GUEST ESSAY

What is Happening to the History of Ideas?

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> "Terzo principal aspetto è una storia d'umane idee. . . ."
>
> Vico, *Scienza nuova*

The "history of ideas" in this country is now entering its second half-century—at least insofar as its principal vehicle, the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, is just publishing its fifty-first volume. In its American incarnation the history of ideas has been associated above all with the work of the principal of this journal, Arthur O. Lovejoy, his colleagues, his epigones, and some of his critics.[1] Yet *ante litteram* this field of study has had a much longer career and has been international in scope. European scholars, too, have long been practicing *Ideen-* or *Begriffsgeschichte*, *l'histoire des idées*; and *la storia delle idee*; and any comprehensive picture should take into account the larger cultural and temporal horizons as well as the more parochial tradition.

Where should such an account begin? The first problem, according to George Boas, is just what historians are writing the history of, especially since there were, according to his count, twenty-five meanings of the term "idea." An important question, no doubt, but one which may not yield to direct philosophical inquiry. Over two and a half millennia there has never been agreement among philosophers about what ideas are; and it hardly seems likely that intellectual historians can resolve the problem by coming up with a better definition. For at least three centuries, adopting the conventions of philosophers, historians of thought have been trying to trace the trajectories of such enduring categories of thought and successions of speculative systems that have achieved academic recognition; and nowadays, it seems to me, the result for the "history of ideas" has been to close off rather than to open up avenues of inquiry, discovery, and criticism—and, methodologically at least, to confine it to a culturally impoverished canon. So my focus is not on the history of ideas as a recollection or celebration of what Hegel called "philosophemes" (similar to Lovejoy's "unit-ideas") but rather on the historical investigation of the textual and cultural remains of human thought processes, however philosophers may conceive of these.

What is the *history of ideas*? The question, since it concerns a human activity, is more straightforward; but a satisfactory answer must be more indirect, if only because the history of ideas (or intellectual history, which is a better term for the enterprise) is located at the juncture of a number of disciplines. Despite claims for "autonomy"[2] this field must be approached in

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[1] See the recent critical tributes in *JHI*, 48 (1987), 187–263; the orthodox summary by Lovejoy's colleague George Boas, *The History of Ideas* (New York, 1969); and my survey of the "Horizons of Intellectual History" in *JHI*, 48, 143–69. Extending that discussion, I offer observations made on the basis of my experience (including the reviewing of over 1000 articles submitted to, and the writing of over 1500 notices of "books received" by, the *JHI*) during five years as executive editor in succession to Philip P. Wiener, who presided over the Journal during its first forty-five years. Thanks to the current members of the History of Ideas Club founded by Lovejoy at the Johns Hopkins University (including Jerome Schneewind, J. G. A. Pocock, and Orest Ranum) for comments on an earlier version of these remarks (as well as more recent warnings and suggestions by Lewis Beck, Allan Megill, Anthony Grafton, and Bonnie Smith). In this connection I should also like to draw attention to a new series of volumes drawn from this Journal ("Library of the History of Ideas," edited by John Yolton), beginning with one edited by me, *The History of Ideas: Canon and Variations*, including articles by and about Lovejoy and theoretical questions concerning intellectual history.

[2] Leonard Krieger in *JHI*, 34 (1973), 499–516 (and see below, n. 47). Jeremy L. Tobey's valuable *The History of Ideas: A Bibliographical Introduction* (2 vols.; Ox-

the first instance through these more established disciplines, which permit a more concrete inquiry than the bluntly scholastic and unhistorical *Quid*? of impatient and childlike curiosity. So I should like to reframe the question from the perspective of three of these disciplines, whose intersection has situated the modern field of intellectual history:

1. history (what has the history of ideas been?),
2. literature (how is the history of ideas written?), and
3. philosophy (what should the history of ideas be?).

Of these the first two (the *quaestiones facti*, as Kant would say) may lead to plausible answers about the past and present practice of intellectual history, while the third (the *quaestio juris*) invites more arbitrary and theoretical reflections.

What Has the History of Ideas Been?

The history of ideas has a mixed heritage, but most obviously it appears as an offshoot of the history of philosophy. This is clear in view not only of Lovejoy's seminal work in this country but also of the longer history of the field in its European scope. The link with philosophy has been evident at least since the time of Aristotle's critiques of his predecessors and of particular branches of philosophy which came to form separate disciplines. Aristotelian convention divides these disciplines into "theoretical" and "practical" kinds of knowledge, the first including natural sciences, the second political and moral science; and the histories of these particular areas have flourished at least since the Renaissance. Periodically, this proto-history of ideas associated with the Greek philosophical canon has aspired to embrace an even larger, "encyclopedic" range and indeed, according to a humanist formula, "all the arts and sciences."[3] In the sixteenth century, for example, Christophe Milieu proposed a view of universal history which would include the history of nature, (*historia naturae*, including man's physical environment), the history of prudence (*historia prudentiae*, including mechanical as well as the liberal arts), history of literature (*historia litteraturae*), the history of government (*historia principatus*), and the history of wisdom generally (*historia sapientiae*).[4] Chronically, since the Renaissance, a series of "new histories" have followed this encyclopedic impulse toward what would eventually be called "intellectual" and even "cultural" history, and it appears also in the eclectic and interdisciplinary vision of Lovejoy, which provided the theoretical agenda for the *Journal of the History of Ideas* a half-century ago.

"Spirit" (spiritus, esprit, Geist) *was the key to the divergence between the history of philosophy and "the richer and more diffuse genre of intellectual history."*

Academic convention, since the very founding of the universities, has also operated to impose philosophical—and implicitly or explicitly theological—patterns on the history of thought. Education was the teaching of "discipline" and "doctrine"—literally "indoctrination," as sixteenth-century legislation declared—and the mechanism was that process of institutionalized influence I like to call "magisterism" (with its necessary analogue "discipulism"). By this I mean the literal formation of eponymous "-isms" by the students, or disciples (*discipuli*), attracted masters (*magistri*) of particular doctrines.[5] On the general level this means the specific disciplines taught, or learned, by "jurists" (*iuristae*), "humanists" (*humanistae*, students of the humanities), and others such; more particularly it referred to the doctrine of individual schools, including as "Thomists," "Averroists," "Bartolists," etc.—not to speak of the "atheists" and "deists" that came to threaten orthodoxy and the ecclesiastical monopoly of learning. The history of philosophy took much of its perspective and structure from the careers of these disciplinary and doctrinal "-isms" and anti "-isms," which reflected the intellectual and generational patterns of a university learning still permeated by "scholasticism" as late as the eighteenth century.

By then, of course, scholars had become

ford, 1975), with its disciplinary rubrics (and interdisciplinary oversights), illustrates the difficulty of maintaining this "autonomy" in practical terms; see my review in *American Historical Review*, 82 (1977), 921.

[3] *Methode qu'on doit tenir en la lecture de l'histoire* (Paris, 1579), 550, and Henri de la Popelinière, *Idee de l'histoire accomplie* (Paris, 1599), 267.

[4] *De Scribenda universitatis rerum historia libri quinque* (Basel, 1556), 244, 186, etc.

[5] Discussion in D. R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology* (Cambridge, 1981), 136–45.

In diverging from the philosophical canon, the history of ideas not only became alienated from "pure reason" and from "pure ideas" but also became entangled in ideological issues and questions of social value and context.

more reflective, more secular, and more "critical" than their magisterial forebears; and they were making serious efforts to develop a theory of the process of learning. It was in the context of that long, curious, and pedantic tradition known as "the philosophy of the history of philosophy" (*Philosophie der Philosophiegeschichte*), going back to post-Kantian controversies and earlier, that the question not only of the role of history in philosophy but also the proper range of the history of ideas were debated.[6] Put more simply and conventionally, the issue was whether to follow an "internal" or an "external" method. The first extreme is represented by Kant's "a priori history of philosophy," which posited a rational progression pursued by a small academic elite (Leibniz, Wolf, and a few others) to its logical end. "Historians of philosophy naturally limit their attention to the ablest thinkers," Leslie Stephen observed. "They tell us how the torch was passed from hand to hand from Descartes to Locke, from Locke to Hume, and from Hume to Kant."[7] The other pole is the "history of the human spirit," composed by vulgarizing (and subversive) *philosophes* like A. F. Bourreau-Deslandres and Appiano Buonafede, who wanted to admit factors of psychology, "anthropology," and even geography and climate into their accounts, in effect (as Lucien Braun remarked) turning the history of philosophy into a history of *mentalités*.[8] This debate over the proper way to delimit philosophy was in a sense "historicized" by Hegel, for whom the whole character of philosophy—questions as well as answers—changed with "the spirit of the times" (*Zeitgeist*), if not of the people (*Volksgeist*). Put more simply, the opposition was between what Hegel called the "philosopheme" of ideas and a broader, less rationalistic, more contextualized "episteme" (in the terminology of Foucault), and for intellectual historians this methodological problem still exists.

"Spirit" (*spiritus*, *esprit*, *Geist*) was the key to the divergence between the history of philosophy and what Richard Rorty called "the richer and more diffuse genre of intellectual history."[9] "Looked at in a certain way," as Bourreau wrote, "it amounts to a history of the human spirit, or at least a history in which the human spirit appears from the highest point of view."[10] Throughout the Enlightenment there was a great cosmopolitan discussion of the history of the human "spirit" in intellectual terms *(historia intellectus humani*; *histoire de l'esprit humain*; and *Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes* all referred to this expression of civilization).[11]

[6] In a vast literature see especially Martial Gueroult, *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris, 1984–88), I ("En Occident, des origines jusqu'à Condillac"), II ("En Allemagne, de Leibniz à nos jours"), and III ("En France, de Condorcet à nos jours"); Lucien Braun, *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris, 1973); Lutz Geldsetzer, *Die Philosophie der Philosophiegeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* (Meisenheim, 1968); *The Monist*, 53 (1969), no. 4: "Philosophy of the History of Philosophy," ed. L. W. Beck; Craig Walton, "Bibliography of the Historiography and Philosophy of the History of Philosophy," *International Studies in Philosophy*, 9 (1977); and above all Giovanni Santinello et al. (eds.), *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* (Brescia, 1979–), 3 vols. so far. Recent contributions to this literature include Rorty et al., *Philosophy in History*; Peter H. Hare (ed.), *Doing Philosophy Historically*, A. J. Holland (ed.), *Philosophy, its History and Historiography* (Dordrecht, 1985); and Bernard P. Dauenhauer (ed.), *At the Nexus of Philosophy and History* (Athens, Ga., 1987). See also the reviews of this and related literature by H. S. Harris (*JHI*, 51, 115–20).

[7] *A History of European Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1876), I, 3.

[8] Braun, *Histoire*, 145. A. F. Bourreau-Deslandres, *Histoire critique de la philosophie ou l'on traite de son origine, de ses progrès, et des diverses Révolutions qui lui sont arrivées jusqu'à notre temps* (Amsterdam, 1737), and Buonafede ("Agatopisto Cromaziano"), *Della Istoria della indole di ogni filosofia* (Lucca, 1766) and *Della restaurazione di ogni filosofia nei secoli XVI, XVII e XVIII* (Venice, 1785). See Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg, 1940), com. no. 3, "Philosophemes" being rendered in the English translation by T. M. Knox and A. V. Miller (Oxford, 1985), 30, as "philosphical propositions."

[9] "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres," *Philosophy in History*, ed. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, Eng., 1984), 68.

[10] *Histoire critique*, iii. On the linguistic history of "spirit" see *Spiritus* (*Lessico Intellettuale Europea*, XXXII, ed. M. Fattori and M. Bianchi, Rome, 1984).

[11] Brucker, *Historia critica philosophia* (1737), 21, on "historia intellectus humani"; A.-Y. Goguet, *De l'origine des lois, des arts et des sciences* (Paris, 1758), on "L'histoire de l'esprit humain"; and K. L. Reinhold, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie," G. G. Fülleborn (ed.), *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie* (Zullichau, 1791), 21, on "Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes."

Both Turgot and Condorcet, for example, celebrated the progress of the "human spirit," as did their spiritual and (in the epithet bestowed by critics) "spiritualist" successor Victor Cousin and in his own way Hegel, though of course the Hegelian *Geist* was a far cry from the *esprit* of the French philosophes. It would appear, too, that the *Geistesgeschichte* of the present century, and especially the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) of Dilthey, are descendants of the Enlightenment concerns for the human "spirit" in its cultural manifestations and more generally of the "spiritualism" that—"liberated from the Cartesian Cogito," as Georges Gusdorf has said[12]—was preserved by the philosophical canon from Locke to Hume and Kant and from the Scottish moralists to the Ideologues, nineteenth-century Eclectics, neo-Kantians, and phenomenologists.

Perhaps the clearest expression of the canon of professional philosophy is the tradition of modern "Eclecticism," which leads Brucker to Baron Degérando and Cousin.[13] "Eclecticism" meant taking the best of ancient doctrines and discarding the rest, and in effect it formed the philosophical aspect of the modern idea of Progress. Yet following the lead of historians of religion (which in many ways, it should be remarked, provided a model for intellectual history), historians of philosophy also came, by the eighteenth century, to recognize the need to attend to the history of error as well as truth. This was one of the implications of the qualifying adjective "critical," which was attached to many histories of philosophy from Bourreau's *Histoire critique de la philosophie* and Brucker's seminal *Historia critica philosophiae* onwards. The eclectic method was perhaps best described by Degérando, whose aim, as he wrote in his comparative history of philosophical systems of 1804, was, "by studying the history of different sects, their birth, development, successions, conflicts, and mutual relations . . . to seize upon their oppositions, and origins of their disputes," and finally to render them "reconciled and mediated" and to display their "harmony."[14]

A more fundamental "criticism" of philosophical orthodoxy came, as so often before, from the rival literary and especially rhetorical tradition. The "linguistic turn" inspired by Renaissance humanists such as Lorenzo Valla became explicit in the work of Giambattista Vico, whose "new science" was directed against the anti-historical and anti-linguistic metaphysics of Descartes, and of J. G. Herder, who offered a linguistically based "metacriticism" of Kantian apriorism.[15] Like Vico and Condillac, Herder assumed that thought depended on the medium of language—with which, therefore, the history of ideas has been inextricably bound up. And this logomachy—this debate over the very essence of the logos—has continued, though only on the margins of professional philosophy; and echoes of it can be heard later in the controversy between the philosopher Lovejoy and the philologist Leo Spitzer in an early issue of the *JHI*. More recently the continued, or renewed, force of the rhetorical tradition—the "New Rhetoric," as it has been called—has been conspicuous in the various intrusions of literary criticism and literary theory into the practice of intellectual history.

In diverging from the philosophical canon, the history of ideas not only became alienated from "pure reason" and from what Brucker called "pure ideas" (*ideae purae*)[16] but also

[12] *La Révolution galiléenne: Les Sciences humaines et la pensée occidentale*, III (2) (Paris, 1969), 184. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, tr. G. Barden and J. Cumming (New York, 1982), 5, points out that the term *Geisteswissenschaften* originated in the translation of J. S. Mill's "moral sciences" ("Von der Logik der Geisteswissenschaften oder moralischen Wissenschaften," book 6 of *System der deduktiven und induktiven Logik*, tr. Schiel, 2nd. ed., 1863). On Gusdorf's recently completed epic of what he also calls a "history of ideas"—*Les Sciences humaines et la pensée de l'Occident* (13 vols.; Paris, 1966–88)—see my "Gusdorfiad," forthcoming in the new journal, *The History of the Human Sciences* (1990).

[13] Santorelli, *op. cit.*, II, *passim*; also Masi Serenella, "Eclettismo e storia della filosofia in Johann Franz Budde," *Memorie della Accademia delle scienze di Torino*, II, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, ser. 5, 1 (Turin, 1977), 163–212. A contemporary example of this sort of naive eclecticism is criticized by Daniel Garber, "Does History Have a Future?: Some Reflections on [Jonathan] Bennett and Doing Philosophy Historically," in *Doing Philosophy Historically*, 28.

[14] *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie, considérés rélativement aux principes des connaissances humaines* (Paris, 1804), 1, xv. On Degérando see Gueroult, *Histoire*, III, 707 ff.

[15] *Metakritik*, in *Sämtlicke Werke*, XXXVII (Stuttgart, 1853), 17. Cf. Spitzer and Lovejoy in *JHI* (5, 191–203), and Thomas Pfau's article on Schleiermacher (51, 51–73).

[16] *Historia philosophica de ideis* (Augsburg, 1723), 295. The term "history of ideas" really stems from this work and was adapted by Vico to his own "new science," which in one of its aspects he called "una storia delle umane idee," according to *La Scienza nuova seconda*, ed. F. Nicolini (Bari, 1953), 128 (par. 347);

became entangled in ideological issues and questions of social value and context. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries intellectual history was almost inseparable from the modern doctrine of Progress, especially as expressed in the seminal Baconian scheme, conceptualized in Lockean psychology, enshrined in the French *Encyclopédie*, and advertised in D'Alembert's "Preliminary Discourse," which modernized—and further "humanized"—the Renaissance idea of the "encyclopedia" by including the "arts of commerce and technology" (as indeed Milieu had done). The French connection was further strengthened by Dugald Stewart, who criticized D'Alembert's rigid classification by pointing out the unexpected benefits of modern interdisciplinary exchange —between geometry and physics, for example, between etymology and ancient history, and between comparative anatomy and geology—in the "progress of philosophy since the Renaissance of letters."[17]

In the aftermath of the French Revolution the "torch" seemed to pass from the hands of the French; and as Mme. de Staël remarked to Degérando in 1802, "the human spirit [*der menschliche Geist*] which seemed to be wandering, has now arrived in Germany."[18] The history of philosophy was certainly flourishing; between 1772 and 1806 over fifty treatises on the subject appeared, and the flood continued throughout the century. Most important were the great history of philosophy by the Kantian W. G. Tennemann (1798–1819) and the *Ideas for the History of Philosophy* (1809) by the pioneering historian of psychology and protégé of Goethe, F. A. Carus, who repeated the advice, so essential to the history of ideas in a general sense, that the history of philosophy should treat not only wisdom but also error.[19] Carus also recognized "anthropological [i.e. psychological] history of the spirit of philosophizing" (*anthropologische Geschichte des philosophiereden Geistes*), as well as questions of causality, intellectual originality, the force of nationality, and the role of language.

In these concerns Victor Cousin followed both Carus and Tennemann, whose history he translated into French, and more remotely Brucker, whom he called "the father of the history of philosophy." Carrying out the eclectic agenda, Cousin pursued the "history of ideas" (*histoire des idées, des principes, des doctrines particulières*) in a pure Bruckerian, and Platonic, fashion, and hardly distinguished it from the "science" of the history of philosophy. Yet, following Degérando and Brucker, Cousin also recognized the need to consider "external" as well as "internal" factors, including cultural environment and what he called material "causes." Such concerns, while tending to discredit Cousin's standing in philosophical tradition, does suggest for him a prominent place in the prehistory of the history of ideas, especially in view of his promotion of German, Italian, and British ideas, including the work not only of Kant and Hegel but also of the Scottish moralists, Vico, and Herder.[20]

Outside of the philosophical tradition it is difficult to define a canon or even informal tradition for the history of ideas over the following generations. In the nineteenth century one can follow histories of particular disciplines, and especially of "literature," which acknowledged "external" as well as "internal" conditions and which, as in the work of Herder, De Staël, Friedrich Schlegel, Christophe Meiners, F. C. Schlosser, and J. G. Eichhorn, proposed to relate intellectual creations to social environment.[21] So, in a later generation, did literary

"une histoire des idées humaines" in Michelet's translation (1827).

17 Stewart's essay, written for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, was translated by J. A. Buchon as *Histoire abrégée des sciences metaphysiques, morales, et politiques depuis la renaissance des lettres* (Paris, 1820), and it was through the accompanying comments of Cousin (369) that Vico's work first became known in France (and would receive wider dissemination through Michelet's translation seven years later).

18 Cited by J. T. Merz, *A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1965), III, 33.

19 Carus, *Ideen zur Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1809), II, 110: "Die Geschichte der Philosophie darf also nicht bloß *historia sapientiae* sondern auch *historia stultitiae* sein." And cf. Carus, *Psyche: On the Development of the Soul, Part One, The Unconscious*, intro. James Hillman (Dallas, 1989).

20 *Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris, 1847), 167 etc., and cf. his translation of Tennemann, *Manuel de l'histoire de philosophie* (Paris, 1827), I, 36, etc.; also *Victor Cousin, les idéologues et les écossais*, Colloque du Centre international d'études pédagogiques, Sèvres (Paris, 1985). According to G. H. Lewes, *The Biographical History of Philosophy* (New York, 1857), II, 7, Cousin's "celebrated Eclecticism is nothing but a misconception of Hegel's *History of Philosophy*, fenced round with several plausible arguments."

21 Least known is Meiners, *Historische Verleigung der Sitten, und Verfassungen, des Gesetze und Gewerbe, des Handels und der Religion, der Wissenschaften, und Lehranstalten des Mittelalters mit denen unsers Jahrhunderts in Rücksicht auf die Vortheile und Nachtheile der Aufklärung* (1793), tr. J. Ch. Laveaux as *Histoire de l'origine des progrès et de la décadence des sciences dans la Grèce* (an VII), 7, on "l'histoire de l'esprit

historians such as Lerminier, Ste.-Beuve, Taine, and Buckle. From the Romantic period, too, "cultural history" became a leading concern, especially in Germany, and pursued the human "spirit" into areas of religion, myth, and the fine arts, exemplified by the work of Jacob Burckhardt. By the end of the century "culture" had joined "spirit" as a defining feature of the human sciences and history (*Kulturwissenschaften* and *Kulturgeschichte*), and a host of other expressions designated the practice of intellectual history—"history of thought," "history of civilization," "mental culture and progress," "history of morals," "spirit of rationalism" "intellectual development," and history of particular "ideas."[22] With the emergence of the "new history" at the turn of the century the term "intellectual history" also gained currency, and soon afterwards the "history of ideas" (though the phrase itself derived from the work of Brucker and Vico two centuries earlier).

Lovejoy, himself a professional philosopher, was surely familiar with these precedents when he set down his own, extraordinarily eclectic agenda in his introduction to *The Great Chain of Being* (1936) and more fully in an essay published two years later.[23] What might pass for the history of ideas a half century ago could be grouped, according to Lovejoy, under at least twelve different rubrics:

1. The history of philosophy.
2. The history of science.
3. Folklore and some parts of ethnography.
4. Some parts of the history of language, especially semantics.
5. The history of religious beliefs and theological doctrines.
6. Literary history. . . .
7. What is unhappily called "comparative literature."
8. The history of the arts. . . .
9. Economic history and the history of economic theory. . . .
10. The history of education.
11. Political and social history.
12. The history of sociology . . . [and] *Wissensoziologie*.

In the pursuit of these lines of inquiry, Lovejoy added, what was most neglected was the study of particular ("unit-") ideas—an approach he conceived of, as he recalled later, from his reading of Windelband's history of philosophy, one of Brucker's more successful descendants.[24]

For Lovejoy the study of these areas was in no sense ancillary to other sorts of historical exploration, and the central concern was not merely a "role for history" in the study of philosophy. On the contrary, he argued, the history of ideas "has its own reason for being," and this reason was self-knowledge—in the sense not only of seeking truth but also of analyzing error, which for Lovejoy meant not only celebrating human cultural achievement but also posing the question looming in the late '30s (and present ever since those darkening years): "What's the matter with man?"

In this way the history of ideas apparently freed itself from the hegemony of philosophy while still drawing on its resources. Although "unit-ideas" might be preserved over time, the history of thought is not "an exclusively logical progress in which objective truth progressively unfolds itself in a rational order." Rather, he suggested, it displayed a sort of "oscillation" between intellectualism and anti-intellectualism

humain"; and Eichhorn, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Cultur und Literatur des neuern Europas* (1796), Schlosser, *Geschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts und des neunzehnten, bis zum Sturz des französischen Kaiserreichs, mit besondere Rücksicht auf geistige Bildung* (Heidelberg, 1823), tr. D. Davison as *History of the Eighteenth Century and of the Nineteenth till the overthrow of the French Empire with particular reference to Mental Cultivation and Progress* (London, 1843); also Eugène Lerminier, *De l'influence de la philosophie du XVIII^e siècle sur la législation et la sociabilité du XII^e* (Paris, 1833), I, xv, especially on the theory of law, "l'histoire d'une des idées essentielles de l'humanité."

[22] Among other studies, Goldfriedrich, *Die historischen Ideenlehre in Deutschland* (Berlin, 1902), and Luise Schorn-Schütte, *Karl Lamprecht: Kulturgeschichtsschreibung zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik* (Göttingen, 1984). The terms cited appear in the well-known older works by Merz, W. L. Lecky, John W. Draper, Cousin (English translation, 1832), and others. See also Columbia University, *Studies in the History of Ideas* (3 vols.; New York, 1918–35), including contributions by members of the philosophy department, including Dewey, J. H. Randall, McKeon, and Sidney Hook. In general *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* ("Ideengeschichte"), *Diccionario de filosofia* ("Ideas—historia de las"); Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die Begriffsgeschichte und die Sprache der Philosophie," *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westphalen*, 170 (Opladen, 1971); Erwin Hölzle, *Idee und Ideologie* (Bern, 1969); Reinhart Koselleck, "Begriffsgechichte and Social History," *Futures Past*, tr. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), 73–91, and Melvin Richter (*JHI*, 48, 247–63), with further references.

[23] *Essays in the Historiography of Ideas* (New York, 1948), I, first published in 1938; and cf. his editorial statement in *JHI*, I (1940), 1–23.

[24] Daniel J. Wilson, *Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Quest for Intelligibility* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 230.

A major focus of mainstream history of ideas is still on individual authors (and these authors on other authors—and of course second-order studies of historians of ideas such as Cassirer, Randall, Kristeller, and, extensively, Lovejoy himself).

(between enlightenment and romanticism?), arising from the same kind of non-rational ("sociological" and "affective") factors which older historians of philosophy—Carus, Cousin, and others—had recognized over a century earlier. On conceptual as well as substantive grounds we can regard Lovejoy's program as a more or less direct descendant and beneficiary of this earlier tradition of "the philosophy of the history of philosophy."

Yet Kantian, Carusian, or Hegelian idealism and Cousinian "spiritualism" has continued to weigh on the history of ideas; and as a professional philosopher, Lovejoy was unwilling to make many concessions to the criticisms of historians, who urged greater attention to social "context," to literary scholars, who emphasized the primacy of language and textuality, or to sociological purveyors of relativism and ideology. Not that intellectual history has been overwhelmed or misled by philosophy; rather it has been the captive of the narrow premises of an earlier ("modernist" as well as "classical") conception of philosophy, when it pretended to be a legislative force for all disciplines.

In that age of conceptual innocence, "ideas" were pure, under authorial if not always rational control, and communicated without difficulty from intellect to intellect, from mountain top to mountain top (in the image Meinecke used in his *Entstehung des Historismus*—published the same year as Lovejoy's *Great Chain* and similarly dominated by philosophical values and premises). The valleys and foothills were largely untravelled, or viewed from a comfortable distance; "prejudice" could be overcome by reason; "meaning" was attainable by men of good will and a liberal education; "myth" was on its way out; and in polite society, psychological and ideological forces were under control, or at least could be safely ignored. Lovejoy showed some suspicions of this comfortable view, but skepticism did not figure centrally in his agenda; nor did he attend much to newer issues in continental philosophy in the wake of Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein. His own magisterial ideas were established, and it remained for his disciples to carry on the tradition. But times change, disciples become masters (if not heretics), old texts are given new meanings, and the history of ideas has itself entered new channels and taken on new forms. "Every philosophy . . . ," Hegel wrote, "belongs to its own time and is caught in that time's restriction."[25] The same must be true of the history of thought, and with this in mind it seems appropriate to turn to the second question:

How is the History of Ideas Written?

Entering another *fin de siècle*, mainstream history of ideas has passed through a variety of shock-waves, intellectual and otherwise; but except for certain frontier territories and bibliographical details, it has preserved ties with Lovejoy's pre-World War II vision. The major focus is still on individual authors (and these authors on other authors—and of course second-order studies of historians of ideas such as Ernst Cassirer, J. H. Randall, P. O. Kristeller, and, extensively, Lovejoy himself); on particular texts (usually classical or canonized texts); on ideas, doctrines, theories, systems, and "-isms" of various sorts, usually along national or disciplinary lines; and on traditional questions of periodization (Renaissance, Romanticism, Modernism, now perhaps Postmodernism, etc.). Questions of "influence" (an astrological term, as Lucien Febvre reminded us)[26] still loom large; texts are still ransacked for "thought-content" and "ideas," which are passed—along with Leslie Stephen's "torch"—from thinker to thinker; and an internalist approach still tends to prevail in the history of particular doctrines or disciplines as well as ideas.

Yet changes there have been, and to suggest their nature it seems appropriate to review current work in terms of the rubrics which Lovejoy set down a half-century ago:[27]

1. The history of philosophy continues to dominate the field of the history of ideas, and indeed the old canon tied to British empiricism, German idealism, and American

[25] *History of Philosophy*, 49.

[26] *La Terre et l'évolution humaine* (Paris, 1922), 438.

[27] My impressions are taken mainly from the articles received and published by the *JHI*; examples will be limited mainly to those published during the last five years, which will be referred to by vol. no. (46–50 = 1985–89), and a few recent books of interest.

pragmatism.[28] Noticeable incursions have been made, however, by mythology and especially by literary criticism and an interest in post-modern (or even "post-philosophical") ideas. In this connection it seems to be the voice not of Kant, Hegel, Marx, or Freud but rather of Nietzsche—and especially the "new Nietzsche"—that dominates recent intellectual-historical "discourse." Whence the currency of Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, and other dissenters from philosophical orthodoxy.[29]

2. Interest in the history of science has if anything increased although the field itself has become independent since Lovejoy's time and lines of inquiry more technical. It has also become conceptually less naive, through not only the controversies centering on the work of Thomas Kuhn but also considerations of the role of the occult and the imagination as well as the logical and imaginative foundations of "scientific discovery."[30] At the same time the horizons of natural science have been expanded by the attention given to such issues as ecology, gender difference, insanity, abortion, animal experimentation, and other issues which hardly concerned Lovejoy and his colleagues.
3. Folklore and ethnography, though central to the study of "popular culture," are not areas which historians of ideas have pursued very energetically, but of late anthropology has come into high intellectual fashion and (in the form of what has inevitably come to be called the "new cultural history") has likewise extended the horizons of intellectual history.[31] The writings of Clifford Geertz have had an extraordinary impact on historians, if in a somewhat vulgar form and with the effect mainly of providing a sort of intellectual fishing license in the exploration of human culture.
4. Language has become a central focus of the history of ideas (although "semantics" has been in large part superseded by concern with semiotics, hermeneutics, and American interest in *Begriffsgeschichte*) and this arising from a conspicuous "linguistic turn" taken in recent intellectual history.[32] For this Journal the result has been studies in the history of particular terms, technical and otherwise, and even more important, an appreciation of the intellectual as well as technical significance of the history of philology and linguistic approaches to philosophical and political works. The critique of Lovejoy's implicitly idealistic conception of "unit-ideas" has received practical expression in the linguistic and rhetorical analysis of canonical philosophical texts.[33]

[28] Of 800 submitted and tabulated papers, those devoted to philosophy constitute 25%, political thought 18%, literature 16%, science 12%, religion 8%, historiography 7%, art and aesthetics 5%, women's studies 2%, miscellaneous historical subjects the rest. English language topics are dominant, 29%, then U.S. 19%, German 18%, French 14%, Italian 6%, and Latin and Greek 5% each. By periods the ranking is 20th Century 26%, 19th C. 20%, 18th C. 17%, 17th C. 15%, 16th C.–Renaissance 8%, and medieval and ancient 6% each.

[29] See, for example, the exchange between Anthony Pagden and Dominick LaCapra (49, 519–29 and 677–87), Allan Megill on the reception of Foucault, and the forthcoming essay on Foucault by Jerrold Seigel. Cf. *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), and Martin Jay, "Should Intellectual History Take a Linguistic Turn?" *Modern European Intellectual History*, ed. LaCapra and S. Kaplan (Ithaca, 1982), 86–110.

[30] Herbert W. Gernand and W. Jay Reedy on Kuhn (47, 469–85) and Catherine Wilson on the microscope and the occult (49, 85–108). And see Daniel A. Dombrowski on St. Augustine and abortion (49, 151–56), Christopher Gill on insanity in antiquity (46, 307–25), and Anita Guerrini on the ethics of animal experimentation in the seventeenth century (50, 391–407).

[31] Ivan Kalmar on *Völkerpsychologie* and "culture" (48, 671–90); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); and Aletta Biersack, "Local Knowledge, Local History: Geertz and Beyond," *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley, 1989), 72–96. See also James McLaverty on Locke and Johnson's *Dictionary* (47, 377–94), Robert Hariman on "modernity" in Machiavelli's *Prince*, and especially the controversy over Valla and "ordinary language philosophy" initiated by John Monfasani (see below, n. 54).

[32] Katherine M. Wilson on "vampire" (46, 577–83), Mario Orrù on "anomy " (47, 177–96), Jane E. Ruby on scientific "law" (47, 341–59), Gregory Claeys on "social science" (47, 409–31), A. P. Bos on "encyclopedia" (50, 179–98), Stephen Wallech on "consciousness" (409–31), Richard E. Aquila on "class" and "rank" (49, 543–62), and Charles Whitney on Baconian "instauration" (50, 371–90). Also James Whitman on Nietzsche and philology (47, 453–60), John C. Adams on Alexander Richardson and rhetoric (50, 227–47), Stephen Yarborough on Jonathan Edwards and rhetoric (47, 395–408), John F. Tinkler on rhetoric and seventeenth-century philology (49, 453–72), etc.

[33] Cf. Spitzer (5, 191–203). See also Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric* (Notre Dame, 1969); Anthony Pagden, *The Languages of*

5. The history of religion and theology continues in all of its confessional as well as "scientific" forms; it has made a particular impact in its association with the history of science and philosophy—the trinity and religious "meditations," for example, in connection with the writing of Descartes, and the occult side of Newton.[34]
6. The history of literature (and of literary criticism), in association with the aforementioned "linguistic turn," has done most, for good or for ill, to, enliven and to transform approaches to intellectual history in the past three decades or so.[35] Yet old patterns of debate persist, it seems to me; and the so-called "new historicism" of the 1980s seems in various ways a (methodologically) conservative reaction to the textualist extremes of post-structuralist criticism, and indeed a return to the sort of literary history practiced by the likes of René Wellek and Lovejoy himself—reading literary texts as expressions or codes of cultural forms (though to be sure in the light, and betimes the obscurity, of more recent intellectual fashions, especially anthropological).[36]
7. "What is unhappily called 'comparative literature'" is still with us, but the earlier euphoria about its potential seems to have faded. "Ideas" continue to be pursued across national and linguistic boundaries but with little concern for a comparative method, and it hardly seems nowadays to merit a separate rubric.
8. The history of the arts maintains a modest place in the history of ideas, and indeed aesthetics has become an object of concern for many scholars interested in the function of imagination in philosophical, scientific, and mathematical as well as in works of art more narrowly conceived.[37] In the wake of Heidegger and others, especially devotees of *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (and in general the shift of attention from author to reader, which is the heart of the *history* of ideas), the "linguistic turn" has been accompanied by an "aesthetic turn;" and there are signs of this, too, in recent intellectual history.
9. Economic history seems less threatening than it did in the days of Lovejoy's battles with Marxist, or Marxoid, reductionism in the 1930s, though it has also become more specialized and remote from intellectual history. The history of economic thought has become more specialized, too (and even has its own journals); outside the dogmatic traditions of classical and Marxist economics it has also become more historical—trying to extricate Smith and Marx from their scholastic followers and misreaders and to place them in the larger tradition of moral, legal, and political philosophy, emergent social science, and intellectual history.[38]
10. The history of education (which has likewise become an increasingly specialized field) is still important, especially in providing the social and institutional frame-

Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe (Cambridge, Eng., 1987); and the prize-winning book by Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1988) and John S. Nelson, Allan Megill, and Donald N. McCloskey (eds.), *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences* (Madison, 1987), with the review by Peter Munz (51, 121–42) and responses by Vickers and McCloskey. Cf. Ian Hacking, *Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy?* (Cambridge, Eng., 1975).

[34] Margaret J. Osler on Descartes and theology (46, 349–62), Stephen M. Nadler on Descartes and transubstantiation (49, 229–40), and Bradley Rubidge on Descartes and religious "meditations" (51, 27–49).

[35] Mark Phillips on Scott and Macaulay (50, 117–33) and Raymond Stephenson on "nerves" in *Clarissa* (49, 267–85). On the historical background of the recent proliferation of schools of literary criticism, see the collection of Joseph Natoli (ed.), *Tracing Literary Theory* (Urbana, 1987).

[36] On the "new historicism" there is a large, growing, and polemical literature, theoretical as well as interpretive, most recently *The Historical Renaissance*, ed. H. Dubrow and R. Strier (Chicago, 1988), and the collection on *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (New York, 1989), and see my remarks (*JHI*, 48, 163) as well as a forthcoming paper on "Historicism, the Old and the New."

[37] Stephen Cassedy on mathematics and literary aesthetics (49, 109–32), James Manns on Scottish philosophy and French aesthetics (49, 633–51, and a forthcoming sequel), and Thomas Christensen on music theory and propaganda in D'Alembert (50, 409–28); also another prize-winning work by David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Eng., 1987). On the related question of myth see Stephen Daniel on myth in Mandeville (47, 595–609) and Michael Tager on myth in Sorel and Barthes (47, 625–39); also Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, tr. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), and the review by William Bouwsma (48, 347–54).

[38] Russell Nieli on Adam Smith and "intimacy" (47, 611–24), Norman Levine on Marx and the historical school (48, 431–51), and Jerrold Seigel on Durkheim and autonomy (48, 483–507) as well as D. R. Kelley, "The Science of Anthropology: An Essay on the Very Old Marx" (45, 245–62); also Donald McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of Economics* (Madison, 1985).

work for the generation and dissemination of ideas.[39]

11. The idea of putting ideas in political and social (externalist) "context" has become commonplace in the past generation, as "intellectual history" has tended to supplant the classical "history of ideas" and as historians of literature, especially the "new historicists," have rediscovered this old problem. It has been in the history of political thought in particular, it seems to me, that the dilemma of text-and-context has been most directly confronted; and here again the primacy of language—or rather the discrimination of a variety of political and social languages—has been apparent.[40]
12. *Wissensoziologie* has surely entered eclipse, except as a phase of the "cultural crisis" or the "crisis of historicism" of this century and a general awareness of the "social framework of knowledge"; but the predicament it reflected and the questions it posed have no less surely been absorbed into the enterprise of intellectual historians. In the past generation, as the "new" economic and social histories have been overshadowed by the "new" cultural history, it might be less appropriate to speak of the "sociology of knowledge" than, with K. O. Apel, of the "anthropology of knowledge."[41]

There are other categories that could be added to—but, I suppose, equally well subsumed under—Lovejoy's original dozen. Among these I would note, first, the application of quantitative methods to the study both of texts (lexicography fortified and extended by computer programs) and of "influence" (one of Lovejoy's favorite concepts);[42] second, the expansion of historiography to include not only ideas in historical literature but the examination in effect of intellectual traditions and canons in which ideas, or at least verbal conventions, have been preserved; third, the acknowledgment of the epistemological and ideological force of race and gender (as well as class) differences;[43] and fourth, the extension of the intellectual historian's horizons to include not only concepts but also questions of "canon-formation," unconscious attitudes, and unexamined "foreknowledge," corresponding perhaps to what Lovejoy himself called "affective" notions and "endemic assumptions." To judge from such aspirations, efforts, and methods, the "new intellectual history" involves not only a certain criticism of Lovejoy's own "endemic assumptions" or (in his own phrase) "unconscious mental habits" but also, and more importantly, an extension of Lovejoy's original encyclopedic and eclectic vision in a quite Lovejovian spirit. Which brings us to the third and last question:

It has been in the history of political thought in particular, it seems to me, that the dilemma of text-and-context has been most directly confronted.

What should the History of Ideas Be?

A presumptuous question, no doubt, but I pose it in a practical rather than prescriptive spirit. In the first place, I think, the history of ideas should represent itself as (according to recent convention) "intellectual history," if only to lay to rest the ghosts of antiquated idealism and to set aside, at least for historical purposes, the imperialist aspirations and invidious claims of philosophy to be a "rigorous science" (in the phrase of Husserl).[44] Intellectual history is not "doing philosophy" (any more than it is doing literary criticism) retrospectively; it is doing a kind, or several kinds, of historical interpretation, in

[39] Martin Staum on political science in the French Institute (48, 411–30); also Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), with a forthcoming review-article by Robert Black in *JHI*.

[40] Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Eng., 1987); David Boucher, *Texts in Context* (Dordrecht, 1985); and James Tully, *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Princeton, 1988).

[41] *Transformation der Philosophie* (Frankfurt, 1976), 1, 35; and see Wolf Lepenies, *Between Literature and Science: the Rise of Sociology*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, Eng., 1988).

[42] See the exchange over quantitative and qualitative approaches to "keywords" between Daniel T. Rodgers and his critics, Mark Olsen and Louis-George Harvey (49, 653–76).

[43] Nadia Margolis on Christine de Pizan (47, 360–75) and G. J. Barker-Benfield on Mary Wollstonecraft (50, 95–115).

[44] "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft," *Logos*, 1 (1911), 289–341, with a critique of Dilthey over the meaning of "spirit" and a severe indictment of what Husserl called *Historizismus*. The *JHI* did adopt a subtitle, "An International Quarterly devoted to Intellectual History."

which philosophy and literature figure not as controlling methods but as human creations suggesting the conditions of historical understanding. In this spirit we might do well to recall the words of John Dewey: "The material out of which philosophy finally emerges is irrelevant to science and to explanation. It is figurative, symbolic of hopes and fears, made of imagination and suggestion, not significant of a world of objective fact intellectually confronted. It is poetry and drama rather than science, and is apart from truth and falsity, rationality or absurdity of fact, in the same way that poetry is independent of these things."[45] Such a human (and humanist) view seems appropriate as well for the history of ideas.

The contrast between the pursuit of propositional entities called "ideas" and the study of language, discourse, and other cultural expressions may be understood by analogy with contrasting conceptions of the history of religion (a field which has always served as a model for the history of thought). According to the Protestant view, such a history was in effect the celebration of "transcendent," unchanging doctrine beyond language, psychology, institutions, or social context, while the orthodox position defended doctrines as "immanent" and so accessible only through corruptible "human traditions" and forms of expression.[46] It seems to me that intellectual historians cannot reach for the transcendent and pure truth of Protestant spirituality, which has persisted in the modern philosophical canon and Kant's "apriori history of philosophy" (as well as in many conventional histories of political and scientific thought). Rather they must be content with those local and variable expressions of human discourse and behavior which Protestant thinkers, from Luther and Melanchthon to Kant and Hegel, so despised.

In the broadest view, then, intellectual history need not (or need no longer) be identified with the canon of philosophy, with the subject-matter of high culture, with elitist social constrictions, or with intellectualist theories of causation in history. Rather it should be seen as an approach, or range of approaches, to historical investigation and interpretation in general—approaches which begin with the study of cultural and linguistic forms but which do not necessarily presume the conventions of academic or even formally logical discourse. The subjects of intellectual historians are texts, or their cultural analogues; the "intelligible field of study" more generally is language, or languages; and the history of philosophy is not the model of but rather a province in this larger arena of interpretation. In a sense this may be what Lovejoy intended, but his professional baggage (and, perhaps, spiritualist heritage) prevented him, it seems to me, from realizing the larger (as well as the smaller) historical and human potentials of his vision.

There are at least two ways of considering the canon of intellectual history in relation to the older disciplines—one inclined toward disciplinary autonomy, the other toward a kind of methodological supremacy. The weak argument is that, while "ideas" may belong in the domain of philosophy, the "history of ideas" has a different character and so presumably a different heritage, which is associated with historical and literary studies and rhetoric in a general sense. The stronger argument—which accommodates both a "role for history" in philosophy and a role for philosophy in history—is that the "linguistic turn" and the "destruction of metaphysics" (from Nietzsche to Heidegger) represent not just an invitation to literary "deconstruction" but a stage in what has been called the "modern project to rigor" (from Descartes to Nietzsche) within the philosophical tradition itself.[47] I take Nietzsche's hermeneutical arguments not only to express this sort of critique of philosophy but also to suggest the necessary grounds for the "modern project" of intellectual historians, which includes the accommodation of the history of philosophy. "The interpretive character of all that happens" was the premise of this critic of the philosophical canon.[48] "There is no such thing as an event in itself. What happens is a group of phenomena *selected* and concentrated together by an interpreting being. Interpretation, not explanation. There is no such thing as a fact, everything is in flux, ungraspable, elusive; what is most enduring is our opinions. Introduction of meaning—in most cases a new interpretation over an old interpretation that has become incomprehensible, that is now itself only a sign."

In any case, to continue these prospective

[45] *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York, 1920), 33.

[46] Peter Fraenkel, *Testimonia Patrum* (Geneva, 1961); and cf. the symptomatic, or paradigmatic, *Catalogus testium veritatis* (Basel, 1556) by the founder of Lutheran (and of the modern canon of) hermeneutics, Flacius Illyricus.

[47] Patrick Madigan, *The Modern Project to Rigor: Descartes to Nietzsche* (Lanham, Md., 1986).

[48] Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, cited by Lepenies, *op. cit.*, 100.

suggestions (which represent in a sense extensions of Lovejoy's agenda), intellectual history focuses not on putative behavioral, social, economic, or political "causes," or on an eclectic combination of such, but on the creations of human culture and on human interpretations of that culture. This means (as Lovejoy preached, if not always practiced) attending not only to concepts and rational arguments but also to the other layers of linguistic meaning—and indeed this is the justification for applying to the rhetorical as well as to philosophical traditions in historical interpretation, since rhetoric, and its extensions in modern literary criticism, reveals the resources, structures, and perhaps cultural memories preserved by language (topoi, tropes, metaphors, constructions, analogies, connections, etc.), popular as well as literary, beyond, or beneath, the reaches of logical formulation, or at least of narrowly rational argument and "reasoned history."

Yet the "return to literature," though it has undermined the hegemony of philosophical orthodoxies, has, from the standpoint of historians, produced its own distortions. A recent exchange on intellectual history in this literary connection focuses, characteristically, on the theories and discourse of the current textualist canon, centering especially, for historians who follow such things, on Derrida, Foucault, Hayden White, and Dominick LaCapra (though all too seldom on the more fundamental German antecedents of these more derivative writers).[49] In his thoughtful and provocative essay David Harlan concentrates appropriately on the questions of text, context, and authorial intention, which are indeed crucial to the task of the intellectual historian. His main targets are "the dream of authorial presence," as he calls it, and historical "contextualism" and its chief proponents, who are J. G. A. Pocock, Quentin Skinner, and David Hollinger. Harlan's arguments concerning what Paul Ricoeur has called the "semantic autonomy of the text" and the inaccessibility of "context" apart from texts are well taken and perhaps logically unassailable. Yet, as Hollinger remarks in his response, these reflections remain on the level of literary theory—in effect a report on the consequences of the (not necessarily critical) importation of doctrines into historical discourse—and they seem to me at best tangential to the current practice and to the hermeneutical condition of intellectual history.

Intellectual history need not be identified with the canon of philosophy, with the subject matter of high culture, with elitist social constrictions, or with intellectualist theories of causation in history. Rather it should be seen as an approach, or range of approaches, to historical investigation and interpretation in general.

The questions are complex, and I limit myself to two comments. The first is that the problem or (as literary critics used to say) the "fallacy" of intentionalism pertained originally, over a generation ago, to the interpretation of literary texts and their ambiguities and especially to the nature of poetical meaning.[50] Archibald MacLeish's aphorism (since become a cliché) that "a poem should not mean but be" exemplifies this insight, which became a premise of literary criticism in its own rise to hermeneutical independence and even hegemony. Meaning is related to reading and "reception" as well as writing; but it should be recalled that "reception theory" (or *Rezeptionsästhetik*) arose in a primarily aesthetic context.[51] It was concerned with the enrichment of meaning, in effect the deliberate creation of new meaning, and is not, without qualification, directly applicable to historical (and certainly not to "documentary") sources. What is more, the premise of authorial intention is unavoidable—a necessary fiction at least—in "disciplinary histories" such as the history of science or of political thought (Skinner's and Pocock's own primary domain), which are important branches of intellectual history.[52]

[49] Harlan, "Intellectual History and the Return of Literature," including an exchange with David Hollinger and discussion by Allan Megill and others on what is vaguely called the "new history," *American Historical Review*, 94 (1989), 581–698; also Lloyd S. Kramer, "Literary Criticism and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra," *The New Cultural History*, 97–128, *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History*, ed. D. Attridge, G. Bennington, and R. Young (Cambridge, Eng., 1987), and Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Wisconsin, 1989).

[50] K. Wimsatt, Jr., *The Verbal Icon* (Louisville, 1954), 37, and later discussions.

[51] Robert Holub, *Reception Theory* (London, 1984).

[52] Loren Grahan, Wolf Lepenies, and Peter Weingart (eds.), *Functions and Uses of Disciplinary Histories* (Boston, 1983).

We cannot ignore the fundamental criticisms of old-fashioned "historicism" made by phenomenology (and largely forgotten by the "new historicists"), which warns us against the illusions—reinforced by a long tradition of rhetoric, devices of imaginative reconstruction, and the conventions of tense—of a direct "dialogue" with the past.

More complex still, and still less amenable to purely theoretical debate, is the question of "context."[53] Harlan calls the constitution of context a "poetic act"; and following LaCapra, he suggests that context requires the control of an indefinite variety of textual networks. This view by no means relies on the assumption of a generalized "climate of opinion" (in the phrase of Joseph Glanvil adopted by Lovejoy) in which influences can be intuited, or of a spiritual forum in which ideas are endlessly debated. Rather it urges that intellectual history, like other varieties of historical study, must be in the first instance the result of well-posed questions of a limited number of texts and aimed at a sort of historical meaning further limited by the language, technology, and social and political conditions of an age—insofar, of course, as they are (textually) determinable. "Context" suggests a problem not wholly amenable to theoretical arguments; it is rather a function of scholarship and of a probable, interpretive, and even (informedly) imaginative reconstruction that cannot be verified absolutely or achieved totally. Context must be established not simply by logical considerations but by something like Gadamer's "experience of tradition" and by a sort of critical and probabilist *heuristics* which inquires into the variety and validity of sources and how—imaginatively—to employ them.

A central, current, and long-standing question in the interpretation of texts has to do with the meaning of "meaning," in a historical sense. Should one read a work merely as an exercise in literal exegesis—paleography, *Quellenforschung*, and reconstruction of authorial intention? Or should one consider the meanings acquired in later contexts remote from, or alien to, the "original" import? Texts have their authority, but they also (according to the classical aphorism) "have their fortune"; and this, too, must be the quarry of intellectual historians.

These extremes might be illustrated by two recent *JHI* articles, one by John Monfasani protesting the characterization of Lorenzo Valla as an "ordinary language philosopher," and the other by Robert Hariman celebrating "Modernity in Machiavelli's *Prince*."[54] Hariman is concerned with the aspects of Machiavelli's unconventional writing which resonate with modern predicaments, while Monfasani looks to a critical edition of Valla as the answer to all questions about "meaning." In fact Monfasani scores telling points (which Valla would have deeply appreciated) off the interpretations by Richard Waswo and Sarah Gravelle in this recent exchange. Yet these small victories are based on an extremely conservative, perhaps naive, notion of authorial intention and on a curious neglect, or innocence, of the problem of the potential, implicit, and changing meanings of texts in a larger linguistic context and a longer intellectual tradition extending beyond the author's original horizons and immediate intentions. Whether or not intellectual historians can achieve the first aim, they can hardly avoid considering the second; for if there is one lesson to be learned from recent literary theory (not to mention the old tradition of rhetoric), it is that discourse is a two way process, the readerly as well as the writerly—and that the former aspect may be, for intellectual historians, the most "meaningful." In any case the divorce, or rivalry, between the search for the pristine author and his or her afterlife (between the "historical Jesus" and the history of Christianity or, in Vichian terms, between philology and philosophy) is unproductive for the purposes of intellectual historians.

What are the conditions, today, of the relations between intellectual history and the parent disciplines of philosophy, literature, and history? The interdisciplinary orientation of the field surely must be kept; but it is essential for

[53] On which see above n. 40.

[54] Hariman (50, 3–29) and Monfasani, Waswo, and Gravelle (50, 309–36). That the history of scholarship is making a rapprochement with intellectual history is shown by three fine recent studies: Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger, A Study in the History of the Classical Tradition*, 1 (Oxford, 1983), John D'Amico, *Theory and Practice in Renaissance Textual Criticism: Beatus Rhenanus between Conjecture and History* (Berkeley, 1988), and William McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio: The Changing World of the late Renaissance* (Princeton, 1989).

historians to be clear, or at least current (as Lovejoy was in his day), about the status of these parent disciplines, since they establish the conditions of knowledge, of expression, and of the interpretation of evidence in a general way. Intellectual history cannot fruitfully tie itself to the outmoded assumptions and issues of the academic and "spiritualist" traditions of yesterday—philosophical, literary, or historical—in the effort of raising the ghosts of yesteryear. Lovejoy himself tried to come to grips with Freud and Mannheim (as well as Marx), and we should do no less (and no less critically) for the intellectual movers and shakers of our times. We cannot return to the age of conceptual innocence before the cultural, social, and political expressions of "affective" and destructive forces of the last half-century, of the world of thought before the linguistic turning, the information explosion, and the experiences projected by means and media which hardly figured in Lovejoy's prescriptions for the history of ideas. We cannot behave as if Husserl, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, and their interlocutors had never written, even if we do not share their views of human thought and expression. Philosophy may not have "ended," but its "career" has been fundamentally changed by alien forces, experiences as well as "ideas"; "metaphysics" may be surpassed, but the search for a "metalanguage" continues; "deconstruction" may be basically an extension of philosophical skepticism and Heideggerian (and Nietzschean) "destruction," but it has enlarged our awareness of the problems of reading as well as writing; "post-modernism" may be a modernist illusion,[55] but it has become part of our language and experiences, if not doctrinal commitment. God may not be dead, but in recent times She has displayed a variety of unfamiliar faces.

This means, among other things, that we cannot avoid the implications of the linguistic turn, which denies us the possibility of getting "behind the back of language," in Gadamer's words, to pure ideas or philosophemes. We cannot accept uncritically the notion of an autonomous subject, or sovereign author, who operates beyond the restrictions of language and culture. We must reject a simple equation between meaning and authorial intention not only because of the intimidating force of language and rhetorical tradition but also because intellectual history is at least as concerned with the reading as well as the writing of texts—the reception and distortion as well as creation and transmission of ideas and culture. We cannot ignore the fundamental criticisms of old-fashioned "historicism" made by phenomenology (and largely forgotten by the "new historicists"), which warns us against the illusions—reinforced by a long tradition of rhetoric, devices of imaginative reconstruction, and the conventions of tense—of a direct "dialogue" with the past.[56] Nor, finally can we, in pursuit of meaning, dispense with notions of gender, class interest, and political commitment, which are embedded in language and which link language with life.[57]

Yet what phenomenology has taken away hermeneutics has to some extent restored, and within the cultural and temporal horizons of our understanding and the insights of the modern "project to rigor," our enterprise remains historical rather than literary or philosophical. It seems to me that too much recent intellectual history (White, LaCapra, et al.) has been spent, often in rather amateurish way, indulging in literary theory, affecting to address questions of high philosophical import, in following the urge toward surreptitious or surrogate ideological fashions, and perhaps (with Harlan) finding intellectual history at a conceptual "impasse." The enticements of postmodern theories and the siren song of "cultural criticism" have distracted scholars from their proper work and their own traditions—which are not as negligible nor as disposable as enthusiasts for recent theories assume. What I should like to see restored to the study of intellectual history is a historical project comparable to the "conception of rational enquiry as embedded in a tradition" which Alasdair McIntyre has, for his own purposes, recently recommended.

This is not to recommend a return to facile eclecticism, nor is it to say that intellectual history is condemned to a passive and falsely "objective" or "disinterested" posture; but it is to suggest that any contemporary significance cannot be produced from a condition of dependence on the fields of philosophy or litera-

[55] See Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere moderne Postmoderne* (Weinheim, 1987), and the amusing article he cites by Klaus Laerman, "Lacancan und Derridada: Über die Frankolatrie in der Kulturwissenschaften," *Kursbuch*, 84 (1986), 34–43.

[56] A useful collection on the *Historismusstreit* is Franco Bianco (ed.), *Il Dibattito sullo storicismo* (Bologna, 1978).

[57] See forthcoming collection of *JHI* articles on "Race, Gender and Class" ed. M. Horowitz in the "Library of the History of Ideas" series.

ture—any more than on the various social sciences. Intellectual history has its own aims, values, and questions to pose about the human condition; and these cannot ultimately be honored and pursued on the level of theory, which, distracted by the conversations of neighboring disciplines, tends to neglect the practical problems of its own historical craft. Intellectual history should indeed be concerned with human self-understanding and perhaps (in the light and heat of more recent sensibilities about class, gender, race, and other elements of a "postmodern" condition) make contributions to the question which Lovejoy posed in connection with his original agenda—"What's the matter with man?"[58] My hope is that, with awareness of these new conditions and horizons, intellectual historians will turn more directly to their own tradition and practice, yet with awareness of and attention to the questions appearing on the horizon of our own age—an age not only of *fin de siècle* but also of a new millennium.

[58] Lovejoy (see above, n. 23).

CALL FOR PAPERS—BERLIN 1998

The History of Endings / The Endings of Stories

We shall witness the ending of a century and a millenium soon, but clearly the topic of historical endings is much more complex and interesting to intellectual historians than just because of this date. At first sight it seems pointless to set up any systematic or topological approach to 'ending' phenomena. That something is ending seems to be an observation one can make in many places and instances. In order to envisage the topic of ending in an interdisciplinary perspective, it is important to neglect none of its cultural, politcal, historical, and existential dimensions. The aim of the 1998 ISIH conference is to bring together as many aspects of endings as possible and to illuminate all the different meanings the term bears in the various disciplines.

Without a doubt one cannot talk about an absolute ending nor about an absolute beginning without running straight into dialectical difficulties. But it is possible to focus on ideas of endings, which play an important part in historical, political, and philosophical thought. The ideas of the world coming to an end, for example, range from the Deluge to the dying forests. This is just one suggestion how to go about dealing with endings; the 'ending of the world' topic clearly challenges theologians, philosophers, and political thinkers. Another suggestion is to work out the existential dimension in addressing phenomena of dying and death. Here also medical theory and practice

Wir werden bald Zeugen vom Ende eines Jahrhunderts und eines Jahrtausends sein; aber das Phänomen des Endens ist viel schillernder, als daß es nur durch das nahe Datum 2000 interessant würde. Eine systematische und vollständige Behandlung des Themas verbietet sich von selbst—wer könnte die Vollständigkeit aller Ende bestimmen, ohne selbst jenseits dieser Marke zu stehen? Aber das Phänomen des Aufhörens erscheint allerwegen. Grund genug, sich mit dem „Enden" in kultureller, politischer, historischer—vielleicht auch existentieller Hinsicht zu beschäftigen. Das ist eine Aufgabe innerhalb und zwischen den akademischen Disziplinen. Das Ziel dieser Konferenz der ISIH ist es, eine Vielzahl von Facetten dieses Themas aus der Perspektive unterschiedlicher Disziplinen zu erhellen.

Es ist evident, daß man über das Thema des absoluten Endes ebensowenig wie über das den absoluten Anfangs reden kann, ohne unmittelbar in dialektische Probleme zu geraten. Diesseits dieser Schwierigkeiten ist es gleichwohl möglich, die Phänomene vom Enden in historischen, politischen und philosophischen Kontexten zu beschreiben. Die Idee etwa vom Ende der Welt reicht von der Sintflut bis zum Waldsterben. Auch wenn das nur ein Beispiel dafür ist, welchen Vorstellungreichtum das „Enden" eröffnet—diese Frage gehört gewiß zu den Themen, die Theologen, Philosophen und politische Denker herausfordern. Ein anderes