Intellectual History and Philosophy of Science

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These days few people are happy to be called 'intellectual historians'. Intellectual history has indeed been in the doldrums since the 1960s. It has been charged with all sorts of vices: with 'internalism' and 'intellectualism', concentrating on theories and doctrines, ignoring social context, social uses and forms of association of the learned; with elitism, concentrating on great authors, great works, great canonical traditions, but paying little attention to local traditions, popular culture, and the reception and criticism of works; with 'purism', considering the intellectual content of works as something independent of ways of writing and types of persuasion.

Against this it may be observed that in much of the recent disciplinary history which focuses on the social context, literary form, and reception of works the baby is thrown out with the bath-water: contact with the content of works and traditions is lost. Of course, there are distinguished exceptions to this; to cite just one instance, the writings of Nancy Struever on history of historiography, which combine close reading of rhetorical tactics with fascinating analysis of contents.

The time has come, I think, for a revival of the traditional concern of intellectual historians with the contents of past disciplines. However, I am not advocating a return to the earlier obsession with theories and doctrines. My own view, like R. G. Collingwood's in *An Autobiography*, is that we should focus on questions and problems rather than doctrines and theories. In particular, we should try to uncover the 'scenes' of past inquiries, the ranges of issues that were both real for, and thought worth pursuing by, past philosophers, historians, lawyers, medics, etc. This approach can, I believe, both do justice to past disciplines in their historical settings, and illuminate our present-day disciplines by to reconstructing their genealogies.

How one should proceed in the attempt to uncover past scenes of inquiry is a very large question indeed, and I shall merely indicate some of the requisite types of historical work.

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One crucial issue is the placement of past disciplines in past schemes of knowledge, as evidenced in encyclopedias, university curricula, institutional arrangements for the arts and sciences, etc. In this connection it is important to note that, prior to the nineteenth century, study of the disciplines central to intellectual history, namely philosophy and history, was preparatory for study in the higher faculties of Law, Medicine and Theology. Thus in my own work on sixteenth-century Paduan philosophy I have found the key to an understanding of the philosophical issues to lie in the links between philosophy and medicine in the University, and between philosophy and ethics in the private tuition of Venetian patricians by the Paduan professors.

In *The Scenes of Inquiry: on the Reality of Questions in the Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1991) I have argued that to grasp past scenes of inquiry we need to look at the entire range of conventions, practices, and strategies that were involved in the posing and settling of questions. This means that we should be concerned not just with logical and rational argument, but with all forms of composition and persuasion. In my work on Galileo, for example, I have argued that rhetoric plays at least as large a role as demonstration in his formation of new scenes of inquiry for the mathematical sciences. Further, it should be noted that literary strategies are by no means all that is involved in the posing and settlement of questions. A whole variety of social tactics, of recruitment of allies and marginalization of foes, is involved, and the modes of production of books and the ways they were perceived and read are of the greatest importance for this kind of disciplinary history. Another area vital for this approach is the history of education. For scenes of inquiry are conditioned by the ways in which the knowledge and skills of a discipline are handed on from generation to generation. It is an outstanding merit of the work of Charles Schmitt that it links the history of education with the history of philosophy in such a way as to illuminate the

The history of medicine is becoming trivial, technical, and insular. There is declining concern with events before 1800, and with ideas, intellectual aspirations, and collective mentalities. If this trend is replicated in other spheres of history, the prospects for intellectual history as a whole must be extremely bleak.

issues which really concerned past philosophers.

In sum, I believe that through concentration on questions the intellectual historian can overcome the divide between context and content, between 'external' and 'internal' history. For such a question-oriented historiography, the coming-into-being and passing-away of disciplines can be understood only through the history of practices—practices of education and learning, of composition and persuasion, of the making and reading of books.

Medicine and Intellectual History

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Although sometimes regarded as a self-contained specialism, adventitious to the interests of intellectual history, medicine has played an integral role in the formation of Western culture. Subjects falling within the traditional scope of medical education are a substantial slice of intellectual history, and those trained as doctors have played an important role in intellectual affairs, extending well beyond the confines of their discipline. Medicine has constituted one of the main avenues for the advancement of higher education and for the creation of an educated élite.

Medicine has therefore been one of the main vehicles for the cohesiveness of European culture, and accordingly it must figure in any project concerned with the balanced appraisal of intellectual history. It is scarcely necessary to provide specific examples to demonstrate the importance of medicine, but the Hippocratic school in Greek antiquity, Galen in the Hellenistic period, the Galenism and Aristotelianism of the medical schools of the Renaissance, medical humanists and polymaths such as Conrad Gessner, the many doctors participating in the first permanent scientific academies of the seventeenth century or in Parisian intellectual affairs during the Enlightenment or the French Revolution, and finally Freud and Jung in the present century, are sufficient to indicate the futility of excluding medicine from intellectual history. They also suggest that the perspective of intellectual history is fundamental for the success of the history of medicine.

The case for the intellectual history of medicine is unquestionable, but realism forces us to conclude that this subject has not advanced in line with other facets of intellectual history to the extent that might have been expected. This shortcoming is particularly notable in the Anglo-Saxon world. This conclusion is unexpected and perhaps surprising, especially considering that in the course of the last twenty-five years the history of medicine as an academic discipline has advanced from virtually nothing to becoming one of the most fashionable areas of historical research. However, all of this has happened without bringing about a proportional contribution to the field of intellectual history.

Prevailing fashions are now very different from in the past, but from point of view of intellectual history, it is arguable that the situation is no better than in 1960. By that stage the foundations for the intellectual history of medicine had been laid by such scholars as Sigerist, Edelstein, Temkin, Ackerknecht, Rosen, and Pagel, most of whom were then nearing the end of their academic careers. Under Temkin's editorship, the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* was an impressive vehicle for the intellectual history of medicine.

In the 1960s there was no shortage of recruits wanting to cultivate and indeed expand the broader conception of the history of medicine, which was still at that time in Britain at least dominated by the narrow, technical, and positivistic approach absorbed from the history of science. This next stage in the development of the history of medicine was inevitably influenced by some of the powerful ideological forces of the day, the effect of which was to promote much greater attention to social and contextual factors, and relate the history of medicine to social movements or the wider process of economic and political change. The history