and took his M.A. in English literature in 1892 standing University first. He started as an English lecturer. His first research paper published in 1901 was *India of Aurangzeb*. Thereafter he switched his loyalty from English literature over to History. He was promoted to the Indian Educational Service in 1918. He retired from Patna in 1926. Just before retirement he was nominated vice-chancellor of Calcutta University. He served for two years. He refused to continue though a second term was offered for he wanted time for historical research. This is all the more surprising in a country where graceful exit from lucrative service is practically unknown. In 1929 he was knighted by the British Government which conferred also the C. I. E. on him in 1926. Jadunath was honoured by the Royal Asiatic Society of Britain in 1923. True to style, Indian learned societies started honouring him three years later. The royal historical society of England which at no time has more than 30 honorary members in the whole world included Sarkar in its membership. The American Historical Society appointed him an honorary life member and in all Asia he was the only scholar to have been so honoured.

Sir Jadunath was a master of English, Sanskrit, Persian and Mahratti; in addition he learned Hindi, French,

German, Portuguese and Rajastani. Bengali was his mother tongue. His masterpiece was the *History of Aurangzeb* in five volumes for which he spent twentyfive years of labour. He prepared also a *Shorter History of Aurangzeb* in one volume. Thus the Emperor who had such an aversion for history had his history written by the greatest of modern Indian historians. Simultaneously he was working on *Sivaji and his times*. His last great work was a *Military History of India* (1960) posthumously published. Mostly he wrote on the Moghuls and particularly Aurangzeb. Moghul administration, fall of the Moghul empire, Aurangzeb and Sivaji were his favourite subjects. He wrote well in Bengali also.

S. Krishnaswami Iyengar (1871-1953) was born at Sakkottai near Kumbakonam; he lost his father at the age of eleven and was educated at Bangalore. He did well at school. He tried to do Physics for his graduate course and mathematics as his post-graduate studies. For some reason he turned from Mathematics to history, a veritable academic revolution. Soon after taking M. A. in history he published his dissertation on the *History of Mysore under the Udayars*. He got into the company of the epigraphists Hultzsch and V. Venkaiah. As early as 1901 he started work on Chola history. Since then he had been founding dynasties in south India, discovering the forgotten ones, fixing their dates, raising their problems, answering impossible riddles peculiar to south Indian history. He equipped himself in Sanskrit and in Tamil and from very early days cultivated the practice of writing Tamil learned historical articles many of which appeared in the *Sentamil*. Before he took to teaching history he was teaching English at the Central college, Bangalore.

The University of Madras endowed a chair in History in 1914. It was a chair of Indian history and archaeology and its first occupant was S. K. Iyengar. The illustrious school of Madras started its brilliant career with Iyengar, its rising sun. In 1921 he published his *South India and her*

Mohammadan Invaders. The *Beginnings of south Indian history* had appeared in 1918; a minor work of his, somewhat loose in construction, was his *Contributions of south India to Indian culture; Manimekalai in its historical setting* (1928) was by far more serious and ensured academic recognition in all Indological quarters. It was not quite necessary for him to have written the *Evolution of Hindu administrative institutions in south India* (1931.) He edited *Sewell's Historical inscriptions of south India* and wrote *The History of Tirupati* in two volumes. His *Sources of Vijayanagar history* prepared the ground for the more comprehensive *Further Sources* by Sastri and Venkataramanayya. He was deeply interested in Sangam history. But he could do pretty little for want of acquaintance with classical Tamil. He wrote his chapters on south Indian history in volume III of the *Cambridge history of India*. For sometime he was the editor of the *Journal of Indian History*. He retired from the University of Madras on 1.11.1929. Along with V. Kanagasabhai and P. Sundaram Pillai, he was a pioneer in Tamil historical studies. Many of his conclusions have necessarily dated now. The encouragement he gave to historical studies in Madras was immense and the credit for founding a respectable school of history there belongs to him, though the responsibility for bringing it to its present position belongs to others. He had a band of researchers around him who have themselves become immortal as authors of notable treatises on different aspects of south Indian history. Among them must be mentioned R. Sathianathaier the author of the *Nayaks of Madure*, R. Gopalan who wrote the *Pallavas of Kanchi*, C. V. Narayana Aiyar and his *Early History of Saivism*. Dr. Appadurai and his *Economic condition of south India* and above all Mr. Rangaswami Saraswathy with his *Sources of Vijayanagar history*. Dr. Iyengar's desire to become vice-chancellor of the Madras university was never fulfilled. But his reputation as a pioneer in

south Indian history never suffered. His eminence as a south Indian historian was somewhat dimmed by the brilliant achievements of his successor in office, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri.

R. C. Majumdar (b. 1888) was educated at Calcutta university where he obtained the Ph. D. degree. His academic career was as brilliant as his later official career. He has been professor of history at the Calcutta university and vice-chancellor, Dacca university. Some of his early works were *Corporate life in ancient India*, *History of Bengal* and his work on Java. R. C. Majumdar has been equally at home in ancient, medieval and modern histories. His *Advanced History of India* which he wrote in collaboration with Ray Chaudhuri and Datta has been a useful and standard text book covering the whole of the History of India. But he greatly outdistanced his contemporaries by two massive contributions: 1. His editorship of the eleven volume History of India called *The History and culture of the Indian people* sponsored by K. M. Munshi's Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 2. He wrote many of the chapters in this series and his captaincy of the endeavour has been a great success. His volumes on the freedom movement in India of which the 1857 Mutiny is the crux is as massive and scholarly as some people consider it controversial. Dr. Majumdar is a serious scholar not likely to indulge in controversy for its own sake. His Heras memorial lectures on historiography in modern India comprising not more than sixty pages summarise his views on the art of writing history. In that work he repeats with approval Jadunath Sarkar's ideal of a historian. I would not care whether truth is pleasant or unpleasant and in consonance with or opposed to current views. I would not mind in the least whether truth is or is not a blow to the glory of my country. If necessary I shall bear in patience the slander and ridicule of friends and society for the sake of preaching truth but still I shall seek truth,

understand truth and accept truth; This should be the firm resolve of a historian.' Majumdar confesses that in writing the *History of Freedom Movement* he has not kept any very high ideal before him. "I have preferred to follow the footsteps of Ranke and may say these words: 'my book does not aspire to such lofty functions as are laid down in the presidential address'" (the reference is to the address of the general president of the Indian History Congress in 1964)" "its aim is merely to show what actually occurred, with such comments as are obviously suggested by it". The winds of change, some of them rather chill Norwesters, are blowing in strong gales over the field of historiography somewhat affecting the quality of the crops raised therein. This change of climate does not exactly suit the intellectual health of scholars like R. C. Majumdar who raise their voice against this charge and demand that the crops be saved and the land protected from these chill winds.

He has been president of the All India History Congress and the All India Oriental Conference. He is the vice-president of the inter-national commission set up by the UNESCO for editing the history of mankind

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri (b. 1892), hailing from Tirunelveli and belonging to a race of men hardy equally physically and intellectually and endowed with a capacity for sustained work graduated from the Madras University with a first class first in his M. A. and was Professor of history in Tirunelveli and Benares before he was requested to be the Principal of Sri Meenakshi College, Chidambaram. He was Principal of that college from 1920-29 during which decade the college became so illustrious that it could easily be converted into the Annamalai University that it is now. In 1929 he became Professor of Indian history and archaeology at the University of Madras where Professor S. K. Iyengar had just then retired. He held that position from 1929-1946 when he retired, but only to take up the Profes-

sorship of Indology in the Mysore University a few years later. Then the UNESCO provided funds for an Institute of Traditional cultures in Madras. Professor Sastri was nominated Director of this institute and he held that position with distinction till 1972.

From the start he had been equipping himself for the task of writing the History of the Tamil country in its various phases and to make that study a part of an all India study. He is profoundly learned in Sanskrit. His Tamil is somewhat second hand but he makes masterly use of it in dealing with Tamil historical problems. He is different from many others in the field in that he knows many subjects besides history and he knows the history of many countries besides India and he knows many branches of history besides political and dynastic. He is as good at archaeology as in history and a distinguishing feature of Sastri's contribution is that whatever he writes is always readable though some of his writings might suffer because of collaboration or insufficient personal attention and these cannot be said of his masterpieces of which *The Pandyan kingdom*, *the Cholas*, *History of South India*, *History of India*, *the Development of Religion in South India*, *his Studies in the history of Sri Vijaya*, *Foreign notices of South India*, *edition of Comprehensive history of India*, the numerous chapters he has contributed to the *History of the Deccan* etc. His *Cholas* undoubtedly take him to the first rank among Indian historians. Prof. Sastri writes in a forthright fashion and is intolerant of cant and history written to please the gallery. Among his students who have made a mark in the field of history C. Minakshi who wrote *The Administration and social life under the Pallavas* and Dr. Gopalachari author of the *Early history of the Andhras* deserve mention.

Sardar K. M. Panikkar was born at Kavalam in Kerala in 1895. He was educated in the Madras Christian College and in Christ Church Oxford, he passed out with a first

class and after qualifying for the bar returned to India. He started teaching at the Aligarh Muslim University. He continued teaching only till 1922 and thereafter he had served in a variety of capacities as publisher, state government servant, editor, diplomat and finally vice-chancellor. His fame rests on his historical writings more than any of the above mentioned activities. He had a natural flair for history. He wrote extremely well though he spoke moderately well. Even while in England he had developed nationalist leanings and published in 1918 *Indian Nationalism*, its principles and its history. He was endowed with a natural gift of original analysis of historical problems and in presenting them in English as well as in Malayalam. As early as 1921 he had written *Nur Jehan* and *Kurukshetrattile Kandari*, the former a play and the latter a poem in Malayalam. In 1922 he became editor of the *Swarajya*, Madras. But in 1924 he resigned the editorship due to difference of opinion and from then onwards he and difference of opinion lived together. In 1924 he founded and started editing the *Hindustan Times* in Delhi. In 1925 he resigned the editorship due to difference of opinion with Malaviya. During 1925-27 he published his really substantial work *the Native States in India*. In 1928 he became adviser to the Maharaja of Kashmir. Later in the year he published *the British Crown and the Indian states*. In 1933 he was appointed minister for foreign affairs in Patiala and became secretary to the Chamber of Princes. In the meantime he had delivered learned lectures on historical subjects in Calcutta and Madras Universities. During 1935 and 1936 he was in Europe visiting Mussolini and the Pope and attending the coronation of the Emperor in London. Meanwhile the number of Malayalam and English works he was writing and publishing increased. In 1947 his well-known *Survey of Indian history* was published. In 1948 he was appointed ambassador to China where he delivered lectures which were collected and published as *the Background of India*. In 1959 the

totems can be correct and I have held the same view independently of him. Kosambi writes with conviction and like other Marxians he is no agnostic. His cocksureness may not be palatable to the traditional historians, to whom history is a perpetual puzzle. But for Kosambi Marx has defined history already and he is but to clothe it in new phrases. He says the inner causes which ultimately manifest themselves in the striking events, the driving forces which underlie great movements have to be made clear before any work can be dignified by the name of serious history.' One might differ from Kosambi but one feels like wanting more of him now for he stands at least for clean and hygienic scholarship. He was free from the taint of mercenary historiography which is becoming all too common now.

We have mentioned above only a very few among the historians of India. But one supposes they are representative. It must be noted that the British started writing our history first before we took it over. For some time we and they played the game together of course, moving towards opposite goals and with a dominating sense of team spirit. In recent times we have started rewriting our history, not only the history written by the British but also what was written by our forbears. To that extent British scholars have been losing interest in Indian studies. The School of Oriental and African Studies is the one great institution which is still massively interested in Indological studies and scholars like C. H. Philips, A. L. Basham, J. D. M. Derrett and a few others elsewhere are keeping up their interest. A. L. Basham's *The Wonder That Was India* is a compendium of Indian culture. In the tradition of Emerson, Thoreau, Max Muller, H. H. Wilson and other admirers of India, Basham is a distinguished new addition. His understanding as well as exposition are all that can be desired and he has not only been a friend of India but a friend and guide of many Indian historians. But ultimately the responsibility for evolving the true style of Indian historiography belongs to the sons and daughters of the soil.

PART V

Methodology Research and Composition

world of scholarship was presented his *magnum opus Asia and western Dominance*. He had served as Indian ambassador to Egypt and Sudan and had been a member of the states re-organization committee in the meantime. In 1956 he was elected as a full member of the international commission for a History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind. In *Two Chinas*, *Geographical Factors in Indian history*, *Hindu society at cross roads*, *The Afro-Asian states and their problems*, *Commonsense about India* are some of his other works. In the fag end of his life he was vice-chancellor of the University of Kashmir and later of Mysore where he died on 11th December 1963.

He started in a University as a teacher and ended in a university as a vice-chancellor. In between, more than four decades had passed and Sardar Panikkar had made the best use of life's opportunity and given of his best to his fellow scholars and the general public. The former true to their nature have criticised him and the latter, naturally enough again, have admired and applauded him.

On the whole Panikkar was more interested in politics, diplomacy, public administration and international relations and geo-politics and other topics of peripheral interest to a traditional historian. Just to show that he was not unmindful of the importance of ancient Indian history his work on the *Origin and Evolution of Kingship in India* was published. But even there he was interested mainly in trying to prove that historical speculation was not unfamiliar to ancient Hindus. A careful study of his *Survey of Indian history and Asia and Western Dominance* shows that the deep sense of nationalism which was inherent in him had interfered with his attitude of objectivity and balanced judgment. Unfortunately it is the nature of the pendulum to move from one extremity to the other and these movements are reactions; and reactions must not be confused with original, independent or unbiased thinking for the premises of every reaction are nearly the same as those of the action to which it responds. British imperialist writing leading

to Indian anti-imperialist writing adds to the same kind of literature. Only the latter is imperialism stood on its head. Parker Thomas Moon had started this tradition when he wrote *Imperialism and world politics*. But there is no denying the vast scholarship, close observation, intelligent expression and the genuine sympathies of Sardar Panikkar. Sardar was the title conferred on him by the Maharaja of Bikaner.

D. D. Kosambi is an unusual scholar who wrote on Indian history. He was absolutely versatile and one suspects he was a genius. His mind was fresh and original. In fact it was a mathematical mind working on historical problems and therefore he could be as stimulating as a Russell or a Plato. Frankly he was a communist i. e. a Marxian. To begin with he was reputed as a mathematician. Then he surprised Indian scholars with his achievements in the field of numismatics. Then Indian historians learnt to the delight - some to their dismay - that an archaeologist with revolutionary ideas was turning up. But when he started writing history the delight as well as the despair was complete. His introduction to the *Study of Indian history* (1956) *Culture and civilization of ancient India in historical outline* (1965) and his *Myth and Reality in Indian History* (1962) are the most important of his contribution to history. He lay special emphasis on archaeology and anthropology as necessary pre-requisites of a historian's equipment. He is intolerant of romantic history; in fact, of any history other than analytical. He believes in the possibility of human motivation being classified and predicted and therefore the possibility of man's determining his future. He surely believes that the economic analysis is the true analysis and that the rest is merely description without explanation. He has said unsavoury things about the Gita calling it a feudal document. But disagreeing with him on emotive grounds is not the same as disproving him. He does say at times strange things which may not be acceptable to minds accustomed to different things. But his derivation of the Gotra from

Choice of Topic

Research is supposed to be the last stage of superior equipment for a student of history or whatever branch of knowledge he might have specialised in. Upto the post-graduate level he knows what is expected of him. The curriculum, the subjects like history of Europe, constitutional history of England etc. are announced, the number of such papers is fixed, a broad area of study is indicated and the pattern of teaching and learning, examining and responding are settled by tradition. I am speaking of most of the Indian universities. So what he does at that level is no more than what he has been doing at under-graduate level with the difference that the M. A. student is expected to specialise in a particular subject both by reading more of it and by avoiding

reading everything else. A specialisation thus sets in but still it is only the outermost circle in the concentric series. Qualitatively he has been doing the same thing from the secondary school history class upto the post-graduate class. By harder work and clearer expression and careful preparation and a certain capacity to statistically predict the most probable questions and getting first class answers ready in advance and with an element of luck a good grade in M. A. cannot be avoided. But an M. A. first class of the best Indian university may be totally innocent of research. But every brilliant M. A. vaguely aspires to do research. Why? is an interesting question.

There are a few obvious answers. He knows that his senior professors are what they are because they hold superior research degrees; that superior professorship can be aspired to and collected by individuals untouched by research and free from research degrees is a contemporary fact. But we speak subject to that. Secondly he knows that it is prestigious to hold a research degree and thirdly, this weighs mostly with most people—the university stipend,—even the stipend that Indian universities offer, is not unwelcome to a post-graduate degree holder who is likely to be otherwise unemployed. These reasons apart it is possible that some students have an idea of what research is, have already developed an affection to the subject and are intellectually involved in the problems of research which can be fascinating to them. Candidates for research motivated by the first three reasons will soon be disillusioned; the last group i. e. the idealists will persist but will still be up against the problem of choosing a topic and going ahead till the thesis is submitted and the degree collected.

It must be obvious that research is calculated to extend the frontiers of knowledge in regard to any area of intellectual pursuit. This may be wide or narrow, may relate to a new discovery, an invention, a point of view, a new arrangement, a new proof and so forth

based upon existing data or marshalling of hitherto unknown data. Research involves original planning if the thesis is to be ordinary and valuable and involves a new breakthrough at the theoretical and speculative level if it is to be brilliant and valuable. Nothing else can constitute research. In both cases however what is involved is originality and the scholar has to start thinking for himself something which he has not done before—I am still thinking of Indian universities—i. e., engaging in an unaccustomed piece of intellection. In this crisis the student either gives up the game or looks upto the guide for the solution of his problems from the choice of topic down to collecting all the material formulating the problems and even actually writing out the thesis. But this will not do. **Research by proxy is no research.** 'The historical architect must quarry his own stones and build with his own hands' says G. M. Trevelyan.

A serious research student must choose his topic with reference to 1. his own predilections and 2. the facilities for research on the subject available to him. And in this process there is no harm in the supervisor helping him to choose a topic. Choice of topic will not be an easy task, for having initially chosen a topic, he may soon discover that it does not work either because there is no material on it or it is not philosophically self-contained. Before he wastes more time on it he must change his topic. A few failures may be stepping stones to successful research; with an obliging supervisor and earnestness on the part of the student the latter can light on a viable topic. The viability of the topic as stated above will depend on only two factors, availability of material and sufficiency of the subject. Apart from this, given the aptitude needed for enthusiastic pursuit of research any one with a modicum of intelligence and more than a modicum of industry can successfully pursue research. When he has finally chosen the subject he would have tested it for problems i. e. whether he can collect sufficient facts for generalization and whether the topic will yield

problems for investigation. So anyone with these basic qualifications can pursue research. The nationality, religion, community, sex etc. of a student will have nothing to do with the choice of topic. To illustrate; a student some-time ago started working on a topic relating to a certain religious sect in Tamilnadu. He was aspiring to the Ph. D. His supervisor initially objected to his choice of topic because the student did not profess the religion he was trying to do research upon. But the student persisted and got a handsome degree. This is an illustration of what does not inhibit and this can be summarised in the words of Kitson Clark: 'No scholar holds monopoly rights in any historical subject whatsoever'.¹

Before choosing a subject it is usually said that it would be preferable for a student to check up whether the topic has already been worked upon. This is no doubt a wholesome advice. To avoid repetitive work, topic banks and clearing houses of research subjects should be set up. There can however be an excess of accent on this. A subject can be worked upon at various levels. Different scholars can work the same subject in different ways depending upon new formulations and data available to them and withheld from others. For example, there are more than half a dozen fairly competent works on the position of women in ancient India. So while it is generally desirable for a virgin field of enquiry to be taken up for research there can be no great harm in working on the same subject over again provided there is fresh treatment involved.

The choice of topic involves its definition and delimitation. Compact neat little topics like, for example, the Kadavarayas in the later Chola period or the Great Temple Tanjore can be worked upon. But in the case of the second topic a certain delimitation would be advisable i. e., the temple is such a vast complex that full justice to every aspect of it would be both difficult and if attempted unsatisfactory. So the student should define his area of work

stating whether he is going to be concerned with the art and architecture of the temple or the history of its construction or its role in the socio-economic life of the people etc. This kind of delimitation of every subject is desirable before it is taken up for research.

The science of spotting the source material and collecting them is called Hueristics. A researcher must know where to seek for his source materials. In fact his materials consist of archaeological finds, epigraphs, monuments, coins, pottery, skeletal remains etc. Some of them are to be found in museums, in the case of some he will have to go to the spot. The Pyramids, the Sanchi stupa, the paintings in Ajanta may be available in photographs but a personal survey on the spot is more useful. In the case of literature original manuscripts may have to be consulted to test the correctness of even learned editions. Translations may have to be scrutinised for correctness. Textual criticism will be necessary and this will be possible only when many copies of the same texts are collected and compared. So the researcher will have to know where this will be available and will have to remember oriental manuscripts libraries. In the case of modern India for instance the archival material is available in abundance and the important archives like that of Madras which is invaluable for the history of modern Madras will have to be consulted over and over again, whether others have consulted them before or not. The word hueristics is derived from the German word Hueristik. A researcher who has chosen his topic and delimited it will have to concern himself with the spotting and collection of data. He must know his evidence. Then only he can pass on to the next stage of his enquiry namely criticism of the evidence.

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Sources

and

Evidence

There are mainly two kinds of sources, primary and secondary. Primary sources relate to contemporary material on the subject like the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* being primary material for the history of the reign of Jahangir. Secondary sources are like Ferishta's *History of Early Medieval India* basing himself upon earlier sources. Tertiary sources are of no importance unless they generate controversies which have to be met or commit mistakes which have to be rectified or make brilliant statements which have to be quoted. Sources can again be classified as human and non-human; the former can be generally called literary and the latter non-literary. Literary sources will include what is usually called literature plus diaries, chronicles, memoirs, travelogues etc. Epigraphs

also can be literature since they were composed by men. It would be better to call archaeological only pre-historical material and monumental evidence. The monuments, pottery and other relics, ruins, coins, skeletal remains and dolmens are strictly archaeological. Palaeolithic painting, neolithic stones etc. are examples of human expression of art and utility of a by-gone age recaptured for the benefit of historians. Of these primary sources are preferred to secondary, i. e., contemporary to later and by the same token local to foreign. But there are some advantages weighing against other disadvantages in preferring later sources and foreign evidence. In fact, a genuine piece of modern research supported by textual criticism of literary evidence and scientific study of material evidence will be more valuable than an uncritical piece of contemporary evidence.

Sources constitute evidence for the historian. A useful analogy for the evidence of the historian will be a witness in a law court as well as other sources of proof for the presiding judge. It is agreed that a historian functions like a judge or at least has to. In a law court where the issue on hand is specific and the problem is also clearly stated the judge admits relevant evidence and rules out irrelevant evidence of an extraneous nature. Hearsay, for instance, is not admissible as evidence and opinion is not called for. To the judge the judgment must be a natural consequence of the evidence. Similarly, a historian also should eschew opinions, though they could be based on attested facts. Thus far the analogy holds good. But the historian is in a predicament which the judge may not have to face.¹ He deals with saints and criminals, events and institutions relating to a practically dead past. He cannot summon witnesses

1. 'In the open court of Clio, advocates must wrangle and put their evidence in the box and bully the otherside's witnesses; but the analogy of a court of justice is not exact, for every historical advocate has got to do his best to be a judge as well'. G. M. Trevelyan: *Autobiography* p. 72.

from that past. If he indicts a character belonging to the historical past the accused cannot defend himself and most of the judgments of the historians are *ex parte*. This is a difficulty from which the judge does not suffer. But anyway the judge will have to come to a conclusion in regard to a case before him. He will have to find him guilty or exonerate one. Lack of proof will be in favour of the accused. But none of these things impinge on a historian. He is not bound to pass judgments in the first place. His opinions are not of the same value as the judge's.

Though historians proceed on the basis of evidence most of them instinctively choose such evidence as will suit the prejudices and reject inconvenient evidence. Prejudices can be like the imperialist prejudice or the nationalist prejudice. That is how both imperialist and patriotic histories have suffered

There are two assumptions to be made in validating evidence: 1. when we are face to face with facts and events different from or contrary to our experience, we presume the facts and events to be falsely reported and will not accept them unless their truth is proved. In the second case when we come across facts and events of which we have no personal knowledge but which conform to our experience the assumption is that they are true unless their falsity is proved. This is different from the procedure wherein it is equitable to assume that everything is innocent till proved otherwise. We make inferences of various kinds from available evidence. At times the evidence will be partial but the inference will be a generalisation. For example, we say that in India child marriage was the result of foreign invasions. But many other countries have also experienced foreign invasions. Did child marriage occur there? The oddity of the situation is the consequence of imperfect use of inadequate evidence. Further in many cases as A. L. Basham points out Indian thinkers have been culpable of overlooking the fallacy of the excluded middle. This is not the only fallacy historians will have

to guard against. Fischer in his masterly book on *Historical Fallacies* has enumerated a very large number of pitfalls a historian must avoid. The worst of all such errors naturally is the confusion between opinion and proof. Bertrand Russell said, 'the fact that an opinion has been widely held is no evidence whatever that it is not utterly absurd; indeed in view of the silliness of the majority of mankind, the widespread belief is more likely to be foolish than sensible'.

In using the testimony of others a historian will have to test the testimony. It is proper that for the sake of truth one must enquire into and find out the habits of mind of the persons whose testimony is examined.

Our disbelief in the case of certain sources of information becomes very strong when *prima facie* incredibility is involved. For example the miraculous in history when reported by respectable authority can be pure myth or an allegory. But the basis on which the disbelief is deemed proper is rather weak since the assumption which we stated above namely the equality of the nature of reality between the past and the present is but an assumption. Inductive arguments are defective when applied to social-sciences, i. e., something is considered incredible since it has not happened within the experience of the concerned person. With the environment and other factors given differently, anything which would be considered supernatural now would have been possible then. So the possibility of occurrence will not be the real question. The question will only be regarding the reliability of the person who gives the evidence, that is, whether he is a liar or not. The special creation theory, the resurrection of Christ, the miracles of the saints of all countries and climes etc., are of this order. So interpretation of fact becomes an important aspect of historical research. The science of scriptural interpretation is called Hermeneutics. Anyone who wishes to indulge in Indian historical research will have to arm himself with the canons of Hermeneutics.

Criticism

It is necessary that a researcher should test the validity of the evidence supporting his thesis. This testing is called criticism. Criticism shall generally be confined to an enquiry about the relationship between the evidence and the thesis. Irrelevant evidence, if it is so *prima facie*, shall be rejected. This does not mean that the rejected evidence is either absolutely false or is useless for all purposes. It only means that it is useless for the purpose on hand. It is beside the point as it were. When this rejection has been done the researcher is confronted with a mass of material which he *prima facie* deems useful for his purposes. Then begins more serious scrutiny of this material from various points of view. The very idea of criticism is that before a piece of evidence is

admitted any error or deflection from truth which might characterise that piece of evidence shall be detected and rectified or removed. Criticism by its very nature and assumptions knows no infallible texts; 'its first principle is to admit the possibility of error in the text which it studies'.¹ Criticism relates mostly to literary material and to a much lesser extent to dumb archaeological material like monuments without inscriptions, skeletal remains, coins without legends etc. The latter can also be criticised to the extent to which tampering with their structure, make or composition is tested and its genuineness as source material is established. In the case of literature, however, criticism assumes serious forms.

Broadly speaking there are two kinds of criticism: 1. external criticism and 2. internal criticism. The purpose of both is to determine whether the documents got from libraries, archives etc. are credible as evidence. The function of criticism is largely preliminary to research and somewhat negative. Criticism itself proves nothing except the admissibility of a piece of evidence. External criticism is concerned with the determination of the degree of authenticity of the piece of evidence. Ancient documents were not written in the media in which we write them now. They have been transcribed from age to age by different hands, some scholarly, some not so learned and in the process of transcription errors could easily creep in. There is a proverb in Tamil which means 'the scribe spoils the text'. In ancient times manuscripts were written on papyrus rolls, pieces of silk, palm leaf strips, parchment etc. These media are either very expensive or brittle and so constant transcription was needed and this led to textual errors. Apart from these unintended but natural errors, wilful interpolations by dishonest and interested editors are possible. These will be more difficult to detect and correct. In very ancient texts like the Vedas and the Bible textual criticism is a regular science and has

¹ Renan: *Life of Jesus*; preface, p. 5

developed its own canons. The historian does not believe in the simultaneous and sacred origins of these texts. He assumes that they are human documents and composed over a period of time and therefore wishes to establish the chronological sequence. The Pentateuch for instance has been the subject of very learned and careful criticism. External criticism deals with the authorship of documents, the source, hand writing, dates, the question of genuineness, purity etc. When at the very outset the genuineness of a document cannot be determined the ancillary aids of history like paleography, archaeology, chronology etc. shall be used. Hence a historian should cultivate enough acquaintance with these ancillary aids to be able to supervise the expert. Study of emblems and seals, the evolution of writing, systems of chronology are necessary for these tasks. Having accepted a document after externally criticising it the researcher shall proceed to internally criticise it which requires greater expertise. Internal criticism deals with the contents of the documents, their probability, the author's veracity etc. The text must be studied thoroughly, contemporary word meaning must be determined, anachronism must be detected, the author's bias and character must be discovered and taken into account in evaluating the text. Criticism however can be negative as well as positive. Positive criticism is interpretative and goes into the positive aspects of statements. But negative criticism deals with the author in relation to the text. If the author is known to be a habitual liar the text becomes suspect. If the author is known to be a great patriot his subjectivity will detract from the value of his writings. Every writer has to some extent a bias. The nature and magnitude of bias in respect of each author must be determined and the text corrected from that point of view. Wells was a scientist; Seeley was an imperialist; Nehru was a patriot; each one of these was subject to a special kind of bias. To determine bias in these cases a study of the lives of these authors would be helpful. In fact a psycho-

analytical study of these and other historians would be in place.

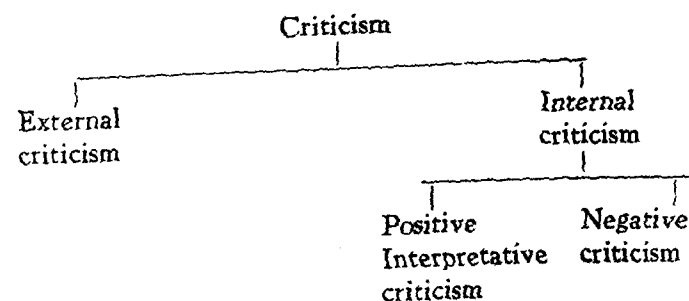
Criticism is not an easy task as we have had occasion often to note before. The critical faculty can almost be identified with the process of historical values; it has to be responsible in form and devoid of fear or favour. The only criterion governing criticism shall be to cure raw evidence and make it fit for use by the researcher. There can be no hard and fast rules for criticism. What has been said above contains broad outlines and guidelines but every critic exercises his critical faculty by a sort of instinct. He must be able to see through obstructing media and see beyond the author. 'Criticism is above all else a gift, an intuition, a matter of fact and flair. It cannot be taught or demonstrated. It is an art'. It is not enough if a researcher is a great scholar. His scholarship will be of no avail if he cannot critically appreciate the writings of others. Acton said 'it is by solidity of criticism more than by the plenitude of erudition that the study of history strengthens and straightens and extends the mind.' Criticism which provides the insulation which will make historical research safe must precede the business of thesis making. The careful critic will try to find out all about the author of the text i. e., whether he was a bad observer, whether he was credulous, suffered from hallucinations, illusions, prejudices, whether the author's condition and situation were such as to preclude him from objectivity and truthful reporting, whether the author was habitually negligent or indifferent. The author might be bound by tradition written or oral. Legends and anecdotes, proverbs and anonymous statements have to be specially treated. There are special reasons without which anonymous statements are not to be accepted; 1. That falsehood is improbable because a) the fact is opposed to the interest or vanity of the author, b) the fact was generally known, c) the fact was indifferent to the author, 2. error improbable because the fact was too big to mistake or conceal; 3. the full significance of the fact was unintelligible to the author.

In criticism we deal not only with explicit statements but implications and suggestions i. e., the researcher is not only to read the texts but must read between the lines in the text. Silence itself is not beyond criticism. An important question for historian is whether anything can be inferred from silence. Nothing specific can be inferred but if silence in a particular context is significant some inference can be drawn and this will depend upon what is suppressed or withheld and what are the consequences of such suppression. *Suppressio veri* is as significant and dangerous as *suggestio falsi*. If silence is due to negligence or a feeling that what is suppressed needs no mention then there is little significance about it.

Interpretative criticism is about the most difficult aspect of criticism. In interpreting a statement or a situation the historian shall take care not to import into it meanings unknown to it. Such importations will result in the fallacy of anachronism. There can be genuine difficulty in interpreting religious texts, hagiologies etc. Sacred tradition bristling with miracles, the supernatural achievements of saints, the stories of gods and their dealings with men and such other things are difficult for a historian to handle; for he will find it an extremely hard task trying to distinguish between the rational and the supra-rational i. e., reality and myth. Myths have themselves no meaning except the meaning given to them by the myth-makers and as a reflection on the nature of the authors of the myths. The canons of interpretative criticism as we saw before are collectively called hermeneutics. Understanding religious myths will require a knowledge of symbolism in art and letters. The difficulty in interpreting the significance of some of the stories in the Periyapuram for instance that of Iyarpagai Nayanar is not less than that of interpreting the significance of the erotic sculptures in Orissan art. In the case of religious texts the genuineness need not be doubted normally since the very nature of the subject must infuse a certain rectitude in the minds of the authors. Good faith of an author need be doubted

only when one has reason to believe that the author's interest, vanity, deference to public opinion, literary distortion due to rigid conventions, sympathies, and antipathies forces of circumstances (like a historical work produced at the behest of a government) are involved in the text.

Emendation of a garbled text must follow established rules of restructuring. One must bear in mind the author's style and ideas and the contextual value of the statement. In textual criticism if a single copy is preserved conjectural emendation may become necessary but must be deemed tentative. If the original is preserved along with a few copies and if the original itself requires emendation the same system shall follow. If several copies were preserved errors can be compared. This system is useful especially in combating interpolations. Difference in style can be a safe guide only when one is sure of a definite and unmistakable evolution in style and when authors enjoy individuality in style. In languages in which highly conventionalised literature has grown it will be risky to think of difference in style as a pointer to difference in authorship. This is true not only of authors but of epochs in literary evolution. Criticism will be concerned also with the investigation of sources of the texts and test for plagiarism and unacknowledged borrowings. In literatures where literary piracy is widespread the task of the historian becomes enormously difficult. The different ways of criticism can be charted as follows:



There are four stages in this business of thesis preparation. In the first place data spotting and collection called hueristics, secondly, criticism, thirdly, synthesis and fourthly exposition. We have seen the nature of criticism above. After the source material has been critically analysed, the unwanted and the erroneous rejected and the relevant admitted to evidence the pieces of information or data thus collected and cured by criticism must be arranged. This arrangement amounts to proper grouping of the facts pigeon-holing them and ordering them in the manner in which they are to be presented. This is a synthetic operation. As Fling says it is the business of the historian to organise the data into a complex unique, evolving whole the parts of which stand in causal relation to one another. The synthesised material may be arranged chronologically or topically. Whatever be the scheme adopted the presentation should be intelligible and logical. Thus the skeleton of the research thesis will be got ready from head to foot, the different places to which different parts of the body should be assigned will be clear by then. But yet it will not be a full body throbbing with life for the flesh will not be there and the narrative would yet not have been given the vigour which a lively thesis ought to possess. This is done by taking special care about exposition. So after synthesis comes exposition. Exposition is the last but not the least part of thesis making. When exposition is complete the thesis is fit for presentation for adjudication by a board of examiners. If the research work is not intended as part of a research programme leading to a university degree, the material will be straightaway fit for publication.

It is the opinion of many historians in modern times that style of presentation is not a significant point in thesis making. Some scholars reluctantly agree that style is important but quickly add that it must be subordinated to matter. The old fear that style will interfere with matter crops up. This is unnecessary fear; very often it is an indirect justification of insipid and often repelling style.

The classic example of Gibbon, it has often been pointed out in this work shows conclusively that style instead of being a handicap to matter serves the cause of history by providing brilliant garments to a presentable person. By style what is meant is not a lot of 'rhetorical wind' but elegant, intelligible, clear and wherever possible pleasing exposition. This will vary from author to author. The literary mannerisms of a Carlyle no less than the majesty of a Gibbon will please a student of history. On the other hand drab matter of fact narratives by dry-as-dust at his worst will be a punishment rather than a reward. Whenever style is decried whatever be the language in which the matter is written insufficient acquaintance with the medium of communication and poor literary talents can be suspected. Elegant style consists in straightforward presentation avoiding the complex and the compound but mainly communicating in simple sentences, preferring phrases to clauses wherever possible, splitting large and cumbersome sentences into viable and effective linguistic units and preferring verbal forms to noun substantives.

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Thesis Engineering

While the thesis is got ready there are certain formalities which every researcher is obliged to follow. Mostly this is a question of uniformity of practice among those who present theses and the conventions needed to secure the uniformity, we mention here the different parts of a thesis and the conventions which usually govern each of them in the case of historical research. An ideal Ph. D. thesis will begin with a preface in which the broad aims of the thesis together with the justification therefor will be mentioned. The student will recapitulate the circumstances under which he was drawn to the subject what made him choose the particular topic, what in his opinion is his net contribution to knowledge in that area, what controversies he meets and overcomes and so on. He will

no doubt mention his predecessors in the same field of research taking care to indicate how he has improved on them. All the time he must be very guarded in his language show (if necessary, pretend) humility in his expression while being firm in putting forth his views with the courage of conviction necessary for that. He will conclude by thanking whomsoever had been responsible for sponsoring his research, guiding it and accepting his thesis for adjudication. If it is a thesis it employs a number of non-English technical terms or philosophical jargon in local languages. He will have to adopt a system of transliteration. This will involve the use of diacritical marks for uniformisation of pronunciation and internationalisation of communication. For example, the Sanskrit vowel occurring as the second letter in the word Krishna will be indicated as *r*; the Tamil letter i.e. the second in the Tamil word for fruit (*paḷam*) will be written as *ḷ*. These diacritical marks should be treated as aids to pronunciation for students unfamiliar with the script, the language and its tradition. Some people make a fetish of it and think that these conventional symbols and frills are more important than the textual material. One should think that diacritical marks should not be raised to the stature of some sort of ritual. A. L. Basham rightly observes that a plethora of diacritic marks may seem irritative'. But still they are unavoidable to some extent at least. In a research thesis presented for adjudication a student must take all the care about these marks since he has to please an examiner whose notions about these things could be anything. But in a book straightaway published for the general public transliterating the word Krishna as *Kṛṣṇu* is irritatingly pedantic. When the diacritical marks are used the scheme shall be indicated in a prominent way at the commencement of the thesis. The contents of the thesis shall be as expressive as possible and indicate the main chapters, sub-chapters, introductions, conclusions, appendices, maps, charts etc. which might be found in the thesis. The

the note book system. A student who puts all these ideas taken from his reading material into a notebook bound on one side as and when the ideas occur without possibility of rearrangement will make a perfect mess of the whole thing and will never be able to use the mass of information collected and put in a haphazard way. When a student who had been thus badly guided consulted the present writer as to what he should do since he found it impossible to use the material his consultant advised him to get the notebook bound on the other three sides also as an alternative to destroying it. In all these matters experience is a sure guide for the student. An intelligent researcher will evolve his own scheme of methodology as research techniques. Methodology of which much noise is made is but the commonsense of a serious minded sane adult. A few sample slips are printed herebelow:

Sample card entry of a bibliographical item :

Subrahmanian, N.
SANGAM POLITY
Bombay, 1967

Subrahmanian, N
HISTORY OF TAMILNAD
vol. 1
Madurai, 1972

Multi-author publication — a special case :

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA
6 vols. (vol. 2 not yet published)
Cambridge, 1922

Multi-author Publication :

Marshall, Sir J. and others
INDUS CIVILIZATION
(3 vols.)
London, 1931

Translated work :

Geiger (tr.)
MAHAVAMSA
2nd impression with addendum by
G. C. Mendis
Colomao, 1950

thesis itself begins with normally an introductory chapter which according to its nomenclature introduces the subject. Discussion of the sources will be an essential feature of any thesis for without source material no research thesis can be written. In that chapter the researcher shall mention the different sources of information for him, their relative evaluation and state how he criticises them. He shall also state the authors who had worked on the same subject before him and the extent to which he is indebted to them. He shall illustrate these statements.

Every important idea in the thesis would need documentation. Well known statements will need no authority. Non controversial statements also can be made for they will not be contradicted. Ideas likely to generate controversy, ideas on which difference of opinion is known to exist etc. will have to be supported by reference to the statements of all parties concerned. Suppose a researcher wants to state that women were relegated to a humiliating and subordinate position in ancient and medieval Hindu society knowing that different opinions are held in this subject he might refer to all those authorities with chapter and works as it were i. e., mentioning the name of the author, the title of the book, volume number if any, place of publication, year of publication and so forth. This is only to ensure that a researcher has actually looked up his references and has not been guessing about them. Documentation shall normally be in the form of foot notes though for the sake of convenience they can be given as references immediately after the concerned chapter. They will thus be interchapter references. There are other ways of bunching all the references at the rear end of the book. Both the interchapter and the end references are justified with reference to the reader's convenience. But they can never be equal to foot notes, though latter involve a lot more trouble both in typing the thesis and in getting it printed. In this documentation apart from giving the sources of historical information dealt within the text of the thesis

any digression associated with the text or any side lights not directly connected with the thesis but springing from a reference therein must be accommodated. In some thesis the references forming the footnotes make more interesting reading than the text itself.

Bibliography or the list of books consulted by the researcher in the course of his research must be listed alphabetically authorwise; either an exhaustive list of books on the subject or a select list actually consulted and used can be given. Books of a primary nature, of a secondary nature in different languages, encyclopaedias, journals, unpublished thesis, persons interviewed for oral history etc. must be separately listed. Maps and charts, tables and illustrations can either be provided at appropriate places in the text or bunched item wise at the end of the thesis and placed before the bibliography.

While the student is engaged in collecting data he shall read through all the important books end to end and read relevant chapters in general treatises but whatever he does he must take notes from whatever he reads. Taking notes from a book, a journal article or while interviewing a person is an art. He must know what is important and what is not. For taking down these notes he shall employ slips of paper of suitable size preferably six inches by four of a thickness sufficient to last till his thesis is submitted or is published and in these slips of paper enter the notes at the rate of only one idea per slip. The unit of entry in a slip will not be author or title but idea. Different statements on the same idea can go into one slip but more than one idea shall never be entered in a single slip. These slips may be punched and attached to an index rack. The facility in using these slips is that they can at any time be rearranged according to need. In every slip invariably the source and the idea shall be indicated. Some research guides whose acquaintance with research methodology is less than nodding prescribe

Translated and edited work :

Tawney, C. H. (tr.)
 Penzer, N. (ed.)
 The OCEAN OF STORY
 (Somadeva's Kathasaritsagara)
 10 vols.
 London, 1925-28

Journal article :

Subrahmanian, N.
 The HOYSALAS
 J. I. H. vol. XLII pt. iii
 Dec. 1964, s. no. 126

Abbreviations used :

E. I Epigraphia Indica
 J. I. H. Journal of Indian History
 and
 so
 forth

A subsequent edition of a multi-author publication :

Majumdar, R. C. and others
 ADVANCED HISTORY OF INDIA
 (2nd ed.)
 London, 1950

Sample entry of note taken from a book consulted :

Minor official at court ch. 3 of the thesis
 Basham, A. L. The Wonder that was India (1963)
 p. 90
 The SUTA, who combined the functions of royal
 charioteer, herald and bard, and was often the friend
 and confidant of the king-is not referred to in the
 inscriptions of later times.

"The historian's duty is to separate the true from the false, the certain from the uncertain and the doubtful from that which cannot be accepted...Every investigator must before all things look upon himself as one who is summoned to serve on a jury. He has only to consider how far the statement of the case is incomplete and clearly set forth by the evidence. Then he draws his conclusions and gives his vote, whether it be that his opinion coincides with that of the foreman or not".

[The maxims and reflections of Goethe Nos. 453, 543]

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