

Determinism, Moralism, and Rationalism:

Philosophies of History in British Intellectual Life, 1920-1961

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Abstract

This thesis examines several historical ideas that were prevalent in British intellectual life between the 1920s and 1960s. It regards the philosophy of history not as a theorisation of history, but as an intellectual activity participated in not only by philosophers and theorists, but also historians and literary critics as public intellectuals. Therefore, this thesis is neither a disciplinary study of the ‘philosophy of history’, nor a philosophical treatise that either makes a case for, or repudiates, a Hegelian, metaphysical conception of history. Rather, it is a work of intellectual history that not only seeks to explore how conceptualising the historical process was related to the political, religious, and philosophical contexts during this period, but also attempts to argue that these conceptions of history informed and underpinned many intellectuals’ political views and religious attitudes. Specifically, it tries to investigate several important debates in British intellectual culture over different, and sometimes antagonistic, presuppositions of the meaning and driving force of history. It illustrates the ways in which the relationships between morality and rationality in history were discussed, and argues that disagreements about the nature of history often arose from irreconcilable moral, philosophical and religious standpoints. It also shows that making projections about the future either by drawing historical parallels or by discovering irreversible historical tendencies in the past tended to be accepted by people living in an age that lacks certainty, but it became unacceptable to many when its determinist and teleological implications were underlined.

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Thesis Abstract

A work on twentieth-century British intellectual history, this thesis examines several ways in which the historical process was conceptualised, conjectured, and understood from 1920 to 1961. It is written with a presupposition that writing and debating over the philosophy of history is not necessarily a purely academic activity participated by philosophers, but also a cultural practice which historians, writers, theologians are engaged in. Therefore, this thesis places these historical ideas in the fullest possible context by exploring how and under what circumstances they were elaborated, promulgated, disseminated, accepted and discussed in British intellectual culture; it also explores the contemporary relevance of these conceptions of history by studying the relationships between them and other significant political views, philosophical persuasions, and religious ideas. It shows that, in some cases, certain historical ideas were informed by discussions in other domains; but in other cases, they were also employed as the theoretical underpinnings of certain public doctrines. In this regard, this thesis seeks to illustrate that historiography and intellectual history can be fruitfully combined—as long as historiography no longer rests purely on concerning famous historians in the past, and intellectual history is no longer confined to study of the history of political thought.

The four historical philosophies that this thesis primarily discusses are characterised respectively as ‘moral-internationalist’, ‘realist’, ‘providential’, and ‘liberal-humanitarian’; the major protagonists of these ideas are Arnold J. Toynbee, E.H. Carr, Isaiah Berlin and Hugh Trevor-Roper. On the one hand, this thesis specifies their

identity as historians as public intellectuals, and underlines their high standing in British intellectual culture; on the other hand, it also includes as many of their interlocutors as possible, and takes into consideration the ideas of other intellectuals who shared, criticised, and even dismissed their views. Henceforth, apart from these thinkers' major published works, this study makes extensive use of their journal articles, broadcasts, unpublished works, and correspondence, in order to understand the relevance and targets of their arguments.

This thesis shows that changes in broad intellectual atmosphere as a result of such events as two World Wars, the economic recession, the advent of Soviet Communism and the Cold War played a significant role in affecting historians' conceptions of the relationship between the past and the present, as well as the way they regarded the notion of meaning in history. The thesis argues that although none of the intellectuals discussed fully endorsed Hegelian total explanations of history, some of them, such as Toynbee, were keen on endowing history with a Christian meaning; while others, such as Carr, despite disputing any transcendental meanings, alleged that historical development was dependent on socio-economic tendencies, and that history could not be properly understood without recognising these forces. These ideas seemed fully plausible in an age of uncertainty, but the denial of unrealised possibilities in history that they implied resulted their being denounced in another climate of opinion.

Moreover, this thesis illustrates different ways in which rationality and morality were discussed by these historical thinkers, and argues that conflicts in their historical ideas can sometimes be explained by the incongruity of their ethical and philosophical

views. It looks into various ways in which historical moralism was promulgated and censured, and shows that the theme of these debates shifted from whether a moral ideal should be presumed as the end of history in the thirties to whether moral ideas were historically effective in the fifties. In a similar vein, this study aims at exploring how rationalism was construed and debated over by these intellectuals. Paying due attention to the antithesis between reason and faith presumed by some Christian intellectuals, it particularly focuses on the notion of historical rationality, which can be distinguished into two antagonistic understandings: 1) one's recognition of, and will to follow, the trend of history; 2) the historical effectiveness of an historical agent's action in his own will.

This thesis is composed of four main chapters. The first chapter deals with the moral-internationalist view of history held by such progressive thinkers as Toynbee, Murray, the Hammonds and Zimmern, who presumed world unity as the end of history, and believed that a solid international order hinged on vindicating certain moral ideals. Chapter II examines the realist conception of history as particularly exemplified in Carr's criticism of moralism in history, and his public defence of Soviet Communism. The third chapter highlights the quintessentially liberal-humanitarian ideas in Berlin and Trevor-Roper's historical criticism, and examines their debates with the historical realists over the power of ideas. The last chapter examines the providential history that was elaborated by Toynbee and Butterfield by placing it into the Christian revival in British intellectual life; it also investigates the grounds on which this Christian idea of history was refuted by secular intellectuals.

Introduction

I.

This thesis is a study of the debate over the nature of history in British intellectual life between 1920 and 1961. It should be noted at the beginning that it primarily tackles history as the historical process or the totality of human experience, instead of the reconstruction of historical knowledge. In other words, the questions that will be addressed are not about historical research or historical writing, but the meaning, end, trend, pattern, conjecture, and driving force of history when viewed in its entirety—although these two senses of ‘history’ cannot, and should not, be completely divided. The main objective of this thesis is twofold: first, to explore various ways in which the historical process was conjectured, conceptualised and then abridged into a grand narrative or theory of history; and how these conceptions of history were quickly disseminated, implicitly accepted, and publicly discussed by British intellectuals with different backgrounds. Secondly, it seeks, after probing into the political, religious, and philosophical considerations with which they were written, as well as the general intellectual settings in which these views of history were situated, to answer why certain conceptions of history happened to be formed and were considerably, if not unconditionally, approved in the 1920s and 1930s, whereas they came to be criticised in the late 1940s and 1950s.

To construe historical reality as a whole is a practice often connected with the notion of a speculative philosophy of history. Perhaps it almost amounts to a consensus, at least within the enterprise of the British historical profession, that the philosophy of

history is a taboo or something so hazardous that it would contaminate their discipline, often identified with a Hegelian metaphysical system which distorts the individuality of historical facts. Even to philosophers of history, this approach has been considered as out-dated since the 1950s. This thesis, however, does not intend to refute this form of philosophy of history on the ground that it does not yield solid historical knowledge; for otherwise it would merely become a repetition of common sense. Nor is it dedicated to challenging this consensus and to make a case for the philosophy of history. Rather, it regards the philosophy of history not as a formal theory of history, but as a cultural practice participated in not only by philosophers and theorists, but also historians, literary critics, and, broadly speaking, intellectuals. Therefore, this thesis is written with an aim to question philosophers of history and historical theorists' monopoly of the right to define the boundary and the theme of philosophy of history.

In the first section of this introductory chapter, I will briefly sketch the development of the philosophy of history as a sub-discipline of marginal importance in Britain, and suggest that although the 'speculative' approach was always denounced by its practitioners, public debates on the nature of history were largely uninformed by a discussion that came from a narrow and disciplinary starting point. The second section further defines the central theme of this thesis, with an elucidation of why certain British intellectuals, namely Arnold J. Toynbee, E.H. Carr, Isaiah Berlin and Hugh Trevor-Roper, were selected as the main figures to be discussed. The third section explicates the chronological arrangement of this thesis, and suggests its historiographical contribution. The last part is a clarification of its structure, and renders

an abstract of each subsequent chapter.

II.

The notion ‘philosophy of history’ was commonly believed to have been coined by Voltaire, whose *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756) provides a comprehensive account of the social and cultural development of a number of civilisations; but the precursor of this sub-discipline is often traced back to Bossuet, Vico, Augustine, Polybius and sometimes even to Herodotus.¹ Denominating these thinkers ‘philosophers of history’, however, entails anachronism in two aspects: 1) as the American philosopher David Carr points out, it blurs the difference in these thinkers’ conceptions of history, and over-stresses their commonality;² 2) it tends to overlook other notions, for example, universal history, which were also used in these thinkers’ time—it is worth remembering that Voltaire’s ‘philosophy of history’ was written as a refutation of Bossuet’s *Discours sur l’histoire universelle* (1681). Critical of Bossuet’s interpretation of history as following a divine plan full of Providence, Voltaire wanted to write a history of mankind with a focus on human manners and customs. To him, ‘philosophy of history’ was therefore a new form of historiography which, founded on critical mind and scientific spirit, instead of on religious presuppositions, served his Enlightenment project.

The defining feature that researchers often find in works of these so-called philosophers of history is a comprehensive explanation of the beginning, end, dynamic,

¹ J.H. Brumfitt, *Voltaire: Historian* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 61-70, 95-104. See, for example, Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

² David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 80-2.

law, trend of the entire historical development. A notable example is the British philosopher W.H. Walsh's classic text *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (1951), in which he famously distinguished between speculative and critical (or analytical) philosophies of history. The task of speculative philosophy of history, as Walsh argued, is to 'discover the meaning and purpose of the whole historical process', and 'to produce an interpretation of the actual course of events showing that a special kind of intelligibility could be found in it.'³ Walsh's definition, therefore, contains two basic presumptions: 1) speculative philosophy of history concerns the entire historical process; 2) it is dedicated to finding an ultimate and metaphysical meaning in it. Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether those figures mentioned by Walsh, including Vico, Bossuet, the French Encyclopaedists, Kant, Herder, Hegel, Comte, Marx, Toynbee, and Butterfield, meet these standards. Condorcet and Comte, for example, can hardly be considered as metaphysical thinkers; while Kant's conception of history, at least in his famous 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' (1784), which Walsh paid due attention to, merely lists several propositions for a universal history that would be worked out in the future, and does not concern the 'actual course of events'.⁴ Walsh's definition seems too narrow to accommodate all these thinkers, whose ideas of history, despite having much in common, also differ at many crucial points. Interestingly, the only figure that perfectly fits into this definition is Hegel, whose philosophy of history received lengthy discussion in Walsh's book—one might even wonder whether he was

³ W.H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951), p. 119.

⁴ The essay is collected in Kant, *Political Writings*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 41-53.

using Hegel's philosophy of history in a normative or descriptive sense.

It is worth remarking that Walsh's distinction was not original, but probably borrowed from C.D. Broad, who famously demarcated what he called 'Critical Philosophy' from 'Speculative Philosophy', whose 'business is to take over all aspects of human experience, to reflect upon them, and to try to think out a view of Reality as a whole which shall do justice to all of them'.⁵ Trained at Cambridge and taught by J.M.E. McTaggart, Broad was particularly interested in philosophy of science, and sceptical about metaphysics. He maintained that 'the analysis and definition of our fundamental concepts, and the clear statement and resolute criticism of our fundamental beliefs' was the task of 'Critical Philosophy', or indeed philosophy itself.⁶ In contrast to Broad's Realist training, Walsh was tutored by the Idealist G.R.G. Mure in the 1930s at Merton College, Oxford. As a Hegelian scholar whose major works also include *Reason and Experience* and *Metaphysics*, Walsh was distressed by the fact that metaphysics was no longer discussed by philosophers in the 1940s and 1950. His loyalty towards the British Idealist tradition made him an intellectual loner at Oxford, and he gave up his fellowship at Merton to take the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh in 1960.⁷

The overarching concern of Walsh's book is undeniably critical philosophy of history, with two thirds of its length dedicated to discussing historical truth, historical objectivity, and historical explanation, etc. Noticeably, the 'perspective theory' and

⁵ C.D. Broad, 'Critical and Speculative Philosophy', in J.H. Muirhead (ed.), *Contemporary British Philosophy, Personal Statements* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), p. 96.

⁶ Idem, *Scientific Thought* (London: Kegan Paul, 1923), p. 18.

⁷ Leon Pompa, 'William Henry Walsh', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-65673?rskey=sJN2jt&result=4> (29 January 2019); idem, 'William Henry Walsh: 1913-1986', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 72 (1986), pp. 511-24; W.H. Walsh, *Reason and Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947); idem, *Metaphysics* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1963).

‘colligatory concept’ proposed in this book are often believed to be Walsh’s greatest contribution to this field.⁸ Nevertheless, Walsh did not thereby dismiss speculative philosophy of history; on the contrary, he argued that ‘philosophy of history of this sort continues to appear, and presumably will do so for so long as evil is looked on as constituting a metaphysical problem.’⁹ It is noteworthy that Walsh’s interest was not in historical research, so this book was written for philosophers instead of historians.¹⁰ Nevertheless, his awareness in the early 1950s that history became a significant problem for philosophers because of its ‘apparently chaotic nature of the facts which made it up’ was clearly related to his military service during the Second World War.¹¹ Therefore, it is possible that Walsh accepted Broad’s distinction precisely because, though it entails an implicit denunciation of ‘Speculative Philosophy’, Broad also argued that ‘the time for Speculative Philosophy has not yet come; for Critical Philosophy may not have advanced far enough to supply it with a firm basis’—in other words, the reappearance of ‘Speculative Philosophy’ is not impossible.¹² To Walsh, analytic philosophy of history is not simply a denial of speculative philosophy of history, but rather its supplement. In this regard, Walsh seemed to retain this nineteenth-century conviction that ultimate history, even if it cannot be written at the present, will eventually be written in the future, when its intellectual foundation is laid by critically analysing the historian’s mental apparatus.

⁸ For example, Frank Ankersmit’s notion ‘narrative substance’ is inspired by Walsh. See Peter P. Icke, *Frank Ankersmit’s Lost Historical Cause: A Journey from Language to Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 14-23.

⁹ Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, p. 154.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 7.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 119; Pompa, ‘William Henry Walsh’.

¹² Broad, *Scientific Thought*, p. 20.

As for contemporary speculative philosophers of history, Arnold J. Toynbee and Herbert Butterfield were the only names Walsh mentioned in his book. Nevertheless, neither of them was a proper philosopher; and Butterfield's apologetic conception of history, in particular, does not fit into Walsh's definition of speculative philosophy of history. This largely shows that speculative philosophy of history, at least in its Hegelian form, was a subject hardly contributed to by British philosophers in the twentieth century, not least because its metaphysical presuppositions would seem unacceptable and even nonsensical to those philosophers who began to accept the principles of logical positivism and early-Wittgensteinian philosophy. In contrast, a meta-historical approach was at least not completely abandoned in the U.S. and on the Continent. Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-1923) and Karl Jaspers' *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (1949) came out in Germany respectively after the two World Wars;¹³ while German refugee scholars such as Karl Löwith and Eric Voegelin helped to introduce this largely German tradition into American scholarship.¹⁴ Even in France, the 1940s witnessed a noticeable revival of Hegelian philosophy, particularly promoted by Jean Hyppolite and Alexandre Kojève, whose exegesis of Hegelian philosophy largely influenced Francis Fukuyama's discussion of the idea of recognition in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), which, written as a result of the controversy aroused by his article 'The End of History?' in *The National Interest*, is sometimes used to illustrate the revival of speculative philosophy of history, after its

¹³ Both had English translations. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. C.F. Atkinson (2 vols, London: Allen & Unwin, 1926-1928); Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. Michael Bullock (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953).

¹⁴ Löwith, *Meaning in History*; Eric Voegelin, *Order and History* (5 vols, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956-1987).

supposed decline since the 1950s.¹⁵ But among British philosophers at least (even including Walsh), the philosophy of history was predominantly regarded as an investigation into historical thought and historical knowledge, instead of the historical process *per se*.

This shift from speculative to critical philosophy of history was initiated by the Neapolitan philosopher Benedetto Croce, who argued confidently in his *Teoria e storia della storiografia* (1917, an English translation appeared in 1921) that ‘that the philosophy of history is dead is clear’.¹⁶ Although Croce did not clearly define what ‘philosophy of history’ he was referring to, his remark that it seeks to discover ‘the “meaning” or the “general plan” of the course of history’, worships ‘the magic wand of finality’, and reveals ‘the action of divine reason or providence’, clearly suggests that it was Hegel’s metaphysical history he had in mind.¹⁷ Interestingly, Croce found a kinship between the philosophy of history and positivism, which he also called ‘deterministic conception of history’; and they both became targets to be criticised in chapter IV of the first part of the book. According to Croce, it was a doctrine held by historical determinists that history was a chain of cause and effect; therefore, historical explanation is fundamentally about finding the cause of an event in history. But when those ‘historical determinists’ fail to find the ‘proximate’ cause, they often resort to larger notions, for example, ‘race’ and ‘age’, whose relationship with the events to be explained is not empirically verifiable; these notions, henceforth, do not seem to be

¹⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992); idem, ‘The End of History?’, *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), pp. 3-18.

¹⁶ Benedetto Croce, *Theory and History of Historiography*, trans. Douglas Ainslie (London: George G. Harrap, 1921), p. 81. It is noteworthy that the American edition, published by Harcourt, is titled *History, Its Theory and Practice*.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 69-71.

different from the ‘ultimate cause’ philosophers of history presuppose.¹⁸ The common mistake the philosophy of history and historical determinism make, Croce argued, is that they both ‘leave the reality of history behind them’.¹⁹ It is noteworthy that Croce, whose well-known dictum is ‘nothing exists outside of thought’, contended that ‘brutal facts’ were not the reality of history, but ‘a presupposition that has not been proved’; rather, historical reality is the mind ‘that thinks and constructs the fact’.²⁰ Therefore, proper philosophy of history as Croce conceived is no longer erecting metaphysical systems by which all happenings in history can be explained; instead, it concerns the historical mind as a particular mode of thought and the process by which historical knowledge is produced.

Croce’s works were first translated into English by Douglas Ainslie in the 1910s; but not least because of Ainslie’s unreliable translation, it was the philosopher R.G. Collingwood who not only translated Croce’s works in the 1920s, but also seriously began to introduce Croce’s thought to British intellectuals.²¹ *Pace* Croce, Collingwood was opposed to philosophy of history written in such a way as to discover a ‘single concrete plan’ in history, which he believed was merely an abstraction of history.²² Proper philosophy of history, Collingwood argued, did not seek to discover trajectories of history; rather, it is the study of ‘its presupposition and implication: an attempt to

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 66.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 75.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 108, 73, 75.

²¹ See H.J. Paton’s criticism, in his review of Douglas Ainslie’s translation of *Philosophy of the Practical: Economic and Ethic*, in *Mind*, 23 (1914), p. 432. Collingwood’s translations include *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (London: Latimer, 1913) and *Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927). On Collingwood’s indebtedness to Croce’s philosophy, see William M. Johnston, *The Formative Years of R.G. Collingwood* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), chapter vii.

²² R.G. Collingwood, ‘The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 25 (1925), p. 151.

discover its place in human experience as a whole; its relation to other forms of experience, its origin and its validity'.²³ In his early works, for example, *Religion and Philosophy* (1916), *Speculum Mentis* (1924), and 'The Nature and Aims of Philosophy of History' (1925), Collingwood remarked that history was neither 'a mechanical process' in which everything was causally connected, nor 'a gradual accumulation of truth'.²⁴ But history, as Collingwood argued, is not thereby a collection of 'an indefinite series of atomic events' which are unrelated to each other at all;²⁵ rather, it is 'essentially universal', 'an organised and coherent whole', in which ostensibly accidental happenings are governed by necessity.²⁶ In this regard, Collingwood was arguing that though history did contain a meaning, its meaning lay in history *per se* and nowhere else. According to him, it is a paradox that to write universal history is to know the infinite details history is composed of, while at the same time the knowledge of even the smallest detail also requires knowledge of history in its entirety.²⁷ Therefore, Collingwood concluded that historical knowledge, like religious, aesthetic and scientific knowledge, lacked solid intellectual foundation; history is subordinated to philosophy, which alone renders reliable and critical knowledge of the mind.

Collingwood's view on the relation between history and philosophy, however, experienced a significant change in the 1930s, when he came to believe that philosophy and history are identical, and sought to make a rapprochement between these two forms

²³ Ibid, p. 162.

²⁴ Idem, *Religion and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1916), p. 49.

²⁵ Idem, 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History', p. 154.

²⁶ Idem, *Religion and Philosophy*, p. 50.

²⁷ Idem, *Speculum Mentis, or The Map of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 231.

of experience.²⁸ According to him, history should be understood as a process of thought, and thought can only be understood in history. Therefore, historical knowledge is the true self-knowledge of the mind, and philosophy of history becomes history of philosophy.²⁹ His posthumous works *The Idea of History* (1946) and *The Principles of History* (1999), it should be remembered, were written with a clear intention to examine the ways in which historical thinking was developed in history, and to provide a foundation for historical knowledge.³⁰

Collingwood's approach during his early years was notably shared by the philosopher Michael Oakeshott, whose *Experience and its Modes* (1933), in terms of its theme, bears a considerable degree of similarity to *Speculum Mentis*. So it is not coincidental that Collingwood was probably the only reviewer who had a positive valuation of *Experience and its Modes* when it came out.³¹ Like many British Idealists, Oakeshott presumed that all forms of experience involved thought and idea; each is, as he put it, a 'world of ideas'. In *Experience and its Modes*, Oakeshott differentiated various categories of thinking and presuppositions that the distinctiveness each mode of experience was hinged on. Unlike Collingwood, however, Oakeshott did not classify different forms of ideas hierarchically, but he maintained that philosophy was a critical

²⁸ Although according to his autobiography, this it happened in 1929, but the argument in *An Essay on Philosophical Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933) shows that his attitude did not alter much in the early 1930s. At any rate, by the time he gave a lecture on 'Human Nature and Human History' at the British Academy in 1936, Collingwood had clearly begun to seek a rapprochement between history and philosophy. See R.G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography and Other Writings*, eds. David Boucher and Teresa Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 107; idem, 'Human Nature and Human History', in *The Idea of History*, ed. Jan van der Dussen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 205-31.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 215, pp. 226-7.

³⁰ R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of History: and Other Writings in Philosophy of History*, eds. William Dray and Jan van der Dussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³¹ See Luke O'Sullivan, 'Worlds of Experience: History', in Efraim Podoksik (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Oakeshott* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 42-3.

apparatus to make judgment on different modes—‘experience without presupposition, reservation, arrest or modification’.³² In comparison, historical experience is, ‘when regarded from the standpoint of the totality of experience, abstract and defective’; ‘it is a homogeneous, self-contained mode of experience which falls short of self-completeness.’³³ So ‘philosophy of history’, in Oakeshott’s view, is an attempt to transform the ‘world of historical events...into the world of absolute reality’ by the working of philosophy. In doing so, however, the philosophy of history not only does not ‘convert an abstract mode of experience into the concrete whole of experience’, but also reduces individual details into instances of some general laws, thus destroying history.³⁴ After *Experience and its Modes*, Oakeshott’s works on philosophy of history, for example, ‘The Activity of Being an Historian’ (1958), *On History and other Essays* (1983), and the first chapter in *On Human Conduct*, continued to discuss historical thought as an autonomous mode of experience, and different (historical, practical) ways of viewing the past.³⁵

Collingwood and Oakeshott’s discussions of historical knowledge both begin from a refutation of the philosophy of history as denoting a total explanation of the historical process; and they both emphasised that their philosophy of history was not only different from, but also transcended, the ‘old’ philosophy of history, which they more or less identified with Hegel’s idea of history. In particular, Collingwood’s posthumous

³² Michael Oakeshott, *Experience and its Modes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 2.

³³ Ibid, p. 145, 156.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 154-6.

³⁵ Idem, ‘The Activity of Being an Historian’, in idem, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991), pp. 151-83; idem, *On History and other Essays* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); idem, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

reputation rose significantly. His re-enactment theory was developed by his disciples including William Dray, Alan Donagan, Lionel Rubinoff and Louis Mink.³⁶ According to the Dutch historical theorist Frank Ankersmit, Anglophone philosophy of history between the 1940s and 1970s was dominated by, apart from what he called ‘covering-law model’, ‘Collingwoodian hermeneutics’. Those who were influenced by Collingwood focused predominantly on themes like modality of historical explanation, validity of historical statement, and reconstruction of historical agent’s intention; while adherents of the ‘covering-law model’, mostly under the influence of the Austrian positivist philosopher Carl Hempel, probed into the extent to which history, like natural sciences, can be explained by scientific laws.³⁷

Hence when the philosophy of history was established as a cross-national sub-discipline in the 1950s, most researchers had accepted the critical/analytical approach. When *History and Theory*, still the most authoritative journal in this field, was founded in 1960, its editorial principle was to include as few articles on speculative philosophy of history as possible.³⁸ However, there are two aspects in which analytic philosophy of history implicitly diverges from Collingwood and Oakeshott’s approach: first, Collingwood and Oakeshott were more preoccupied with exploring historical experience and its relationship with the mind, so even though they touched upon the

³⁶ William H. Dray, *History as Re-enactment: R.G. Collingwood’s Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Alan Donagan, *The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Lionel Rubinoff, *Collingwood and the Reform of Metaphysics: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970); Louis Mink, *Mind, History, and Dialect: The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969).

³⁷ Carl G. Hempel, ‘The Function of General Laws in History’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 39/2 (1942), pp. 35-48.

³⁸ Richard T. Vann, ‘Turning Linguistic: *History and Theory* and History and Theory, 1960-1975’, in Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (eds.), *A New Philosophy of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 41.

same issues discussed by those analytical philosophers of history (for example, intentionality, impartiality, evidence), they both had a larger philosophical agenda than that. Secondly, Collingwood and Oakeshott's philosophy of history, as we shall see, should be viewed in connection with their political and religious philosophies; their writings engaged with much broader issues in British intellectual life. To Collingwood, it might be the rise of Fascism in the 1930s; whereas to Oakeshott, it was the deficiency of rational liberalism. In this regard, analytical philosophers of history almost turned this subject into a narrow-minded field in which problems were discussed in an over-technical way.

A notable feature that can be discovered after briefly revisiting the disciplinary history of the philosophy of history is that it never became an influential discipline in Britain.³⁹ Among those works written when critical philosophy of history was in its heyday, including Walsh's *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*, William Dray's *Laws and Explanation in History* (1957) and *Philosophy of History* (1963), Patrick Gardiner's *The Nature of Historical Explanation* (1952), Morton White's *Foundations of Historical Knowledge* (1965), Arthur Danto's *Analytical Philosophy of History* (1965), Louis Mink's posthumously published *Historical Understanding* (1987), Maurice Mandelbaum's *The Anatomy of Historical Knowledge* (1977) etc., only a limited number was contributed by British philosophers (apart from Walsh, the other one was Gardiner).⁴⁰ White, Danto, Mink, and Mandelbaum were all Americans; despite

³⁹ Peter Burke, 'Historiography and Philosophy of History', in idem (ed.), *History and Historians in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 230-49.

⁴⁰ William H. Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); idem, *Philosophy of History* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964); Morton White, *Foundations of Historical Knowledge* (New York:

acquiring his D.Phil. in Oxford, Dray was a Canadian whose main academic career was outside Britain. This situation does not change after analytic philosophy of history was gradually replaced by so-called ‘narrativist’ or ‘postmodernist’ historical theory in the 1980s, when historical theorists such as Ankersmit, under Hayden White’s influence, began to propose a ‘new philosophy of history’ that transcended both speculative and analytical philosophies of history. Borrowing theories from other disciplines, they contend that any historical text should be viewed as a ‘literary artefact’, whose objectivity, unlike an individual historical statement, cannot be pinned down. These views, however, would be largely unacceptable to, and do not have much resonance among, most British historians. Another factor that needs to be considered is that most of their discussions were published in professional journals and monographs that had little influence outside their circle. Perhaps the only work on this subject that had a wide readership was Collingwood’s *The Idea of History*.

Speculative philosophy of history, as we have seen, had almost been completely dismissed by philosophers of history since the 1950s.⁴¹ Nevertheless, since the philosophy of history itself has become a parochial discipline with a currency mostly in North America, public debates over ‘what is history?’ in British intellectual life were largely unaffected by its recent development. From Collingwood onwards, it became a

Harper & Row, 1965); Arthur Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Louis Mink, *Historical Understanding*, ed. Brian Fay (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Maurice Mandelbaum, *The Anatomy of Historical Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1977). Mandelbaum’s another work, often regarded as laying the foundation of the philosophy of history in American, *The Problem of Historical Knowledge: An Answer to Relativism*, came out much earlier in 1938 (New York: Liveright Publishing).

⁴¹ Even after recent ‘postmodernist’ historical theorists have casted doubt on Walsh’s distinction, arguing that discussion of such notions as historical fact and historical explanation inevitably involves conceptualisations of the historical reality, speculative philosophy of history has not come back to the foreground yet. See Herman Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 9-11.

common practice that, for the purpose of promoting a ‘new philosophy of history’, various sorts of conceptualisations about the historical process were reduced into a unified form, and then thrown into the dust bin, without noticing that the Hegelian, teleological approach was not the only way of viewing history, and that those historical conjectures did not disappear in public—particularly when it was an age of instability when people were eager to be informed about the place of their society in history, or to discover a hidden meaning by which present disorders will be explained. So about the same time that speculative philosophy of history was alleged to be replaced by critical philosophy of history, presumptions about the totality of historical experience were debated by British intellectuals, and in particular, historians, on public platforms (including magazines, periodicals, and newspapers), presented to a more general readership than professional philosophers—which this thesis is about to examine.

III.

In 1951, an article written by the historian Alan Bullock was published’ in *History Today*, a journal founded by Brendan Bracken that publishes popular history written by serious historians.⁴² In ‘The Historian’s Purpose’, Bullock argued that what he called ‘metahistory’ was incompatible with proper history; and that the ‘metahistorian’s’ attempt ‘to discover in history patterns, regularities and similarities on whose recurrence is built a philosophical explanation of human existence, at the very least a panoramic view of the stages of its development’ was different from the historian’s purpose. Bullock’s criticism was responded to by the religious historian Christopher Dawson,

⁴² Alan Bullock, ‘The Historian’s Purpose’, *History Today*, 1/2 (1951), pp. 5-11.

who claimed that Bullock had a narrow conception of historiography, and that ‘metahistory’ was ‘not the enemy of true history but its guide and its friend’. Before long, G.J. Renier and Max Beloff also joined this battle, with Renier insisting that a distinction should be made between ‘plain history’ and ‘metahistory’, and Beloff contending that works by philosophers of history, such as Collingwood, should be highly valued.⁴³

Several observations can be made from this interesting debate, which happened in a time when, as we shall see, the nature of history became a topic frequently discussed in journals and magazines aimed at an unprofessional readership. First, ‘metahistory’, a notion often associated with Hayden White, was actually coined by Isaiah Berlin in a seminar he held with the historian Alan Bullock.⁴⁴ Moreover, the fact that Collingwood was often placed alongside Hegel and Toynbee in these articles suggests that historians were largely uninformed, or at least unenthusiastic, about the strict distinction between speculative and critical philosophies of history that had been made. Furthermore, although it seems that historiography is at the foreground of this debate, after closely reading their articles, we find that these four intellectuals did not fundamentally disagree about historiographical issues: none believed that ‘metahistory’ was equivalent to proper history, and all consented that reconstructing a historical picture required the historian’s intuition and generalisation—it is important that history should distance itself from antiquarianism. Their actual difference, however, resides in their bifurcated

⁴³ Christopher Dawson, ‘The Problem of Metahistory’, *History Today*, 1/6 (1951), pp. 9-12; G.J. Renier, ‘Plain History and Meta-History’, *History Today*, 1/7 (1951), p. 69; Max Beloff, ‘Plain History and Meta-History—II’, *History Today*, 1/9 (1951), p. 57.

⁴⁴ Isaiah Berlin, *Enlightening: Letters 1940-1960*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), pp. 252-3.

attitudes towards ‘metahistory’, which in turn was related to their own conception of history. To Bullock, the historical process does not conform to any fixed patterns, or contain any transcendental meanings (though he did not dismiss all macro-historical views); Dawson, in contrast, hinted that historical research provided footnotes for a larger picture in which Divinity was revealed. In this regard, their political and religious attitudes which lay at the background repay serious consideration: Bullock, embracing the liberal-humanist tradition, was especially alerted to the danger of Hegelian philosophy of history when misused; while Dawson, a Catholic convert, did not doubt that there was a Christian meaning behind history.

Therefore, this controversy brings two major themes of this thesis into light. First, debates over the nature of historical process, for example, whether it should be construed as a whole, often involve something more than historiography; for either supporting or refuting a macro-view of history is not only about historiography, namely whether it is beneficial or harmful to historical writing, but also concerns the political, moral and religious implications of such an historical understanding when placed in a particular age. Sometimes an ostensibly historical dispute between two historians can be better understood in the light of their respective views of politics and religion. Therefore, a central theme of this thesis is to provide an explanation of why certain speculations about the meaning of history were promulgated by many British intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s, but came to be repudiated in the 1950s. The answer, I believe, is related, but should not be confined, to certain developments in the enterprise of the British historical profession—for example, professionalism, specialisation,

fragmentation and hostility towards the intrusion of other disciplines; it is also related to different intellectual atmospheres in the 1920s, 1930s and the post-war years. This thesis is therefore a study of the presuppositions behind these historical speculations, and the circumstances under which they were written and disseminated. It also seeks to examine the degree to which this change can be explained by a broader climate of opinion, and the ways in which historical ideas interacted with political (e.g. League of Nations, the rise of Fascism and political radicalism, post-war reconstruction, cold-war politics, etc.) and religious (in particular, the Christian revival in British intellectual life from the 1930s to 1950s) contexts. However, it does not follow that historical ideas can be reduced to a mere reflection of these contexts; on the contrary, this thesis will show that a thinker's historical ideas sometimes license and inform his political or religious views.

Secondly, speculating about the historical process is not only a preoccupation of philosophers of history, but also historians and other intellectuals. This thesis, therefore, focuses on those historical 'doctrines' (to borrow Maurice Cowling's term here) that were debated publicly, and demonstrates the relevancy of certain historical enquiries as something of general concern to the reading public. It is noteworthy that those historical speculations that will be discussed do not necessarily correspond to 'speculative philosophy of history' as narrowly defined by philosophers of history; namely, when elaborating the patterns, future, trends and driving forces of the historical process, one's historical conception does not always provide a coherent system or a grand narrative by

which history as an entirety was explained.⁴⁵ For example, one can still argue that history is moving progressively and irrevocably towards a certain end, even if he does not at the same time give a detailed account of human history from the beginning, or describe all the phases human society has undergone. Therefore, I will avoid using the term ‘speculative philosophy of history’ in this thesis, for it has been too closely connected with Walsh and Hayden White’s definitions, which, reducing philosophy of history into a limited number of literary forms and philosophical ideas, are formalist, exclusive and dismissive of any other historical conceptions.⁴⁶ In this regard, this thesis is much less an investigation into the history of philosophy of history as a discipline than a study of British intellectual history from the inter-war years to the post-war period.

In particular, four historians of high public standing—Arnold J. Toynbee, E.H. Carr, Isaiah Berlin, and Hugh Trevor-Roper—and their ideas of history will be scrutinised throughout this thesis, although it is worth noting that they are far from the only figures mentioned in it. Henceforth, a clarification of the standard by which they are selected is required. First, all these four intellectuals were engaged in discussing issues related to the philosophy of history—used here in a broader sense that denotes any speculations

⁴⁵ On different forms of ‘grand narrative’, see Alan Megill, “‘Grand Narrative’ and the Discipline of History”, in *idem, Historical Knowledge, Historical Error* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 165-87.

⁴⁶ Hayden White argued in *Metahistory* that ‘proper history’ differed from speculative philosophy of history ‘only in emphasis, not in content’. After studying eight historians (Michelet, Ranke, Tocqueville, Burckhardt) and philosophers of history (Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Croce) of the nineteenth century, White held that the ‘strategies’ or modes by which historical writings and speculative history were written, including ‘formal argument’, ‘emplotment’, and ‘ideological implication’, were the same. He therefore averred that ‘what remains implicit in the historians is simply brought to the surface and systematically defended in the works of the great philosophers of history.’ Nevertheless, although White did not dismiss theories of the historical process as insignificant, it never became the focal point of his works. Rather, speculative philosophy of history was a tool that White used to shatter that ‘noble dream of objectivity’. See Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

about the historical process. Their ideas, conveyed in their writings which reached a general reading public, each in its distinctive way, touched upon essential questions about the nature of history that either drew public attention, or that were asked, sometimes less explicitly, by many other intellectuals during the same period. Among them, Toynbee was commonly considered one of the most celebrated 'metahistorians' of the twentieth century who sought to discover the pattern of the rise and fall of civilisations. In comparison, Carr was not ambitious enough to delineate the development of human society in its entirety; but he also had a realist philosophy of history which, despite its not having been elaborated in a definitive form until he delivered the famous Trevelyan Lecture, published as *What is History?* (1961), was already in ferment in his writings in the 1930s, particularly *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, and was recurrently stated in a large number of review articles he wrote for the *TLS* in the 1950s. Berlin and Trevor-Roper are selected not only because they posed the most serious attacks on determinist, realist, and metaphysical views of history in the 1950s, but also because their respective conception of history was reflected in their criticisms. For denouncing some sorts of historical speculation also involves the critic's own historical view. As Trevor-Roper famously argued in the preface of his *Historical Essays*, every historian needs a historical philosophy; and it is not least Trevor-Roper's own historical philosophy, which his historical works are infused with that makes him a significant figure in twentieth-century British intellectual history.

Moreover, apart from addressing historical questions, these thinkers were also preoccupied with other religious, political and moral issues that were debated in British

intellectual life. It is noteworthy that, perhaps except Trevor-Roper, who was almost always an historian, all the other three intellectuals had various public identities. Toynbee's reputation relied to a large extent on the annual report on international relations he wrote for Chatham House, and *A Study of History* was not taken seriously by academic historians even during his lifetime. Likewise, Carr's status as an historian did not receive widespread admission until his *A History of Soviet Russia* (1950-1978) came out; before that, he held the Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Politics at Aberystwyth from 1936 to 1946, and wrote leaders on foreign affairs for *The Times* during the War. Isaiah Berlin, albeit trained as a philosopher, decided to become an historian of ideas in the 1950s, and was most renowned for his works on Tolstoy, Vico, and Herder. Due to his and Trevor-Roper's service during the War, they were often consulted by the media about their views on international politics, and particularly issues related to Germany and the Soviet Union. Besides, while Toynbee was keen on participating in reviving Christianity in the 1930s and 1940s, Trevor-Roper publicly launched his ferocious attack on religious dogmatism. In a nutshell, their historical views were closely related to their political allegiances, philosophical beliefs, moral convictions and religious attitudes; for this reason, their ideas often broke disciplinary boundaries, and were thus valued by intellectuals from different persuasions.

Furthermore, these thinkers' historical conceptions, as I suggest, were influential in the sense that they made considerable resonance among British intellectuals, and that some of their presuppositions were either implicitly or explicitly accepted. In addition to those important works that were widely circulated, for example, *A Study of History*

(1934-1961), *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939), *The Last Days of Hitler* (1946), and *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (1953), these thinkers also contributed to newspapers and magazines such as *Spectator*, *Encounter*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *New Statesman*, and were frequently invited to give talks on the BBC, which reflected their public reputation. None of them were 'pure' academics; more or less belonging to 'the Establishment', they had connections and sometimes might even influence policy-making. Toynbee served in the British delegation in both of the post-war Peace Conferences; Berlin was asked by Churchill to comment on the first volume of the latter's autobiography before it was published; and Trevor-Roper, marrying Douglas Haig's daughter and eventually becoming Lord Dacre himself, was renowned for his love of being accompanied by the upper-class. Therefore, this thesis endeavours to show the ways in which the historical ideas of these thinkers reached wider audiences, and were responding to the larger intellectual context. For example, Toynbee's prediction of the prospect of the West by comparing its history with the development of other civilisations was a concern shared by many intellectuals during the interwar period; whereas the presupposition under Carr's historical realism was not uncommonly accepted before and during the Second World War. Detecting a potential affinity between total explanations of history and the Soviet ideology, while at the same time criticising certain religious views of history, Berlin and Trevor-Roper held typically liberal-humanitarian views of history during the Cold War. Therefore, I will show that they were not only historians, but also historians as public intellectuals.

Last but not least, the disputes between these four thinkers were in themselves

important events in twentieth-century British intellectual history. For example, Carr's criticism of the utopian view of history was directed at Toynbee, whose support of the League of Nations, Carr believed, was responsible for the political chaos in the 1930s. Carr himself, however, was attacked by Isaiah Berlin, who argued that Carr's realism was a denial of moral responsibility. Toynbee was also excoriated by both Berlin and Trevor-Roper in the 1950s because of his marriage of history with religion; in particular, Trevor-Roper's review of *A Study of History* was so furiously critical that even Toynbee's biographer claimed that his reputation among British historians was substantially damaged by it (though I will argue that this is perhaps an exaggerated remark). These debates reveal the extent to which certain historical speculations were in conflict, and help us understand how these conflicts resulted from different, and sometimes irreconcilable, presuppositions. Specifically, their discussion provides a new perspective to reconsider such themes as moralism and rationalism in twentieth-century British intellectual history.

To understand the interaction between these thinkers and the broader intellectual atmosphere they lived under, this thesis examines different ways in which two World Wars, international politics, religion, and philosophy played a role in the formation of their historical ideas. Toynbee's initial incentive for writing a grand narrative of history, as I will demonstrate, was related to the widespread reflection of the prospect and stability of Western civilisation after the First World War; he tried to provide an answer by using the pattern that he claimed to have discovered from the genesis, growths, downfalls and disintegrations of other civilisations. Moreover, his civilisational

approach was buttressed by a not unusual historical presumption held by various internationalists in the twenties that history was marching towards a world unity. Nevertheless Toynbee was not, as commonly assumed, utterly pessimistic about the spiritual progress of the West; it was only after he became notably more enthusiastic about religion in the late 1930s, when Fascism was on the rise and another War was impending, that he came to believe that the fate of the West was inescapable, and contended that earthly catastrophes promoted religious progress. Toynbee's religious re-conversion, however, was also not accidental. First, it should be viewed in the light of the religious revival in British intellectual life between the 1930s and 1950s; secondly, his religious interpretation of history, as I will particularly highlight, also fitted into a time when history became an important theme in theological discussions.

Carr's intellectual outlook also changed significantly in the 1930s, when the Great Depression completely shattered his belief in liberalism. He was not unusual in believing that a new phase of history was at the corner—a presumption he developed into a historical philosophy which can be summarised as: history is determined by socio-economic realities rather than by ideas, and it is 'utopian' to swim against the currents of history. This conception of history as an impersonal trend marching towards a certain direction underpinned Carr's affirmation of economic collectivism and planning. After studying Toynbee and Carr's historical views, I argue that for them, and many others from their generation, the 1930s was a time that lacked certainty and meaning. However, a total explanation of the entirety of history, when linking the past and the future, precisely renders the orientation that they desired.

The 1930s also marks an important watershed for Berlin and Trevor-Roper's generation. They were largely politicised by the Spanish Civil War, and thus had a life-long hostility towards various forms of Fascism and totalitarianism. The Second World War, however, made them realise the importance of history—the iron laws of history are not unbreakable and history can be used to legitimise crimes and evils. That is why they particularly highlighted the role teleological, determinist, triumphalist and dynamical views of history played in Fascist and Communist ideologies; and they insisted on a liberal view of history during the Cold War, when they felt that certain humanitarian values were under threat. It is worth noting that Berlin and Trevor-Roper's historical criticism in the 1950s was not only targeted at certain political ideologies and religious ideas, but also a growing scientism in the Humanities in the 1950s, when sociologists and political scientists were confident enough to contend that human behaviour in history can be explained by laws. Berlin, in particular, was deeply sceptical about and even hostile towards sociology. Henceforth, a contextual approach is needed here to help us distinguish various targets Berlin and Trevor-Roper aimed at (particularly in Berlin's case), and to understand the grounds on which they posed their challenges.

However, it is dangerous to neglect the difference between Berlin and Trevor-Roper during the Cold War: Berlin was comparatively more pro-American, while Trevor-Roper found anti-Communism equally dogmatic as Communism. But more importantly, Trevor-Roper had a strong interest in religious issues, and was more inclined to draw a parallel between Fascism and Catholicism. Berlin, by contrast,

focused much more on the moral danger of historical determinism and relativism (his target was more frequently Soviet Communism). The complicity and nuance in Berlin and Trevor-Roper's historical criticism as suggested above indicate that their historical ideas cannot be simply concluded as 'anti-totalitarian'. I will also show that their criticism did not come from a void; instead, they had their own conceptions of the historical process. For example, Berlin's engagement in philosophy of history in the 1950s can be demonstrated by many facts that were recently revealed after the publication of his correspondence.⁴⁷ He was particularly intrigued with German historical thinking in the nineteenth century—an interest that promoted his works on Johann Gottfried Herder, in which Berlin's own philosophy of history is discernible. This also brings another issue that will be mentioned, albeit not particularly engaged with, in this thesis: the import of continental historical thought during this period. Berlin was intellectually more at home in nineteenth-century Russian and German thought, Carr was highly influenced by the Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim, and Trevor-Roper was indebted to the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt.

Two more important factors that will be mentioned throughout this thesis also repay clarification here, namely education and generation gap. It is interesting that all the four central figures, and many other intellectuals that will be discussed were trained in Classics (though Berlin and Trevor-Roper only sat for Moderations at Oxford);

⁴⁷ He knew and even kept close relationships with many scholars in this field, including Walsh, Gardiner, and Morton White, whom he once seriously considered to write a book with; he was also well-informed about developments in this subject, and kept copies of new publications. The fact that 'The Concept of Scientific History' was published in the very first issue of the journal *History and Theory* clearly indicates Berlin's reputation within this discipline, although he became very unsatisfied its being dominated by analytical philosophy, which he found exceedingly boring in the 1950s. Isaiah Berlin, 'The Concept of Scientific History', now incorporated in idem, *Concepts and Categories*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 135-86.

therefore this thesis will not lose sight of the influence of such an education on their intellectual formation, and the style of their writings. This common imprint actually demonstrates one of my arguments from another angle: reading Classics required one to draw parallels in history, and to view history from a longer time span, so the disagreements between Toynbee, Carr, Berlin and Trevor-Roper were not only about historiography, but also the political and moral implications of their historical views. Apart from that, it is worth remembering that there was a twenty-year gap between Toynbee (1889) and Carr's (1892) generation, and Berlin (1909) and Trevor-Roper's (1914), which means that they were brought up in very different political, intellectual and religious backgrounds. For example, Toynbee, having witnessed a Great War, was particularly afraid of another one's coming; while Carr was convinced that Germany was treated unfairly in the post-war settlement. Therefore, it seemed natural enough for them to support appeasement, which Berlin and Trevor-Roper, whose contemporaries fought for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, found difficult to endorse. Moreover, when Toynbee entered Balliol in the early 1900s, it was still dominated by British Idealism, whereas Berlin and Trevor-Roper, highly influenced by logical positivism as many people from their generation were, were very critical of Idealism's metaphysical presuppositions. These factors, which I have briefly introduced here, will nonetheless be paid due attention to and discussed in respective chapters.

IV.

The period this study will focus on also needs specification here; since any periodisation is at the same time a historiographical stance as well, and involves

acceptance, revision and even challenges of existing literature and received assumptions of current scholarship. In this section, I will not only provide some explanations of the chronological arrangement of this thesis, but also suggest the historiographical significance it might have.

The most obvious reason why 1920 is taken as the beginning and 1961 the ending of my narrative is that Toynbee embarked on exploring the pattern of civilizational development in 1920, and that the dispute between Carr, Berlin and Trevor-Roper reached its climax with the publication of *What is History?* in 1961. The relevance of the latter debate, as many other historical debates during the 1950s that will be discussed in this thesis, cannot be fully appreciated without an admission that the irreconcilability of views held by different intellectuals was largely a consequence of the incongruity between their political, religious and philosophical presuppositions that came to be accepted in the 1930s. Therefore, it seems unwise and even unfeasible to limit the time span of this study merely to one or two decades. At least in terms of those figures scrutinised in this thesis, the 1930s, as we have seen, either marked a watershed in their intellectual development, or left an enduring impact on their *Weltanschauung*.

Therefore, this thesis suggests that the relationship between the inter-war years and the post-war period needs to be reconsidered. This, of course, is not to argue that there was no discrepancy between the 1930s and 1950s, which neglects the fact that even the same topic was discussed in a different manner in the late 1940s and 1950s from the 1930s. For example, accepting certain Marxist assumptions was not unusual among British intellectuals; nonetheless it seemed politically and morally dubious to endorse

Marxist historical ideas in the Cold War. However, to presume that the Second World War bifurcated these two periods completely is also to deny the possibility, at least in terms of historical thinking, that the gap between the late 1930s and 1950s is not unbridgeable—to some extent, their difference might be even smaller than that between the 1920s and 1930s. To Berlin and Trevor-Roper's generation, it was the Spanish Civil War, rather the Second World War, which moulded their political ideas. Therefore, this thesis is alert not to turn 'inter-war years' from a notion of temporality into an explanatory concept.

As most historical theses do, there are several historiographical generalisations that I would venture to cast doubt on, and even challenge, in this study. The inter-war years is sometimes concluded to have been a period of pessimism, as Richard Overly famously maintains in his *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilisation, 1919 - 1939*, in which he argues that there was a consensus about the inevitability of the decline of the West among British intellectuals after the First World War.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, after a contextual study of such figures as Toynbee, Gilbert Murray, Leonard Woolf, whom he mentions, and others that he does not, I would contend that the ostensible gloomy tone of their writings often conceals the fact that they were not pessimistic, let alone fatalistic, about the future of Western civilisation; rather, they were making serious political and economic proposals to prevent the West from ruining itself. To Toynbee, at any rate, it was not necessarily the outcome of the Great War, but rather the fear that another Great War that ended war was impending that generated his despair.

⁴⁸ Richard Overly, *The Morbid Age: Britain and the Crisis of Civilisation, 1919-1939* (London: Allen Lane, 2009).

In a similar vein, Fukuyama famously contends in his *The End of History and the Last Man* that pessimism and scepticism about progress shared by twentieth-century intellectuals were accountable for their denunciation of Universal History. It is noteworthy that despite Fukuyama's recent reconsideration of his original prediction, according to which the end of history is already achieved as democratic liberalism becomes the only available political ideology after the fall of the Berlin Wall and disintegration of the Soviet Union, he seems to retain the Hegelian presuppositions of his historical framework. Nevertheless, this study shows that critics of Hegelian philosophy of history in the 1950s were far from pessimistic as Fukuyama assumes; on the contrary, re-admitting the significance of Western values was not uncommon after the War. Therefore, I would suggest that it is over-reductive to characterise twentieth-century intellectual history as pessimistic simply because of its supposed reaction against nineteenth-century principles.

The intricate ways in which the Whig interpretation of history has been reflected, criticised but sometimes also implicitly accepted by twentieth-century British thinkers have been particularly examined by Michael Bentley and Stefan Collini. Bentley's *Modernising England's Past* and *The Life and Thought of Herbert Butterfield* exhaustively examine various forms of Whiggish residues in the English historical profession of the first half of twentieth century, and argue that Whig history survived what he calls the 'modernist' period.⁴⁹ Collini's Ford Lectures, recently published as

⁴⁹ Michael Bentley, *Modernising England's Past: English Historiography in the Age of Modernism, 1870-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); idem, *The Life and Thought of Herbert Butterfield* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

The Nostalgic Imagination, render a comprehensive account of how modern British history from the seventeenth century was conceived by leading British literary critics, and how certain presumptions of Whig history were particularly challenged in their works.⁵⁰ It is not, however, the objective of this study to cast doubt on their arguments, for its focal point is neither on developments in historical profession, nor in literary criticism. For the same reason, there is a difference between the approach of this work and other notable works on early twentieth-century British historiography, which include Christopher Parker's *The English Historical Tradition* and *The English Idea of History from Coleridge to Collingwood*, P.B.M. Blaas's *Continuity and Anachronism*, Peter Slee's *Learning and a Liberal Education*, Reba Soffer's *Discipline and Power* and certain chapters in Richard Evans' *In Defence of History*.⁵¹ But given that discussions of Whig history always involve the idea of progress, and thus a conception of the trend of historical development, and that progress, optimism and 'declinism' was an issue discussed by almost all the main figures to be discussed, this thesis seeks to provide another perspective, namely, how Whiggism was viewed by historians as public intellectuals.

In this regard, the present study is indebted to Peter Novick and Stefan Collini's research. Novick's classic *That Noble Dream* provides a perfect example of how ostensible historiographical issues are related to a broader intellectual atmosphere (it is

⁵⁰ Stefan Collini, *The Nostalgic Imagination: History in English Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁵¹ Christopher Parker, *The English Historical Tradition Since 1850* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1990); idem, *The English Idea of History from Coleridge to Collingwood* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); P.B.M. Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism: Parliamentary and Constitutional Development in Whig Historiography and in the Anti-Whig Reaction between 1890 and 1930* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1978); Peter Slee, *Learning and a Liberal Education: the Study of Modern History in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester, 1800-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); Reba Soffer, *Discipline and Power: the University, History, and the Making of an English Elite* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997).

noteworthy that William Palmer's *Engagement with the Past: The Lives and Works of the World War II Generation of Historians* also follows this approach).⁵² Collini's pioneering works on British intellectuals, including *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* and *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930*, not only explore the public function and cultural authority of intellectuals in British society, but also give prominence to various media—newspapers, radio broadcasts, and literary journals—as platforms on which public issues were debated, and hence as an essential part of the study of twentieth-century intellectual history.⁵³ Nevertheless, Collini's definition of public intellectual seems exclusive, and the standard by which public intellectuals are identified is sometimes deliberate; for example, why A.J.P. Taylor is counted as a public intellectual, whereas Trevor-Roper is not? It is, after all, literary and social critics that constitute the greatest part of his books; this thesis, despite sometimes examining similar issues, focuses more on historians.

Another theme, hardly discussed by Collini in his works, that will be called attention to is religion. The role religion played in twentieth-century British intellectual history has particularly been emphasised in such recent works as Julia Stapleton's *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain Since 1850*, and Matthew Grimley's *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State Between the Wars*, both of which argue convincingly that religion

⁵² Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); William Palmer, *Engagement with the Past: The Lives and Works of the World War II Generation of Historians* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

⁵³ Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); idem, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930* ((Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); idem, *English Pasts: Essays in History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); idem, *Common Writing: Essays on Literary Culture and Public Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); idem, *Common Reading: Critics, Historians, Publics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

is a constituting part in the formation of British national identity and British political thought during the inter-war period.⁵⁴ Although not engaging in entirely similar topics, these works provide a mature framework to which this thesis is indebted. Moreover, Joshua Bennett's recently published *God and Progress* touches upon many themes—although in a nineteenth-century context—that this thesis also aims at probing into, including the difference between religious and secular understandings of progress and rationalism.⁵⁵ Another significant work that combines intellectual history and religious history is Maurice Cowling's trilogy *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, in which he contended that religious assumptions were implicitly accepted by all British intellectuals, even including those whose attitude towards Christianity was rather negative.⁵⁶ Cowling's works repay particular consideration because his convictions, which his hostility towards liberalism and rationalism hinged on, that reason is not capable of solving political issues, and that political behaviours are not shaped by ideas, under the spirit of which his trilogy on British political history were written, were shared by many religious-historical thinkers in the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁷ Therefore, this thesis also intends to show that debates over the nature of history not only involve political, but also religious, considerations. And for this reason, studying religious views of history in British intellectual life, a topic much neglected particularly

⁵⁴ Julia Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

⁵⁵ Joshua Bennett, *God and Progress: Religion and History in British Intellectual Culture, 1845-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁵⁶ Maurice Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England* (3 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980-2001).

⁵⁷ Idem, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); idem, *The Impact of Hitler: British Politics and British Policy, 1933-1940* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975); idem, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution: the Passing of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

after C.T. McIntire's work, helps us re-evaluate the multiplicity of British historical ideas in the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁸

Last but not least, I hope this research will contribute to the study of individual thinkers that I give particular notice to. Although Toynbee was an historian who once enjoyed a worldwide reputation, his name has almost faded into oblivion after his centenary in 1989, which witnessed the publication of a considerable number of high-standard studies, including an excellent biography written by his disciple William McNeill, and a *Festschrift* edited by two American historians.⁵⁹ However, not much significant research has come out since then. More often than not, these secondary writings are primarily concerned with the validity and logical soundness of Toynbee's system by examining, for example, whether the facts are sacrificed for the pattern, whether the pattern was based on empirical research, and in which ways his philosophy of history can be applied in predicting the future. This thesis, instead, seeks to situate his works, written in two different phases, into their contexts: 'the future of civilisation' debate, and the religious revival in British intellectual life.

In a similar vein, Carr's reputation, not least because of Norman Stone's devastatingly critical article, has waned substantially since his death in the early 1980s.⁶⁰ Though his philosophy of history is sometimes mentioned and praised by professional historians such as Richard Evans, whose *In Defence of History*, in terms of

⁵⁸ C.T. McIntire (ed.), *God, History and Historians: An Anthology of Modern Christian Views of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁵⁹ William McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); C.T. McIntire and Marvin Perry (eds.), *Toynbee: Reappraisals* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

⁶⁰ Norman Stone's 'Grim Eminence' (*London Review of Books*, 10 January 1983) depicts Carr as a Stalin's disciple, and charges him for being irresponsible in private life (e.g. for treating his wives badly).

its thematic arrangement, can be viewed as a deliberate imitation of *What is History?*, there are not many contextual studies, except Jonathan Haslam's biography, that examine the relationship between Carr's historical works and his views on domestic and international politics throughout the 1930s and 1950s (though there are a few books that focus exclusively on his international theory).⁶¹ This thesis is an attempt to situate Carr in the political spectrum during that period, and it indicates that his conception of history played a defining role in the formation of his political and social ideas, and his admiration of the Soviet system.

Berlin, in contrast, has been comprehensively studied in recent years; but it has always been Berlin's political thinking that has aroused, since his lifetime, more vehement discussions. His historical ideas, by contrast, do not seem to many people a pivotal constituent of his thought. Secondary studies are rare, if any; researchers either believe that Berlin's conception of history is no more than his political ideas applied in history, or that his attack on historical determinism was only a reflection of an anti-totalitarian stance in the Cold War.⁶² I will therefore challenge this impression by examining the relationships between his historical criticism and his philosophical persuasion, interest in Continental historical thought and religious attitude.

With the publications of many of his unpublished works, Trevor-Roper's philosophy of history and his identity as a public intellectual have recently been

⁶¹ Michael Cox (ed.), *E.H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal* (Basingtoke: Palgrave, 2000).

⁶² See Ryan Patrick Hanley, 'Berlin and History', in George Crowder and Henry Hardy (eds.) *The One and the Many* (Armherst, New York, 2007), pp.159-180; James Cracraft, 'A Berlin for Historians', *History and Theory*, 41/3 (2002), pp.277-300.

discussed by Blair Worden, Richard Davenport-Hines and Brian Young.⁶³ This thesis, owing much to their contribution, particularly seeks to examine the ways in which Catholicism played a part in the formation of Trevor-Roper's historical views, and his entire intellectual development (temporarily attracted in the late 1930s, and highly critical in the 1950s); and suggests that his understanding of Cold-War politics was to a large extent shaped by his interpretation of religious history.

V.

This thesis aims at combining case studies with a number of themes that will be discussed throughout. The first chapter of this thesis will examine the moral-internationalist idea of history that was accepted, elaborated, and employed by several thinkers of international politics, and show how this idea of history became a theoretical underpinning of their conception of post-war international order. Examining various ways in which the notion 'civilisation' was discussed in the 1920s, this chapter will argue that this decade should not be characterised as one of widespread pessimism, let alone fatalism—for it was almost a common belief that as long as a new international order was established, the future of civilisation was still promising. For this purpose, this chapter will particularly look into such historian-cum-internationalists as Gilbert Murray, Lawrence and Barbara Hammond, and Arnold J. Toynbee, and attempt to study their intellectual kinship. They all recognised world unification as the ultimate goal of

⁶³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment*, ed. John Robertson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); idem, *One Hundred Letters from Hugh Trevor-Roper*, eds. Richard Davenport-Hines and Adam Sisman, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); idem, *Letters from Oxford: Hugh Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson*, ed. Richard Davenport-Hines (London: Phoenix, 2007); Blair Worden, 'The Puritan Revolution', in idem (ed.), *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Historian* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016, pp. 54-84); B.W. Young, 'Trevor-Roper and Thomas Carlyle: History and Sensibility', in *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Historian*, pp. 221-39.

history, and believed that morality was the most important factor in achieving this goal. After a contextual study of Toynbee's works in the 1920s and the early 1930s, it will argue that Toynbee's historical approach and his initial idea to write a universal history of humankind were closely relevant to these historical presumptions.

The second chapter will elaborate the ways in which realist conception of history was formed and promulgated by those British intellectuals who were disappointed with liberalism after the economic depression, and insisted that a new form of society was needed. After examining the works of a number of British Socialists, it will argue that this idea of history is composed of two significant presumptions: 1) the development of history is determined by certain irrevocable historical tendencies; 2) moral values are inescapably relative to the socio-economic reality of a given society. It will particularly look into historical realism as exemplified in E.H. Carr's criticism of moral-internationalist views of history, and in his admiration of the Soviet Union. It will contend that Carr was neither a believer in Marxism nor a serious fellow-traveller; rather, his defence of Soviet Communism was founded on a belief that Russia was on the 'right side of history'.

Chapter III will discuss the liberal-humanitarian view of history that was well-exemplified in Berlin and Trevor-Roper's historical criticism in the 1950s (I will characterise Trevor-Roper's historical view as liberal instead of conservative). This chapter has two primary concerns: 1) to examine the ways in which the Second World War changed men's attitudes towards grand theories of history; 2) to discover the defining ideas of the 'intellectually liberal' view of history, as opposed to the

teleological 'politically liberal' presumption of history in the Cold War. Therefore, it will attempt to challenge the view that liberal conceptions of history can be simply surmised as an attack of the determinist, metaphysical, and Communist explanations of history. Moreover, it will take into consideration Berlin and Trevor-Roper's political attitudes and philosophical standpoints in the thirties by comparing them with those of their contemporaries. Last but not least, it will look into different ways in which liberal-humanitarian and realist conceptions of history conflicted, and will argue that their debates centred on the problems of historical rationality and the power of ideas.

The last chapter will explore the ways in which history was understood and conceptualised by a number of intellectuals under certain Christian presuppositions. It will place these understandings within the context of the Christian revival in British intellectual life from 1930s to the 1950s. It will particularly take two major topics into consideration: 1) how the religious view of history was used to explain the cause of the political and moral crises in the thirties, and how it rendered an ultimate meaning in a world of chaos (Toynbee will, again, be a case study); 2) the ways in which and the grounds on which these Christian presumptions were repudiated particularly by liberal-humanitarian thinkers in the 1950s.

Chapter I

Civilisation on Trial?: Murray, Toynbee, the Hammonds and Moral-Internationalism

Introduction

In 1924, Gilbert Murray, Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, told his friend, the economic historian J.L. Hammond, that ‘I used to feel the world comparatively friendly or at least hopeful, whereas now I feel it utterly alien and hostile.’⁶⁴ As Hammond’s biographer suggests, Murray and Hammond, both life-long Liberals, were distressed by the victory of the Labour Party in the 1923 general election, and the death of John Morley, the last representative of nineteenth-century Gladstonian Liberalism, in the same year. The advent of the first Labour government led by Ramsay MacDonald was indeed a huge blow to them; but at that time, they could not have identified this as the fatal attack to the Liberal Party from which it had never recovered. Moreover, neither Murray nor Hammond was particularly keen on party politics. Murray had already known and worked with several Conservatives such as Robert Cecil and Arthur Balfour when he was, with some hesitance, serving in the Board of Education of Lloyd George’s wartime government.⁶⁵ Hammond was comparatively more allied to New Liberalism (or what Michael Freeden characterises as ‘left-Liberalism’), and had a close relationship with a number of British socialist thinkers, including G.D.H. Cole and R.H. Tawney.⁶⁶ It is worth noting that Murray, turning fifty eight in 1924, was under both personal and intellectual turmoil at this point. His daughter had died only two years

⁶⁴ Stewart A. Weaver, *The Hammonds: A Marriage in History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p.183.

⁶⁵ Francis West, *Gilbert Murray: A Life* (London & Canberra: Croom Helm, 1984), pp.154-5, 180-8.

⁶⁶ Michael Freeden, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

earlier, while his eldest son became a wreck after being caught and imprisoned by the Germans during the First World War, finally dying from excessive drinking in 1930.⁶⁷

The War, when it took away almost a whole generation of bright young men, many of whom Murray knew well at Oxford, not only became a cleavage between the present and the Victorianism in which Murray was brought up, but also posed the most serious threat to civilisation itself—a theme that appears recurrently in almost all of Murray’s writings and public addresses in the 1920s and 1930s, including *Essays and Addresses* (1921) *Tradition and Progress* (1922), *The Ordeal of This Generation* (originally intended to be entitled ‘The Ordeal of Civilisation’, published in 1929), *Then and Now* (1935), *Liberalism and Civilisation* (1938), etc.⁶⁸ But Murray was certainly not an unusual case of those intellectuals who began to discuss the prospect of civilisation after the War. Indeed, the ambition of Arnold J. Toynbee, one of Murray’s favourite protégés and later his son-in-law, to write a comprehensive history of civilisation was no secret to his family members, to whom it was known as ‘the book of nonsense’. In December 1930, only two months after Toynbee finished writing the first part of *A Study of History*, and had the manuscript sent to Murray for comment, he told him that:

The besetting danger of work like this is crankiness, and I see that, to your mind, I came nearest to this in my animus against Western Civilisation. I will correct this in the two places where you point it out...But I am conscious of having a certain ‘down’ on Western Civilisation and have often tried to think out why I have it, in order to get it into proportions. I expect it is largely a personal uncorporateness, which makes me rather hostile, in the same sort of way, to Winchester and Balliol and the British Empire; partly it is the effect of the War, which, for anyone of my age, is bound to seem the chief expression of Western Civilisation, so far, in one’s own lifetime; partly it is the effect of a

⁶⁷ West, *Gilbert Murray*, pp.162-3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.159.

classical education. I think I have a tinge of the Renaissance feeling that the Ancient World is the real home of the human spirit, and that what comes after rather a pity...⁶⁹

This quotation, in which Toynbee's 'hostility' towards Western civilisation is ostensibly indicated, seems to correspond to a general belief that Toynbee's philosophy of history is 'pessimistic', and that Toynbee, *pace* Oswald Spengler, predicted the decline of the West. Moreover, Toynbee's *A Study of History* is often used to demonstrate a prevailing 'declinism' and defeatism among British intellectuals after the First World War.⁷⁰

It is, in part, the objective of this chapter to cast doubt on this historical generalisation by using Toynbee's idea of history as a case study. Without losing sight of other contemporary discussions of the 'crisis of civilisation', I will particularly focus on the works of several liberal internationalists sharing an intellectual kinship, including Murray, Toynbee, and the Hammonds. Based on this study, I will suggest that although the War was indeed an ordeal for both Murray and Toynbee's generations, they did not truly believe in the impending demise of the West in the 1920s. Another aim of this chapter is to dig out the influence of classicism on Toynbee's macro-historical approach, and to place it into an intellectual culture which did not oppose making sense of the present condition either by tracing the spiritual development of Western society, or comparing it with other societies in the past.

Section I explores the debate over the nature, stability, and the future of the 'civilisation' (which, on many occasions, was identified with the 'Western civilisation')

⁶⁹ Oxford, Bodleian MS Toynbee, C 72: Arnold J. Toynbee to Gilbert Murray, 27 December 1930.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age*, pp. 9-49; Ian Hall, "'Time of Troubles': Arnold J. Toynbee's Twentieth Century", *International Affairs*, 90/1 (2014), pp. 23-36.

in British intellectual life after the First World War. I will look into the almost unanimous belief among British thinkers of international relations that establishing a new world order was an urgent need, particularly focusing on Gilbert Murray's conception of history that he used to justify the League of Nations. Section II examines the role developments in international politics played in the formation of Toynbee's idea of history, the influence of classical education on his comparative approach, and the extent to which *A Study of History* and Toynbee's annual report on international affairs were written under the same spirit. I will suggest that the pattern Toynbee imposed on all civilisations in history was an outcome of his research on ancient Greek history, and that his primary concern was to answer whether the Westerners would follow the same route as the Greeks did. Section III concerns Toynbee's ethical conception of civilisation by revealing the intellectual resources that he was indebted to, namely, British Idealism and Henri Bergson's philosophy. Moreover, I will explore how Toynbee was informed and even influenced by Lawrence and Barbara Hammond's works on Industrial Revolution, and argue that Toynbee not only accepted some of the Hammonds' historical generalisations, and but also recognised the moral problems caused by industrialism as the greatest challenge posed to the West.

I.

1.1. Optimism Contested

The inter-war period witnessed a growing interest in the notion of 'civilisation', including its definition, essence, and future. In addition to Murray and Toynbee's works, we can also list, among many others, H. G. Wells' *The Salvaging of Civilisation* (1921),

Clive Bell's *Civilisation: An Essay* (1928, second edition published by Pelican in 1938), Leonard Woolf's *Imperialism and Civilisation* (1928) and the first two volumes of his *After the Deluge* (1931 and 1939), Harold Laski's *Nationalism and the Future of Civilisation* (1932), etc. It should be admitted that 'civilisation' has always been a research topic for students of certain disciplines, for example, archaeology, anthropology and art history; and it was definitely not an issue of public concern only during the inter-war years. Therefore this section confines itself to examining a number of ways in which this notion was elucidated in public debates between 1919 and 1939 (public addresses, books and articles written with a clear intention to be read by non-academic readers), and to exploring certain common presumptions in these works.

'Civilisation', when discussed in this particular inter-war context, can be roughly summarised as containing four different, albeit not unrelated, meanings. First, it denotes an ideal state of society that has made huge material, moral and cultural achievements; its antonym is 'barbarism'. Second, 'civilisation' also refers to the process that approximates this particular ideal type. For example, Clive Bell argued that 'there never has been a perfect civilisation'; it is rather a process towards a civilised society composed of a certain number of civilised individuals, who are equipped with reasonableness and 'a sense of value', and who can reach 'an exquisite spiritual state'.⁷¹

In a similar vein, Collingwood noted that every society was oscillating from barbarity to civility.⁷² As Raymond Williams pointed out, the modern sense of 'civilisation', whose

⁷¹ Clive Bell, *Civilisation: An Essay* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928; repr. London: Penguin, 1938), p. 17, 43, 62, 105.

⁷² David Boucher, *The Social and Political Thought of R.G. Collingwood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 209-20.

origin can be traced back to the Enlightenment, was the entanglement of two meanings: an ideal condition and a process towards it.⁷³ Furthermore, there are two descriptive ways in which ‘civilisation’ is used in the relevant literatures. Due to its cultural superiority, spiritual progress, and material achievement, ‘Western civilisation’ was often identified as ‘the civilisation’. Besides, ‘civilisation’ was also defined in an anthropological or archaeological sense as denoting any societies that, in contrast to primitive societies, had reached a certain level of development. This plural understanding of ‘civilisation’ naturally has an anti-imperialist implication, and often presumes a criticism of the idea that Western civilisation was the only true civilisation.

A common presumption during this time was that the progress of civilisation could not be solely measured by material development, but also by the advances it had achieved in morality, culture and spirit. To Clive Bell, civility is something expressed in ‘manners, customs and conventions, in laws and in social and economic organisation, above all, in...literature, science and art’.⁷⁴ As for those with a religious bent, such as the Catholic historian Christopher Dawson, they insisted that all civilisations were of religious essence; so the present crisis was a result of secularisation.⁷⁵ Leonard Woolf, furthermore, pointed out two components of civilisation: the ‘actual structure of society’, which includes various institutions and political-economic systems, and the underlying ideas that decide its distinctiveness. So when a significant change occurs in what he called ‘communal psychology’, it tends to modify the structure of the society, and

⁷³ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 57-60.

⁷⁴ Bell, *Civilisation*, p. 104.

⁷⁵ This issue will be discussed in much more detail in chapter IV. Dawson’s view can be most clearly found in his *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1929).

normally leads either to progress or decay. The theme of Woolf's *After the Deluge* is thus to examine certain ideas, which he believed originated in the French Revolution and developed over the nineteenth century, that in turn made the War possible.⁷⁶

Regardless of how it is defined, 'civilisation' suggests an idea of progress or perfection; so it is not surprising that discussions about civilisation during the inter-war period often involved a re-evaluation of the prospect of Western civilisation—contesting whether it was still in progress, and whether it was still superior to other societies. Debating over the nature of civilisation therefore involves understanding the condition of Western civilisation by comparing it with the ideal state. Nevertheless, even though nineteenth-century optimism was questioned, fatalism did not necessarily become a widespread mentality. It is worth remembering that the presumed cultural pessimism was comparatively more of a German import than a British product. In 1922, the philanthropist, theologian and Nobel Prize winner Alfred Schweitzer, gave the Slade Lectures at Mansfield College, Oxford.⁷⁷ Owing his philosophical training to neo-Kantians such as Windelband and Simmel, Schweitzer opened his lecture by declaring the 'collapse of civilisation' was around the corner.⁷⁸ An arresting argument of his lectures is that philosophers of the past two centuries should be held responsible for the decay of civilisation.⁷⁹ Kant, Fichte, Goethe and Hegel, after challenging the optimistic and rational 'popular philosophy' of the eighteenth century, were unable to

⁷⁶ Leonard Woolf, *After the Deluge: A Study of Communal Psychology* (3 vols, London: Hogarth Press, 1931-1953), i, p.30.

⁷⁷ Matthew Simpson, 'Schweitzer at Mansfield', *Oxford Magazine*, 351 (Michaelmas 2014), pp. 9-11.

⁷⁸ Nils Ole Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 109.

⁷⁹ Alfred Schweitzer, *The Decay and Restoration of Civilisation*, trans. C.T. Campion (London: A.& C. Black, 1923), p.1.

provide a similar moral outlook. It is noteworthy that Schweitzer's conception of civilisation is exceedingly ethical; to him, the nature of civilisation is to promote progress in humanity as well as in the objective world—to achieve, using his own words, the 'world-and life-affirmation'.⁸⁰ Therefore, he contended that the crisis of civilisation was caused by a lack of a theory of *Weltanschauung* founded intrinsically on a 'reverence for life'.

However gloomy his message was, Schweitzer seemed reluctant to give up his hope in the West completely, as hinted at the end of his lectures. In comparison, it was another German philosopher, Oswald Spengler, who infamously predicted the mortality of the West. *The Decline of the West*, though half finished before the War, received huge popularity in Germany and the Western world after the War. The book is notoriously lengthy and difficult to read; hence its influence largely hinged on the lifespan of each culture that Spengler predicted. According to Spengler, Western civilisation had reached its 'winter', and its demise was unavoidable and approaching.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the English translation of Spengler's book came out only successively in 1926 and 1928, so his dreadful message was unlikely to impinge on the English-speaking world instantly after the War. In addition, despite its impact, Spengler's theory did not receive positive feedback in Britain. Collingwood especially took issue with Spengler's approach, first in an article published in the journal *Antiquity*, and then in his talk at the London School of Economics two years later, in 1929. Collingwood's criticism can be summarised as following two lines: first, a culture should not be defined by means of a single

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. xi.

⁸¹ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, trans. C.F. Atkinson, (2 vols, London: Allen & Unwin, 1926-1928).

governing idea, whose realisation becomes the only end of that culture; second, there are no fixed endings in history, but merely 'a becoming, a change, development', so it is 'the historian's highest task to discover what developed, through what phases, into what.'⁸²

In a similar vein, Christopher Dawson, in his *Progress and Religion*, accused Spengler of being a relativist who denied 'the very existence of relations, and dissolves the unity of history into an unintelligible plurality of isolated and sterile cultural processes'.⁸³ From a Christian point of view, Dawson maintained that history was a unity that contained one single meaning. In this case, Dawson, though also critical of Collingwood's view of culture which failed to take geography, race and religion into consideration, was actually in accordance with Collingwood's view that history was a continuous process. Moreover, Spengler's defeatism was repudiated in two major literary journals in Britain. L.C. Knights and Donald Culver, in their editors' note for the very first issue of *Scrutiny*, regarded Spengler's work as a naive emotional reaction to optimism.⁸⁴ Similarly, L.P. Jacks, editor of the *Hibbert Journal*, one of the largest forums in inter-war years for theological and philosophical debate, criticised Spengler for promulgating the 'civilisation in danger' theme. Jacks conceded the ubiquity of moral decay engendered by 'mechanisation and standardisation', but he insisted that 'faithfulness', 'skill of the competent', and 'courage' would help the West to overcome

⁸² R.G. Collingwood, 'Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles', *Antiquity*, 1 (1927), pp. 311-25; Oxford, Bodleian MS Collingwood, C12/1: 'Oswald Spengler'. The article on *Antiquity* illustrates that archaeological discussion of 'civilisation' was inseparable from a broader intellectual concern; for Collingwood was, after all, an expert in Roman British archaeology.

⁸³ Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, p. 46.

⁸⁴ L.C. Knights and Donald Culver, 'Scrutiny: A Manifesto', *Scrutiny*, 1/1 (1932), p. 2.

the present crisis and make progress again.⁸⁵

‘It is a fact so familiar that we seldom remember how very strange it is’, the medieval historian G.N. Clark wrote in 1932, ‘that the commonest phrases...about civilisation at the present time all relate to the possibility, or even the prospect, of its being destroyed.’⁸⁶ In his article, which was also published in the *Hibbert Journal*, Clark thus tried to reassure his readers that even if Western civilisation dissolved one day, newcomers would find in its debris an intellectual heritage on which a new social order could be built. In the same spirit, Murray, despite believing this world ‘hostile and alien’, told Lawrence Hammond that he believed “‘our ancestors’ were probably in the main right in thinking that Progress was really an aim—in believing in the forward movement of humanity. They were wrong in applying too rough and material a test’.⁸⁷ Murray’s letter, as we shall discuss later, should be viewed in the context of the recent publication of Lawrence and Barbara Hammonds’ ‘labour trilogy’. But however he was shocked by such miserable lives of the poor in an age of Industrial Revolution as depicted by the Hammonds, Murray did not believe there was anything wrong with the idea of progress *per se*. It amounts to a consensus among those intellectuals preoccupied with the ‘civilisational debate’ that the progress of civilisation was measured by culture, morality and values; although it remained an open question whether this progress would be unlimited, almost none of them took Spengler’s prediction seriously—even if the West might be in trouble, insofar as certain problems are solved, its fate could still be

⁸⁵ L.P. Jacks, ‘The Saving Forces of Civilisation’, *The Hibbert Journal*, 30/1 (1931), pp. 1-6.

⁸⁶ G.N. Clark, ‘The Instability of Civilisation’, *The Hibbert Journal*, 30/4 (1932), p. 645.

⁸⁷ Oxford, Bodleian MS Hammonds, C 30, fo.74: Gilbert Murray to Leonard Hammond, 22 March 1920.

overturned.

1.2. Internationalism and Abolition of War

So what exactly were these crucial problems? On the one hand, to over-emphasise the influence of the War, as if it was the only threat to civilisation, is a sheer negligence of those progressive thinkers who had already begun to reveal the maladies of the Western society before 1914. For example, Edward Carpenter, socialist and friend of William Morris, argued in his Fabian Lecture *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (1889) that civilisation was a disease, and that capitalism and industrialism had a detrimental effect on the environment and normal people's living.⁸⁸ H. G. Wells observed that the Great War was not necessarily a cause of the crisis of civilisation, but rather a symptom of a long-term illness; so unless mankind can 'readjust its political and social ideas', they would be prone to drop down to the level of barbarism again.⁸⁹ In 1928, when Murray was preparing for his Halley Stewart Lectures (the significance of this Lecture, founded under the liberal politician Halley Stewart, can be demonstrated by the names of other lecturers, including R.H. Tawney, J.M. Keynes, Charles Gore, William Beveridge, etc.), he told Lawrence Hammond that its theme was related to 'the long struggle you and I have kept up ever since the foundation of the *Speaker*.'⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that between 1899 and 1907, Hammond served as the editor of the liberal magazine *Speaker*, although he was replaced by H.W. Massingham under the request of

⁸⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure, and Other Essays*, 15th edn (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), pp. 15-78.

⁸⁹ H. G. Wells, *The Salvaging of Civilisation* (London: Cassell & Co., 1921), p.10.

⁹⁰ MS Hammonds, C30, fo.163: Gilbert Murray to Leonard Hammond, 29 October 1928. As for other incumbent, Tawney gave his lecture on 'Equality' in 1929 (*Equality*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), Charles Gore in 1927 (*Christ and Society*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929), and Keynes and Beveridge both in 1931 (this year's Lecture was given by six lecturers, whose addresses were published collectively as *The World's Economic Crisis and the Way of Escape*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932).

the Rowntree Trust when the *Speaker* was renamed and became the *Nation*. Under Hammond's editorship, the *Speaker* provided a platform for liberal progressives and pro-Boers such as Murray, L.T. Hobhouse, J.A. Hobson and F.W. Hirst to criticise British imperialism during the Boer War, and call for land redistribution.⁹¹ Known as a 'pessimist' who was sceptical about the social consequence of the Industrial Revolution, Hammond nonetheless argued that the War urged the British people to re-consider their individual value, which should not be subjected to 'the iron law which checked and hampered all our hopes'; therefore it 'has emancipated and widened our imagination, teaching us that we have much more power over our future than we supposed.'⁹² So to Hammond, social criticism not only does not imply pessimism, but also assumes improvement:

But for men and women, at any rate, it matters supremely how they spend their lives, and the growing sense of the quality of life, the growing revolt against the sacrifice of life to gain, however plausibly it is disguised, marks the progress of civilisation, the advance of the human mind to a finer idea for society, the escape from the moral avalanche of the Industrial Revolution.⁹³

On the other hand, however, the Great War, not least because of its unprecedented scale, still prompted Murray and Hammond's generation to take 'war and peace' as a pivotal issue. As it became a common belief that war posed the greatest threat to civilisation, international thought in early twentieth-century Britain was, to some extent, dominated by different theories of disarmament, peace movement and international governance.⁹⁴ During and after the War, groups and organisations had already been

⁹¹ Weaver, *The Hammonds*, pp.57-61, 91-2.

⁹² Jason (pseudonym of J.L. Hammond), *Past and Future* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1918), p. 35.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p.12.

⁹⁴ A.J.P. Taylor and Martin Ceadel argued that a distinction should be made between pacificism and the more radical pacifism that was held, for example, by Bertrand Russell, who believed that no armed conflicts were justifiable. See Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 1-8;

formed not only to promote pacifist ideas, but also to raise public awareness of the significance of constructing a new world order. The Union of Democratic Control, for example, was founded by Liberal thinkers and politicians such as Charles Trevelyan, Edmund Morel and Arthur Ponsonby, and soon attracted a large number of British intellectuals such as Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (who coined the term ‘League of Nations’), Hobson, Norman Angell (whose *The Great Illusion* and Hobson’s *Imperialism* became two significant pacifist texts in early twentieth century), C.P. Scott, Bertrand Russell, etc.⁹⁵ About the same time, the League of Free Nations Association and the League of Nations Society were both founded, and they were later amalgamated as the League of Nations Union, of which Murray, the classical scholar Alfred Zimmern, H.G. Wells, and Ernest Barker were all members.⁹⁶ A conspicuous difference between these groups, though their members overlapped, was, as A.J.P. Taylor indicated, that the U.D.C. had a particular connection with Cambridge, while the L.N.U., in comparison, bore a more Oxonian colour. Dubbed by Taylor as ‘trouble-making’ ‘dissenters of British foreign policy’, many members of the U.D.C., such as Morel, maintained that Britain was not fighting a war of justice; whereas Murray, like many of his friends and colleagues at Oxford, including Zimmern, Hammond, H.A. L. Fisher, etc., firmly supported Britain’s cause in the War—Oxford, in

idem, ‘Pacifism and Pacificism’, in Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 473-92; A.J.P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939* (London: Pimlico, 1993), p.51, n.5.

⁹⁵ Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The ‘Peace Movement’ in Britain, 1914-1919* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), pp. 37-47.

⁹⁶ George W. Eagerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations* (London: Scholar Press, 1979), pp. 11-13, 19-23, 72, 90-1. Peter Yearwood, “‘On the Safe and Right Lines’: The Lloyd George Government and the Origins of the League of Nations, 1916-1918”, *The Historical Journal*, 32/1 (1989), pp.131-55; Henry R. Winkler, *The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain, 1914-1919* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1952); Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1996), especially pp. 120-49, 196-223.

Taylor's view, 'specialised in emotional uplift'.⁹⁷

Although both recognised the necessity of building a new world order, and supported the League of Nations, the U.D.C. and L.N.U. were in conflict in terms of the nature of this order. The former, particularly after it became increasingly connected with the Labour Party, advocated a world government of a coercive nature; for example, Leonard Woolf in his *International Government* (1916), which was written under the commission of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and became the Fabians' official manifesto, elaborated a quasi-legislative view of world government.⁹⁸ In his later works, Woolf argued that the League was not merely an institution that prevented international conflicts by promoting peaceful cooperation, but also a significant and positive force in settling colonial disputes in Asia and Africa. He even argued that Article 22 of the League's Covenant should be implemented in countries such as China, which was not a mandate, to end its anarchical status. In doing so, he contended that the fact that 'the States, nations, and peoples are closely interrelated parts of international society, requires considerable modifications in the ancient theory and practice of independence and sovereignty'.⁹⁹ Out of his pluralist political theory and in a more radical manner, Laski argued in his *Nationalism and the Future of Civilisation* that the state power which controlled political and economic policies should be minimised, and that national

⁹⁷ Taylor, *The Troublemakers*, p. 141. As for the ways in which history dons of Oxford were shaping public view during the War, see Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, 'The Role of British and German Historians in Mobilising Public Opinion in 1914', in Benedikt Stuchtey and Peter Wende (eds.), *British and German Historiography, 1750-1950: Traditions, Perceptions, and Transfers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 335-72.

⁹⁸ L.S. Woolf, *International Government: Two Reports* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916); Peter Wilson, *The International Theory of Leonard Woolf: A Study in Twentieth-Century Idealism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 34-48.

⁹⁹ Leonard Woolf, *Imperialism and Civilisation* (London: Hogarth, 1928), pp. 125-6, 128.

sovereignty must be transferred to the League.¹⁰⁰ This coercive nature of a world government, however, was not appealing to Zimmern and Murray, whose conception of the League, as Jeanne Morefield suggests, had a clear imprint of British Idealism.¹⁰¹ They were particularly worried about the League being turned into an authoritarian ‘super-state’ that contained too much power, and hence endorsed a more ‘organic’ view of this new world order, in which cultural and moral dimensions played a significant role—Murray, for example, served in the International Committee of Intellectual Cooperation since its foundation in 1922, and became its chairman in 1928.¹⁰² The difference between the ways in which these liberal internationalists and the Fabians regarded the role moral ideals played in establishing the new international order, as it will be illustrated in Chapter II, would become more conspicuous and even irreconcilable in the thirties. As a member of the Round Table Movement, Zimmern remained very close to those Oxonian liberal imperialists such as Lionel Curtis, and he consented to their basic argument that structure of the League should be designed as an international community modelled on the Commonwealth. Eventually, it was Zimmern’s memorandum that was accepted by the Foreign Office and laid the foundation of the British delegation’s proposal in the Paris Peace Conference, known as

¹⁰⁰ Harold J. Laski, *Nationalism and the Future of Civilisation* (London: Watts, 1932). For Laski’s international thought during inter-war period, see Peter Lamb, *Harold Laski: Problems of Democracy, the Sovereign State, and International Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 115-45; Michael Newman, *Harold Laski: A Political Biography* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), pp.160-4.

¹⁰¹ Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 55-95. Peter Wilson also provides, from the disciplinary perspective of international relations, a general account of Murray’s international thought. See his ‘Gilbert Murray and International Relations: Hellenism, Liberalism and International Intellectual Cooperation as a Path to Peace’, in *Review of International Studies*, 37/2 (2011), pp. 881-909.

¹⁰² Morefield, *Covenants without Swords*, p.137. Also see *Gilbert Murray: A Life*, pp. 206-8. Among Murray’s writings, those directly engage with the League include *The League of Nations and the Democratic Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1918) and *The League and its Guarantees* (London: The League of Nations Union, 1921).

the 'Cecil Report'.¹⁰³

Another noticeable feature of Murray's ethical conception of post-war world order was that he tried to provide a justification for the League based on his philosophy of history that was elaborated in his writings and public addresses in the 1920s, particularly his Halley Stewart Lectures and Hibbert Lecture ('Liberality and Civilisation'). Murray believed that a material basis was indispensable for the formation of civilisation, so 'the first thing that civilisation does is to provide for these elementary needs of man and thus make him to that extent free'.¹⁰⁴ But civilisation simply 'goes wrong' if it urges too much mere material needs; its greater task is rather to ensure that men 'are protected against violence and fraud, that they have access to justice, and as far as may be to education, that they have the same freedom to pursue life and happiness, and are not cut off altogether from the wonders and beauties of the world and the mind of man'.¹⁰⁵ If a civilisation fails to achieve this goal, it is in decline. To Murray, history, or history of civilisation, is constantly an alteration between two completely opposite states: cosmos and chaos. A civilisation that is in growth is a cosmos, and its decline means chaos. Born and brought up in the Victorian Age, Murray claimed that he and his contemporaries used to take it for granted that Western civilisation was the only 'right road of human progress', with its 'faith in progress, its liberalised Christianity, in humanitarian ethics, its free democratic institutions, its common sense, its obedience to

¹⁰³ Morefield, *Covenants without Swords*, pp. 177-87.

¹⁰⁴ Gilbert Murray, *Liberality and Civilisation* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Idem, *The Ordeal of this Generation: The War, the League and the Future* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929), pp. 37-8.

law, its triumphs of applied science, and its vast and ever-increasing wealth.’¹⁰⁶ The Victorian Age, to Murray, was naturally a cosmos, for it had a ‘definite form and character’ and cared about ‘the great main issues’; its problem, however, was being too creative to be critical and reflective.¹⁰⁷ Holding this cyclical view of history, Murray did not believe that the present crisis would be eternal. What was needed, he contended, was a renewed search for another cosmos which was founded on ‘ideals and inspirations’, ‘something higher in the world than men as we now know them’.¹⁰⁸ This higher cause, as Murray recognised, was thus the League of Nations and other cross-national organisations that promoted internationalism, mutual understanding and intellectual cooperation between different nations.

II.

2.1. A Hellenic Legacy

Born in 1889, Toynbee graduated from Winchester College and, unlike most bright Wykehamists, went to Balliol, instead of New College. After getting a double ‘First’ in both ‘Mods’ and ‘Greats’, Toynbee was elected a fellow of Balliol, though he resigned soon after the War broke out. After the War, Toynbee became the first Koraes Professor of Greek at the University of London, and later Director of Studies at Chatham House. When the first three volumes of his *A Study of History* were published in 1934, almost all reviewers pointed out approvingly that Toynbee’s erudite scholarship enabled him to make a comparison of more than twenty civilisations in history.¹⁰⁹ But it is worth noting

¹⁰⁶ Idem, *Then and Now: The Changes of the Last Fifty Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ Idem, *The Ordeal of this Generation*, p. 170, 176.

¹⁰⁸ Idem, *Liberality and Civilisation*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁹ Idem, ‘The Meaning of Civilisation’, *Observer* (24 June 1934); J.L. Hammond, ‘A New Interpretation of History’,

that Toynbee's work is not a grand narrative that consists of detailed and chronological accounts of each civilisation's history; instead, it highlights the common features, themes and patterns in their development. This is particularly telling if we compare *A Study of History* with, for example, H.G. Wells' *An Outline of History* (1920), which was also written under the spirit that 'the need for a common knowledge of the general facts of human history throughout the world has become very evident during the tragic happenings of the last few years.'¹¹⁰

As Wells, who was never properly trained in history, confessed at the front page of his book, he was indebted to Ernest Barker and Murray for their 'editorial help'. To what extent Murray was responsible for Wells' unreliable scholarship was unknown; but the reason why Wells borrowed Murray's name was probably because of their common membership of the L.N.U., and their agreement on internationalism as the goal of history—'a sense of history as the common adventure of all mankind is as necessary for peace within as it is for peace between the nations'.¹¹¹ In *An Outline of History*, Wells held a teleological view of history that placed education and unified humanity as the most important themes of the future. But at the same time, the main chapters of the book, in which Wells did not lose sight of the Middle East, East Asia, and India, are badly structured, and fail to support the book's general argument. For example, it is difficult to understand why a number of unrelated topics, such as 'the Sassanid Empire

Manchester Guardian (26 June 1934); idem, 'The Philosophy of History', *London Mercury*, 30/179 (September, 1934); 'The Significance of History', *Times Literary Supplement* (4 October 1934); Leonard Woolf, 'Civilisations', *New Statesman and Nation*, 8/182 (18 August 1934); R.H. Tawney, 'Review of A Study of History', *International Affairs*, 14/1 (1935).

¹¹⁰ H.G. Wells, *The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind* (2 vols, New York: Macmillan, 1921), i, p. vi.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. vi.

in Persia', 'the great age of China', and 'travels of 'Yuan Chwang' (a Chinese Buddhist monk), are all placed under the heading 'Christianity and Islam'. In comparison, Toynbee treated each civilisation equally as the greatest achievement of the human spirit and an end in itself; his ultimate goal in *A Study of History* was to ask whether all civilisations followed the same pattern.

After toying with the idea of writing a comprehensive history of humankind since the 1910s, Toynbee published the first three volumes of *A Study of History* in 1934. The exact date at which each volume was finished is an insolvable question, largely due to the inaccessibility of the manuscript, which was purchased and owned by Nihon University. According to Toynbee's letter to Gilbert Murray, he had finished the 'Introduction' by 1930; hence the general framework of his work was constructed no later than this point.¹¹² As early as in his undergraduate years, Toynbee began to think about writing a *magnum opus* that would make his fame.¹¹³ Although Toynbee's first publication was a careful annotation of several paragraphs in Herodotus' *The Histories*, he strongly detested the study of miniature facts of this kind.¹¹⁴ His preference for Mommsen the author of *History of Rome* to the compiler of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* shows his longing for synthesis.¹¹⁵

Between 1919 and 1920, Toynbee delivered six lectures on ancient history at the University of London. At the very beginning of the first lecture, Toynbee classified three origins of 'our own civilisation', including the islands of the Aegean, where the

¹¹² Oxford, Bodleian MS Toynbee, C 72: Arnold J. Toynbee to Gilbert Murray, 27 October 1930.

¹¹³ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee*, p. 30.

¹¹⁴ Arnold J. Toynbee, 'On Herodotus III. 90, and VII. 75, 76', in *Classical Review*, 24/8 (1910), pp. 236-8.

¹¹⁵ Idem, *Experiences* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.109-110.

‘European civilisation’ was born, and the two cradles of the Middle East civilisation: the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates (Mesopotamia), and the Nile valley (Upper Egypt).¹¹⁶

It is noteworthy that in these lectures, Toynbee suggested that modern Western and Greco-Roman civilisations were both separate cycles, each having its own decline and fall, of a larger civilisation called ‘the Civilisation of Europe’. The Minoans, however, were earlier members of the Greco-Roman civilisation and did not have a civilisation of their own. But in *A Study of History*, Toynbee rendered a different and more detailed clarification of the complicated relations between these societies: the Minoan society is classified as one of the six civilisations which are unrelated to any earlier civilisations, while the Hellenic society is ‘infra-affiliated’ to it; the Western civilisation and the Hellenic civilisation, in comparison, are in a proper relationship of ‘Apparentation-and-Affiliation’—a notion Toynbee coined and used to delineate the process in which a civilisation is succeeded by another.¹¹⁷ According to him, a society in decline is comprised of three constituents: the dominant minority, the external proletariat, and the internal proletariat (in the case of the Hellenic society, they were the barbarians and the universal Church of Christianity). The destruction of the Roman Empire as ‘the universal state’, according to Toynbee, was the last phase of the Hellenic civilisation; but the barbarians did not win the ultimate victory, for, as the external proletariat, they were spiritually attached to the old civilisation.¹¹⁸ It was, by contrast,

¹¹⁶ MS Toynbee, C35: ‘Ancient History: Six Lectures’. ‘The First Civilisations’ is the only one of the manuscripts of those lectures that survives. Titles of the other five lectures are: ‘Rise of Greece’, ‘The Crisis of Greek History’, ‘Roman Conquest (The Cloud from the West)’, ‘Roman Empire (Passing of Hellenism)’, and ‘Dark Age (Death and Birth)’.

¹¹⁷ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (12 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934-1961), i, pp. 129-56.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 56.

the universal Church that ‘played the part of a chrysalis’ from which Western civilisation emerged.¹¹⁹

In May 1920, Toynbee gave a lecture for the candidates in ‘Greats’ at the Examination Schools of Oxford. Entitled ‘The Tragedy of Greece’, it can be seen as a concise outline of Toynbee’s interpretation of ancient Greek history. A central theme of this lecture is to elaborate the significance of classical education. Toynbee’s contention is that the Hellenic civilisation repays studying not only because of the classical texts, but also because it provides historical insight and historical experience that can be used to illuminate the present. It is noteworthy that the word ‘tragedy’ is used here in an Aristotelian sense, emphasising, primarily, the emotional value of the play which purges and purifies (‘catharsis’) the pity and fear aroused by the incidents; and secondarily, its ‘dramatic’ form.¹²⁰ Therefore, Greek history was conceived by Toynbee as a tragedy not only because it entailed a tragic or miserable ending, but more importantly because it rendered a sense of ‘relief’ after ‘communication with a different civilisation from our own—with people who had experienced all and more than we had experienced.’¹²¹ Moreover, owing to tragedy’s ‘dramatic’ form, Toynbee argued that upholding a tragic idea of history was thus to admit that every civilisation, as a tragedy, had a plot.¹²²

In the lectures on ancient history, Toynbee discovered five phases in the rhythm of Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilisations; while in ‘The Tragedy of Greece’, he found three acts in the Greco-Roman tragedy. But the development of these civilisations can

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 57.

¹²⁰ Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (2 vols, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), ii, p. 2320.

¹²¹ Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Tragedy of Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), p.12.

¹²² Ibid, p. 6.

be roughly concluded as following a similar pattern. At first, it is always the birth and growth of civilisation, which Toynbee regarded as a process of conquering physical and human environments. Once the original impulse that creates civilisation is lost, the triumph of youth is followed by decay and downfall, which is often manifested in the degraded morality of the ruling class. Take the Hellenic society as an example: the governing groups of Sparta and Corinth were blinded by their envy, and Athenian statesmen by their voracity, which ultimately gave rise to the 'fatal catastrophe' of the Peloponnesian War and subsequently a 'Time of Troubles', before the Roman Empire was founded, thus announcing the final stage before the dissolution of civilisation.¹²³

The plot here is highly similar to the framework Toynbee elaborated, albeit with differences in details, in *A Study of History*. It is worth noting that Toynbee's argument in 'The Tragedy of Greece' had a significant change compared to his lectures on ancient history at one significant point: he began to view the Hellenic and Western societies as related but entirely separate civilisations, and he hinted that the plot of Greek civilisation could be used to illuminate the future of the West.

Another particularly noticeable issue is Toynbee's aversion in both 'ancient history' lectures and 'The Tragedy of Greece' that the 'General War', which predestines the fate of these civilisations even several centuries before their death, is a symptom of the decline of civilisation. Aged twenty five when World War I broke out, Toynbee was supposed to be enlisted. According to William McNeill's detailed research, although Toynbee was not a conscientious objector, he successfully escaped it by using his

¹²³ Ibid, pp. 15-20.

physical health as an excuse. Nonetheless, the War, which took away so many of Toynbee's contemporaries and acquaintances, had a huge impact on his entire intellectual outlook.¹²⁴ Even in retrospect half a century later, he still regarded August 1914 as the most traumatic event in his life.¹²⁵ So Toynbee's conception of history was, from the very beginning, imbued with his own experiences. Since his time as an undergraduate, Toynbee had always denied there was an unbridgeable gap between the past and the present; he believed that one should illuminate the past with his present concern, and understand the present with the help of the past. In an essay entitled 'What the Historian Does' delivered to an Oxford undergraduate club in the year 1910-1911, Toynbee argued that only by historical imagination could light be shed on the past. When an historian's imaginative faculty is fully developed 'up to its job', it 'carries him across the gulf between past and present', and he will be 'momentarily hypnotised' and turns into a ghost he raises himself. His personality is changed, and he mentally becomes, for example, 'an Italian' living in the years 90-80 B.C.' who looks at 'his native world as an outsider'.¹²⁶

A distinctive feature of *A Study of History* is that it is essentially a collection of numerous historical parallels and comparisons not only between the twenty one civilisations that he discovered in history, but also historical instances on national and regional levels. It is noteworthy that drawing parallels was not uncommon among

¹²⁴ How Toynbee used his dysentery he contracted in Greece in 1912 as an excuse to be exempted from military service, see McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee*, pp.64-8. McNeill's suggestion that it was Toynbee was persuaded by his wife, Rosalind, who 'wanted her husband close at hand for own satisfaction', not to be enlisted is perhaps unfair to her.

¹²⁵ Toynbee, *Experiences*, p. 45.

¹²⁶ MS Toynbee, C33: 'What the Historian Does'.

Oxford-trained classicists in Toynbee's time, not least because of the syllabus of 'Greats'.¹²⁷ Many of the questions in Ancient Philosophy and History Papers, which Toynbee chose to sit for 'Greats', involved discussing modern issues in a classical context, for example, 'The first object of government is the security of life and property. Was Athens or Rome the more successful in this respect?', or 'Estimate the value of the contribution which Aristotle makes to the study of political revolutions'.¹²⁸ Moreover, it is likely that Toynbee was particularly under Gilbert Murray's influence in adopting this approach. When Murray was delivering his inaugural lecture as Professor of Greek of Glasgow University at the notably young age of twenty three, he particularly criticised the narrow way in which Classics was taught in British universities that focused on textual elucidation and translation.¹²⁹ What he wanted to promote, instead, was a 'Greek education' founded on Greek history and philosophy being combined, rather than a grasp of the Greek language. For 'there is more in Hellenism than a language...it is quite possible for a man who cannot read a single line of Plato intelligently, to acquire a tolerable proportion of the Greek spirit: to enter more or less into that peculiar way of looking at things, that extraordinary shrewdness and knowledge of the world, that child-like impulsiveness for wild hopes and idealism'.¹³⁰

This way of classical teaching that focused on reviving the Hellenist spirit was brought to Oxford by Murray when he acquired the Regius Professorship of Greek, after

¹²⁷ W.H. Walsh, 'The Zenith of Greats', in *The History of the University of Oxford* (8 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984-2000), vii, p. 312.

¹²⁸ Honour School of Literae Humaniores, *Oxford University Examination Papers: Second Public Examination*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Trinity Term 1911).

¹²⁹ Gilbert Murray, *The Place of Greek in Education: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered in the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1889); West, *Gilbert Murray*, p.113.

¹³⁰ Murray, *The Place of Greek in Education*, pp. 13-14.

achieving his fame by translating a large number of Greek dramas, and it had an enduring influence on Toynbee.¹³¹ To both Murray and Toynbee, Hellenism represented the highest achievement of the spirit of humankind.¹³² According to Toynbee's recollection from later years, his humanist education was so influential that he was 'alienated' from his mother-tongue to such an extent that whenever he wanted to express his inner feelings, the words came out not in his native English but in 'either Greek or Latin'.¹³³ This self-proclamation might sound rather pretentious to most modern readers, but it indeed reflects the atmosphere in which Toynbee's intellect was formed. Classical training enlarged his scope, and made him believe that 'human affairs do not become intelligible until they are seen as a whole'.¹³⁴ Therefore it is perhaps not surprising that similarity can be found between Toynbee's plot and Murray's account of ancient Greek history. For example, throughout Murray's pre-war work *Euripides and His Age* (1913), published in the 'Home University Library' series, of which Murray was one of the general editors, a comparison between the Hellenic world and the Victorian Age was constantly made. In it, Murray argued that 'the Greek tradition of the fifth century B.C., the great age of Athens, not only achieved extraordinary advance in most developments of human life, but it trained an extraordinary band of critical or rebellious children'.¹³⁵

Despite not being a historian, Murray's evaluation of the fifth century B.C. was

¹³¹ Idem, *The Interpretation of Ancient Greek Literature: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909); also see James Morwood, 'Gilbert Murray's Translations of Greek Tragedy', in Christopher Stray ed., *Gilbert Murray Reassessed: Hellenism, Theatre, and International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 134-44.

¹³² On the classical influence on Murray's liberalism, one can also see Julia Stapleton, 'The Classicist as Liberal Intellectual: Gilbert Murray and Alfred Eckhard Zimmern', in *Gilbert Murray Reassessed*, pp. 261-91.

¹³³ Toynbee, *Experiences*, p. 15.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 108.

¹³⁵ Gilbert Murray, *Euripides and His Age* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1913), p. 15.

founded on a historical generalisation of Greco-Roman civilisation, which he elaborated comprehensively but also lucidly in *Four Stages of Greek Religion* (1912), a series of lectures delivered at Columbia University. It is noteworthy that Murray, as Toynbee did in *A Study of History*, treated ancient Greece and Rome as an entirety; so his book covers a rather long timespan from what he called ‘the age of ignorance’ to the Hellenistic world and finally the rise of Christianity.¹³⁶ When discussing the first stage of Greek religion, Murray was obviously informed by the research of Jane Harrison, whom he knew well personally, when he argued that the gods of this period, usually lacking names and having no genealogies, were reflections of primitive rituals.¹³⁷ But Murray was against applying Harrison’s argument into interpreting Greek religion in its second phase, which he called ‘the Olympian’ or ‘classical’ age. Murray explained this ‘Olympian spirit’ more comprehensively in *Four Stages* compared to *Euripides and His Age*: ‘the strife, the ultimate victory, of human intelligence, reason and gentleness, against what seems at first the overwhelming power of passion and unguided strength’.¹³⁸ During this period, religion served as a ‘moral expurgation of old rites’, and attempted to ‘bring order into the old chaos’—here another instance of the antithesis between ‘chaos’ and ‘order’ in Murray’s historical conception.¹³⁹ To Murray, the real religion of the fifth century B.C. was actually ‘a devotion to the City itself’, which was a great spiritual achievement in the sense that it was after ‘the truth...not in

¹³⁶ Idem, *Four Stages of Greek Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), p. 16.

¹³⁷ Ibid, pp. 27-36.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 80.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 81.

you but beyond you, a thing not conquered but to be pursued'.¹⁴⁰ But at the same time, the adoration of *polis* naturally led to conflict—despite having been written before the War, the destructive force of political parochialism had already been made clear in this work.

As Toynbee would have agreed, Murray contended that the decline of the Greco-Roman civilisation became apparent in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, which he characterised as 'the failure of nerves', a term he borrowed from J.B. Bury.¹⁴¹ This new spirit, according to Murray, owed its quality to Gnostics, the Gospels, the Apocalypse, Julian, Plotinus, Gregory and Jerome, and belonged to an age that witnessed: 'a rise of asceticism, of mysticism, in a sense, of pessimism; a loss of self-confidence, of hope in this life and of faith in natural human effort; a despair of patient inquiry, a cry for infallible revelation; and indifference to the welfare of the state, a conversion of the soul to God'.¹⁴² Therefore, it is clear that Murray's outline of ancient Greek history bears a close affinity with Toynbee's, particularly in terms of their shared antipathy to war and nostalgic imagination of the 'Olympian spirit'.¹⁴³

2.2. From 'Civilisation' to 'civilisations'

In 1914, Toynbee accepted Gilbert Murray's invitation to write a book on Greek history for the 'Home University Library'.¹⁴⁴ The project was obviously suspended due to the outbreak of the First World War, and only resumed after decades; but preparing

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 98.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 103.

¹⁴³ On Murray's account of Greek religion, one can see Robert Parker, 'Gilbert Murray and Greek Religion', see *Gilbert Murray Reassessed*, pp. 82-102. Frank Turner's outstanding work places Murray in a context of Victorian understanding of the Hellenic civilisation; see *Frank M. Turner, The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp.75-6, 131-4.

¹⁴⁴ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee*, p. 46.

for it urged Toynbee to expand his horizon from ancient Greece to Byzantine civilisation, and, eventually, to modern Greece. In 1918, he was seriously planning for ‘a much longer history of how Rome destroyed the world’, and vaguely thinking of yet another book on ‘European civilisation from the Dark Ages to 1914—treating it as a unity and not as a bundle of separate nations or states’; but it was not until about 1923 that he decided to integrate these histories together into a much broader history.¹⁴⁵ This decision was not made due to a matter of convenience, but had much deeper intellectual reasons: 1) Toynbee’s growing antagonism to national history; 2) his modified view of the relations between the West and the rest of the world; 3) to test the validity of the pattern that he discovered in Greco-Roman civilisation by applying it into other civilisations.

In 1915, when Arthur Heath, a fellow of New College, Oxford, was killed in the War, Toynbee wrote with huge sorrow to Gilbert Murray:

I suppose it is this, that all those things, that got Heath killed, are the purposes and instincts of the herd; and that they are senseless and inhuman, and all history is the individuals’ effort to break free from them. That is why it is so terrible that they have swept away Heath. But most people who write history, and most people who work politics, are obsessed with the life of the herd, and the herd’s point of view. That is the real {*unrecognisable*} of the Germans, and that is how they have brought all this evil upon all the individual lives....Now the thing is, not to shut one’s eye to all the herd thing and deny them...but to see that they are wonderful and partly beautiful and anyhow very strong, and that they can do with individual lives what they like...And then to know them all the time for what they are, and to that it is the individual lives that matter, and that each individual soul is worth the whole herd-world.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ MS Toynbee, C80: Arnold J. Toynbee to Robert Darbishire, 5 May 1918. His letter to Darbishire in 13 April 1919 writes, ‘I haven’t touched the Home University history of Greece, which I began five summers ago...I am planning...a big history of Rome, concentrating on the conquests and the social revolution—showing how the first brought out the second, and how between them. They destroyed not only Rome but the whole of Greek civilisation.’

¹⁴⁶ MS Toynbee, C 72: Arnold J. Toynbee to Gilbert Murray, 15 October 1915.

It is noteworthy that Toynbee, like Murray and unlike many pacifists such as Bertrand Russell and Leonard Woolf, was a supporter of the British side during the War. However, he evidently came to draw a link between nationalism and historical writings based on nation states. Transcending national history and presuming 'civilisation' as the basic unit of historical research, therefore, was a revelation of Toynbee's political, and even moral, stance.

Toynbee's scope in 1920 was still confined to dividing human history into the West (Western Europe) and the East (Middle and Near East). In his lectures on ancient history, he stated clearly his limited aim to examine the origins of 'our civilisation', and excluded any discussions of 'the Indian and Chinese civilisations'.¹⁴⁷ In addition, the 'Middle East civilisation', though a part of 'our own', is depicted as stabilised and morbid; after losing its creative energy as early as in 4000 century B.C., it always lies under 'the shadow of death'.¹⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, Toynbee's estimation of the Turks, as an outcome of his 'Grand Tour' in Greece before the War, was rather low in this period.¹⁴⁹ This sense of superiority, however, gradually waned, not only because of his lack of confidence in the West after the War, but also because of his visit to Greece and Anatolia as a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* in 1921, when the Turkish Nationalist Army led by Kemal was fighting the Greeks. Toynbee was shocked by the atrocities committed by the Greeks he witnessed there, which forced him to reconsider his attitude towards the Turks, and his evaluation of the Islamic civilisation a whole.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ MS Toynbee, C 35 Arnold J. Toynbee, 'Ancient History: Six Lectures', p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

¹⁴⁹ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee*, pp. 41-2; Toynbee, *Experiences*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁵⁰ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee*, pp. 105-9.

During the War, Toynbee was an assistant to James Bryce in the latter's investigation into the Turkish massacre of the Armenians; his *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*, based on his investigation, was published in 1915.¹⁵¹ What he witnessed now made him alter his belief that the disaster was a result of Turkish moral backwardness. He became growingly critical towards the Greek government, and was forced to resign his Koraes Professorship, which was sponsored by the Greeks, before joining Chatham House in 1924.¹⁵²

'The Place of Medieval and Modern Greece in History', Toynbee's inaugural lecture as the first Koraes Professor at the University of London, was delivered in October 1919. One of his main arguments is that Western Europe and Greece experienced similar developments after the fall of Rome. The Eastern Roman Empire experienced a 'death of the past and the birth of a new society' under a new political order built by the Isaurian emperors in the Seventh Century, which is comparable to the history of the West at the same time; though dominated by the Ottoman Empire for centuries, its form of government was actually 'less of a break with the Greek tradition'.¹⁵³ Therefore, the Greeks did not have to 'uproot their national culture' to embrace Western culture in its eighteenth-century intellectual revival, of which Adamantios Korais was one of the leading lights, for 'the spirit they found in the West was not alien to their own'.¹⁵⁴ Stressing the common spirit the West and Greece

¹⁵¹ Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916).

¹⁵² See Richard Clogg, *Politics and the Academy: Arnold Toynbee and the Koraes Chair* (London: Frank Cass, 1986).

¹⁵³ Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Place of Medieval and Modern Greece in History* (London: Vellonis, 1919), pp. 13-14.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

inherited from the ancient Greek, however, implies that Toynbee did not regard modern Greece as having an individual civilisation of its own—either Byzantine or Ottoman.

Nevertheless, Toynbee's understanding changed significantly when he wrote *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, published in 1922. The title of the first chapter, 'The Shadow of the West' tellingly betrays Toynbee's belief that the West was responsible for any nationalist movements in Eastern Europe, so that the 'Eastern Question' as traditionally understood should be reversed and truly recognised as a 'Western Question'. Although Toynbee averred that the West should be blamed for its expansion, he also suggested that it was actually a token of the decline of both Greece and Turkey, which he now signified respectively as the Near Eastern civilisation and the Middle Eastern civilisation. A civilisation, as Toynbee put in the concluding paragraphs in *The Western Question*, is a closed universe in itself as long as it is 'fulfilling its potentialities'; therefore, these two civilisations' encounter with the West was a forced act due to their inner crisis.¹⁵⁵ In this regard, by the time he wrote *The Western Question*, Toynbee had begun to individualise different cultures and treat each of them as a separate civilisation, after abandoning the 'West-and-East' and 'us-and-them' dichotomies. It is noteworthy that advocating a 'civilisational' approach in international thought was not unusual in the 1920s. For example, Leonard Woolf, whose interest in the Far East resulted from his experience as a civil servant in Ceylon after graduating from Cambridge, on which his first novel *The Village in the Jungle* was based, averred in his *Imperialism and Civilisation* that imperialism was essentially a clash of

¹⁵⁵ Idem, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilisations* (London: Constable, 1992), p. 362.

civilisations, for the political, cultural and economic expansion of the West broke the co-existence of civilisations around the world. So to achieve a world order is to overturn this situation and promote ‘a synthesis of civilisations’.¹⁵⁶

As we have seen, Toynbee’s Koraes period (1919-23) witnessed a noticeable change in his historical thought, which was intrinsically connected with his experience during and after the First World War. He deserted the ‘Classic-Medieval-Modern’ periodisation, and argued that the Minoan, Greco-Roman and Modern Western societies were ‘philosophically contemporary’. Meanwhile, he no longer regarded the East as an entirety without inner variation, but began to discover as many civilisations as possible in other regions across the world. This expanded scope, as I have suggested, was decisively triggered by Toynbee’s post-war visit to Greece and Turkey—the outline of his study of civilisations was drafted during his trip back to England.¹⁵⁷ I further suggest that Toynbee’s comparative study of the growth, decline, and fall of civilisations was underpinned by a desire to validate the plot he discovered in the history of the only civilisation he had seriously worked on by then: the Hellenic society. As he proclaimed in an article contributed to a collection entitled *The Legacy of Greece* (1921), ‘it is possible that the great tragedies of history—that is, the great civilisations that have created by the spirit of man—may all reveal the same plot, if we analyse them rightly.’¹⁵⁸ Notably, Toynbee treated the facts and the ‘plot’ in a way as if they belonged to two dimensions. After completing the first volumes of *A Study of History*, Toynbee

¹⁵⁶ Woolf, *Imperialism and Civilisation*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Toynbee, *Experiences*, p. 101.

¹⁵⁸ Arnold J. Toynbee, ‘History’, in R.W. Livingstone (ed.), *The Legacy of Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), p. 297.

listed a number of historians, including F.M. Cornford (whose book on Thucydides he liked), Eileen Power and his sister Jocelyn, who 'have official knowledge of the histories of the different civilisations cited'; but, as he made clear, 'it is on facts and not on theories that I want them to be consulted'. However, there was another list composed of Gilbert Murray, the Hammonds, Hamish Paton and F.J. Teggart (an Irish-American historian), whom he intended to consult on 'the whole thing'. The value of their comments obviously weighed heavily: 'The revision of the book in the light of their criticisms will be of the most important stories in producing it'.¹⁵⁹

Toynbee's deepest concern was the future of the West, namely whether the West can avoid the seemingly unavoidable fate of other civilisations. But though Toynbee began to draw a parallel between Hellenic civilisation and modern Western civilisation, and proclaimed the significance of studying the former as a helpful way to understand the latter, he was not maintaining that the demise of the West was irreversible, not least because he believed that historical determinism was irreconcilable with historical imagination, as suggested in his undergraduate article 'What the Historian Does'.¹⁶⁰ In *A Study of History*, Toynbee indicated that Spengler's analogy between organism and civilisation had a determinist implication.¹⁶¹ In the first six volumes published in the 1930s, Toynbee was critical of what he called 'cyclic and recurrent' views of history on the ground that it was presupposed by scientism and determinism, and hence hindered creativity.¹⁶² It is worth noting that, at least in the first three volumes, nowhere did

¹⁵⁹ MS Toynbee, C 39: Arnold J. Toynbee, 'Direction for Publication'.

¹⁶⁰ MS Toynbee, C 33: Arnold J. Toynbee, 'What the Historian Does'.

¹⁶¹ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iii, pp. 221-3.

¹⁶² Ibid, iv, pp.11-12, 24.

Toynbee explicitly proclaim that Western society had reached the ‘Time of Troubles’—which signifies the irrevocable decline of a civilisation. Rather, when discussing the future of the West, the most frequently phrase he used was ‘the challenge of the West’; so Toynbee’s philosophy of history as elucidated in Volume I-III is less of a prediction than a warning against one of the greatest threats the West was faced with—another general war.

2.3. A ‘Chatham House Version?’

War World I not only had an enduring effect on Toynbee’s intellectual development, but it also had a direct influence on his academic career. Escaping from fighting on the Front, Toynbee joined the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, and was under the direction of James Headlam-Morley. Probably due to his investigation of the Armenians, Toynbee was responsible for providing information in regard to the Ottoman Empire. During the Paris Peace Conference, Toynbee was a member of the Middle Eastern section of the British delegation. After he was forced to resign his professorship at the University of London, Toynbee became the first Director of Studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) in 1924, and retained this position until his retirement. Toynbee, therefore, spent most of his career as a student of international relations; he was, from an institutional point of view, never a proper professional historian who held distinguished chairs in History and published articles in academic journals.

The post-war foundation of Chatham House was inseparable from a number of thinkers of international relations, including Zimmern, Headlam-Morley, and Lionel

Curtis, who recognised the significance of reliable and independent research. To build a new international order, and to ensure that international conflicts would be eliminated in the future, they believed that the intellectual-cum-diplomat would play a crucial role, as what they had done during the War—Headlam-Morley worked for the government on propaganda, while Zimmern was particularly keen on mobilising the working class and had a close connection with the Workers' Educational Association (W.E.A).¹⁶³ It is noteworthy that Curtis, who especially valued the Anglo-American alliance, believed that research centres based at both ends of the Atlantic would be extremely helpful in exchanging information. Curtis's original plan, which he proposed in 1919 in a meeting participated in by British and American delegates, however, did not succeed, and the Americans built up their own Council on Foreign Relations afterwards.¹⁶⁴

Because of Curtis, Chatham House from its beginning had an intimate relationship with the Round Table Movement. After getting a double Third in both Moderations and 'Greats' at Oxford, Curtis went to South Africa and became a member of Alfred Milner's 'Kindergarten', a term initially used in a critical way that referred to those Oxford graduates such as, apart from Curtis, Geoffrey Dawson (later editor of *The Times*), John Dove, Robert Brand, Lionel Hitchens, Patrick Duncan (later governor-general of the Union of South Africa) etc., who were recruited by Milner to serve in colonial administration after the Transvaal and Orange River colonies were

¹⁶³ See Gordon Martel, 'From Round Table to New Europe: Some Intellectual Origins of the Institute of International Affairs', in Andrea Bosco (ed.), *Chatham House and British foreign policy, 1919-1945 : The Royal Institute of International Affairs during the Inter-War Period* (London: Lothian Foundation, 1994), pp.14-39.

¹⁶⁴ Deborah Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth: A Biography of Lionel Curtis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp.166-79.

incorporated into the Empire after the Second Boer War.¹⁶⁵ It was Curtis' self-designated mission to help unite different colonies and make them a single Dominion; his ambition was achieved after the publication of the Selborne Memorandum, which he personally drafted, and accelerated the process of unification.

Curtis conceived the Empire as a federation that promoted self-governance of its dominions. Britain, as he argued in *The Problem of Commonwealth*, 'is not the commonwealth but merely a part of it'.¹⁶⁶ The Empire, therefore, becomes a Commonwealth of Nations in which organic unity and colonial nationalism are both realised. It was in this spirit that he, after returning from South Africa, with the help of Milner, organised the Round Table movement, which, as a pressure group, had its first meeting held in 1909 and its official journal, entitled *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, established in 1910. Its participants included, apart from those members of 'Milner's Kindergarten', Philip Kerr, Leonard Amery, Reginald Coupland, Zimmern, etc. Most of them had strong interests in colonial issues: Kerr served in South Africa, Amery worked for Milner at the Colonial Office, and Coupland held the Beit Chair in Colonial History at Oxford for more than twenty years.¹⁶⁷

When Toynbee joined Chatham House, he instantly recognised the significance of the *Annual Survey of International Affairs* that he was employed to compose in moulding public opinion, and regarded it as a platform which not only served the

¹⁶⁵ Walter Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men: The 'Kindergarten' in Edwardian Imperial Affairs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1968), p. 44.

¹⁶⁶ Lionel Curtis, *The Problem of Commonwealth* (London: Macmillan, 1915), p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Lavin, *From Empire to International Commonwealth*, pp.106-33; Nimocks, *Milner's Young Men*, pp.158-96.

purpose of maintaining international peace, but also helped to promulgate his own idea of history. Between 1925 and 1934, Toynbee did not produce much journalism; his time and energy were almost all spent on the *Annual Survey* and *A Study of History*. These two big projects became intertwined not least because Toynbee tended to understand contemporary international politics in the light of contacts between civilisations in history, and to study history with a strong concern for the present political situation.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, Toynbee's decision to include such a wide range of civilisations in *A Study of History* was not only because he wanted, as has been suggested, to apply his pattern into as many civilisations as possible; but also because this approach served practical purpose—his job to investigate international affairs naturally required a global perspective.

The first volume of *Annual Survey*, published in 1925, covers a timespan from 1920 to 1923. Apart from giving a general account of post-war settlement, including a brief introduction of the structure of the League of Nations, Toynbee provided a detailed analysis of international affairs from official files and press dispatches of the world divided into five regions: Western Europe, Central-Eastern Europe, Africa, the Far East, and the Islamic World.¹⁶⁹ But what is particularly worth mentioning is Toynbee's conception of the post-war international order that was elaborated in his long preface published as a separate volume. Toynbee believed that, in general, there were two noticeable trends in international politics after the War: 'an increase in the importance of

¹⁶⁸ When Toynbee was making an assessment of Chatham House's achievement in the past decade, he stated that a guiding principle of this institution was to encourage studies that '(i) covering a longer time-span of the past; (ii) retaining practical value for a longer time after production'. See MS Toynbee, C 39: 'Research of Chatham House' (8 pages).

¹⁶⁹ Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1920-1923* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925).

worldwide international organisations and a decline in the importance of continental Europe in international affairs'.¹⁷⁰ Toynbee argued that when the Covenant of League of Nations was signed as part of the Versailles Treaty, a huge accomplishment had been achieved; and that its long-term significance, which 'inaugurate[d] a new order of international society', would not be overshadowed by debates over specific issues such as territorial redistribution and reparation that attracted public attention at the first sight.¹⁷¹ Toynbee defended the League by maintaining that, although the U.S. refused to join, it still included most of the 'self-governing' states, and had achieved a balance between the Great Powers and smaller countries. Moreover, Toynbee fully endorsed the mandatory system on the ground that it prevented a 'social vacuum' in those countries which had been unprepared to defend themselves; otherwise, antagonistic Great Powers would easily confront each other when endeavouring to fill in this vacuum.¹⁷²

Toynbee's confidence in this new world order was manifest in the subsequent volumes until 1931 (published in 1932). In *Annual Survey 1928*, for example, Toynbee indicated in an encouraging manner that Kellogg-Briand Pact was a clear sign that Western civilisation would escape the fate of Hellenic civilisation. It is noteworthy that when stressing the significance of this Treaty in abolishing 'War', which Toynbee regarded as the 'deadly disease and sin' of civilisation, he clearly brought his theory of civilisation into play.¹⁷³ Toynbee made a comparison between the West, the Roman Empire, and Han Dynasty of ancient China, and argued that the peace achieved by the

¹⁷⁰ Idem, *The World after the Peace Conference* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 25.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 52.

¹⁷² Ibid, pp. 56-7.

¹⁷³ Idem, *Survey of International Affairs, 1928* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 1.

latter two empires ‘through the reduction of a plurality of sovereign independent states to a single super-state or unitary state’ was only temporary; for these two ‘universal states’ ‘were not established by the common consent of society’, but ‘the creatures of War itself’. In contrast, Western civilisation ‘addressed itself to the more difficult but far more hopeful task of inducing a plurality of sovereign states to renounce, not their separate existences and not their sovereignty, but the single sovereign prerogative of employing War as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another’.¹⁷⁴ Toynbee was not a member of the Round Table, but because of his endorsement of the principle of self-governance, he agreed with Curtis and Zimmern’s federalist approach in international politics, and was sympathetic with their view of the Commonwealth— ‘the development of national self-consciousness and national self-government in the British Dominions...had established a peculiar relation of diversity in unity and unity in diversity’.¹⁷⁵ In this regard, although Toynbee became a staunch critic of the Empire in the fifties, at least in the early thirties he still largely advocated the liberal imperialist idea on which Chatham House was founded.

As most British international thinkers during the inter-war years did, Toynbee identified nationalism as the greatest threat to the new world order. He argued in his general preface to the *Annual Survey* and in his BBC lectures ‘World Order or Downfall’ (1930) that from the nineteenth century, there had been two contradictory but not

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 18. In this regard, Elie Kedourie’s accusation of Toynbee for being a primary promulgator of the ‘Chatham House Version’ of British foreign policy in Middle East is perhaps exaggerated: Toynbee’s allegedly mistaken accentuation of pan-Arabism should be placed into a context in which advocating unification within the Dominion was not unusual, and not only by participants of Round Table Movement—for example, Jan Smuts, who fought for the Transvaal during the Boer War, was also a pro-Unionist. See Elie Kedourie, ‘The Chatham House Version’, in idem, *The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Essays* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), pp. 351-94.

unrelated forces: a decentralising tendency towards national devolution and a unifying tendency towards economic co-operation.¹⁷⁶ Compared to Murray and Zimmern, Toynbee was keener on making a relationship between nationalism and imperialist expansionism, and accepted Hobson's argument in *Imperialism: A Study* that war was a result of financiers and manufacturers' competing over overseas markets, when underconsumption happened in domestic markets.¹⁷⁷ The Great Powers of the nineteenth century, Toynbee argued, had linked various regions across the world together by their imperial activities out of economic interests. However, a world unity on the political level was not realised because nationalist sentiment and the worship of state power were in growth; eventually, the lack of economic self-sufficiency of those Great Powers finally led to worldwide conflicts.¹⁷⁸

Henceforth, what Toynbee tried to deliver in the *Annual Survey* and the first three volumes of *A Study of History* was a clear message that the future of Western society depended on whether nationalist antagonism between the Great Powers would be controlled, a world order could be built, and, most importantly, a general war might be prevented. Interestingly, Toynbee did not propound any formal theories of the League, which was partly because he was, after all, not a proper international theorist, and partly because of his disapproval of conceiving the League as a bureaucratic institution. To him, the League was first and foremost an ideal; so maintaining the new international

¹⁷⁶ Arnold J. Toynbee, *World Order or Downfall?: Six Broadcast Talks, November 10th to December 15th, 1930* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1930).

¹⁷⁷ J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: James Nisbet, 1902).

¹⁷⁸ Toynbee, *The World after the Peace Conference*, p. 16. Despite identifying nationalism as the origin of most general wars, Toynbee made a distinction between conservative nationalism that had its origin in Western Europe, and was spreading to Central-Eastern Europe, and creative nationalism, which became a dynamic force in countries that had been colonised by the West.

order primarily requires intellectual, instead of political and economic, communications between different civilisations. It was this purpose that Toynbee intended *A Study of History* to serve:

The meaning of my Near Eastern History to me has been the light that I have got from it on the relations between civilisations. In this way it was an avenue to working out my particular theory of the philosophy of history, and this is where my ultimate interest lies...When I begin to think about the Institute, I see this picture: there is Western Civilisation in contact with half-a-dozen other civilisations. So far the contact has been mainly economic and political, the intellectual contact has only just begun, but this is the really important contact, and things are going XXX [unrecognisable] now because this intellectual contact is so much more difficult to get right than the other kinds, and at the same time it is the heart of the matter.¹⁷⁹

III.

3.1. Bergson and British Idealism: Dual Legacy?

After reading Hans Morgenthau's review of the last four volumes of *A Study of History*, Toynbee's friend and disciple Martin Wight told the German-American political theorist that he had not done justice to Toynbee at one particular point—Toynbee's own definition of 'civilisation' was not fully discussed in the review.¹⁸⁰ Wight reminded Morgenthau that in the third volume, Toynbee made a clear statement of his understanding of 'civilisation': objectively, civilisation represents human institutions 'of the highest order, in the sense that they comprehend other institutions without being comprehended by others in their turn'; while subjectively, it refers to those societies that are 'intelligible fields of study'.¹⁸¹ However, Wight's quotation probably does not do justice to Toynbee either. For on the one hand, it seems

¹⁷⁹ MS Toynbee, C 72: Arnold J. Toynbee to Gilbert Murray, 27 October 1924.

¹⁸⁰ LSE Library Archives and Special Collections, MS Martin Wight, C 47: Martin Wight to Hans Morgenthau, 24 December 1954.

¹⁸¹ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iii, p. 227.

rather strange that the theme of a ten-volume work should be defined in merely one single line; on the other hand, Wight overlooked a particularly notable element in Toynbee's conception of civilisation, which, although Toynbee did not place under chapter titles such as 'definition of a term', constitutes a defining feature of his pre-religious philosophy of history—that civilisation is more of a moral and spiritual essence than merely an organised form of society.

The 'objective' sense of civilisation that Wight referred to was Toynbee's argument, already elaborated in volume I, that 'environmental challenges' of a human society included not only 'physical', but also 'human', environments. Primitive societies that surrender to these challenges are 'comprehended' by civilisations, whereas civilisations successfully meet these challenges and then 'comprehend' primitive societies.¹⁸² According to Toynbee, a civilisation, from its birth to demise, is constantly meeting challenges and making responses; so what is always needed is a dynamic force that helps to achieve a momentum that keeps one in movement and struggle:

To convert the movement into a repetitive, recurrent rhythm, there must be an élan which carries the challenged party through equilibrium into an overbalance which exposes him to a fresh challenge and thereby inspires him to make a fresh response in the form of a further equilibrium ending in a further overbalance.¹⁸³

This vitality, according to Toynbee, is the crucial and defining constituent of a civilisation. It is noteworthy that Toynbee's frequent use of the term 'vital impetus', and his recurrent quotation from *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* and *Creative Evolution* betray an intellectual indebtedness to Bergsonian philosophy.

¹⁸² Idem, *A Study of History*, i, p. 278.

¹⁸³ Idem, *A Study of History*, iii, p. 119.

‘Life “mechanises” its environment in order to vitalise it—to make it subservient to its own purposes and mode of activity...but the environment is also “mechanising” life by devitalising it and assimilating its movement to its own non-living rhythms.’—these words with a clear Bergsonian imprint were written by the young Toynbee as an undergraduate at Balliol in an essay entitled ‘The Machine—A Problem of Dualism’, in which Bergson is paid high tributes.¹⁸⁴ In 1911, when Bergson’s philosophy had a high reputation among British intellectuals, he gave a lecture at the Examination Schools at Oxford, which Toynbee might have attended.¹⁸⁵ Bergson’s philosophy, as some researchers have convincingly demonstrated, left a significant influence on a number of British modernist writers, including T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Meanwhile, there were two different ways in which Bergson’s philosophy was evaluated by British philosophers: it was harshly criticised by Bertrand Russell, who dismissed Bergson as a mystic; by contrast, Bergson’s defence of metaphysics with the notion of ‘quantitative multiplicity’ (which entails a criticism of the scientific ‘cause-and-effect’ relationship), and his elaboration of the faculty of ‘intuition’ were both appreciated by A.D. Lindsay in his *The Philosophy of Bergson* (1911).¹⁸⁶ To a large extent, this difference stemmed from their respective philosophical persuasion: Russell was an advocate of Realism, whereas Lindsay was deeply immersed in the British Idealist tradition. As a tutor in philosophy at Balliol when Toynbee was an undergraduate, Lindsay had a strong influence on, and formed a friendship with,

¹⁸⁴ MS Toynbee, C 34: Arnold J. Toynbee, ‘The Machine—A Problem of Dualism’.

¹⁸⁵ Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Buffalo: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), p.29.

¹⁸⁶ Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Bergson* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1914); A.D. Lindsay, *The Philosophy of Bergson* (London: Dent, 1911).

Toynbee (which was irrevocably harmed by Toynbee's decision to quit his fellowship of Balliol).¹⁸⁷ It is highly possible that it was through Lindsay that Toynbee was introduced to Bergson's philosophy, and that Lindsay's interpretation of Bergson influenced the ways in which his ideas were assimilated by Toynbee.

Among Bergson's writings, *Creative Evolution* (1917) particularly informed Toynbee's conception of the genesis and growth of a civilisation. *Creative Evolution* challenges two evolutionary theories prevalent in biological science: mechanism and finalism.¹⁸⁸ Both theories, Bergson argued, despite standing in opposition to each other in many aspects, share a common premise: that the historical process is calculable or can be known beforehand; hence creativity, which Bergson believed was the essential quality of evolution, is denied.¹⁸⁹ Bergson believed that evolution, once having been triggered by *élan vital*, was a process in constant change. Similarly, the willingness for radical change, as we have seen, was regarded by Toynbee as the defining characteristic of civilisation. The genesis of a civilisation, as Toynbee maintained in the third volume, does not guarantee its growth; so there are, apart from the twenty one civilisations, five arrested ones, whose failure was due to their inability to respond to recurrent challenges.¹⁹⁰

Bergson's influence on Toynbee, as we have seen, is manifested in Toynbee's conception of civilisation as being in constant development. However, there was another no less remarkable atmosphere in which Toynbee's intellectual outlook was nourished,

¹⁸⁷ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee*, p. 85.

¹⁸⁸ Henri Bergson, *The Creative Revolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1944), p. xx.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 43.

¹⁹⁰ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iii, pp. 1-3.

namely, British Idealism. When Toynbee arrived at Balliol, the influence of Jowett and T.H. Green was waning; but in general, he was still immersed in an Idealist milieu. Toynbee's choice to sign his name as 'Arnold Toynbee' instead of 'Arnold J. Toynbee' when publishing his first book *Nationality and the War*, and the fact that he lacked a father figure from his youth due to his father's mental illness, make us wonder to what extent Toynbee saw himself as an heir of his uncle, who was one of Benjamin Jowett's favourite disciples.¹⁹¹ As an undergraduate, Toynbee told a friend that he was 'overwhelmed by' reading T.H. Green's moral philosophy.¹⁹² As a requirement, Toynbee read many works by the Idealists, including Bernard Bosanquet's *Companion to Plato's Republic for English Readers* (1895), R.L. Nettleship's lecture on Plato's *Republic*, published posthumously in *Philosophical Lectures and Remains* (1897), and D.G. Ritchie's *Plato* (1902).¹⁹³ Moreover, some of the examination questions in 'Moral Philosophy Paper' he sat in for 'Greats' were closely related to T.H. Green's philosophy, for example, 'Discuss the view that all action aims at self-satisfaction'.¹⁹⁴

As Toynbee's philosopher tutors, Lindsay and J.A. Smith were important contributors to the afterlife of Idealism. Lindsay studied Classics at the University of Glasgow before reading 'Greats' at University College, Oxford, where he was tutored by Edward Caird, who was one of the two figures to whom Lindsay dedicated his Inaugural Lecture as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow in 1922.¹⁹⁵ J.A. Smith,

¹⁹¹ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee*, p. 72.

¹⁹² MS Toynbee, C 80: Toynbee to Robert Darbishire, 5 June 1910.

¹⁹³ MS Toynbee, C 35: 'J.A. Smith: Hegel and After'.

¹⁹⁴ Honour School of Literae Humaniores, *Oxford University Examination Papers Oxford University Examination Papers*, p.3 B4.

¹⁹⁵ W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 536.

was also a Scot; after acquiring a double first in ‘Mods’ and ‘Greats’, he was elected a fellow of Balliol in 1891, and became Waynflete Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy in 1910. Apart from holding basic Idealist positions, both Lindsay and Caird were interested in contemporary Continental thought. Lindsay wrote on Bergson and Marx, whereas Smith, alongside Collingwood, was one of the first who introduced Croce and Gentile’s ideas to British philosophers.¹⁹⁶ It is remarkable that there is a notebook of Smith’s lectures on Hegel and nineteenth-century German philosophy in Toynbee’s archive.¹⁹⁷ This influence, therefore, might have deterred Toynbee from being a mere philologist, and contributed to Toynbee’s interest in historical ideas.

Despite being philosophically ambitious, Toynbee was, after all, an historian and not particularly philosophically talented. But he infused several Idealist presuppositions into his philosophy of history in one significant aspect, namely, that civilisation is ethical in its essence. According to Toynbee’s account in *A Study of History*, the growth of a civilisation is measured by whether it can make a series of ‘successful responses to successive challenges.’¹⁹⁸ To achieve this goal, a civilisation is required to transform the external challenge into an internal one:

Growth means that the growing personality of civilisation tends to become its own environment and its own challenger and its own field of action. In other words, the criterion of growth is progress towards self-determination; and progress towards self-determination is a prosaic formula for describing the miracle by which Life enters into the kingdom.¹⁹⁹

Although Toynbee in *A Study of History* claimed that civilisation did not have a personality, it is particularly noteworthy that what he was really refuting was the evolutionary view that society was comparable to a ‘super-organism’, held by Spengler

¹⁹⁶ On the hitherto unnoticed influence of Smith on Collingwood, see Adrian Taylor, ‘Hidden Footnotes: J.A. Smith, R.G. Collingwood and Croce’s Conception of History’, *European Review of History*, 24/5 (2017), pp. 683-703.

¹⁹⁷ MS Toynbee, C 35: ‘J.A. Smith: Hegel and After’.

¹⁹⁸ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iii, p.216.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 216.

and J.S. Huxley.²⁰⁰ To him, a civilisation in growth integrates ‘all the aspects and activities of their social life [into] a single social whole, in which the economic, political, and cultural elements are kept in a nice adjustment with one another by an inner harmony of the growing body social.’²⁰¹ Therefore, Toynbee made a Bosanquetian argument that civilisation was an entity whose purpose was to realise its individuality and better-self.

Toynbee not only believed, as T.H. Green did, that society needed to play a positive role in fostering an individual’s character and helping him achieve his potentiality; he also imparted a historical dimension into his social theory. Toynbee remarked that humanity, in general, did not make any progress from primitive society to civilisation; it was a minority of creative personalities who made the decisive moral and spiritual breakthrough that gave birth to a civilisation.²⁰² These geniuses ‘stand to ordinary Human Nature as civilisations stand to primitive human societies’, and they launch the creative process by their ‘mystical experience’.²⁰³ Moreover, it became these people’s duty, after a civilisation is born, to lift its moral and spiritual level by transfiguring ‘his fellow creatures into his own image’, an activity Toynbee called ‘Withdraw-and-Return’.²⁰⁴ There are two ways to pursue this goal: the ideal way is to convey their ‘creative energy from soul to soul’; whereas a more viable approach is by mimesis and habitual exercise.²⁰⁵ Toynbee maintained that the second alternative was a

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 223.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 152.

²⁰² Ibid, p. 242.

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 234.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 235.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 245.

shortcut that had been taken by all civilisations; however, since it is not ‘self-determined’, it easily leads to ‘a kind of mechanisation of human movement and life’, and thus consumes the vitality of a civilisation.²⁰⁶ Therefore, if those leaders cannot help their fellows realise their better-selves, they would no longer be creative minorities, and become dominant minorities instead. According to Toynbee’s theory, when a society ceases to be unified, or when there is a ‘schism’ between various social groups, its breakdown is imminent.

Inspired by Bergson and British Idealism, Toynbee’s view that the lifespan of a civilisation depends on its vitality, and his recognition of self-achievement as the essence of civilisation have a significant implication—the general war is merely a symptom of the decline of a civilisation, instead of its cause. In other words, insofar as a civilisation has not yet lost its creativity, it is still in the process of growth; so a general war is not necessarily *the* general war that marks the beginning of the process of ‘Time of Troubles’. In this regard, we might understand why in volumes I-III Toynbee never seriously proclaimed that the West had reached the ‘Time of Troubles’, even though he admitted that World War I was ‘a general war’.²⁰⁷ On the contrary, Toynbee stated that Western civilisation was the only civilisation that had not lost its creativity. In this regard, although the War shattered Toynbee’s optimism by prompting him to speculate about the future of the West, his attitude until the early 1930s was, despite being uncertain, not necessarily pessimistic. The question about the future of the West, he

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 248; iv, pp.124-8.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, i, p. 14.

averred, would not be answered in several centuries.²⁰⁸

But meanwhile, Toynbee also warned that the West's expansion was a waste of its vital energy, and that every civilisation that sought expansion in history was punished by social disintegration.²⁰⁹ Therefore, the challenge to the West is internal instead of external. To Toynbee, the fact that morality in Western civilisation had not gone up to a higher level was particularly alarming, not least because the new international order required 'self-control', 'mutual tolerance', and 'public spirited co-operation'.²¹⁰ By the time the second batch of *A Study of History* was published (1939), Toynbee had clearly been more pessimistic as European Fascism was on the rise and another Great War seemed inevitable; and he seemed to have accepted the fact that 'our "Time of Troubles" has undoubtedly descended upon us in our Western World of today'.²¹¹ Becoming increasingly religious, as we shall see in Chapter IV, Toynbee revised the structure of his theory and reconsidered the relationship between civilisation and religion in volumes IV to VI. However, the presumption that civilisation needs an ethical force to overcome the internal challenge and realise its inner-self is retained in Toynbee's new framework, especially as Toynbee began to regard industrialism as the greatest moral challenge to the West from the 1930s.

3.2. Industrialism and Discontent

In a letter written to Barbara Hammond in 1930, Toynbee told her that he had

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p.90, n 2.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, iii, p. 140.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 363.

²¹¹ Ibid, iv, p. 4.

‘been reading “Discontent” with enormous pleasure’.²¹² What Toynbee referred to here was obviously Lawrence and Barbara Hammonds’ *The Age of the Chartists, 1832-1854: A Study of Discontent*, published in the same year. Through Gilbert Murray, Toynbee got to know, and soon formed a lifelong friendship with, the Hammonds— Toynbee’s third son was even named after Lawrence. Lawrence Hammond was a staunch pro-Boer who always held a liberal-internationalist view, and had, together with Toynbee, temporarily served on the Labour Party Advisory Committee during the War.²¹³ After the War, Lawrence Hammond was invited by C.P. Scott to report on the Paris Peace Conference for the *Manchester Guardian*. At Lawrence Hammond’s request, C.P. Scott appointed Rosalind Murray, Toynbee’s first wife and Gilbert Murray’s daughter, as his personal assistant.²¹⁴

Tutored by the socialist Sidney Ball at Oxford, Lawrence Hammond became a radical who espoused the cause of New Liberalism, and remained close to other progressives such as Tawney, G.D.H Cole, Hobson, Hobhouse (who was Barbara Hammond’s tutor at Oxford), etc. His early liberal view is well exemplified in ‘A Liberal View of Education’, collected in *Essays in Liberalism*, a volume contributed by six Oxford men (also including, among others, Hilaire Belloc and Francis Hirst).²¹⁵ Gaining a disappointing double ‘second’ in ‘Mods’ and ‘Greats’, Hammond never pursued a purely academic career; as a journalist-cum-intellectual, he not only edited *The Speaker*, but also kept writing leaders and columns for the *Manchester Guardian*.

²¹² MS Hammonds, C 23, fo. 115: Arnold Toynbee to Barbara Lawrence, 15 October 1930.

²¹³ Weaver, *The Hammonds* p. 149; Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 198.

²¹⁴ Weaver, *The Hammonds*, pp. 152-62.

²¹⁵ J.L. Hammond, et al., *Essays in Liberalism by Six Oxford Men* (London: Cassell, 1897).

But it was certainly the works on nineteenth-century English social history which Lawrence Hammond collaborated on with his wife Barbara that established this couple's reputation not only as historians, but also public moralists in the first half of the twentieth century.²¹⁶

The Hammonds' labour trilogy, including *The Village Labourer*, *The Town Labourer* and *The Skilled Labourer*, were published successively in 1911, 1917 and 1919.²¹⁷ The common theme of these three works, originally planned to be composed as one single volume, is to examine the social consequence of the Industrial Revolution, and to reveal the miserable living condition of the poor between 1760 and 1832. They not only explored the impact of Enclosure, which transformed large open fields into fenced private farms, on rural peasants, but also gave a detailed account of the life of masses of industrial workers in new towns—some paragraphs on child labour shocked Tawney so much that he could not even finish reading it.²¹⁸ As Gilbert Murray remarked, the Hammonds' works show 'how blind the whole upper and middle class can be to the condition of the poor'; Tawney believed that they rendered 'the historical assumptions on which our modern slavery is based.'²¹⁹ In this regard, the Hammonds' works were written under a similar spirit with the surveys conducted in the late nineteenth century by such social researchers as Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree on poverty in London and York.

²¹⁶ In regards to Lawrence Hammond as a public moralist, see Stefan Collini, 'Moralist: J.L. and Barbara Hammond, R.H. Tawney, Richard Hoggart, R.M. Titmuss', in idem, *Common Writing*, pp.183-90.

²¹⁷ J.L. and Barbara Hammond, *The Village Labourer, 1760-1832: A Study in the Government of England before the Reform Bill* (London: Longmans, Green &Co., 1911); idem, *The Town Labourer, 1760-1832: The New Civilisation* (London: Longmans, Green &Co. 1917); idem, *The Skilled Labourer, 1760-1832* (London: Longmans, Green &Co., 1919).

²¹⁸ Weaver, *The Hammonds*, p. 138.

²¹⁹ Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, pp. 155-63.

In the field of economic history, the labour trilogy triggered the ‘standard of living’ debate which was engaged in by more than a generation of British economic historians, who were predominantly sceptical about the Hammonds’ historical generalisations. Never properly trained in economics, the Hammonds laid themselves open to criticisms because of their statistical mistakes. For example, their argument that a population growth in late eighteenth-century England demonstrates the large demand of labour force by industrialisation was refuted by the Cambridge trained historian G.T. Griffith, who contended in his *Population Problems of the Age of Malthus* (1926) that it was, instead, a decline in the death rate as a result of improvement in public health that made this growth possible.²²⁰ More significantly, the economic historian J.H. Clapham in his *Economic History of Modern Britain* (1926) challenged the Hammonds’ catastrophic presumption by arguing that the effect of Industrial Revolution was not radical but ‘gradual and local’, and that the wages of the labours had risen during the 1780s and 1830s.²²¹ Faced with these criticisms, the Hammonds admitted some of their mistakes both publicly and privately. Barbara told Lawrence Hammond that ‘statisticians smite and we offer the other cheek’; while in ‘The Industrial Revolution and Discontent’ (1939), Lawrence Hammond recognised the strength of Clapham’s argument based on quantitative research.²²² In the same article, however, Hammond also raised an

²²⁰ Weaver, *The Hammonds*, pp. 195-7; Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, pp.245-7; For the Hammond’s place in the standard of living debate, see Eric Hobsbawm, ‘The Standard of Living Debate’, as well as the ‘Editors Introduction’, in Arthur J. Taylor, *The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1975), pp. xi-xviii, pp. 179-88. As for the Hammonds’ place in the historiography of the Industrial Revolution, see David Cannadine, ‘The Present and the Past in the English Industrial Revolution, 1880-1980’, *Past and Present*, 103 (1984), pp. 131-72.

²²¹ It is noteworthy that although Clapham did not mention the Hammonds’ names directly, the implication of his historical account was crystal clear. See J.H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain: The early Railway Age, 1820-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), especially Chapters IV and V.

²²² Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, p.246; J.L. Hammond, ‘The Industrial Revolution and Discontent’, *The Economic History Review*, 2/2 (1930), pp. 215-28.

important issue that had already been dealt with in *The Town Labourer* and *The Rise of Modern Industry* (1925) and would be more explicitly elaborated in *The Age of the Chartists* (1930) and *The Bleak Age* (1934).

The subtitle of *The Town Labourer*—‘The New Civilisation’ indicates that the Hammonds were not content with merely examining the economic condition of labour based on cold statistics. To them, the Industrial Revolution ‘was a social revolution, creating a new civilisation with problems and a character of its own’, which ‘separated England from its past...completely.’²²³ There is no doubt that it generated an unparalleled growth in national wealth; but at the same time it also gave rise to a new social system, a new form of ‘discipline’, a new spirit, which, in combination, became an ‘inexorable force’ that not only made the poor ‘mere muscles of industry’, but also destroyed ‘their customs, their traditions, their freedom, their ties of family and home, their dignity and character as men and women’.²²⁴ In fact, the Hammonds only wrote one chapter on ‘The Economic Condition’; but there was a chapter on how political economy was used to legitimise the new philosophy of profit-making, and two more chapters on the negative effect of Methodism, which, the Hammonds argued, spiritually enslaved the labour with social asceticism. Therefore the age of the Industrial Revolution was described by the Hammonds as ‘complacent pessimism’, which successfully split the English society into what Disraeli called the ‘two nations’.²²⁵

What the Hammonds told in their labour trilogy was therefore essentially a moral

²²³ J.L. and Barbara Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, p. 2.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 36, 18.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, p. v.

story; but, to them, morality includes not only poverty and injustice, but also sentiments and imagination. *The Age of the Chartists* is not, as its title suggests, a book on the Chartist movement. Rather, it deals with the predominant ‘discontent’ of the masses, including the Luddites, the Chartists, and participants in other small revolts across England during the first half of the nineteenth century, when, as the Hammonds suggested, ‘statisticians tell us that...earnings increased and that most men and women were less poor’—it was clearly Clapham whom they were referring to here.²²⁶ Why, therefore, this discontent? The Hammonds’ answer was that these revolts were driven neither by politics nor economics, but ‘from the imagination’. A civilisation, they argued, should ‘satisfy a wider range of needs’, and should be measured by the ‘whole of their social life, their religion, their art, their literature, their methods of government and justice, the several institutions in which their public life finds form and expression, the relationships and the sentiments of classes to each other’. English society in the nineteenth century, as the Hammonds maintained, failed to form a unified social sympathy and sentiment; instead, it deprived the labourers of a feeling that ‘they have a part’ in, or were attached to, a community. So the impulse of those working-class people in revolt was ‘hostility to a view of life which outraged the poor man’s self-respect and gave to his higher wants no place at all in its values’.²²⁷

It is interesting to note that, after 1931, industrialism also became a significant theme in Toynbee’s works. In particular, his introduction for *Annual Survey, 1931* strikes an unusual note compared to other volumes; his focal point was not international

²²⁶ Idem, *The Age of the Chartists, 1832-1854: A Study of Discontent* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1930), p. 3.

²²⁷ Ibid, p. 4.

affairs, but the impact of the Great Depression on Western civilisation in general. Recapitulating his contention that Western imperialism had unified the world economically, Toynbee also added a new dimension into his social criticism. He underlined the force of industrialism as a 'human institution' that underpinned Western expansion, and its role in building an economic world order.²²⁸ It is noteworthy that this line of argument had not been adopted in Toynbee's BBC lectures 'World Order or Downfall?', delivered only two years before, but was incorporated into volumes I-III, and received more detailed elaboration in volumes IV-VI of *A Study of History*.

Toynbee's evaluation of industrialism and its effect rests on two levels. First, he believed that it was an economic system erected in England after the Industrial Revolution, and had spread around the globe. Industrialism is 'a system of machine production' that 'means local specialisation in skilled and costly production for a world-market'; its success relied on 'the world organised as one single field of economic activity, in which we are all at liberty to live and work and produce and collect and distribute and sell and buy and travel and transact without let or hindrance'.²²⁹ Nevertheless, the Great Powers of the nineteenth century, who owed their strength to industrialism, promoted protectionism and opposed world unity. In this regard, Toynbee was improving his Hobsonian argument in the 1920s that the world had been unified economically but divided politically. In 1932, Toynbee and Lawrence Hammond together gave twelve BBC talks under the theme 'The Growth of Modern

²²⁸ Arnold J. Toynbee and V.M. Boutler, *Survey of International Affairs, 1931* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 1-59.

²²⁹ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iii, p.363; idem, 'The Unnatural Spring of Industrialism', *The Listener*, 22 June 1932.

World Order', in which they tried to analyse the present world order and Britain's place in it by tracing its development from the eighteenth century (it is noteworthy that Toynbee's six talks were highly similar to 'World Order or Downfall?', except that 'industrialism' now became a more significant theme). Here Hammond supplemented his social history of the Industrial Revolution with a more international perspective: he argued that the prosperity of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a result of its success in commerce and internal free trade. What gave the 'unbalanced enthusiasm' of commerce in England a special momentum, according to Hammond, was particularly the Industrial Revolution.²³⁰ Moreover, Hammond restated Toynbee's argument that nationalism and protectionism were menacing in a world economically united by industrial commercialism, so it was urgent to 'bring some moral laws into the relations of people to each other'.²³¹

In this regard, Toynbee not only accepted the Hammonds' generalisation that the Industrial Revolution marked the beginning of a completely new society in English history, but he also integrated this presumption with his study of nineteenth-century international politics. But more importantly, it was above all the moral implication of Hammonds' social criticism, which, as Donald Winch and Stefan Collini point out, made them successors to critics such as Ruskin, William Morris and Arnold Toynbee Sr., and contributors to what Raymond Williams would call the 'culture-and-society' tradition, by which Toynbee was especially inspired.²³² In the first six volumes of *A*

²³⁰ J.L. Hammond, 'Commerce Becomes the Source of Power', *The Listener*, 27 April 1932.

²³¹ Idem, 'Building up World Unity', *The Listener*, 25 May 1932.

²³² See Stefan Collini, 'The Literary Critic and the Village Labourer: "Culture" in Twentieth-Century Britain', *Transaction of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2002), pp. 93-116, especially pp.107-12; Donald Winch, 'Mr

Study of History, Toynbee argued that industrialism was a mode of thought that influenced not merely the English society, but the entire Western civilisation. The danger of industrialism, he argued, was that it accentuated the division of labour in a society, and hindered men's creative faculties, which resulted in what he called 'mechanicalness of Mimesis'. According to Toynbee's theory, when the morality of major members of a civilisation cannot be lifted up to the level of creative minority, 'anti-social esotericism' would happen, which would lead to the disintegration of this civilisation.²³³ In this regard, even if Toynbee's works (in which the notion of 'culture' was hardly discussed) did not neatly fit into Williams' tradition, he was still a historical moralist who accepted the Hammonds' historical presumption that the late eighteenth century was the beginning of a new society, and who recognised moral degradation and spiritual vacancy as the greatest problems of the entire Western civilisation— and it is within this context that Toynbee's re-conversion to Christianity can be best understood.²³⁴

A significant feature of *The Age of the Chartists*, *The Bleak Age* (written based on the framework of *The Age of the Chartists*), and Lawrence Hammond's Hobhouse Lecture (1933), as Stefan Collini and Stewart Weaver both recognised, was the Hammonds' comparison of nineteenth-century England with Hellenic civilisation, and their confidence in the 'corrective function' of classical teaching.²³⁵ The Hammonds

Gradgrind and Jerusalem', in idem, *Wealth and Life: Essays on the Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 367-98, especially 380-2.

²³³ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iv, pp. 122-33.

²³⁴ Tawney famously remarked that the Hammonds tend 'to write as times as though the fall of man occurred in the reign of George III'. See the obituary he wrote for Lawrence Hammond, 'J.L. Hammond, 1872-1949', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 46 (1960), pp. 267-93, at 276.

²³⁵ J.L. Hammond, *The Growth of Common Enjoyment* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933). J.L. and Barbara

admitted that class conflict in ancient Greece was not less' bitter and incessant', but it was 'veiled or softened by the moral influence of common possessions'; besides, 'the practice of social fellowship was stimulated by the spectacle of beautiful buildings, and the common enjoyment of the arts and culture of the time.'²³⁶ A large amount of public expenditure was spent on what the Hammonds called 'common enjoyment', so that 'every town had its theatres, its baths, its public games and festivals, its great gardens and colonnades', which was unimaginable in new towns such as Manchester, where even local playgrounds disappeared. As Murray, Zimmern, and Toynbee were, the Hammonds were intellectually indebted to their classical education; they even believed that because of this education, which 'every eighteenth century politician was bred and nourished', the English governing class, despite their responsibility for eliminating the peasants, 'remained a race of country gentlemen', and showed 'a passion for justice between peoples, a sense for national freedom, a great body of principle'.²³⁷

The Hammonds' adornment of Hellenism even served a reassuring purpose. When they were shocked and depressed by the brutal attack made by the Tory critic Anna Ramsay in a review published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1929, the Hammonds chose to 'lay on sofas in different rooms...reading the *Agamemnon*...and the *Trojan Women*'.²³⁸

Moreover, like Murray and Toynbee, they were not only keen on drawing historical

Hammond, *The Bleak Age* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1934); particularly see the second chapter. It is noteworthy that as Collini shows, the subsequent editions of *The Bleak Age* contain many significant revisions. See Collini, 'The Literary Critic and the Village Labourer', and 'Moralist'. Also see Teresa Javurek, 'A New Liberal Descent: The "Labour" Trilogy by Lawrence and Barbara Hammond', *Twentieth Century British History*, 10/4 (1999), pp. 375-403.

²³⁶ J.L. and Barbara Hammond, *The Age of the Chartists*, pp. 7-8.

²³⁷ Idem, *The Village Labourer*, p. 330.

²³⁸ Collini, 'Moralist', p. 188.

parallels, but also believed that historical writing was a communicative medium between the past and the present. Henceforth, it might be worthwhile to compare the reciprocal comments made by Toynbee and the Hammonds when reading each other's works. Writing to Barbara Hammond, Toynbee observed that 'The way you set it against the ancient background and use ancient history as a kind of observation post for standing off from the 19th Century and looking at it in perspective is masterly...You make these towns come alive—or perhaps I mean dead.'²³⁹ In a similar vein, Lawrence Hammond remarked in his review of the first three volumes of *A Study of History* that 'here the reader is offered not some clever and arresting adaptation of the latest novelty in psychology or biology to politics but a large, measured, tranquil, and philosophical examination of history by a writer who adds to the rare intellectual equipment needed so Herculean a task the advantage of experience of public life and contact with foreign scholars and politicians.'²⁴⁰ Both the Hammonds and Toynbee (as he argued in the very first section in the general introduction of *A Study of History*) recognised industrialism (in other words, specialisation) as one of the greatest obstacles to historical research. It limits the historian's scope, makes him a slave of his materials, and deters him from seeing 'Life as a whole'.²⁴¹ To them, drawing historical parallels and conjuring up the spirit of Hellenism is therefore not only an historical approach, but itself a revolt against industrialism and its damage to the spirit of Western society.

Conclusion

²³⁹ MS Hammonds, C 23, fo. 115: Arnold Toynbee to Barbara Lawrence, 15 October 1930.

²⁴⁰ J.L. Hammond, 'A New Interpretation of History', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 June 1934.

²⁴¹ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, i, p. 2.

The First World War shattered the sense of certainty those British intellectuals who were brought up in the Victorian Age used to enjoy; so the fact that civilisation became a frequently debated theme in British intellectual life itself betrays a common concern about the timespan of contemporary Western society, and renders the progress of Western society an idea no longer taken for granted. The extent of their anxiety, nevertheless, should not be exaggerated; for neither fatalism nor defeatism was widely accepted. To those thinkers of international relations discussed in this chapter, including Murray, Zimmern, Laski, Woolf, the most valuable lesson of the Great War was that international conflicts should be prevented by re-building a new, stable international order—the fact that international relations as a subject became noticeably popular in the 1920s is itself an illustration of a prevailing internationalism. Their commitment to the League of Nations as a cause, moreover, was often buttressed by these thinkers' conceptions of history which presupposed a world unified by different civilisations as the future goal. Toynbee's *magnum opus*, despite being written in an idiosyncratic manner by today's standard, should thus be situated into this context. The overriding place of the abolition of war in Toynbee's philosophy of history is only one of the many instances in which his view of international politics as elaborated in the annual report he wrote for Chatham House, and his conception of history were merged. In many ways, the first three volumes, albeit published in the thirties, were a product of the twenties; they not only exemplified Toynbee and his contemporaries' confidence in the new international order particularly after the Kellogg-Briand Pact, but also incorporated certain historical presuppositions that were not uncommon in the twenties. As situations

in international politics soon became radicalised in the 1930s, Toynbee's confidence in internationalism and the future of the West noticeably waned, which can be demonstrated by the more pessimistic tone in his second batch of volumes.

Toynbee, as this chapter shows, was not a Hegelian philosopher of history who sought to explain the history of humankind by a governing principle. But his later 'fame' as a 'meta-historian' obliterated the political and ethical implication of 'civilisation' as being treated as the most basic unit in his philosophy of history. In the 1920s, this 'civilisational' approach, presuming that civilisations were equal in their value, not only had an anti-imperialist indication (which was accepted by both liberal progressives and the Left), but also conveyed an obvious criticism of parochialism and nationalism, which thinkers with an internationalist bent regarded as the greatest threat to civilisation—historical writings influenced by nationalism and based on the 'nation state' generated a certain type of knowledge that would, in turn, be used to defend nationalism. Moreover, the tendency to evaluate a society from a 'civilisational' perspective was related to Toynbee's classicist training. Toynbee's examination of civilisations in history, in terms of their genesis, growth, and decline, was highly reliant on the pattern he discovered in Greco-Roman civilisation, which Toynbee, Murray and other classicists-cum-international theorists treated as a whole. A typical way in which they made sense of their own society was often not by examining its historical development, but by drawing parallels between it and the Hellenic civilisation. Gradually recognising industrialism's harm to human thought as an internal challenge graver and more significant than the external challenge of the West, Toynbee and the

Hammonds had recourse to the spirit of Hellenism, including its creativity, public spirit and ability to understand humanity in its entirety. This spiritual-moral understanding of civilisation not only made Toynbee a historical moralist, but also paved the way for his re-conversion to Christianity in the late 1930s, when the new international order was dismantled again.

Chapter II

History as a One-Way Street: E.H. Carr and Historical Realism

Introduction

In the third meeting of the Moot, a discussion group primarily composed of a number of leading British Christian thinkers, the Hungarian refugee sociologist Karl Mannheim introduced his famous ‘planning for freedom’ thesis to other members who were present, including J.H. Oldham, T.S. Eliot, John Middleton Murry, Alec Vidler, H.A. Hodges, etc.²⁴² Mannheim’s proposal, which was later more systematically elaborated in his wartime writings such as *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (1935, translated into English with revision in 1940) and *Diagnosis of our Time* (1943), concerned the indispensability of planning in social and educational reconstruction, and was highly valued not only by intellectuals from different persuasions, but also by members of the government, for example, R.A. Butler, President of the Board of Education.²⁴³ Knowing that the War was impending—the meeting was held in January 1939, Mannheim argued that to compete with the totalitarian states, Britain should also be ‘semi-totalitarian’; so a new social order with more communal cohesiveness and a new form of government democratically controlled but with increased power were urgently needed.²⁴⁴ During their discussion, John Middleton Murry remarked that ‘he did not like the plan outlined in Mannheim’s paper’ because of ‘the sort of control

²⁴² K.W. Clements, *The Moot Papers: Faith, Freedom and Society, 1938-1944* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), p. 136.

²⁴³ Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction: Studies in Modern Social Structure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1940); idem, *Diagnosis of Our Time: Wartime Essays of a Sociologist* (London: Kegan Paul, 1943); Jose Harris, ‘Political Ideas and the Debate on State Welfare, 1940-45’, in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 239-46.

²⁴⁴ Clements, *The Moot Papers*, pp. 130-4.

envisaged'; but still, 'he was forced to agree with it'. Mannheim replied that 'it was just because there was no other way out that put the chance of success high'.²⁴⁵ In the preface to his *Diagnosis of Our Time*, Mannheim again underlined the necessity of implementing his plan—'Britain has the chance and the mission to develop a new pattern of society, and that it is necessary that we should become aware of it and act on it.'²⁴⁶

So, interestingly, Murry and Mannheim reached an agreement only because they shared a common view of history—when one finds, after seriously considering the reality of various situations, that there is only one alternative provided, he should then follow this irreversible historical tendency. As a Christian literary critic and husband of the novelist Katherine Mansfield, Murry was conspicuously radicalised in the 1930s, and known for his marriage of Communism with Christianity—a classless society, he averred, can only be achieved in a Christian society. Working on William Blake's poetry in the early 1930s, Murry seemed to experience a mystical Marxist revelation himself.²⁴⁷ As Murry claimed in his lecture to the Independent Labour Party summer school in 1932, 'Marxism is not primarily a doctrine of economics; it is a particular kind of understanding of human history, more fundamental and more comprehensive than any that had been before'.²⁴⁸ In his *The Necessity of Communism* (1932), Murry argued that 'communism will inevitably come to this country', and that 'no power on earth can

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p.165.

²⁴⁶ Mannheim, *Diagnosis of Our Time*, p. ix.

²⁴⁷ Sharron Greer Cassavant, *John Middleton Murry: The Critic as Moralist* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1982), pp. 63-6; Ernest G. Griffin, *John Middleton Murry* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), pp. 148-50.

²⁴⁸ Peter Faulkner, 'Murry, Marx and Morris', in *Journal of William Morris Society*, 12/4 (Spring 1998). p. 8.

stop it'.²⁴⁹ But Murry's Christian belief meant that he could not fully accept Soviet Communism; his solution, as he claimed in his essays for the literary journal *Adelphi* that he edited, was that Communism could be realised in a distinctive English form, and that William Morris, whom he much admired, was the English Marx.²⁵⁰

In 1953, a review of Karl Mannheim's *Essays on the Social Knowledge*, a collection of his methodological essays published after his sudden death in 1947, appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, in which Mannheim's sociological approach was highly praised. Acclaiming Mannheim's argument that the history of ideas cannot be properly studied without considering their sociological and economic backgrounds, the reviewer nonetheless pointed out that relativism and historicism, which he believed were the most significant constituent of Mannheim's thought, also generated a difficulty in Mannheim's theory, namely, the standard of truth and value if all ideas are conditioned by history. According to the reviewer, although Mannheim's theory posed a serious challenge to the universalism of the Enlightenment, when he attempted to overcome this problem, he also secretly but unavoidably inherited the principle of rational progress.²⁵¹

Thanks to the disclosure of identities of anonymous contributors for the *TLS*, we now know that the reviewer was E.H. Carr, who wrote a large number of reviews for this journal in the 1950s. Carr's interpretation of Mannheim, interestingly, also seems a proclamation of his view of history. Like Murry and many from the British Left, Carr

²⁴⁹ John Middleton Murry, *The Necessity of Communism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932), p. 9.

²⁵⁰ J. Middleton Murry, 'William Morris', in H.J. Massingham and Hugh Massingham (eds.), *The Great Victorians* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1932), pp. 291-308; Faulkner, Murry, Marx and Morris', p. 8.

²⁵¹ E.H. Carr, 'Thinking Things Out', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 9 January 1953.

was also radicalised by the political events in the 1930s, including the rise of Fascism and global economic crisis. They felt that the Western liberal capitalist society had been abandoned by history, and that it would be replaced by a new form of social and world order. As A.L. Rowse remarked, 'I have always regarded 1931 as the disastrous turning point in Europe after the First German War, when all our post-war hopes of a better world were frustrated and the way taken that led to the Second War'.²⁵² In such a context, historical inevitability was therefore often intertwined with historical relativism—no economic systems, social orders and ideologies are universally valid, and will inevitably be replaced when a new age is coming.

Carr self-consciously developed these 'realist' presuppositions into a more formal and systematic philosophy of history, which underpinned his political and economic views. Unlike Toynbee, Carr was not ambitious enough to make an enquiry into the pattern of history as an entirety; but this does not mean that he did not have an interest in probing into the process of history. As he told the Marxist historian Brian Pierce in the 1970s, 'events have infinite numbers of causes, some remote, some less remote...which you regard as fundamental depends on your view of the historical process'.²⁵³ Carr's philosophy of history, as he enunciated in *What is History?*, can be roughly summarised as seeking to erect a relationship between the past and the future. He believed that the historian was entitled to project the future based on the tendency he found in the past; at the same time, his expectation of the future also affects the way he

²⁵² A.L. Rowse, *A Man of the Thirties* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979), p. 174.

²⁵³ University of Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library, Special Collections, MS Carr, C 26: E.H. Carr to Brian Pierce, 1 July 1975.

views history. Carr was, therefore, convinced that history could not be understood without a pattern; but the pattern is neither pre-destined, nor presupposed by a definite or transcendental end of history. Instead, it is imposed by the historian after he makes an analysis of the given socio-economic circumstances.²⁵⁴ The essence of Carr's realist historical thought is thus this idea that history is a process irrevocably marching towards a long-term goal; so being historically rational is to identify and cooperate with the driving force of history.

It is, therefore, the objective of this chapter to examine the political circumstances and intellectual atmosphere in which Carr's realist philosophy of history was formed, and the ways in which it was used to legitimise his denunciation of liberalism and backing of economic planning. It is remarkable that, politically speaking, realism and liberalism are not necessarily mutually exclusive; but, according to Carr, their underlying historical presumptions are in irreconcilable conflict. Moreover, this chapter aims to show that Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939) is an early summary of his conception of history, while *What is History?* is a conclusive synthesis. So it is perhaps untenable, against Carr's intention, to treat the former, as most students of international relations do, exclusively as a classic text on international theory, and overlooking the political agenda in the latter, as historical theorists tend to do.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, as Murry's comment on Mannheim's programme betrays, certain realist presumptions were employed by some British thinkers in their political arguments in the 1930s and

²⁵⁴ E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 109-32.

²⁵⁵ See Michael Cox (ed.), *E.H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); Charles Jones, *E.H. Carr and International Relations: A Duty to Lie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Keith Jenkins, *On 'What is History?': From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London: Routledge, 1995).

1940s. This chapter thus seeks to explore a certain number of ways in which historical realism was appropriated into British Socialist thinking, in particular when the future of capitalism was under discussion.

The first section concerns how and why the Soviet Union was considered by some British Socialists as a new civilisation in an age when capitalism seemed irredeemable and destined to demise. However, I do not intend to study fellow-travellers altogether as a group, or to provide a detailed account of those British intellectuals who were attracted by Marxism in the 1930s. It is partly because these problems have already been studied by, for example, David Caute and Neal Wood; but it is also because one's political conversion is not always related to his idea of history.²⁵⁶ John Strachey, for example, despite having been inspired by Marx as a social analyst, did not have much to say about dialectical materialism. His major works, such as *The Coming Struggle for Power*, *The Nature of Capitalist Crisis*, *Theory and Practice of Socialism*, despite employing Marx's economic theory to analyse the capitalist economy, hardly discuss the place of capitalism in the history of human society.²⁵⁷ Therefore, I will particularly focus on a number of socialist thinkers, including Bernard Shaw, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and Carr, and suggest that a belief in 'historical inevitability' was incorporated into their acclamation of Soviet Communism. Section II deals with a number of ways in which Marx's philosophy of history was construed in the 1930s. By comparing Isaiah

²⁵⁶ David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers: Intellectual Friends of Communism*, revise edn. (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1988); Neal Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1959); Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain, 1917-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

²⁵⁷ John Strachey, *The Coming Struggle for Power* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1932); idem, *The Nature of Capitalist Crisis* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935); idem *Theory and Practice of Socialism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936). All of these works were reprinted several times. Also see Michael Newman, *John Strachey* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 48-76.

Berlin, G.D.H. Cole and a number of other socialists' interpretations of Marx, I will suggest that Marx was much more often approvingly depicted as a historical realist, instead of a historical metaphysician; I will also examine how this particular line of interpretation fitted into a common criticism of liberalism in the late 1930s. Section III explores the historical nature of Carr's realist attack of liberal-internationalists, and the debates around the publication of *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. I will indicate that Carr's criticism of Murray and Toynbee's international views centres particularly on one aspect: their presupposition of an absolute moral ideal as the end of history. Section IV looks into Carr's proposal for a new form of society that incorporates planning and collectivism, which he identified as the irreversible tendency of history. This belief, as I will argue, also explains Carr's changing attitudes towards the Soviet Union and Germany from the 1930s to the 1950s.

I.

1.1. Soviet Union and the Future of Socialism

As an outcome of the Great Depression, it was not unusual for British Socialists to develop an interest in, and even advocate, Soviet Communism in the 1930s. Before the fall of the second Labour Government in August 1931, information about the Five-Year Plan was already spreading in Britain. Through the Soviet Ambassador, Grigory Sokolnikov, Beatrice and Sidney Webb were kept updated about Russia's economic achievement, though they were still worried that its success might also mean a 'moral failure'.²⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Soviet officials were invited to introduce their system in

²⁵⁸ Richard Toye, *The Labour Party and the Planned Economy, 1931-1951* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society,

conferences held by the New Fabian Research Bureau, which was founded by G.D.H. Cole in 1931 with an aim to investigate the practicability of economic planning. Cole expected the success of the Soviet experiment, and so did Kingsley Martin and H.N. Brailsford, who publicly defended the Soviet economic system; but none of them was fully confident.²⁵⁹ In *What we Saw in Russia* (1931), published by the Hogarth Press in its 'Day to Day Pamphlets' series, three Labour M.P.s, Aneurin Bevan, John Strachey and George Strauss, told the public what they witnessed in Russia. Praising the Soviet Union for its industrial achievement, they nonetheless also pointed out food and clothing shortages in large cities—in a nutshell, their 'wait-and-see' tone was evident.²⁶⁰

It was within this context that George Bernard Shaw was invited to pay a visit to the Soviet Union, which left him with such a great impression that, when giving a talk in Leningrad, he proclaimed that:

We know from our recent historical researches that there have been many civilisations, that their history has been very like the history of our civilisation, and that they arrived at the point which Western capitalist civilisation has reached, there began a rapid degeneracy, followed by a complete collapse of the entire system and something very near to a return to savagery by the human race. Over and over again the human race has tried to get round that corner and has always failed. Now Lenin organised the method of getting round that corner...if this great communistic experiment spreads over the whole, world, we shall have a new era in history.²⁶¹

This flattering remark about Lenin and the Soviet Union was probably sincere; for after returning to Britain, Shaw soon became one of the first, as well as the most influential, British intellectuals who spoke highly of the Soviet achievement.

Despite not being a revolutionary, Shaw was not opposed to communism in the

2003), p. 41.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 41-44.

²⁶⁰ Aneurin Bevan, E.J. Strachey and George Strauss, *What We Saw in Russia* (London: Hogarth Press, 1931).

²⁶¹ Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw* (5 vols, London: Chatto & Windus, 1991), iii, p.246.

1920s—‘at any rate, it can hardly produce worse results than Capitalism’.²⁶² But Shaw’s Russian visit, during which he had a meeting with Stalin, who impressed him a great deal, made him an unreserved supporter of the Soviet system, and affirmed his belief that capitalism and parliamentary Socialism would soon end. His plays in the early 1930s, for example, *Too Good to be True* and the more political *On the Rock* (both published in 1932), were written in the spirit that the old world, with its economic systems, political institutions and moral assumptions, would be replaced by a new one, and that a dictator (it is noteworthy that Shaw was for a time an admirer of Mussolini and Oswald Mosley) was needed in overcoming the economic crisis.²⁶³ The new introduction Shaw wrote for *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, and his posthumously published *Rationalisation in Russia* demonstrate that his Fabian gradualism had been replaced either by ‘revolutionary Left’ or ‘Fascist Right’.²⁶⁴ In 1933, Shaw drafted a letter signed by twenty other writers to the *Manchester Guardian*, in which he defended the progress of the Soviet Union against its critics, and argued that what he witnessed in Russia was ‘hopeful and enthusiastic working-class...developing public works, increasing health services, extending education, achieving the economic independence of woman and the security of the child’.²⁶⁵

Being a ‘political pilgrim’ to communist states in the twentieth century, as Paul Hollander shows, was not unusual particularly among those Western intellectuals who

²⁶² Ibid, p. 225.

²⁶³ Gareth Griffiths, *Socialism and Superior Brains: The Political Thought of Bernard Shaw* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 250-4, 260-4.

²⁶⁴ Bernard Shaw, ‘Preface to the 1931 Reprint’, in idem (ed.), *Fabian Essays*, Jubilee edn, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948), pp. v-xiv.

²⁶⁵ Idem, ‘Social Conditions in Russia’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1933.

were unsatisfied with the political system of their own countries.²⁶⁶ Shaw was not the earliest British intellectual who travelled in Soviet Russia, but his visit certainly had an impact on other socialists who shared his concern about the future of Western society after the economic crisis, particularly those who also believed that a radical change was bound to happen. In 1932, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, inspired by Shaw's visit, also travelled to the Soviet Union; welcomed by the Russians—not least because Lenin had personally translated their *Industrial Democracy*—they went around the country, though not without guidance, for two months.²⁶⁷ What distinguished this trip as a notable event in twentieth-century British intellectual history was its outcome: the Webbs' *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* (1935) is a comprehensive introduction to Soviet political, social and economic systems.²⁶⁸ Alongside Shaw, the Webbs became leading advocates of the Soviet Union and its social policies in the 1930s; their conviction that Russia now had a better and more progressive form of society can be demonstrated by the removal of the question mark from the book title in its subsequent editions. Through the machinery of the Left Book Club, around 40,000 copies had been sold by the time the Second World War broke out. It is perhaps not coincidental that the first edition was published by Longmans, and that subsequent editions were published by Victor Gollancz. Also a supporter of the Soviet Union until the late 1930s, Gollancz was

²⁶⁶ See Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1829-1978* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 102-76.

²⁶⁷ According to Royden Harrison, Lenin did not, as it is often assumed, translate their *History of Trade Union*, although this was the original plan. See Royden Harrison, *The Life and Times of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, 1858-1905: The Formative Years* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 259. As for the detail of the visit, see Barbara Drake, 'The Webbs and Soviet Communism', in Margaret Cole (ed.), *The Webbs and Their Work* (London: Frederick Muller, 1949), pp. 221-34.

²⁶⁸ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* (2 vols, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1935).

enthusiastic enough to proclaim that ‘a new civilisation with an unimaginable power of development and construction’ had superseded the ‘underlying sense of decay’ of Western Europe.²⁶⁹

The Webbs’ view of the Soviet Union was largely sceptical, if not completely negative, before the late 1920s. As Kevin Morgan suggests, between the two, it was Beatrice Webb who became more pessimistic about the socialist movement in Britain, and who was more informed about recent developments in Russia by reading the Russian American journalist Maurice Hindus’ *Humanity Uprooted* (1929) and *Red Beard* (1931).²⁷⁰ The collapse of the second Labour Government in 1931 not only freed Sidney Webb from his governmental duty as Colonial Secretary, but also forced the couple to reconsider the future of Socialism. It is noteworthy that the Webbs were never seriously attracted by Marxism as an ideology, not least because their view that the benefit of society should be considered as a whole excluded the idea of class war; so strictly speaking, they were simply admirers of the Soviet system, unlike those converts who were driven by their faith. However, this does not mean that their appreciation of Soviet communism was unrelated to their conception of history. The famous notion of ‘inevitable gradualness’, coined by Sidney Webb in his address to the Labour Party Conference in 1923, not only characterises the Labour Party’s major scheme in the 1920s, but also indicates the Webbs’ belief in the irrevocability of history—even though

²⁶⁹ Kevin Morgan, *The Webbs and Soviet Communism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2006), p.11; Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Victor Gollancz: A Biography* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1987), p. 214; Gordon Barrick Neavill, ‘Victor Gollancz and the Left Book Club’, *The Library Quarterly*, 41/3 (1971), pp. 197-215.

²⁷⁰ Morgan, *The Webbs and Soviet Communism*, pp. 140-6.

a long period might be needed to await the goal to be realised.²⁷¹

In the same year, the Webbs published *The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation*, in which they confidently argued that capitalism, as ‘the particular stage in the development of industry and legal institutions in which the bulk of the workers find themselves divorced from the ownership of the instruments of production’, was doomed to fail, because its profit-making nature ‘destroys, not only the most valuable of the instruments of production, but also some of those that are irreplaceable.’²⁷² The Webbs’ indictment of capitalism was consistent with their socialist writings since *The History of Trade Unions* (1894) and *Industrial Democracy* (1898), but in the early 1920s, they came to argue that the ‘initial success’ and ‘eventual failure’ of capitalism were both irrevocable; and they found ‘no alternatives’ other than accepting its decay.²⁷³ At the beginning of *Labour and the New Social Order: A Report on Reconstruction* (1918), a report on Labour’s general policy, Sidney Webb proclaimed that European ‘industrial civilisation’ founded on the ‘individualist system of capitalist production’ was definitively reaching its end, and that it was time to build a ‘new social order’ which pursued full employment, a national minimum wage, redistributive taxation, state ownership of industry and a new social welfare system.²⁷⁴ As Jose Harris acutely points out, the Webbs recognised implementing these economic reforms as the unavoidable

²⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 125-34; Sidney Webb, *The Labour Party on the Threshold, The Chairman’s Address to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, 26th June, 1923* (Westminster: The Fabian Society, 1923), p.11.

²⁷² Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation* (Westminster: The Fabian Society, 1923), p. 2, 86.

²⁷³ For the Webbs’ pre-War political thought, see their twelve essays on ‘What is Socialism?’ serialised in *The New Statesman* from 12 April to 6 September, 1913. Also see Willard Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 183-214; J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Politics in Britain, 1912-18* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 29-66; Chris Wrigley, ‘The Webb Working on Trade Union History’, *History Today*, 37/5 (1987), pp. 51-5.

²⁷⁴ Sidney Webb, *Labour and the New Social Order* (London: The Labour Party, 1918), pp. 3-4.

task capitalist societies should undertake—the only question is when and how.²⁷⁵

Therefore, the Webbs' abandonment of 'gradualness' was not a result of a significant change in their socialist thought, but a conviction, after their visit to Russia, that this new form of society, which was destined to be achieved, had already been achieved there.

The Webbs' political thinking, as they elaborated in their well-known articles on 'What is Socialism?' serially published in *New Statesman*, was founded on the presumption that consumption had a more significant place than production in a social democracy. Participating in the 'co-operative movement' and becoming critical of syndicalism and guild Socialism from the 1910s, the Webbs believed that the government represented the 'interest of the citizen as a consumer'; so their ideal government was a 'large operative-society' ruled by a group of professionals and elitist designers of social policy.²⁷⁶ What they believed had been achieved in the Soviet Union, and what was discussed throughout the first volume of *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?*, was exactly this 'highly integrated social organisation in which...each...is expected to participate in three separate capacities: as a citizen, as a producer, and as a consumer'. Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, 'leadership is carried on by a new profession, organised, like other professions, as a voluntarily enlisted and self-governing unit'.²⁷⁷ In this regard, far from being faithful believers of communism,

²⁷⁵ Jose Harris, 'The Webbs', in Paul Barker (ed.), *Founders of the Welfare State* (London: Heineman, 1984), pp. 58-9.

²⁷⁶ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, 'What is Socialism?: VII.—The Expansion of Local Government', *The New Statesman*, 24 May 1913; idem, 'What is Socialism?: VIII.—National Housekeeping', *The New Statesman*, 31 May 1913.

²⁷⁷ Idem, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?*, p. 450.

the Webbs simply believed that the Soviet model conformed to their ideal.

Shaw and the Webbs' enthusiasm, however, was not unreservedly shared by their former Fabian colleague H.G. Wells, who also travelled to the Soviet Union and had an interview with Stalin in 1934.²⁷⁸ The typescript of their meeting was published later in *New Statesman and Nation*, which, under Kingsley Martin's editorship, became an important platform for disseminating Marxist ideas in the 1930s. Wells' discussion with Stalin soon drew the attention of both Shaw and Keynes'.²⁷⁹ Wells' view of the Soviet Union in the 1920s was in general positive; but after meeting President Roosevelt in the early 1930s, he came to endorse the New Deal, and believed that state intervention was indispensable to both capitalism and Socialism. Henceforth, he tried to convince Stalin that the Soviet Union and America were following the same trend of global economic rationalisation, and that they did not belong to two irreconcilable worlds. Stalin's idea of Socialism in one state, however, was a disappointment to him. Wells' interview was harshly criticised by Shaw, who believed that Wells had no reverence for Stalin, and only tried to put his words into Stalin's mouth. After Wells' equally unfriendly reply, their controversy soon became personal.

Interestingly, it was Keynes who, being critical of both sides, correctly pointed out that their real intellectual difference was about whether there were other available alternatives apart from Soviet Communism and capitalism. He alleged that Shaw and Stalin, imprisoned by their conviction of 'Marx's picture of the capitalist world', only

²⁷⁸ Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, *H.G. Wells: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), pp. 379-82.

²⁷⁹ *Stalin-Wells Talk: The Verbatim Record and A Discussion by G. Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, J.M. Keynes, Ernest Toller and others* (London: New Statesman and Nation, 1934).

‘look backwards to what capitalism was, not forward to what it is becoming’.²⁸⁰ Therefore, this dispute betrayed two different ways, among those supporters of Soviet Communism, in which the future of Western capitalist civilisation was conceived in the 1930s. To Shaw and the Webbs, capitalism, after its irreversible fall, would inevitably be replaced by a completely new form of society; whereas Wells tended to believe that even though Western capitalist society needed reconstruction, it was not historically doomed.

1.2. A Fellow-Traveller?—Carr’s view of the Soviet Union in the 1930s

Carr was born and brought up in a middle-class family in London.²⁸¹ His father’s career was not a very successful one; under his influence, Carr supported the Liberal Party at school, which distanced him from his predominantly Conservative schoolmates. After graduating from Trinity College, Cambridge with a double First in Classics, Carr went to the Foreign Office and participated in the Peace Conference as a member of the British delegation.²⁸² Carr’s progressive liberalism at this stage was reflected by his sympathy for the new states in Eastern Europe that appeared after the War, and in his approval of the social and budgetary reform launched by Lloyd George’s government.²⁸³ From 1925 to 1929, Carr served as the second secretary to the British legation in Latvia. Life in Riga, a place he described as ‘an intellectual desert’, was ‘excessively boring’; but it was not long before he found his new interest.²⁸⁴ He soon

²⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 30-6. Matthew Taunton gives a well-rounded contextual study of this debate, see his ‘Russia and the British Intellectuals: The Significance of *The Stalin-Wells Talk*’, in Rebecca Beasley and Philips Ross Bullock (eds.), *Russia in Britain, 1880-1940: From Melodrama to Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 210-25.

²⁸¹ Jonathan Haslam, *Vices of Integrity: E.H. Carr, 1892-1982* (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 1-4.

²⁸² Ibid, pp. 17-34.

²⁸³ Ibid, p. 6. ; E. H. Carr, ‘An Autobiography’, in Cox, *E.H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal*, p. xiv.

²⁸⁴ Carr, ‘An Autobiography’, p. xvii.

learnt to read Russian and became considerably enthusiastic about nineteenth-century Russian literature, which, as he recalled, provided him with a completely different worldview from the ‘liberal moralistic ideology’ that he was familiar with and had taken for granted.²⁸⁵

Nevertheless, this recollection is not entirely accurate, for at this point, Carr was not as intensely anti-capitalist as he was later. After he was transferred back to London, Carr began his part-time career in journalism while working in the Central Europe Department as a ‘temporary clerk’ with a salary below his rank.²⁸⁶ He wrote a large number of review articles mostly for *The Spectator* and the *Fortnightly Review*, which were both periodicals that, despite taking a liberal and even pro-conservative line, accommodated various topics including literature, philosophy and politics. He also wrote for *The Christian Science Monitor*, an American newspaper founded by Mary Baker Eddy to promote the new Christian Science—although it also welcomed non-religious topics. The facts that Carr seldom wrote for *New Statesman and Nation*, and that his biography of Bakunin was declined by Victor Gollancz suggests his distance, in both personal and intellectual terms, from the mainstream British Left.²⁸⁷ In the twenties, Carr’s political view was still mildly progressive, liberal, and certainly not radical. Most of Carr’s journalistic writings in 1929 and 1930 are devoid of any political concerns and focus on literary issues.²⁸⁸ He commented on Proust, James Joyce, D.H.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, p. xvii,

²⁸⁶ Haslam, *Vices of Integrity*, p. 42.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 52.

²⁸⁸ E.H. Carr, ‘Turgenev and Dostoyevsky’, *Slavonic Review*, 8/22 (1929), pp. 156-63; ‘Chekhov: Twenty Five Years After’, *The Spectator*, 20 July 1930; ‘Was Dostoyevsky and Epileptic’, *Slavonic Review*, 9/26 (1930), pp.424-31; ‘Tolstoy—The Later Years’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 8 August 1930.

Lawrence and Lytton Strachey. To him, the modernist movement, or ‘the school of unreason’, in its indictment of individual rationality, was a symptom of the widespread scepticism in the 1920s.²⁸⁹ Carr did not lament the loss of the Victorian faith in progress, but he longed for certainty, and thus urged that a new one should be searched for by the English people.²⁹⁰ His discontent, however, is contrasted with a rather high regard for the Soviet poets, particularly Mayakovsky; but at this moment his admiration for the Soviet Union was confined to literary and cultural domains, and his attitude towards its political system remained sceptical, if not critical.²⁹¹ Reviewing Trotsky’s autobiography in 1930, he regretted that Lenin’s comrade-in-arms ‘still retains unimpaired his faith in the Soviet system’ after being expelled from his country.²⁹²

Carr’s view, however, changed significantly during the Great Depression. After being transferred to the League of Nations section, Carr attended the League’s eleventh annual assembly in September 1930, and was astonished at and disappointed by the delegation’s luxurious way of life when the economic crisis had widely spread.²⁹³ Meanwhile, he was struck by a remark made by a Yugoslavian delegate that ‘free trade was the doctrine of economically powerful states which flourished without protection, but would be fatal to weak states’.²⁹⁴ At this particular moment when his liberal belief in the League was shattered, he was informed about the success of the First Five-Year Plan.

²⁸⁹ Idem, ‘The Age of Unreason’, *The Spectator*, 26 April 1930.

²⁹⁰ John Hallet, ‘England Adrift’, *Fortnightly Review*, September 1930, pp. 354-362. Not least because of his job in the Foreign Office, Carr often used the pseudo name ‘John Hallet’ in his reviews particularly in *Fortnightly Review* and *The Spectator*.

²⁹¹ E.H. Carr, ‘The Theatre Under the Soviets’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 August 1929; John Hallet, ‘The Poets of Soviet Russia’, *Fortnightly Review*, February 1930, pp. 241-250; idem, ‘The Prose Fiction of Soviet Russia’, *Fortnightly Review*, March 1930, pp. 362-372; idem, ‘Contemporary Russian Literature’, *The Spectator*, 2 May 1932.

²⁹² E.H. Carr, ‘Trotzky’s Autobiography’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 19 July 1930.

²⁹³ Haslam, *Vices of Integrity*, p. 49.

²⁹⁴ Carr, ‘An Autobiography’, p. xvii.

In 'Soviet Has a Plan' (1931), a review of a Soviet propagandist work, Carr made a comparison between 'rotten capitalism' and the Soviet Union's promising economic system including 'mechanised agriculture through collective farm', town planning etc. More importantly, the Soviet Union has a new faith and a new 'religion', which was 'growing up on the fringes of a Europe which has lost faith in itself'. It is clear that Carr's fascination with the Soviet system and his disappointment with the economic recession of the West were closely intertwined from the very beginning. Indicating that Soviet Communism represented the future, Carr went on pointing out what he believed to be the greatest trouble of British society—'we did not realise how far things had changed and how they are moving...We did not understand that we were living in a new kind of world'.²⁹⁵

Carr paid a short visit to Moscow when he was still based in Riga in 1927, but we do not know his first impression of it.²⁹⁶ During the first half of the 1930s, Carr's knowledge of the *status quo* in Russia highly relied on a large number of books he reviewed, ranging from histories of the Revolution, biographies of the Soviet leaders such as Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin, observations from Western reporters and translations of Russian writers. Nevertheless, Carr's attitude towards the Soviet Union was still not certain at this time. According to Carr's own account, which has largely been accepted by many researchers, he was 'thoroughly pro-Soviet' until the watershed of 1935, when Stalin's purges began to leak out, which thereafter made him extremely 'hostile' to

²⁹⁵ John Hallet, 'Soviet Has a Plan', *Fortnightly Review*, September 1931, pp. 400-1.

²⁹⁶ Haslam, *Vices of Integrity*, p. 39.

Russia.²⁹⁷ However, the reality was perhaps not that clear-cut. From the very beginning, Carr welcomed the Soviet Revolution; and indicated that 'sentimental regret for the past easily turns to bitterness'.²⁹⁸ He was not ready to pity the losers, and mocked the unrealism of Kerensky as well as the 'folly' and 'incompetence' of the 'Whites', who had been 'condemned by history'.²⁹⁹

However, Carr's attitude towards agricultural collectivism was somehow ambivalent. The Five-Year Plan was designed in a spirit of rapid industrialisation, and, therefore, most of the resources were distributed to heavy industry. Meanwhile, the Soviet leaders believed that collective agriculture would substantially improve productivity, and that enough grain could be reserved to feed the labourers. Nevertheless, this unrealistic programme resulted in severe food shortage from 1930, and resulted in the *Holodomor* in 1932 and 1933, which was not successfully concealed from Western reporters. William Chamberlin, a foreign correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, already pointed out that food supply was the top urgency for the Soviet Union in 1933.³⁰⁰ Malcolm Muggeridge, who succeeded Chamberlin in 1932, was the first Westerner who went to the North Caucasus and reported the Great Famine in Ukraine; but his articles in the *Manchester Guardian* were doubted by many and backed only by the journalist Gareth Jones.³⁰¹ Subsequently, *The New York Times* correspondent, Walter

²⁹⁷ Carr, 'An Autobiography', p. xviii.

²⁹⁸ Idem, 'Old and New Russia', *The Spectator*, 6 August 1932.

²⁹⁹ John Hallet, 'The Memoirs of General Wrangle', *Fortnightly Review*, January 1930, pp. 139-140; idem, 'Bolshevism and Menshevism', *The Spectator*, 9 March 1934; idem, 'Review of W.H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921*', *Fortnightly Review*, November 1935.

³⁰⁰ W.H. Chamberlin, 'Impending Change in Russia', *Fortnightly Review*, January 1933, pp. 1-10.

³⁰¹ Malcolm Muggeridge, 'The Soviet and the Peasantry: Famine in North Caucasus', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1933; idem, 'Hunger in the Ukraine', *Manchester Guardian*, Monday 27 March 1933; idem, 'Poor Harvest in Prospect', *The Manchester Guardian*, Tuesday 28 March 1933; idem, 'The Soviet's War on the Peasants', *Fortnightly Review*, pp. 558-564. Gareth Jones' letter to the *Manchester Guardian* was published on 8 May 1933. As for Muggeridge's memory of his years in Russia, see his *Chronicles of Wasted Time* (Vancouver: Regent College

Duranty, who was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his report on the First Five-Year Plan, robustly defended the Soviet Union by denying that any Russians were starving.³⁰²

Muggeridge had to leave the *Manchester Guardian* later, and published *Winter in Moscow* in 1934, a novel renowned for its outward anti-communism.³⁰³ It is noteworthy that as Beatrice Webb's nephew by marriage, Muggeridge had kept the Webbs informed about the famine as early as in 1933, but they refused to take it seriously.³⁰⁴

Carr consistently argued the necessity of collective agriculture in Russia; but he did not turn a blind eye towards the poor condition of the peasants, whom he regarded as the 'key' to the Soviet economy.³⁰⁵ Apparently, Carr accepted the ends, but he disapproved the means. Only a month before his encouraging 'Soviet Has a Plan', Carr criticised Maurice Hindus for overlooking the persecution of the 'kulaks' and the violence done to the peasants when they were forced to join collective farming.³⁰⁶ He certainly knew the dispute between Muggeridge and Duranty, but he refused to take sides. On the one hand, he condemned Duranty for being 'far too hard-boiled to shut his eyes to the immense sufferings of the peasants';³⁰⁷ on the other hand, he did not appreciate *Winter in Moscow*, for Muggeridge lacked 'the innate sympathy of the good caricaturist'.³⁰⁸ When more details of the famine were revealed in the book *Human Life in Russia*, published in 1936, Carr was not hesitant to admit its great value. He joined

Publishing, 2006), pp. 254-66.

³⁰² Walter Duranty, 'Russians Hungry, But not Starving', *The New York Times*, 31 March 1933. A fair account of the story can be found in S.J. Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty, The New York Times's Man in Moscow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 193-223.

³⁰³ Malcolm Muggeridge, *Winter in Moscow* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1934).

³⁰⁴ Cf. *The Morbid Age*, p. 296.

³⁰⁵ E.H. Carr, 'Russian—Then and Now', *The Spectator*, 27 January 1933.

³⁰⁶ Idem, 'Review of Maurice Hindus, *Red Beard*', *Fortnightly Review*, August, 1931, p. 268.

³⁰⁷ Idem, 'U.S.S.R', *The Spectator*, 22 November 1935.

³⁰⁸ Idem, 'Bolshevism and Menshevism', *The Spectator*, 9 March 1934.

the author to denounce Édouard Herriot, the ex-Prime Minister of France, and Shaw for their denial of the famine. Nevertheless, in the same review, Carr disagreed with the author's allegation that Stalin was an absolute dictator.³⁰⁹ In a similar vein, he praised Maurice Dobb's pioneering work on Soviet economics, but considered him 'hopelessly biased' in refusing to 'frankly admit the darker sides of the Soviet Regimes'.³¹⁰

It is, however, remarkable that there is a subtle adjustment of Carr's tone after his second visit to Russia in 1937, when he accidentally came across the Russian literary historian D.S. Mirsky on the street in Leningrad, and tried to converse with him even though Mirsky pretended not to know him.³¹¹ Mirsky was later arrested and executed in 1939. This incident might have given him a real sense of Stalin's terror. Nevertheless, Carr did not have such a strong aversion towards the Soviet Union as he claimed later. Carr was not uncritical of the purge, but he avoided morally condemning the Soviet leaders. The content of a revolution', he claimed, 'is not measured by the number of its victims'.³¹² Instead, he treated it as a reflection of the conflict between two persuasions contesting official Party lines: Stalin and his agents eventually beat other 'Old Guards' of 1917.³¹³ As a consequence, the Soviet Union began to 'retreat from' utopian Marxism by abandoning world revolution without, and by giving up the egalitarian ideal within.³¹⁴ Carr was not against the former, for it was a sign that Russian foreign policy no longer depended on 'principles which can be found in Marxist text-books, but on the

³⁰⁹ Idem, 'Human Life in Russia', *The Spectator*, 7 August 1936.

³¹⁰ Idem, 'Old and New Russia', *The Spectator*, 6 August 1932.

³¹¹ Haslam, *Vices of Integrity*, p.76.

³¹² E.H. Carr, 'The Origins of Liberalism', *The Sunday Times*, 24 May 1936.

³¹³ E.H. Carr, 'The Twilight of the Bolsheviks', *The Spectator*, 28 August 1936.

³¹⁴ Idem, 'Lenin: Stalin II. A Retreat from Utopia', *The Times*, 6 July 1937.

considerations of enlightened self-interest'.³¹⁵ Nevertheless, his comment on the latter was rather acerbic. The unequal distribution of wealth, the enlarged differentiation of wages, and the re-introduction of inheritance, Carr argued, all demonstrated the existence of exploitation in the Marxist sense; hence the Soviet system embodied 'many of the characteristic symptoms of capitalism'.³¹⁶

As we have seen, Carr's attitude towards the Soviet Union in the 1930s was not always consistent. He was a sympathiser praising the material improvement it had accomplished, in particular by economic collectivism; but he was not an apologist who made excessive exaggerations.³¹⁷ His declined enthusiasm, however, was perhaps not, as he claimed, entirely a result of being disillusioned by Stalin's show trials, but its deviation from the trend of history. More importantly, Carr believed that Russia was still an economically backward country; and, as we will see, he became much more interested in Germany's industrial power in the late 1930s. This suggests that Carr's admiration of either Russia or Germany was devoid of ideological incentives; to him, the standard of judgement resided in which society could follow the trend of history. By 1937, his historical conception was already matured; when criticising British society for clinging to the laissez-faire idea of capitalism, he argued that:

Seeking Utopias in the past is a strangely outmoded pursuit. History does not double back on its track; and the way out of our troubles is more likely to be found in a forward advance through the present phase of planned collectivism than in a return to the point where our ancestors are alleged to have gone wrong seventy or eighty years ago.³¹⁸

II.

³¹⁵ Idem, 'Lenin: Stalin III. A Changed Face to the World', *The Times*, 7 July 1937.

³¹⁶ Idem, 'Lenin: Stalin II. A Retreat from Utopia', *The Times*, 6 July 1937.

³¹⁷ John Hallet, 'The Soviets Through Soviet Eyes', *The Spectator*, 14 September 1934.

³¹⁸ E.H. Carr, 'In Search for Utopia', *The Spectator*, 24 December 1937.

2.1. Marx as a Determinist

The attraction of Communism to British intellectuals during the 1930s, not least because of the Great Depression and the threat of Fascism, meant that Marxism became a serious topic not only for the ‘card-carrying’ Communists, but also the Left in general. So it was a rather odd choice when H.A.L. Fisher, who, alongside Murray, was an editor of ‘The Home University Library’, asked Isaiah Berlin to write a book that aimed to introduce Marx’s thought to the general reading public. Despite being sympathetic to the Left in the 1930s, Berlin was neither a socialist, nor particularly knowledgeable about Marx’s works. He claimed that Fisher approached him because Laski, Cole, and Frank Pakenham all refused the offer; although according to Henry Hardy’s research, the only thinker that Fisher contacted before Berlin was Sidney Webb. But had any one of them accepted this offer, the book would have been written from a very different perspective compared with Berlin’s *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment* (1939).

Berlin’s work on Marx was written as a history of ideas. Tracing Marx’s forerunners, Berlin was in particular indebted to Georgii Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism. As Joshua Cherniss has convincingly shown, there is an evident kinship between Plekhanov and Berlin’s interpretations of Marx’s forerunners, including the French *philosophes* and Hegel.³¹⁹ *The Development of the Monist View of History* begins with a discussion of the French *encyclopédistes* and materialists, then continues to deal with the Utopian Socialists such as Saint-Simon and Fourier, and goes on to treat German idealist, especially Hegel’s, philosophy, before culminating in a

³¹⁹ Cf. Joshua Cherniss, *A Mind and its Time: The Development of Isaiah Berlin’s Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 31-2.

more systematic elaboration of Marx's philosophy of history.³²⁰ Clearly, this is not much different from the line of Marx's predecessors that Berlin constructed in his book.

Another arresting feature of this book, however, is that Marx's economic theory is almost completely neglected. Instead, Berlin paid much more attention to Marx's philosophy of history, and underlined a strong connection between Marx and Hegel's metaphysical systems. Berlin argued that *The German Ideology* had long been neglected by Marx's followers, which led to a narrow, 'half-positivist, half-Darwinian' interpretation of Marx by unduly stressing the 'historical and economic aspects', rather than the 'sociological and philosophical content', of his thought.³²¹ Berlin, therefore, contended that although Marx denounced Hegel's metaphysics, the underlying framework of his theory was staunchly Hegelian.³²² Both Hegel and Marx firmly believed that 'the history of humanity is a single non-repetitive process' marching to 'a definite, irreversible direction'.³²³ Apart from that, Marx's allegation that man is 'intelligible only in terms of the struggle which he had not chosen' but is 'a part of his essence' echoes Hegel's theory and becomes 'the metaphysical moment' in his thought.³²⁴ Most importantly, to both of them, the alternatives historical agents can choose from are 'ultimately determined and scientifically predictable'.³²⁵

Compared to his criticism of Marxist determinism in the 1950s, Berlin did not underline the moral threat of Marxist philosophy of history in *Karl Marx*, although he

³²⁰ Georgi Plekhanov, *The Development of the Monist View of History* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1956).

³²¹ Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p.114.

³²² Ibid, pp. 117-9.

³²³ Ibid, pp. 141-2.

³²⁴ Ibid, p. 120.

³²⁵ Ibid, pp. 145-6.

did mention in passing that Marx's relativism might lead to moral cynicism. Although *Karl Marx* was in general approvingly reviewed, there was also dissent, although it was conveyed in a rather restrained tone.³²⁶ On 24 October and 31 October 1939, Berlin received two letters respectively from G.D.H. Cole and A.D. Lindsay. Apart from expressing their appreciation for the book in general, both raised several issues on which they disagreed with Berlin. Lindsay accused Berlin of neglecting 'the prophetic side of Marx' while over-emphasising the latter's 'scientific passion'.³²⁷ Marx, as Lindsay argued, was driven by a moral incentive, and therefore believed that 'the stars are on his side'.³²⁸ Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that Berlin never claimed that Marx's system was purely scientific, but only that Marx persuaded himself that it was. Instead, Berlin believed, as he recapitulated in his reply to Lindsay, that Marx's vision of the 'march of history' was purely 'metaphysical'.³²⁹ Lindsay's criticism of Berlin thus misses the point. The Master of Balliol College, Lindsay was a well-known Christian Socialist, and he had a profound influence especially on many left-wing intellectuals when they were students at Balliol (Cole was a supreme example). Lindsay was extremely enthusiastic about the Workers Educational Association; his own work on Marx, *Karl Marx's Capital: An Introductory Essay*, was first delivered in Glasgow for the W.E.A.³³⁰ In the first chapter of this study, Lindsay also traced the link between Hegel and Marx. Although both of them, as Lindsay argued, were believers in historical

³²⁶ 'In the Name of Marx: The Philosopher and the Right', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 October 1939.

³²⁷ A.D. Lindsay to Isaiah Berlin, 15 October, in Isaiah Berlin, *Flourishing: Letters 1928-1946*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Pimlico, 2005), p. 296.

³²⁸ Oxford, Bodleian MS Berlin, C 107: A.D. Lindsay to Isaiah Berlin, 6 November 1939, fo.147.

³²⁹ Isaiah Berlin to A.D. Lindsay, 31 October 1939, in Berlin, *Flourishing*, p. 297.

³³⁰ Drusilla Scott, *A.D. Lindsay: A Biography* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), pp. 63-75.

progress,³³¹ Marx's materialistic conception of history was a revolt against Hegel's view of the past as a process of thought.³³²

It is noteworthy that Lindsay's Christian belief was not dogmatic, which even incurred protests from some comparatively devout believers after listening to his sermons in Balliol.³³³ Lindsay famously made a distinction between two moralities: the Bradelian 'my station and its duties', and what he dubbed as the 'morality of grace'.³³⁴ Lindsay was apparently not satisfied with only fulfilling the obligation of the social and domestic duties, and he quested for a new morality which was a summons to do something other than one's own business—'giving, not demanding; creating, and not hindering'.³³⁵ This morality is not only Christian, but can also be found in 'Buddhism', 'Hinduism', and the 'Judaism of the Prophets'.³³⁶ Therefore, when mentioning the 'prophetic side' of Marx, it was to this morality that Lindsay was referring.³³⁷ In this regard, Berlin also misunderstood Lindsay by replying that Marx's 'moral sentiment' was 'founded on pride in human possessions' but not on 'a love of justice'—neither pride nor justice, however, is relevant to Lindsay's 'morality of grace'.³³⁸

In comparison, what Cole found 'the weakest' element in Berlin's interpretation was his accusation of Marx's elimination of 'the need for moral evaluation' when Marx was merely making a 'scientific diagnosis' of Western society.³³⁹ Berlin's reply to

³³¹ A.D. Lindsay, *Karl Marx's Capital: An Introductory Essay* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 19.

³³² Ibid, p. 22.

³³³ Scott, A.D. *Lindsay: A Biography*, pp.166-7.

³³⁴ A.D. Lindsay, *The Two Moralities: Our Duty to God and to Society* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1940), pp. 1-2.

³³⁵ Idem, *The Moral Teaching of Jesus: An Examination of the Sermon on the Mount* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937), p. 43.

³³⁶ Idem, *The Two Moralities*, p. 42.

³³⁷ Idem, *Karl Marx's Capital*, p. 11.

³³⁸ Isaiah Berlin to A.D. Lindsay, 31 October 1939, in Berlin, *Flourishing*, p. 297.

³³⁹ MS Berlin, C 107: G.D.H. Cole to Isaiah Berlin, 24 October 1939, fo.139.

Cole's letter is missing, but he apparently defended his position, which is demonstrable by Cole's further letters dated 30 October and 7 November. Cole's main argument, through and through, is that although Marx declined any 'absolute moral values', he did not deny moral evaluations completely. What Marx really stood for, instead, was a standard of moral judgments based on 'appropriateness', which adjusts itself to the 'changing problems with which the generations are confronted'.³⁴⁰ It is worth noting that Berlin's criticism of Marx was comparatively mild in the 1930s, and that his discussions with Cole and Lindsay were also polite; but their exchanges still betray the distance between the liberal and the Left's views of Marx's philosophy of history. To Berlin, there was a clear trajectory from Marx's philosophy of history to the 'Finland Station'; while this is an impression Cole and Lindsay from which especially wished to save the 'true' Marx. Moreover, the fact that Lindsay and Cole's criticisms of Berlin's work began from very different starting points can be regarded as a case to illustrate bifurcated ways Marx's philosophy of history were interpreted by British Socialists. Depicting Marx as a moralist, Lindsay was still an adherent of British ethical Socialism; whereas Cole was an example of those who became increasingly sceptical about fixed moral ideals in the 1930s.

2.2. Marx as a Realist

Five years before Berlin's book appeared, Cole's study of Marx was published. *What Marx Really Meant*, however, is much less a book on what Marx really meant, as its title implies, than on what Marx meant for Socialism in Britain. Another significant

³⁴⁰ MS Berlin, C 107: G.D.H. Cole to Isaiah Berlin, 30 October 1939, fo. 143.

piece of work on Marx was a chapter he contributed to a collection of essays on Marxism prefaced by John Middleton Murry. In both of them, Cole argued that his aim was to discover the ‘living Marxism’ that could be applied to analysing contemporary society, instead of treating Marx’s theory as a doctrine.³⁴¹ Therefore, Cole did not fail to notice the errors in Marx’s predictions. For example, contrary to Marx’s projection that the declining *petite bourgeoisie* would welcome Socialism in an age of industrialism, the middle-class in Germany, Italy and Austria, frightened by the insecurity of Socialism, chose to embrace Fascism.³⁴² Disappointed with the Labour Party after its failure in 1931, as many other British Socialists were, Cole began to promote a more radical form of Socialism, and played a vital role in helping to found various socialist organisations including the New Fabian Research Bureau and the Socialist League.³⁴³ Compared to his guild Socialism phase, the 1930s was an age that witnessed Cole’s conspicuous pessimism. Cole worried about the ‘danger of a world collapse into utter planless disorder of despair—a new Dark Age out of which mankind could only hope again to emerge after generations of needless suffering and humiliation’.³⁴⁴ Attracted by Marx’s ideas, Cole occasionally called himself a ‘Marxist’ during the 1930s. Interestingly, although Cole was Reader in Economics at Oxford in the 1930s, it is Marx’s philosophy of history, instead of his economic thought, that was underlined in Cole’s works.³⁴⁵

A quintessential point at which Cole’s exegesis of Marx’s historical ideas differs

³⁴¹ G.D.H. Cole, ‘Marxism and the World Situation Today’, in J. Middleton Murry, John MacMurray, N.A. Holdaway, G.D.H. Cole, *Marxism* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1935), p. 208.

³⁴² Ibid, pp. 224-8.

³⁴³ Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 37-9, 41-51.

³⁴⁴ A.W. Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 224.

³⁴⁵ L.P. Carpenter, *G.D.H. Cole: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.227.

significantly from Berlin's was its relation to determinism. Contrary to Berlin's interpretation, Marx was depicted as a humanitarian socialist by Cole. Cole argued that Marx, despite inheriting Hegel's view on evolution, dismissed Hegel's metaphysical system, and was not a 'fatalist' who held that historical development was 'inevitable' 'however human beings may behave'.³⁴⁶ In other words, Marx was more of a social scientist than an idealist philosopher; his prediction of the coming of Socialism was not founded on a predestined historical framework, but made after considering all the 'objective conditions facing the modern world', which 'were of such a nature as to make some form of Socialism the only possible next stage in the development of Western civilisation'.³⁴⁷ To Marx, the so-called 'idealism/materialism', and 'mind/matter' dichotomies are meaningless; so his conception of history, according to Cole, should be best summarised as 'Realist'.³⁴⁸ What Cole recognised as the essence of Marxism, and what he believed constituted the core of historical realism, was the contention that 'at every stage of civilisation, there must be a sufficient degree of correspondence between the conditions of production and the political and social system embodied in law and custom'.³⁴⁹

However, Cole was reluctant to accept the extreme form of this argument that ideas, morality and human agency were meaningless and only reflections of existing economic forces. To Cole, man is 'essentially a social animal, whose mind and character are wholly unintelligible unless they are considered in their social context'; but he is

³⁴⁶ G.D.H. Cole, *What Marx Really Meant* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1934), pp. 22-3; idem, 'Marxism and the World Situation Today', p. 209.

³⁴⁷ *What Marx Really Meant*, p.24.

³⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 19-20.

³⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 80.

determined neither by a preconceived historical process, nor the economic and social conditions of a given age.³⁵⁰ In this regard, even though one cannot go beyond the possibilities offered by a given situation, he might still 'fail to take full advantage of these possibilities'.³⁵¹ Therefore, Cole did not completely deny the power of ideas. On the one hand, human thought is 'a force which builds upon what it finds in being, and takes its form and direction from the problems which the objective situation presents'; but on the other hand, it is also 'an independent force, itself powerful in the shaping of economic conditions'.³⁵² Historical realism, according to Cole, acknowledges that the reality of a given situation in history is composed of various forces; so even though economic force is the more dominant factor, the power of moral ideas should not be overlooked.

To Cole, an historical realist has to understand that even 'reality does not stand still'; so he should and can only tell 'to what further developments in tendencies already discernible in the present; and even that he must do in the knowledge that new tendencies are certain soon to appear and to create the need for restatement of his forecasts'.³⁵³ As A.W. Wright notes, a pivotal idea in Cole's thought is that all ideas, values and institutions are relative.³⁵⁴ Accepting the conclusion that laissez-faire capitalism is bound to be abandoned by history, Cole was nonetheless not an utter relativist who sought to smash everything that belonged to the old world. Rather, he argued that certain values would not be replaced by, and would be compatible with, new

³⁵⁰ Cole, 'Marxism and the World Situation Today', p. 211.

³⁵¹ Idem, *What Marx Really Meant*, p. 100.

³⁵² Ibid, p. 85.

³⁵³ Idem, 'Marxism and the World Situation Today', p. 229, 239.

³⁵⁴ Wright, *G.D.H. Cole and Socialist Democracy*, p.208.

values that belong to a new society—‘changes must be within limits that are compatible with the elasticity of the current social morality—not with that morality as it is, but with it as it can become without destruction of its principle of life.’³⁵⁵ In his *Europe, Russia and the Future*, written during the Second World War, Cole argued that social reconstruction meant ‘doing, not what one wants to do, not what one has planned to do, not what...one thinks the right thing to do, but simply the best that can be done under the circumstances’. Therefore, realist socialists should be prepared to pursue their ideal ‘by any means which are not destructive of Socialist ends’. But at the same time, Cole was opposed to dismissing morality ‘as a mere reflection of prevailing economic relationships’; rather, he maintained that realism accepted and sought to develop ‘the established morality of Western civilisation’ which was built on ‘the Christian ethic, though not necessarily...the Christian theology’.³⁵⁶ Henceforth, it was this moral dimension that made Cole more sceptical about the Soviet Union, as well as more critical of Marxism after the War.

Cole’s realist reception of Marx’s philosophy of history is an example of a not uncommon way in which British ethical Socialism was reflected on during the 1930s—its failure to resolve the tension between fixed moral ideals and changing economic realities was disparaged by both Marxists and realists. For example, the young A.L. Rowse, in his *On History* (1927), condemned the attempt to moralise history on the ground that economic conditions, instead of moral ideas, were historically

³⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 227.

³⁵⁶ G.D.H. Cole, *Europe, Russia and Future* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1941), pp. 182-4.

effective.³⁵⁷ He argued that the philosophy of history ought to investigate the real ‘social process’, and to make ‘excursions into the depth’ of history.³⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that, to Rowse, this realist view, stated in a work of juvenilia which has now almost been forgotten, is not only of historiographical importance, but also politically significant. Therefore, he argued in his *Politics and the Younger Generation*—a work that renders a political agenda to a new generation of socialists—that history should focus more on ‘group interests’ than ‘values’.³⁵⁹

In a similar vein, Laski’s critical evaluation of Tawney’s *The Acquisitive Society* in the 1930s on the ground that the moralising Left has laid too much emphasis on the self-sufficiency of ideals was a conspicuous departure from his position in the early 1920s.³⁶⁰ Laski’s disparagement of Tawney clearly reveals bifurcated ways in which certain Marxist historical assumptions were assessed by British socialists in the 1930s. In almost all his works in the 1920s and early 1930s, including *The Acquisitive Society* (1921) and *Equality* (1931), Tawney criticised the privileged class and the policies it followed in order to protect their vested interests. But criticising the ‘acquisitive society’, or maintaining that capitalism was morally wrong, does not mean that the whole system is historically doomed. Tawney always had a considerable interest in Marx; and *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* perfectly exemplifies his attempt to explain history from an economic perspective. But the Christian nature of his Socialism and his insistence on Christian morality obstructed his being a Marxist, let alone

³⁵⁷ A.L. Rowse, *On History: A Study of Present Tendencies* (London: Kegan Paul, 1927), pp. 92-103.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³⁵⁹ D.S. Mirsky, *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain*, trans. Alec Brown (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935), pp. 217-21

³⁶⁰ For Laski’s criticism of ethical Socialism from a relativist line, see Ben Jackson, *Equality and the British Left: A Study in Progressive Political Thought, 1900-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 96-7.

converting to Communism, whose dogmatism he always loathed.³⁶¹

In contrast, Laski, despite being highly influenced by Tawney's socialist thought in his pluralist phase, rediscovered some of Marx's ideas, which he found particularly valuable in the 1930s. In his *Karl Marx: An Essay* (1922), Laski still argued that Marx, moved by 'the passion for justice', was 'the first thinker to expose...the moral inadequacy of a commercial civilisation'.³⁶² This moral dimension of his thought, however, was replaced by a more realist historical view in the 1930s. For example, in *The Rise of European Liberalism* (1936) and his Hobhouse Lecture, entitled 'The Decline of Liberalism' (1940), Laski traced the history of liberalism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment, and raised what he believed liberalism's greatest weakness, namely, confidence in the eternal validity of its principles, its inseparable link with a narrow notion of property, and its inability to adapt to new circumstances.³⁶³ In particular, the liberal ideal protected the interest of the privileged and middle classes, but 'left the proletariat in their chains' at the same time.³⁶⁴ Employing the Marxist view that the forces of production were no longer harmonious with the present relations of production, Laski maintained that the 'evolution of social forces, particularly of economic forces' had 'made the major doctrines of liberalism the instrument of a system of vested interests.'³⁶⁵ Failing to 'extend rapidly the application of its principles to areas

³⁶¹ See Lawrence Goldman, *The Life of R.H. Tawney: Socialism and History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 167-97; Stefan Collini, 'Moral Mind: R.H. Tawney', in idem, *English Pasts*; Tim Rogan, *The Moral Economists: R.H. Tawney, Karl Polanyi, E.P. Thompson, and the Critique of Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 40-8.

³⁶² Harold Laski, *Karl Marx: An Essay* (London: The Fabian Society, 1922), p. 44, 46.

³⁶³ Idem, *The Rise of European Liberalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1947), pp. 258-64; idem, *The Decline of Liberalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 5.

³⁶⁴ Laski, *The Rise of European Liberalism*, p. 239.

³⁶⁵ Idem, *The Decline of Liberalism*, p. 17.

which, when the claim for innovation is made, are outside the traditional fields of analysis', liberalism, according to Laski, was bound to be eclipsed.³⁶⁶

III.

3.1. The Failure of the League Spirit

In the last section, we examined different ways in which Marx's philosophy of history was construed in the thirties. Berlin's portrayal of Marx as a determinist, as we have seen, was not commonly accepted; instead, such socialists as Cole and Laski recognised Marx's historical thought as being realist (moral ideas are relative and economic tendencies are real cause of history), and they employed this interpretation to reflect on the ethical tradition of British Socialism, and to dismiss liberalism as an out-dated ideology. This section particularly focuses on how similar arguments were used by Carr in his disparagement of Toynbee and Murray's moral-internationalist idea of history. After working in the Foreign Office for twenty years, Carr was appointed to the Woodrow Wilson Chair of International Politics at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1936. This was a rather strange appointment—not only because Carr's opposition to the League of Nations contradicted David Davies, a Welsh millionaire and Liberal M.P., who had donated the Chair with a hope that the incumbent would promote the idea of internationalism, but also because Carr had not had a particularly high reputation by then.³⁶⁷ At this point, Carr was still a diplomat and part-time journalist

³⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 6.

³⁶⁷ For Davies' international thought, see Brian Porter, 'David Davies and the Enforcement of Peace', in David Long (ed.), *Thinkers of the Twenty Years' Crisis: Inter-War Idealism Reassessed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 58-78. As for the place of the Aberystwyth Chair in the development of International Relations as a discipline in Britain, see Ieuan John, Moorhead Wright, and John Garnett, 'International Politics at Aberystwyth, 1919-1969', in Brian Porter (ed.), *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics, 1919-1969* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 86-102.

who had published nothing substantial on international politics, and it would be a few years later that Carr's view came to be publicly known after the publications of his *International Relations since the Peace Treaties* and *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, which attacked internationalist utopian Idealism, and annoyed not only Davies, but also a group of thinkers interested in international politics, including Toynbee, Murray, Woolf, Angell, and Zimmern.

From 1936 to 1939, Carr intentionally engaged in public debates over appeasement, one of the most significant issues in international politics during this period. An adamant appeaser, Carr did not identify Fascism as an ideology that posed a threat to peace; rather, he believed that Hitlerism restated 'a living national faith', and mingled 'all social distinction' by 'embracing in its ranks working men, bourgeois, intelligentsia and aristocrats'.³⁶⁸ Carr's public defence of Germany's remilitarisation and re-occupation of the Rhineland in his BBC talk, 'Hitler Enters the Rhineland', was founded on a belief that Germany was unfairly treated by the Versailles Treaty, which the Germans were forced to sign, and whose legitimacy should be questioned.³⁶⁹ This view was by no means unusual among British intellectuals after the First World War, with the notable example of Keynes' *The Economic Consequences of Peace* (1919). However, as Jonathan Haslam points out, by placing the Versailles Treaty together with the Locarno Pact, which stipulated Germany's international duty and was agreed by the German Government, Carr was deliberately but secretly moulding public opinion, and he tried to make people believe in the legitimacy of Hitler's move. In *International*

³⁶⁸ John Hallett, 'The Prussian Complex', *Fortnightly Review*, January 1933, pp. 37-45.

³⁶⁹ Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity*, pp. 62-63.

Relations since the Peace Treaties, Carr provided an historical sketch of world affairs after the Versailles Treaty, which is infused with clear sympathy for Germany and an opposition to French foreign policies in the 1920s.³⁷⁰

To some extent, support for appeasement was a position held by many people from Carr's generation as a consequence of their experience of the First World War. Toynbee, for example, gradually giving up his hope in the League after Germany's withdrawal, and particularly the Abyssinia War, feared that another general war would uproot the very foundation of civilisation and bring the whole world into chaos. Under this consideration, he argued adamantly that conflict with Germany should be avoided. Toynbee was therefore completely convinced by Hitler at their meeting in February 1936—shortly before the Germans controlled the Rhineland—and he believed that Hitler had no ambition to change the international order.³⁷¹ Carr made a similar point in his BBC talk, arguing that if another war happened it would be unprecedented in its scale, and that it is crucially important to maintain peace.³⁷² But unlike Toynbee, Carr did not bemoan the dissolution of post-war international order; for he averred that it was precisely the League, founded and controlled by the victors of the First World War, that was responsible for the current political crisis.

'Public Opinion as a Safeguard of Peace', Carr's inaugural lecture at Aberystwyth, and his article in the *Fortnightly Review* entitled 'The Future of the League', both published in 1936, can be seen as his first attack on the League and its liberal principles.

³⁷⁰ E.H. Carr, *International Relations since the Peace Treaties* (London: Macmillan, 1937).

³⁷¹ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee*, pp. 172-3.

³⁷² Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity*, p. 63.

Carr's argument in 'Public Opinion', in particular, is so iconoclastic that he seemed to destroy all kinds of international theories since the 1920s. Carr classified inter-war international theorists into three categories: 'pacifists' who believe that all war is a sin, 'isolationists' who prioritise the interest of the British Empire, and 'collectivists'.³⁷³ 'Collectivists' can again be divided into advocates of a 'super-national executive', and those who believed in 'an arrangement by which sovereign States agree to combine together against any one of their number who may be guilty of an act of aggression'—though Carr did not mention anyone's name, it is little doubt that it was Toynbee and Murray whom he was referring to. According to Carr, these collectivists failed to realise that their 'collective security' proposal was not endorsed by normal citizens who were unwilling to fight for an ideal, and that economic sanctions, which were encouraged by Article 16 of the League Covenant, would be ineffective without military support.³⁷⁴

Soon after his inaugural lecture, Carr received a letter of protest from Gilbert Murray, who regarded Carr's lecture as an overt challenge to the League principle—an accusation Carr admitted.³⁷⁵ Apart from disagreements on specific policies, there were two significant ways in which Carr's entire intellectual outlook differed from that of Toynbee and Murray. First, maintaining that the so-called 'League principle' was merely a doctrine, and that people 'don't expect to see it realised for years or centuries', Carr

³⁷³ E.H. Carr, 'Public Opinion as a Safeguard of Peace', *International Affairs*, 15/6 (1936), pp. 846-62.

³⁷⁴ Ibid, pp. 853-4.

³⁷⁵ Oxford, Bodleian MS Gilbert Murray, C 137, Gilbert Murray to E.H. Carr, 5 December 1936, fos. 136-7; E.H. Carr to Gilbert Murray, 8 December 1936, fos. 142-4.

was opposed to presupposing a fixed end of history, as he believed Murray did.³⁷⁶ Secondly, Carr denied the effectiveness of moral laws implemented on an international level, and believed that power was the only important factor in international politics. So the alleged crisis of the 1930s, as he maintained in *International Relations since the Peace Treaties*, should be understood as a 'return of power politics'.³⁷⁷ In 'Public Opinion as a Safeguard of Peace' and his review of *Survey of International Affairs, 1935*, Carr, moreover, presumed an antithesis between ideas and the real situation, and criticised Toynbee for taking studying absolute values, instead of public opinion, as the objective of international relations.³⁷⁸ Apparently, this view was unacceptable to Murray, who directly confronted Carr by asking 'because most men are rather dishonest, is that to say there is to be no law against thieving?'.³⁷⁹ It is noteworthy that in almost all the reviews of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* that were written by the so-called idealists, including Angell, Zimmern, and Woolf, Carr's value relativism was unanimously recognised as the essence of his realism, and received the most serious rebuttal. Zimmern and Woolf both argued that if the power of ideas was completely dismissed, it would be difficult to explain such political movements as Zionism, and that politics became a meaningless discipline if there were no normative concepts to be applied in it.³⁸⁰

3.2. Liberalism versus Realism

³⁷⁶ MS Gilbert Murray, C 137, E.H. Carr to Gilbert Murray, 8 December 1936, fos. 142-4.

³⁷⁷ Carr, *International Relations since the Peace Treaties*, pp. 133-96.

³⁷⁸ Carr criticised Toynbee for caring too much about what the professors and bishops wrote about. E.H. Carr, 'Review of "Survey of International Affairs 1935"', *International Affairs*, 16/2 (1936), p. 281.

³⁷⁹ MS Gilbert Murray, C 137, Gilbert Murray to E.H. Carr, 5 December 1936, fo. 137.

³⁸⁰ Alfred Zimmern, 'A Realist in Search of a Utopia', *The Spectator*, 24 November 1939; Norman Angell, 'Who are the Utopians? And Who the Realists?', *Headway*, January 1940; Leonard Woolf, 'Utopia and Reality', *Political Quarterly*, 11/2 (1940), pp. 168-82.

The Twenty Years' Crisis is possibly the best and widely-circulated work of Carr's. Published in 1939, it is not only a book on international theory, but was also written with the greater ambition to debunk liberalism as an ideology. The original title Carr intended to use was 'Utopia and Reality', and it is precisely the overarching concern of the book to examine two antithetical ideas, namely utopianism and realism.³⁸¹ These two notions are very loosely defined in the book, and each, according to Carr, contains a number of subordinate ideas. Utopianism indicates voluntarism, presumes international harmony, encourages moral condemnation, emphasises the dominance of political theory over actions, and is preferred by intellectuals.³⁸² Realism, by contrast, denotes determinism, underlines national interest, worships *realpolitik*, stresses the independence of political actions, and is favoured by bureaucrats.³⁸³ But Carr also pointed out that a fundamental difference between utopianism and realism lay in their views of history. First, utopianism adopts a teleological view and presupposes an ideal as the end of history. By contrast, realist philosophy of history prioritises recognising the inevitable tendency of history from empirical research:

Realism places its emphasis on the acceptance of facts and the analysis of their causes and consequences... [it] tends to emphasise the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to these forces and these tendencies.³⁸⁴

Secondly, utopianism presupposes absolute and 'static' ethical standards; whereas realism, presuming that 'there can be no reality outside the historical process' and maintaining that values are always historically conditioned, is more 'dynamic and

³⁸¹ MS Carr, C 27: E.H. Carr to Harold Macmillan, 23 July 1938.

³⁸² E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, new edn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 25-59.

³⁸³ Ibid, pp. 62-88.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 10.

relativist’.³⁸⁵ Realism, therefore, stipulates that historians and students of international politics need to identify the historical trend of a certain period. Carr indicated that determinism and relativism were both constitutive elements of realism; when these two ideas are combined, realist philosophy of history can thus be summarised as maintaining that the historical process is governed, and values inescapably conditioned, by the dominant force of a certain age. Two corollaries are thus followed: on the one hand, there are no alternatives in history, swimming against the tide is completely ineffective, and ‘things could not have turned out otherwise than they did’; on the other hand, moral condemnation is meaningless, for ‘history cannot be judged except by historical standards’.³⁸⁶

It is noteworthy that in *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*, utopianism is presumed to be equivalent to liberalism. Therefore, this work can also be regarded as the theoretical underpinning of Carr’s criticism of the liberal idea of history, and liberalism as an ideology itself. But as Carr’s review of Mannheim illustrates, he realised that radical relativism would be inescapably entangled in self-contradiction, and eventually lead to a lack of standards that were accepted by most members of society. He thus pointed out that ‘every realist...is ultimately compelled to believe...that there is something which man ought to think and do...and that his thought and action are neither mechanical nor meaningless.’ To solve this dilemma in his theory, Carr maintained that although every age needed a shared goal and common faith to achieve communal cohesion, these ideals were only temporary—‘having demolished the current utopia with the weapons of

³⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 63.

³⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 64-5.

realism, we still need to build a new utopia of our own, which will one day fall to the same weapons.'³⁸⁷ It is noteworthy that thirty years later, Carr made a very similar point in *What is History?*, arguing that he principally approved the idea of progress in history, but the standard of progress should not be ultimate, but always relative. Henceforth, the basic principles of Carr's historical conception remained unchanged after they were elaborated in the 1930s.

Carr was particularly influenced by Marx and Mannheim when writing *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. Already attracted by Marx's theory in the early 1930s, Carr accepted Marx's historical inevitability, and advocated an economic understanding of history, which resulted in his *Karl Marx: A Study in Fanaticism*. Nevertheless, his endorsement of Marx's philosophy of history was never full. Diverging from Marx, he rejected a classless society as the telos Marx designated into history, and regarded it as the Achilles' heel of Marxism. According to Carr, Marx's assumption that men could be divided into propertied and propertyless classes was not correct, for the line between them is constantly shifting. 'In this culminating point of his system', Carr claimed, 'Marx abandoned science and reverted to Utopianism'.³⁸⁸ The ending paragraphs of Carr's *Karl Marx* again indicate that Carr did not treat history as a process with an ultimate meaning ready to be achieved:

even if the near future produces an extension and an intensification of mass-rule, the inveterate tendency of man to individualise himself will ultimately reappear; and, unless all historical analogies are false, a new differentiation of the mass will lead to a new renaissance of humanism. Nobody will care to prophesy when and how this revolution will occur. But

³⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 87.

³⁸⁸ John Hallet, 'Karl Marx: Fifty Years After', *Fortnightly Review*, p.321.

when it is consummated, the Marxist epoch of history will have come to an end.³⁸⁹

Apart from Marxism, which taught him to explain history by ‘the underlying economic realities’, Carr was especially influenced by Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia*, as is demonstrable by the original title of *The Twenty Years’ Crisis*—‘Utopia and Reality’.³⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that the manner in which ‘utopia’ is used in these two works differs. Carr basically identified utopianism as naive idealism; but to Mannheim, a utopian state of mind, despite being incongruous with the state of reality, and determined by ‘the dominant group which is in full accord with the existing order’, is indispensable if freedom still has its place in history.³⁹¹ For otherwise, ‘man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it’.³⁹² In this respect, Carr’s reading of *Ideology and Utopia* was therefore highly selective. According to Carr, Mannheim’s work ‘showed how the opinions of political and economic groups reflected this status and their interests.’³⁹³ But he overlooked Mannheim’s belief that ‘the only form in which the future presents itself to us is that of possibilities’, and was mainly attracted by Mannheim’s discussion of ideology. To Mannheim, a study of ideology is to reveal the real meaning that lies behind the ‘face value’ of the ‘opinions, statements, propositions, and systems of ideas’ of an individual or a group.³⁹⁴ According to him, ideology can be distinguished into two different but related meanings: the particular conception of ideology focuses on the ‘psychology of interests’ of a particular group,

³⁸⁹ E.H. Carr, *Karl Marx: A Study in Fanaticism* (London: Dent, 1934), p. 303.

³⁹⁰ E.H. Carr, ‘Nationalism: The World’s Bane’, *Fortnightly Review*, June 1937, p. 699.

³⁹¹ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 173, 183.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

³⁹³ Carr, ‘An Autobiography’, p. xviii.

³⁹⁴ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 50.

namely, someone's motive for saying something other than what he really means; whereas ideology in the total sense denotes the general outlook of a whole society, which includes the content as well as the unified structural framework of its 'thought-system'³⁹⁵.

Mannheim maintained that there were four types of utopian ideas: orgiastic chiliasm, liberal-humanitarianism, conservatism, and socialist-communist utopia. According to him, both liberalism and conservatism embrace the particular conception of ideology; they assume that 'there was only one universal truth', and 'referred individual ideas to a universal criteria of validity'.³⁹⁶ Carr clearly noticed and adopted this argument in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*. To him, a certain political ideology is always intertwined with and determined by its corresponding economic system; liberalism, therefore, is a set of ideas that have encouraged the development of capitalism. Carr contended that the ideas of laissez-faire and harmony of interest 'were substantially fulfilled in an age when production involved no high degree of specialisation and no sinking of capital in fixed equipment'; but when industrial capitalism had developed into its mature form, and when there had been 'a large and powerful proletariat more interested in distribution than in production', liberalism became 'the ideology of a dominant group concerned to maintain its predominance by asserting the identity of its interests with those of the community as a whole'.³⁹⁷ On the international level, moral principles were produced and imposed by the dominant nations to protect their vested

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 52.

³⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 224.

³⁹⁷ Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, pp. 44-5.

interests.³⁹⁸ Already believing that capitalism was rotten, Carr thus proclaimed that liberalism as an ideology that protected the interests of capitalists was also doomed and would soon perish.

IV.

4.1. Planning as an Historical Inevitability

Soon after the Second World War broke out, Carr acquired a position in the Ministry of Intelligence; but before long, he was forced to leave due to office politics. Then he joined *The Times* as a leader writer on foreign affairs in 1940, and was promoted to assistant editor in the following year, while still retaining his professorship in Aberystwyth, until his resignation in 1947. Under Geoffrey Dawson's editorship, *The Times* was generally in tune with the official views of the British Government, which nonetheless witnessed a significant change after Dawson was succeeded by Barrington-Ward.³⁹⁹ Though known as an appeaser, Dawson disliked Carr's political view; it was Barrington-Ward, who admired Carr's talent and prose, and allowed him to make use of the newspaper as a platform 'for getting some of [his] ideas across', even though this broke the unspoken rule that leading articles should be detached and impersonal—a 'newspaper is not for essays'.⁴⁰⁰ As a result, Carr, unsatisfied with discussing foreign affairs only, embarked on writing about social reconstruction and the Home Front.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, p.76.

³⁹⁹ Iverach McDonald, *The History of the Times: Struggles in War and Peace 1939-1966* (5 vols, London: Times Books, 1984), v, pp.10-12.

⁴⁰⁰ On how Carr joined in *The Times*, see Donald McLachlan, *In the Chair: Barrington-Ward of The Times, 1927-1948* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp. 212-3; Stefan Collini, 'The Intellectual as Realist: The Puzzling Career of E.H. Carr', in idem, *Common Reading*, p.162.

Carr's social and economic ideas during this period were basically promulgated in two leaders published in 1940. In 'The New Europe', published shortly after the 'Phoney War' was over, Carr pointed out the urgency of formulating a new social order for the Home Front. He argued that true democracy was 'the right to work and the right to live', that freedom included 'social organisation and economic planning', that equality must also be achieved economically, and that reconstruction required 'equitable distribution'. This contention was emphasised again in 'Two Scourges', in which Carr identified war and unemployment as two great threats to British society.⁴⁰¹ His motion to promote social reform answered the public need for social reconstruction, and was thus warmly welcomed by the working-class: ten thousand reprints of 'The Two Scourges' were sold.⁴⁰² But more importantly, Carr's social view was underpinned by his conception of history—in both articles, he proclaimed that British society was on the threshold of a new age, and that radical change was needed to follow the current of history. As he suggested in his war-time talk at Chatham House, the War was not a struggle against evil, but a revolution that totally broke up with the past.⁴⁰³

Carr's view was more systematically elaborated in *Conditions of Peace*, which was also a bestseller and reprinted several times soon after its publication in 1942. To ensure that Britain still 'plays a leading part' after the War, Carr proclaimed, 'the revolution must begin at home front'.⁴⁰⁴ First and foremost, the government should increase

⁴⁰¹ E.H. Carr, 'The Two Scourges', *The Times*, 5 December 1940. Viscount Elibank once said, 'Professor Carr is indeed an active danger to the country and its future in the position he holds.' Cited from *The History of the Times*, v, p. 105.

⁴⁰² Haslam, *Vices of Integrity*, p. 90; Mclachlan, *In the Chair*, p. 217.

⁴⁰³ MS Carr, C 25: E.H. Carr, 'What Are We Fighting For', talk at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 14 August 1940; E.H. Carr *Conditions of Peace* (London: Macmillan, 1942), p.4.

⁴⁰⁴ Carr, *Conditions of Peace*, p.4.

welfare by upgrading the standard of the social minimum provided to the citizens, including food, clothing, housing and basic household equipment.⁴⁰⁵ Moreover, to tackle the problem of unemployment and inequality, which Carr believed were the most obvious ‘scandals’ of British society, it requires ‘more equitable distribution of consumption and orderly utilisation of our productive capacity’.⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, Carr advocated economic planning, and the establishment of a mixed economy in which ‘essential industries and services’ were under governmental control, and luxury industries operated in a free market.⁴⁰⁷ Carr recognised underconsumption as an inherent problem of capitalism, but, unlike those economists, such as Hobson, who maintained that an increased purchasing power was effective in solving overproduction, he did not believe that redistributive taxation was a viable solution.⁴⁰⁸ Instead, he contended that the real issue was overproduction due to ‘incompatibility between an increasingly rigid system of production and the increasingly variable demands of consumers’. In this regard, Carr argued that it was necessary to implement what he called ‘planned consumption’, and to make production subordinate to consumption:

The first essential of economic reconstruction is that planned consumption must precede and condition planned production...The second essential of economic reconstruction is the substitution of welfare for wealth as our governing purpose, and the consequent abandonment of considerations of price and profits as the determining factor of production.⁴⁰⁹

According to Carr, expanded plans of consumption should be formulated by first ranking the needs of the customers. Without doubt, basic needs of the common people

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 138.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, p.80.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, p.145.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, p.87.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 97-8.

should be prioritised; so at an early stage, the customers' choice would be limited. But in a sheer egalitarian spirit, Carr went on stating that 'such a restriction is a lesser evil than the maintenance...of unrestricted choice between a large range of "luxuries" combined with the denial to another part of the community of access to any "luxuries" at all'.⁴¹⁰ Sceptical of Trade Unionism because of its protection of certain groups, Carr seemed to advocate a Webbian programme that emphasised the significance of the consumer; nonetheless, he did not mention the co-operative movement in the book, and what he endorsed was rather nationalisation of the means of production, which would solve unemployment at the same time. Nevertheless, Carr never clearly defined planned consumption; nor did he articulate its difference from planned production—for both inevitably require state interference. The standard seems merely to be to what extent the economy in question is capitalised: planned production is being carried out in backward countries such as Russia where there is no over-production, while 'planned consumption' has been implemented in economically advanced countries such as Germany.⁴¹¹

Carr's direct and deliberate challenge to the 'safety first' principle of the 1920s was by no means unusual, since planning in particular had become a most common theme in British public debate from the 1930s to the end of the War, and attracted politicians and intellectuals across the political spectrum. In the 1930s, it was seriously discussed by socialist thinkers and economists such as Laski, Cole, Stafford Cripps, Hugh Dalton, and Evan Durbin, and it became a serious agenda of the Labour Party in the 1930s and

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, p. 96.

⁴¹¹ Ibid, p. 94.

1940s.⁴¹² Pressure groups and research organisations with an aim to promote economic planning, such as Political and Economic Planning, inspired Max Nicholson's famous article 'A National Plan for Britain' published in the *Weekend Review*, and the Next Five Years Group, which attracted a large number of progressive intellectuals, including, among others, H.A.L. Fisher, Gilbert Murray, Hobson, and Wells, were founded along a liberal and progressive line that sought to achieve a consensus between various political groups.⁴¹³ Even among the Conservatives there were such radicals as Harold Macmillan who made a plea for planning and social reform; without mentioning that Mannheim's 'planning for freedom', insofar as it laid an emphasis on Christian values in organising the society into a holistic community, was widely disseminated with the help of other members of the Moot, and was highly valued by many Conservatives.⁴¹⁴

However, this makes it rather curious that Carr seemed largely uninformed about, or at least reluctant to discuss, these new developments in current political debate. To some extent, his works during the War fit into a context he himself did not recognise. Carr hardly mentioned any names of economists or political thinkers who advocated economic planning; he emphasised in *Conditions of Peace* that 'leaders of the satisfied countries' such as Britain were blind to the real movement of history, and still lacked a

⁴¹² See Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London: Pimlico, 1994), pp. 127-89; Jose Harris, 'War and Social History: Britain and the Home Front during the Second World War', *Contemporary European History*, 1/1 (1002), pp. 17-35. Also see John Stevenson, 'Planners' Moon? The Second World War and the Planning Movement', in Smith (ed.), *War and Social Change*, pp. 58-77; Stephen Brooke, 'Revisionists and Fundamentalists: The Labour Party and Economic Policy during the Second World War', *The Historical Journal*, 32/1 (1989), pp. 157-75.

⁴¹³ See Daniel Ritschel, *The Politics of Planning: The Debate on Economic Planning in Britain in the 1930s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Brian Harrison, 'Planning in Modern Britain: Its History and Dimensions', in Lawrence Goldman (ed.), *Welfare and Social Policy in Britain since 1870: Essays in Honour of Jose Harris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 80-103.

⁴¹⁴ See Harris, 'Political Ideas and the Debate on State Welfare'.

will to change.⁴¹⁵ In comparison, during the War, Carr was particularly attracted by Germany's industrial and military power. He argued that the success of Germany and Russia was because they 'held the key to the future', 'propounded new economic systems based on new principles and therefore opening up a prospect of hope', and 'had something to offer and did not invite their followers to worship a political idea enshrined in the past'.⁴¹⁶ This partly betrays Carr's intellectual detachment and his distance, on a personal level, from other socialists; and partly shows his being extremely 'unrealistic' in analysing the political reality of his own country, and equally 'idealistic' in putting his hope first on the Soviet Union, then Germany, and the Soviet Union again.

4.2. The Making of a Sovietologist

Carr's international view experienced a rapid change from 1942 to 1944. Most of the reviewers of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* and *Conditions of Peace*, including Richard Crossman, Rebecca West, and Hugh Seton-Watson, mentioned Carr's sympathy with Fascism.⁴¹⁷ In his *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek criticised Carr for being an apologist of totalitarianism, and pointed out the influence of German historical thought on his ideas, which anticipated Berlin's attack on Carr in the 1950s.⁴¹⁸ As has been suggested, in the late 1930s and during the War, Carr's assessment of Germany's economic achievement was more positive than that he had made for Soviet Russia. This, however, does not

⁴¹⁵ Carr, *Conditions of Peace*, p. xix.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, p. xv.

⁴¹⁷ Hugh Seton-Watson, 'Politics and Power', *The Listener*, 7 December 1939; R.H.S. Crossman, 'E.H. Carr: Illusions of Power', in idem, *The Charm of Politics: and other Essays in Political Criticism* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958), pp. 91-4; Haslam, *Vices of Integrity*, p. 99.

⁴¹⁸ F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 196-200.

mean that Carr was a Fascist; for to him, Communism and Nazism were both meaningless ideologies. Carr believed that Germany was 'as revolutionary in essence as the Soviet system', and that 'the processes which have destroyed Liberalism in Russia, in Italy, and in Germany clearly have their root in the same necessity'.⁴¹⁹ Therefore, Carr's appreciation of Germany during the War was merely because it was then a much stronger and more efficient force whose 'immense programme of consumption was set on foot capable of absorbing all and more than all the productive forces of the nation, and hitherto unemployed labour.'⁴²⁰

When the War was reaching its end, Carr's 'initial faith' in the Soviet Union was rekindled by the immense power the Soviet Union and the Red Army exhibited, and he was resolved to re-evaluate the achievement that turned Russia from an economically backward country to a great Power.⁴²¹ In 1944, Churchill decided to lend military support to the Greek Government to combat the Russian backed National Liberation Front. Carr wrote a number of articles in *The Times* deploring the Government's policy, which infuriated Churchill and many senior officers in the Foreign Office.⁴²² This incident anticipated Carr's attitude towards the Soviet Union after the War, when there was a short period during which many Westerners were unclear about Russia's next move. It is noteworthy that at this time, Carr formed a working relationship with the producer Anna Kallin, and frequently broadcast for the BBC's Third Programme. So when many liberals, such as Berlin, recognised instantly after the War that the Soviet

⁴¹⁹ Carr, 'The Origins of Liberalism', *The Sunday Times*, 24 May 1936.

⁴²⁰ Idem, *Conditions of Peace*, p. 94.

⁴²¹ Idem, 'An Autobiography', p.xx; Haslam, *Vices of Integrity*, pp. 120-137; idem, 'Carr's Search for Meaning', in Cox (ed.), *E.H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal*, pp. 29-30.

⁴²² McLachlan, *In the Chair*, pp. 252-8.

Union was a menace that should be contained, Carr however, provided a completely different analysis.

In a number of broadcasts, for example, 'Background of Soviet Policy' (1947) and 'World Revolution as a Factor in Soviet Foreign Policy' (1949), Carr assured the audience that Stalin did not have a determined plan to expand, for he was no longer strictly following Marxist principles. Soviet foreign policy since the 1930s had followed such a pattern as that ideological propaganda was 'let loose against the capitalist world' only when its relationship with the West was in deterioration.⁴²³ As many socialists in the post-war period were, Carr was overtly anti-American; so his general position was that Britain should 'strike a balance' between the two Great Powers, and pursue a middle way by not leaning too close to either of them.⁴²⁴ Interestingly, at this point, Carr and Toynbee were almost in total agreement with each other.⁴²⁵ From a realist point of view, the West should, therefore, admit Russia's influence in Eastern Europe, and avoid any potential conflicts.

Meanwhile, Carr's admiration of the domestic policies of the Soviet Union became increasingly unreserved, which was best exemplified in his *Soviet Impact on the West*, a work composed of a series of lectures he delivered in Oxford in early 1946. Unlike in the 1930s, Carr's admiration of the Soviet Union was not confined to its agricultural collectivism. Soviet planning, Carr argued, was successful in both economic (e.g. nationalisation of means of production) and social domains by reaching equilibriums

⁴²³ MS Carr, C 25: E.H. Carr, 'Background of Soviet Foreign Policy' (typescript), 20 December 1947; idem, 'World Revolution as a Factor in Soviet Foreign Policy' (typescript), 29 January 1949. The former was published as E.H. Carr, 'The Pattern of Soviet Foreign Policy', *The Listener*, 1 January 1948.

⁴²⁴ E.H. Carr, 'Striking a Balance', *The Listener*, 17 October 1946.

⁴²⁵ See Toynbee's reply to Carr, 'The Virtue of the Middle Way', *The Listener*, 14 November 1946.

between efficiency and equitable distribution, as well as production for capital accumulation and that for consumption.⁴²⁶ It is a 'combination of material and moral appeal' which answers the collective need of society; the success of the Soviet Union, therefore, is achieved by the establishment of planning as 'a peace-time procedure' which contains 'both rights and obligations for citizens'.⁴²⁷

Moreover, Carr explicitly denounced democracy in the Western, political, bourgeois form for being purely formal, institutional and hence transient. To him, true democracy is a process of 'progressive social and political change', which encourages the participation of the masses in governmental administration and above all, increases material well-being and standard of life.⁴²⁸ He praised the Soviet political system by arguing that though there was only one political party to vote for, the citizens were not forced to vote, but voted for the sake of 'performing acts of political faith, demonstrating their political beliefs and their political loyalties.'⁴²⁹ This view, of course, seemed politically dubious when the Cold War began to impose its influence on intellectuals; and it was directly refuted by other liberal Sovietologists, such as Hugh Seton-Watson, who asserted that the whole system was manipulated by the Party, and did not reflect the real opinions of the people.⁴³⁰ Furthermore, Carr began to refer to what he used to call liberal capitalist ideology as 'individualism'; and the Soviet Union was an example of the inevitable trend from individualism to 'totalitarianism'—it is

⁴²⁶ E.H. Carr, *Soviet Impact on the Western World* (London: Macmillan, 1946), p. 36.

⁴²⁷ Ibid, pp. 44-6, 41-2.

⁴²⁸ Idem, 'Foreign Policy Begins at Home', *The Listener*, 31 October 1946.

⁴²⁹ Idem, 'The Real Meaning of the Soviet Elections', *The Listener*, 12 September 1950.

⁴³⁰ Hugh Seton-Watson, 'The Soviet Conception of Democracy', *The Listener*, 1 July 1948.

noteworthy that Carr did not construe this notion in a denunciative way.⁴³¹ Soviet ideology, if there was one, was, according to Carr, precisely its 'materialistic' and 'relativist' historical view.⁴³²

Carr's reputation as a Sovietologist was largely founded on *A History of Soviet Russia*, a fourteen-volume *magnum opus* which took him almost thirty years to finish. *The Bolshevik Revolution*, the first batch of *A History of Soviet Russia*, is composed of three volumes which came out respectively in 1950, 1952 and 1953. The first volume was initially intended to be an introductory chapter, which explores the social and economic structure of Russia before Lenin suffered his third stroke and disappeared from the political stage in 1923. Carr's ambition is to evaluate Lenin as a founder of a state, rather than a revolutionary who overthrew the Tsar. This, however, resulted in a rather peculiar history of the Soviet Union which leaves ideological dynamics of the revolution totally untouched. Carr's intention, as he claimed in another Third Programme talk, advertising his book, was to investigate the forces that moulded the regime, and 'the political, social and economic order that emerged from' its foundation. As Carr now made explicit, his appreciation of the Soviet Union was decisive because it was 'the only country in a position to attempt a thorough-going experiment in Socialism and planned economy', when it realised that 'bourgeois capitalism' was 'doomed to break down', and that 'conditions for that breakdown...had matured'.⁴³³ In other words, Carr's faith in the Soviet Union was based on the judgment that it was marching on the

⁴³¹ Carr, *The Soviet Impact on the Western World*, p.12.

⁴³² Ibid, pp. 86-105.

⁴³³ Idem, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923* (London: Macmillan, 1950), p. v; MS Carr, C 25: 'Work in Progress': *The History of Russia* (typescript), 3 October 1948.

only correct path in history.

During the 1950s, Carr wrote numerous reviews and leading articles for the *Times Literary Supplement*. When Stanley Morrison, an old friend from *The Times* with a socialist bent, and Alan Pryce-Jones were editors, they were eager to welcome voices from different persuasions, and Carr was apparently considered a left-wing critic of the *status quo*.⁴³⁴ However, Carr seemed to a large extent unaware that the intellectual atmosphere of the 1950s had considerably changed. He remained hostile to liberals such as Berlin, and believed they were trying to revive Murray and Toynbee's cause in the 1920s. In a large number of leaders and book reviews he wrote for the *TLS*, and particularly in the first chapter of *The New Society*, Carr attacked various intellectuals who still held the 'moralist', 'liberal' and 'defeatist' conception of history, including Berlin, Butterfield, and Hans Kohn. Carr tried to indicate that these advocates of 'new scepticism' still tried to make a case for an out-dated ideology with a view of history that itself had been abandoned by history.⁴³⁵ Nevertheless, in the Cold-War atmosphere, Carr's realism easily made him being recognised as an apologist for Communism and totalitarianism—though, as we have seen, Carr's admiration of the Soviet Union was never driven by Communist ideology.

Conclusion

As a noticeable phenomenon in the 1930s, the attraction of Soviet Communism to

⁴³⁴ Derwent May, *Critical Times: The History of the Times Literary Supplement* (London: Harper Collins, 2001), pp. 279-80.

⁴³⁵ E.H. Carr, *The New Society* (London: Macmillan, 1951), pp. 1-18; idem, 'History and Morals', *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 December 1954; idem, 'The New Scepticism', *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 June 1950; idem, 'Self-Criticism and the Historian', *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 July 1957; idem, 'The Historian a Moralism', *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 August 1951; idem, 'History without a Philosophy', *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 November 1956.

British intellectuals took several forms. Apart from those who formed a firm belief in Communism as the future goal of human society after accepting Marx's economic theory and historical idea, some people simply appreciated the economic progress achieved by the Soviet Union, and identified its system as a viable alternative, especially after the economic recession of the Western world. Meanwhile, partly because of the success of Soviet Communism, economic planning as a new social programme was promulgated, advocated and vehemently discussed by politicians, economists and political thinkers in public during the 1930s. This chapter explored a typical historical conceptualisation that was sometimes explicitly raised but more often implicitly accepted by a number of social thinkers in their writings to reinforce, bolster and even license their arguments about Soviet Communism and economic planning. According to this conception of history, it is an inevitable tendency of history that laissez-faire liberalism will be replaced by planning, as the case of Soviet Union had demonstrated.

This conception of history, defined as 'realist' in this chapter, was related to, but different from Marxist philosophy of history in the strict sense. Through an examination of the ways in which Marx was construed in the 1930s, it seems clear that upholders of this realist view tended not to treat Marx's historical thought as teleological or metaphysical, but rather to underline the relativist implication of Marx's ideas. Their contention can be roughly summarised as 1) ideas, values and institutions are largely dependent on the economic realities of a certain society; 2) the irreversible historical tendency of an age can be understood after analysing the real situations of that society.

This chapter particularly focused on E.H. Carr not only because he intentionally integrated these presuppositions into a mature and coherent philosophy of history, but also because he developed his argument into such an extreme form: moral values, being the ideological protection of a certain group's interest, could be completely discounted. Moreover, Carr believed that the historical trend from liberal individualism to collectivism and planning was unmistakable and irrevocable, and that it was historically unwise to fight against the current. His appreciation of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany can thus be explained: both countries, according to him, not only self-consciously followed this trend, but also adopted the realist conception of history.

From this realist standpoint, Carr thus posed the greatest challenge to the liberal-internationalism discussed in the last chapter. As this chapter showed, Carr's condemnation of what theorists of international relations now call 'inter-war idealism' needs to be interpreted as first and foremost directed at its philosophy of history, which, according to Carr, presumed a fixed moral ideal as the end of history, but failed to realise its own historical relativity. In terms of the ground on which his criticism of liberalism was based, Carr provided a typical example to illustrate the ways in which moralism in political and historical thought, not least because of its negligence of economic realities, was censured in the 1930s. Nevertheless, Carr's public defence of the Soviet Union, and his continued belief that liberalism was an out-dated ideology against the current of history, resulted in his being viewed as a fellow-traveller. He left *The Times*, and was forced to resign his professorship due to his scandalous affair with a colleague's wife, who later became his second wife. Not least because of his

provocative political views, Carr experienced successive failures to obtain the Montague Burton Professorship of International Relations at Oxford, which went to Agnes Headlam-Morley, and the Chair of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies Centre in London.⁴³⁶ A lecturer at Balliol for some years, he was finally elected to a tenured fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge. But the fact that Carr did not have any connections with the History Faculty only betrays that his reputation as an historian was not widely recognised—in a way, it never has been.

⁴³⁶ Haslam, *Vices of Integrity*, pp. 119-26.

Chapter III

The Power of Ideas: Isaiah Berlin, Trevor-Roper and the Liberal-Humanitarian Idea of History

Introduction

At first sight, Isaiah Berlin and Hugh Trevor-Roper, despite belonging to the same generation, cannot seem more different in terms of their backgrounds and characters. One was a Latvian Jewish immigrant who received proper training in philosophy, had a love for Russian literature, liked making small talk, and was renowned for his works on political liberalism; the other, however, came from an upper-middle class family in the North of England, specialised in modern history, enjoyed reading classical literature, sometimes felt uneasy among strangers, and was often regarded as a High Tory in politics. Nevertheless, Berlin and Trevor-Roper formed a solid, even if not extremely close, friendship from the 1930s, not least because they shared an interest in gossip, and were both among the first-rate letter-writers of the twentieth century. After attending Hugh Trevor-Roper's inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of History at the Examination Schools of Oxford in 1957, Isaiah Berlin told his friend and life-long correspondent Rowland Burdon-Muller that he had 'seldom enjoyed an event more than' this. Trevor-Roper, as Berlin recalled, requested 'four rows of the School to be kept empty for him for the "quality"', but at the end, only a small number of Trevor-Roper's aristocratic guests showed up, and the seats were 'filled by the plebeian' in the end. But Berlin's mockery here, directed at Trevor-Roper's well-known fascination with High society life, did not hinder his appreciative evaluation of the lecture itself and

Trevor-Roper's idea of history in general.⁴³⁷

That Berlin and Trevor-Roper both came to be interested in probing into the nature of history, however, was not a pure coincidence. Witnessing the political turmoil of the 1930s, participating in the War, and establishing their fame in an age that was defined by confrontation between the free world and Communism, Berlin and Trevor-Roper believed that certain types of historical conceptualisation that justified, underpinned, and inhered in prevailing political ideologies were either morally dangerous or intellectually fallacious. To some extent, their common enemies rendered Berlin and Trevor-Roper allies in the 1950s. The fact that Berlin and Trevor-Roper's historical criticism appeared in such public platforms as *The New Statesman*, *Sunday Times*, *The Spectator*, and *Encounter* reveals the public interest in these issues, and, moreover, indicates Berlin and Trevor-Roper's belief that the implication of these debates was not confined to the historical profession, and that they could not be simply interpreted as conflict between different approaches in historical research. This chapter therefore aims to study Berlin and Trevor-Roper not only as historians, but also historians as public critics. This does not, however, mean that Berlin and Trevor-Roper's intellectual kinship can be exaggerated; for even their historical thought differed in some not insignificant ways. For example, as a proper historian, Trevor-Roper left more room for social and economic explanations of history; whereas Berlin always claimed that history, to him, was essentially 'what Alcibiades did and suffered'.⁴³⁸ But achieving an affinity does not

⁴³⁷ Isaiah Berlin to Rowland Burdon-Muller, 13 December 1957, in idem, *Enlightening: Letters 1940-1960*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), pp. 601-2.

⁴³⁸ Isaiah Berlin to Myron Gilmore, 26 December 1949, *ibid.*, p. 150.

necessarily require an unconditional agreement on every issue; so it is much more important to identify their common targets, find out the positions that they both held, and discover the principles that presuppose a certain liberal conception of history that both of them advocated.

The main objective of this chapter is twofold: first, to look into Berlin and Trevor-Roper's analysis of the reality of the Cold War, and to consider the ways in which they promulgated and censured certain historical conceptualisations as a reply to the conflict between Communist and anti-Communist ideologies. Secondly, it seeks to dislodge the frequently presumed relationship between Cold War liberalism and criticism of totalitarian explanations of history. Therefore, it argues that the liberal-humanitarian conception of history, which this chapter is primarily about (it therefore presumes more than one form of liberal historical view), relates, but does not necessarily correspond, to liberalism as a political ideology (not least because liberalism itself is an ambiguous notion). For one's political persuasion informs, but by no means determines, the way one views history; so Trevor-Roper, more often believed to be a conservative rather than a liberal, endorsed certain historical ideas that are defined in this chapter as typically liberal and humanitarian: freedom of choice, unrealised possibilities, and the power of ideas in history. Moreover, totalitarianism, as we shall see, was far from the only theme in Berlin and Trevor-Roper's historical criticism. In this regard, this liberal view of history is not only not subsidiary to, but also provides another perspective to reflect on, the so-called Cold War liberalism.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁹ Berlin's relation with Cold-War liberalism from a perspective of political theory, see Jan-Werner Muller, 'Fear

This chapter is composed of four sections. The first section concerns Berlin's and Trevor-Roper's intellectual development in the 1930s; for it would be difficult to understand some of their major concerns in the 1950s without an examination of their experience in the 1930s, including witnessing such political events as the Spanish Civil War and the Munich crisis. To some extent, certain issues were debated in the 1950s precisely because of their topicality in the 1930s. Moreover, this section pays due attention to the attraction of Communism to many young intellectuals from the generation of the thirties. It argues that although Berlin and Trevor-Roper shared their contemporaries' opposition to Fascism, they were reluctant to make an either-or choice between international Fascism and international Communism, which betrays their insistence on freedom in history. Moreover, it examines the ways in which logical positivism, as an influential intellectual current in the thirties, underpinned Berlin and Trevor-Roper's denunciation of Marxism. In particular, this section provides another perspective from which to reconsider Berlin's critical evaluation of logical positivism in the 1930s; by making use of some of his unpublished philosophical writings, it argues that historicity had already constituted a significant part in Berlin's philosophical thinking in the thirties.

The second section explores Berlin and Trevor-Roper's role as public intellectuals during the late 1940s and 1950s, and their involvement in the cultural Cold War. It

and Freedom': On "Cold War Liberalism", *European Journal of Political Theory*, 7/1 (2008), pp. 45-64; idem (ed.), *Isaiah Berlin's Cold War Liberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). It is noteworthy that current discussion on Cold War liberalism largely focuses on American intellectual life. See David Cieply, *Liberalism in the Shadow of Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006); Kevin Mattson, *When America was Great: The Fighting Faith of Post-war Liberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2004). Jim Smyth's *Cold War Culture: Intellectuals, the Media and the Practice of History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2016) provides a general account of the British case, although its primary objective is to place the Butterfield-Namier controversy into a broader cultural context.

particularly focuses on their criticism of certain historical conceptualisations that both Communism and anti-Communism were presupposed by, and explores the grounds on which they argued that these conceptions of history were unacceptable. In addition, this section also tries to answer to what extent Berlin and Trevor-Roper's ideas of history were modified by the Cold War context. The objective of the third section is to revisit the famous controversy between Berlin and Carr over moral judgement in history, and that between Trevor-Roper and Taylor over the origins of the Second World War. It seeks to demonstrate that the real issue behind these clashes was an irreconcilable disagreement between humanitarian and realist views of history over the power of ideas. It shows that Berlin and Trevor-Roper's insistence on the autonomy of social and moral ideas as a prerequisite of historical freedom is inseparable from the political atmosphere of the 1950s; it also indicates that this belief in the force of ideas is relevant to their decision to become intellectual historians. The last section seeks to uncover, through a chronological examination of Berlin's writings, a hitherto overlooked target of Berlin's historical criticism, namely a prevalent scientific explanation of history which he found in Popper's philosophy of knowledge, analytic philosophy of history and sociology. Anti-scientism, as it will be shown, became something Berlin was growingly preoccupied with in the late 1950s, and can be regarded as initiation of his study of Vico, Herder and German Romanticism.

I.

1.1. The 1930s—A Prelude to the 1950s?

In his autobiography *World within World*, the poet Stephen Spender observed that

‘the qualities which distinguished us from the writers of the previous decade lay not in ourselves, but in the events to which we reacted. These were unemployment, economic crisis, nascent fascism, approaching war...The older writers were reacting in the twenties to the exhaustion and hopelessness of a Europe in which the old regimes were falling into pieces. We were a “new generation”...’.⁴⁴⁰ This remark, made by a central figure of what literary historians often characterise as the ‘Auden Group’, composed of Auden himself, Spender, Louis MacNeice, C. Day Lewis, and others, clearly betrays these young writers’ aspiration to distance themselves from the older generation, including the ‘Oxford Aesthetes’ of the 1920s. A central theme in the works of the Auden generation was a deep concern with politics. As Samuel Hynes argues, what these poets had in mind was a strong feeling that they were witnessing something historically significant, as John Lehmann’s *The Noise of History* exemplified.⁴⁴¹

Naturally, many of them came to be attracted by Marxism. Although Auden claimed that he never considered converting to Communism, the dialectic of history appeared in his works in the early 1930s. For example, in the last scene of *The Dance of Death*, a play known for its moral diagnosis of modern society, Marx appears on stage and declares the death of the dancer, who is a token of the bourgeoisie, while the Chorus is singing ‘O M. Marx, you’ve gathered/ All the material facts/ You know the economic/Reasons for our acts.’⁴⁴² In comparison, Spender and Day Lewis, both joining the C.P.G.B., were more radical. Spender’s *Forward from Liberalism*, published by

⁴⁴⁰ Stephen Spender, *World within World: The Autobiography of Stephen Spender* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1951), p. 139.

⁴⁴¹ Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (London: Bodley Head, 1976), pp. 140-4. Also see D.E.S. Maxwell, *Poets of the Thirties* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 1-42.

⁴⁴² Ibid, p. 128.

Victor Gollancz in 1936, was highly influential in the 1930s, fostering the growth of political radicalism among a generation of young men. Employing a not uncommon argument in the 1930s that political freedom is meaningless, the book sentences both liberalism and capitalism to death, and places its hope on the Soviet Union (it is noteworthy that Spender was highly indebted to the Webbs' *Soviet Communism* in writing this work).⁴⁴³ In a similar vein, Day Lewis, in the introduction he wrote for *The Mind in Chains*, a collection of essays on Communist art and literature, welcomed a new Communist society and, evoking Marx, claimed that culture was already dead in capitalist society.⁴⁴⁴

Spender and Day Lewis were not rare cases in holding these views. A seminal feature of British intellectual history in the 1930s was that students at Oxford and Cambridge were largely politicised, and that many of them developed an interest in Marxism, and even became formal members of the Communist Party.⁴⁴⁵ This climate of opinion affected the political complexion of Berlin, who was, as he recalled, not very political in the 1920s and early 1930s.⁴⁴⁶ Morally and temperamentally, Berlin felt closer to people from the Left; many of his friends and acquaintances at Oxford, including the Lynd sisters, Jenifer Hart (née Williams), Goronwy Rees, Philip Toynbee and Christopher Hill—let alone Spender—were deeply attracted by Communism.⁴⁴⁷

During his undergraduate years at Corpus Christi College, Berlin was intrigued by

⁴⁴³ Stephen Spender, *Forward from Liberalism* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936).

⁴⁴⁴ C. Day Lewis, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *The Mind in Chains: Socialism and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Frederick Muller, 1937), pp. 11-17.

⁴⁴⁵ Neal Wood, *Marxism and British Intellectuals* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1959), pp. 37-90; Jenifer Hart, *Ask Me No More* (London: Peter Halban, 1998), pp. 61-79.

⁴⁴⁶ Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin* (London: Phenix, 1993), pp. 6-10.

⁴⁴⁷ Arie M. Dubnov, *Isaiah Berlin: The Journey of a Jewish Liberal* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 117-23.

literature, the arts and music. He edited six issues of *Oxford Outlook*, which, formerly edited by Auden, was a literary magazine published by Basil Blackwell. Berlin had a high regard for Auden and his followers' experiments in poetry; he found a similarity between them and Alexander Blok, a Russian symbolist whose works Berlin had translated.⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, Berlin believed that the age in which Blok lived, which was Russia on the eve of the Revolution, highly resembled England in the 1930s. *Pace* Blok, Auden's group also had 'a sense of impending doom', as suggested by the title of an article Berlin wrote for, but was declined by, the *London Mercury*, in which he argued that 'the troubled period in England will be seen in the light of parallel stages in the evolution of other nations'. In such a world, poets found it, as Berlin contended, 'impossible to go on working in a private world, shutting out all intimations of the storm, in order...to preserve their integrity, their personal attitude; in order to deal with purely artistic problems.' In this respect, they should 'reflect the degree to which politics permeate the experience', which Berlin accused T.S. Eliot of failing to do.⁴⁴⁹

This unpublished piece not only shows Berlin and Spender's common indictment of British society in the 1930s, but also betrays a significant difference between Berlin and many of his contemporaries. To Spender and other writers, the attraction of Russian art was to a large extent because it was regarded as a reaction against the culture and morality they were brought up with. As Spender recalled in his autobiography, he was 'impressed by the overwhelming accusation made by Communism against bourgeois

⁴⁴⁸ Isaiah Berlin, 'Alexander Blok', *Oxford Outlook*, 11/55(1931), pp. 73–6; Alexander Blok, 'The Collapse of Humanism', trans. Isaiah Berlin, *Oxford Outlook*, 11/55 (1931), pp. 89–112.

⁴⁴⁹ Isaiah Berlin, 'A Sense of Impending Doom', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 27 July 2001, pp. 11–12.

society, an accusation not only against all its institutions but also reaching deep into the individual soul'.⁴⁵⁰ In contrast to capitalist culture, Russian literature and films, according to Spender, not only contained all the qualities of modern art, but also 'extolled a heroic attitude' and 'conveyed a message of hope like an answer to *The Waste Land*'.⁴⁵¹ Also reflecting the 1930s from the perspective of the 1950s, Auden observed that 'we were interested in Marx in the same way that we were interested in Freud, as a technique of unmaking the middle-class ideologies...our great error was not a false admiration for Russia but a snobbish feeling that nothing which happened in a semi-barbarous country which had experienced neither the Renaissance nor the Enlightenment could be of any importance'.⁴⁵² In a similar vein, Berlin's friend Jenifer Hart regarded her decision to be a Communist as a symbol of revolting against the Victorian bourgeois lifestyle of her family.⁴⁵³ These factors were apparently lacking in Berlin's upbringing. However naturalised Berlin became, he was still an immigrant whose intellectual outlook unavoidably had a more 'Russian' imprint than others.

The rise of Fascism was a significant factor that pulled young writers and intellectuals out from their cloistered college life, and persuaded them to accept Communism as the only resistance to the Fascist threat. It is noteworthy that, for various reasons, travelling to the Continent, especially to Germany and Austria, was very usual among Berlin and Trevor-Roper's generation in the 1930s. To some of them, such as Auden, Spender and Isherwood, who lived in Germany for months and even for

⁴⁵⁰ Spender, *World within World*, p. 135.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid, p. 132.

⁴⁵² Richard Davenport-Hines, *Auden* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 157.

⁴⁵³ Hart, *Ask Me No More*, pp. 61-3.

years, the toleration of homosexuality in the Weimar Republic made it an attractive destination.⁴⁵⁴ But to most of them, the violence and inhumanity they saw during their trips largely resulted in their hostility towards Fascism. The second section of *The Noise of History*, for example, records the author's witness of the rise of Nazism, while Spender's long poem *Vienna* shows his high regard for those Social Democrats resisting the Fascists and monarchists.⁴⁵⁵ In the early 1930s, Berlin had his first encounter with Nazism when attending the music festival in Salzburg, where anti-Semitism was beginning to rise.⁴⁵⁶ To improve his fluency in German, Trevor-Roper travelled to Germany and Austria several times, and once was taken by his German host to a Nazi demonstration. What he experienced there was a growing but uncontrolled enthusiasm for Nazism among normal people; their dogmatic admiration for the Führer, which shocked him so much that, as a result, he had a life-long dislike for German ideas.⁴⁵⁷

More importantly, it was the Spanish Civil War that motivated many young intellectuals to take part in the anti-Fascist movement, and to volunteer for fighting.⁴⁵⁸ Auden, for example, served as an ambulance driver; and in his politically influential verse *Spain*, he deliberately interpreted the present fight as a crucial moment between the past and the future ('Yesterday all the past' / 'Tomorrow perhaps the future').⁴⁵⁹ However, the Comintern's involvement in organising the Popular Front meant that the

⁴⁵⁴ John Sutherland, *Stephen Spender: A Literary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 105-50.

⁴⁵⁵ John Lehmann, *The Noise of History* (London: Hogarth Press, 1934); Stephen Spender, *Vienna* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934).

⁴⁵⁶ Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998), pp. 53-5.

⁴⁵⁷ Adam Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010), pp. 39-41; also see Trevor-Roper's memoir. Oxford, Christ Church Archive, SOC. Dacre 6/34/3, 'Oxford: 1927-1935'.

⁴⁵⁸ James K. Hopkins' *Into the Heart of the Fire: The British in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) provides a comprehensive account of British intellectuals' (Hopkins not only examined those coming from upper-middle class, but also the proletarian intellectuals) involvement in this event. See particularly the first two parts.

⁴⁵⁹ W.H. Auden, *The Collected Poetry of W.H. Auden* (New York: Random House, 1945), pp. 181-5.

anti-Fascist cause was deliberately used to serve the purpose of Communist propaganda. For example, Spender's joining the International Brigade was under the direction of Harry Pollitt, head of the C.P.G.B., who believed that a present-day Byron was needed.⁴⁶⁰

To some extent, this political upheaval almost split British intellectuals and men of letters into two groups. A telling example is a pamphlet called *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, which was initiated by the writer Nancy Cunard and published by the *Left Review*, and which records a hundred and forty eight writers' attitudes in supporting the Republican or the Nationalist side. An overwhelmingly majority of them were pro-Republican, including, among others, Auden, Day Lewis, Spender, Laski, Rebecca West, Mary Cole, Aldous Huxley, Samuel Beckett; those who remained neutral or supported Franco's cause included T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Evelyn Waugh. It is noteworthy that not all sympathisers of the Republicans were pro-Communist; but when stating that 'Today, the struggle is in Spain. Tomorrow it may be in other countries—our own', the editors implied that people were now confronted with an inescapable choice between survival and Fascism—or, using C. Day Lewis' words, a worldwide 'battle between light and darkness'.⁴⁶¹ Their rhetoric, therefore, suggested a general feeling that remaining neutral was not possible, and that Communism was the only way to stop the expansion of Fascism. Interestingly, this 'either-or' line of argument was questioned by the so-called Fascist supporters from 'the other side'. Evelyn Waugh, for example,

⁴⁶⁰ Sutherland, *Stephen Spender: A Literary Life*, pp. 208-14.

⁴⁶¹ W.H. Auden et al., *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War* (London: Left Review, 1937). This pamphlet is without page numbers.

maintained that he supported Franco only because the allegedly ‘legal’ Republican Government was ‘bad’ and ‘rapidly deteriorating’; he claimed that ‘I am not a Fascist nor shall I become one unless it was the only alternative to Marxism. It is mischievous to suggest that such a choice is imminent’.⁴⁶²

Like most of their contemporaries, both Berlin and Trevor-Roper staunchly objected to Fascism, and supported the Republicans. To Trevor-Roper, the Spanish Civil War was another instance of his experience in Germany: ‘My sympathies were with the Republican government, which I saw as a legitimate government attacked by a military putsch. I was not an enthusiastic supporter of that government, but I recognised Nazi Germany and fascist Italy as the real threat and Franco as their tool.’⁴⁶³ Berlin claimed that the rise of Nazism and the outbreak of the Spanish War were a ‘Farbekenner’ ‘more terrifying than anything which has happened yet’.⁴⁶⁴ But both them understood that their hostility towards Fascism was not shared by the older generation. In his interview with Michael Ignatieff, Berlin recalled that ‘From 1933 onwards, I was fully aware of Nazi horrors, more than most. I knew it was unique, terrible and didn’t for a single moment think we could have peace with them...People divided in quite interesting ways in Oxford.’ All Souls in the thirties played a significant role in backing the policy of appeasement, with many fellows being famous appeasers, including Lionel Curtis, Geoffrey Dawson, Lord Halifax, and John Simon. Berlin and other young fellows, including J.L. Austin, Rowse, and Stuart Hampshire, were united in opposing this policy.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ SOC. Dacre 6/34/3, ‘Oxford: 1927-1935’.

⁴⁶⁴ Isaiah Berlin to Sheila Grant Duff, 10 August 1936, in Berlin, *Flourishing*, p.188.

Trevor-Roper, whose social circle was largely based at Christ Church, was also well aware that his tutors Keith Feiling and J.C. Masterman, both having fought in the First World War, were supporters of Chamberlain's policy, although they never had any quarrels about it. But the common feeling, which Noel Annan would later call 'the obsession with Munich', that the War should have been avoided 'left scars that never healed upon the minds' of the generation of 1930s.⁴⁶⁵ In the very last years of his life, Trevor-Roper still remarked that 'At the time...I was deeply shocked by Chamberlain and Appeasement. Afterwards I came to agree that he had little alternative...But even so, Chamberlain's pretence that Munich was a diplomatic victory...seemed to me shocking'. With sorrow, he concluded that 'our generation will never escape from the 1930s.'⁴⁶⁶ Therefore, when we re-examine Berlin and Trevor-Roper's attacks on Carr and Toynbee in the 1950s (as shall be done in the next sections), the factor that both Carr and Toynbee were well-known appeasers should not be forgotten.

Nevertheless, neither Berlin nor Trevor-Roper believed that Communism and Fascism were the only two alternatives available; and both of them excluded the thought of completely leaning towards Communism. Although Berlin was not unsympathetic to Spender's cause, which he believed was different from Communism on the Continent in being a 'neo-liberal...radical-intellectual revolt against the bureaucracy and stale corruptness of the Labour Party', he was deeply opposed to Stalinism and never considered making the conversion himself.⁴⁶⁷ This was partly due to the horrible

⁴⁶⁵ Noel Annan, *Our Age: Portrait of a Generation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), p. 190.

⁴⁶⁶ Hugh Trevor-Roper to Nicholas Henderson, 21 December 2001, in Hugh Trevor-Roper, *One Hundred Letters from Hugh Trevor-Roper*, ed. Richard Davenport-Hines (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 412.

⁴⁶⁷ Isaiah Berlin to Stephen Spender, 25 April 1936, in Berlin, *Flourishing*, p. 166; Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with*

childhood memory in Petrograd, which, as he later confessed, had he not had, he ‘too might have drifted in that direction’.⁴⁶⁸ Not unlike Berlin, Trevor-Roper also developed an interest in Marxism in the 1930s. Under the influence of A.L. Rowse, whom he admired at this time, Trevor-Roper favoured an economic explanation of history, and was befriended by Marxist historians such as Rodney Hilton.⁴⁶⁹ In his first work *Archbishop Laud*, Trevor-Roper adopted a reductive view of religious ideas, and regarded the main theme of seventeenth-century English history as a conflict between feudalism and capitalism.⁴⁷⁰ But having an economic view of history does not necessarily mean being a Marxist. Trevor-Roper was doubtful of Marx’s philosophy of history, which, as he recalled, Patrick Gordon Walker, a socialist who stood as a parliamentary Labour candidate twice in the 1930s, tried to sell to Christ Church undergraduates, though ‘he didn’t cut much ice’ in the college.⁴⁷¹ Berlin and Trevor-Roper’s distance from Communism, therefore, was also related to the fact that they could not persuade themselves to accept Marxism. In fact, they were both highly critical of certain presuppositions in Marx’s philosophy; and this brings us to another intellectual movement which Berlin and Trevor-Roper participated in and were indebted to, namely, logical positivism.

1.2. Logical Positivism and the Denial of Metaphysics

Although in his intellectual biography of Marx, Berlin hinted at the moral cynicism

Isaiah Berlin, p. 9.

⁴⁶⁸ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Foreword’, Hart, *Ask Me No More*, p. xiii.

⁴⁶⁹ Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, p. 53, 72.

⁴⁷⁰ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud, 1573-1645*, 2nd edn (London: Pimlico, 2000).

⁴⁷¹ Idem, ‘History and Imagination’, in Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl, and Blair Worden (eds.), *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper* (London: Duckworth, 1981), p. 358.

Marx's conception of history entailed, his opposition to Marxism in the 1930s primarily arose from his philosophical belief. It is remarkable that the philosophical training Berlin received as an undergraduate from his philosophy tutor, W.F.R. ('Frank') Hardie, was embedded in the Oxford Realist tradition ('Realism', when it denotes this philosophical persuasion, is capitalised in this thesis, in order to differentiate it from 'historical realism'). Berlin confessed that he was 'a kind of realist' when he was an undergraduate; G.E. Moore, Russell, Cook Wilson, and H.A. Prichard were all on his reading lists.⁴⁷² Meanwhile, Berlin was also 'made to read' Bradley and Bosanquet, but could not 'understand a word'.⁴⁷³ According to Mathieu Marion's generalisation, Oxford Realists can be roughly divided into three generations.⁴⁷⁴ Cook Wilson inaugurated this tradition in revolt against T.H. Green and his school; apart from him, other members of the first generation also included H.A. Prichard and H. W. B. Joseph. The second generation was led by Gilbert Ryle and Henry Price, who wanted to distance themselves from Cook Wilson, and thus organised their own discussion group called 'Wee Teas' (a clear gesture to stay away from Joseph and Prichard's 'Philosopher's Tea'), which was also attended by W.C. Kneale, J.D. Mabbott and W.F.R. Hardie.⁴⁷⁵ The third generation was notably represented by Berlin, A.J. Ayer and John Austin.

On the one hand, this young generation had a critical attitude towards any metaphysical systems; on the other hand, they also revolted against Cook Wilson's

⁴⁷² Steven Lukes, 'Isaiah Berlin in Conversation with Steven Lukes', *Salmagundi*, 120 (1998), p. 67.

⁴⁷³ Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, p.153.

⁴⁷⁴ Mathieu Marion, 'Oxford Realism: Knowledge and Perception', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 8/2 (2000), pp. 299-338; 8/3 (2000), pp. 485-519.

⁴⁷⁵ Gilbert Ryle, 'Autobiographical', in O.P. Wood and G. Pichter (eds). *Ryle* (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 1-15; J.D. Mabbott, *Oxford Memories* (Oxford: Thornton's of Oxford, 1984), pp. 73-9.

denunciation of mathematical logic, when original studies in this field had already been contributed by Russell, Moore, and Wittgenstein. Opposed to British Idealism and sceptical about any *a priori* explanations of the outer world devoid of empirical observation, Berlin was an ally of Ayer when the latter set himself against idealism by introducing into Britain the contributions of the Vienna Group via his *Language, Truth and Logic*.⁴⁷⁶ Berlin espoused many basic presuppositions of logical positivism, especially its endeavour to eliminate, with the proper use of reason, philosophical predicaments and errors caused by metaphysics. Moreover, Berlin organised a regular discussion group whose core members included, among others, Ayer, Austin, and Stuart Hampshire. Although Berlin and Austin later came to be sceptical about certain principles of logical positivism (Austin was critical of the theory of ‘sense data’, while Berlin was dissatisfied with the ‘verification’ principle), a basic idea then shared by group members was that philosophy was about the analysis of either logical or empirical statements. Their discussion, according to Berlin, centred on four topics: perception, *a priori* truths, verification, and the knowledge of other people’s minds, which were very different from those metaphysical concepts Idealists would be interested in.⁴⁷⁷

Another noteworthy characteristic of these young Oxonian philosophers was that most of them published very little in the 1930s. Most of Austin’s works, including *Sense and Sensibilia* (1962), *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) and *Philosophical Papers* (1961) were collections of his essays and lectures (most of them written in the 1950s,

⁴⁷⁶ Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, pp. 151-5; Isaiah Berlin, ‘My Intellectual Path’, in idem, *The Power of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp.1-5; A. J. Ayer, *Part of My Life* (London: Collins, 1977), pp. 139-66.

⁴⁷⁷ Isaiah Berlin, ‘J.L. Austin and the Early Beginnings of Oxford Philosophy’, in idem, *Personal Impressions*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 166-7.

and ‘Are There a Priori Concepts?’ was one of the very few pieces published in the 1930s), published after his premature death in 1960.⁴⁷⁸ Among Berlin’s major publications in the thirties, *Karl Marx* is a history of ideas, and ‘Verification’ is the only philosophical piece. Hampshire, moreover, had hardly published anything substantial by then. To some extent, this was not unusual in an academic world that did not demand publication; but perhaps it also reveals Berlin and his fellows’ propensity to dismiss grand philosophical systems. Therefore, the metaphysical system which Marxism laid its foundation on would instantly seem dubious to Berlin, as it did to Ayer and Austin, who, along with Berlin, were frequent attendees of the ‘Pink Lunch Club’, which, initiated by G.D.H. Cole, was a gathering of young dons sympathetic to the Left. Austin even visited the Soviet Union and was fascinated by its economic achievement.⁴⁷⁹ Nevertheless, none of them was truly tempted by communism. The reason, as Ayer confessed, was simply that he did not believe in dialectical materialism, which was at odds with the philosophical position he held.⁴⁸⁰ In a similar vein, Stuart Hampshire recalled that ‘according to the arguments first formed by the Vienna Circle, there cannot possibly be a comprehensive theory of human history, if only because no such theory is testable in experience, as all meaningful and acceptable theories must be.’⁴⁸¹

The influence of logical positivism, however, was not confined to philosophers. Being a young don at Merton College but still retaining his connection with Christ

⁴⁷⁸ J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, ed. G.J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); idem, *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); idem, *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

⁴⁷⁹ Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin*, p. 70.

⁴⁸⁰ Ayer, *Part of My Life*, p. 187.

⁴⁸¹ Stuart Hampshire, *Innocence and Experience* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 6.

Church in the late thirties, Trevor-Roper was very close both to Ayer and Ryle, whom he often had serious discussions with about intellectual matters.⁴⁸² What attracted Trevor-Roper ‘was not the “linguistic” philosophy’, which he found ‘unsatisfying’; but ‘Ayer’s repudiation of metaphysics and his austere use of language, his repudiation of propositions which could be categorised as either non-sense or tautology’.⁴⁸³ As will be discussed in the next chapter, Trevor-Roper at this point was entangled in reflecting on his religious belief. Logical positivism thus provided him with a solid philosophical standpoint to refute the illusion of metaphysics—both religious and Marxist. Therefore, it is perhaps not coincidental that the very next entry after the one which records Trevor-Roper’s sudden revelation that ‘the metaphysics are metaphysical, and having no premises to connect them to this world’ in his *Wartime Journal* is entitled ‘Language, Truth and Logic’:

With the composure of a scientist proving his experiments, Freddie Ayer first states his solvent principle, and then calmly watches while the whole metaphysical world, its cloud-capp’d towers and gorgeous palaces, slides majestically and obediently into inevitable and predicted ruin.⁴⁸⁴

1.3. A Realist Legacy?

As Bernard Williams remarked, Berlin ‘was never a positivist,’ but he was ‘seriously interested in philosophy at a time when philosophy’s most pressing questions came from positivist directions’.⁴⁸⁵ Despite largely accepting the agenda stipulated by logical positivism, Berlin was at one point in huge disagreement with Ayer and the Realists, namely, an interest in political, social and historical ideas in history. Sceptical

⁴⁸² Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, pp. 56-8.

⁴⁸³ SOC. Dacre 6/34/3, ‘Oxford: 1927-1935’.

⁴⁸⁴ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Wartime Journals*, ed. Richard Davenport-Hines (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 41.

⁴⁸⁵ Bernard Williams, ‘Preface’, in Berlin, *Concepts and Categories*, pp. xxx–xxxi.

of Hegel and Marx's metaphysical systems as he was, Berlin did not simply dismiss them. Rather, he was quite interested in their thought, which can be demonstrated by a letter he wrote to Spender in 1932, shortly after he was elected a fellow of New College, and before he was requested by Fisher to write the Marx volume:

I am growing very conscious not of the barrenness of academicism in general but of the futility of the particular wrangles indulged in by my colleagues, young especially. Consequently I shall read a lot of Hegel, Marx, Engels and the Russians in order to climb out into a different even if not wider universe.⁴⁸⁶

Berlin's earliest discussion of the philosophy of history is displayed in 'Some Procrustations', an essay written for the *Oxford Outlook*. Maintaining that 'every separate mental activity can properly be judged to have failed or succeeded only by reference to its own particular end and its own particular standard, and by reference to no other end or standard', Berlin criticised such *kulturphilosoph* as Spengler for proposing to solve the problems that should be tackled 'departmentally and piecemeal' permanently by adopting the notion of 'culture'.⁴⁸⁷ As a prize fellow of All Souls, Berlin got to know and befriended Adam Von Trott, who was then a German Rhodes Scholar studying at Balliol. Despite sharing an interest in Hegel's philosophy of history, their evaluations of Hegel, based on 'different assumptions', were irreconcilably different. Von Trott, as A.L. Rowse recalled, was embedded in Hegelianism, and viewed white 'always in the process of becoming white', and black 'always in the process of becoming white'.⁴⁸⁸ In a letter to Berlin in 1933, von Trott wrote:

One thing at any rate seems quite clear to me: that the 'historical process' in itself is not a real entity but rests on highly theoretical assumptions which

⁴⁸⁶ Isaiah Berlin to Stephen Spender, 5 December 1932, in Berlin, *Flourishing*, p. 43.

⁴⁸⁷ Isaiah Berlin, 'Some Procrustations', *Oxford Outlook*, 10/52 (1930), p. 491, 498.

⁴⁸⁸ Christopher Skyes, *Troubled Loyalty, A Biography of Adam von Trott* (London: Collins, 1968), p. 56.

need justifying, the same of course being true of what one calls ‘historical fact’—[the successive accumulation of which one usually calls the h[istory] process]—History on the ‘phenomenological’ view then is reducible to a human attribute...⁴⁸⁹

It goes without saying that von Trott’s belief in a grand plan behind the succession of historical facts seemed to Berlin ‘nonsensical’.⁴⁹⁰ Berlin later ended their friendship because von Trott denied that the Jews in Nazi Germany were discriminated against, and it might have seemed to Berlin that a latent connection between von Trott’s excessive patriotism and his belief in a Hegelian philosophy of history was discernible.⁴⁹¹ Moreover, determinism had already become a philosophic topic that interested Berlin in the 1930s; but unlike in the 1950s, Berlin’s criticism of historical determinism and metaphysical conceptions of history was devoid of any indictments of their moral implication at this point. Berlin not only believed that the value of an individual and a fact was determined by itself, instead of any transcendental entities, he also maintained that human behaviour was not constrained by the burden of history. In this spirit, he complained to Spender about Unamuno’s conception of history after attending a lecture by the Spanish poet: ‘he said that we were too oppressed by our history to act, too debilitated by the burden of the knowledge of the past to do anything but hesitate...’⁴⁹²

Berlin’s interest in the philosophy of history, however, was not shared by most Oxford Realists. In comparison, it was the Idealists who were keen on discussing change, development, progress and history. In retrospect, this tradition was commenced

⁴⁸⁹ Oxford, Bodleian MS Berlin, C 103, fo.27: Adam von Trott to Isaiah Berlin, March 1933.

⁴⁹⁰ MS Berlin, C 103, fo.28: Adam von Trott to Isaiah Berlin, March 1933.

⁴⁹¹ Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin*, pp.73-6; Sheila Grant Duff, *The Parting of Ways: A Personal Account of the Thirties* (London: Unwin, 1984), pp. 55-7.

⁴⁹² Isaiah Berlin to Stephen Spender, 26 February 1936, in Berlin, *Flourishing*, p. 152.

by F.H. Bradley in his *The Presuppositions of Critical History* (1874). Although it touches upon many important problems concerning historical epistemology, the religious implication it carries should not be overlooked. Bradley was influenced by the biblical criticism of the Tübingen School; by arguing that the critical mind of the historian is crucial in reconstructing and patterning the historical facts, and thus that history must be analogous with his own experience, Bradley was actually refuting a miraculous reading of the Bible.⁴⁹³ Even though Idealism's heyday had gone by the 1930s, it did not die out in Oxford. The Waynflete Professorship of Metaphysical Philosophy was occupied by John Alexander Smith and subsequently by Robin George Collingwood from 1910 to 1941, and Harold H. Joachim held the Wykeham Chair of Logic throughout the 1920s. Apart from that, such philosophers with an Idealist bent as Lindsay, G.R.G. Mure and H.J. Paton, who became the White's Professor of Moral Philosophy in 1937, were also delivering their systems at Oxford.

The most distinguished philosopher of history in the 1930s was undeniably Collingwood. Although Collingwood was tutored by the Realist E.F. Carr at Oxford, he became an Idealist and a life-long opponent of Cook Wilson, particularly because of the latter's denunciation of historical ideas.⁴⁹⁴ Berlin attended Collingwood's lectures when he was an undergraduate, and he probably came across Kant's maxim that 'Out of the crooked timber of humanity nothing straight can be ever made' from Collingwood.⁴⁹⁵ Contrary to some researchers' assumptions, Berlin might have been

⁴⁹³ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 135-8; Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 177-8; F.H. Bradley, *The Presuppositions of Critical History* (Oxford: James Parker, 1874), p. ii.

⁴⁹⁴ Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, p. 28.

⁴⁹⁵ Henry Hardy, 'Editor's Preface', in Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton:

well acquainted with Collingwood's philosophy of history before the posthumous publication of *The Idea of History* in 1946 by Oxford University Press.⁴⁹⁶ For Collingwood's later views were already evident, although in a less mature form, in his lectures given from 1926 to 1931, the extant manuscripts of which have been incorporated in the revised edition of his masterpiece.⁴⁹⁷ Berlin did not lack reverence for Collingwood. In his reply to Sheila Grant Duff, who was eager to know about Collingwood after he became her tutor, Berlin wrote:

Collingwood is very exciting and risky. He is a very sly lively continental sort of philosopher...I know really very little about [him] save that I always found him entertaining, enormously ingenious, and frequently deceitful and unsound. He is the only philosophy tutor in Oxford who is also a man of genuine culture...Have you ever seen *Speculum Mentis*, your future tutor's masterpiece? I read it at school and have forgotten it entirely. It is, I believe, shallow and exhilarating. But I may be hopelessly unfair.⁴⁹⁸

Berlin's attitude towards Collingwood seems rather complicated. On the one hand, Berlin appreciated Collingwood's knowledge of Continental ideas, and his consistent endeavour to make a rapport between philosophy and history.⁴⁹⁹ On the other hand, Berlin was not satisfied with Collingwood's unyielding loyalty to Idealism. Berlin's later adoption of Vico's notion of *fantasia* and his emphasis on the relevance of 'intuition' and 'empathy' in historical understanding, however, did not make him espouse Collingwood's 're-enactment' theory, which is presupposed by the belief that 'history is the history of thought'.⁵⁰⁰ To Berlin, historical understanding does not require

Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. xxii-xxiii.

⁴⁹⁶ Dubnov, *Isaiah Berlin*, p.70, 76; Peter Skagestad, 'Collingwood and Berlin: A Comparison', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66/1 (2005), pp. 99-112. I do not agree with their view that Berlin's conception of history was influenced by Collingwood.

⁴⁹⁷ Jan van der Dussen, 'Editor's Introduction', in Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. x.

⁴⁹⁸ Isaiah Berlin to Sheila Grant Duff, 12 December 1932, in Berlin, *Flourishing*, p.44.

⁴⁹⁹ Isaiah Berlin to Morton White, 27 January 1960, in Berlin, *Enlightening*, p.720.

⁵⁰⁰ Isaiah Berlin, 'Is a Philosophy of History Possible?', in Berlin, *Concepts and Categories*, p. 323; idem, *Three Critics of Enlightenment*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p.58 n, 146-7.

‘a magic eye’, but only involves ‘something perfectly ordinary, empirical, and quasi-aesthetic in the way that it works.’⁵⁰¹ This, however, did not prevent Berlin from inviting Collingwood to their discussion group. Collingwood’s refusal was polite if distant, claiming that it was his principle not to engage in any discussions of this kind.⁵⁰² But the real reason was possibly due to his reluctance to have any contacts with members of that group, whom he did not believe to be different from the elder Realists. Ayer’s autobiography records a famous anecdote that Collingwood mocked Prichard and Joseph, after *Language, Truth and Logic* was published, by claiming that this book would make their names forgotten. Ayer suspected, quite reasonably, that this statement was less a tribute to him than contempt for them.⁵⁰³

Nevertheless, a crucial issue that Collingwood raised in his lectures ‘Outlines of a Philosophy of History’ would also be identified by Berlin later as the clay feet of phenomenalism and the verification principle. According to Collingwood, the Realists’ definition of reality as existence cannot be applied in history, for historical facts do not exist anymore. Henceforth, an historical object is a combination of ‘actuality’ and ‘ideality’. Historical reality is ‘compatible with actuality and indeed inseparable from actuality’, but it becomes ‘actual’ only when it is also ‘ideal’, namely, when an event in history is re-enacted by the historian.⁵⁰⁴ Berlin could not have accepted the Idealist premise of this argument; but he also discovered the conundrum logical positivism had when confronting propositions made about history. Even before the publication of

⁵⁰¹ Isaiah Berlin, *The Sense of Reality*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Pimlico, 1997), p. 46.

⁵⁰² MS Berlin, C 106, fo. 2: R.G. Collingwood to Isaiah Berlin, 5 January 1938.

⁵⁰³ Ayer, *Part of My Life*, p.166.

⁵⁰⁴ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 440-2.

‘Verification’ (1939), in which Berlin falsified the verification principle by arguing that hypothetical propositions, though they could not be verified, were still meaningful, he had questioned the general validity of some of the presuppositions of logical positivism in two unpublished lectures.⁵⁰⁵

In January 1934, Berlin was invited to give two lectures at Balliol on the subject of ‘Matter’, namely, what are ‘material objects’ and on what grounds can we believe in their existence. Berlin began by tracing Plato and Aristotle’s treatment of this issue. According to them, a distinction should be made between the form and the matter; the matter of an object in question is identical with the form of the object below it. Berlin dismissed this argument, which he believed was shared by such idealists as Hegel and Bradley who ‘regard daily experience as a deception and a cheat’, as ‘drawn not from actual experience, but asserted on a priori deductive grounds’.⁵⁰⁶ Attacking these Idealists, however, does not mean that Berlin accepted the solution suggested by the logical positivists that all knowledge was based on observation and measurement. Berlin stated that measurement only provided the relation between atoms or particulars, and it failed to examine what matter really was.⁵⁰⁷ Moreover, logical positivists’ contention that the certainty of a proposition cannot be found outside our sense data would easily slip into solipsism. Most importantly, these philosophers overlooked propositions made about history—memories and traces left by the past cannot be

⁵⁰⁵ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Verification’, in idem, *Concepts and Categories*, pp. 26-33. This is another point in which Berlin hugely differed from Cook Wilson. Wilson believed that all genuine statements were categorical, because the hypothetical statements contradict with the common use of English. ‘All A is B’ supposes that A really exists; but ‘If...then...’ fails to carry such an implication. See John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1968), p. 243.

⁵⁰⁶ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Matter’, unpublished lecture 1934, The Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library, <http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/nachlass/matter.pdf>, (17 November 2016), p. 10.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, p.15.

verified by our sense data at present. For example, if someone predicts at two o'clock that it will rain at three, and that it does rain—a fact that can be proved by his sense data, he still cannot therefore prove his prediction right; for whether he did ever ask this question was not demonstrable by his present sense data.⁵⁰⁸ Using this example, Berlin tried to argue that logical positivism was unable to verify propositions about the past.

About the same time, Berlin gave another talk to a philosophical society of Oxford on the subject of 'Error'. The objective of this talk is to examine the nature of someone's being aware that he makes a proposition which he thought to be true but proves false. Berlin contended that even when a statement was false, it was still intelligible, and did not refer to nothing.⁵⁰⁹ He first examined the correspondence theory, according to which there exists a special kind of entity corresponding to the false statements; this theory, however, leads to dualism. Then Berlin criticised McTaggart's view that false belief was in a relation of non-correspondence, as well as Cook Wilson's theory that what men do not have direct knowledge about is unreal.⁵¹⁰ Berlin's own solution is that error arises when hypothetical propositions are confused with categorical ones. To demonstrate this point, Berlin used historical understanding as a case. To Berlin, every realised situation is composed of a group of 'parallel, unactualised' potentialities, and being erroneous is to mistakenly take one of them as the actual, realised one.⁵¹¹ To have a true historical understanding of a situation in history is therefore not only to grasp its individuality, but also to distinguish it from other

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, p.29.

⁵⁰⁹ Isaiah Berlin, 'Error', unpublished talk, The Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library, <http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/nachlass/error.pdf>, (17 November 2016), p. 3.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 4-9.

⁵¹¹ Ibid, p. 18.

‘immaterialised’ or ‘unrealised possibilities’, namely, the state of affairs which might have happened in a given historical situation but eventually did not.⁵¹² Berlin argued that what distinguished those great historians, such as Ranke, was their being able:

... to explain actual events by contrasting them with what so easily might have been, and to estimate and evaluate the motives and the general character of given personages because I believe that he really has conjectured more or less adequately how far they themselves understood what the real possibilities, at a given moment, were, whether they saw them all or were blind to some, and how far they were...contemplating possibilities real enough at some moment previous to the given moment, but left unactualised and without actualisable progeny by the fact that events had occurred which altered the actual situation and so made the next lot of possibilities different from their predecessors...⁵¹³

The philosophical soundness of this argument does not bother us too much, since Berlin himself admitted that this paper was only a tentative work. But it is clear that Berlin’s discussion of potentiality in history and what he would later call the ‘sense of history’ cohere with his anti-determinist position in ‘Historical Inevitability’, which he would deliver two decades later.⁵¹⁴ Moreover, Berlin’s acceptance of logical positivism was from the very beginning not unconditional. Unlike many other contemporary philosophers, Berlin was interested in ideas in history, which foreboded his departing from analytic philosophy in the 1950s. His introduction of historicity into his critical examination of certain premises of logical positivism demonstrates that his conception of history was neither an automatic application of his political ideas into the field of history, nor a simple result of Cold War politics.

II.

⁵¹² Ibid, p. 12.

⁵¹³ Ibid, p. 13.

⁵¹⁴ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Historical Inevitability’, in idem, *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 121.

2.1. History, Morality and Communism

Unlike many of his Oxford contemporaries, for example, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Stuart Hampshire, H.L.A. Hart and J. L. Austin, Isaiah Berlin, as a Jew of Latvian origin, was not enrolled by the British Intelligence Service when the War broke out. Instead, he went to the U.S., where he worked initially for the British Information Service and subsequently in the British Embassy until the War ended.⁵¹⁵ Before he resumed his fellowship at New College, Berlin paid a visit to the Soviet Union in 1945, and went back to Petrograd for the first time since he left there when he was a child. This trip was to have an enduring effect on his thought. The life of the common people he saw, and the conversations he had with Russian intellectuals, particularly his historic meetings with Boris Pasternak and Anna Akhmatova, gave him an immensely strong sense of the reality of Soviet Russia, and, to a considerable degree, prompted him to probe the historical development of some crucial ideas which, at any rate he believed, lay at the heart of the ideology of the Soviet Union and directed its policy-making within and without.

After the 'iron curtain' descended, and the antagonism between the two camps grew, many people from the West nonetheless found that they lacked reliable knowledge of the Soviet Union, and were therefore eager to know what moves Stalin might take. Berlin, when he embarked on his new career as an historian of ideas, was at the same time regarded as an expert on Russian affairs because of his wide knowledge of and insightful comments on both American politics and the *status quo* of the Soviet Union.

⁵¹⁵ Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin*, pp. 97-134.

He rendered a detailed and vivid account of how the voices of intellectuals were soon muted down in Russia. He also depicted Stalin as an expert in the art of governance who implemented a 'zig-zag-patterned' policy which ensured that people were always in stress.⁵¹⁶ The fact that many of the book reviews and articles that Berlin wrote during this time appeared in American periodicals such as *Foreign Affairs* and *New York Times Book Review* is telling itself. Owing to the semi-official status of *Foreign Affairs*, it is not arbitrary to presume that Berlin had a wish to influence U.S. foreign policy by drawing people's attention to the ideological power of the Soviet Union.

With the help of Felix Frankfurter, Berlin developed a good relationship with people inside the White House, especially the young New Dealers during the War, including, for example, Charles Bohlen and Donald Hiss. He also got to know a number of intellectuals, politicians and journalists who played a significant role in the Cold War, including Arthur Schlesinger Jr., George Kennan, Max Ascoli, Philip Graham, Joseph Alsop, and McGeorge Bundy.⁵¹⁷ No longer living a cloistered college life, Berlin was now a celebrated public intellectual whose opinion had a high leverage in both Britain and America. This becomes more telling if we compare him with his acquaintances in the 1930s: Austin and Hampshire were still more preoccupied with pure philosophical research; although Ayer broadcast frequently on the radio and appeared on television, for example, in BBC's famous 'The Brains Trust' programme, his interest was mainly

⁵¹⁶ Isaiah Berlin, 'The Arts in Russia under Stalin', 'Conversations with Akhmatova and Pasternak', 'The Artificial Dialectic: Generalissimo Stalin and the Art of Government', all collected in idem, *The Soviet Mind: Russian Culture under Communism*, ed. Henry Hardy (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

⁵¹⁷ Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life*, p. 110.

on philosophical and cultural issues.⁵¹⁸ Berlin's Washington connection, moreover, strengthened his belief that an alliance between Britain and the U.S. in combating the Russians was necessary. Nevertheless, the fact that Berlin was criticised for promulgating pro-American foreign policies showed that such an attitude was not shared by those British intellectuals who were reluctant to admit America as the most dominant power in the West, and others who viewed America as the best representative of the decaying capitalist system.⁵¹⁹

Since he was convinced that Stalin had a 'revolutionary impetus' to export Communism to the rest of the world, Berlin became a supporter of the 'containment' policy, which was famously raised by George Kennan in his 'Long Telegram' (also known as the 'X-Article').⁵²⁰ The significance of 'X-Article', as John Lewis Gaddis argues, is that 'it provided a way to fuse concerns about totalitarianism and communism in dealing with the Soviet Union'.⁵²¹ Berlin agreed with Kennan in recognising the Soviet Union as the greatest threat in the post-war world. According to Berlin, the Soviet ideology is fundamentally 'a fanatically simple view of history and mankind', of which Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin, despite being pragmatists and tacticians, were prisoners. They firmly believed that 'a final duel' with capitalism was inevitable; so 'pushing out the frontiers of ideological influence' was also an attainment of 'internal

⁵¹⁸ For Ayer as a public intellectual, see Stefan Collini, 'No True Answer: A.J. Ayer', in idem, *Absent Minds*, pp. 393-409.

⁵¹⁹ Isaiah Berlin to Kay Graham, 11 January 1950, in idem, *Enlightening*, pp. 166-7.

⁵²⁰ 'I think I am still a pro-containment man, in fact a Kennanite.' Berlin to Henry Brandon, 2 May 1955, See idem, *Enlightening*, p. 497. Kennan's telegram was received on 22 February 1946, and was later, on the urge of Hamilton Fish Armstrong, published as 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', in the *Foreign Affairs* under the pseudonym 'X'. See 'Document 475', Rogers P. Churchill and William Slany (eds.), *Foreign Relations of the United States 1946, Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), pp. 699-710.

⁵²¹ Cf. Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 74.

security'.⁵²²

Berlin's contention that the Soviet Union is irretrievably trapped in its ideology—particularly dialectical materialism—is consistent with the view he holds in *Karl Marx* that Marx's belief in a discoverable iron law of history, which he inherited from Hegel, constitutes the core of Communism. David Leopold has rightly pointed out that Berlin's reading of Marx perhaps too loyally follows the 'orthodox' line of Engels and Plekhanov's interpretation of Marx.⁵²³ Nevertheless, Berlin should not be blamed for this. On the one hand, the lack of English-written secondary works when Berlin was writing that book in the thirties meant that he had to heavily rely on those written in Russian and German.⁵²⁴ So he constantly asked his mother and friends, for example, Christopher Hill, to send back books when they were travelling in Germany and the Soviet Union.⁵²⁵ On the other hand, an authentic construction of Marx's thought was, after all, not his primary concern. Berlin was more interested in how certain elements in Marx's ideas inspired, and were applied by, his disciples in the twentieth century. In a nutshell, Berlin cared as much about the 'Marx' in minds as the 'Marx' in texts.

There is, however, a subtle but by no means trivial difference between Berlin's interpretation of Marx in the post-war period and that in the 1930s. What he now found and made explicit was the moral hazard Marx and Hegel's philosophy of history entailed, especially when it was employed by the Communist Party. This new thesis was

⁵²² Isaiah Berlin, 'Three Who Made a Revolution, *American Historical Review*, 55/1 (1949), pp. 86–92; idem, "'A Sense of Reality" about Russia', *New York Times Book Review*, 8 January 1950, p. 1, 25.

⁵²³ David Leopold, 'Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx* and the Enlightenment', in Laurence Brockliss and Ritchie Robertson (eds.), *Isaiah Berlin and the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 24.

⁵²⁴ Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin*, p.71; Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, pp. 11–12.

⁵²⁵ Isaiah Berlin to Marie Berlin, July and late July 1935, in Berlin, *Flourishing*, pp.129–30; Christopher Hill wrote to Isaiah Berlin on 1 November 1936, 'I have sent 4 Plekhanovs and 7 Lasselles—miserable paperbacks.' See MS Berlin, C 105, fos. 12–13.

already mentioned in the speech he gave at Mount Holyoke College in 1949, entitled ‘Democracy, Communism and the Individual’. If Marx’s theory of history is true, Berlin questioned, then the losers are doomed to perish because they stand at the wrong side of history; henceforth, ‘their ideas can be ignored with impunity’, and ‘the use of any weapon whatever against the enemies of progress, from censorship to killing’ can be justified.⁵²⁶ Berlin did not advance this view in another important political tract ‘Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century’(1950), only indicating that a typical feature of ‘our time’ was that values were not analysable in their ‘moral sense’, but ‘from some factual hypothesis or metaphysical dogma about history’.⁵²⁷ This was probably because historical materialism was not one of the topics Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of *Foreign Affairs*, listed in his letter to Berlin, when soliciting his contribution.⁵²⁸

‘Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century’ incurred a warm criticism from George Kennan, who, in his letter to Berlin, argued that Berlin’s conclusion was ‘laconic, and almost perfunctory’.⁵²⁹ Berlin was astounded by this remark, and left Kennan’s letter unanswered for almost a year. Although Kennan claimed that he did not intend to dispute Berlin’s main argument, and Berlin’s reply struck a rather amiable tone, their disagreement is not casual but rather profound. Both intellectually and emotionally, Kennan believed that totalitarianism was bound to perish before long due to its

⁵²⁶ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Democracy, Communism, and the Individual’, unpublished speech at Mount Holyoke College Institute, 28 June 1949, The Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library, http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/published_works/singles/attitude.pdf (17 November 2016), p. 2.

⁵²⁷ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century’, in *Liberty*, p. 85.

⁵²⁸ The topics Armstrong raised were 1) welfare of citizens and social responsibility, which developed from Marxism; 2) nationalism; 3) world organisation. Armstrong also wrote: ‘No one of the headings which I have suggested above is necessarily part of the story, though I think it would be difficult to tell the story without some reference to them’. It is worth noting that the main idea of Berlin’s essay diverges from Armstrong’s suggestion. See MS Berlin, C 242, fos. 2-5: Armstrong to Isaiah Berlin, 31 August 1949,

⁵²⁹ MS Berlin, C123, fo. 41: George Kennan to Isaiah Berlin, 26 April 1950.

self-contradictory essence: the men who ‘manipulate human nature’ are fundamentally the same as those being manipulated—they are human beings who are not immune from passion, disease, death, and they also trembled in front of mortality.⁵³⁰ Berlin, by contrast, was less optimistic and less inclined to be propagandistic—the collapse of Communism in the short term was certainly what he hoped for, but not what he believed in. More importantly, he completely disagreed with Kennan’s allegation that internal moral force was sufficient enough to undermine the Soviet Union. To the Communists, morality is identical with their success, which will not be achieved by fortune, but has already been stipulated by the law of history. As a consequence, their conduct, vices, and even crime can be justified. A belief in this amoral conception of history, Berlin argued, differentiates the inhuman Trotsky from Plekhanov, who, despite his belief in historical materialism, was still immersed in the humanism of the nineteenth century.⁵³¹

The ‘ultimate horror’ of totalitarianism thus lies in:

This doctrine that the moral and the good is the successful, and that failure is not only unfortunate but wicked, is at the heart of all that is most horrifying both in utilitarianism and in ‘historicism’ of the Hegelian, Marxist type...We...[must] deny the notion that ‘history’ in some mysterious way ‘confers’ upon us ‘rights’ to do this or that; that some men or bodies of men can morally claim a right to our obedience because they, in some sense, carry out the behests of ‘history’, are its chosen instrument...⁵³²

Using Plekhanov as an example, it is clear that Berlin presupposed an antithesis between humanitarian and Hegelian relativist conceptions of history. The greatest moral threat of Communism, according to Berlin, is not its brutality or horror, but its

⁵³⁰ Ibid, fos. 42-43.

⁵³¹ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century’, pp.71-2; idem, ‘The Father of Russian Marxism’, idem, *The Power of Ideas*, pp. 153-62; idem, ‘Review of G. V. Plekhanov, *In Defence of Materialism*’, *Slavonic Review*, 28/70 (1949), pp. 257–62.

⁵³² Isaiah Berlin to George Kennan, 13 February 1951, in idem, *Liberty*, p. 341.

identification of the ends of history as the only measurement of moral values. Although Berlin condemned the Soviet Union's political coercion and persecution of intellectuals, it was criticising the historical presuppositions of Communism that constituted a significant part of his Cold War political thought. Berlin rarely mentioned issues such as the threat of the Soviet system to constitutional democracy; nor did he develop his thought into a comprehensive analysis of totalitarianism, as many other prominent anti-totalitarian thinkers, such as Raymond Aron, George Orwell and Hannah Arendt, did. Despite being hostile towards Communism, Berlin was not a 'Cold War warrior' who believed that combating the Soviet Union was a matter of life and death, or that anti-Communism was the only alternative people had. Despite being personally close to Arthur Schlesinger, whose *The Vital Centre* (Schlesinger's indebtedness in writing this work has been persuasively demonstrated by Joshua Cherniss) and 'Not Left, Not Right, But a Vital Centre' played a key role in promoting Cold War liberalism, Berlin took 'Non-Communist Left' merely as a 'funny Washington phrase', instead of a serious intellectual movement.⁵³³ When his Northcliffe Lecture was published in *Encounter* as 'A Marvellous Decade', Berlin was discontented to find that a subtitle 'Herzen and the Grand Inquisitor' was added, and protested to the editor Irving Kristol that he refused to allow his work to be used for a Cold War propagandist purpose.⁵³⁴

After attending a conference on the philosophy of education organised by the Ford Foundation, Berlin condemned the 'betterment of men' movement in the U.S., which

⁵³³ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Centre: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949); idem, 'Not Left, Not Right, But a Vital Centre', *New York Times*, 4 April 1948; Cherniss, *A Mind and its Time*, pp. 67-74.

⁵³⁴ Berlin to Irving Kristol, 15 May 1956, in Berlin, *Enlightening*, pp. 529-30.

was enthusiastically promoted by the philosophers Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, because of its ‘fanaticism’ and proposal to establish ‘a set of axioms about conduct’ to instruct the youth without faith.⁵³⁵ Berlin averred that to combat Communism with an ‘equally fervent, militant’ ‘counter faith’ was to ‘fight the devil with the devil’s weapon’; for Communism and its replacement are equally totalitarian in their ideologies, and in shutting down dissenting voices.⁵³⁶ Berlin was deeply opposed to orthodoxy and conformity in whatever forms, and he felt astonished to notice an arresting tendency to eradicate individualism not only in Communist states, but also in the West.⁵³⁷ Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why Berlin, who was never a propagandist seeing the world in black and white, even denounced liberalism by calling it ‘the opium of liberals’, just as ‘Marxism is the opium of Marxists’.⁵³⁸ Although Berlin found not only Adler, but most of the participants in that conference rather disappointing, he was particularly intrigued with a beautiful remark made by Tawney: ‘When propaganda comes in through the door, truth flies through the window, she breaks her neck, and she is seldom, seldom missed.’⁵³⁹

2.2. Communism and Anti-Communism: Twin Ideologies?

Despite being sceptical about Marxism, Trevor-Roper also understood why it attracted so many young intellectuals in the thirties: ‘the vast pageant of history, hitherto so indeterminate, so formless, so mysterious, now had, as it seemed, a beautiful,

⁵³⁵ Isaiah Berlin to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., 30 May 1953, *ibid.*, p. 370; Isaiah Berlin to Morton White, 22 March 1954, *ibid.*, p. 437.

⁵³⁶ Isaiah Berlin to Herbert Elliston, 30 December 1952, *ibid.*, p. 349.

⁵³⁷ Isaiah Berlin, ‘The Trends of Culture’, in *1950 Britannica Book of the Year* (Chicago/Toronto/London: 1950: Encyclopaedia Britannica), p. xxx.

⁵³⁸ Isaiah Berlin to Joan Robinson, 23 January 1953, in Berlin, *Enlightening*, p. 360.

⁵³⁹ Isaiah Berlin to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., 30 May 1953, *ibid.*, *Enlightening*, p. 370

mechanical regularity'.⁵⁴⁰ Nevertheless, his mild criticism soon turned into strong opposition after the War. In a controversial essay in the 1950s, Trevor-Roper provided an explanation of the currency Marxism had gained in the West: it was not its inner quality, but the public desire for a philosophy of history, that made it attractive.⁵⁴¹ The facts that Marxism, failing to fulfil its promise to make prophecies, had not foretold the rise of Fascism, and that Hitler was so close to victoriously conquering Europe made Trevor-Roper realise that history was not determined, but full of contingencies. Trevor-Roper's first attempt to reveal the fallacy of Marxism, and in particular its philosophy of history, can be found in his review of Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*. Trevor-Roper had a high regard for Popper's book, which he believed 'demolished the philosophical basis of Historicism', abandoned the 'inevitable destiny' or 'law of progress', and 'restored politics and institutions to fundamental human importance'.⁵⁴² Trevor-Roper argued that Marxist history was dogmatic, trapped in its presuppositions, and entailed a false belief that 'truth is necessarily on the side of' the progressive force.⁵⁴³

Trevor-Roper's review was published in *Polemic*, a journal that only existed for a brief time between 1945 and 1947, but played a significant role in post-war British intellectual debate.⁵⁴⁴ Not an exclusively literary journal, it aimed at attracting a large

⁵⁴⁰ Trevor-Roper, 'History and Imagination', p. 358.

⁵⁴¹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Karl Marx and the Study of History', in idem, *Historical Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 285-98. Trevor-Roper's public attack of Marxism in 'Review of The Letters of Jacob Burckhardt' (*New Statesman and Nation*, 6 August 1955) elicited a heated debate participated by Eric Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill, and Isaiah Berlin. See 'Correspondence', *New Statesman and Nation*, 20 August, 27 August, 24 September, 15 October, 22 October.

⁵⁴² Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Open Society: Review', *Polemic*, III, p. 60.

⁵⁴³ Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays*, p. 288.

⁵⁴⁴ Humphrey Slater, 'Editorial', *Polemic*, II.

readership, and covered a wide range of subjects, including psychology, philosophy, and the arts. Encouraging free speech when faced with the threat of authoritarianism, its editorial principle was unquestionably anti-Communist. Moreover, *Polemics* had an overt philosophical stance: Ayer and Russell were its most frequent contributors; thanks to its editor, the ex-Communist Humphrey Slater, it was one of the earliest routes by which Popper's thought was introduced into Britain.⁵⁴⁵

Moreover, Trevor-Roper was aware of the threat and aggression of the Soviet Union, and he expressed his views in newspapers and journals with wide circulations amongst the general reading public, which demonstrated his identity as a public critic of the Soviet Union. In 1947, Trevor-Roper wrote two essays on European Communism for *The Observer*. He estimated that the French Communist Party, though having a reputable history in resisting Nazism, was already in decline; whereas Communism was in a state of growth in Italy. He also pointed out that Communist parties in Western Europe were ready to seize power legally, which explained why they tried to gain the peasants' confidence; but he warned that once the Communist parties had achieved power, they would be unlikely to keep their promises to their idealist followers.⁵⁴⁶

Trevor-Roper was nonetheless never a Cold War warrior who unconditionally supported the anti-Communist cause; ironically, this did not prevent him from being drawn into Cold War politics. In 1950, Trevor-Roper was invited by Melvin Lasky personally to attend the first 'Congress for Cultural Freedom' held in West Berlin.⁵⁴⁷ A

⁵⁴⁵ Collini, *Absent Minds*, p. 396.

⁵⁴⁶ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Communism in Europe', 'Communism in France', *The Observer*, 14 September, 21 September 1947.

⁵⁴⁷ SOC. Dacre 12/27: Melvin Lasky to Trevor-Roper, 26 April 1950.

radical anti-Stalinist, Lasky registered his anxiety that launching a ‘cultural war’ against the Soviet Union was a necessity, which he expressed in the famous ‘Melvin Lasky Proposal’ submitted to the American military governor in Germany, Lucius D. Clay. In 1948, Lasky became the editor of *Der Monat*, a monthly magazine funded by the CIA and published in West Germany; his mission was to spot intellectuals from the ‘free world’ who might work for their cause.⁵⁴⁸ Trevor-Roper’s review of a biography of Wilhelm Canaris, Hitler’s Intelligence Chief, was published in *Der Monat* in 1950; and it was probably on this occasion that Lasky got to know Trevor-Roper.⁵⁴⁹ But still, Melvin Lasky’s invitation to Trevor-Roper to attend the Congress for Cultural Freedom itself was a demonstration of the latter’s status as an expert on Germany, whose opinion was highly valued by the public, particularly after the publication of *The Last Days of Hitler*.

Despite ostensibly promoting cultural freedom, the Congress was not a free platform. It was directed and financially backed by the CIA, and served the purpose of combating Soviet propaganda. In 1948, the Cominform organised a ‘World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace’ in Wroclaw, which was followed by a ‘Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace’ in New York, and ‘The World Congress of Partisans for Peace’ in Paris, both held in 1949. The idea of these gatherings was to pronounce that the prospect of peace-loving countries like the Soviet Union was threatened by the aggressive capitalist countries led by the U.S.; and they culminated in the establishment

⁵⁴⁸ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2000), pp. 27-44.

⁵⁴⁹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Admiral Canaris’, now collected in idem, *The Secret World: Behind the Curtain of British Intelligence in World War II and the Cold War*, ed. Edward Harrison (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 49-65.

of the World Peace Council in 1950. To counteract, the CIA and its affiliated department O.P.C. (Office of Policy Coordination) decided to stage a conference in West Berlin. Remarkably, the theme of the Soviet-backed conference was predominantly 'Peace', whereas that of their Western counterparts was 'Freedom'.

A large number of fierce anti-Communists in the 1940s and 1950s were ex-Communists who renounced their belief in the face of Stalin's terror. In the U.S., there was a considerable number of Trotskyists, including James Burnham, James Farrell, Sidney Hook, Dwight Macdonald, and Lionel Trilling, who became Cold War fighters. It was O.P.C.'s strategy to recruit and organise these converts, making them a central force in combating Soviet propaganda—and the result was fruitful. For example, the idea of holding a conference in Berlin was initially raised in a meeting attended by Lasky, Borkenau and Ruth Fischer—all ex-Communists.⁵⁵⁰ *The God that Failed*, a collection of essays written by six ex-Communists, including Stephen Spender, Arthur Koestler, Andre Gide, and Ignazio Silone, also proved a huge success—although Crossman claimed in the preface that the book was not serving any propagandist purpose, its publication was not possible without the funds and support from the American intelligence agency.⁵⁵¹

Trevor-Roper was probably not fully aware of this propagandist mission of the Berlin Conference; at least he had no idea that the British delegation, which was composed of, among others, Ayer, Herbert Read, R.H.S. Crossman, and Christopher Hollis, was secretly funded by the Information Research Department of the Foreign

⁵⁵⁰ Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, pp. 62-72.

⁵⁵¹ Richard Crossman (ed.), *The God that Failed* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), pp. 1-11.

Office. Trevor-Roper was asked to speak on the panel ‘Science and Totalitarianism’ on 27 June 1950. The speech he prepared was entitled ‘Truth, Liberalism and Authority’, which argued that the greatest threat of totalitarianism—defined by Trevor-Roper as ‘government with ideological or doctrinal power’ that required ‘not only a police but a priesthood’—was its control of the standard of truth. The doctrinal nature of totalitarian ideology, apart from censorship and secret police, was mentioned in many anti-totalitarian and anti-Communist texts in the Cold War, notably exemplified by the works of George Orwell and Ignazio Silone. Comparatively, the significance of Trevor-Roper’s idea is twofold: 1) the conflict between science and totalitarianism had precedents in history, and Calvinism and Catholicism were Marxism’s forerunners; 2) these ideological systems adopt a progressive view of truth, which stipulates that their respective victory is the only ultimate ‘Truth’ that judges the validity of all truths.⁵⁵²

The conference, however, did not proceed in the way that Trevor-Roper had anticipated. North Korea’s invasion of South Korea on 25 June only intensified the delegates’ already strong opposition to Communism. Trevor-Roper soon realised that it was designed to be a political demonstration rather than an intellectual discussion. The shining star of the conference was Arthur Koestler, who alone gave three speeches. In his address at the opening ceremony, Koestler maintained that international politics was at an emergent moment, and that intellectuals should no longer synthesise or neutralise. According to him, they are required to take sides, and replace their ‘neither-nor’ attitude

⁵⁵² Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Truth, Liberalism and Authority’, in *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, XL (2006), pp. 432-40.

by an ‘either-or’ mentality.⁵⁵³ Trevor-Roper was repelled by Koestler’s aggression, intolerance and dogmatism, and insisted that there must be alternatives other than Communism and anti-Communism. Moreover, he was shocked to find that Ayer’s speech on J.S. Mill’s notion of toleration was dismissed as irrelevant in the panel; so he decided to abandon his prepared text, and instead gave a talk in defence of Ayer’s position.⁵⁵⁴ He also ganged up with other British delegates, and made serious objections to the manifesto of the Congress drafted by Koestler, successfully forcing them to withdraw this sentence: ‘Totalitarian ideologies which deny intellectual freedom have no right of citizenship in the republic of spirit’.⁵⁵⁵ After returning to Oxford, Trevor-Roper wrote an article for the *Manchester Guardian* to report the Berlin scenario. As the title—‘Ex-Communist v. Communist’—suggests, Trevor-Roper believed that those ex-Communists did not throw away the ‘obscurantist doctrinal rubbish whose residue can never be fully discharged from the system’.⁵⁵⁶

Interestingly, it was Koestler’s contention that traditional ideological conflict between Right and Left, or Capitalism and Socialism, was out-dated, so ‘total tyranny’ and ‘relative freedom’ are the only alternatives to choose from.⁵⁵⁷ This ‘end of ideology’ thesis was notably restated in Edward Shils’ report on the fifth Congress for Cultural Freedom in Milan, 1955. Shils argued that the age of doctrinal extremism was over, and that Western intellectuals had no longer felt ‘the need for a comprehensive explicit

⁵⁵³ Peter Coleman, ‘Arthur Koestler and the Congress for Cultural Freedom’, *Polanyiana*, 1-2 (2006), pp. 184-202.

⁵⁵⁴ A.J. Ayer, *More of My Life* (London: Collins, 1984), pp. 63-4.

⁵⁵⁵ Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, pp. 196-9.

⁵⁵⁶ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Ex-Communist V. Communist’, *Manchester Guardian*, 10 July 1950.

⁵⁵⁷ Coleman, ‘Arthur Koestler and the Congress for Cultural Freedom’, p. 192.

system of beliefs', which the Soviet Union did.⁵⁵⁸ This self-acclaiming remark, however, is definitely not value-free—by making this comparison, Shils made an implicit attack on the dogmatism of Communism, and celebrated the West's renunciation of these coercive ideologies. Trevor-Roper did not participate in this 'end of ideology' debate initiated by Shils, but his article on Desiderius Erasmus, despite having been written earlier than Shils' piece, can be seen as a proclamation of his humanistic standpoint in the cultural Cold War. Trevor-Roper suggested that anti-Communism and Communism were essentially not different— 'history...suggests that opposite in an ideological struggle, for all their high-sounding abstract slogans, are not so opposite as they think that they are.'⁵⁵⁹

Trevor-Roper depicted Erasmus favourably as a humanist who insisted on intellectual independence and refused to support either Martin Luther or the Roman Catholic Church in an ideological war. Despite being condemned by Rome, his legacy was nonetheless evident in both Protestantism and the Catholic Church; so it is superficial to divide Christendom into two opposing blocs and forget that there was 'an Erasmianism after Erasmus'.⁵⁶⁰ Trevor-Roper did not conceal his intention to draw a parallel between the Reformation and another ideological war he was witnessing—'the fate of this generation is interesting, for it bears some resemblance to our own...the generation of the liberals who were obliged to choose between rival orthodoxies'.⁵⁶¹ To him, Erasmus exemplified an ideal intellectual: they 'may be citizens; they may even, as

⁵⁵⁸ Edward Shils, 'Letter from Milan: The End of Ideology?', *Encounter*, November 1955, pp. 52-8.

⁵⁵⁹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Desiderius Erasmus', *Encounter*, May 1955; it is incorporated in *Historical Essays*, p. 59.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

such, have to become soldiers; but it is not their business to be recruiting-sergeants.’ Interestingly, the essay was published in *Encounter*, which, like *Der Monat*, was also secretly funded by the CIA. However, this connection was not publicly known then—otherwise Trevor-Roper’s critical mentioning of the Berlin conference would have been seen as a defiant gesture. Under Spender and Irving Kristol’s editorship, *Encounter* was still a literary-political magazine that promulgated common human values, positive suggestions, and something ‘beyond anti-communism’; publishing Trevor-Roper’s essay, however, would be unthinkable after Lasky took over the editorship in 1958.⁵⁶²

In the same year, Trevor-Roper maintained in a review article in the *New Statesman and Nation* that a peaceful co-existence between the West and the Soviet Union was possible:

The theory that the world cannot live ‘half slave and half free’, that a frontal struggle between opposing systems is sooner or later inevitable and might as well be hastened by an ideological crusade, is simply not true. Europe and the Turk, with their opposing ideologies and opposing social systems, faced each other for centuries. There were diplomatic relation and local struggles, as between Christian powers, but there was no crusade, and when the system which had once seemed so formidable to disintegrate, it was through inner weakness.⁵⁶³

Trevor-Roper did not believe that the struggle between the West and the Soviet Union was unavoidable. According to the Cold War warriors, however, the destruction of Communism is not only unavoidable, but also bound to happen soon. In this regard, Trevor-Roper maintained that the historical presuppositions of anti-Communism, as a

⁵⁶² Jeremy P. Howard, ‘A Political History of the Magazine *Encounter*, 1953-1967’ (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1993), pp. 40-2.

⁵⁶³ Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays*, p. 177.

part of its ideology, followed the same logic as that of Communism. Among the anti-Communist crusaders, Trevor-Roper was particularly hostile to James Burnham. After being let down by the Soviet Union, Burnham became an extreme advocate of the Right during the War, and predicted that Germany would win. Inspired by Pareto's theory, he argued in his *Managerial Revolution* that capitalism was doomed to fall, and was already being replaced by a new form of society ruled by an elite group called 'managers'. It is noteworthy that Burnham's *Managerial Revolution* was critically reviewed by George Orwell, whom Trevor-Roper much admired. Orwell's article, also published in *Polemics*, condemned Burnham's belief in historical inevitability, and showed that Burnham's prophecies often proved wrong.⁵⁶⁴ To Trevor-Roper, Burnham was another prisoner of Popperian historicism; his unwarranted confidence in the destruction of international Communism, displayed in his post-war works *The Struggle for the World* and *The Coming Defeat of Communism*, was a demonstration of his victorious view of history.

III.

3.1. Berlin versus Carr

The impression that Berlin was a prolific writer who had a large number of publications sometimes obscured the fact that the book on Marx was the only monograph he wrote—not least because he was an outstanding essayist. Berlin's reputation as an historian of ideas now owes much to his editor Henry Hardy, who has

⁵⁶⁴ George Orwell, 'James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution', in idem, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, (4 vols, London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), iv, pp. 160-81.

for decades collected and edited his essays, lectures and broadcasts—some of them were originally published in less well-known periodicals, and some of them had been unpublished.⁵⁶⁵ Berlin's high public standing in the 1950s partly relied on his BBC lectures broadcast in 1952, when the Third Programme was in its heyday and regarded as a significant medium through which cultural and intellectual ideas were disseminated.⁵⁶⁶ These lectures were published only half a century later as *Freedom and its Betrayal*.⁵⁶⁷ Berlin's most widely circulated and frequently discussed works in the fifties include *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, 'Historical Inevitability', and 'Two Concepts of Liberty'.⁵⁶⁸ Compared to the other two, 'Historical Inevitability' was much less positively evaluated.

'Historical Inevitability' was originally delivered under the title 'History as An Alibi' as the first August Comte Lecture at the London School of Economics in May 1953, and was—rather unusually for Berlin—far from successful, often remembered as a dramatic event in which Michael Oakeshott, the host of the lecture, introduced Berlin in an extraordinarily mocking way. Berlin was obviously offended and humiliated, which, apart from his over-preparation for the lecture, made him unable to present it in a lucid and orderly form.⁵⁶⁹ Nevertheless, 'Historical Inevitability' is commonly and, I believe, justly regarded as Berlin's most ill-planned and incoherent work, which is deficient in a governing thread, full of repetitions and insufficiently supported

⁵⁶⁵ For a first-hand account of the history of this editing project, see Henry Hardy, *In Search of Isaiah Berlin: A Literary Adventure* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

⁵⁶⁶ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Envy of the World: Fifty Years of the BBC Third Programme and Radio 3* (London: Phoenix, 1997), pp. 127-8.

⁵⁶⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *Freedom and Betrayal*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁵⁶⁸ Idem, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Phoenix, 2014); these two lectures are both incorporated in Berlin's *Liberty*.

⁵⁶⁹ Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin*, p. 205.

arguments. He had too much to say, but simply put too many eggs in the same basket. The title of the lecture in its published form (it was published without much revision by Oxford University Press in 1954) suggests that its primary theme is about historical determinism; however, Berlin actually discussed two different, albeit closely related, topics in it. Apart from criticising determinist views of history, he also recognised relativism as one of his targets.⁵⁷⁰

Berlin classified historical determinism into three different categories: teleological metaphysical, non-teleological metaphysical, and scientific. By the teleological metaphysical branch of determinism, Berlin referred to those conceptions of history which not only presupposed a pattern of history, but also assumed some units or entities whose growth and realisation corresponded to the development and goal of human history. Such entities might be ‘a race, a nation, a class’, or ‘a religion, a civilisation, and a Hegelian (or Buddhist) World Spirit’, and they are metaphysically ‘more “real” and more “concrete” than the individuals who compose them’. In this regard, the meaning and purpose of an individual no more lie in himself, but in the place he occupies in history. Berlin famously defined ‘negative freedom’ as one’s freedom to choose; in other words, he has at least more than one alternative to choose from. In ‘Historical Inevitability’, however, Berlin not only argued that moral judgement was inseparable from freedom in history, but he also added another issue into the discussion—namely, the effectiveness of men’s choices. Berlin indicated that even men felt free to act or to choose from the seemingly available alternatives, insofar as history

⁵⁷⁰ As one of Berlin’s research notes shows, the earliest title of this lecture was ‘Determinism and Relativism’. MS Berlin, C 431, fo.1.

is inevitably marching towards a predestined end, and hence none of these options exerts any influence on history, history is still beyond men's control.⁵⁷¹ Following this, moral judgments in history become invalid; for it is meaningless to condemn someone when the consequences of his conducts are not within his control.

Berlin's criticism of teleological metaphysical determinism, as we have seen, was clearly an intended exposure of the moral cynicism of Soviet ideology. But meanwhile, Berlin also recognised the realist (especially Carr's) conception of history, despite its not being metaphysical, as containing similar presuppositions as Communism did. To Berlin, Carr was not a committed believer in Communism, but his view of history was equally dangerous; Carr, however, recognised Berlin as a representative of those 'liberal thinkers' who were blind to the tendency of history. Their debates over the nature of history continued throughout the 1950s. Reviewing *The Bolshevik Revolution* in the *Sunday Times*, Berlin maintained that Carr's work was written with a presumption that history was 'ruled by inexorable laws', without acknowledging any 'unrealised possibilities', 'victims and casualties of the process.'⁵⁷² Moreover, Carr saw 'history through the eyes of the victors', and was reluctant to notice any 'anti-Bolshevik and neutral voice'.⁵⁷³ Meanwhile, Carr's review of Berlin's 'Political Ideas in the Twentieth-Century' was published in the *TLS* with the title 'The New Scepticism' (1950), in which Berlin was criticised for his nostalgia for a past age. Living in their 'ivory tower', Carr argued, such liberals as Berlin refused to face the coming of mass

⁵⁷¹ Berlin, *Liberty*, pp. 97-8.

⁵⁷² Idem, 'Soviet Beginning', *Sunday Times*, 10 December 1950.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

civilisation, and were unable to perceive the ‘disturbing and uncongenial realities of contemporary society’.⁵⁷⁴ Berlin quickly noticed Carr’s review, and recognised his identity as the author; he told Kennan that Carr ‘rightly interprets my articles as an attack on all he stands for’, but ‘this makes me believe that I must be even more right than I thought, since his writings are among the more obvious symptoms of what I tried to analyse’.⁵⁷⁵ On the one hand, Berlin’s scepticism about economic planning and endorsement of situational policy exemplified in ‘Political Ideas in the Twentieth-Century’ can be seen as an intentional repudiation of Carr’s proposal for total planning.⁵⁷⁶ On the other hand, Berlin’s criticism of the Soviet Union’s moral cynicism was interpreted by Carr as a revival of the utopian liberalism that he had attacked in the 1930s.

Berlin and Carr shared a similar experience in working for the Foreign Office. Both were pioneers in writing serious books on Marx in the Anglophone world, and both were engrossed in nineteenth-century Russian literature.⁵⁷⁷ Carr’s works on Dostoevsky, Herzen and Bakunin came out successively during the 1930s, when Russian intellectual history was still a marginal subject and did not attract the general public as it did after the War.⁵⁷⁸ Berlin read Carr’s biography of Marx before he began writing his own book, and his attitude was positive, if not unreservedly favourable.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁴ E.H. Carr, ‘The New Scepticism’, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 9 June 1950.

⁵⁷⁵ Isaiah Berlin to George Kennan, 13 February 1951, in Berlin, *Enlightening*, p. 219.

⁵⁷⁶ Berlin, *Liberty*, pp. 91-2.

⁵⁷⁷ E.H. Carr, *Karl Marx: A Study in Fanaticism* (London: Dent, 1934).

⁵⁷⁸ E.H. Carr, *Dostoevsky (1821–1881): A New Biography* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931); idem, *The Romantic Exiles: A Nineteenth Century Portrait Gallery*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933); idem, *Michael Bakunin* (London: Macmillan, 1937).

⁵⁷⁹ ‘Mr Carr wrote a frivolous patronising book, & thinks of K.M. as a grotesque old monster, very able & curious & interesting, & now & then tells you he was a man of genius, but offers no evidence. Still he does try & answer questions: about M’s ideological evolution, about his relations with Hess, Lassalle, Bakunin etc. He is always superficial, intolerably jocose, & usually wrong, but he is aware, dimly, that he has solved nothing.’ See Berlin’s letter

His review of Carr's study of Bakunin was also encouraging, although he criticised the author for failing to depict the revolutionary's personality.⁵⁸⁰ But it was not until the end of the Second World War that Berlin and Carr became close in private, demonstrated by the more casual 'Dear Isaiah' and 'Dear Ted' initiating their correspondence.

Carr is mentioned twice in 'Historical Inevitability'; on both occasions, Carr's argument that making moral judgement is invalid due to the relativity of values is refuted.⁵⁸¹ Berlin argued that Carr's historical view would lead to moral nihilism, and he insisted that certain basic human values must be unconditionally accepted regardless of time and space:

Because there is no hard and fast line between 'subjective' and 'objective', it does not follow that there is no line at all; and because judgements of 'importance', normally held to be 'objective', differ in some respects from moral judgments, which are so often suspected of being merely 'subjective', it does not follow that 'moral' is tantamount to 'subjective'...It does not follow that the ethical implications, concerned with responsibility and moral worth, can somehow be sloughed off...⁵⁸²

Carr was soon aware of Berlin's attack on him, and he quickly responded by reviewing 'Historical Inevitability' in the *TLS*.⁵⁸³ The review is quite moderate, without expressing any fundamental disagreement with Berlin, save in the last few sentences. However, the published version is different from the original draft, which Carr sent to Berlin for comment before publication. From Berlin's clarification of his arguments in the letter to Carr in December 1954, we can speculate that the original text might have been much more critical. Carr's original rebuttal centred on two points: 1) Berlin's condemnation of the impersonal force is a denial of causation in history; 2) Berlin is calling for moral

to Jenifer Williams, 30 September 1936, in his *Flourishing*, p. 200.

⁵⁸⁰ Isaiah Berlin, 'The Father of Anarchism', *The Spectator*, 31 December 1937.

⁵⁸¹ Berlin, *Liberty*, p.132, 138.

⁵⁸² Ibid, p. 145.

⁵⁸³ E.H. Carr, 'History and Morals', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 December 1954.

judgments in history.⁵⁸⁴

Carr's attack on Berlin in *What is History?* still follows these two lines of argument—henceforth, Berlin did not succeed in convincing Carr, and the latter only lowered his tone in his *TLS* review unwillingly.⁵⁸⁵ The disagreement between Berlin and Carr was radicalised after *What is History?* was published in *The Listener* (before its publication in book form), in which Berlin's views are referred to 'only less frequently than to those of Hegel and Marx'.⁵⁸⁶ In public, Berlin wrote a letter to *The Listener* to clarify some of his contentions that he believed had been misunderstood by Carr, and he also contributed a critical review of *What is History?* to the *New Statesman*. Privately, Berlin and Carr also had a heated debate in their correspondence. On most of these occasions, Carr shrewdly avoided confronting Berlin's allegation that he was a sheer relativist, and implicitly changed the theme of the debate from 'whether moral values are totally relative' to 'whether historians should make moral judgments'. He then reduced Berlin's argument into naively encouraging moral condemnation, a view Berlin nonetheless never held.⁵⁸⁷

Moreover, Carr argued that Berlin's denunciation of historical determinism was a demonstration of his complete denial of the 'cause-and-effect' relation in history, and his belief that history was written by the great men.⁵⁸⁸ These accusations, however, were also wide of the mark; for Berlin's argument in 'Historical Inevitability' is that the

⁵⁸⁴ Isaiah Berlin to E.H. Carr, 3 December 1954, in Berlin, *Enlightening*, p.460.

⁵⁸⁵ Interestingly, Berlin told Carr's biographer Jonathan Haslam that David Knowles originally asked him to deliver the Trevelyan Lectures, but he refused and recommended Carr. See Berlin to Haslam, 27 September 1995, Berlin, *Affirming: Letters 1975-1997*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Chatto & Windus, 2015), pp. 516-7.

⁵⁸⁶ Isaiah Berlin, 'Mr Carr's Big Battalions', *New Statesman*, 5 January 1962, p. 15.

⁵⁸⁷ Berlin, *Liberty*, pp. 143-4.

⁵⁸⁸ Carr, *What is History?*, p.88.

collective force of numerous unidentifiable individuals is still human force.⁵⁸⁹ The fundamental difference between personal and impersonal ideas of history is whether men's 'purposes and motives' impose any influence on history. Ironically, Carr also began to revise his view of determinism in the 1950s, and even denounced determinism on some occasions.⁵⁹⁰ Determinism is defined in *What is History?* as 'the belief that everything that happens has a cause or causes, and could not have happened differently unless something in the cause or causes had also been different.'⁵⁹¹ Compared to his view in the 1930s and 1940s that history was driven by inexorable tendencies, it seemed that Carr's determinist view was now less radical.

Carr's propensity to radicalise, if not distort, Berlin's argument nonetheless obliterated the fact that from a purely historiographical point of view, their views did not clash to such an extent that they were irreconcilable. Carr believed that socio-economic factors had much more explanatory force. Berlin did not neglect these forces, but he was not ready to accept them as the only factor worthy of weighing up in historical research, fearing that, if so, they would be akin to those metaphysical entities by which all human behaviour in history can be explained, thus nullifying people's wills and motives.⁵⁹² Therefore, their fundamental and possibly irreconcilable difference lay

⁵⁸⁹ Berlin, *Liberty*, p.97.

⁵⁹⁰ Carr, *The New Society*, pp. 14-15. Again, he criticises thorough determinism in *The New Society*, for it hinders human creativity. Furthermore, in *What is History?*, he attests that historians usually use such terms as 'inevitable' merely in a rhetorical sense when they believe something was 'extremely probable' to happen (Carr, *What is History?*, p. 90). Last but not least, Carr repeatedly contended that there were quintessentially two forms of historical view: one conceives history as linear and the other as repetitive. He embraced the former, and dismissed the latter, which was epitomised by Spengler and Toynbee's philosophy of history, as deterministic. E.H. Carr, 'Historical Parallels and Dilemmas', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 1 January 1949; idem, 'The Creed of Oswald Spengler', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 3 October 1952.

⁵⁹¹ Carr, *What is History?*, p. 87.

⁵⁹² Isaiah Berlin's letter to the editor of the *Listener*, published on 15 June 1961, in Berlin, *Building: Letters 1960-1975*, eds. Henry Hardy and Mark Pottle (London: Chatto & Windus), 2013 pp. 49-50.

in their evaluation of the power of ideas. Carr, through and through, never changed his belief that ideas and values were relative to their age in history, and were not historically effective. Berlin, however, insisted that certain ideas were, at any rate, universally valid, and that their effectiveness should not be completely eradicated.

3.2. Trevor-Roper versus Taylor

Trevor-Roper recalled in his old age that he did not have any real understandings of ‘history, or historical philosophy, or the history of ideas’ when he was writing his first book—*Archbishop Laud* (1940).⁵⁹³ His claim seems to suggest that it was indeed the Second World War that obliged him seriously to ponder the nature of history, and made him realise that certain ideas of history had political consequences—though often undesirable, and sometimes even disastrous, ones. Nevertheless, Trevor-Roper was also acute enough to have already noticed before the War that to understand Hitler, it was necessary to understand his ideas first. After reading *Mein Kampf* in German in 1938, as not many people in Britain had done, Trevor-Roper found that:

Hitler was not a mere demagogue as it was fashionable at that time to portray him. Behind that shrill and turgid style, half-buried in that disorderly verbiage, there was a powerful, systematic mind and a frightening, but coherent and realistic policy; and, moreover, a policy which, by 1938, had already been partly realised. After reading *Mein Kampf* I could not see Hitler as a mere adventurer, or opportunist, far less a charlatan. Nor could I see him, as some naive Britain Tories saw him, as an ideologue of traditional conservatism.⁵⁹⁴

Trevor-Roper’s investigation of the death of Hitler further confirmed his belief. In the epilogue of *The Last Days of Hitler*, Trevor-Roper reminded us that Hitler was a man who believed in ‘historical greatness’, and convinced of his role as the Messiah of the

⁵⁹³ SOC. Dacre 1/1/11, Hugh Trevor-Roper to Peter Miller, 18 March 1999.

⁵⁹⁴ SOC. Dacre 6/34/3, ‘Oxford: 1927-1935’.

German people, which can be demonstrated by this line from *Mein Kampf*—‘At long intervals in human history, it may occasionally happen that the practical politician and the political philosopher are one.’⁵⁹⁵

This line of interpretation, however, was not universally accepted in the 1950s, when a number of substantial works still depicted Hitler as an unscrupulous social-climber, ruthless dictator, and hopeless maniac. A notable example was Alan Bullock’s *Hitler*, published in 1952 (the American edition appeared in 1953). Bullock’s book gives an excellent account of the history of Hitler’s rise to power, but it argued that Hitler was devoid of any intellect, and dominated solely by passion: ‘hatred, resentment, the lust to dominate, and, where he could not dominate, destroy’.⁵⁹⁶ Hitler’s only idea was ‘the extension of his own power and that of the nation with which he had identified with himself’; he did not believe in the ‘power of ideas’, and was ‘delighted to prove that men were governed by cupidity, fear and their baser passions’.⁵⁹⁷ Trevor-Roper reviewed Bullock’s book twice, respectively for the *Sunday Times* and *New York Times*; and his comments were generally positive. But Trevor-Roper was not content with Bullock’s negligence of the peculiarity of Hitler’s mind—‘as if anyone else as ambitious and unscrupulous as Hitler could, by the same technique, have done the same’.⁵⁹⁸

In the introduction for the English translation of *Hitler’s Table Talk* (1952), Trevor-Roper again averred that Hitler was ‘not just Spengler or Napoleon, but Spengler

⁵⁹⁵ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: Pan Books, 2012), p. 207, 46.

⁵⁹⁶ Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (London, Odhams Press, 1952), p. 736.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Tyrant’, *Sunday Times*, 9 November 1952; ‘First Power, Then Revolution’, *New York Times*, 22 February 1953.

and Napoleon’, and that he had a mature idea of history which should not be overlooked. Hitler believed that he was the incarnation of history, and that he alone knew how to ‘control those cataclysms and convulsions in which historic ages perish or are born’.⁵⁹⁹ According to Trevor-Roper, Hitler ‘saw history as a succession of human ages which could be defined by their “culture”, the totality of their social organisation and ideas’. The Greco-Roman world was replaced by the ‘Germanic Medieval Culture’, and the latter gave way to Western capitalist society; now that the West is already in decline, it is bound to be conquered by a new ‘barbarian power’—this, according to Trevor-Roper, was Hitler’s philosophy of history in an abstract form.⁶⁰⁰ Therefore, Hitler’s ambition and his interpretation of world affairs were closely related to his idea of history. Launching war against Russia was thus an ideological choice, for Hitler believed that Russia and Germany were the only two land-based barbarian powers that might rule the world.

If Alan Bullock depicted Hitler as a maniac, it was A.J.P. Taylor who infamously proclaimed that Hitler was an ordinary man who had no ambitions or ideas. Taylor’s *The Origins of the Second World War* was published in 1961, and immediately became a controversial work—not least because the Eichmann Trial was held in the same year. In his work, Taylor contended that Hitler did not have a timetable to conquer Europe; instead, his foreign policy was a continuation of that of Bismarck. Aiming to rebuild Germany’s status as a big Power, Hitler was not different from any German statesman

⁵⁹⁹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘The Mind of Adolf Hitler’, in Adolf Hitler, *Hitler’s Table Talk* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1953), p. xvi.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, p. xvii.

of the twentieth century, including Gustav Stresemann. According to Taylor, Hitler simply took advantage of the nationalist sentiment in Czechoslovakia to acquire Sudetenland; he had no plans to conquer Poland, and was only obliged by the German people to occupy Danzig. Taylor ascribed the outbreak of the War to collective miscalculations: merely calling Chamberlain's bluff, Hitler did not anticipate Britain's reaction, while the British Government mistook Hitler's action as the first movement of a bigger plan. Although *The Origins of the Second World War* was warmly welcomed by the neo-Nazis, Taylor was by no means a supporter of Hitler. The point he wanted to make was that it was meaningless to make moral judgement on Hitler; for it was the German people as an entirety that should be blamed, and Hitler was only a product made by 'the course of German history'.⁶⁰¹

Trevor-Roper's review of Taylor's book was published in *Encounter*, reflecting that the controversy was not confined to the historical profession. Apart from criticising Taylor's scholarship, Trevor-Roper took issue with Taylor's dismissive attitude towards ideas and ideological confrontation, which made Taylor deny the historiographical importance of texts such as the Hossbach Memorandum—perhaps he would not have been surprised had he known that Taylor had not read *Mein Kampf* until 1962.⁶⁰² After Taylor became aware of Trevor-Roper's criticism, he commented that 'He knows as much about twentieth-century history as I do about seventeenth-century history, which

⁶⁰¹ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 1964), pp. 190-231, 203-337; idem, *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of German History since 1815* (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁶⁰² Kathleen Burk, *Troublemaker: The Life and History of A. J. P. Taylor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 288.

is not to say nothing at all.’⁶⁰³ Interestingly, although Taylor was renowned for his works on nineteenth-century diplomatic history at this time, his reputation as an expert in twentieth-century British history was achieved only after his *English History: 1914-1945* came out in 1965. To some extent, Taylor’s controversial argument in *The Origins* was an outcome of his reading twentieth-century history with a vision of the nineteenth-century diplomatic world. As Taylor argued in *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, a volume written for the Oxford European History series, a distinctive feature of nineteenth-century diplomatic history was that foreign policies were conducted not under domestic economic or ideological pressure, but always for the pursuit of power.⁶⁰⁴ So when he applied this presumption into the twentieth century, his conclusion was that Nazism was not different from other political ideologies, and that the Great War was merely an outcome of power politics.

As a renegade disciple of Namier, Taylor, like his old master, did not believe in the power of ideas. When averring that statesmen are too absorbed by events to follow a pre-conceived plan, Taylor thus also discounted the effectiveness of human motives in history. He proudly declared that his works had ‘no system, no moral interpretation’; to him, history was merely a fulfilment of ‘detached curiosity’.⁶⁰⁵ Therefore, despite his contribution to various newspapers and frequent appearances on television, Taylor was a public intellectual who—borrowing Stefan Collini’s remark—‘had nothing to say’.⁶⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Trevor-Roper still believed that Taylor had a philosophy of history, and

⁶⁰³ Cf. Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, p. 333.

⁶⁰⁴ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), pp. xix-xxxvi.

⁶⁰⁵ Idem, *Englishmen and Others* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956), p. vii.

⁶⁰⁶ Collini, *Absent Minds*, pp. 375-392.

that it was a morally dangerous one; although Taylor denounced any ideologies, he was at the same time trapped into another ideology—‘realities in history’:

The real determinants of history, according to Taylor, are objective situations and human blunders. Objective situations consist of the realities of power; human intelligence is best employed in recognising these realities and allowing events to conform with them; but as human intelligence seldom prevails in politics, the realities generally have to assert themselves, at greater human cost, through the mess caused by human blunders.⁶⁰⁷

3.3. Realism versus the Power of Ideas

Although it was purely coincidental that Taylor’s *The Origins of the Second World War* and Carr’s *What is History?* were published in the same year, it is not coincidental that Taylor and Carr were often listed together by Berlin and Trevor-Roper on both public and private occasions.⁶⁰⁸ Trevor-Roper’s review of Carr’s *What is History?*, also published in *Encounter*, largely follows a similar line of criticism as Berlin’s. Trevor-Roper maintained that Carr was a Hegelian determinist, whose identification of success as the ultimate meaning of history would only lead to anachronism:

An historian who skips over the alternative possibilities merely because they were not immediately realised (although they may have been realised in the long run), or who writes off all that is accidental or contingent by confusing it (as Mr Carr regularly does) with what is trivial, must seriously misjudge historical situations, human motives, and the course of events itself; and without these, what is history?⁶⁰⁹

After reading Trevor-Roper’s draft review before it went into print, Berlin told Trevor-Roper that ‘Carr will not mind it. He does not mind criticism much, although mine evidently got underneath his skin, but my relations with him like yours with Alan

⁶⁰⁷ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘A.J.P. Taylor, Hitler and the War’, *Encounter*, July 1961, p. 90.

⁶⁰⁸ See, for example, Berlin’s letter to Jacob Talmon, 8 June 1961 and to Trevor-Roper, 6 March 1962, in Berlin, *Building*, p.47, 84-5.

⁶⁰⁹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘E.H. Carr’s Success Story’, *Encounter*, May 1962, p. 73.

Taylor persists. In a way I even like him, but do not respect him at all—I suspect that must be your feeling about Alan.’⁶¹⁰ Interestingly, when Norman Stone, who launched a notoriously ferocious attack on Carr shortly after his death, spoke highly of Taylor’s explanation of the Second World War, Berlin explicitly expressed his disagreement: ‘Alan’s addiction to the idea that everything, virtually, is contingent, that the faintest suspicion of a theory or a hypothesis indicates a foolish academic preoccupation with ideas, lack of a tough sense of the kaleidoscope of reality, is too much even for me.’⁶¹¹ Taylor and Carr were both attracted by political radicalism in the 1920s and 1930s, but they also differed from each other in significant ways. Unlike Carr, Taylor was not an appeaser, nor an admirer of the Soviet Union—he was renowned for making a protest against Stalinism in the ‘World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace’ in Wroclaw. Henceforth, it was clearly Carr and Taylor’s common denunciation of the power of ideas in history that made Trevor-Roper and Berlin strongly opposed to their views of history.

To Berlin, to discount the power of ideas is to embrace moral cynicism; while to Trevor-Roper, a political ‘ideology’ which recognises ‘the pursuit of power’ as its sole aim is in its nature Fascist.⁶¹² Therefore, Trevor-Roper and Berlin’s concerted decision, though following different approaches, to practise the history of ideas in the 1950s and 1960s had, apart from intellectual reasons, a moral dimension as well. According to Berlin, his abandonment of proper philosophy was related to hearing a remark made by

⁶¹⁰ Berlin to Trevor-Roper, 6 March 1962, in Berlin, *Building*, p. 84.

⁶¹¹ Berlin to Norman Stone, 30 April 1981, in Berlin, *Affirming*, p. 160.

⁶¹² See Trevor-Roper’s letter to Tibor Szamuely, 6 March 1970, in Trevor-Roper, *One Hundred Letters from Hugh Trevor-Roper*, p. 200-1.

the Harvard logician H.M. Sheffer that progress could be achieved in logic and psychology, but not in philosophy. Berlin then decided that he wanted to do something he could know more about at the end of his life than at the beginning.⁶¹³ Many Berlin scholars, however, have recently come to re-construe this claim, arguing that Berlin merely gave up the philosophy of knowledge for political philosophy, or that a certain continuation could be found between his writings from earlier career and his later thought.⁶¹⁴ These interpretations, however plausible they are, overlook a significant feature of Berlin's history of ideas: Berlin was interested not in abstract thought (regardless of whether it is political, social or purely philosophical), but rather 'the personalities associated with ideas, and the particular flavour which they give to them and in terms of which they exchange them with one another.'⁶¹⁵ Moreover, Berlin's history of ideas had, as he confessed, 'a very direct bearing upon our present discontents'; his works on Vico, Herder, Hammann, de Maistre, and the Russian thinkers were written with a presumption that the political and moral catastrophes of the twentieth century could be better understood in the light of, if not fully explained by, certain ideas that had their origins in both the Enlightenment and what he dubbed as the 'Counter-Enlightenment'.⁶¹⁶ Similarly, a belief in humanity's independence of

⁶¹³ Berlin, *Concepts and Categories*, pp. 294-7.

⁶¹⁴ See the forewords written respectively by Alasdair MacIntyre and Mark Lilla for the new Princeton paperback editions of *Concepts and Categories* and *Against the Currents*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). Moreover, we also need to take the institutional and professional factors into consideration. Berlin was elected by New College in the 1930s to write and to teach philosophy, while a prize fellowship of All Souls meant that he was not required to teach. However, his duty as a Robertson Research Fellowship at All Souls, to which he was elected in 1950, was mainly to study 19th century European history of ideas and Russian history. Meanwhile, his philosophy teaching responsibilities at New College were reduced, although he continued to teach as a C.U.F. (Common University Fund) Lecturer. See Berlin's letter to the Board of Literae Humaniores, 27 July 1950, in Berlin, *Enlightening*, pp.184-6.

⁶¹⁵ Isaiah Berlin to Jenifer Hart, 10 December 1953, in idem, *Enlightening*, pp. 411-2.

⁶¹⁶ Isaiah Berlin to the President of Bryn Mawr College, 13 June 1950, in idem, *Enlightening*, p. 183. Berlin's works on these figures are mostly included in *Three Critics of Enlightenment*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), *Russian thinkers*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Hogarth Press, 1978), *The Roots of*

economic conditioning was also a prerequisite of Trevor-Roper's decision to be an intellectual historian in the early 1960s, when he gradually diverted from his projects of studying the social cause of the English Civil War, and the relation between Protestantism and social change in the seventeenth century.⁶¹⁷ His discussion of the religious origin of the Enlightenment, as John Robertson points out, was inspired by his reading of Erasmus and discovery of the political consequences of Erasmus's ideas.⁶¹⁸ Henceforth, both Berlin and Trevor-Roper's later intellectual careers were highly irrelevant to their insistence on the power of ideas when it was discounted by such realists as Carr and Taylor.

IV.

4.1. Popper and the Scientific Concept of History

According to one of Karl Popper's disciples, the Israeli philosopher Joseph Agassi, Popper was so irritated by Berlin's talk at the LSE that he even refused to shake hands with Berlin afterwards, believing that his ideas had been plagiarised. It is, however, rather curious that such a dramatic scenario, if it did happen, is not mentioned anywhere else. But Agassi's serious accusation also betrays a not uncommon impression that Berlin and Popper's criticisms of Hegelian total explanation of history followed a

Romanticism, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). The practical, instead of strictly exegetical, purpose of Berlin's history of ideas is recently explored by Ryan Patrick Hanley in his 'Berlin on the Nature and Purpose of the History of Ideas', contributed to Joshua L. Cherniss and Steven B. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Isaiah Berlin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 81-96. Hanley's article, however, does not consider the disciplinary history of intellectual history in Britain. Brian Young's study, in comparison, placed Berlin's intellectual history in a wider intellectual context. See his 'Intellectual History in Britain', in Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in Intellectual History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 25-8.

⁶¹⁷ See Blair Worden, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, p. 5.

⁶¹⁸ John Robertson, 'Intellectual History: The Religious Origins of the Enlightenment', pp. 131-41; idem, 'Editor's Introduction', in Hugh Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment*, pp. vi-xxii. Peter Ghosh, however, held a different view, and argued that Trevor-Roper's conversion to history of ideas happened in the early 1950s. See his 'Hugh Trevor-Roper and the History of Ideas', *History of European Ideas*, 37/4 (2011), pp. 483-505.

similarly liberal-rationalist line.⁶¹⁹ This view, based on a fallacious presumption that agreement between intellectuals can be reached insofar as they have common enemies, nonetheless obliterated the fact that Popper was a social democrat whereas Berlin was a liberal. Apart from that, Berlin's historical criticism was not exclusively directed at teleological views of history. For example, religion, as it will be discussed in the next chapter, is also a theme in 'Historical Inevitability', which, however, was largely neglected by Popper. Moreover, their criticisms of grand narratives of history were founded on very different starting points.

To Berlin, historical determinism and relativism are morally unacceptable because they pose a threat to freedom, and could be used to exonerate crimes. Popper's criticism of Hegel and Marx was most famously elaborated in his *The Poverty of Historicism*, drafted when Popper was still in Vienna in the 1930s, and first published in German in the 1940s (the English translation in 1957), and *The Open Society and its Enemies*, which came out in 1945. As a Jew who had experienced the political turmoil in Vienna, Popper was strongly opposed both to Marxism and Fascism. But in his works, the contention that Hegel, Marx and the historicists should be blamed does not rest mainly on the moral implication of their theories, but on the unscientific methods they used to make prophecies. Popper's definition of 'historicism' is notoriously idiosyncratic—it is 'an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the "rhythms", or the "trends", the "laws" or the "trends" that underlie the evolution of

⁶¹⁹ Joseph Agassi, *A Philosopher's Apprentice in Karl Popper's Workshop* (Amsterdam: Ridopi, 2008), p.152.

history'.⁶²⁰ Popper distinguished between pro-naturalistic and anti-naturalistic forms of historicism. The former aims at constructing social laws which 'determine the transition from one period to another' via an appropriation of the methods of natural sciences; the latter, however, employs an organic idea of society and propounds a utopian form of social engineering which 'remodels' the whole society with 'a definite plan.'⁶²¹ Popper's refutation of the anti-naturalistic historicism centres on its totalitarian implication, and he argued that the so-called 'social whole' could not be scientifically studied.⁶²² The pro-naturalistic form, however, mixes trends with laws—when trends divert from 'initial conditions', they turn out to be 'unconditional prophecies'.⁶²³ Against historicism in both of these two senses, Popper famously put forward the notion of 'piecemeal engineering', which 'takes a step at a time', and is ready for the 'unavoidable surprise' in the future.⁶²⁴

As a philosopher of science, Popper was familiar with the works of the Vienna Circle, though he was never a member of it. In his first book, *Logik der Forschung* (1934), translated into English with revision as *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959), Popper began to cast doubt on the verification principle, and replaced it with his 'falsification' theory in science.⁶²⁵ Popper also believed that the objects of social and natural sciences were both theoretically constructed, and that both shared similar methods: deductive causal explanation, prediction, testing. This view, however, is

⁶²⁰ Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 3.

⁶²¹ Ibid, p. 41, 66.

⁶²² Ibid, p. 77.

⁶²³ Ibid, p. 128.

⁶²⁴ Ibid, p. 66.

⁶²⁵ Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959).

precisely the scientific view of history that Berlin also criticised in ‘Historical Inevitability’ (Popper’s failure to distinguish between scientific and historical methods is mentioned in the footnote).⁶²⁶ At the beginning of the lecture, Berlin particularly took issue with Comte’s plan to transform history into a natural science—however, the facts that this lecture was set up particularly to commemorate Comte, and that Berlin was the first incumbent obviously made Berlin’s critical remark sound controversial.⁶²⁷ Later Berlin became aware of the provocation of his lecture, not least because it was delivered in front of an audience largely composed of sociologists; so when he highly praised Lewis Namier in an essay contributed to A.J.P. Taylor’s festschrift, Berlin compared it to the LSE scenario.⁶²⁸ Henceforth, if Popper did get annoyed by Berlin’s lecture, as Agassi suggested, he was probably most unhappy about Berlin’s direct challenge to his philosophy, rather than Berlin’s alleged plagiarism.

4.2. History and the Rise of Sociology

Berlin contended that the basic presumption of the scientific view of history was that men were completely subjected to their material nature; therefore, laws can be discovered based on a reliable knowledge of the regularity of their behaviours, and used to explain the past and predict the future at once. In this regard, men’s thoughts and motives are completely ineffective. There were, however, also two noticeable tendencies in Berlin’s historical criticism since the mid-1950s: 1) criticising scientific, instead of metaphysical, conceptions of history became a more recurrent theme in his

⁶²⁶ Berlin, *Liberty*, p. 110.

⁶²⁷ Ibid, pp. 94-6.

⁶²⁸ Isaiah Berlin to Noel Annan, 11 November 1966, in idem, *Building*, p. 314. As it is widely known, Taylor fell out with Namier, his former patron, because he believed that Namier supported Hugh Trevor-Roper when he was competing with Trevor-Roper for the Regius Professorship.

writings; 2) his refutation of scientific views of history no longer focused on their perilous ethical consequence, but more often followed a historiographical line of argument, exemplified in, for example, ‘Political Realism’, ‘The Sense of Reality’, and ‘The Concept of Scientific History’.⁶²⁹ This was probably related to Stalin’s death in 1953, which alleviated the tension between the East and the West; but it also pointed to another intellectual current which Berlin found particularly unsympathetic.

In the early 1950s, Berlin claimed that the philosophy of history ‘has always interested me deeply’. Partly due to this interest, Berlin developed a friendship with the American philosopher Morton White, and they once seriously planned to write a collaborative work on this subject. The fact that the project was never even close to being realised, although the idea came up recurrently in their correspondence that lasted for forty years, was not only due to practical difficulties such as Berlin’s busy schedule, but also because of Berlin’s conception of the approach and subject matter of this sub-discipline differed from White and its mainstream practitioners’.⁶³⁰ As he told White, he could not ‘work up enough interest in the logic of historical statements (such as the one I possessed when I wrote an article on ‘History and Theory’), e.g. the Hempel-Dray-Morton White-Gardiner-Collingwood issue, the ‘covering law’-coherence-logic of the social sciences topic’. Instead, his attention was drawn by the question of ‘historical understanding’, namely, ‘what is meant when it is said that historians understand a period well or badly, that they are good historians or poor, or

⁶²⁹ Isaiah Berlin, ‘The Sense of Reality’, idem, *The Sense of Reality*, pp.1-39; idem, ‘Realism in Politics’, idem, *The Power of Ideas*, pp.163-72; idem, ‘The Concept of Scientific History’, *Concepts and Categories*, pp. 135-86.

⁶³⁰ This project was mentioned by White in his autobiographical work *A Philosopher’s Story* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 228, 229, 244, 252, and passim.

profound or shallow, or that their accounts are plausible or unconvincing’.⁶³¹ In sum, Berlin’s primary concern is to explore historical understanding as a distinctive mode of thought, and to defend the autonomous status of history as a discipline with its own method, approach, presuppositions and theoretical foundation.

Berlin’s philosophy of history presupposes that each society in history has its own ‘fixed habits, a whole framework of things, persons, ideas, beliefs, attitudes to be taken for granted, uncriticised assumptions, unanalysed beliefs’, which are embedded in what he often called ‘concepts and categories’, which ‘the most primitive act of observation or thought requires’.⁶³² To understand the distinctiveness of an individual, a society or an age in history, therefore, requires what Berlin dubbed as a ‘sense of reality’ and one’s ‘mental projection into the past’. In elaborating these ideas, Berlin became attracted in the 1950s by German historical thought. Unlike Popper, Berlin was more sympathetic towards historicism, and demarcated it from historical inevitability. He often evoked the notion of *Verstehen* by Dilthey, whom he believed was ‘both empirical and imaginative’, and ‘superior not merely to Toynbee but to Whitehead’.⁶³³ Berlin also contended that Meinecke was ‘the only historian in Europe in the last fifty years worth reading’.⁶³⁴ In his preface for the English translation of *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, Berlin highly praised Meinecke’s pluralism.⁶³⁵ It is noteworthy that Berlin’s discussion of historical

⁶³¹ MS Berlin, C 290, fo. 22: Isaiah Berlin to Morton White, 15 May 1980; Berlin to White, 4 October 1954, *Enlightening: Letters 1946-1960*, p. 452.

⁶³² Berlin, *The Sense of Reality*, pp. 15-16.

⁶³³ Isaiah Berlin to Morton White, 4 October 1954, in idem, *Enlightening*, p. 453.

⁶³⁴ Berlin to Stephen Toulmin, 9 May 1958, cf. Avi Lifschitz, ‘Isaiah Berlin’s Bifurcated Enlightenment’, in Brockliss and Robertson (eds.), *Isaiah Berlin and the Enlightenment*, p. 58.

⁶³⁵ Isaiah Berlin, ‘Foreword’, in Friedrich Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*, trans. J.E. Andersen (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972). Now incorporated as ‘Meinecke and Historicism’ in Berlin, *The Power of Ideas*, pp. 249-59.

knowledge and historical understanding was concurrent with his growing interest in Vico and Herder in the late 1950s. Vico and Herder are very briefly treated in the long chapter on 'The March of History' in *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age*, in which Herder was depicted as a precursor of Hegel who 'inspired the desire for romantic self-assertion', and whose irrational nationalism was an origin of 'Romantic Fascism'.⁶³⁶ Berlin nonetheless began more seriously and substantially to study these two figures in the late 1950s and 1960s. In such works as *Vico and Herder*, composed of two long essays published respectively in 1960 and 1965, *The Roots of Romanticism*, 'The Divorce between the Sciences and the Humanities', 'Vico and the Idea of Humanities', Berlin particularly highlighted and appreciated their theory of historical knowledge, cultural pluralism, and revolt against the Enlightenment's scientism and universalism.⁶³⁷

It is, therefore, not surprising that when Berlin made his criticism of the scientific view of history more explicit, he was sometimes accused of being against rationalism. For example, the economic historian Michael Postan told Noel Annan that he believed Berlin was 'a neo-Tolstoyan, a mystic, and an anti-rationalist'.⁶³⁸ Berlin admitted in his letter to the art historian Meyer Schapiro, after the latter read *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, that 'what I think really offends you is a certain enthusiasm which you perceive in

⁶³⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age: Their Rise and Influence on Modern Thought*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). pp. 289-90.

⁶³⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Idea* (London: Hogarth Press, 1976). This work was later incorporated into *Three Critics of the Enlightenment*. 'The Divorce between the Sciences and the Humanities' was originally published in the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Scribner's, 1968-1973), and 'Vico and the Idea of Humanities' in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969); both essays were later incorporated into Berlin, *Against the Current*.

⁶³⁸ MS Berlin, C 241, fo. 29: Noel Annan to Isaiah Berlin, 4 December 1953.

me for debunking scientific rationalism as applied to human affairs. To that I admit’.⁶³⁹

Berlin, however, never denied men’s rationality; what he was opposed to was rather the rise of positivism and behaviourism in the political and social sciences in the 1950s. Even his attitude towards analytic philosophy in general became rather acerbic; when he knew that Ryle and Carl G. Hempel, who raised the ‘covering law’ theory in his essay ‘The Function of General Laws in History’, were holding a class together in Oxford, his comment was that their philosophy was ‘worse than useless’.⁶⁴⁰ Berlin’s ‘Does Political Theory Still Exist?’, in which he made a case for the study of political ideas in history, is a direct answer to the well-known allegation made by Peter Laslett in the 1950s that political philosophy, surrendered to the influence of linguistic philosophy, behaviourism and sociology, had died.⁶⁴¹

Moreover, Berlin’s anti-positivist stance can be exemplified in his hostility towards the growth of sociology in the 1950s. Unlike his antagonist Carr, who not only called for both sociological history and historical sociology in *What is History?*, but also ascribed ‘the backward state of sociological studies’ in Britain to the individualist ideology championed by such intellectuals as Berlin, Berlin remained sceptical of sociology, arguing that it ‘is in principle impossible, a mad dream founded on a false analogy’.⁶⁴² As a friend, Noel Annan, who was significantly more interested in

⁶³⁹ Isaiah Berlin to Meyer Schapiro, 4 January 1953, in Berlin, *Enlightening*, p. 420.

⁶⁴⁰ Isaiah Berlin to Morton White, 27 January 1960, *ibid.*, p. 720.

⁶⁴¹ Peter Laslett, ‘Introduction’, in *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, ed. Peter Laslett (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), p. vii; Berlin’s essay was originally published in Peter Laslett and W.G. Runciman (eds.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, 2nd Series (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), and incorporated into his *Concepts and Categories*. Also see J.G.A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 126-7.

⁶⁴² Carr, *What is History?*, pp. 59-60; *idem*, ‘Sociology’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 January 1953; Isaiah Berlin to Meyer Schapiro, 4 January 1953, in Berlin, *Enlightening*, p. 420.

sociology, and tried to find both institutional and intellectual reasons for its lack of influence in Britain, continuously attempted to persuade Berlin that ‘I still think that sociologists sometimes produce some good paradoxes about political behaviour which political philosophers have found much more difficult to do in the past fifty years’.⁶⁴³ He also defended Talcott Parsons, and wrote that ‘I rather admire parts of *The Structure of Social Action*; the analysis of utilitarian-positivist sociology is, when one has translated it, useful’.⁶⁴⁴ Berlin, however, was never persuaded.

Berlin’s opposition to sociology, to some extent, was directed at the expansion and professionalisation of sociology in Britain, particularly in such institutions as the LSE, which nurtured and accommodated the majority of outstanding British sociologists during the post-war years, including David Glass, Edward Shils, Jean Floud, A.H. Halsey, and Ralf Dahrendorf. This process was slower in Oxford and Cambridge; but in the 1960s, sociology had been introduced into undergraduate teaching in both institutions.⁶⁴⁵ Meanwhile, there was, however, also a strong opposition to this new discipline, and its disparagers included, as Matthew Grimley shows, a large number of historians, philosophers and political theorists during the 1950s (for example, Richard Cobb, Oakeshott, Alfred Cobban, Peter Winch, and Malcolm Bradbury, whose satirical novel *The History Man* provides a telling example). Moreover, British sociology’s relation to student protests in the 1960s, and its being influenced by Marxism after the

⁶⁴³ See Noel Annan’s Hobhouse Lecture *The Curious Strength of Positivism in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); idem, *Our Age*, pp. 254-62; MS Berlin, C 241, fo.26: Noel Annan to Isaiah Berlin, 12 November 1953.

⁶⁴⁴ MS Berlin, C 241: Noel Annan to Isaiah Berlin, 14 February 1959.

⁶⁴⁵ See chapters four and five in A.H. Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain: Science, Literature, and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

rise of the New Left, left sociology imprinted with a radical image.⁶⁴⁶

Similar to Berlin's unpleasant experience, Trevor-Roper's Oration at the LSE, the centre of student radicalisation in 1968, was almost hi-jacked by the protesters.⁶⁴⁷

Trevor-Roper's talk is about the relationship between history and sociology, and it defends the autonomy of the historical approach. Trevor-Roper's line of argument, in criticising sociologists' tendency to make abstraction, and their 'static' and 'dogmatic' models that neglect historical circumstances, did not differ too much from Berlin's.⁶⁴⁸

Unlike Berlin, Trevor-Roper was not opposed to sociology; as a friend and admirer of Fernand Braudel, who was keen on marrying sociology and history, Trevor-Roper believed that sociology rendered inspiration for historians. In his review of Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Trevor-Roper had already argued that 'certain conditions in the past have produced certain results with certain regularity that a workable hypothesis can be deduced from it'.⁶⁴⁹ Making theoretical hypotheses, as he marvellously put it in his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History, is significant for historical research, for a new generalisation that contains new errors is still 'more life-giving than an old truth'.⁶⁵⁰ However, Trevor-Roper also warned against sociology's attempt to make prophecies and formulate plans (including Popperian 'piecemeal engineering'), and criticised its ignorance of the force of history. It is noteworthy that Trevor-Roper's talk contains a clear political message: he used Mao's

⁶⁴⁶ Matthew Grimley, 'You Got an Ology?: The Backlash against Sociology in Britain, c. 1945-90', in Lawrence Goldman (ed.), *Welfare and Social Policy in Britain since 1970: Essays in Honour of Jose Harris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), especially pp. 179-89.

⁶⁴⁷ SOC. Dacre 6/34/3, 'My Lecture to LSE'; Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography*, pp. 400-2.

⁶⁴⁸ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Past and the Present: History and Sociology', *Past and Present*, 42 (1969), p.12.

⁶⁴⁹ Idem, 'The Open Society: Review', p. 64.

⁶⁵⁰ Idem, 'History and Imagination', p.13.

Cultural Revolution, which became an attraction to many radical students in 1968, as a case to illustrate that one could not simply separate the past from the present, or remould a society completely based on a scientific model.⁶⁵¹

Berlin and Trevor-Roper's opposition to scientism and behaviourism in history is worth examining here because, as we have seen, it began to constitute a more significant place in their historical criticism from the late 1950s. On the one hand, this can be seen as a case to illustrate a conflict between the methods and approaches of the humanities and the social sciences as a result of the latter's noticeable growth in British academia; on the other hand, it suggests that the often presumed kinship between Berlin and Popper because of their criticisms of totalitarian views of history needs to be reconsidered. Moreover, though Berlin and Trevor-Roper were critical of metaphysical, dogmatic, and triumphant views of history which defined the nature of both Communist and anti-Communist ideologies, the fact that, as a theme, it appeared less frequently in their writings tellingly betrays a real, if not unnoticeable, change in the ways in which historical consciousness was affected by the Cold War, when Stalinism came to wane and ideological conflicts were assuaged.

Conclusion

This chapter is, first and foremost, an attempt to discredit the presumption that liberal conception of history can be simply surmised as an attack of the determinist, metaphysical, teleological explanation of history. Undeniably, this type of historical conceptualisation, especially in a Cold War context, was frequently intertwined with

⁶⁵¹ Idem, 'The Past and the Present: History and Sociology', p.6.

Communist ideology, and reasonably criticised on the ground that it could be used to provide an historical justification for the victory of Communism. But to reduce disparagements of Communist philosophy of history into a single type labelled as anti-totalitarian is to over-simplistically interpret British intellectual life in the fifties as a struggle between Communism and anti-Communism, thus neglecting the nuanced way in which the liberal-humanitarian conception of history as discussed in this chapter was elaborated by Berlin and Trevor-Roper. For the Cold War was not the only context in which their historical criticism should be situated in, nor Communism the only target it was directed at.

This chapter is written with a presumption that to Berlin, Trevor-Roper and others from their generation, the significance of their views in the fifties cannot be fully appreciated without understanding their standpoints in the thirties. For example, their reluctance to support anti-Communism as a cause, despite their hostility towards Communism, was partly a result of their experience in the thirties, when Communism was presented as the only alternative to those young anti-Fascist intellectuals. Having these in mind, Berlin and Trevor-Roper saw Communism and anti-Communism as presupposed by the same view of history. In this respect, the defining principle of their historical thought is that history consists of both realised and unrealised possibilities, instead of a belief in the inevitable victory of Western institutions in history.

Moreover, this chapter also revisits the public debate between Berlin and Carr, as well as that between Trevor-Roper and Taylor, from a hitherto unnoticed perspective. It argues that the significance of motives and ideas in history is the crucial point at which

realist and liberal views of history bifurcated; and elaborates the ways in which the relationship between freedom in history and the power of ideas was erected (for example, if, as Berlin argued, ideas are completely relative and thus irrelevant, men's motives and wills will be discounted, and they will be subjugated to the force of history). Furthermore, this chapter provides an instance where philosophical and historical ideas interacted. The facts that logical positivism rendered a solid philosophical ground on which Marxism was refuted in the thirties, that its validity in explaining historical propositions was questioned by Berlin, and that the positivist notion of history was denounced by Berlin and Trevor-Roper indicate the subtlety that requires consideration when exploring the extent to which rationalism and liberalism coheres—as the case of Berlin's clash with Popper betrays, a distinction should be made between liberal rationalism and scientific rationalism. Berlin and Trevor-Roper's defence of the autonomy of history against behaviourism and sociology, and their argument that these determinist views curtail freedom in history, not only demonstrate that anti-totalitarianism alone cannot fully accommodate the issues involved in Berlin's and Trevor-Roper's historical criticism, but also suggests that their decision to write the history of ideas was underpinned by a reaction against intellectual barrenness and moral cynicism.

Chapter IV

Progress, Providence, and Rationalism: History and Religion

Introduction

When Rosalind Murray decided to convert to Catholicism in 1934, Toynbee was probably unaware of its influence on his own religious thought. At least he instantly assured Gilbert Murray that he had no intention to become a Catholic himself.⁶⁵² Brought up as an Anglican, Toynbee received Confirmation at a young age, but his interest in religion waned soon after going to Balliol.⁶⁵³ But even during this period, Toynbee's attitude towards religion was not completely dismissive: Murray's 'militant rationalism', as he told Phillip Toynbee, he could not 'quite get into'.⁶⁵⁴ In 1930, Toynbee glimpsed a flash of God's light after he failed to pursue the historian Eileen Power (who had already been engaged to Michael Postan), when they were travelling together in China. This sudden religious experience, however, did not influence Toynbee's historical thought or his analysis of international affairs. But only several years later, Rosalind Murray's conversion, and the deeper intellectual reasons behind it, prompted Toynbee to reconsider his religious belief. In her *The Good Pagan's Failure* (1939), a book that overtly attacks the liberal humanism her father defended throughout his life, Rosalind Murray claimed that she was 'born and brought up among enlightened Pagans' and educated by 'their outlook and their standard'; but now 'in maturity', she finally found 'enlightened Paganism inadequate to explain life as I see it, inadequate to

⁶⁵² Toynbee to Gilbert Murray, August 1933, cf. McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life*, p. 157.

⁶⁵³ Toynbee to Columba Cary-Elwes, 5 August 1938, in Christian B. Peper (ed.), *An Historian's Conscience* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), p. 19; Arnold and Philip Toynbee, *Comparing Notes: A Dialogue Across a Generation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), pp. 8-9; Arnold J. Toynbee, *Experiences*, p. 127.

⁶⁵⁴ Arnold and Philip Toynbee, *Comparing Notes*, p. 10.

deal with it as I find it.’⁶⁵⁵ Toynbee largely shared Rosalind Murray’s scepticism about the ‘enlightened Paganism’, and abandoned his liberal internationalism, not least because of the bankruptcy of his former conviction that international order can be guaranteed by cooperation and negotiation.

Toynbee and Rosalind Murray’s disillusion, however, was far from unusual in the thirties, when a large number of British intellectuals either re-discovered their faith, or converted to a different denomination. Moreover, it became a central belief of theirs that the contemporary political and cultural crises both stemmed from secularisation, and that spiritual power was indispensable for combating Fascism. The first section of this chapter examines a typically Christian understanding of history displayed in the debate over eschatology by a number of theologians and Christian intellectuals who took part in, or had connections with, the ecumenical movement led by such churchman as J.H. Oldham. It also seeks to uncover an antithesis between Providence and human reason as often highlighted in these theological debates, and a widespread antagonism towards the secular idea of progress.

The second section further explores how providential history was discussed by Butterfield and Toynbee during the 1930s and 1940s. It particularly focuses on the relation between their assumption that earthly calamities could be redeemed in history, and their scepticism about human intellect. This section also looks into the development of Toynbee’s religious thought, and examines certain significant ways in which Toynbee’s philosophy of history in its third and last phase diverted from Christianity.

⁶⁵⁵ Rosalind Murray, *The Good Pagan’s Failure* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1939), p. 3.

The decline of Toynbee's reputation in British intellectual life was not least because the argument in the last four volumes of *A Study of History* became too idiosyncratic to be comprehended or appreciated by most readers. Therefore, Trevor-Roper's criticism of Toynbee, despite being infamously ferocious, reflected a not uncommon evaluation of Toynbee's works in the fifties. However, Trevor-Roper's image as an anticlerical and even non-believer in public—which largely stemmed from his public attack on Catholicism—sometimes obscured the complexity of his religious thought. In his later years, Trevor-Roper deplored his young friend Alasdair Palmer's decision to get married in a Registry Office, arguing that:

Surely the whole point of having an Established Church is that we pay our clergy to believe doctrines we cannot believe ourselves...just as the electrician to mend a fault in the wiring, which, if we meddled with it ourselves, might well give us a fatal shock. On this convenient basis we then call on the Church to provide a dignified ceremony on special occasions, useful *rites de passage*, and a loose, elastic, metaphysical envelope within which we can insert our view of morality and our ideas (if any) about the economy of the universe.⁶⁵⁶

Being opposed to religious dogmatism and metaphysical systems, Trevor-Roper nonetheless always recognised the psychological and social functions of Christianity. The third section of this chapter, therefore, attempts to provide a more rounded account of the grounds on which Trevor-Roper and Berlin denounced Christian conceptions of history, and why they were publicly hostile to the religious revival in British intellectual life in the fifties. For this purpose, this section explores an often neglected debate between Berlin and Butterfield on moral judgement, and contends that it largely arose from the difference between secular and Christian presumptions of morality and

⁶⁵⁶ Trevor-Roper to Alasdair Palmer, 14 August 1988, *One Hundred Letters from Trevor-Roper*, pp. 348-9.

rationality. Moreover, this section aims at comprehensively examining Trevor-Roper's interest in Catholicism especially in the thirties, which helps to re-evaluate his public anti-Catholicism in the fifties. This section argues that although Berlin and Trevor-Roper criticised certain religious presumptions which were in conflict with their sceptical rationalism, religion was not a realm that had no significance for them.

I.

1.1. Collingwood on Secularisation

Three years before his death, Collingwood proclaimed in an article entitled 'Fascism and Nazism' that 'the vital warmth at the heart of a civilisation is what we call a religion'.⁶⁵⁷ After sketching the development of modern philosophy and natural science from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, Collingwood argued that their triumph has been achieved by separating the 'rational' from the 'irrational' elements of religion, and by denouncing religion as 'superstition and magic'.⁶⁵⁸ As a consequence, people lost their faith in civilisation, and simply obeyed the civilised way of life by habit, forgetting that the ideas underpinning liberal democracy derived not from utilitarianism or Kantian 'intuitionism', but 'a religious love of God'.⁶⁵⁹ Without faith, Collingwood averred, it would be difficult to fight the 'psychological dynamism' of Fascism and Nazism.⁶⁶⁰

'Nazism and Fascism' was written in a time when Collingwood had become seriously ill due to the stroke he suffered in 1938. Nevertheless, Collingwood remained

⁶⁵⁷ R.G. Collingwood, 'Fascism and Nazism', now collected in idem, *Essays in Political Philosophy*, ed. David Boucher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 168.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 169.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 171.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

a prolific writer during the last years of his life, not least because he was troubled by the political and spiritual crisis of Europe—a theme discussed in almost all his works during this period, including *An Autobiography* (1939), *An Essay on Metaphysics* (1940), *The New Leviathan* (1942) and the unfinished *The Principles of History*. Unlike Toynbee and Carr, Collingwood was opposed to appeasement, and harshly denounced the British Government for staying neutral during the Spanish Civil War. In his autobiography, Collingwood sharply criticised the Realists for removing ‘value’ from their philosophical discussion, and for disassociating theory from practice; hence Cook Wilson and his disciples should be held partly responsible for the rise of Fascism.⁶⁶¹ This allegation was so strong that there were even speculations about Collingwood’s mental health due to his illness.⁶⁶² But in a way, he was, alongside Herbert Samuel and C.E.M. Joad, encouraging professional philosophers to pay more attention to practical matters, and to use their philosophical writings to increase the wisdom of the public.⁶⁶³

Nevertheless, the undeniably Christian message exemplified in ‘Nazism and Fascism’ was often discounted by most Collingwoodian scholars, neglecting the fact that Collingwood was a practising Christian. Collingwood’s discussion of religion can actually be traced back to his very first work, *Religion and Philosophy*, in which he endeavoured to make an apology for the autonomy of religious experience. He criticised the attempts to explain religious experience by natural science or psychology—William

⁶⁶¹ Collingwood’s criticism of Wilson and the Realists, see Collingwood, *An Autobiography and Other Writings*, pp. 15-21 and *passim*.

⁶⁶² See the introduction written by David Boucher and Collingwood’s daughter, Teresa Smith, for *An Autobiography and Other Writings*, *ibid*, pp. xxi-xlix.

⁶⁶³ On Collingwood’s role as a public intellectual, see Stefan Collini, ‘Professorial Cackling: R.G. Collingwood’, in Collini, *Absent Minds*, pp. 331-49; Julia Stapleton, ‘The Secularisation of Liberalism and Political Decline’, in Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850*, pp. 55-63.

James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is an overt target in the book. To Collingwood, the ultimate questions discussed by theologians and philosophers are the same, so religion can be reduced to theology.⁶⁶⁴ These arguments are largely continued in *Speculum Mentis* and 'Faith and Reason' (1929); but here Collingwood abandoned the excessive intellectual understanding of religion in *Religion and Philosophy*, and emphasised its emotional dimension instead: he claimed that God was not known, but adored.⁶⁶⁵ However, Collingwood also insisted that religion was inferior to philosophy, so it cannot help one acquire the highest level of knowledge. Therefore, at the end of the chapter on Collingwood in *Religion and Public Doctrine*, Maurice Cowling regretfully argued that even though Collingwood 'implied that religion was integral to life, it is still the case that he subordinated it to philosophy', and that he allowed 'philosophy and history a quasi-religious authority'.⁶⁶⁶

Collingwood refused to conceptualise the historical process on a Christian basis, for he was too much a Hegelian to accept an end other than Mind as immanent in history. But in *The Idea of History*, Collingwood also presumed an opposition between the Enlightenment tradition, which dismissed 'creative power' and presumed 'an immanent necessity in which unreason itself is only a disguised form of reason', and a counteracting force that he recognised in anti-positivists from Herder to Croce.⁶⁶⁷ This lineage not only coheres with his argument in 'Nazism and Fascism' that secular liberalism, with its lack of faith, is unable to combat Fascism, but also places him within

⁶⁶⁴ Collingwood, *Religion and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1916), p. 19.

⁶⁶⁵ Idem, 'Faith and Reason', in idem *Faith and Reason: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Lionel Rubinoff (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), pp. 122-47.

⁶⁶⁶ Maurice Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, i. p. 189.

⁶⁶⁷ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 81.

a not uncommon position as it was held by many theologians and Christian intellectuals in the 1930s.

1.2. History and the Kingdom of God

In 1937, Toynbee gave a talk on the BBC entitled ‘Post-war Paganism versus Christianity’, in which he rebuked Fascism and Communism’s attacks on Christianity by alleging that 1) Christianity still possesses its spiritual vitality in the modern age; 2) the core of both Fascism and Communism is a worship of false idols: Fascism worships the notion of ‘tribe’, whereas Communism adores ‘Humanity’.⁶⁶⁸ Promulgating the significance of Christianity in combating Fascism was a common standpoint shared by many prominent churchmen (notably Hensley Henson and George Bell) and by Christian writers (Ernest Barker, Christopher Dawson) in the 1930s.⁶⁶⁹ Moreover, the theme of this BBC series was the same as that of the well-known Oxford Conference held in the same year—‘Church, Community and State’. As a product of the ecumenical movement, which made a strong resonance in British intellectual life in the 1930s with its attempt to create a revival of the Christian way of life through joint efforts by different churches, this conference was held with to tackle ‘the problem of the relation of the Church to the all-embracing claims of a communal life’, and to solve the struggle between ‘Christian faith and the pagan tendencies of our time’.⁶⁷⁰ In a similar spirit, J.H. Oldham, an organiser of the conference, also helped to found the *Christian News-Letter*, a periodical which provided latest news about Christian Churches worldwide, and

⁶⁶⁸ Arnold J. Toynbee, ‘Church, Community and State: Post-War Paganism versus Christianity’, *The Listener*, 20 January 1937.

⁶⁶⁹ Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*, pp. 194-201.

⁶⁷⁰ J.H. Oldham, ‘Introduction’, in idem (ed.), *The Churches Survey Their Task: The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July 1937, On Church, Community, and State* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1937), pp. 9-10.

whose aim was to ‘bridge the gulf which exists at present between organised religion and the general life of the community’.⁶⁷¹ Its collaborators included, apart from Toynbee, such prominent intellectuals as Eliot, Karl Mannheim, Christopher Dawson, William Temple, R.H. Tawney and Lindsay. Moreover, Oldham also played a crucial role in the formation of ‘the Moot’. Apart from democratic planning (as mentioned in Chapter II), the significance of Christian values in a secular society was another major theme discussed in their meetings. Eliot’s *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) was known to be inspired by these discussions. The revival of Christianity in British intellectual life, therefore, was largely indebted to a general belief that Christian faith, as Oldham contended, would ‘bring hope and renewal to a decaying civilisation’.⁶⁷²

Three years before the Oxford conference, a research team sponsored by the Universal Council for Life and Work had already begun making preparation for the conference by calling for papers, and circulating them for comments. Initially, nine topics considered relevant to the future of Christianity were listed, and ‘The Kingdom of God and History’ was one of them. Although it was not formally discussed in the conference, seven essays related to this theme were collected and published as a single volume afterwards (contributors included, among others, H.G. Wood, C.H. Dodd, Edwyn Bevan, and Christopher Dawson).⁶⁷³ These essays not only provided a theological background for other topics discussed in the conference, but also exemplified a number of ways in which the relation between religion and history was

⁶⁷¹ Idem, ‘Editorial’, *The Christian News-Letter*, No.0, 18 October 1939.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Idem, ‘General Introduction’, in H.G. Wood et al., *The Kingdom of God and History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), pp. vii-x.

noticeably reflected on by theologians and Christian writers during this period. As the Dutch theologian Willem Visser't Hooft, who was involved in organising this conference, argued in his memoir, 'the eschatological problem—that is the problem of the relation of the Kingdom of God to human history and of the ultimate hope to the proximate hope—is the key problem of modern theology and had dominated ecumenical discussion ever since the Stockholm Conference of 1925'.⁶⁷⁴ Therefore, the historical nature of Christianity was emphasised by nearly all the contributors to this volume. For example, Edwyn Bevan criticised William Inge's refusal to admit the importance of time for spiritual life, and argued that history was a platform of preparation for reaching the Kingdom of God.⁶⁷⁵ Christopher Dawson also contended that Christianity should never 'ignore history', for Christian faith was essentially linked with certain historical events.⁶⁷⁶ Therefore the prospect of the Christian Church at 'this turning point', as H.G. Wood claimed, was presupposed by 'the nature of the Kingdom of God, and...the relation of God's rule to temporal happenings.'⁶⁷⁷

Meanwhile, any conceptions of history which presumed a secular ideal as the telos of history were denounced not only by most of the contributors to *The Kingdom of God and History*, but also by many other theologians and Christian writers in the thirties. For example, C.H. Dodd, a Congregationalist and one of the leading biblical scholars of the twentieth century, endeavoured to reconcile biblical scholarship with a confidence in the reliability of the New Testament. Dodd was best known for the 'realised eschatology' he

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. C.T. McIntire, 'The Renewal of Christian Views of History in an Age of Catastrophe', in idem (ed.), *God History and Historians*, p. 19.

⁶⁷⁵ Wood et al, *The Kingdom of God and History*, p. 59.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 203.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

raised in *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1935), and he believed that the Kingdom of God ‘came with Jesus Christ, and in its coming was perceived to be external in its quality’.⁶⁷⁸ In this regard, history, as Dodd argued, ‘was determined, not by horizontal forces of development within time, but by the vertical impact of forces from the unseen’.⁶⁷⁹ In a similar vein, George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, claimed in his *Christianity and World Order* (1940) that Jesus gave rise to ‘a recreated earth’, and that ‘the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdoms of God and of his Christ’.⁶⁸⁰ H.G. Wood, who was the first holder of the Edward Cadbury Chair in Theology at Birmingham University, also argued in his *Christianity and Civilisation* (1942) that ‘it is impossible to reduce Christianity to a this-world religion or to equate the Kingdom of God with an ideal order or given special programme’⁶⁸¹. When mentioning ‘this-world religion’, Wood not only aimed at attacking Communism (his tone was considerably more low-key during the War); he was also referring to what he called ‘scientific humanism’, which sought to promote individual happiness and social evolution by applying scientific methods.⁶⁸²

Wood’s argument here indicates a not uncommon belief among those who were opposed to building a Kingdom of God on Earth that these outrageous attempts, which contradicted with religious fulfilment, were often licensed by the secular idea of progress and a faith in rationalism that had its origin in the Enlightenment. Real

⁶⁷⁸ C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1935).

⁶⁷⁹ Wood et al, *The Kingdom of God and History*, p. 36.

⁶⁸⁰ George Bell, *Christianity and World Order* (London: Penguin, 1941), p. 38.

⁶⁸¹ H.G. Wood, *Christianity and Civilisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), p. 17.

⁶⁸² Ibid, p. 20. Compare this war-time work to his criticism of Communism in his works such as *The Truth and Error and Communism* (London: SCM, 1933) and *Communism, Christian and Marxist* (London: Epworth Press, 1935).

progress, as H.G. Wood pointed out in his Hulsean Lectures delivered at Cambridge University (1933), was under the perpetual inspiration by Christ and in its essence ‘the enrichment of the cultural traditions of mankind of forms of social organisation’.⁶⁸³ By contrast, the rationalists, according to Wood, replaced this cultural and religious nature of progress with an ‘assured and inevitable’ law.⁶⁸⁴ Edwyn Bevan, a Greek scholar, proclaimed that whatever blessedness the future might be endowed with, it ‘cannot be realised on earth as it is in Heaven’; and he warned that the Church should never exhibit ‘the same deficiency as the non-Christian optimistic humanitarian hope’—the progress of mankind’s ‘condition of comfort and dignity’.⁶⁸⁵ Alec Vidler argued that after the experiment of rationalism carried out successively by the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment, ‘man was free to realise his own creative powers in independence of God’; but meanwhile, they were not far away from ‘self-destruction’.⁶⁸⁶ A man with faith, as Vidler contended, would understand that he could never build a Utopia on earth; ‘for he knows that there are limits to what can be done in history, and that history exists for, and will be fulfilled in, an end beyond itself’.⁶⁸⁷

1.3. Christopher Dawson on Religious Progress

As we have seen, in the 1930s, many theologians, Christian writers and philosophers of history (including both Toynbee and Collingwood) recognised a rational-secular idea of progress that aimed at building a Kingdom of God on earth as

⁶⁸³ Idem, *Christianity and the Nature of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 156.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 150.

⁶⁸⁵ Wood et al, *The Kingdom of God and History*, pp. 57-9.

⁶⁸⁶ Alec R. Vidler, *Secular Despair and Christian Faith* (London: SCM, 1941), p. 15.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 38.

being responsible for the spiritual void of the Western society, which left room for the rise of such false religions as Fascism and Communism. These presumptions were fully displayed and comprehensively elaborated in the works of the Catholic historian Christopher Dawson, who enjoyed a huge reputation not only among Catholics, but also intellectuals from other persuasions, which explains why he was a central figure in several Christian movements in the 1930s and 1940s. Owing both to his family wealth and bad health, Dawson did not seek a position in academia, and became a man of letters after graduating from Oxford (where he was tutored by Ernest Barker). He was a member of a discussion group organised by the Catholic publisher Tom Burns in the 1930s, whose members included, among others, Martin D'Arcy, and the artist David Jones.⁶⁸⁸ An intellectual product of this loose organisation was a book series called 'Order', which was aimed to promote a Catholic revival in British intellectual life by introducing works by continental Catholic writers, including Gabriel Marcel, Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, and Peter Wust. Books in this series were published by the Catholic publishing firm Sheed and Ward, co-founded by Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward, granddaughter of W.G. Ward; and Dawson was chosen as the editor. Frequently contributing to *The Tablet* and *The Dublin Review*, Dawson eventually became the latter's editor in 1940. Admired by Eliot, he was but an infrequent participant of the Moot, not least because he believed that those meetings were dominated by Anglican philistinism.⁶⁸⁹ During the War, Dawson served as the vice-president of the 'Sword of the Spirit', an organisation founded by Cardinal Arthur Hinsley to promote social justice

⁶⁸⁸ Christian Scott, *A Historian and His World: A Life of Christopher Dawson* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1984), p. 95.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 133.

under the spirit of Pius XII's Five Peace Points (it was during Rosalind Murray's service for the 'Sword of the Spirit' during the War that her relationship with Toynbee became irrevocably damaged).⁶⁹⁰

Dawson's first book, *The Age of the Gods*, was published by John Murray in 1928. As its subtitle 'A Study in the Origins of Culture in Prehistoric Europe and the Ancient East' suggests, this work ambitiously covers the histories of Western Europe, Mesopotamia and Egypt from the Old Stone Age to the Age of Bronze. Dawson's central argument is that culture should be defined as 'a common way of life', which is modified by race, environment, economic condition, and thought. Thought, or what Dawson called 'the psychological factor', is not confined to 'purely intellectual knowledge'; rather, it 'is manifested equally in the religious outlook'.⁶⁹¹ Despite making extensive use of archaeological findings, Dawson's main purpose in writing this book is to reveal the vital role religion plays in cultural formation. It persuasively shows that agriculture and city life had origins in religious beliefs and rituals, and that the rulers of primitive societies were taken by their people as the incarnation of Gods and Goddesses.

Hence the study of primitive culture is intimately bound up with that of primitive religion. Throughout the history of humanity the religious impulse has been always and ever present as one of the greatest permanent forces that make and alter man's destiny, and the deeper we delve in the past, the more evident it is how inseparable is the religious instinct from human life and society.⁶⁹²

Similarly to Toynbee, Dawson also had the ambition to write a universal history of

⁶⁹⁰ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life*, pp. 188-9.

⁶⁹¹ Christopher Dawson, *The Age of the Gods* (The Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C., 2012), p. xxiv, xxiv.

⁶⁹² *Ibid*, p. 16.

mankind. *The Age of the Gods* was intended to be the first of a five-volume history of religion from pre-history to the modern age, although this project was never completed. As an introductory volume, *Progress and Religion* (1929) can be seen as Dawson's most comprehensive account of his conception of history. A distinctive feature of Christianity which differentiated it from the 'speculative mysticism' of the Eastern religions, as Dawson pointed out, was a conception of history that originated from Judaism—whose revelation was 'historical rather than metaphysical'.⁶⁹³ The Christian view of history is thus not 'an eternal cycle of cosmic change', but 'a divine drama whose successive acts were the Creation and Fall of Man, his Redemption, and his glorious restoration'.⁶⁹⁴ Moreover, Dawson argued that 'it is in fact through Christianity above all that man first acquired that sense of a unity and a purpose in history without which the spectacle of the unending change becomes meaningless and oppressive'.⁶⁹⁵ Henceforth, Christianity and history become irrevocably intertwined: Christian faith is connected with certain historical events, and the meaning of history is exclusively Christian.

As its title suggests, one of the central themes of *Progress and Religion* is the refutation of the secular idea of progress. Dawson was not against the idea of progress *per se*; instead, in 'Religion and the Life of Civilisation' (1925), an article published in *Quarterly Review*, Dawson had proclaimed that:

If man is not the slave and creature of time, but its monster and creator, then history also becomes a creative process. It does not repeat itself meaninglessly: it grows into organic unity with the growth of human experience. The past does not die; it becomes incorporated into humanity. And hence progress is possible, since the life of society and of humanity itself possesses continuity

⁶⁹³ Idem, *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1938), p. 172.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 162.

⁶⁹⁵ Wood et al, *The Kingdom of God and History*, p.198.

and the capacity for spiritual growth no less than the life of the individual.⁶⁹⁶

Dawson had a profound dislike of modern civilisation. He abhorred the ‘rawness and ugliness’ of urban life that was resulted from the Industrial Revolution, and he believed that optimism, liberalism, and secularism, which were synonymous to him, became obstacles to spiritual progress.⁶⁹⁷ Unlike Toynbee, Dawson was reluctant to claim that different cultures followed similar unavoidable patterns of development; but a semi-determinist allegation he did make was that the decline of a society was always concurrent with secularisation. To him, religion is the only realm in which progress can be achieved; and a society as an organic wholeness reaches spiritual progress not when it renounces the past, but when it embraces its tradition. Therefore, the progress of Christianity is dependent on the Catholic Church, in which the tradition of European civilisation is kept; and its ‘ecclesiastical unity’ provided the necessary cohesion to link the ‘whole of social life’.⁶⁹⁸

Although the ‘modern sense of progress’ was initiated by the Renaissance, Dawson contended that its humanism and worship of tradition hindered a belief in excessive progress. It was rather the Reformation that marked the beginning of a new philosophy which treated faith not as ‘a human participation in the Divine knowledge, but a purely non-rational experience’.⁶⁹⁹ Afterwards, the Deism of the Enlightenment (elsewhere Dawson called it Socinian ‘rationalised theology’) turned morality into ‘practical philanthropy’, and ‘the order of Providence’ into ‘a mechanistic natural law’.⁷⁰⁰ Now

⁶⁹⁶ Christopher Dawson, ‘Religion and the Life of Civilisation’, in idem, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1933), p. 252.

⁶⁹⁷ Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, p. 72.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 173.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 189.

⁷⁰⁰ Wood et al, *The Kingdom of God and History*, p. 212.

that this philosophy ‘had no place for the supernaturalism of the Christian eschatology’, Dawson concluded, ‘the belief in the moral perfectibility and the infinite progress of human race took the place of the Christian faith in the life of the world to come, as the final goal of human effort’.⁷⁰¹ In this regard, although Dawson’s contention that the real—in other words—spiritual, progress could only be achieved by embracing the Christian tradition and worshipping according to the rites of the Catholic Church was unacceptable to many Anglicans and latitudinarian lay intellectuals, his comprehensive criticism of the secular, optimistic idea of progress, and his interpretation of modern European intellectual history as the development of human reason accompanied by a decline of religious faith, provided a typically religious way in which rationalism and liberalism were both questioned and censured.

II.

2.1. Civilisation and Religion

The political crisis of the thirties, and a growing awareness that another Great War was impending, made some of those liberal-internationalists who used to be confident about the League of Nations realise that the international order that they had helped to devise was devoid of spiritual force. As Christopher Dawson put it, the political disorder of the West was an outcome of its denunciation of the Christian tradition which had moulded its institutions, ideas and beliefs for centuries. Evoking Hilaire Belloc’s verdict that ‘Europe is the faith, and the faith is Europe’, Dawson had already remarked in 1931 that Europe was a ‘spiritual unity’, and that its political order hinged on the restoration

⁷⁰¹ Ibid, p. 199.

of a spiritual order provided by the Catholic Church.⁷⁰² The significance of religion in international relations came to be also highlighted by Alfred Zimmern.⁷⁰³ Until the publication of *The League of Nations and The Rule of Law* (1936), a book which renders an insightful account of the background under which the Covenant of the League was written, Zimmern still adamantly believed that progress could be achieved in international politics by the League principle. However, he began to realise soon after 1937 that an institution devoid of ‘social conscience’ could not maintain world order.⁷⁰⁴ He abandoned his psychological-cum-evolutionary conception of politics, which he had inherited from Graham Wallas, and he claimed that ‘without such inner order, without such a conception of life as a whole, it is impossible for man to discover the road to the solution of any problem involving human relation’.⁷⁰⁵ Moreover, Zimmern no longer believed that the League should be adored as a new religion ‘associated with the conception of the Kingdom of God’ that was capable of eradicating evil. For without definite Christian moral standards, political conduct cannot be judged, and thus ‘the progress of international co-operation’ cannot be achieved.⁷⁰⁶ Moreover, although religion is unable to frame the policy, it points out the true path that international politics will follow.⁷⁰⁷

In a similar vein, Toynbee’s growing interest in religious issues was concurrent with his disappointment with the worsening situation in international politics after

⁷⁰² Christopher Dawson, ‘Essays in Order: General Introduction’, in Jacques Maritain, *Religion and Culture* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931), pp. vii- xxvii.

⁷⁰³ See Julia Stapleton, ‘Alfred Zimmern and the World “Citizen-Scholar”’, in idem, *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850*, pp. 91-112.

⁷⁰⁴ Alfred Zimmern, *The League of Nations and The Rule of Law* (London: Macmillan, 1936).

⁷⁰⁵ Idem, *Spiritual Values and World Affairs* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1939), p. 9.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 68.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid, p.48.

Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, and Germany's breaching the Locarno Treaties by occupying the Rhineland in 1936, thus breaking his hope of settling international disputes by the League of Nation's mediation. Toynbee was thus forced to accept the impending of another War that he believed would result in a 'Universal State' established by Germany, which, according to his philosophy of history, marked the last phase of civilisation. Due to Rosalind Murray's conversion, Toynbee developed a close relationship with Ampleforth Abbey, and sometimes stayed there for a couple of days to participate in monastic life, after his youngest son Lawrence Toynbee was sent to Ampleforth College in 1935, a decision obviously made by his mother.⁷⁰⁸ Toynbee formed a friendship with a Benedictine monk, Father Columba Cary-Elwes, and their correspondence lasted for decades. Father Columba's spiritual instruction, which Toynbee took as his 'most direct door to God', was a great help when he was suffering agonies, for example, after the suicide of his eldest son in 1939.⁷⁰⁹ A notable feature of Catholicism in England during the 1920s and 1930s was that it attracted so many intellectuals and men of letters; and Toynbee was such an obvious target whom the Church deliberately wished to convert.⁷¹⁰ Father Columba kept urging Toynbee to be 'humble' and 'obedient' enough to 'give up all (your baggage) and follow Christ', and to understand 'the necessity...of accepting authority in religious matters'.⁷¹¹ At the same time, however, he also called Toynbee 'the philosopher to the future Kings', and

⁷⁰⁸ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life*, pp.166-7.

⁷⁰⁹ Toynbee to Columba Cary-Elwes, 3 September 1939, in Peper (ed.), *An Historian's Conscience*, p.37; also see Toynbee's letter on 19 March 1939, written soon after his son's death, *ibid*, pp. 32-3.

⁷¹⁰ The list can be extremely long, including, among so many others, Ronald Knox, Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, David Jones, David Pakenham, G.K. Chesterton, Alfred Noyes etc.

⁷¹¹ Columba Cary-Elwes to Toynbee, 29 November 1939, 22 December 1939, Peper (ed.), *An Historian's Conscience*, p. 43, 46.

compared *A Study of History* with Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*.⁷¹²

Nevertheless, Toynbee's flirtation with Catholicism came to an end after the War broke out, when he became the Director of the Foreign Research and Press Service, and was based at Oxford. Shortly afterwards, Toynbee's marriage reached such a critical point that he and Rosalind Murray decided to separate in 1942; his endeavour to fix their relationship eventually failed in 1944, when he was told that she was determined to get a divorce. Rosalind Murray's claim that their un-Catholic marriage had never been valid made Toynbee feel that it was the Catholic Church that took his wife, who became increasingly immersed in the spiritual world under the guidance of Benedictine monks, away from him. Toynbee never recovered from this blow. His unfavourable comments on Catholicism depressed both Father Columba, who decided to end their correspondence in 1944 (though it was resumed before long), and Ampleforth Abbey, which did not welcome Toynbee any longer.⁷¹³

Although Toynbee enjoyed monastic life, and was inspired by the early Church Fathers, particularly St. Augustine and St. Ignatius of Antioch, there were noticeable and irreconcilable differences between his religious thought and Catholicism, which he listed in a long letter to Father Columba in 1937. First and foremost, Toynbee did not regard the history of Catholicism as a victory won by God's interventions; rather its survival is 'contingent upon mundane historical causes: some trivial, some unedifying, all natural'.⁷¹⁴ Moreover, Toynbee was dismissive of the sacraments—particularly the

⁷¹² Columba Cary-Elwes to Toynbee, 3 December 1939, *ibid*, pp. 41-2.

⁷¹³ Toynbee to Columba Cary-Elwes, 14 July 1944, 20 September 1944, *ibid*, pp. 167-9, 171-4.

⁷¹⁴ Toynbee to Columba Cary-Elwes, 5 August 1938, *ibid*, pp. 19-22.

Mass, which he believed to be miraculous. Furthermore, Toynbee was sceptical about ‘the Real Presence and the powers of the Priest’, and denounced the Catholic Church on the ground that its ecclesiastical system was modelled on the civil service of the Roman Empire.⁷¹⁵ Most importantly, Toynbee’s belief that ‘Catholicism is *a* revelation, but most improbable that it is *the* revelation of God’ is incompatible with the dogmatism of Catholicism, which, according to Toynbee, ‘tests agreement and disagreements sharply and uncompromisingly in doctrinal terms’.⁷¹⁶ Therefore, even though Toynbee was, as he made clear to Father Columba, not ‘anti-Catholic’ but ‘philo-Catholic’, he preferred to remain what he called a ‘Bodhisattva’ rather than an ‘Arhat’.⁷¹⁷

In February 1937, Toynbee told Father Columba that he was trying to ‘re-place’ the ‘material world’ of the West ‘in Christian setting from which it has broken out’. By using the ‘nonsense book’ to serve this purpose, Toynbee believed that he would have ‘a clearer knowledge of the road’ he was travelling on.⁷¹⁸ These words not only reflect that Toynbee’s reflection on history was first and foremost a way to ease his personal anxiety by discovering a guiding light in a world full of uncertainties; they also imply that Toynbee was unsatisfied with the answer given in the first three volumes of *A Study of History*. Now that Toynbee abandoned his ‘liberal rational paganism’, his tone in volumes four to six was much more pessimistic compared with the earlier volumes, and his religious message became conspicuous.

⁷¹⁵ Arnold J. Toynbee, ‘Christianity and Civilisation’, in idem, *Civilisation on Trial* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 242.

⁷¹⁶ Toynbee to Columba Cary-Elwes, 14 July 1944, 20 September 1944, in Peper (ed.), *An Historian’s Conscience*, p. 173.

⁷¹⁷ Toynbee to Columba Cary-Elwes, 5 August 1938, *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷¹⁸ Toynbee to Columba Cary-Elwes, 14 February 1937, *ibid.*, p. 15.

The central theme of volumes four to six is the nature of the breakdowns and disintegrations of civilisations, which, according to Toynbee, arise from ‘failures in an audacious attempt to ascend from the level of a Primitive Humanity, living the life of a social animal, to the height of some superhuman kind of being in a Communion of Saints’.⁷¹⁹ He hinted that religious wars in the Sixteenth Century might have been the first symptom of the breakdown of the West, and thus that the West had already entered the act of ‘Time of Troubles’. Emphasising the standardisation of the process of disintegration, Toynbee seemed intimidated by the impending demise of the West; so he averred that this challenge could only be responded to by Christianity: ‘We may and must pray that a reprieve which God has granted to our society once will not be refused if we ask for it again’.⁷²⁰ When discussing the relation between individuals and disintegrating societies, Toynbee claimed that a leader who played a creative role in a growing society became a saviour ‘who come to the rescue of a society that has failed to respond’.⁷²¹ After elaborating at length different forms of ‘would-be saviours’—for example, warriors, philosopher-kings, archaists and futurists—Toynbee wrote in a sheer apocalyptic manner that the only true Saviour was God, who ‘rises from the flood and straightforward fills the whole horizon’ at ‘the final ordeal of death’.⁷²²

At the very end of volume six, Toynbee urged his readers to reconsider the ‘destiny of the Universal Church in which every higher religion seeks to embody itself’.⁷²³ According to the pattern Toynbee elaborated in the first three volumes, religion is the

⁷¹⁹ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iv, p. 5.

⁷²⁰ Ibid, vi, p. 321.

⁷²¹ Ibid, p. 177.

⁷²² Ibid, p. 278.

⁷²³ Ibid, p. 326.

chrysalis of the old civilisation out of which a new civilisation emerges. In other words, religion has no value of its own, and is secondary to secular civilisation. However, Toynbee's view on the relation between civilisation and religion experienced a fundamental change in the late 1930s. In his Hobhouse Memorial Lecture delivered in May 1939, Toynbee suggested that the Universal Church was a superior species to civilisation; he also made a tentative claim that the destruction of civilisation would, if viewed from another perspective, lead to 'further spiritual enlightenment, and will leave behind it a religious legacy'.⁷²⁴ If this is the true relation between civilisation and religion, Toynbee argued, then 'we can confront, with a better courage, the appalling social tribulations that may be still in store for us.'⁷²⁵

Toynbee elaborated his new idea more confidently and comprehensively in the Burge Lecture given in May 1940 at the University Church of Oxford. At the beginning of his lecture, Toynbee repudiated two views of Christianity: the first view, upheld by James Frazer and Gibbon, alleges that Christianity is the destroyer of civilisation; whereas the second view, which Toynbee himself used to endorse, regards religion as the custodian of the intellectual heritage of a previous civilisation. To replace these two types of falsification, Toynbee argued that:

If religion is a chariot, it looks as if the wheels which it mounts towards Heaven may be the periodic downfall of civilisation on Earth. It looks as if the movement of civilisations may be cyclic and recurrent, while the movement of religions may be a single continuous upward line.⁷²⁶

If we compare the quotation above with several passages in volume four that are

⁷²⁴ Idem, *The Downfalls of Civilisations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 12.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Toynbee, *Civilisation on Trial*, pp. 235-6.

dedicated to repudiating the 'cyclic and recurrent' view of civilisation on the ground that it hinders creativity, it is evident that Toynbee's attitude had been completely reversed. Moreover, the fact that Toynbee's argument in volume four is clearly at odds with the religious cast in the last chapters of volume six illustrates that the second batch of volumes is a strange mixture written in a transitional period when Toynbee's Christian view of history was in ferment:

Without the repetitive circular movement of the wheel, the vehicle could not move on any track at all; but while the wheel is indispensable to the vehicle as a means of locomotion, it is incapable of dictating the course on which the vehicle is to move.⁷²⁷

Therefore, if civilisation had used to be the 'vehicle', it now became the wheels of the chariot of religion in Toynbee's new philosophy of history. Toynbee pointed out that the standard of progress did not lie in improvements in 'mundane social life', 'but the opportunity open to souls, by ways of the learning that comes through suffering for getting into closer communion with God, and becoming less unlike Him, during their passage through this world'.⁷²⁸ After evoking Augustine's allegation that the source of true happiness is above human nature, Toynbee concluded that martyrdom was the only way to 'save the City of Destruction from its doom by converting it to the Peace of God'.⁷²⁹ In this regard, religious progress and 'deeper religious insight' are often accompanied by misfortunes and catastrophes in the earthly world.⁷³⁰ 'Christianity and History' was delivered in a time when the War had already broken out, and the future of the West was completely unknown; to Toynbee, religion thus became the only

⁷²⁷ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, iv, p. 35.

⁷²⁸ Idem, *Civilisation on Trial*, pp. 248-9.

⁷²⁹ Idem, *A Study of History*, vi, pp. 167-8.

⁷³⁰ Ibid, p. 236.

consolation: from a transcendental perspective, earthly calamities indeed repaid condolence, but they also promoted religious progress.

2.2. Human Predicament in History

As we have seen, Toynbee's religious conception of history not only echoed a widespread criticism of attempts at achieving secular progress by human reason; its Augustinian premise that calamities are redeemable in history was also popular in an age of catastrophe. So Christopher Dawson, for example, argued in his *Beyond Politics* (1939) that 'the Christians ought to be the last person in the world to lose hope in the presence of the failure of the right and the apparent triumph of evil'; for the life of Christ was a reminder that 'out of the heart of this catastrophe there arose something completely new'.⁷³¹ This religious interpretation of catastrophe was also apparent in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Toynbee was quite familiar with Eliot's works, and especially admired *Little Gidding*.⁷³² Both Toynbee and Eliot believed that ostensible tragedies in history should, from a religious perspective, be regarded as opportunities for God's nature to be revealed to individuals.⁷³³ Allusions to the Blitz, during which Eliot served as a night watchman, can be found in many places in *Little Gidding*: for example, the first three stanzas of the second section, and 'The Dove descending breaks the air/ With flame of incandescent terror'. Faced with this 'death of earth', Eliot believed that 'the only hope', however, was 'to be redeemed from fire by fire'. Quoting Julian of Norwich's maxim that 'Sin is Behovely', Eliot thus encouraged an indifferent attitude

⁷³¹ Christopher Dawson, *Beyond Politics* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1939), p. 127, 136.

⁷³² Toynbee to Columba Cary-Elwes, 16 November 1943, Peper (ed.), *An Historian's Conscience*, p. 145.

⁷³³ T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems: 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p.177, 184, 208.

‘to things and to persons’, and devoted faith in the Transcendental. For eventually, ‘All shall be well, and/ All manner of thing shall be well.’⁷³⁴

Another notable Christian intellectual who endorsed this view was Butterfield, who, as Michael Bentley has convincingly shown, had long been preoccupied with reflecting on the future of the West when it was threatened by barbarism in the thirties. Butterfield’s theological thinking was also presupposed by a deep hostility towards the secular idea of progress. According to him, love is a religious idea; so ‘evil can come about if men love anything in the world too much—their country or their family, their college or their religious denomination, their art or their science, and even the cause of civilisation as they may happen to conceive it’.⁷³⁵ Although Butterfield failed to offer any ‘public doctrines’ until in the late 1940s, his religious attitude was implicitly related to the historiographical position he held in *The Whig Interpretation of History*, for example, his determination to exclude moral judgments can be explained by his hatred of human pride.⁷³⁶ A devout Methodist, Butterfield was nonetheless rather reluctant to talk about his faith in public; therefore it was only under the insistent request by the Divinity Faculty of Cambridge, that he finally agreed to deliver a series of lectures on the Christian view of history, which was published as *Christianity and History* in 1949, a year also witnessing the publication of *The Origins of Modern Science* and *George III, Lord North, and the People*.⁷³⁷

Apart from *Christianity and History*, Butterfield’s providential history was also

⁷³⁴ Ibid, pp. 207-9.

⁷³⁵ Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951) p. 47, 53.

⁷³⁶ Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Britain*, i, pp. 220-7.

⁷³⁷ C.T. McIntire, *Herbert Butterfield: Historian as Dissenter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p.174. All three books were published by Bell.

exemplified in 'Reflection on Predicament of Our Time' (published in 1947 in *The Cambridge Journal*), and *History and Human Relations*, which incorporates his essays and lectures between 1947 and the early 1950s.⁷³⁸ History, according to Butterfield, is a stage on which human tragedies are constantly played; and it is Providence that, albeit refusing to promise secular progress, often brings 'good out of evil', and achievements from cataclysms in history: the Fire of London led to a superior rebuilding plan, the Reformation gave rise to toleration, and most importantly, the ancient Hebrews 'turned their tragedy...into one of the half-dozen creative moments in world history'.⁷³⁹ Throughout *Christianity and History*, Butterfield constantly reminded his readers to notice a parallel between the age of the Hebrew prophets and the twentieth century—both suffered from such unimaginable disasters:

And before the cataclysms occurred it was a remarkable moment...when the prophet Amos warned the Jews that 'the day of the Lord', which they so eagerly awaited, was to be not a time of triumph and exultation...but a dark, terrible day of reckoning; for the modern world has been in a similar position, imagining itself on the very threshold of utopia, and then suddenly awaking to the fact that it was really on the edge of an abyss.⁷⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Butterfield did not believe that catastrophes would necessarily bring about good consequences, for Providence was beyond men's understanding. It is noteworthy that these Christian presumptions highly affected the ways in which international relations as a discipline was studied in post-war Britain, especially owing to the influence of Butterfield and Martin Wight, who were co-founders of the British Committee of the Theory of International Politics funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.

⁷³⁸ Herbert Butterfield, 'Reflection on Predicament of Our Time', *The Cambridge Journal*, 1/1 (1947), pp. 5-13.

⁷³⁹ Idem, *Christianity and History* (London: Bell, 1949), p. 75, 98.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 57.

Both trained in history—Butterfield was tutored by the great diplomatic historian Harold Temperley at Peterhouse, and Martin Wight read Modern History at Hertford College, Oxford, they contended that historical research, instead of political theory or economics, was the only proper approach to studying international theory. Their propensity to understand and evaluate contemporary affairs by placing them into a longer time span is precisely underpinned by a belief in Providence in history. In ‘The Tragic Element in Modern International Conflict’, *Christianity, Democracy and War* (1953), and to a lesser degree in *Christianity and History*, Butterfield argued that because of numerous uncalculated factors in international politics, men were inescapably trapped in what he called the ‘human predicament’—even when two opposing countries both implemented reasonable foreign policies without any aggressive plans to attack each other, their actions would still bring about unintended consequences, which made international conflicts largely unavoidable.⁷⁴¹ Having a rather low estimation of human nature, Butterfield reminded the policy-makers that they should learn to cooperate with Providence, for it would change one’s plan into something one could never have otherwise anticipated.⁷⁴²

In a similar vein, Martin Wight brought his theological thinking into his study of international relations in the late 1940s. Profoundly influenced by Toynbee after joining Chatham House in 1937, Wight hugely admired *A Study of History*, and accepted the Christian presumptions displayed in volume six. Although Wight became disillusioned with the League in the late thirties, he retained the internationalist idea that history was

⁷⁴¹ Idem, *History and Human Relations*, pp. 9-36.

⁷⁴² Idem, *Christianity and History*, p. 55.

‘tending inexorably...towards the political unity of the world—establishment of world unity, world order, a world state.’⁷⁴³ Meanwhile, he also insisted that history was essentially ‘a process with an author’, and that ‘its meaning is identical with judgment by the author’.⁷⁴⁴ The way in which Wight viewed international politics was therefore explicitly Christian: in his well-known article ‘The Church, Russia and the West’ published in the late forties, he argued that one should not be intimidated by the conflict between the West and Russia, for ‘what matters is not whether there is going to be another war or not, but that it should be recognised, if it comes, as an act of God’s Justice and if it is averted, as an act of God’s Mercy.’⁷⁴⁵ Hence his disciple Hedley Bull placed this maxim at the heart of Wight’s conception of history and his international theory: ‘hope is not a political virtue, it is a theological virtue’.⁷⁴⁶

What underlies both Butterfield and Wight’s international theories is therefore an historical presupposition that the human intellect is insufficient fully to understand the unforeseen possibilities in history, or to design a perfect international order—‘intellectual arrogance’ was even regarded as a moral sin by Butterfield.⁷⁴⁷ This presumption, as we have seen, was also underlined, if in different ways, by a large number of theologians and Christian intellectuals. For example, albeit appreciating Collingwood’s contention that history should be understood as a unity, Christopher Dawson nonetheless argued that Collingwood was wrong in identifying the historical

⁷⁴³ Ibid, p. 31.

⁷⁴⁴ Martin Wight, ‘The Church, Russia and the West’, *Ecumenical Review*, 1/1(1948), p. 38.

⁷⁴⁵ Idem, ‘Christian Commentary’, cf. Hedley Bull, ‘Martin Wight and the Study of International Relations’, in Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), p. 11.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid. Ian Hall also provides a well-balanced account of Wight’s historical thought, see his *The International Thought of Martin Wight* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 43-63.

⁷⁴⁷ Butterfield, ‘Reflection on Predicament of Our Time’, p. 8.

process with the development of mind.⁷⁴⁸ Moreover, this anti-rational view in its most radical form can be found in C.S. Lewis' criticism of Historicism. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* (1952), a collection of his war-time BBC radio broadcasts which earned him huge fame, had already illustrated his scepticism about the limits of rationality; he argued, especially in Book I, that 'moral laws' could only be intuited, and he presumed a 'definitely real' reality that is 'above and beyond the ordinary facts of men's behaviour'.⁷⁴⁹ In his article on 'Historicism', published in the Jesuit-founded journal *The Month*, Lewis denounced all forms of Historicism (he sometimes used it interchangeably with 'the philosophy of history'), which he recognised as the attempt to discover 'the inner meaning of history' (even a Christian meaning), on the ground that the historical process was too fragmented to be understood by human reason. Although Lewis was convinced that history was written by the finger of God, he was even opposed to vindicating God by history, for history is 'the pure, unedited, unexpurgated text, straight from the Author's hand'.⁷⁵⁰

Neither Toynbee nor Butterfield would have accepted Lewis' view of history based on such an extreme opposition to any conceptualisations of history. But it was certainly a common presumption that the ultimate meaning of history was endowed by the God that made Toynbee and Butterfield recognise the value of each other's works in a post-Christian society, although Toynbee and Butterfield's historiographical approaches differ in not insignificant aspects. For example, Butterfield clearly made a distinction

⁷⁴⁸ Wood et al., *The Kingdom of God and History*, p. 212; Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, p. 47.

⁷⁴⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Harper Collins, 2002), p. 20.

⁷⁵⁰ Idem, 'Historicism', in McIntire (ed.), *God, History, and Historians*, pp. 225-38.

between history in the ‘technical’ sense and that in a higher ‘Providential’ sense, while Toynbee’s ‘history’ was largely composed of numerous historical generalisations and was not based on serious original research,⁷⁵¹ These factors, however, did not prevent Toynbee from appreciating, and frequently quoting from, *Christianity and History* to illustrate the indispensability of having a ‘mental pattern of history’.⁷⁵² Reciprocally, Butterfield defended Toynbee in his review of *A Study of History*, arguing that Toynbee reconciled the “‘necessity’ that conditions us’ and the ‘consciousness of what we can still achieve by acts of will’”.⁷⁵³

2.3. The Demise of Western Civilisation?

Toynbee was released from governmental work after attending the Peace Conference in Paris as a member of the British delegation again, and resumed his position as Director of Studies at Chatham House in 1946. Though most of his time was then spent on finishing the last four volumes of *A Study of History*, his huge success with the publication of the abridged version of volumes I-VI meant numerous invitations from North American universities and institutions, asking him to give lectures. His ability to analyse current international affairs with his immense knowledge of history made the American people consider him one of the greatest minds in Britain and a guide for making sense of the direction Western civilisation was moving towards. Admired by the American press, he acquired a huge international reputation when his

⁷⁵¹ Particularly see Michael Bentley, ‘Herbert Butterfield and the Ethics of Historiography’, *History and Theory*, 44/1 (2005), pp. 55-71.

⁷⁵² Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Butterfield, C 531, fo. T105: Arnold Toynbee to Herbert Butterfield, 2 June 1950.

⁷⁵³ Herbert Butterfield, ‘Hitting Back’, *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 May 1961.

portrait appeared on the front cover of *Time* magazine on 17 March 1947.⁷⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Toynbee's fame nonetheless significantly declined, not only among professional historians, but also among British intellectuals in general. To some extent, this was related to a widespread scepticism about his scholarship after numerous faults were discovered in his historical writings. Moreover, Toynbee's methodology was comprehensively criticised by Pieter Geyl in his essay 'Toynbee's System of Civilisation' (1946). Geyl telling demonstrated that Toynbee's conclusion was not based on empirical research; instead, he selected and distorted the facts to make them fit into his presupposed theory.⁷⁵⁵

Moreover, not least because Toynbee's philosophy of history experienced another change in the last batch of *A Study of History*, he was even attacked not only by secular liberals, but even by some Christian intellectuals. In the last four volumes, Toynbee retained his belief that 'history is all really spiritual history', namely, 'the history of people's relations with God and, through God, with each other'.⁷⁵⁶ But the roads towards God, he now argued, must be multiple; for 'God is love', and His 'desire to beautify all His creatures by bringing them into communion with Himself would remain unfulfilled if one road only were open for approaching the great mystery'.⁷⁵⁷ Therefore, he contended that the four existing Higher Religions (Christianity, Hinduism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Islam) were essentially the same in their relations to God:

The essence of Christianity is the essence of the higher religions as a class,

⁷⁵⁴ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life*, pp. 212-9.

⁷⁵⁵ Pieter Geyl, 'Toynbee's System of Civilisation', 'Toynbee Once More', 'Toynbee the Prophet', all in idem, *Debates with Historians* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958).

⁷⁵⁶ See Toynbee to Father Columba, 14 August 1948, in Peper (ed.), *An Historian's Conscience*, p. 227.

⁷⁵⁷ Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vii, p. 443.

though in different eyes these different windows through which God's light shines into Man's soul may differ in the degree of their translucency or in the selection of the rays that they transmit.⁷⁵⁸

Moreover, Toynbee alleged that none of the 'Secondary civilisations', from whose chrysalis all the four Higher Civilisations were born (Christianity and Mahayana from Hellenic civilisation, Islam from Syriac civilisation, and Hinduism from Indic civilisation), had any inherent values; rather, they merely served as 'stepping-stones for a progressive process of the revelation of always deeper religious insight'.⁷⁵⁹ Toynbee did not alter his argument that the world was marching towards unity; but now he predicted that a new Universal Religion would be born from this world State, and amalgamate the four existing Higher Religions. In the last of his Reith Lectures on 'The World and the West' delivered in 1952, in which Western civilisation was disparaged for its continuing expansion, Toynbee gave a lengthy account of how the Greeks and Romans were captivated by 'new religions' after they conquered the rest of the world. With this historical parallel in mind, Toynbee then asked 'is something like this historic *dénouement* of the Graeco-Roman story going to be written into the unfinished history of the world's encounter with the west?' Although Toynbee claimed that he had no intention to make predictions, his answer certainly seemed confident—he expected a new Universal Religion which would unite 'all human souls without discriminating between ruler and subjects or between Greeks, Orientals, and barbarians.'⁷⁶⁰

So unlike in the 1920s and 1930s, Toynbee was no longer troubled by the doom of the West, or indeed any secular civilisations, which explains why he began to adopt an

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 388.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid, vii, p. 445.

⁷⁶⁰ Idem, 'The World and the Greeks and Roman', *The Listener*, 25 December 1952.

unusually critical attitude towards the West. For example, as one of the contributors to a series of talks given on the B.B.C. European Programme on 'The Western Tradition' in 1949, Toynbee's understanding of the Western tradition differed hugely from other speakers (including Bertrand Russell on scientific method, Ernest Barker on Western political tradition, and G.D.H. Cole on individual right); most of them sought to rediscover and vindicate certain values from Western political, philosophical and cultural traditions that were significant in post-war social reconstruction and in combating Communism. Butterfield, for example, despite lamenting that Protestant liberty had been too closely associated with rationalism since the eighteenth century, still insisted that freedom of conscience was an essentially Christian as well as Western political value.⁷⁶¹ Toynbee, however, simply dismissed this very notion of 'Western tradition', and argued that what was needed in this unified world was an awareness that 'in the history of a religion [Christianity] whose mission is to reach all nations and to preach the Gospel to every creature which is under Heaven, our Western Christendom, which means all the world to us Westerners, need be no more than a local and temporary camping place'.⁷⁶²

Toynbee's view, unsurprisingly, seemed dubiously defeatist to many liberals who were eager to defend the significance of Western society when it was threatened by totalitarianism. For example, Hans Kohn argued that Toynbee failed to notice that the West 'set new and...higher standards of respect for the intellectual, of social

⁷⁶¹ Herbert Butterfield, 'The Protestant View of Church and State', in *The Western Tradition: A Series of Talks Given in the B.B.C. European Programme*, (London: VOX MUNDI Ltd., 1949), pp. 49-50.

⁷⁶² Arnold J. Toynbee, 'A Summing up', *ibid.*, p. 110.

responsibility, of critical enquiry, than any preceding civilisation...'⁷⁶³ In addition, the sinologist G.F. Hudson criticised Toynbee for being a 'deserter' of certain values, such as freedom and the critical mind, which belonged to Western civilisation.⁷⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it is implausible to assume that Toynbee's reputation was destroyed only by liberals—let alone, as it is commonly believed, by Trevor-Roper alone. Toynbee's deviation from Christianity, for example, also made his views incompatible with a noticeable trend (as Dianne Kirby's research has shown) among Anglican intellectuals to combat Communism with the spiritual force of Christianity.⁷⁶⁵

A telling example is that Toynbee's essay presented to a conference initiated by George Bell under the theme 'Christian Faith and Communist Faith', struck a noticeably discordant tone compared with other attendees'. Recognising Communism as a religious ideology, George Bell adamantly averred that a secular society was unable to resist the Communist faith, and that the challenge of Communist dogmatism could only be met by Anglicanism.⁷⁶⁶ The philosopher D.M. MacKinnon, for example, contended that the Christian reply to Communism should be based on a refutation of dialectical materialism, and a belief that 'history has been grasped and possessed by God'.⁷⁶⁷ Similarly, the Oxonian philosopher and leader of the Student Christian Movement, Michael Foster, pointed out that Marxists failed to understand 'the receptive attitude'

⁷⁶³ Hans Kohn, *Is the Liberal West in Decline?* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1957), p. 36.

⁷⁶⁴ G.F. Hudson, 'Professor Toynbee and the West', *The Twentieth Century*, 148 (1953), pp. 210-8.

⁷⁶⁵ See Dianne Kirby, 'The Anglican Church in the Period of the Cold War: 1945-55' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Hull, 1990); idem, 'Religion and the Cold War—An Introduction', in idem (ed.), *Religion and the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). pp. 1-22.

⁷⁶⁶ George Bell, 'Introduction', in D.M. MacKinnon (ed.), *Christian Faith and Communist Faith: A Series of Studies by Members of the Anglican Communion* (London: Macmillan, 1953), p. ix; Bell's role in the Anglican Church's criticism of Communism, see Dianne Kirby, 'George Bell and the Cold War', in Andrew Chandler (ed.), *The Church and Humanity: The Life and Work of George Bell, 1883-1958* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 148-68.

⁷⁶⁷ D.M. MacKinnon, 'Conclusions', MacKinnon (ed.), *Christian Faith and Communist Faith*, p. 255.

and ‘responsiveness to divine revelation’ as the Christians had.⁷⁶⁸

However, none of them, as Toynbee did, suggested that the ruin of Western civilisation was not only not discouraging, but also agreeable, from a religious point of view:

Suffering is neither an evil in itself nor a good in itself, nor meaningless in itself nor significant in itself. It is a means to an end, and its purpose is to give human beings an opportunity of sharing in Christ’s work and thereby realising their potentiality of being God’s children in virtue of being Christ’s brethren...we shall find that every one of the philosophies and higher religions has made its appearance in the world and place at which mankind’s perennial suffering has been intensified by ...the breakdown and disintegration of a mundane civilisation.⁷⁶⁹

When comparing Christian hope with Communist hope, the theologian Christopher Evans argued that God’s Grace did not ‘negate the present world by reference to another’.⁷⁷⁰ In a similar vein, Mackinnon maintained that ‘men cannot live without hope’, but ‘that hope must be related to the actual circumstances of their lives’; in this regard, Christian hope is different from the hope Stalinism endowed its devotees with.⁷⁷¹

According to Wight, who was disappointed with Toynbee’s deviation from the Christian position, Toynbee, over-stressing the similarity and comparability of Higher Religions, missed a distinctive point in Christian theology—God has ‘acted in history’ to show the peculiar Christian meaning of history.⁷⁷² Moreover, Douglas Jerrold, in his pamphlet *The Lie about the West*, came to grips with Toynbee’s Reith Lectures, and

⁷⁶⁸ Michael Foster, ‘Historical Materialism’, *ibid.*, p. 97.

⁷⁶⁹ Arnold J. Toynbee, ‘Christian Understanding of History’, *ibid.*, p.202, 205.

⁷⁷⁰ Christopher Evans, ‘The Faith of the New Testament’, *ibid.*, p. 145.

⁷⁷¹ D.M. MacKinnon, ‘Conclusions’, *ibid.*, p. 234.

⁷⁷² Toynbee, *A Study of History*, vii, p. 737.

criticised Toynbee's dismissiveness of both Western civilisation and Christianity.⁷⁷³ An idiosyncratic Tory and a vehement Catholic, Jerrold was a sympathiser with Fascism and friend of Oswald Mosley in the 1930s; but, like Arthur Bryant, he began to pronounce the glory of England during the War. Jerrold insisted that 'such august concepts as the rule of law, the rights of conscience, the right of free speech and free association, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' all had their roots in the Christian tradition.⁷⁷⁴ Toynbee's contention that the Christian Church is only one of the many universal religions, according to Jerrold, is a denunciation of its uniqueness, hence surrendering Western civilisation to Communism.⁷⁷⁵

Not least because of the frequent changes in certain basic presuppositions of his philosophy of history, it is not easy to evaluate Toynbee's status as a religious thinker in British intellectual life. On the one hand, his historical conceptualisation touched upon several important themes which were under discussion during this period; and the fact that he inspired such writers and intellectuals of a Christian bent as Rose Macaulay and Maurice Cowling betrays the significance of Toynbee's work in a post-Christian society. 'If, then, one asks why Toynbee deserves attention, the answer', as Cowling averred, 'must be that he was a liberal enemy of optimism and complacency'.⁷⁷⁶ On the other hand, in the fifties, Toynbee not only denounced both Christianity and the Western intellectual tradition, but also gave up a governing principle which presupposed his

⁷⁷³ Later collected and republished as a single volume: *Counsels of Hope: The Toynbee-Jerrold Controversy* (London: The Times, 1954).

⁷⁷⁴ Douglas Jerrold, *The Lie about the West* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1954), pp. 4-5.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁷⁶ Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, i, p. 43. As for Rose Macaulay's being inspired by Toynbee, see Alexander Hutton, "'A Belated Return for Christ?': The Reception of Arnold J. Toynbee's A Study of History in a British Context, 1934-1961", *Revue européenne d'histoire*, 21/3 (2014), p. 414.

former religious view of history, namely, that the historical process was not within the grasp of rationality, when he confidently proclaimed that the West would inevitably be ruined, and that human spirituality would be irrevocably dominated by a new Universal Religion.

III.

3.1. Lay Piety against Religious Dogmatism

Compared to the ‘confident agnosticism’ of the 1920s, religion in British cultural life in the next decade is characterised by Adrian Hastings as ‘flowing quite perceptibly in one large direction: from irreligion to religion, from liberal to modernist religion to neo-orthodoxy, and from Protestantism towards Catholicism’.⁷⁷⁷ To those who lived in an intellectual void, and needed orientation in the 1930s, Catholicism precisely rendered a unified and all-encompassing system by which the historical process could be explained. If Toynbee briefly sought spiritual guidance from the Benedictine monks, it was the Jesuits, in particular, Father Martin D’Arcy, who played a significant role in recruiting potential young converts in Oxford, including Evelyn Waugh and Frank Pakenham.⁷⁷⁸ With an ‘El Greco look’ and ‘Mephistopheles-like’ character, Father D’Arcy successfully made Campion Hall renowned for its intellectual atmosphere, art collection, and guest nights, where people from various backgrounds (not necessarily Catholics) could be found, including dons, bright undergraduates, editors of Catholic papers, and ambassadors.⁷⁷⁹ Reading philosophy at Oxford, D’Arcy became a

⁷⁷⁷ Adrian Hastings, *A History of English Christianity: 1920-1990* (London: SCM, 1991), p. 221, 89.

⁷⁷⁸ This was Trevor-Roper’s version of the story, which was not necessarily true; see Trevor-Roper, *The Wartime Journals*, p. 85. AS for Pakenham’s own account, see his *Born to Believe* (London: Cape, 1953), pp. 63-100.

⁷⁷⁹ Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography*, p. 39; H.J.A. Sire, *Father Martin D’Arcy: Philosopher of Christian*

neo-Thomist, and was convinced that the universe was in a 'hierarchised order'. He was highly critical of what he called empiricism in philosophy, and argued in *The Nature of Belief* that the perfect kind of knowledge was acquired only by 'intuition', which 'meant an act of knowing which moves straight to its object and sees it as it is'.⁷⁸⁰ This ideal, however, cannot be achieved in this world, and awaits its realisation in Heaven. But human intellect also owns a faculty of 'interpretation', which, according to D'Arcy, synthesises and integrates various data to reveal the essence and wholeness of an entity. To D'Arcy, knowledge is thus synonymous with 'certitude', namely, 'when the mind is aware that it knows something about the object as it is in its own nature'; and certitude occurs only when there is a 'unity of indirect reference' by our 'interpretation'.⁷⁸¹ Henceforth, truth rests on a set of inter-related beliefs which themselves were supported by innumerable references in our daily life.

As a young talent at Christ Church, Trevor-Roper was obviously recognised as a potential convert by Father D'Arcy, especially as Trevor-Roper was not exceptional in seeking for guidance in spiritual matters during this period, even temporarily joining the freemasons. It was rumoured that Trevor-Roper was, apart from A.J. Ayer and Frank Birkenhead, one of D'Arcy's most desirable targets.⁷⁸² Despite his public image as an anticlerical, Trevor-Roper had a lifelong interest in religion and its significance in Western society. His religious thinking during the 1930s, as it will be discussed in this section, would not only promote a better-rounded understanding of his public

Love (Leominster: Gracewing, 1997), p. 92.

⁷⁸⁰ M.C. D'Arcy, *The Nature of Belief* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931), p. 56.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid, p. 52, 194.

⁷⁸² Sisman, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography*, p. 48.

disparagement of Catholicism in the fifties, but also reflect a not untypical way in which Catholicism was treated by latitudinarian intellectuals.

According to Trevor-Roper's own account, his mind had experienced three major revolutions by 1940. Among them, his discovery of the Victorian writer Samuel Butler, and his friendship with Logan Pearsall Smith not only reflected his love for literature, but also inspired his life-long pursuit of elegance and style in writing. But a sudden revelation that happened in 1936 was the only one that was caused by the development of his own mind. When walking around Christ Church Meadow and 'pondering on the subtleties of St. Augustine's theological system', he suddenly realised that 'the metaphysics are metaphysical, and hav[e] no premises to connect them to this world.' Thereafter, he saw the 'whole metaphysical world rise and vanish out of sight in the upper air, where it rightly belongs'; and he had 'neither seen it, nor felt its absence, since'.⁷⁸³ Trevor-Roper's remark is a clear proclamation of his religious stance; but this quasi-mythical experience itself also demonstrates his ambivalence, struggle, and the fact that he was bothered by whether transcendental reality actually existed. He had read Augustine's *Confessions* three times when he was an undergraduate; he also regarded reading Milton's 'On the Morning of Christ's Nativity', a poem with such an overtly religious theme, one of the most crucial moments in his life, which led to his discovery of poetry at the age of fifteen.⁷⁸⁴

These reading experiences distinguished him from many of his friends at Oxford, including Berlin and Ayer, both Jewish (though Berlin observed Jewish rituals), and

⁷⁸³ Trevor-Roper, *The Wartime Journals*, pp. 37-8, 40-1.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid, *The Wartime Journals*, p. 40.

Ryle, who never had any serious religious beliefs.⁷⁸⁵ Trevor-Roper, by contrast, attended church services when he was at school and as an undergraduate—Charterhouse was still known for its insistence on tradition in the early twentieth century, and Christ Church was a college strongly influenced by the clergymen of the Cathedral. To Trevor-Roper, the real basis of religion is psychological: for an individual, it ‘fills an important void’, ‘gathers up and harmonises his irrational impulses’, and ‘provides an outlet, or a substitute, for dark and sinister passions’; whereas for a society, ‘religion is the invisible cement of a social order’, and ‘the outward sign of a social and political theory, that it was enforced and presented by Church and State’.⁷⁸⁶ In a nutshell, Trevor-Roper was not, and could never be, an atheist.

In an entry in his journal written during the War, Trevor-Roper made an ostensibly self-contradictory claim that he was not a Christian, but an Anglican, and that he ‘commended the Church of England’ precisely ‘for its very indifferency’ about doctrines.⁷⁸⁷ This attitude, however, was not consistent; for in the late thirties, Trevor-Roper was indeed temporarily attracted by Catholicism. In another entry in *The Wartime Journal*, Trevor-Roper confessed that he had once had great enthusiasm for some verses of Newman—‘Had he not of wealth his fill/Whom a garden gay did bless/And a gently trickling rill/And the sweets of idleness?’⁷⁸⁸ In his journal of 1937, Trevor-Roper recorded his visits to Campion Hall, when Father D’Arcy was often present. After one dinner, he confessed to his friend that he ‘admired the Jesuits, but still

⁷⁸⁵ Hugh Trevor-Roper to Gerald Brennan, 11 March 1968, in Trevor-Roper, *One Hundred Letters from Hugh Trevor-Roper*, p. 141.

⁷⁸⁶ Idem, *Archbishop Laud*, p. 4; idem, *The Wartime Journals*, p. 204.

⁷⁸⁷ Idem, *The Wartime Journals*, p. 205.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

mistrusted them’.⁷⁸⁹ During a discussion of ‘a religious nature’ with Father Basset, he endorsed the latter’s view on the ‘function of the Church as an education and a legislator to the laymen’.⁷⁹⁰ He also went to Pusey House to hear a High Church sermon given by the Bishop of Bradford, in which the Bishop ‘positions the Church as an interpreter, and functions as sacraments as true means of establishing connections with Reality’.⁷⁹¹ These occasions seemed to suggest that Trevor-Roper’s revelation did not, as he remembered, occur in 1936; instead, 1937 was the more probable watershed.

To D’Arcy’s dismay, Trevor-Roper had, by 1938, at any rate, become deeply sceptical of Catholicism. Once he even outspokenly feuded with Father D’Arcy by arguing that religion was not the highest or purest form in art, which shocked and annoyed his friends Dawyck Haig and Peter Wood— a fact which shows that members of Trevor-Roper’s circle were not confined to rational unbelievers.⁷⁹² Trevor-Roper’s public comment on Catholicism after the War was highly negative and sometimes even controversially harsh. In such works as *The Last Days of Hitler*, ‘Twice Martyred: The English Jesuits and Their Historians’, and ‘Huguenots and Papists’, he deliberately indicated the Jesuit influence on Goebbels’ thought, and depicted the Catholic Church as a decadent institution which imposed censorship, obstructed learning, and was full of bigots.⁷⁹³

Nevertheless, Trevor-Roper’s public image as a staunch anticlerical sometimes obscures his more nuanced view of Catholicism. He was obviously hostile to

⁷⁸⁹ SOC. Dacre 13/57: Entry 9 February 1937.

⁷⁹⁰ , SOC. Dacre 13/57: Entry 27 January 1937.

⁷⁹¹ SOC. Dacre 13/57: Entry 2 February 1937.

⁷⁹² SOC. Dacre 13/57: Entry 23 May 1938.

⁷⁹³ Both included in Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays*, pp.113-9, 227-32.

Catholicism as a doctrinal ideology, which made it similar to other secular ideologies such as Communism; but meanwhile, he viewed Catholicism neutrally as a social phenomenon, and was interested in exploring its effects on economics and society.⁷⁹⁴ For example, he not only began to regard Catholicism as being a significant social force in such countries as Spain, but also discounted the correlation between Catholicism and Fascism from the 1940s. In his *Sunday Times* articles on Franco, Trevor-Roper abandoned his former belief that Franco was a Fascist, and considered him an autocrat who knew how to cooperate with the Catholic Church.⁷⁹⁵ In his study of the rise of European Fascism, Trevor-Roper distinguished between German ‘dynamic Fascism’ and Spanish ‘clerical Fascism’; and he contended that only the former was ‘Fascism’ proper, whereas the latter was merely Catholic conservatism in another form⁷⁹⁶

During 1953 and 1954, Trevor-Roper was enthusiastic about writing a history of English Catholic revival in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Only three chapters, however, were finished; their titles are ‘Milner and the Cisalpines’, ‘Wiseman and the Converts’, ‘Wiseman and Manning’. According to Trevor-Roper’s account, the history of English Catholicism was a contest between the lay, aristocratic, intellectual ‘Cisalpines’, and the clerical, proletarian (particularly after the Irish diaspora), bigoted ‘Ultramontanes’. The outcome of their conflict was the victory of Roman Catholicism over English Catholicism, especially after the restoration of hierarchy in England in

⁷⁹⁴ For example, Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change’, in idem, *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001).

⁷⁹⁵ Idem, ‘The Secret of Franco’s Rule: 1—How Spain Kept out of War’, ‘The Secret of Franco’s Rule: 2—Is Franco a Fascist’, *Sunday Times*, 7 June 1953, 14 June 1953.

⁷⁹⁶ Idem, ‘The Phenomenon of Fascism’, in S.J. Woolf (ed.), *European Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), pp. 19-38.

1850. Trevor-Roper was sympathetic with the Cisalpines because of their tolerance, intellectual pursuit and liberation from the ecclesiastical system. In his wartime journal, Trevor-Roper claimed that he liked ‘the quiet rural existence of those families in the North; and in old Lancashire, and in folds of the Cotswolds and Chiltern Hills, whom the Reformation passed by, and those old faiths had survived because their lives were simple and elemental, outside the development of time’.⁷⁹⁷ To him, lay piety is similar to Erasmianism and contrasts with Romanism; it is ‘simple, sincere, animated by faith, nourished by prayer, free from the ostentatious trappings of priestly works’.⁷⁹⁸ In his essay on Thomas More, published in the *New Statesman and Nation*, Trevor-Roper again praised the English lay recusants for clinging to ‘the image of an English, unpolitical, pre-Counter-Reformation Catholic Church, and laboured in consequence under the imputation of “liberal Catholicism”, of anti-Romanism, even of crypto-Protestantism.’⁷⁹⁹

Moreover, Trevor-Roper argued that although Newman should be blamed for his ‘egoism’, ‘cruelty’, ‘fear of human reason’, antagonism towards liberalism, and ‘indifference to human morality’, he was still treated as a leader of lay Catholicism because of the historical nature of his conversion:

[Newman’s] conversion to Rome had been based on a study of tradition. A romantic believer nostalgically attached to a forgotten past, he found himself naturally gravitating towards the comforting, traditional, moss-grown Catholicism of the great lay families.⁸⁰⁰

Nevertheless, Trevor-Roper also pointed out that ‘ancient, aristocratic,

⁷⁹⁷ Idem, *The Wartime Journals*, p. 223.

⁷⁹⁸ Idem, *Historical Essays*, p. 53.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 92.

⁸⁰⁰ SOC. Dacre 9/8/1: ‘Wiseman and Manning’, p. 126 (page number as given in the manuscript).

traditionally-minded families are seldom willing to see their cause publicly and vocally represented by jumped-up middle-class newcomers into the fold'.⁸⁰¹ Never an antiquarian, Trevor-Roper was keen on drawing historical parallels, so it is highly possible that, as Brian Young acutely observes, Waugh was in Trevor-Roper's mind when he was discussing Newman's conversion, not least because a heated debate was taking place between Trevor-Roper and Waugh in *New Statesman and Nation* from December 1953 to January 1954, as a result of Trevor-Roper's acerbic allegation that Waugh illustrated that 'in the intellectual emptiness of modern English Catholicism only the snob-appeal is left'.⁸⁰² Waugh was annoyed by Trevor-Roper's attack on Catholicism and the Jesuits in *The Last Days of Hitler*, and instantly regarded him as a 'demon'.⁸⁰³ His hostility received reciprocity from Trevor-Roper, who called him a 'monster'.⁸⁰⁴ Known for his love of the upper classes, Waugh had intimate friends like Nancy Mitford, Ann Fleming, and Diana Cooper; but they were, as Noel Annan crudely pointed out, nonetheless 'déclassé aristocrats' after all.⁸⁰⁵ So when Trevor-Roper responded to Waugh's claim that his use of the word 'recusant' was wrong, he was probably being deliberate in proudly and satirically pointing out that 'since my family were recusants for two hundred years while Mr Waugh's Catholicism is, I think, still rather crude and green, I may perhaps claim a finer sense than he'.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰¹ SOC. Dacre 9/8/1: 'Wiseman and Manning', p. 122-3.

⁸⁰² Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays*, p. 97; Evelyn Waugh, Sean O'Casey, and Hugh Trevor-Roper's letters to the *New Statesman and Nation* on 12 December 1953, 26 December 1953, 9 January 1954, 11 January 1954, and 16 January 1954; B.W. Young, 'Trevor-Roper and Thomas Carlyle: History and Sensibility', in Worden (ed.), *Hugh Trevor-Roper*, p. 226.

⁸⁰³ Evelyn Waugh to Nancy Mitford, 11 December 1953, in Mark Amory (ed.), *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh* (London: Penguin, 1982), p. 415.

⁸⁰⁴ SOC. Dacre 1/3/29: Hugh Trevor-Roper to Martin Stannard, 10 August 1991.

⁸⁰⁵ Annan, *Our Age*, p. 165.

⁸⁰⁶ Trevor-Roper, 'Correspondence', *New Statesman and Nation*, 11 January 1954.

Although Waugh's enthusiasm for Catholicism was kindled by his miserable experience of being abandoned by his first wife Evelyn Gardener, D'Arcy dismissed the claim that Waugh's conversion was merely emotional—'I have never myself met a convert who so strongly based his assent on truth'.⁸⁰⁷ Despite going to Church regularly as an undergraduate, Waugh was not then a passionate believer. Religion is not an obvious theme either in *Decline and Fall* or *Vile Bodies* (despite the biblical origin of its title); even after his conversion, his first overtly Catholic novel was *Brideshead Revisited*, published after the War. His earlier novels, instead, were written more explicitly as ruthless mockery of the institutions, customs and moralities of the twenties. What Catholicism, via D'Arcy, could offer Waugh was therefore a theological system by which contingencies and irregularities in the earthly world could be made sense of. The mentality of such Catholic converts as Newman, Waugh, and Greene was summarised by Trevor-Roper in his essay 'Huguenots and the Papists' as:

How well one knows the face of certain converts to Catholicism—that smooth, exhausted look, burnt-out and yet at rest, as of a motorist who, after many mishaps and mounting insurance-premiums, has at last decided to drive himself no more, and having found a chauffeur with excellent references, resigns himself to safer travel in a cushioned back-seat.⁸⁰⁸

Trevor-Roper's critical acceptance of certain presuppositions of logical positivism in the thirties meant that D'Arcy's idea of truth would have seemed meaningless and nonsensical to him. Moreover, to Trevor-Roper, Catholicism and other dogmatic ideologies (both secular and religious) denied certain moral and intellectual values that he cherished, including rationality, free enquiry, and truthfulness. So the relevance of his

⁸⁰⁷ Selina Hastings, *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (London : Minerva, 1995), p. 227.

⁸⁰⁸ Trevor-Roper, *Historical Essays*, p. 230.

appreciation of the lay piety of recusants can only be understood by recognising what he believed its antithesis was—obscurantism, bigotry, fanaticism, intolerance and dogmatism. As it has been discussed in Chapter III, Trevor-Roper's celebration of Erasmianism illustrated his critical attitude towards the Reformation, and his view that Calvinism was equally detestable because of its promulgation of 'restrictive dogmas'.⁸⁰⁹

Unlike Ayer's reductive definition of truth, Trevor-Roper's idea of truth includes a moral dimension.⁸¹⁰ It is noteworthy that he treated 'Truth' (in its capitalised form) as the highest ideal of any intellectual activities which he was relentlessly after, and whose nature should not be confined to empirically verifiable facts. In a letter to Bernard Berenson's companion Nicky Mariano in the early 1950s (which Mariano would read to Berenson), Trevor-Roper wrote:

Now all this gossip; and you know that I (like Logan) 'hate gossip'. Give me the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. I admit I am not very strong on the Good, and the Beautiful of course I leave as the undisputed empire of BB; but I am a fanatic for the True.⁸¹¹

In this spirit, Trevor-Roper strongly condemned the Catholic historians from Cardinal Manning's biographer E.S. Purcell to David Mathew, who, as he believed, invented their materials to suit their conclusions.⁸¹² Similarly, Trevor-Roper's devastating review of Lawrence Stone, as Blair Worden persuasively argues, was not only due to their different understanding of the economic condition of the gentry, but more importantly because Trevor-Roper believed that Stone had distorted, falsified and neglected materials that contradicted his conclusion. Moreover, Trevor-Roper's criticism of

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, *The Wartime Journals*, p. 34.

⁸¹⁰ A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936), pp. 87-101.

⁸¹¹ Trevor-Roper to Nicky Mariano, 14 January 1952, in idem, *Letters from Oxford: Hugh Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson*, ed. Richard Davenport-Hines (London: Phoenix, 2007), p. 83.

⁸¹² Idem, *The Wartime Journals*, pp. 219-24.

Christopher Hill's work largely did not stem from the latter's Marxist conception of history, but from his intellectual dishonesty—in *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution*, Hill 'has simply galloped through a mass of often worthless secondary sources picking out whatever snippets—unverified and often misquoted—seem to the eye of faith to support his predetermined conclusions.'⁸¹³

To Trevor-Roper, 'Truth and Justice should be the guiding principles of a historian'. However, he was also fully aware of the significance of historical imagination, and insisted that Truth 'needs never be dull', and that the way in which Truth was conveyed also became a constituent part of Truth.⁸¹⁴ In this regard, Trevor-Roper was not a naive positivist who believed that facts spoke for themselves; his emphasis of 'Truth' should not be understood primarily as an historiographical position, but needs to be placed in a context in which he felt that rationality and intellectual pursuit were under threat by dogmatic ideologies.

As a leading light in contending the proximity of history and religion after the War, Toynbee was seen as a natural target by Trevor-Roper. But why did he choose Toynbee in particular, and why in such a controversial manner? After all, their religious views were not completely irreconcilable, since both adopted a latitudinarian stance against Catholic dogmatism. Trevor-Roper did not approve of Christopher Dawson's religious conception of history based on Catholic traditionalism, but his criticism of Dawson's Gifford Lectures was mild and reserved.⁸¹⁵ In comparison, his famous review of *A Study*

⁸¹³ Trevor-Roper to Valerie Pearl, 12 September 1965, in idem, *One Hundred Letters from Hugh Trevor-Roper*, p. 132.

⁸¹⁴ Trevor-Roper to Alan MacFarlane, 22 January 1967, ibid, p. 138.

⁸¹⁵ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Dark Ages', *New Statesman and Nation*, 11 March 1950, incorporated in idem, 279

of *History* was so savage that it drew attention from various media (including *TLS*, *The New York Times*, *The Tablet* etc.), and even became a public event in post-war British cultural history.⁸¹⁶ Trevor-Roper's review concerns less the validity of Toynbee's system than its political and intellectual implication—it was, as he recalled, not only Toynbee, but also those who still believed in Toynbee's ideas, that he aimed to attack.⁸¹⁷ As Philip Toynbee correctly pointed out in his defence of his father, 'I cannot defend Arnold Toynbee as a historian since I am not a historian myself. But then Mr Trevor-Roper's article was not attacking him as a historian. It was attacking him as a megalomaniac obscurantist and would-be messiah.'⁸¹⁸ A potential danger Trevor-Roper found in Toynbee's theory was its affinity with Hitler's conception of history; both viewed history as a succession of cultures, and saw themselves as 'the Messiah who would roll up one age of history and open out a new'. This comparison testifies to Trevor-Roper's reluctance to forgive Toynbee's meeting with Hitler (not incidentally, those he disliked in the post-war world—Carr, Butterfield, Toynbee—were all appeasers); it also suggests the possibly disastrous outcome when prophecy takes the form of defeatism.⁸¹⁹ Moreover, a distinctive feature of Trevor-Roper's review is its argument that this defeatist prophecy entails an implicit renunciation of certain values—reason, pluralism, liberty—that constituted the very core of Western civilisation.

In his review of William McNeill's biography of Toynbee, Trevor-Roper proffered

Historical Essays.

⁸¹⁶ 'Self-Criticism and the Historian', *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 July 1957; V.S. Pritchett, 'Literary Letter from England', *New York Times*, 4 August 1957; 'Toynbee Assailed', *The Tablet*, 15 June 1957; 'A Vigorous Denunciation of Toynbee's Millennium', *The Glasgow Herald*, 11 June 1957.

⁸¹⁷ SOC. Dacre, 11/2: Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'A Note on Toynbee's Millennium (1996)' (handwritten).

⁸¹⁸ Philip Toynbee, 'Letters', *Encounter*, July 1957, p. 71.

⁸¹⁹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Arnold Toynbee's Millennium', *Encounter*, June 1957, pp. 14-28.

three reasons why he had launched his devastating attack thirty years before: Toynbee's methods, egotism, and the detrimental effect of his message.⁸²⁰ Therefore, another factor which especially repelled Trevor-Roper, as many others also felt, was Toynbee's excessive intellectual arrogance—the tenth volume of *A Study of History* is essentially an intellectual biography of the author, which includes an almost thirty-page-long acknowledgment. Toynbee did not, as Trevor-Roper claimed, call himself an Ezekiel, but his conviction, which he already had as an undergraduate, that men like him can actually re-experience the past, once deprived of its root from Idealist philosophy, could be easily interpreted as a confident declaration of his superiority—that only he was gifted enough to break the boundary of time. After William McNeill's biography was published, he asked Trevor-Roper to write a review, in which he hoped that Trevor-Roper would give a fair comment on 'macro-history'; but he was disappointed to find that this issue was hardly mentioned in the review.⁸²¹ However, Trevor-Roper's refusal by no means implied that he was dismissive of the kind of global history McNeill was practising. In fact, Trevor-Roper had a high regard for *The Rise of the West*, which was not only because, as McNeill assumed, its argument could be used as 'a stick to beat Toynbee with', but more importantly because it was good history, particularly compared to Toynbee's bad history.⁸²² Apart from the implication of his system, what annoyed Trevor-Roper most was perhaps Toynbee's lack of truthfulness—Toynbee's claim that his pattern was discovered by scientific methods.

⁸²⁰ Ibid, 'Prophet', *New York Review of Books*, 17 October 1989.

⁸²¹ SOC. Dacre, 11/2: William McNeill to Hugh Trevor-Roper, 1 September 1989, 20 October 1989.

⁸²² Trevor-Roper, 'Prophet'.

3.2. Rationality and Transcendental Reality

Both Trevor-Roper and Berlin were acute in noticing the revival of Christianity in British intellectual life in the fifties. Trevor-Roper, as we have seen, drew a relationship between this revival and Catholic conversion—both were presupposed by dogmatism and a transcendental vision of truth. Apart from his public attack on Waugh and Toynbee, Trevor-Roper was never hesitant to express in private his antagonism towards C.S. Lewis, Greene and Butterfield. He not only mocked Lewis' eccentric lifestyle, but also pointed out that the 'reactionary nihilism' in the latter's religious thought was 'morbid and illiberal'.⁸²³ He called Butterfield 'a very undistinguished historian', and believed that *Christianity and History* was a book 'of darkest mysticism'. He also found it ironical that, partly under the influence of such prophets as Oakeshott and Butterfield, 'whereas forty years ago the metaphysical darkness of Oxford was dispelled by a growing pinpoint of light in Cambridge, Oxford is now defending the Cambridge rationalists against new and desperate bigotries in their original home'—a remark that once again testifies Trevor-Roper's intellectual distance from Oxford Idealism.⁸²⁴

In a similar vein, Berlin classified these Christian intellectuals as 'marvellously black characters', which betrays his scepticism about their preoccupation with discovering 'the seamier side of life'.⁸²⁵ In the cultural survey Berlin wrote for *Britannica Book of the Year 1951*, he particularly highlighted this new intellectual phenomenon, and mentioned the names of Butterfield, Basil Willey, Toynbee, Eliot,

⁸²³ Trevor-Roper to Wallace Notestein, 28 January 1951, Trevor-Roper, *Letters from Oxford*, p. 286.

⁸²⁴ Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson, 22 May 1949, *ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

⁸²⁵ Isaiah Berlin, 'Nineteen-Fifty-One: A Survey of Cultural Trends', *Britannica Book of the Year 1952* (Chicago/Toronto/London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), pp. xxii-xxiv.

Waugh and Greene as representatives:

In a sense, this attitude was the successor...to the other two great movements which had dominated modern times—psychoanalysis and Marxism. And like them, it conveyed to its followers the impression that it too was cutting through the mere surface of the phenomena to the hideous depths below which must be faced because they were real, because they existed, and exercised an influence more decisive upon the course of human life.⁸²⁶

In a letter to David Cecil in 1952, Berlin explained why he was dubious about this cultural movement (interestingly, as the recipient of Berlin's letter, Cecil was also known as a devout Christian and former member of the Inklings):

I am about to write a piece for the Encyclopaedia Britannica about 1951 & religion seems to me the prevalent tone...The kind of Eliot-Auden-Butterfield-Maurice-Graham Greene-Evelyn W.-Niebuhr etc. mood is what is fashionable, and it has made of a literarified religion the latest means of presenting unpleasant facts—which used to be the monopoly of Marxists and Psycho-Analysis users: the thing now is to say either a) the hideous things are hideous because men do not understand God...b) the hideous, chaotic, tragic is true: & religion is the mode of apprehending it: what is repellent to normal morality or aesthetic sense is the divine order: the uglier & bleaker & less intelligible the more necessary.⁸²⁷

Therefore, such prominent thinkers and writers who had a high public reputation as Eliot, Butterfield, Toynbee, C.S. Lewis, Waugh, and Greene were disparaged not only because some of them were dogmatic converts to Catholicism, but also because they all presumed a transcendental realm which could not be grasped by human reason. As Berlin claimed, 'during the ascendancy of sceptical rationalism, the voices of anti-rationalist faith are never wholly silent'.⁸²⁸ Moreover, Trevor-Roper and Berlin's remarks indicate that they were both aware of a noticeably growing Christian enthusiasm, particularly at Cambridge. It is well-known that when the

⁸²⁶ Ibid, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

⁸²⁷ Isaiah Berlin to David Cecil, 3 January 1952, in idem, *Enlightening*, p. 267.

⁸²⁸ Berlin, 'Nineteen-Fifty-One: A Survey of Cultural Trends', p. xxii.

Cambridge-educated literary critic William Empson returned to England after leaving the Far East for good in the early 1950s, he was indeed shocked by the influence of what he called the ‘neo-Christian’ approach in literary criticism; to some extent, his controversially anti-Christian work *Milton’s God* was an overt revolt against this religious revival.⁸²⁹ In the fifties, members of the English Faculty of Cambridge included such notable Christian intellectuals as Basil Willey and Stanley Bennett, who were joined by C.S. Lewis in 1953, when he acquired the Chair of Mediaeval and Renaissance Literature (interestingly, the second choice was Helen Gardner—another so-called ‘neo-Christian’).⁸³⁰ Meanwhile, both Butterfield and David Knowles (a Benedictine monk), for example, were senior members of the History Faculty. Moreover, the fact that Toynbee was offered the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge in the late 1940s, which he declined, also implied the influence of this religious revival at Cambridge; for it is almost inconceivable that Toynbee would have been even considered a candidate for the equivalent Chair at Oxford.⁸³¹

Trevor-Roper and Berlin’s critical attitude to religion, however, was not unusual among contemporary ‘sceptical rationalists’ and Cold War liberals. For example, Christianity was hardly, if ever, mentioned in Noel Annan’s *Our Age*, a work written with an intention to provide a comprehensive account of the history of ideas of their generation. Neither was Alan Bullock ready to admit any Christian heritages in European humanism and British political liberalism in his introductory studies of these

⁸²⁹ William Empson, *Milton’s God* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961); John Haffenden, *William Empson* (2 vols, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ii, pp. 432-53.

⁸³⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *C.S. Lewis: A Life. Eccentric, Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), p. 311-3.

⁸³¹ McNeill, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life*, pp. 208-9.

two traditions.⁸³² Maurice Bowra, who had a considerable influence on Berlin and Trevor-Roper's generation in the thirties, was always sceptical about any organised religions. He remained unconvinced of C.S. Lewis' intellectuality, and was particularly repelled by Pakenham and Waugh's conversion to Catholicism, calling *Brideshead Revisited* a 'masterpiece of papist Propaganda'.⁸³³ Moreover, the fact that Trevor-Roper's critical review of Toynbee was published in *Encounter* is a clear indication of this journal's religious stance (Trevor-Roper also wrote a much milder review of *A Study of History* for the *Sunday Times*).⁸³⁴

Despite worrying about the legal consequence of Trevor-Roper's piece, Irving Kristol shared his antagonism to the revival of religiosity in the post-war world.⁸³⁵ It was thus not coincidental that religion was not a frequently discussed topic in *Encounter*—even when it was, the tone of the reviewer tended to be critical. This was not least because Christian intellectuals were easily seen by some rational liberals as surrendering to, and even allying with, Communism. Christopher Hollis' 'Catholicism, Communism, and Liberalism' was one of the very few articles in *Encounter* that made a case for Catholicism; but his argument was rather based on an assertion that Catholicism was more 'liberal' than secular liberalism.⁸³⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising that Butterfield's *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* was critically reviewed by Robert Gorham Davis, another former Trotskyist. Davis criticised Butterfield's unwillingness to

⁸³² Alan Bullock (ed.), *The Liberal Tradition from Fox to Keynes* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956); idem, *The Humanist Tradition in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985).

⁸³³ Leslie Mitchell, *Maurice Bowra: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 315-17.

⁸³⁴ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Testing the Toynbee System', *Sunday Times*, 17 October 1954.

⁸³⁵ SOC. Dacre, 11/2: Irving Kristol to Hugh Trevor-Roper, 23 September 1957.

⁸³⁶ Christopher Hollis, 'Catholicism, Communism, and Liberalism', *Encounter*, September 1954, pp. 41-9.

attack Communism as an ideal, and his proposal to appease the Soviet Union. It is noteworthy that Butterfield's position here was not very different from Trevor-Roper's: co-existence with Russia was desirable, and a crusade against Communism would bring much harm.⁸³⁷ But the interesting point is that Davis linked Butterfield's political standpoint with his religious view: he maintained that Butterfield was supposed to boost the spirit of Western people by spiritual power, instead of over-stressing the limitedness of human intelligence.⁸³⁸

Non-teleological metaphysical determinism, as a theme Berlin discussed in both 'Historical Inevitability' and *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, is often neglected by students of his political thought. Nevertheless, the heading of one of Berlin's research notes—'Bradleyan metaphysical determinism'—suggests that this non-teleological metaphysics of history presupposes an antithesis between 'appearance' and 'a timeless, permanent, transcendental reality' which stands 'above', 'outside' or 'beyond' the actual happenings and explains the intrinsic connection between persons and events.⁸³⁹ Most people, nonetheless, blinded by their 'ignorance, stupidity, passion', are too immersed in their daily experience to be able to perceive this 'real' cause of history.⁸⁴⁰ According to Berlin, one of the proponents of this agnostic and apocalyptic view was Tolstoy, whom Berlin mentioned in 'Historical Inevitability', but whom he discussed more comprehensively in another piece of enduring reputation. *The Hedgehog and the Fox* was first published with a less appealing title—'Lev Tolstoy's Historical

⁸³⁷ Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* (London: The Epworth Press, 1953), pp. 102-125.

⁸³⁸ Robert Gorham Davis, 'The Longer View', *Encounter*, November 1953, pp. 80-84.

⁸³⁹ MS. Berlin, C 431, fo. 1.

⁸⁴⁰ Berlin, *Liberty*, pp. 107-8.

Scepticism’—in *Oxford Slavonic Papers* in 1951, and was reprinted by Weidenfeld and Nicolson only in 1953.⁸⁴¹ However, the original title indicates an often overlooked fact that this essay was intended to discuss Tolstoy’s philosophy of history, instead of promulgating value pluralism. Tolstoy’s ability to see ‘the manifold objects and situations ...in their full multiplicity’, according to Berlin, is contrasted with his persistent hunt for the necessity and ‘first cause’ of history.⁸⁴²

It is clear that Berlin’s elaboration of this non-teleological determinism was very similar to his criticism of the presumptions of those ‘black characters’ mentioned above. In ‘Historical Inevitability’, henceforth, Butterfield became one of Berlin’s most evident targets. According to Berlin, Butterfield’s presumption that human nature is full of weakness, blindness and imperfection implies that moral judgments in history are invalid.⁸⁴³ After the LSE Lecture was delivered, Berlin might have felt uneasy to find that his critical reference to Butterfield was reported by the *Manchester Guardian* (as a matter of fact, Butterfield was the only one who was mentioned in that article).⁸⁴⁴ Berlin immediately wrote to Butterfield, and made a clarification that he did not, as the newspaper reported, believe that Butterfield was a determinist, although he admitted that he did not endorse Butterfield’s moral view.⁸⁴⁵ In his reply, Butterfield seemed to be somewhat puzzled by Berlin’s letter; for he clearly saw a huge difference between their conceptions of history, as if there was no common ground. Berlin, he wrote, envisaged ‘History as “human life in time”’; whereas his view ‘start[s] from an extremely

⁸⁴¹ Idem, ‘Lev Tolstoy’s Historical Scepticism’, *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 2 (1951), pp. 17–54.

⁸⁴² Idem, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, p. 11, 37, 40.

⁸⁴³ Berlin, *Liberty*, p. 133, 135.

⁸⁴⁴ ‘Mr Berlin’s Lecture’, *Manchester Guardian*, 13 May 1953.

⁸⁴⁵ MS Butterfield, C 531, fo. B 81: Isaiah Berlin to Herbert Butterfield, 15 May 1953.

moralising Old Testament basis.’⁸⁴⁶

Butterfield was indeed known, and often criticised, for his denial of making moral judgments in history. Nevertheless, morality was a central theme in Butterfield’s conception of history: what he argued was that moral questions could only be answered by Providence, for rationality could not judge rights from wrongs. From an Augustinian standpoint, Butterfield argued that Christians should blame the sins and forgive the sinners. As he notably argued in his *Christianity and History*, it is less appropriate to expose Hitler’s moral crime than to investigate how such disasters were made possible in the twentieth century as a result of the removal of a certain ‘subtle safeguard’ of society; therefore, ‘what history does is rather to uncover man’s universal sin’, and it was the ‘cupidity’ of common people from which calamities stemmed.⁸⁴⁷ Moreover, Butterfield maintained that an historian should try to appreciate ‘his neighbour’s shortcomings’, for the latter was often a slave of his circumstances. In this regard, Butterfield confidently told Toynbee that ‘if I am right in the general notion about the texture in human events, this does at least greatly enlarge the range and scope for charitable-mindedness in the Christians’.⁸⁴⁸

From Berlin’s standpoint, however, Butterfield’s moral view of history would effectively dismiss men’s motives and ‘moral ideas’, as Carr, Marxists, and ‘economically inclined’ historians did.⁸⁴⁹ Therefore, it seems that, as Butterfield pointed out, there was an irreconcilable gap between their views on the ultimate source of

⁸⁴⁶ MS. Berlin, C 134, fos. 86-8: Herbert Butterfield to Isaiah Berlin, 16 May 1953.

⁸⁴⁷ Butterfield, *Christianity and History*, p. 30, 35-8, 45; Michael Bentley, *The Life and Thoughts of Herbert Butterfield* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 220-2.

⁸⁴⁸ MS Butterfield, C 531, fo. T106: Herbert Butterfield to Arnold J. Toynbee, 7 June 1950.

⁸⁴⁹ MS Butterfield, C 122/6: Isaiah Berlin to Herbert Butterfield, 15 September 1953.

morality. Berlin did not deny this; but he also tried to convince Butterfield that the intellectual origins of twentieth-century catastrophes precisely resided in the fact that ‘different people pursued different ideals and the same people pursued incompatible ideals’, as if there were no common grounds at all.⁸⁵⁰ To Berlin, the existence of certain values shared by different moral ideals is presupposed by the effectiveness of rationality—men are capable of negotiating and making trade-offs. Berlin and Butterfield’s debate, therefore, also illustrates that the alleged tension between value pluralism and liberal principles in Berlin’s thought needs to be re-considered in the light of the confrontation between Christian morality and the rational-liberal ethnic view in the 1950s.

Berlin was opposed to making a case for religion on the ground that it provided consolation and a sense of certainty when men were experiencing catastrophes; for he found distressing in this religious revival a dismissive attitude towards ‘sceptical rationalism’ and common sense, which contradicted his Realist belief that the meaning of a thing lies nowhere but in itself. Reaching old age, Berlin once wrote an interesting letter to Henry Hardy, claiming that in contrast with ‘those who, like Freddie Ayer or Trevor-Roper, are bone-dry atheists and simply deny and denounce the whole thing’, he himself understood ‘religious emotion and the effect and influence which it has upon people’s characters and lives’.⁸⁵¹ This remark, on the one hand, ironically demonstrates that Trevor-Roper was so well-known for his attack on religious thinkers that his real religious attitude was overlooked; on the other hand, it reflects that the ways in which

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁵¹ Hardy, *In Search of Isaiah Berlin: A Literary Adventure*, pp. 184-5.

Berlin and Trevor-Roper's generation treated religion were complicated.⁸⁵² Both Trevor-Roper's denunciation of religious dogmatism and Berlin's criticism of Providence stemmed from a robust defence of rationality. Their sceptical rationalism represents a philosophical position which esteems empirical truth, and opposes presupposing a transcendental reality, but which also keeps a distance from positivism. This again indicates the significance of philosophy in their intellectual development—their reaction against Idealism and criticism of religious irrationalism were closely connected.

Conclusion

This chapter primarily explores a typically Christian understanding of history as promulgated and underlined by a number of Christian intellectuals from the thirties to fifties, when Christianity was noticeably revived, and religious topics were frequently discussed, in British cultural life. As we have seen, certain basic presuppositions of this Christian conception of history, including the recognition of Providence in history and denunciation of secular idea of progress, were not only related to the Second World War, but also to an ubiquitous belief among both churchmen and lay intellectuals that religious faith was urgently needed in an age of cultural crisis that resulted from secular liberalism.

In addition, this chapter focuses on the conflict between this Christian conceptualisation of history and the humanist liberalism that has been discussed in Chapter III. It attempts to demonstrate that a fundamental, and largely irreconcilable,

⁸⁵² Matthew Grimley, 'Public Intellectuals and the Media', in Jane Garnett (ed.), *Redefining Christian Britain: Post-1945 Perspectives* (London: SCM Press, 2007), p.269.

point at which these two persuasions differed was the evaluation of rationality in history. To Butterfield and Toynbee (in his Christian period), for example, it is a quintessentially Christian presumption that the ultimate meaning of history is endowed by Providence and hence beyond the reach of the human intellect. To such sceptical rationalists as Berlin and Trevor-Roper, who insisted on making a distinction between sceptical rationalism and positivism, however, this presumption, which they recognised as intrinsic to the Christian revival of which they staunchly disapproved, was incompatible with a whole set of values that they had already accepted in the thirties and were adamant to defend in the fifties, including toleration, human motivation, and a sceptical empiricist view of truth.

Moreover, this chapter seeks to make some historiographical contributions to the study of certain individual thinkers. For example, it examines the development of Trevor-Roper's religious thought, especially his complicated attitude towards Catholicism, and aims at overturning the impression that he was always an unswerving critic of Catholicism. This chapter also provides a more contextual study of the ways in which Toynbee's last volumes were critically evaluated, and suggests that the decline of his reputation in British intellectual life should not be ascribed exclusively to the liberals.

Conclusion

I.

This thesis primarily examines four typical modes of historical thought that were prevalent in British intellectual life, as well as debates between, and controversies that resulted from, them, between the 1920s and the early 1960s. By conceptualising the historical process, many historical thinkers discussed in this thesis sought to make sense of the present by orientating its place in history; therefore, a significant theme which they were preoccupied with was the prospects for and stability of Western society. Their respective conceptions of history, as this thesis shows, need to be appreciated in the light of prevailing mentalities among intellectuals during different periods, for example, from prevalent optimism after a new international order was established in the twenties, to widespread recognition of Soviet Communism as a new civilisation in the thirties, and then from a resort to spiritual force when civilisation was threatened by Fascism, to a renewed confidence in, and acclamation of, certain values rooted in the Western tradition in a post-war world.

Meanwhile, these conceptions of history also served as ideological underpinnings of many intellectuals' political and religious thinking as discussed in this thesis. Therefore a certain thinker's conceptualisation of the historical process is relevant, but not reducible, to his political stance; on the contrary, I suggest that sometimes one's historical view helps us have a clearer understanding of the nuance of his political thought. For example, although Toynbee was often regarded as a liberal, and Leonard Woolf a Fabian socialist, they both accepted a quintessentially

internationalist-cum-civilisational assumption that history was marching towards unification of different civilisations. In addition, the changes in Carr's attitude towards Fascism and Soviet Communism, and his never being a serious ideological fellow-traveller, need to be understood in the light of his Realist historical view. Henceforth, it is implausible simply to reduce British historical thinking during this period into such antithesis as between liberal anti-determinism and Marxist totalitarian explanations of history.

In addition, this thesis provides an explanation of why such a comprehensive history of humankind as Toynbee had written became unpopular in British intellectual life after the 1950s. First and foremost, it was obviously related to a general feeling among historians that this approach tended to be unscholarly and methodologically dubious, especially after Toynbee's reputation was damaged by numerous mistakes being found in his work; in addition, the determinist implication of such an approach was often underlined, not least because it was often associated with Spengler, whose idea of history had never been seriously accepted by British intellectuals. Another significant factor particularly highlighted in this thesis is that Toynbee's microscopic and civilisational approach was licensed by the intellectual atmosphere of the twenties; however, certain presumptions of the internationalist view of history, which the first three volumes of *A Study of History* were fundamentally informed by, had not been widely accepted since the thirties. In addition, Toynbee's strong religious concern displayed in the last six volumes was no longer resonant once religion ceased to be a significant theme after the sixties. Nevertheless, historical writing with an implicit but

identifiable preconception of the historical process did not completely disappear. To some extent, Carr's multi-volume history of Soviet Russia was written with an intention to vindicate his philosophy of history by showing how employing historical realism and embracing the inevitable tendency of history helped to transform such an economically backward country as Russia into a Great Power. Moreover, the worldwide reputation enjoyed by such Marxist historians as Eric Hobsbawm, whose works are more or less informed by Marxist historical premises (despite being in a less determinist way), and the growing influence of global history as a sub-discipline in recent years, seem to suggest that Berlin (whose reputation has experienced a significant decline recently) and Trevor-Roper are not necessarily on the victorious side of history as they appeared to be in the fifties.

II.

The notion 'philosophy of history' itself implies that a thinker's philosophical stance is frequently involved in his conceptualisation of history. The debates about the nature of history revealed that the antagonism between Idealism and Realism still had its relevancy outside the philosophers' group in the 1950s. This does not suggest that each historical conceptualisation as discussed in this thesis necessarily corresponded to a certain philosophical persuasion; nor does this thesis intend, as some recently published works do, to argue that Idealism had such a long afterlife as continuing to shape British political thought until the 1980s.⁸⁵³ Rather, the import of these two persuasions did not lie in their specific arguments, but in their philosophical postulates.

⁸⁵³ For example, Admir Skodo, *The Afterlife of Idealism: The Impact of New Idealism on British Historical and Political Thought, 1945-1980* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

This thesis therefore suggests that the influence of both Idealism and Realism on historical thinking between the 1920s and 1950s is twofold: first, some of their basic presumptions largely informed their respective advocates' view of rationality and the nature of historical process; secondly, they affected, though by no means determined, the ways in which intellectuals identified themselves and each other. Henceforth, Berlin and Trevor-Roper were always well aware of the intellectual distance from their position to Collingwood and Toynbee's, even though, for example, a similarity between certain aspects of Berlin and Collingwood's ideas of history was often recognised.

One of the two central themes which different conceptions of history discussed in this thesis debated was the limit and proper use of reason—a problem often associated with a constellation of notions such as positivism, rationalism and Realism. When examining rationalism as a significant topic in twentieth-century British intellectual history, Michael Oakeshott seems a most obvious starting point. A not unimportant reason why this thesis has nonetheless not particularly focused on Oakeshott's criticism of rationalism is that both his historical and political ideas have been comprehensively studied in recent years. Additionally, although Oakeshott's interest in the philosophy of history had already been illustrated by *Experience and its Modes* and 'The Activity of Being a Historian' (1958), his primary concern was still to examine historical thought as a form of human experience in the 1950s; it was not until the 1980s, with the publication of *On History and other Essays*, that his elaboration of this problem came into light in a more mature form.⁸⁵⁴ Oakeshott famously defined rationalism as upheld

⁸⁵⁴ Michael Oakeshott, *On History and other Essays* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

by those political thinkers who were ‘at once sceptical and optimistic: sceptical because there is no opinion, no habit, no belief, nothing so firmly rooted or so widely held that he hesitates to question it and to judge it by what he calls his “reason”; optimist, because the Rationalist never doubts the power of his “reason” (when properly applied) to determine the worth of a thing, the truth of an opinion or the propriety of an action.’⁸⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that Oakeshott’s target was not confined to such political ideologies as Marxism, managerialism, and social engineering, which sought to reform society by applying a set of presupposed rules, but also doctrines that were used to combat these ideologies, for example, the plan to ‘resist all planning’, as exemplified in Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*.⁸⁵⁶ Disparaging the idea that politics should be identified with the application of a fixed set of principles, Oakeshott was often regarded as a Cold War liberal; and the commonality between his and Berlin’s anti-monist political thought was sometimes assumed. Noel Annan, for example, lamented that Berlin and Oakeshott, despite both promulgating political pluralism, never exchanged their views, and even avoided attacking each other directly in public.⁸⁵⁷

Therefore, was Berlin a rationalist in an Oakeshottian sense becomes a question that repays probing into. On the one hand, Berlin’s antagonism towards scientism, and his idea that politics should not be reduced to solving technical problems seem to betray a similarity with Oakeshott’s position. On the other hand, the fact that certain underlying principles of Oakeshott’s works, in particular his promulgation of the notion

⁸⁵⁵ Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991), p.6.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 26.

⁸⁵⁷ Annan, *Our Age*, p. 401.

of 'tradition', inspired such leading conservative thinkers as Cowling in criticising liberal optimism clearly implies an intellectual distance between Oakeshott and other liberals. Berlin did not mention Oakeshott much in public or in his writings; but his opinion of the latter in private was undoubtedly critical—Berlin was obviously offended when he learnt that he was compared by Michael Postan with Oakeshott. Moreover, Berlin's value pluralism is underpinned by a belief that trade-offs and negotiations are always needed in politics, now that values are not always mutually compatible; therefore, the difference between pluralism and relativism resides in the former's recognition of certain core values accepted universally and rationally. In a similar vein, Trevor-Roper, known as a High Tory in politics, nonetheless cherished rationality, and regarded it as the premise of truthfulness—a basic but admirable intellectual merit to him. Trevor-Roper was, therefore, never fond of Oakeshott's idea, and dismissed him as another Cambridge-produced obscurantist.

The conundrums above reveal the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of Oakeshott's discussion of rationalism at once: inclusive because rationalism seems to contain almost all secular ideologies, thus neglecting the different senses in which rationality was presumed by each; exclusive because Oakeshott largely neglected rationalism as it was discussed by contemporary theologians and philosophers of history. Henceforth, the conceptions of history elaborated in this thesis provide another perspective to re-evaluate rationalism and the ways in which it was contested in British intellectual culture during the first half of the twentieth century. First, rationalism as a philosophical concept archetypally associated with the Enlightenment was almost disparaged by all

forms of historical philosophy discussed in this thesis, on the ground that it exceedingly underlined the power of reason and scientific methods. Toynbee's scepticism about rationalism, for example, was manifest in his works during both his pre-religious and religious periods, and particularly cohered with his contention that the spiritual crisis of the West arose from industrialism and scientism's dominance of human thought. To many theologians and Christian thinkers, rationalism meant the renunciation of faith, and was equivalent to a secular idea of progress buttressed by scientific laws of human society. Moreover, even to such liberal thinkers as Berlin, rationalism in its positivist and monist form, namely, the idea that a society can always be rationally structured and moulded into an ideal form, or the belief that history can be scientifically explained, needs to be condemned.⁸⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that hardly any historical thinkers in the twentieth century were still committed to rationalism defined in such a strict sense; although some social scientists, such as Popper, continued to maintain that scientific methods can be applied into humanities disciplines, and that making short-term projections about history is legitimate.

Secondly, rationalism was also construed in a sceptical way that denoted the ability and willingness to make free enquiries, and was defended by such liberals as Berlin and Trevor-Roper, who believed that common-sense rationality was being threatened by historical determinism and religious dogmatism in the fifties. Influenced by and accepting certain presuppositions of Oxford Realism and logical positivism, sceptical rationalists of this kind often employed an empirical, non-transcendental idea of truth,

⁸⁵⁸ Berlin, *Liberty*, pp. 191-200.

and dismissed any metaphysical system, which they believed was not only inherent in such philosophical persuasion as Idealism, but also informed the religious revival in the fifties, as irrational, obscurantist and nonsensical.

The third aspect of rationalism which different conceptions of history debated was historical rationality. Although Carr harshly denounced the internationalist idea of history for presupposing a utopian ideal in history, both he and Toynbee contended, despite coming from very different starting points, that being historically rational hinged on understanding the pattern or tendency of history. Such internationalists as Toynbee, Murray, Zimmern, Wells, and Woolf identified historical rationality with the recognition that the world would be politically, economically and culturally unified. Despite being critical of this conclusion, Carr, in a similar vein, argued that it was historically irrational to overlook the socio-economic realities that determined the historical tendency, and to swim against the tide of history, as he believed the liberal idealists did. In this regard, historical rationality, to both Toynbee and Carr, was measured by the extent to which the one followed the trend of history; his own motives are thus irrelevant. This presumption, as we have seen, was in one respect accorded with the providential view of history held by many Christian intellectuals: now that the historical process, directed by Providence, cannot be fully known or conceptualised by human intellect, men's behaviours and wills were historically insignificant. Interestingly, this accordance was self-consciously recognised by Carr: after *What is History?* (in which Butterfield's view was censured) was published and critically reviewed by Butterfield, Carr told Butterfield that 'in many respects we are not really so far apart, since what I

call “progress” you call “Providence””; while his remark that ‘those with whom my differences are much more serious still hold back’ was clearly an allusion to Berlin.⁸⁵⁹

In contrast to historical rationality construed in this way, Berlin and Trevor-Roper’s liberal conception of history was pivoted on men’s freedom, which Berlin and Trevor-Roper believed had been nullified by the realist conception of history from the Left, and anti-Communism from the Right. To them, making a case for the rationality of historical agents is not dismissing socio-economic realities in history. Rather, it is buttressed by a belief that, however much men are blinded by their passion and ignorance, or subjugated to impersonal power, the historical effectiveness of the choices they make based on their rationality should not be completely disregarded; for otherwise, history would be devoid of any unrealised possibilities, and moral judgement in history would become impossible. It was, as we have seen, on these bifurcated views of historical rationality and antithetical presumptions of human nature that the debates between different conceptions of history examined in this thesis centred.

III.

Apart from rationalism, moralism was also a theme discussed throughout this thesis. The contests between different philosophies of history, to some extent, exemplified the ways in which those public moralists who were loyal to the nineteenth-century progressive tradition were refuted by realists in the thirties, and how they were replaced by a new group of ‘moralists’ whose discussion of morality centred on defending moral values against moral nihilism, instead of fulfilling moral ideals. As

⁸⁵⁹ MS Butterfield, C 531, fo. C12: E.H Carr to Herbert Butterfield, 12 December 1961.

we have seen in chapter I, Toynbee (in his pre-religious period), Murray, and the Hammonds were historical moralists whose historical writings were informed by their progressive politics, and imbued with a presumption that the progress of civilisation resided in its morality—the common comparison they made between the West and Hellenic civilisation, a society in which they believed the human spirit had made its greatest achievement, clearly betrays this ethical concern. This moralist view of history, however, was denounced by Carr and by other historical realists, who argued that moral ideas were utopian, naive, and relative to the socio-economic condition of a certain society. Although the fact that moralism became a vehemently debated topic by philosophers of history in the fifties was obviously related to post-war reflection on the Second World War and the moral threat of Soviet Communism, Carr's debate with Berlin over moral judgements in history in the 1950s, was not, as Carr believed, a continuation of that between moral idealism and realism. Berlin did not presuppose a moral ideal as the telos of history; neither did he encourage moral condemnation of individuals in history. Rather, his argument was largely composed of two presumptions: 1) ordinary language is embedded with moral evaluation; 2) certain moral ideas are universally valid and historically effective. The real issue that he and Carr were in disagreement about, therefore, as we have seen in Chapter III, was the power of ideas. In comparison, Berlin's debate with Butterfield over moral judgements reflected the irreconcilability between Christian and secular moralities: to Butterfield, Christianity is the ultimate source of morality, so it is beyond the human intellect to make moral judgements in history; whereas to Berlin, even two contradictory moral ideals are bound

to share certain common ethical values.

Last but not least, the moral dimension in Berlin and Trevor-Roper's decision to practise the history of ideas, as it is discussed in Chapter III, provides another perspective to look into the disciplinary history of intellectual history in Britain. Recognising the autonomy of ideas is naturally a prerequisite of the history of ideas; so it is not coincidental that Marxism and Namierism are both implicitly regarded as the greatest enemies by Quentin Skinner, J.G.A. Pocock and John Dunn in their 'manifestos' for intellectual history in the sixties. In comparison, Berlin and Trevor-Roper, who were more acute with the challenges of historical determinism and historical realism in the fifties, particularly underlined the power of ideas in history. So unlike Skinner (at least in the 1970s), who still held a more or less Collingwoodian contention that a past thinker's text should be regarded as answering the questions raised by his contemporaries, Berlin and Trevor-Roper (although Trevor-Roper's intellectual history has a more scholarly basis, and Berlin's seems more impressionist) both believed that ideas contained real political implications, floated in time, affected people's minds, and might even influence the course of history—so Vico's ideas could be depicted by Berlin as being ahead of his times, and the significance of Erasmianism was highlighted by Trevor-Roper in the Cold War. Moreover, both Berlin and Trevor-Roper were keen on drawing historical parallels, and assumed that the past and the present were communicative via historical imagination or having a sense of reality; although they also warned, as their criticism of Toynbee shows, that parallelism was never unconditional. To some extent, this approach was also manifest in the works of a

number of Oxford-educated philosophers, historians and classicists (although not all of them were considered ‘proper’ intellectual historians by today’s standards), such as Murray, Zimmern, the Hammonds, and Bernard Williams. In this respect, Berlin and Trevor-Roper’s case seems to indicate an Oxonian tradition of the history of ideas which existed alongside, and even before, the triumph of contextualism in Cambridge.

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