

country which the religious quarrel had unpredictably flung back on to its medieval institutions. The failure of our *rois soleils* and our Richelieu is our greatest stroke of historical good luck. We missed thereby having a Louis XV, and we were spared a guillotine, and, who knows, we may yet be led by it to discover the still hidden art of sound democratic rule.

MISS WEDGWOOD's book defies criticism most of the time. The writing is strong, clear, delightful throughout, and her sense of character provides light upon light on the opacities of an extraordinarily complicated past. The book might have been more valuable if she had related the situation of the British throne to that of European monarchy in general, and if she had examined the relation, or unrelation, of the religious quarrel in the British Isles to that which prompted the Thirty Years War on the Continent. In one passage there seems to be a rather bad slip. One of the most remarkable men of 17th century England was Algernon Percy, Lord Northumberland, whom Charles, with characteristic foolishness, alienated from his cause. Miss Wedgwood asserts that this man abandoned the royal party after Strafford's execution, and she suggests that part of his reason for so doing was contemptuous disgust at Charles's betrayal of his chief and best minister. She adds that Northumberland and Strafford were friends. Surely this is wrong. Northumberland might have been expected to be Strafford's friend after the support he had received from him, but the fact

remains that he gave evidence against Strafford during the latter's trial, a deed which understandably hurt and angered the King. Afterwards Northumberland wrote to a friend that he had lost royal favour because he had not perjured himself for Strafford, as the King wanted. None of this sounds remotely like friendship of any kind for Strafford, or suggests that for his sake Northumberland threw over Charles—but I am prepared to be corrected by the author of this deeply studied record.

It is good news that *The King's Peace* is the prelude to further books in which Miss Wedgwood intends to relate the course of the Civil War and the Republican Commonwealth. The end of the first act, as it is presented here, again shows that Miss Wedgwood is a narrative artist in the first rank. The moment is November 1641. The Irish Rebellion is producing barbarism in the sister island, and the King thinks little of it. He has paid a disastrous visit to Scotland in which, so he believes, his personal charm has again conquered all hearts for him. Pym has just obtained a narrow majority in the Commons for the Grand Remonstrance. The curtain comes down on a last glimpse of Charles I enjoying one of his many refreshing moments of optimism and confidence:

Early on the morning of November 23rd, 1641, while the Members of the House of Commons slept off the effects of their late night, the King and his following were once more upon the road, a distinguished, orderly, elegant cavalcade, moving towards London.

Christopher Sykes

## TOYNBEE AND THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

THE last four volumes of Mr. Toynbee's work\* confront the reviewer with formidable difficulties. They are the culmination of a gigantic effort, gigantic both in quantity and quality, the like of which no other contemporary has dared to undertake. Thus it is impossible to try to assess the value of Mr. Toynbee's last volumes without raising the general question as to the intention and achievement of his work as a whole.

This inevitable expansion of the scope of the reviewer's task raises, however, a deeper difficulty still. We can do real justice to somebody else's intention and achievement only on the condition that his intention and achievement is commensurate with our own. We can judge what others have tried to do and have done only if we ourselves have tried to do, or at least have dreamt of doing, what they have done. What transcends the limits of our own intention and achievement, we can praise or condemn but cannot judge; for our inner experience has been prevented by its self-

\* *A Study of History. Vols. VII-X.* By ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE. Oxford University Press. £7 10s.

imposed limitations from creating the standards of valuation commensurate with the intentions and achievements transcending it. I can judge a poem, or a novel, or a work of history without ever having written one; for I have at least dreamt of writing one.

Who in our time has dreamt of doing what Mr. Toynbee has been trying to do? Since hardly anybody has, Mr. Toynbee's work has received scant justice. It is being praised by the multitude and those critics who write for it; for there is a great satisfaction in identifying oneself, through praise, with an undertaking which is so much bigger than anything oneself would even try to engage in. It has been damned by the specialists who, in applying their narrow standards, have found it wanting in this or that particular. Both types of critics have looked at Mr. Toynbee's work as a kind of monstrosity whose bigness either overwhelms or irritates them.

However, it ought to be possible to scale down Mr. Toynbee's work, as it were, to normal human proportions, isolating certain specific problems which it poses. These problems must fall short of the general intention of the work, but they surpass in breadth and depth any of the many technical problems of fact and interpretation the work raises. Our judgement of the contribution which Mr. Toynbee has made to the solution of these "intermediate" problems may shed some light on the general value of the work.

THREE such problems have come to the mind of this reviewer: historiography, philosophy of history, and religion.

Mr. Toynbee's work poses anew, by implication, the problem of historiography. If what Mr. Toynbee is doing is a valid writing of history, then most of what is going by the name of academic history is, at worst, irrelevant or, at best, mere preparation. On the other hand, if the writing of history is a science with all that the word "science" connotes in terms of the use of documentary evidence and the renunciation of judgements of value, then certainly Mr. Toynbee is not a historian. This conflict between two conceptions of history is not likely to be resolved through methodological argument; for within that argument the philosophic assumption predetermines the conclusion. Method being a means to an end,

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achievement is the only valid test of method. What, then, is it that we expect history to achieve?

Burckhardt has told us that it is the purpose of history "to make us not clever for one day but wise forever." History imparts its wisdom by giving a meaningful account of the life and deeds of men who came before us. This account receives its meaning from the connection which the selective and appraising mind of the historian establishes between the data of history and the perennial concerns of man.

If this be the standard by which history must be judged, then Mr. Toynbee's contribution dwarfs scientific historiography, not in this or that of its manifestations, but as a category of historic thinking. The great achievement of Mr. Toynbee as a historian lies in that very subjectivity which is the horror of scientific historiography. Mr. Toynbee has recovered the courage, which the scientific dogma had put to sleep, to ask from history questions which are meaningful for him and, through him as a man, for other men as well, and to force history to answer him. Never mind that history may have no answer to some of the questions Mr. Toynbee asks, that the facts are sometimes arranged to produce the answers expected, and that not all the "facts" are facts in the scientific sense. Mr. Toynbee has awakened the historic imagination from its dogmatic slumber; he has communicated his own wonderment about the ways of man to his readers, and through innumerable flashes of insight, suggestive reinterpretations, and fertile hypotheses he has demonstrated by his own example the worth of historiography in the classic manner.

Compare with the richness and infectious dynamics of his historic imagination the unproblematic poverty of scientific historiography! The "science" of history leaves nothing to the imagination. What cannot be proven by the documents not only is not true but can have no meaning to be communicated by the historian. To have demonstrated, not through argument but through example, the richness of philosophic historiography, however problematical in detail, as over against the self-improvement of "scientific" history, unproblematic in detail but a problem in its very conception of history, is the great merit of Mr. Toynbee's work. What in our time had become a mere historic recollection, Mr.

Toynbee has again made a living reality: the creativeness of the historic imagination.

THIS historic imagination is not at the service of history, properly speaking. It is not Mr. Toynbee's purpose to give a coherent account of the historic process. His purpose is philosophic rather than historical. He searches for the laws which determine the rise and fall of civilisations.

On the face of it, such an undertaking appears to be sociological rather than philosophic. For it appears to require, not the philosophic assessment of the different civilisations from an overall world view, but rather the empirical analysis of the morphology of civilisations, proceeding from empirically verifiable similarities to ever broadening generalisations. The main categories which Mr. Toynbee employs, such as challenge and response, contacts in space and contacts in time, point to such a sociological intent. And in page after page the work reads like a gigantic collection of sociological essays and aphorisms, of illuminating similarities and analogies across the accustomed barriers of historic time, but loosely held together by the work's general plan. Still, the general plan is philosophic and could have been no other. For what Mr. Toynbee sets out to do is beyond the ken of empirical verification.

The possibility of all empirical verification resides in the shared perspective of all actual and potential observers. Astronomy as empirical science is possible because observers with the same perceptive and rational faculties look at the same object from the same planetary perspective. The deeper we move from the world of nature into the world of man as the subject and object of valuations, the more we find the objectivity of empirical science qualified by the ever narrowing limits of common perspective. For astronomy these limits are for all practical purposes irrelevant, since they coincide with the confines of the earth. In the sciences of man the rational core, common to all science, is diminished, obscured, and distorted by the inevitably partial perspective of the observer.

That impairment is minimised when both the object and the perspective of observation are identical with the confines of a particular civilisation. A parochial civilisation, looking at itself from the perspective of its own values,

can achieve a high degree of empirical objectivity, given the limits of that perspective. Impairment is maximised when the perspectives of one civilisation are applied to an object lying beyond its confines. For in order to do justice to such an object, the observer would have to transcend the confines of his own civilisation and apply to that object categories which transcend the confines of any particular civilisation and, hence, are applicable to all. This, however, is an epistemological impossibility. It is this impossibility which Mr. Toynbee has endeavoured to achieve.

The examination of but a few of Mr. Toynbee's basic concepts will show that it is impossible to verify them empirically, but that they must be validated philosophically if they are to be validated at all. The very concept of civilisation lacks empirical precision, once we leave behind the two extremes of primitivity and such generalisations as Western and Eastern civilisation, and share Mr. Toynbee's concern with the major historic civilisations. At what point can we say that a civilisation is autonomous, that it is a derivative "offshoot" of another, or that it has no autonomy of its own, being a mere variety of a dominant one? Obviously American civilisation is both distinct from, and similar to, British civilisation. An Englishman might well try to comprehend American civilisation in the terms of his own, or at best regard it as a mere "offshoot" of his own, while the American might assume its autonomy; for the Chinese observer, on the other hand, the differences between the two civilisations, obvious to both Englishman and American, might be hardly worthy of notice. From the point of view of imperial Rome, Roman civilisation was the culmination of the civilisation of Greece; for Hellenism it might very well have looked like Greek civilisation in a state of decay; and Western Christian civilisation has seen the civilisation of Greece and Rome as a mere preparation for itself. Can one speak of one Chinese civilisation as a continuum extending through the whole history of the Chinese state, or is it possible and necessary to speak of a number of civilisations following each other within the geographic and political space called China? Here again, the answer will differ according to the observer's perspective. There is no need to multiply examples in order to show that judgements about a civilisation are mere reflections of the

valuations of a particular one. It is not by accident that there has been a tendency for history to be written in terms of political or geographic units rather than of civilisations; for the former lend themselves more readily to empirical verification than do the latter.

What is true of the very concept of civilisation applies also to the specific concepts referring to its alleged life cycle. What are the verifiable characteristics of the birth and death of a civilisation, when does it flower, when break down and disintegrate? Did the Greek, Roman, and Jewish civilisations ever die or were they but transferred by political circumstances from one geographic locale to another? If we should assume that Greek civilisation actually died, did it die through the degeneration of its inner life-substance, or was it killed, as it were, by military assassination, which in view of its own inner potentialities was a mere accident? If Western civilisation should dissolve tomorrow into radio-active rubble, would it have died a "natural" death because of inner exhaustion or would it have committed suicide in an isolated act of intellectual and moral degeneracy, or would it have been killed by an atomic assassin? If Western civilisation should be spared atomic destruction and if it should move into an age of material abundance, who is to prove scientifically that such a civilisation would be inferior, or for that matter superior, to, say, the 13th or 18th or 19th centuries of Western civilisation? The answers to all these questions obviously depend upon what we mean by civilisation. To speak again of Western civilisation only, there are those who see nothing but decay from the 15th century onwards; there are others who see nothing but darkness before the 15th century and nothing but decay from the 17th century onwards. For still others, Western civilisation culminates at the turn of the 19th century, while there are those for whom all history preceding Marx is a mere prescientific preparation for the self-emancipation of man.

THE concept of civilisation and of its different stages, then, which we apply to other civilisations, cannot but be a function of the valuations of one's own. The very simile of life and death has an objective, empirically verifiable meaning for biological units and is still susceptible of a high degree of empirical precision in the political sphere: a state or a



party. can be said to live and die. However, when we speak of the life and death of a nation as a cultural entity, we sacrifice, in a measure which will change with differing historic situations, empirical precision for a philosophic metaphor. That substitution of philosophic valuation for empirical science is bound to become total when we enter the realm of civilisation, which as a concept is a kind of synthesis of the valuations of a member of a particular civilisation. The appraisal of civilisations other than one's own is possible only through the erection of a partial world view into a philosophic system claiming universal validity. From Vico through Hegel and Comte to Marx, philosophy had the self-confidence to sit in judgement over all history and to assign to its different periods what appeared to be their rightful place. Our age has transferred its confidence from philosophy to science. Thus it must endeavour to prove scientifically what other ages have tried to demonstrate through philosophy.

This is the tragic paradox which Marx was still able to overcome by identifying philosophy and science, but before which Spengler and Toynbee could not but founder. For, unlike Marx, they have no philosophic system to fall back on which would lend their systems of valuations at least an element of rational objectivity. In this respect Mr. Toynbee is philosophically more sophisticated than Spengler. He is aware of the dilemma without being able to overcome it. Spengler, with that Hegelian consistency which takes absurd conclusions in its stride as long as they follow logically from premises, forces the history of civilisations into the biological strait-jacket and, again not unlike Hegel, finds in the apparent trends of the contemporary scene experimental proof for the pseudo-scientific premise of biological necessity.

Mr. Toynbee, with an intention as sweeping as any of the system-builders before him, has too much common sense to sacrifice the evidence of history on the altar of logical consistency. He allows for human creativity to modify, if not to stop altogether, the life cycle of all civilisations, and particularly of our own. Yet this concession to the unpredictability of history, which is a function of human freedom, faces Mr. Toynbee with still another dilemma. If a civilisation can escape its life cycle by an act of human will, if, in other words, it can

refuse to die if it so wills and knows how to live for ever, what, then, is the cognitive value of the biological scheme? Is there a tendency in civilisations to die, which tendency can be reversed? Or were other civilisations bound to die while ours—faint echo of *Roma eterna*—might live for ever? Obviously, what Mr. Toynbee's concession to common sense has gained for history it has lost for philosophy.

It is a measure of Mr. Toynbee's philosophic sophistication that he not only allows human freedom to qualify, if not to disrupt, the determinism of the biological life cycle, but that he is also aware of the need for standards of evaluation which transcend the empirical sequence of biological phases. He does not, and cannot, find these standards in philosophy; for our age has lost the rational boldness and self-reliance which still allowed a Comte and a Marx to build a philosophic system which pretended to explain the laws by which history proceeds. Instead Mr. Toynbee turns to religion. By doing so, Mr. Toynbee raises three issues: the meaning of the return to religion, the value for civilisation of a return to religion, the ability of a civilisation to return to religion by an act of will.

MR. TOYNBEE'S claim that only religion can save Western civilisation coincides with a popular movement, especially strong in the United States, which also seeks in religion salvation from the evils and dangers of the times. Church membership is rising; prominent intellectuals are converted or return to the fold of their church; politicians justify themselves and their policies in religious terms; and the display of religious observances has begun to become standard practice for public men. Much of Mr. Toynbee's popularity in the United States can be attributed to the apparent convergence of his call for the renewal of religious faith with these popular tendencies. He is in danger of becoming a prophet of a new cult, a kind of Billy Graham of the eggheads.

This popularity is unjust to Mr. Toynbee's intent, but it illuminates the weakness of his achievement. Mr. Toynbee has no illusions about the impossibility of reviving a lost religious faith by joining or rejoining an established church. He calls not so much for a return to a particular established religion as for a revival of religious faith which might find confirmation in any established religion or a

combination of elements of them. Mr. Toynbee's personal preference, if I understand him aright, seems to be a kind of intellectual and æsthetic eclecticism which open mindedly accepts and receives all that is congenial in the different historical religions.

However, this stress upon a new syncretic religion tends to obscure a distinction which is vital for the understanding of the religious problem and, in turn, has strengthened the popular misunderstanding of Mr. Toynbee's position to which we have just referred. This confusion concerns the distinction between religion and religiosity. It can well be argued—and I would support the argument—that most of the failures of the modern age and many of its accomplishments stem from one single source: the lack of religiosity. Modern man, as he sees himself, has become a self-sufficient entity who knows what he sees and can do what he wills. He has lost the awareness of his dependence upon a will and a power who are beyond his understanding and control. To warn modern man against the irreligious self-glorification, which in a sense is his self-mutilation, for it deprives human experience of mystery, tragedy and guilt, is one thing; to advocate a kind of religious eclecticism is quite another.

This distinction between religiosity and religion has a direct bearing upon the question which is central to Mr. Toynbee's concern and for the sake of which he has raised the issue of religion in the first place: What makes a civilisation live and what will enable our civilisation in particular to survive? Mr. Toynbee answers: Return to religion by reviving your religious faith. Yet this answer is open to serious doubt. The doubt arises not from metaphysical speculation but from the experience of history itself. Is there any historic evidence to show that religious ages are monopolistically or even especially productive of the values of civilisation, as commonly understood? And is there not rather overwhelming historic evidence in support of the proposition that the weakening of religious faith coincides with the flowering of civilisations, as commonly understood?

We are using the term "commonly understood" on purpose; for here the observer's subjective preference, as pointed out above, is bound to colour his judgement. If we assume that only religious civilisation is worthy of the name, it cannot be hard to demonstrate that

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the flowering of civilisation depends upon religious faith. Yet if we give to civilisation its common secular meaning, it can hardly be open to doubt that from Plato to Kant, from Sophocles to Dostoevsky, from Michelangelo to Rodin, the weakening of religious faith and the flowering of civilisation not only coincide in time but also are organically interconnected. It is true that these great achievements of civilisation owe their greatness to the religious experience of mystery, tragedy and guilt. Yet it must further be allowed that the achievements of material civilisation, in terms of rational control of nature and society, owe much, if not everything, to the modern denial of both religious faith and religiosity, which assumes the limitless powers of man and demonstrates them within self-chosen limits.

**B**UT even if it were true that the return to religious faith can save Western civilisation, can a civilisation recover its religious faith by an act of will? Here it is necessary, paradoxical as it may seem, to invoke the very spirit of religion against its most learned advocate. It requires nothing but an act of will to

join a church and to perform its rituals. To have religious faith demands an act of grace, for which, however, man may well prepare himself through rational instruction. Religiosity, in turn, is the fruit of experience, more particularly of suffering, transformed into intellectual and moral awareness by mind and conscience.

The clarion calling a civilisation to return to religion, *en masse* as it were, finds, and must find, its response in an eclectic idolatry, often blasphemous in man's self-identification with the deity, which popularises the trappings of religion without reviving the dormant substance of its religiosity. To restore man to the fullness of his stature and thus give his civilisation a new lease on life requires indeed the teaching of men like Mr. Toynbee. Yet their teaching must seek to illuminate a mysterious, tragic and sinful experience common to all men in terms of a religiosity likewise common to all men. Neither a teacher nor a whole civilisation can by an act of will create the symbolic and ritualistic expressions of religiosity thus restored; least of all can they create

them out of the fragments of religions, whose decline has made the restoration of religiosity necessary in the first place. What religions will grow from this new religiosity man must leave to fate. He must be content to be ready, and to make others ready, to see the signs and to read them aright when they appear.

What Mr. Toynbee has been trying to do as a philosopher of history could no longer be done in an age which tries to reduce truth to science. What Mr. Toynbee has been trying to do as a herald of religious faith no man could have achieved in any age. One hundred years ago he might have been the last of the great philosophers of history. Four hundred years ago he might have been the last of the great scholastics—or mystics. Such achievements are not for this age. Yet Mr. Toynbee's Icarean effort does for our age what the great representative works of the mind have done for others. It both presents its spirit and attempts to transcend it in the search for the perennial truths by which all ages must be judged. His achievement belongs to the ages; his failure belongs to his own and, hence, is ours as well as his.

Hans J. Morgenthau

## Other Books

**Anna Cora. The Life and Theatre of Anna Cora Mowatt.** By ERIC WOLLENCOTT BARNES. Secker and Warburg. 25s.

To feel excitement—whether about a person, picture, place or book—and then find almost no one in agreement with you, is disconcerting. In the case of Mr. Eric Barnes's biography of Anna Cora Mowatt, I find it positively alarming. The praise *Anna Cora* has received from the English press is faint enough to keep this fascinating, long-forgotten woman on the shelf from which Mr. Barnes has been at such pains to bring her down.

Who was Anna Cora Mowatt? In New York recently I met only one person who knew and he was Van Wyck Brooks who probably possesses a greater knowledge of his country's literary history than any other man alive. Webster's biographical dictionary gives Mrs. Mowatt eight lines, describing her as "writer and actress." Elsewhere she has been called, and correctly, a pioneer in the American theatre. As little more than a girl, Anna Cora was the first American of her sex to give public read-

ings of poetry. In her twenties she wrote and had a triumphant success with the first American play of merit (*Fashion*, revived in London in 1929). Within the year the playwright had turned actress, being the first "lady" to appear on the American stage.

As an actress Mrs. Mowatt took America by storm, playing to packed houses all over the country as well as in Dublin and London. What is worthy of note is that, unlike many a career woman of our day, she launched seriously upon a life of intense activity neither from loneliness, unhappiness, nor ambition, but out of dire necessity. Had she not set herself to pour out romantic novels, books on cookery, housekeeping, embroidery, the etiquette of ballroom dancing, an autobiography, and countless articles on travel, she and her husband—who lost his health and his wealth and his eyesight soon after their marriage—would have starved.

These achievements, however, whether in literature, journalism or the theatre, seem to me of less interest today than the personality of