

History & Archaeology

Arnold J. Toynbee

History as Paradox—By ELIE KEDOURIE

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE is eighty-five this April, and though it is almost two decades now since he retired from Chatham House the works which he has continued to publish attest to the vigour of his mind, the width of his interests, and the facility of his pen. His career as a writer began before the first World War, and the books by and about him amount now to a small library. Toynbee is not a mere academic historian writing for a mere learned audience. He is, rather, a popular writer, but not because he has set out to write what are called popular books. On the contrary, the work which established his worldwide reputation, *A Study of History*, is of such length and complication that it requires a great deal of leisure to follow, comprehend, and digest its author's reasonings. As G. R. Urban told Toynbee in a recorded conversation:

"... Your popularity in America astounds me, for your *Study* is very exacting reading; it demands a grounding in the classics which is not one of the qualities American education favours. Yet your *Study* is not only read but definitely fashionable. The same goes, to a lesser degree, for Germany, where the classical background is, of course, much more firmly established."¹

Urban is undoubtedly right. Since the appearance of its first three volumes in 1934, *A Study of History* and its abridgment by D. C. Somervell have been reprinted many times, and the continuing popularity of the work is shown by the publication quite recently of a new, lavishly illustrated, one-volume edition, revised and abridged (in collaboration with Jane Caplan) by Toynbee himself.²

¹ *Toynbee on Toynbee: A Conversation between Arnold J. Toynbee and G. R. Urban*. Oxford University Press, \$5.95, £1.50.

² Oxford University Press in association with Thames and Hudson, £8.50.

In his foreword to this new abridgment, Toynbee declares that he has been working on *A Study of History* from 1920 to 1972, and indeed not the least interesting aspect of his work is the way in which Toynbee has never ceased to reflect upon his enterprise, to explain and justify his historical method, and to modify—in small and great things alike—the grandiose panorama which he began to unfold before us forty years ago. Anyone who reads consecutively the ten volumes of *A Study of History* will easily discover changes in mood and tone, as well as in argument and classifications between the first six volumes published in two batches in 1934 and 1939 respectively, and the last four volumes published in 1954. These ten volumes were followed by another, published in 1961, entitled *Reconsiderations*, where Toynbee bent once more over his work, endeavouring to modify it in the light of further reflection and reading, and to respond to objections made by his numerous critics. And the abridgment of 1972 shows that the author continues to brood over his handiwork, seeking to improve its appearance, increase its cogency, and make its message clearer and more forceful.

BUT SUBSTANTIAL AS ARE some of the changes which *A Study of History* has undergone from 1934 to 1972, Toynbee still adheres to a view of history which first occurred to him as long ago as August 1914, and on which he has built his imposing and complicated edifice:

"The year 1914 [Toynbee tells us in his foreword] caught me at the University of Oxford, teaching the history of classical Greece. In August 1914 it flashed on my mind that the fifth-century BC historian Thucydides had had already the experience that was now overtaking me. He, like me, had been overtaken by a fratricidal great war between the states into which his world had been divided politically. Thucydides had foreseen that his

generation's great war would be epoch-making for his world, and the sequel had proved him right. I now saw [Toynbee adds] that classical Greek history and modern Western history were, in terms of experience, contemporary with each other. Their courses ran parallel. They could be studied comparatively."

This passage is crucial for understanding Toynbee's enterprise. His starting point was an analogy between the Peloponnesian War and the War of 1914-18, and it was the pursuit of analogies between different periods and places which would seem to have made Toynbee into a universal historian. *A Study of History* is thus perhaps better entitled, by analogy with Bishop Butler's famous book, *An Analogy of History*. This urge to compare—and to classify—clearly means that the ideal of Toynbee the universal historian is not a narrative, based on all the available evidence, showing how all events are related to all other events in the past—an ideal which Meinecke sums up by quoting Leibnitz's motto, "*Tout est conspirant*." Events Toynbee seems to consider a veil behind which lies the true reality for which the historian is searching. Again, what men have suffered and done, infinitely various and perpetually surprising as it is, does not seem to interest Toynbee in itself. He is (he tells us) in search of "underlying permanent and uniform facts of human nature." He believes in "the uniformity and constancy of human nature", and considers this to be the "objective criterion" by which the historian must endeavour to be guided. For Toynbee, it follows therefore, a man is not (as Hegel believed) the series of his actions—actions which he has the choice to take or not to take. He does not believe that man's nature is his history. Man for Toynbee rather exemplifies the workings of a uniform and constant human nature, of which his actions are specimens or instances.

*Où sont des morts les phrases familières
L'art personnel, les âmes singulières?*

But, in this perspective of Toynbee's, Valéry's question remains unanswered. The specificity of a human act, the singularity of a human life, must somehow be drained of their substance and significance. This perhaps accounts for what in other historians would be a dismissive and insouciant attitude to historical evidence. Discussing with Urban the *Survey of International Affairs* which he edited for many years for Chatham House, Toynbee declares:

"I have had the curious experience of having written, in the '20s and '30s, about events on which the documents have since been published. Certainly when the inside material becomes available . . . things look very different."

To an ordinary historian this gap between what he had written and the actual evidence would be

very disturbing, if not utterly devastating. Toynbee, however, shrugs off the discrepancy with a pyrrhonism: "... do you ever", he asks, "get the full story?" Together, then, with a firm belief in "objective" laws at work in historical events, Toynbee evinces great, if not radical, scepticism about our ability to know the actual course of the events. This scepticism seems reinforced by his belief that "We can't help having unconscious axes to grind to some extent." An ordinary historian might think that in historical discourse what counts is the evidence, and the arguments derived from the evidence, and that about these there can be nothing "unconscious"; in short, that it is what the historian says which signifies, not his motive for saying it. But for Toynbee, it seems that the evidence is never complete, and the historian's motive is always suspect. Can history under these conditions ever be a respectable enterprise?

THE READER OF TOYNBEE'S WORKS is perplexed by other paradoxes. *A Study of History*, we remember, has its origin in a comparison between the Peloponnesian War and the first World War. This comparison did not remain a hermeneutic guess, opening new vistas of enquiry, and serving to inspire and illuminate. It became rather the foundation on which Toynbee erected his gigantic analogical construction, in which "models" are built and tested, and "specimen" compared with "specimen."

The purpose of these operations, we are told, is to discover "whether or not there is a standard type to which [these specimens] conform, notwithstanding their individual peculiarities." The specimens which Toynbee believes to constitute intelligible and comparable entities are those societies known as civilisations. Toynbee argues that they are constant and absolute objects of historical thought, that each one of them is an objective "intelligible field of historical study." This language serves to impress us with the idea that civilisations are more real, more tangible, more dependable than other subjects of historical research. On this point Toynbee is very emphatic:

"Such political communities (national states, city-states, and the like) are not only narrower in their spatial extension and shorter-lived in their time-extension than the respective societies to which they belong, but their relation to these societies is that of inseparable parts to indivisible wholes. They are simply articulations of the true social entities and are not independent entities in themselves. Societies, not states, are 'the social atoms' with which students of history have to deal."

But we soon discover that these large and solid entities, these ultimate "atoms", these wholes

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which are said to be indivisible, have, paradoxically, no more (and no less) substantiality than other historical individuals—a state, or an idea, or a tradition—which historians fashion out of their evidence.

On Toynbee's own showing these indivisible wholes turn out to be eminently divisible. In 1934 he counted 19 civilisations. By 1961 these had proliferated to no less than 32, and in the one-volume abridgment the total stands at 34. To an ordinary historian there is here nothing surprising, for his work consists precisely in making historical identities (which can never be exhaustively listed), and in specifying their *differentiae* according to the evidence, which is never a fixed quantity, and always equivocal. "Civilisations", for such an historian, are not more real or "objective" identities than states or churches or corporations or statesmen. History is no doubt a seamless web since all events somehow or another touch all other events. But life is short and seams have to be made. There is, however, nothing to prove that one seam is more privileged than another, that a history organised in terms of civilisations is inherently sounder than histories which adopt some other organising principle.

Is the historian of Cromwellian England, or of First World War diplomacy *ipso facto* inferior to the historian of any of Toynbee's civilisations, for instance the "Egyptiac" or the "Syriac"? Again, is it really the case that (as Toynbee claims) a larger unit is more intelligible than a smaller unit or a panoramic view "a less misleading reflection of reality than a partial view"? There is, on the face of it, no reason why this should be so, or for speaking as though history is a mirror-image of "reality." In *Auguries of Innocence* Blake gives a rather deeper and truer account of the relative significance of the large and the small, and of the infinite shining through the finite:

*To see a World in a grain of sand,
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour.*

THE CIVILISATIONS which Toynbee has listed and classified are in any case studied not for their own sake, but only so that a comparison between them may disclose the laws of human nature. This results in the events which Toynbee studies being transformed into categories or ideal types, with often paradoxical consequences. Thus, the history of the Roman Empire inspired Toynbee to fashion the concept of "internal" and "external" proletariat, and to use it for explaining the decline and downfall of other civilisations. But the notion of proletariat, which in fact has its origin in Roman history, abandons its

historical moorings in the end, and becomes a free-floating category to be applied as and when the needs of classification require its presence. Thus we find Toynbee declaring—in the conversation with Urban—that Tolstoy, though a wealthy aristocrat who was privileged to do what he liked, was in reality a proletarian because he was "alienated" from the Czarist régime. Similarly, the South African whites who are opposed to *apartheid*: "Aren't they part of the proletariat—alongside of the blacks of South Africa? Many of this white minority are eminent intellectuals, some of them are wealthy, but from this spiritual and psychological point of view they are part of the proletariat."

The demands of Toynbee's classificatory system result in many other paradoxical statements which, if taken *au pied de la lettre*, must bewilder the historian—let alone the common reader. Thus Toynbee argues that universal states engender universal religions. This argument is clearly inspired from Roman history where Christianity spread as a religion of its spiritually famished "internal proletariat." But Toynbee must needs generalise from this "specimen", and we are therefore invited to believe that the Caliphate (which was itself the outcome of Islam) did for Islam what the Roman Empire did for Christianity. Again, universal states are broken up by barbarian invasion—and therefore the Ottoman Empire, but for "the mightier march of Westernization", would have been broken up by "incipient barbarian invasions." Who were these incipient barbarian invaders?

The Ottomans provide yet another puzzle for the reader. Toynbee explains that the growth of civilisation is the outcome of a successful response to a challenge. But if response is not adequate to the challenge, a society may become "arrested." The Ottomans, like the Spartans, are an example of arrested growth. They "leaped" from being a pastoral Nomadic community to being an imperial Power:

"They faced the unprecedented challenge of having to govern vast populations, and, trying to cope with this novel political problem, they created intractable and inflexible institutions which precluded any further social development."

Now it is well known that among empire-builders the Ottomans were not unique in having pastoralist origins; nor is it the case that their transformation into the rulers of an empire was a sudden "leap." Such a description would fit the Arabs much better. It is also well known that the Ottoman state lasted for some six centuries, which is quite a long time, that from first to last its institutions underwent a prodigious amount of change, and that on the whole they managed quite well the problem of governing "vast subject

populations." What sense, then, are we to give to the epithet "arrested" when it is applied to the Ottoman Empire, and how are we to establish that it was more or less "arrested" than the Roman, or the Abbasid, or the Austrian, or the British Empire? "Inflexible", "intractable", and "arrested", when used to describe societies and political institutions are mere metaphors; as a *jeu d'esprit* they may be stimulating, but by themselves impart little of substance. May we not even go further and ask (with the author of the latest appreciation of Toynbee's *oeuvre*):

"Who can gainsay Lord Palmerston's dictum that 'Half the wrong conclusions at which mankind arrive are reached by the abuse of metaphors' . . . ?"³

THE NEEDS OF HIS SYSTEM lead Toynbee to a judgment which, of all the paradoxes in *A Study of History*, will perhaps most bewilder and disorient his readers. For Toynbee asserts, flatly and sweepingly, that the Western genius in architecture, sculpture, and painting in the half-millennium since Giotto has been "afflicted" with "sterility." It has been sterilised by a "Hellenising renaissance", the evil effects of which were not thrown off until the 19th century, when Hamlin Hall built on the shores of the Bosphorus in 1869-71, and the Halle des Machines in Paris in 1889 first showed us what the Western genius could do when it was not smothered by the ghost of a resuscitated Hellenism. This extravagant and exorbitant verdict is a mechanical application of Toynbee's theory about growth, arrest, and decline. Growth expresses the strength of native genius; therefore to be inspired by the achievements of a dead civilisation is a dangerous raising of ghosts, a sinister trafficking with the dead. Therefore Cyrus Hamlin is better than Brunelleschi.

Toynbee's wholesale dismissal of five centuries of Western art, eccentric and paradoxical as it is, raises fundamental issues about the character of human life itself. Man is a being who is aware of himself, and aware that his world is a mind-affected world. It is because his world is such that he is at all at home in it. To say this is to say how vitally man depends on legacies and traditions, on the transmission of modes of thought and behaviour, on artefacts and institutions, without which he would be unable to survive, or at best become simply an animal or a savage. It is for this reason, among others, that man's nature is his history. Toynbee's depreciation of legacies and traditions, his dismissal of them as a dead hand and an incubus, does not tally with

³ Arnold J. Toynbee: *Historian for an Age in Crisis*. By ROLAND N. STROMBERG. Southern Illinois University Press, \$5.95, £3.30.

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our experience and historical knowledge. And if this depreciation is systematically adopted as a maxim or a rule of action, then it must result in making men aliens in their own human world, in increasing their insecurity and "alienation."

Such feelings of instability are, in any case, usually disagreeable. To show this we need go no further than *A Study of History* itself. Readers of the original ten volumes know how stable and immutable the position of the Jews and Judaism was in Toynbee's scheme. The Jews were fossils who had survived from the dead Syriac civilisation. Their religion was characterised by fanaticism and intolerance and arrogance, and from it the West had derived these detestable traits. These views have almost disappeared from the one-volume abridgment which even goes so far as to state that in all three religions of the Judaic school, "God the sovereign legislator has been seen to be God the merciful and compassionate synonym for love." Toynbee goes even further. This fossil of a dead civilisation, now a scattered diaspora, is declared to be "the wave of the future", and this because the "transformation of the world into a cosmopolis favours social organization on a non-local basis." Verily, to adopt the Psalmist's words, the fossil which the builders have rejected is now the head-stone of the corner! But this is none the less puzzling. For the Jews are now still what they ever were, and no new historical discovery has occurred to warrant so radical a reappraisal. It is disturbing to come upon so great and so unexplained a change in the seemingly solid and "objective" fabric of Toynbee's scheme.

As Professor Nathan Rotenstreich pointed out some years ago, the attention which Toynbee devotes to Jews and Judaism is out of all proportion to the place which he allots to them in world history.⁴ This remark is as true of the abridgment as of the original work. Toynbee is much pre-occupied with the past, present, and future of the Jews. He discusses the two options which have been open to them (which he calls Herodianism and Zealotism), and attempts to fit Zionism and anti-Zionism within these categories. He points out that in terms of these two options, the Zionist position is ambivalent, and he concludes: "At all events, the attempted Israeli-Jewish responses to the problem of 'peculiarity' will all of them fail unless the policy of national and religious exclusivity is renounced forthwith." Zionism, as is well known, is a nationalist movement, no different in its ideological assumptions from other nationalist movements in the Middle East and elsewhere. Why it should be singled out

for such a peremptory monition is obscure. Furthermore, the reader may wonder whether the historian is in a position, *qua* historian, to offer advice so confidently, and so imperiously. Supposing the Israelis proceeded "forthwith" to follow Toynbee's advice, and in consequence came a cropper? Or supposing they disregarded it, and thereafter flourished exceedingly? What, in either case, would be the historian's apology?

BUT IT DOES NOT SEEM that such dangers worry Toynbee very much. On the contrary, the history which he writes has an avowed practical purpose. *A Study of History* is there to inculcate a lesson and to point a moral. The lesson is that of the "senseless criminality" of human affairs hitherto; and the moral is that mankind must grow "into something like a single family", or else destroy itself. It is to drive this point properly home that Toynbee has embarked on a universal history. "A study of human affairs", he tells us, "must be comprehensive if it is to be effective." Toynbee clarifies this argument by means of a quotation from Polybius whose influence on him was (he told Urban) "enormous":

"The coincidence by which all the transactions of the world have been oriented in a single direction and guided towards a single goal is the extraordinary characteristic of the present age, to which the special feature of the present work is a corollary. The unity of events imposes on the historian a similar unit of composition in depicting for his readers the operation of the laws of Fortune on the grand scale, and this has been my own principal inducement and stimulus in the work which I have undertaken. . . ."

We are puzzled how we are to understand this passage in the context of Toynbee's own work. Is it that he, too, believes all the transactions of the world to be oriented in a single direction? And does he, too, want to depict "the operations of the laws of Fortune"?

In this passage Polybius, we know, is looking forward to and celebrating the beneficent spread of Roman dominion. But Toynbee is far indeed from eulogising any earthly state or dominion. On this issue he is perfectly categorical. "The so-called 'civilised' state is", he affirms, "simply an imposing, high-powered version of the primitive tribe." This, of course, is simply not true. A tribe is held together by blood and kinship, a civilised state by law. In a tribe there can be no distinction between private and public, while on such a distinction all civilised states must rest. A tribe is primitive because it lacks the institutions which mediate between the multifarious interests of its members, while a civilised state is civilised precisely because it can discharge these mediatory and remedial duties. But it is easy to see that the

⁴ Nathan Rotenstreich, *The Recurring Pattern: Studies in Anti-Judaism in Modern Thought* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963), p.76.

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achievement which a civilised state represents is, paradoxically, of little consequence to Toynbee. "Paradoxically", because an historical study is concerned with human actions, and the evidence will simply not allow us blithely to dismiss as insignificant the establishment and maintenance of a polity, or to condemn all political actions as hopelessly tainted with criminality.

BUT FOR TOYNBEE all the political arts are pernicious and in the end vain and useless. The stimulus of danger or a cold-blooded calculation of expediency are inefficacious for salvation. The power to save ourselves can only come from love:

"In virtue of this love which is equally human and divine, the Kingdom of God has a peace of its own which is not the philosophic peace of detachment, but the peace of life lived by men in and for God. . . . That is the palingenesia which Jesus proclaimed as the sovereign aim of his own birth in the flesh."

Again, we are told:

"If this is a soul's recognised aim for itself and for its fellow souls in the Christian Church on Earth, then it is evident that under a Christian dispensation God's will *will* be done on Earth as it is in Heaven to an immeasurably greater degree than in a secular mundane society."

In respect of these passages too we are perplexed. And for this reason: that in his conversation with Urban Toynbee has declared that he is not a believer, that he does not know whether there is a God, and that when he was an undergraduate he ceased to believe in the doctrines of Christianity. How then are we to understand these references in *A Study of History* to God's will and to divine love and to "the palingenesia which Jesus proclaimed"?

But however we may understand them, is it anyway the case that in our fallen condition it is love (and only love) which saves? What is love? Love is a feeling which moves the lover to promote above everything else the good of the loved one. Is this feeling, even though it were universal, enough to maintain the state of the world? The world with all its denizens, we know, is various, changeable, and even treacherous. What the lover may look upon as good the loved one may consider simply hateful. And does it follow that if you want the good, you will have enough prudence to bring it about? And even if your action is faultless, may the course of events not in the end mock your benevolence, and out of good in fact produce evil? Love is not enough.

Toynbee also utters exalted words about conscience. He sees a conflict between it and the "ecclesiastical 'Establishment'", and his language shows clearly enough that he believes the promptings of conscience always to be better

than the wisdom of the "Establishment." But the individual conscience, acting strictly on its own, spurning the help of institutions and traditions, is as likely to counsel evil as to prescribe the good. Eichmann, we remember, pleaded that he did what he did "for the sake of conscience", and he may not have been lying.

Where will love and the dictates of conscience take us? Paradoxically, they will take us to a Super-establishment, an all-engulfing institution. For Toynbee looks forward to the unification of mankind in a world-state. What would a world-state conceivably look like? Will it not have to be some kind of gigantic EEC in which Love will have to be codified in "community regulations", and whose managers will be infinitely more remote than any State or Church which has hitherto existed? But it may be that Toynbee does not think so, for the model which he seems to commend to us is that of Communist China. The caption below a picture of an athletic display in China (drafted by Miss Caplan but approved by him) declares:

"Westerners tend to see in China a repulsive modern Leviathan, but behind the ceremonial lies an ideal of mutual solidarity and co-operation from which a fragmented world may learn."

The caption appended to the reproduction of a Chinese propaganda poster (it shows Chairman Mao visiting a factory) invites us to consider the possibility that here is "a deliberately controlled attempt at a felicitous synthesis" which might be "a wholly new cultural departure for civilised Man." Toynbee is clearly much attracted by Mao's China (as his conversation with Urban shows):

TOYNBEE: This is a possibility—a rule of technocrats, with the state acting as Confucian paterfamilias, demanding and receiving, as you say, filial obedience from the workers. The extremism of the Cultural Revolution shows that Mao must have perceived this as a very real danger. This extraordinary purge, not only of the ruler's enemies, but of his bureaucracy—the transmission belts of his system—is, I think, unique in history, and is totally unlike the Stalinist terror. Mao made fools, in public, of the Mandarins, but then, instead of having their heads cut off, he put them back in office, and the people, having had the Mandarins gayed and seen through, will perhaps now not kowtow so abjectly as, according to tradition, they would be inclined to do. I think this was in Mao's mind.

URBAN: If one could set aside the appalling cruelties that preceded (and partly also accompanied) the Cultural Revolution, one might applaud, anyway, Mao's intention. I would personally rejoice at the thought of Italian bailiffs, French social security administrators, and even some British customs officers being given a taste of the Maoist whip.

TOYNBEE: I think it would be a salutary exercise for all bureaucrats—they ought to be put through it at fairly short intervals.

It may be that we too, if we desire the "felicitous synthesis" of Maoist China, should arrange for our First Division civil servants (should we call them practitioners of "institutionalised violence"?) to make quarterly public confessions before the multitude in Trafalgar Square.

TOYNBEE, as we have just seen, contrasts favourably Mao to Stalin. But his judgment of Soviet Communism is by no means unfavourable. Its founder, Lenin, he puts in the same category as Christ, the Buddha and Gandhi. Lenin is "a creative personality [who] feels the impulse of internal necessity to transfigure his fellow men by converting them to his own insight", and whose emergence "inevitably precipitates a social conflict, as society struggles to cope with the disequilibrium produced by his creative energy." Lenin's transfigurative activities were inspired, as is well known, by Marxist doctrine. This doctrine (Toynbee tells us) is "the classic exposition of the social crisis that accompanies the disintegration of a civilisation." The Marxist schema, he believes, is true, "as a matter of ascertainable historical fact."

"The phenomenon of disintegration, as it is revealed in history, does exhibit a movement that runs through war to peace; through an apparently wanton and savage destruction of past achievements to fresh works of creation that seem to owe their special quality to the devouring glow of the very flames in which they have been forged."

What is so lyrically described here Toynbee calls a movement of "schism-and-palingenesia." Palingenesia is the word he had used to describe what Jesus proclaimed. Are we to understand that what Lenin effected was a palingenesia?

As a matter of ascertainable historical fact the Bolshevik Revolution was accompanied by a great deal of violence. But this violence was evoked by, was a response to, a disintegrating Western industrial society which, in Toynbee's pages, is depicted throughout as greedy and aggressive in various ways. The West has presumed to take possession of the whole world as though it was "in the gift of some war goddess of private enterprise." Commerce and industry, which have served prodigiously to increase material welfare, Toynbee denounces as Western cultural aggression, as though humanity had before then been utterly innocent of buying and selling. We are shown a contemporary Nigerian shop sign showing a man in Western clothes and proclaiming: "SEE THE MANAGER IN CHARGE." This, we are told, "is a signal of the West's successful cultural aggression, which has transformed the patriarchal chief of a tribal society into the ubiquitous managerial boss of Western commerce." A few pages further on, we come

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upon a sketch—a caricature really—reproduced from a left-wing French periodical of the beginning of the century and purporting to show a European in a solar topee sitting in an easy chair, with revolver in hand and drink at his side, receiving the obeisance of grovelling and cowering natives. As though this picture depicted ascertainable historical fact, the caption declares: “unprofitable or dangerous natives must be exterminated like vermin: a nineteenth-century French colonialist does his bit for civilisation.” The West is guilty of “atrocities” in Korea, the Americans in Viet Nam, the French in Algeria, and the French police in Paris in 1968. These “atrocities” are the sign of breakdown, and “moral responsibility for the breakdowns of civilisations lies upon the heads of the leaders.” This passage occurs on page 166 of the one-volume abridgment.

As I have said, Toynbee is not a popular writer,

and makes no concessions to his audience. We may assume that the readers who had the diligence to persevere so far would be educated enough and knowledgeable enough to know that those against whom the Western forces were fighting in Korea, the Americans in Viet Nam and the French in Algeria were ruthless and unscrupulous enemies fully capable, as a matter of ascertainable historical fact, of committing the most chilling atrocities. Would this reader then wonder why the North Koreans, the Viet Cong, and the FLN are not denounced with the same stern and prophetic accents? If it is right to assume that some such thought would revolve in such a reader's mind, then not the least paradoxical in this budget of paradoxes is Toynbee's continuing popularity in the Western world to which Mr Urban has attested, and to which the illustrated edition of *A Study of History* constitutes such weighty testimony.

The English Revolution

Sunbeams and Lumps of Clay—By WILLIAM M. LAMONT

“How the purer spirit is united to this clod is a knot too hard for fallen humanity to untie. How should a thought be united to a marble-statue or a sunbeam to a lump of clay!”

JOSEPH GLANVILL

EXCELLENT BOOKS on the English Revolution pour from the presses, and yet the task of synthesis becomes ever more difficult. Why should this be so? My argument in this article is against a tendency in historical writings to divorce political ideas from political actions. For instance, Christopher Hill offers this advice in the introduction to his study of sectarian thought, *The World Turned Upside Down*:¹

“The reader who wishes to restore his perspective might with advantage read the valuable book recently published by Professor David Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford U.P., 1971). This book deals with the same period as I do, but from an entirely different angle. His is the view from the top, from Whitehall, mine the worm's eye view. His index and mine contain totally different lists of names.”

Such division of powers can have unforeseen consequences. Political ideas can be seen as something separable from the real world of practical politics. Indeed political theory can be seen as something which only happens to scholars

and non-gentlemen. On the one hand the cerebral relay race, where Aquinas is forever handing the baton on from Plato to Locke; on the other hand, riots in the stands, with tinkers declaiming from the Book of Revelation and soldiers debating the Rights of Man. Meanwhile, back in the box-office, Cromwell and Ireton are coolly pocketing the receipts. The theme has variations: a non-gentleman may even *become* a scholar. Thus in that same book Dr Hill can learnedly show affinities between the Digger leader, Gerrard Winstanley, and Hobbes, and—hey presto!—a year later Winstanley is promoted to a “Pelican Classic.” He has become an intellectual athlete instead of a nuisance on the terraces: he has been raised to a new level of ineffectuality. The real world—where Thomas Cromwell makes Privy Councils and Oliver Cromwell unmakes Parliaments—lies somewhere else.

Another book by Dr Hill—*Antichrist in England*²—illustrates the dangers in such a division. The publisher's blurb calls the book “a significant contribution to historical studies, and also a fascinating account, with many colourful quotations, of a movement of what might be called ‘left wing’ thought.” Well, it might be called that, but it would be extraordinarily ineptly called that. The purpose of Dr Hill's study is to educate us out of the mistaken belief that Antichrist in the 17th century was an evocative figure

¹ Temple Smith (1972).

² Oxford University Press (1971).