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(Betty Joan Beck was awarded the prize for the best freshman essay in 1957 for her paper "Destiny and the Platonic Soul." The editors regret that space limitations precluded the publication of her paper.)

This year the St. John's Collegian will be a new Collegian, a different Collegian, a Collegian which will be the sounding-board for the community's critical and creative thinking. Since the Collegian has no staff, with the exception of an editor or two, it is entirely dependent on the College community as a whole for its contents. We, the editors, are responsible for the selection of material; all contributions literary or otherwise will be given the closest attention and, if space allows, all worth-while efforts will be published. We hope that the Collegian will be the mirror of your discourse, the gauge of your temper, and the voice of your opinion.

Chris Griffin

James A. Baldwin

BEHIND THE LOOKING GLASS

Michael Sanford

Acknowledgment

The writer is grateful to the instruction of Mr. James Caldwell of the University of California for his courses in the history of English literature. He also acknowledges a debt to Mr. Jacob Klein for his instructive lecture "History and the Liberal Arts", in which he labored to demonstrate that history is not a necessary form of the understanding.

I

There is no more striking characteristic of modern education than the fact that it is intensely concerned with the study of history. By means of a highly developed methodology the familiar forms of history, "ancient", "medieval" and "modern European", have become extremely thorough and precise studies. Archeological research, the discovery of ancient ruins and tombs, the deciphering of curious manuscripts, all have enormously increased and refined our knowledge of the past. But the modern interest in history is by no means manifested only in the improvement of the techniques of research. On the contrary, the most important characteristic of this interest comes to light when we consider the very special manner in which educators conceive of the relation between history and the other disciplines. It is impossible to over-emphasize, for example, the importance of history to the so-called "humanities". Wherever literature, philosophy, music, and art are studied, they are studied as the history of literature, the history of philosophy, the histories of music and art. But not only with respect to the humanities is this the case. Nearly any subject can be studied historically. Hence we find histories of mathematics, histories of chemistry, histories of psychology and sociology, economic history, histories of the biological sciences, the history, if we please, of history itself.

We might say, then, that modern education is not merely concerned with history; it is preoccupied with history in a most important way. History has come to be conceived as a kind of substructure upon which the other aspects of learning are to be built; a universal science whose framework is to encompass the other disciplines. This tendency to "universalize" seems to be a characteristic peculiar to history. No one proposes, for example, that there is a "botanical approach" or a "meteorological approach" to problems outside those fields, yet there seems to be an "historical approach" to nearly every kind of problem. (There are, of course, analogous tendencies to make universal claims on the part of the social sciences, but that is because these sciences themselves are partly the result of a special application of the historical way of looking at things. They arise from a meeting of the historical perspective with statistical mathematics and the discoveries of psychology.)

This insistence on the importance of history in its relation to other areas of knowledge embodies a special emphasis which must be made clear. When history is united, for example, with the study of philosophy, the result is not, as one might expect, simply the study of the views held by philosophers in the past; it is not the familiar use of history made by Aristotle:

> calling into counsel the views of those of our predecessors who have declared any opinion in order that we may profit by whatever is sound in their suggestions and avoid their errors.

Rather, for the purposes of this study, the whole great body of historical knowledge, all the available information concerning the activities, institutions, and ideas which prevailed during the lifetimes of the various philosophers, is taken over into this study and applied by a process of inference to the writings of these men. The emphasis here is upon the implicit assumption that the relation between a writer and his historical surroundings, that is to say, the relation between history and human ideas, is not an incidental but a crucial one. A writer is viewed as both an "expression" and as one who "expresses" the "spirit of his age". This emphasis is particularly evident with respect to the humanities, where it is seriously maintained that a piece of literature or work of art cannot be understood without proper consideration of the appropriate "cultural" and historical background. It is less evident with respect to mathematics and the natural sciences, where, however, history and historical inferences are used to explain the "failures" of the ancients and the "progress" of the moderns.

It is primarily with respect to this very question of history that modern education is distinguished from traditional education in the liberal arts. The "universalization" of history tends unavoidably to the destruction of the autonomy of the traditional disciplines. But the consequences of this "doctine of history" are even more serious and far-reaching. In the light of the historical perspective all ideas become the functions of their "cultural" surroundings; the truth itself, therefore, is considered to be relative to historical circumstance. The inevitable result is an historical restatement of the familiar doctrine of Protagoras: "history itself" becomes the measure of all things. But this is not to say that knowledge is essentially a matter of convention and hence arbitrary. The proposition is rather that knowledge is dependent in a crucial way upon historical circumstance. Thus the result is not pure Protagoreanism, but precisely historical Protagoreanism.

What we have here, then, is tantamount to a critique of human knowledge, in the name of history. Presumably, if such a critique is to be self-consistent and thus truly historical, it must draw its validity not from non-historical philosophical principles, but from the nature of history itself. We shall ask therefore, as the subject of this paper, whether the modern doctrine of history (the"historical perspective" or "historical approach") does, in fact, find its roots in the nature of history. Does the modern conception of the relation of history to the other disciplines (embodying the special emphasis mentioned above) follow analytically from the kind of thing history is? Or is it an extension of history, an application of the historical perspective to phenomena which are only incidentally historical? In an attempt to answer these questions it is necessary first to try to formulate the essential characteristics of history.

One of the earliest and most fundamental observations made by men is that they are inescapably creatures of time. We live, move, and change in time; we are aware of the present, we look forward to the future, we remember the past. Since our own experience of time is limited, since our lives span only a short period of time and our memories encompass an even shorter one, we ponder that great body of time which is beyond our own experience. We wonder about the future, and finding it closed to direct investigation, we try to devise means of predicting its contents. We seek to find the past; and history, the study of the past time, the discovery and reconstruction of the past, comes into being. But this understanding of history needs an important qualification. Not every aspect of past time belongs to history. Any phenomenon which changes in time and hence virtually all the phenomena of nature may be said to have a past, but the study of such phenomena is not usually called "history". The investigation of the great geological ages in the development of the earth belongs not to the study of history but to the study of geology. Genetics, as the study of the ontogeny of animals, the biological theory of evolution, and more generally, the studies of the physical and chemical changes of natural (temporal) phenomena, are not regarded as historical studies. History seems rather to mean the study of the past with respect primarily to human affairs. It encompasses human activities in all their manifestations: the civil affairs and inter-reactions of nations: laws, wars, parleys, treaties; the rise and decay of social institutions and, in general, all the arts, sciences, artifacts, customs, and contrivances of mankind. In this sense the sciences mentioned above do belong to history. That is to say, they belong to history not with respect to their own objects, but just in so far as they belong to human activity in general. The domain of history, then, in its most familiar signification, is the study of past time with respect to human affairs.

The task of discovering and reconstructing the past is not an easy one. Historical knowledge can only be more or less accurate, and special skills are needed in the attempt to establish reliable historical facts. All the available evidence must be thoroughly deciphered, examined, compared, and checked with the greatest care. Hence Thucydides (Book I):

> With reference to the narrative of events,
> far from permitting myself to derive it from
> the first source that came to hand, I did not
> even trust my own impressions, but it rests
> partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others
> saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always
> tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible.
> My conclusions have cost me some labour from the
> want of coincidence between the accounts of the
> same occurrences by different eye witnesses arising
> sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from
> undue partiality for one side or the other.

By laborious and painstaking research, then, past time is filled in with historical particulars and organized in the form of a written sequence of events. Thus we have history in its most familiar form, i.e., written narrative; Herodotus, Gibbon, Toynbee, The History of New Zealand, The History of the American Labor Unions, and modern textbooks and periodicals on the subject of history. Two points are to be made in connection with this fact.

II a

First, in so far as it is written narrative, history is a form of literature; it must employ the principles of grammar, logic, rhetoric and poetic. In this sense, therefore, history seems to be related to epic and dramatic poetry and to the other forms of imaginative and poetical art. Thus, while an historical work, such as Thucydides, has often been compared to tragedy, so purely imaginative works such as Don Quixote and Tom Jones are entitled "histories". Both the poet and the historian tell stories, but while the poet need only tell a likely story, the historian must try to tell a true one. Herodotus, for example, finds that the truth about Helen of Troy seems to vary greatly from the account by Homer:

> Such is the story told me by the priests concerning the arrival of Helen at the court of Proteus. It seems to me that Homer was acquainted with this story, and although he discarded it because he thought it less adapted for epic poetry than the version he followed, nevertheless showed that it was not unknown to him.

The historian's task of telling the truth is difficult, for as Gibbon says, "history...is indeed little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind," and, in general the truth does not often make the best story.

Both the historian and the poet try to persuade us, but they try to persuade us in different ways and towards different ends. The historian qua historian (that is to say as long as he is not also a political theorist or moralist) tries to persuade us only of the truth of his narrative. This he does by pointing to his own careful research and to the reliability of the sources of evidence upon which the narrative is built. Herodotus often gives us various accounts of the same story and leaves it to us to decide between them. Gibbon supplies us with his sources by means of footnotes and invites us to examine them for ourselves. The poet, on the other hand, may even distort historical evidence for his own purposes, as Shakespeare does. The poet tells a plausible story, often as a means to persuade us of truths which apply not only to the story itself but universally. This seems to be something like the meaning of Aristotle where he says, "Poetry is more philosophical than history because poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular." (Poetics, 1451)

It appears, then, that the chief difference between history and poetry is the difference between a true story and a plausible one and between their respective purposes. In so far as history is written narrative it must unite historical research with the principles of poetic, and in this respect, history seems to be the mean between poetry and methodical science. Bearing this in mind, we now proceed to the second point.

II b

When we read Thucydides, Tacitus, or Gibbon, we know that there are an infinite number of events of all kinds which are contemporaneous with these histories and yet not included in them. Obviously the historian has had to make a selection. He must decide which events are significant and he must have a criterion by which significance is judged. Hence Tacitus says:

> My purpose is not to relate every action, but only such as were conspicuous for excellence or notorious for infamy.
>
> (Annals, Bk.III)

History cannot be all-inclusive if it is to hold any real interest. Henry Fielding speaks clearly on this point. (I shall quote this passage at some length since it affords both instruction and entertainment.)

> Though we have properly enough entitled this our work a history, and not a life, as is more in fashion; yet we intend in it rather to pursue the method of those writers who profess to disclose the revolutions of countries, than to imitate the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the detail of months and years in which nothing remarkable happened, as he employs upon those notable eras when the greatest scenes have been transacted on the human stage. Such histories as these do, in reality, very much resemble a newspaper, which consists of just the same number of words, whether there be any news in it or not. They may likewise be compared to a stagecoach, which constantly performs the same course, empty as well as full. The writer, indeed, seems to think himself obliged to keep even pace with time, whose amanuensis he is; and, like his master, travels as slowly through centuries of monkish dullness, when the world seems to have been asleep, as through that bright and busy age so nobly distinguished by the excellent Latin Poet: 'When dreadful Carthage frighted Rome with arms,...' Now it is our purpose, in the ensuing pages, to pursue a contrary method. When any extraordinary scene presents itself (as we trust will often be the case), we shall spare no pains nor paper to open it at large to our readers; but if whole years should pass without producing anything worthy of notice, we shall not be afraid of a chasm in our history, but shall hasten on to matters of consequence and leave such periods of time totally unobserved.
>
> (Tom Jones, Bk.II)

Historical events, then, must be selected. This fact not only holds true with respect to individual historians; it holds true equally within the framework of the modern historical methodology. To increase the sheer body of historical data is only to increase at the same time the number of apparently irrelevant historical facts which must be weeded out and discarded. Thus by improving and refining the techniques of historical research, the task of selection is only made more difficult. Improved skills may provide us with more certainty with respect to the truth or falsity of an alleged historical fact, but they will not necessarily tell us the <u>significance</u> of that fact with respect to other facts in an historical sequence. It is precisely this latter characteristic which is of importance to historians. The essential <u>historical</u>

property of events is not their mere occurence; nor is it the temporal order of their occurrence; rather, what is crucial is their significance in terms of their relation one to another. Criteria for historical selection generally contain some means of measuring this kind of significance. The difficulty is that there seems to be no science for determining such means of measurement, and hence the opinions of historians as to the significance of a given event often vary. As historians we might all agree that the war between Rome and Carthage was a significant historical event. But if we try to determine its significance in relation to later events, or if we try to find earlier events which are significant as causes of that war, our unanimity would disintegrate into the wildest controversy. It is clear, then, that the question of whether a given event will "go down in history" depends less upon the nature of the event than upon the criterion of the historian.

III

Let us return for a moment to the question which initiated this discussion. We are seeking the historical grounds for the modern doctrine of history. Now, in view of the fact that historical events must be selected, the kind of thing history is will tend to depend upon, and vary with, the different kinds of criteria of selection employed by historians. We must, therefore, rephrase our original question in the following form: is there an historical basis for determining criteria of historical selection?

In an attempt to answer this question we shall now examine several fundamental kinds of criteria with their corresponding types of history.

IV

In general, the historians of ancient times, together with Gibbon, employ criteria which give rise to what is called pragmatic history. Here, the purpose is to derive from the unfolding events of history lessons to serve as guides for the future conduct of men and nations. It is, according to Gibbon, a kind of "history which undertakes to record the transactions of the past for the instruction of future ages." History is conceived as a gigantic pageant of moral and political actions; a great storehouse from which we may freely draw examples of actions which ought to be imitated and others which ought to be avoided. In this sense we are able, in effect, to increase our experience in moral and political matters, and to improve our judgment by supplying ourselves with a fund of historical material. Plutarch is the chief exemplar of this kind of history:

> The virtues of these great men serve me as a kind of looking-glass, in which I may see how to adjust and adorn my own life. Indeed, it can be compared to nothing more than daily living and associating together; we receive, as it were, into our inquiry, and entertain, each successive guest, view 'their stature and their qualities', and select from their actions all that is noblest and worthiest to know...My method is, by the study of history, and by the familiarity acquired in writing, to habituate my memory to receive and retain images of the best and worthiest characters.
>
> (Plutarch-Timoleon)

This is the kind of history made use of by political and ethical theorists. The emphasis is not upon the solution of historical problems but upon the solution of perennial moral and political problems. Historical examples are selected in accordance with their bearing upon these problems. The criteria for pragmatic history, therefore, are clearly non-historical.

V

A second group of criteria give rise to what has been called genealogical history. Here, the purpose of the historian is to take some particular historical situation or institution, and to reach back in an attempt to discover the origin and processes by which it came to be. We might, for example, wish to find the origin of the American labor movement, or look for the causes of the first world war. In general, this kind of history involves the notions of cause, source, process, movement, pattern, series, origin and development. It gives rise to a comprehensive chain of events each leading to the next in an historical sequence or genealogy. Hence Herodotus seeks to trace out the events leading to and comprising the Persian War in an attempt to "show how two races came into conflict", and Gibbon constructs the sequence of events leading to the fall of Rome.

Genealogical history is fundamental. It is found in combination with virtually all other types of history. This is why hundreds of historical books and pamphlets bear titles suggestive of historical sequence: "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", "The Development of American Agriculture", "The Rise of Public Education", "The Emergence of Cubism", "The Revival of Liberalism", The Decay of Greek Idealism", "The Birth of Nominalism".

Genealogical history is implicitly founded upon the relation between what a thing is, on the one hand, and how it came to be what it is, on the other; the relation, that is to say, between the nature of a thing and its genesis. There are two ways in which this relation is conceived. Either (a) the nature of a thing is taken to be logically prior to its genesis, so that the genesis of the thing ordered in accordance with, but is only incidental to, its nature, or (b) it is supposed that the way a thing comes to be determines its nature. There are two types of genealogical history which correspond to these two conceptions. When, for example, Plato describes the genesis, or generation, of the world in the Timaeus, he presents us with what might loosely be called a genealogical history of the birth of the world. But we are not to suppose that it is precisely because the world came to be in the manner described by Plato that it now has the kind of nature which it has. We are not to suppose, here, that the world's genesis is prior to its nature. Rather, Plato is trying to imagine how the world might have come into being in view of the kind of nature which it has. His investigation is therefore only incidentally historical. He uses an historical exposition as a tool of analysis; a means of making the nature of the world less difficult to understand. This is pointed up by Aristotle's remarks on this subject:

> They say [the members of the Academy] that in describing the generation of the world they are doing as a geometer does in constructing a Figure, not implying that the universe ever really came into existence, but, for purposes of exposition, facilitating understanding by exhibiting the object, like the figure, in process of formation.
>
> (De Caelo, 279b)

This is genealogical history in the first sense. It is exemplified again in Aristotle's account of the origins of the state in his Politics. Here, as in pragmatic history, the emphasis is not historical. History is only employed in the service of other kinds of investigation.

The second kind of genealogical history is built, as we have already suggested, upon the supposition that the genesis of a thing determines its nature. Interpreted in its broadest sense, this supposition tends to reduce all philosophy and natural science to the study of history. It makes the study of the nature of a thing coextensive with the study of its history. The first signs of this understanding of history are given to us in Machiavelli's Discourses. Machiavelli seems to reject a purely philosophic approach to politics such as is exemplified in Aristotle's Politics, and to adopt the view that history is to be both the teacher and the judge in political matters. Again, when Hobbes and Locke present their theories of civil government, their arguments are partly based upon their conception of how civil government came to be. They trace the development of government from the turbulent "state of nature" through some supposed moment in history when men agreed to the formation of a social contract. History is employed in a similar fashion in Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Here, Locke presents the makings of an historical account of the understanding. He speaks in terms of a development of the understanding from childhood to maturity; a development beginning with the crude childhood reception of impressions, and moving through the discovery of simple ideas to the final formation of the most abstruse complex ideas. But these writers, like the writers of pragmatic history, still tend to emphasize the end of an historical process rather than the process itself. Their arguments do not stand or fall on historical considerations. The question of whether or not civil government actually came to be in the manner described by Hobbes or Locke is virtually irrelevant.

It is only in more recent times that the proposition that the genesis of a thing absolutely determines its nature has been strictly maintained. We find such a notion in the theory of evolution and in some of the doctrines of psychoanalysis, and we may even venture a guess that history has borrowed this notion from such sources.

One interpretation of this notion gives rise to the belief that we might find laws of historical sequence; that by taking some significant state of affairs in history, and discovering the events which led to that situation as causes, we might be able to predict the future whenever such a set of causes again emerges on the historical scene. As applied to individual persons, this belief yields the kind of thinking indulged in by Warwick in Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part II:

> There is a history in all men's lives,
> Figuring the nature of the times deceased;
> The which observed, a man may prophesy,
> With near aim, of the main chance of things
> As yet not come to life, which in their seeds
> And weak beginnings lie intreasured.

The most recent example of the attempt to find laws which govern historical sequence is Toynbee's theory of challenge and response.

There are two points which must be made in order to answer the question of whether this second type of genealogical history is based upon historical criteria

of selection. First, as we have already suggested, the doctrine that the genesis of a thing determines its nature is by no means exclusively an historical doctrine. It is of great importance also to the study of biology, where we find it in the theory of evolution and in the notion that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny". It is crucial to the doctrines of psychopathology, it is found occasionally in the physical sciences, and, in general, it is likely to be advanced wherever phenomena which change are investigated.

Secondly, the general question of whether the genesis of a thing determines its nature, or the reverse, is not an historical but a metaphysical question. History does not teach us the answer to this question; it may only appear to do so after it has been selected and organized by an historian who believes that he has the answer.

We conclude, therefore, that there is no historical basis for the criteria which give rise to the various kinds of genealogical history.

VI

There is a third fundamental type of history which has been given to us in the form of Christianity. The Biblical account of the genesis of the world and the history of mankind suggests an entirely different way of looking at history. The fact that the fall of Adam, the covenant, the Law, the prophets and the coming of Christ, all occur at specific times and have their proper places in an historical sequence, suggests that the whole of history is ordered in accordance with some all-comprehensive, purposive plan. Here, indeed, each man's place, his position within the irresistible current of history's purposive motion, is of a crucial and determinative character. It makes much difference, for example, whether a man lived before or after the Law of Moses was given; it makes virtually all the difference whether he lived before or after the coming of Christ. Here, history is the temporal representation of divine providence; it is God's great plan for the salvation of mankind.

The point for us to note is that the Christian understanding of history as it is presented, for example, in Augustine's City of God, has given to historians the idea of a gigantic, all-inclusive design. History becomes a great Leviathan whose irreversible internal processes are either ordained by God's providence, or operate in accordance with certain fundamental, irresistible,and inviolable laws.

In general, such all-comprehensive histories embody either the concept of a gigantic historical cycle in which birth, development, decline, and death follow one another indefinitely, or they present a great plan of continual evolution and development which may or may not culminate at some goal. Thus we have the cyclical scheme of Giambattista Vico: the "ideal eternal history" which operates in three recrurrent ages, the divine, the heroic, and the human. As examples of the evolutionary kind of history we have first the doctrine of Gotthold Lessing, a secular interpretation of the Bible which maintains that history moves in accordance with God's progressively revealed plan for the education of mankind. Secondly, we have the system of Hegel, the progressive realization of the spirit of man which culminates in the perfection of the German state. Lastly, we have the "materialism" of Marx. Here the forces of history are thought to operate in accordance with inviolably laws of economics, and history is conceived as moving irreversibly toward the birth and perfection of Communist Democracy.

In all of these great schemes of history, our historical position is of crucial importance in determining our outlook. Here, indeed, history itself tends to become the measure of all things. One of the salient characteristics of the doctrines of Lessing, Hegel, and Marx is the importance of precisely the historical positions of these authors with respect to their own systems. Their usual habit is to conceive of themselves as living at the culmination of their systems and thus to use themselves as evidence for the validity of their own teachings. When, for example, they conceive of history as a process of progressive enlightenment and place themselves at the culmination of this process, they are then in a position to argue that since they have been able to discover the inner processes of history, since they alone have had the insight to see that history is, in fact, a great movement toward enlightenment, it follows that they are themselves enlightened, hence it follows again that history must be a process of progressive enlightenment and that they must be living at the culmination of that process. It is important for these writers to argue in this fashion, for if they do not place themselves at the culmination of their systems, their ideas must be regarded as the expressions of, and nothing but a passing phase in, the great evolutionary motion of history.

The modern doctrine of history as it has been described in the opening section of this paper is largely a lingering vestige of these great systems of history. While modern historians seem to have rejected the idea of an all-comprehensive plan in history, they still cling to the notion of an historical "conditioning" or determining" of human activities or ideas. They still maintain that a man's historical position is of crucial importance, even though they have abandoned the over-all patterns of history in terms of which each different historical position is made intelligible.

We must now ask whether there is an historical basis for the criteria which give rise to these all-comprehensive schemes.

With respect, first, to Christian history, the answer seems to be in the negative. Christian history, as the temporal representation of divine providence, focuses its attention not upon the essential temporality of human affairs, but upon the eternal order of God's providence; the timeless pattern of transgression, redemption, and salvation. Furthermore, Christian history does not arise from an examination of historical evidence; it is not taught by history; rather it arises from, and is exclusively based upon, an interpretation of the words of the Bible.

We may repeat this second point with respect to most of the other great systems of history. They are either built on the Bible directly, as is the case with the doctrine of Lessing, or they have derived from the Bible only the idea of an all-inclusive plan which they have then re-interpreted and filled in with various kinds of material. These histories, then, do not derive their roots from history itself. They do not represent a synthesis of historical evidence. Rather, the over-all plans upon which they are based are themselves criteria for historical selection; they are predetermined hypotheses which, when they are applied to the great body of historical data, select and shape the events of history in accordance with their own purpose and design. But in order to make this latter point perfectly clear, let us consider it briefly in the following section.

VII

We are accustomed, in our discussions of history, to distinguish between historical events themselves, and the narration of those events by an historian. When we speak of the Peloponnesian War, for example, it appears that we might mean either the historical fact, the sequence of events which constituted that war, or the written work by Thucydides. This distinction is important because it rests upon the belief that historical events are objective phenomena which are to be understood and explained by the historian. The task of the historian in relation to historical events is thus pictured as perfectly analogous to the task of the physicist in relation to physical objects. This analogy, however, does not seem to describe the true state of affairs.

Now, as we have said, historical events must be selected. But, while the essence of historical events is their genealogical significance one to another, there is no science for positively measuring that significance. The mere fact that events are inescapably temporally ordered does not necessarily mean that they are historically ordered. A given temporal event may or may not become part of an historical genealogy depending on the criterion of the historian. (As historians we might all agree that the war between Rome and Carthage was a significant historical event. But it is very unlikely that we should be in agreement as to precisely the nature of that significance.) We may conclude, therefore, that there is no inherent tendency of events to become historically ordered.

Genealogical (i.e., historical) significance is given to events when they chance to fall under the criterion of an historian. But, in turn, genealogical criteria of selection are not founded upon an historical basis; they are, in fact, absolutely prior to history itself. There are, therefore, no purely objective historical (genealogical) phenomena. Historical phenomena, as such, come into being only within the medium of an historical narration or system. This means that the attempts of historians to discover from history itself the laws of its inner processes are doomed to perpetual uncertainty. When the historian goes to the data of history with an hypothesis, he cannot, like the physicist, obtain some fairly clear idea of whether or not this hypothesis will account for the phenomena. On the contrary, the historian is faced with a virtually unavoidable danger: the danger that it will be precisely his hypothesis which will bring the phenomena, i.e., genealogically significant events, into being.

History, therefore, is in "the eye of the beholder"; it arises out of a certain way of looking at things which automatically arranges them in an historical sequence. This is why there can be an "historical approach" to virtually any kind of problem. We have only to reflect, in the company of our "historical looking-glass," and we will see historical patterns at every turn.

The distinction between historical events themselves and the narration of those events is thus seen to be a purely formal distinction, for historical (i.e., genealogical) events only come to be within the framework of a narration. This is borne out by the special ambiguity of the word "history", for while the term "biology" signifies the study of living organisms, and "geology" names the study of rocks, the term "history" indicates both the study and the thing studied.

VIII

We are now in a position to recall our original question: Does the modern doctrine of history, the "historical perspective", or "historical approach",

find its roots in the nature of history?

The answer is in the negative.

First let us examine the tendency to "univeralize" history; to combine history with all the other disciplines. There are two ways in which this combination is conceived. Take, for example, the study of mathematics: To study this science historically means primarily to study it in the chronological order of its development, i.e., first Euclid, then Appollonius, Descartes, Newton, and so on. The science of mathematics happens to have developed from relative simplicity to increasing complexity in a chronological order. But our purpose in studying it in this manner would be to grasp not the history, but the logical development of the science itself; the emphasis is upon the inner logic of the science itself, not the incidental fact that this logic has actually been discovered over a great length of time. The fact that Euclid lived before Newton is of no mathematical importance; what is of mathematical importance is that the work of Euclid, in terms of the logic of mathematics, is prior to that of Newton. The study of mathematics, then, can only be incidentally historical. This is so clear in the case of mathematics that modern historians have very little interest in this science; they cannot make it yield to the doctrine of historical Protagoreanism.

But when we turn to the study of literature and philosophy the scene changes. Here it is proposed that the moving forces of history itself are of the utmost importance. The relation of a thinker to his historical environment is suddenly no longer incidental, but is thought to be absolutely essential. We are given historical reasons why a writer thought as he did. We are not concerned merely with his ideas; we want to know how these ideas embody the "spirit of an age"; we want to know what historical forces shaped these ideas; in short, our concern is only incidentally with philosophy or literature; we are studying "history itself".

> Another thesis underlying the writing of this volume is the generally recognized principle that philosophers are not disembodied spirits...Almost without exception the great philosophers have been concerned with what we may call, from the perspective of two thousand years, 'local problems'. We cannot hope to understand their theories unless we see them as expressions - doubtless at a highly conceptualized level - of the same currents of thought and feeling which were moving the poets and statesmen, the theologians and the playwrights, the painters and sculptors, as well as the average citizens, who were their contemporaries....This means that if we pass over the total cultural milieu in which a given philosophy emerges, we do so at the risk of making it seem a timeless, and so meaningless and inconsequent, affair....Plato's philosophical absolutism, his insistence on the existence of 'absolute' standards for conduct and for knowledge, is understandable only in terms of the social, economic, and political chaos and the moral and religious collapse of the end of the fifth century. (W. I. Jones, A History of Western Philosophy)

This is the modern doctrine of history in its full colors: the belief that human ideas are determined by, expressions of, and relative to, their historical surroundings. The tendency to "universalize" history is thus seen to be one of the forms of the doctrine of historical Protagoreanism. This doctrine, in turn, is grounded upon the assumption that an historical period, a civilization, or a "culture", is a truly fundamental objective phenomenon, and that the relation of this phenomenon to the thoughts and actions of human beings is determinative and intelligible.

Now as we have seen, this latter point cannot be maintained. There are no purely objective historical phenomena; such phenomena come into being only when they are shaped by a criterion of selection, and such criteria, in turn, are not based upon history.

But even if it were possible to establish, as a fact, the existence of historical "cultures", it would not follow that our inferences concerning the relation of such"cultures" to human ideas would yield any more certainty than mere chance alone could supply. (It would be foolish to deny that a writer obtains his material and ideas from his historical surroundings, but it is impossible to positively formulate this relationship, and there seem to be no grounds at all for assuming that this relationship is determinative.)

History does not teach us the doctrine of historical Protagoreanism. It does not teach us that Justice, for example, is relative to different peoples, civilizations, and historical periods. History only tells us that there have been as many ideas of justice as there have been peoples and civilizations. Any argument built upon such a basis is totally irrelevant; for as Plato has shown, it is precisely this great variety of opinions which suggests that there <u>is</u> such a thing as Justice. History may tell us that all ideas of justice change as time passes, and it may show us where any given idea of justice has been abandoned; but it cannot tell us whether that idea <u>should</u> have been abandoned.

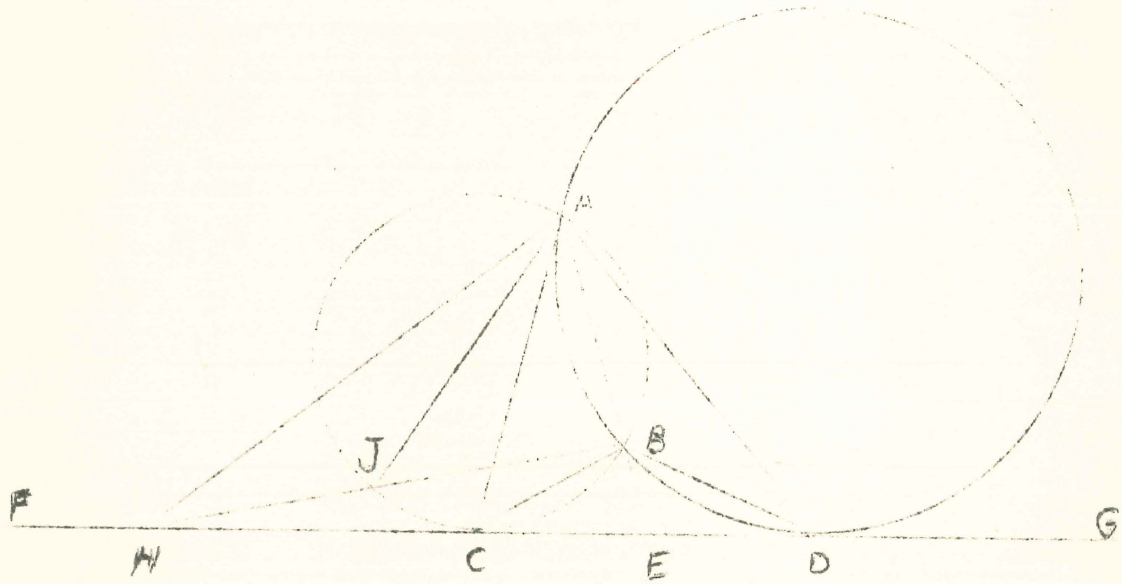
Another point to be made here is this: These historians do not, like Hegel and Lessing, take the precaution of putting themselves at the end of an historical progression. Their <u>own</u> ideas, therefore, including this particular Protagorean insight, become nothing but the "expressions" of their own ages, and no amount of "scientific methedology" can draw them back to safety.

We may conclude, therefore, that the tendency to universalize history, and the doctrine of historical Protagoreanism, do not find their roots in the nature of history. The question of the nature, extend, and validity of history is not itself an historical question.

SOLUTION OF MATHEMATICAL PROBLEM

Peter Rice

Problem: To find the point on a given line from which the line joining two given points on the same side of the given line subtends the greatest possible angle.



Given: Line FG and points A,B both on the same side of FG.

Construction: Connect A and B with a straight line and extend to meet FG at E. (See Special Case 1.) Find C and D equidistant from E such that CE (and DE) is the mean proportional between AE and BE (VI 3). Draw a circle through A,B,C and one through A,B,D (III 37).

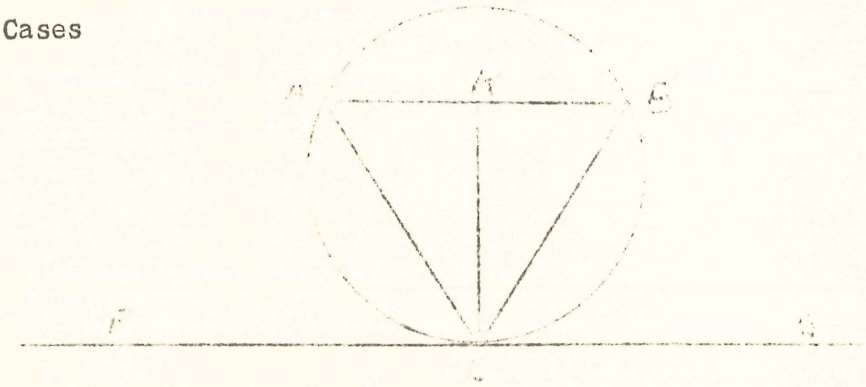
Then, line FG being divided at E, C is the point on part FE from which AB subtends the greatest angle; and on part EG, D is that point. For if not, let it be another point H. Draw AH, HB, and AJ. Angle AJB equals angle ACB (III 20); but angle AJB is greater than angle AHB (I 32). Therefore angle ACB is greater than angle AHB, which is contrary to what was assumed.

Of the two points C and D, the one from which AB subtends the greatest angle is that one through which the smallest circle is drawn

(see Special Case 2), for the chord AB subtends the greater arc in the smaller circle; and since angle ACB is measured by arc AB of circle ACB and angle ADB by arc AB of circle ADB, angle ACB is greater than angle ADB and any other angle subtending AB on FG.

Q. E. F.

Special Cases



1. If AB is parallel to FG, then there is only one circle through A and B tangent to FG. For if AB be bisected at K and KC be drawn perpendicular to AB and FG, KC must pass through the center of the circle (III 1 porism). Then C will be the tangency point because no other line than KC can be drawn perpendicular to FG from any point on KC on which the center of the circle must be to pass through A,B. Then C is the point on FG from which AB subtends the greatest angle by the above reasoning.

2. If AB is perpendicular to FG, then the two circles are equal, for the perpendicular bisector of AB will pass through the centers of the circles and will be parallel to FG. The the radius of each circle which is perpendicular to FG will be equal to the other because the perpendicular distance between parallel lines is always equal. Then both C and D will be the points on FG from which AB subtends the greatest angle.

SONNET FOR AN ASTROLABE

David Jones

Green oily sheen of brass and brass decay
In tarnished circles loops a careful cage;
It is the pointing finger of a sage,
And pins the stars, as is the sage's way.
Eye tickles to the radius' feather ray,
And laughs to see direction's simple stage
Swell out in sphere, the all-inclusive page
Where period worlds can never hide away.
The storyteller's art was always pointing,
But pointing never drove away a beast,
Nor ever got hold lightning; well begun
Was never act of hand which not at least
Would probe the joint, if not perform the jointing:
To hold the heavens, hands must touch the sun.

HOMECOMING HYMN

Freshmen, young and old, we came to learn,
Walking the hot streets of Annapolis autumn;
Sweating with our heavy clothes filled bags,
Giving with wet hands money to strange faces
With wet hands outstretched to take it,
Watching waiting upperclassmen watching us,
Afraid to ask,
And they who came in autumns past,
Fearing that here would be no place for them
And finding one
(Some not so lucky)
Afraid to give a little least they lose it all.

The books, the key; the room,
Too small at first, but soon to be too large,
A universe, with walls indefinite,
Growing far too fast for human finite souls.

We came in Annapolis autumn, and that first night,
We met, we touched; and talked, and drank,
And some made love,
And late at night, some came,
Too drunk with words or wine to sleep,
To bed.

We came alone, we came together soon,
And soon to drift apart like pendulums,
The sooner to touch and drift apart again.
God is, we thought, but here
God lives in churches down the street,
Religion and rationality,
(Bottles and bedrooms)
Do not mix readily
If at all.

We came alone to learn,
And soon we learned we could not learn enough to learn at all.
And while we sat at books men fought and died
For something we never really cared to understand.

"I once knew a man who wrote..."
"What can a man write? Only a book is written by a man."
"Is it more to live a man and later be a god,
Or die a god and never learn
From later lesser ones you only lived a man?"
We wondered. We came to learn.

Walk the river,
Listen to the moon cry.

We came to learn.
(Talk of agape and eros,
Light the winter sky with words
And then creep home to empty beds.)

Walk the river,
Listen to the moon cry.

We came to learn.
(Tall golden woman with desire eyes drinking in the dark,
Teach my frien passion
If he cannot learn virtue.)

Walk the wild waters,
Women washing in the star-shine.

We came to learn.
(Drink the dawn from broken bottles,
Buy your passion second hand.
Let the wars be fought by others,
While we plant flowers in the sand.)

Walk the river,
Listen to the moon cry.

Freshmen, young and old, we came to learn
Of caves and prisons (But you said you'd set us free)
You taught us of the chains that bind us
(Then you said you'd lost the key.)

We are but men, not gods,
We build our prisons with bricks bought for roads,
And then walk in walled courtyards, pretending to be free.
We came not even children,
We leave you, not quite men.

--E. H. Mini