

J. B. BURY: A CRISIS OF HISTORICAL AND INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE

by: **Arthur HABERMAN**

A dissertation in the Department of History
submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of
Arts and Science in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at New York University.

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PREFACE

The life of J.B. Bury was the life of his mind. As much as any other important historian of the twentieth century, Bury remained, no doubt by choice, in the academic cloister. Even in those areas in which he did enter the arena of the active life, in which he disregarded scholarship in order to comment on meaningful public issues, the nature of his participation was mental. He did not care to make speeches, lead crusades, sit on committees, or in any way actively participate in anything but his own research and writing. Moreover, as is pointed out in this study, Bury had little to do with anything beyond his writing and teaching, and his teaching was hardly inspiring, especially in his later years. Bury was something of a recluse and even some of his old friends, such as Sir Almroth Wright, Norman Baynes and Sir Frank Adcock, have left little by which we can get to the inner man. There does not even survive the kind of anecdotes which hover about the ghosts of men who become academic legends. Even during his tenure as Regius Professor of History at Cambridge, from 1903 until his death in 1927, Bury neither used nor abused the privilege of holding an academic chair, a privilege otherwise advantageous for personal advancement in England. He was content to let his work make its own way, and because of its quality and the quality of his mind, it did.

Given the nature of the man, any study of Bury must concentrate on his works rather than on his activity, for it is in his works, in the life of his mind, that he really lived. Furthermore, a thorough search in Cambridge, London and elsewhere has indicated that most of his personal papers are no longer in existence. They were not preserved by Mrs. Bury and only some letters have

survived. Thus, those hints which might have been obtained from his unguarded moments, if there were any, are gone. Those letters which do remain reflect the public and not the private Bury.

This study is an analysis and assessment of Bury's work in the area of the methodology and philosophy of history and of his writings supporting his personal beliefs in rationalism, freedom of thought and the idea of progress. As will be shown, Bury made a clear distinction between his historical life and his personal one, although the problems he encountered and the issues he faced are not as mutually exclusive as he would have liked: in the attempts to formulate a meaningful philosophy of history and to develop a sound foundation for his individual beliefs, he often dealt with identical questions. In addition, although he was not an activist and preferred to remain physically isolated, Bury was very much aware of and concerned with contemporary thought. He was never mentally alone and the issues he treated and the way in which he treated them were not the result of the archaic behavior of a man not in tune with his times, but were contemporary in the full sense of the term. His reactions to problems of history are similar to those of the leading thinkers of his day and his responses to public issues were of his own time. Bury therefore cannot be studied in isolation, but must be related to the intellectual scene in those areas in which he worked, for he was influenced by his contemporaries and in turn had some influence on them.

Bury also was not a characteristically English historian in his concerns and his scope. He made it clear that he disliked any special affection for national history, he thought the issue of the philosophy of

history profoundly important, and his own research was almost exclusively related to the European continent. As a result, Bury was more influenced by the intellectual climate of the continent than by that of England and he felt more at home with European than with English scholarship. Indeed, European historians regarded Bury, like Acton, as one of their own--a cosmopolitan man who transcended national boundaries. As a historian, Bury is thus much more closely tied to the European scene than to the English one and perhaps this accounts, in part, for his isolated position at Cambridge.

Bury's contributions to historical scholarship are many and varied and today, almost two-score years after his death, it can be seen that his place in the development of historiography is secure. Furthermore, he was one of the few English historians to concern himself with the significant issues in the methodology and philosophy of history, and here he is of value both for what he said and for the problems he could not solve. His writings on rationalism and the idea of progress can be read not only for information and for the insights into the workings of a fine mind who felt he had to concern himself with issues of ultimate value, but also for what they tell us about the force and meaning of these questions to the European intellectual community in the first part of the twentieth century. In all of these areas, Bury's mind is still of value today.

I am greatly indebted to Professor A. William Salomone, whose guidance and encouragement, as always, went far beyond the bounds of any academic duty. The Department of History of New York University aided me in many ways and the Samuel S. Fels Fund kindly gave me the time and the opportunity to travel and research. My wife's

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Part I - The Historical Conscience

Inaugural of a Historian: The Autonomy of History

In 1902 Lord Acton, European, Roman Catholic, moralist, and scholar, died. For the last seven years of his life he occupied the chair of Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, being the successor of Seeley. The succession was somewhat incongruous, for Seeley and Acton not only differed in temperament and personal values but had sharp contrasting views on the scope and function of history. To Seeley, history was politics, a branch of political science; it could even be described as that academic function which supplied material for the study of politics.¹ For Acton, complex as he was, it was more and less at the same time. "Politics and history are interwoven, but are not commensurate.... It is our function to keep in view and to command the movement of ideas, which are not the effect but the cause of public events." Yet Acton was kaleidoscopic; hieratic history ought to have "some priority" over civil, and he logically carried through his thought to advocate that morality and history cannot be separated. While insisting upon detachment, Acton viewed history as a part of everyday life; we must learn to uphold our ideals in history as we do in contemporary affairs, for "if we lower our standard in history, we cannot uphold it in Church and State."² Thus, the Victorian and the European

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- 1 - Seeley, Sir John R., "The Teaching of Politics: An Inaugural Lecture," in Lectures and Essays, London: Macmillan and Co., 1870. See also Seeley, Sir John R., Introduction to Political Science, London: Macmillan and Company, 1896, pp. 1-29. In the latter work Seeley stated that "to lecture on Political Science is to lecture on History." (p. 13).
 - 2 - Acton, Lord, "Inaugural Lecture," in Essays on Freedom and Power, New York: Meridian Books, 1955, pp. 26, 27, 51-52.

Catholic to Seeley history is the pleasant gathering of dress for the affairs of state; to Acton the study is interwoven into the history of ideas while being part of the kind of presentism which views it as inseparable from ethics.

John Bagnell Bury was Balfour's second, and possibly his third, choice to succeed Acton. The chair was first offered to the Prime Minister's friend and longtime opponent John Morley, who declined.¹ Bury was born in Ireland in 1861 and trained in classics from an early age. He initiated his huge published output in 1881, collaborating with Professor J.P. Mahaffy on an edition of the Hippolytus of Euripides. In 1893 he was elected Professor of Modern History at Trinity College and in 1898 was appointed Regius Professor of Greek, holding the two chairs at the same time before reaching the age of forty. Before his appointment to Cambridge his histories of the early Byzantine Empire, Rome, Greece and a new edition of Gibbon had won him a European reputation.²

The Cambridge chair had been undistinguished until the middle of the nineteenth century; it had indeed been more a sinecure than a chair of learning since it was founded in 1724, perhaps reflecting the state of the English

1 - Gooch, G.P., "The Cambridge Chair of Modern History," in Studies of Modern History, London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1931, p. 319. The Dictionary of National Biography indicates that Maitland had first choice but did not want it. See Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1930, ed. J.R.H. Weaver, Oxford: University Press, 1937, p. 144.

2 - See Appendix A for further biographical details.

university and the chaotic nature of the study of history.¹ With the successive appointments of Stephan, Kingsley, Seeley and Acton, Cambridge began to attain some importance in historical study. Bury's was the first appointment of a man who had been exclusively a historian.²

"History is a science, no less and no more." This was the message Bury imparted in his Inaugural Lecture, and this was the epigram used by critics and students to summarize Bury's thought. Other than an article published in 1891 pleading for a sympathetic understanding of the past as contemporaries understood it, and a few utterances in prefaces to his historical works,³ Bury had never publicly stated his thoughts on the discipline of history. His first statement caused a minor sensation, given as it was at the time when history was freeing itself from the bonds of the natural sciences. Bury's statement was taken in and of itself to mean that the methodology of history

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- 1 - It should be noted that the Chair was founded by George I expressly to train diplomats in modern languages and history. It was not until history began to achieve some respectability in European intellectual circles that capable men were appointed.
 - 2 - Gooch, op. cit., passim. The other holders of the chair from its founding were Samuel Harris, Shallett Turner, Laurence Brockett, Thomas Gray, John Symonds and William Smyth. Only Symonds and Smyth made any kind of attempt to discharge their duties; only Gray did any work of lasting value and he, of course, was a poet and not a historian.
 - 3 - Bury, J.B., "Anima naturaliter pagana: A Quest of the Imagination," Fortnightly Review, N.S., vol. XLIX (1891), pp. 102-112. Also see the preface to his History of Greece, New York: The Modern Library, n.d., and the introduction to his edition of Gibbon, Edward, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., vol. I, 1896.

was the same as that of the natural sciences, a positivist statement with roots in the thought of Comte, the Social Darwinians, Buckle, Spencer, and Taine.

However, the word "science" had many meanings at the turn of the century; among other things it connoted rational, correct, and precise. The value of science was such that for an idea to be called scientific meant a kind of respectability of thought whose value could not be impugned. What Bury meant by science was a similar connotation.

Bury's lecture began with a discussion of the growth of the science of history in the nineteenth century. Praising Niebuhr, Ranke and Wolf, he stated they provided a "stricter standard of truth and new methods for the purpose of ascertaining truth."¹ Coincidentally, nationalism gave impetus to the study of history, nations and nationalists using it for "their claims for independence or for unity." History was an "effective weapon" on which to base a rationalization of the new political nationalism. Fortunately, the two movements--nationalism and the new criticism--met in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century. Nationalism provided an assumption of cultural unity and historical continuity; the new criticism provided a new historical methodology. Thus, for Bury, began the emancipation of the discipline of history from a position which had placed it subordinate to other branches of knowledge.

Bury then went on to deplore the old association of history with literature, rhetoric, and ethics. If history

1 - Bury, J.B., "Inaugural Lecture," in Temperley, Harold, ed., Selected Essays of J.B. Bury, Cambridge: University Press, 1936, p. 7.

is practical it is not so in that it teaches by example; history may "supply material for literary art" but it "is not a branch of literature." History "has come out into a place of liberty." Bury admitted that the impression of the past is "itself a distinct factor in guiding and moulding our evolution" and contrary to what he had previously implied, stated that he did intend to supply his listeners with a theory of the practical uses of the past.

The issue was severed at that moment and Bury then discussed the necessity of history being true--that is, correct, the need for objectivity and the desirability of historical perspective in not giving too much importance to the modern period while denigrating the idea of future development. The idea of development, on which Bury would later write, is stressed both for its importance as a controlling assumption in the growth of the discipline, as well as for limiting the emphasis on contemporary affairs. It is here that Bury seemed to go back to the idea of the practical significance of the study of history. Having stated that history cannot be used as literature, as rhetoric, to furnish laws, to guide us in our actions, or as an ethical study, he still had to answer the pragmatic question.

The answer he gave was, at best, inadequate. Our labor is justified, he stated, in terms of posterity. We collect and classify materials for generations to come. This research can "help to build, firm and solid, some of the countless stairs, by which men of distant ages may mount to a height unattainable by us and have a vision of history which we cannot view, standing on our lower slope." Furthermore, the works of history that are produced in a given period have value because they are products of an

age and can thus be used "as documents which mirror the form and feature of the age." Thus, history is practical in that it furthers research and is performing a duty to posterity, and "the only way to true history lies through scientific research."¹

Bury closed with a plea for universal history as opposed to viewing history as past politics. The larger conception is the true one and the study must be related to all the manifestations of human activity. It is sometimes necessary to divide the labor, but the larger view must be kept in mind.

The two major themes--history as science and history as having a practical importance--were then recapitulated:

...if, year by year, history is to become a more powerful force for stripping the bandages of error from the eyes of men, for shaping the public opinion and advancing the cause of intellectual and political liberty, she will best prepare her disciples for the performance of that task, not by considering the immediate utility of next week or next year or next century, not by accommodating her ideal or limiting her range, but by remembering always that, though she may supply material for literary art or philosophical speculation, she is herself simply a science, no less and no more.²

If we define positivism as that philosophy of history which saw history acting in the service and with the methods of the natural sciences, its twin program being ascertaining facts and framing laws by induction,³ Bury can hardly be called a positivist and his unfortunate use

1 - Ibid., pp. 17, 18, 19.

2 - Ibid., p. 22.

3 - Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, pp. 125-127.

of the word "science" can hardly be used to view him as a champion of positivist historiography. It is true that Bury sought to find a practical use for the study of history at a time when the positivist program supplied the only ready answer. Yet his answer would hardly endear him to the Comtians, for he expressly rejected the use of history to ascertain laws and he was uninterested in sociology. He was indeed part of the evolutionary tradition, but so were many others who were not positivists.

It can more truly be stated that Bury failed to supply historians with any practical justification for their labors; he was begging the question rather than answering it. What did happen was that he had started by negating all theories which viewed history as the hand-maiden of any other area. Clio was neither a lawgiver nor a muse. Having rejected all of the prevailing viewpoints from Herodotus to Spencer, he was unable to find an acceptable substitute. He was in the position of a man who had revolted against the old, but whose mind was unable to transform this revolt into a new theory. History became a "science," and by this Bury was affirming something more deeply felt than any pragmatic issue: history was autonomous, it belonged to no other discipline, it had no moral precepts to deliver, it should be objective, it had no guidance to offer, it had its own dignity. Bury pushed off all the old justifications and found himself with just plain history. It is clear he meant that the methodology of history should be as critical, as precise, as "true," as was that of the natural sciences; but it is also clear that history had nothing to offer beyond the vagueness of posterity and the humility of possibly serving the future. By science Bury meant what Acton did when

he wrote of the "science of politics";¹ a science is an independent study, no less and no more. History is autonomous, it belonged to no other than itself.

The discipline of history had been dealing with the question of autonomy for approximately one century before Bury's Inaugural Lecture. The greatest impetus for the establishment of history as an important study had been the growth of internal criticism and philological work, the initial masters being from Germany, mainly from the University of Göttingen² and more important in the establishment and dissemination of sophisticated scholarship, the University of Berlin. The great masters were, as Bury stated, Niebuhr, Wolf, and Ranke.³ It is not so surprising that this critical movement coincided with what is generally thought of as eclectic and imprecise Romanticism. For Romanticism had a view of the past which made its adherents most amenable to historical investigation.⁴ More important than its use of the idea

1 - Acton, Lord, op. cit., p. 25.

2 - Butterfield, Herbert, Man on His Past, Boston: Beacon Press, 1960, ch. 2, passim.

3 - Fueter, Eduard, Histoire de l'historiographie moderne, trans. Emile Jeanmaire, Paris: Alcan, 1914, pp. 575-605, passim. Barnes, Harry Elmer, A History of Historical Writing, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937, p. 246.

4 - It should be noted that Romanticism could hardly be called a single movement. English Romanticism was almost entirely a literary or artistic phenomenon, very much different than its German counterpart which profoundly affected every sphere of activity and was as much related to scholarship as to literature. See Beers, Henry A., A History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918, p. 352; and Stokoe, F.W., German Influence in the English Romantic Period, New York: Russell and Russell, 1963, pp. 13-14.

of development or social change were the twin ideas of the importance of the past in terms of present development and the fact that Romanticism viewed previous periods and other cultures as being worthy subjects of investigation.

Romanticism was sympathetic to the past and, probably even more significantly, propagated a theory of cultural relativism--it did not attempt to judge previous periods, it merely recorded them. From the time of Herder, each cultural milieu had value simply because it had existed. No culture was correct, it was only necessary.

Many eighteenth century philosophers, as well as earlier ones, did have the idea of development. However, history was treated as morality and literature.¹ Great arsenals of facts were used as grapeshot against the ancien régime and the Enlightenment values were absolutized when viewing periods of the past. Reason was enthroned and historical investigation took second place to its dictates. As Condorcet stated in his delightfully bizarre history: "The time will come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason."²

As the nineteenth century wore on historical scholarship became more meticulous, historical investigation grew into an industry, and historical speculation was a habit of all academicians. No philosopher, historian, sociologist, economist and others would be caught without a philosophy of history. In this process history bifurcated into two distinct areas--historical research and the

1 - Thompson, James Westfall, A History of Historical Writing, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942, vol. II, pp. 94-95.

2 - Condorcet, Antoine-Nicolas de, Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind, trans. J. Barraclough, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955, p. 179.

philosophy of history. Most historians stayed in the safety of the wings of research, while those few of their colleagues, as well as many from other areas, who dared, speculated on the meaning of the past. The dominant philosophy, from mid-century on, was positivism, a theory whose view on research fortunately coincided with that of the earlier Romantics who emancipated history but whose final speculations subordinated history to the epistemological ends of the natural sciences. As we shall see later in greater detail, at about 1890 there grew quite independently a revolt against the positivist viewpoint of history as natural science, and many answers, some old and some new--ranging from history as narrative to history as philosophy to the need of a personality theory through history--were given with a view toward finding the ultimate interpretation of history. As a result of the bifurcation, and undoubtedly because of the soundness of its methods, historical criticism and investigation was not discussed. The issue was one of a criticism of what became known as the philosophy of history and it was wholly on the interpretive level. It was the search for meaning out of the morass of facts offered by the researchers and, incidentally, a justification of the labors of the historian.

Bury was either not as ambitious as many of those who countered the old trend or not as able. He did make a minor attempt to develop a philosophy of history in the lecture, but dropped the issue in favor of just declaring for the autonomy of history. In the preface to his Life of St. Patrick Bury took occasion to use the term "science"

again and to answer his critics.¹ In speaking of the appendices, in which he discussed the sources and methods used to arrive at his conclusions, he stated: "These appendices represent the work which belongs to the science of history; the text is an effort in the art of historiography."² In a note to the above sentence he continued:

I may be permitted to remark that in vindicating the claims of history to be regarded as a science or Wissenschaft (sic), I never meant to suggest a proposition so indefensible as that the presentation of the results of historical research is not an art, requiring the tact and skill in selection and arrangement which belong to the literary faculty.

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- 1 - Bury specifically mentioned Morley and Butcher. Among the more vociferous critics in print immediately following the lecture, all focusing on the issue of science and history, were Trevelyan, G.M., "The Latest View of History," The Independent Review, vol. I, pp. 395-414; and Butcher, S.H., Harvard Lectures on the Originality of Greece, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1920, pp. 251-253 (originally published under the title Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects, 1904). Even today Bury's epigram is used as a contrasting battle-cry for those historians who wish to point out the more literary aspects of their craft. See, for instance, Wedgwood, C.V., Literature and the Historian, Oxford: University Press, 1956, passim; A.L. Rowse in The Use of History, rev. ed., New York: Collier Books, 1963, p. 63 and D.W. Brogan in "Clio, a Muse," The New York Times, 14 February 1965, section 7, p. 2 also use the epigram to interpret Bury as advocating a wholly scientific view of history. C.H. Williams, in his anthology The Modern Historian, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1938, pp. 14-15, points out how Bury's statement, misunderstood as it was, encouraged the practitioners of positivist history.
- 2 - Bury, J.B., The Life of St. Patrick, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1905, p. viii.

"I did not," he further remarked, "sufficiently guard against this misapprehension."¹ The meaning seems quite clear; although Bury often wrote and thought like a positivist, for instance in bringing Gibbon up to date and editing and contributing to the Cambridge Series, he was not one with regard to their philosophy of history. Criticism must be "scientific," history could not be.

Bury later took up the same position in the lectures which comprised The Ancient Greek Historians. He again stated that history has a practical value and is not studied for its own sake. However, the question was still left open for all he said in relation to its practicality is: "History cannot be isolated (except provisionally for methodical purposes) from the total complex of human knowledge; and human knowledge has no value out of relation to human life." Thus knowledge is good, history is knowledge, therefore history is good. A somewhat different answer than in 1903, but one which still leaves the issue cold. With reference to history as a science, Bury did clarify his earlier statement, although it should be noted that he was becoming an avowed relativist by this time. In speaking of the maxim "History for its own sake," Bury explained that it is a regulative norm meaning that "history must be studied as if it had no bearing on anything beyond itself."

In other words, it assumes that history is a science. The study of natural phenomena intimately affects society in its ethics, religion, and politics; the study of historical phenomena must affect them too. But like physical sciences and all other branches of knowledge, history requires for its scientific development complete freedom and independence;

1 - Ibid., p. viii, note.

its value is annulled and its powers are paralysed if it consents to be ancillary to politics, ethics, or theology; in order to fulfil its function, it must (like all sciences) be treated as if it were an end in itself.¹

The new Regius Professor who delivered his Inaugural Lecture in The Divinity School in Cambridge, on 26 January 1903, was establishing a new credo, vastly different from that of his predecessors, and unusual with reference to other English historians. This was not his final statement, but rather his first on the study of history. With this he began a long personal dialogue on the nature of the study and meaning of the past while continuing his impersonal scholarly researches at the same prodigious rate as before.

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958, pp. 244-245. See also, Bury, J.B., "Darwinism and History," in Temperley, op. cit., (a lecture delivered in 1909), pp. 26-27, 33, 36-37.

From Philology to History

Bury was an accomplished classicist at a very early age, and this training remained with him, both in his scholarship and temperament, throughout his lifetime. As Trinity College's best student of the classics¹ and as its future Professor of Greek, it was natural for him to begin his scholarly work with philological studies. History was approached by way of philology, with a side-ward glance in the areas of philosophy and poetry.

The earliest publications are more in the nature of classical-philological studies than they are historical investigations. At the age of twenty, Bury's list of publications began with an edition of Euripides' Hippolytus,² edited in collaboration with his teacher J.P. Mahaffy. The edition is not distinguished by an historical introduction, a feature which would later become commonplace in Bury's classical studies.³ Bury was the junior member of the partnership and Mahaffy, writing the introduction, stated: "The labour of sifting the materials and composing the notes, has mainly been undertaken by Mr. Bury."⁴

This work was followed throughout his lifetime by numerous articles on many topics, all relating to some philological point, whether a brief examination or the editing of a manuscript. In the early years, almost all of Bury's articles can more truly be placed under philology

1 - Bury received first place in the area in 1882.

2 - Euripides, Hippolytus, ed., with Introduction, Notes, and Appendix, by J.P. Mahaffy and J.B. Bury, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1881.

3 - For instance, see the editions of Pindar.

4 - Euripides, op. cit., p. xii.

or classics than history. He contributed to many publications, most often giving emendations to Greek and Latin texts, sometimes reinterpreting the meaning of a word, other times giving his opinion on various archeological discoveries.

Bury's interest in philology for its own sake continued to the end of his life. But slowly, more and more articles published on philology had as their reason the illumination of history. Instead of suggesting an emendation to a text, Bury, after the earlier studies, would either examine a whole text or use the philological solution as an introduction to a historical problem.¹ He did continue to suggest only philological points, but these grew fewer as the years wore on.

Philology slowly transformed itself in Bury's mind. Though he never suggested that it had no value for itself, his attitude toward his own studies changed it for himself. Bury became a historian and what was once the material now became a tool. This is also evidenced by the jump from classical philology to work in the Byzantine period. Until his Later Roman Empire of 1889, Bury confined his philology almost solely to Greek and Latin texts. Afterwards, he divided his work between the Ancients and the Byzantines; even the classical studies were now more often than not conscious preludes to the understanding of history,²

1 - For example, Bury, J.B., "The History of the Names Hellas, Hellenes," The Journal of Hellenic Studies, vol. XV (1895), pp. 217-238; and Bury, J.B., "The Treatise De administrando imperio," Byzantinische Zeitschrift, vol. XV (1906), pp. 517-577.

2 - For example, Bury, J.B., "The Helladikoi," English Historical Review, vol. VII (1892), pp. 80-81; and Bury, J.B., "Some Points in the Pentekontaetia," Hermathena, vol. X (1889), pp. 153-158.

preparations for his History of Greece, published in 1900. It becomes clear that as Bury's own interests began to change, his uses of philology underwent a similar transformation. By the turn of the century, philology was approached as an adjunct to history, a part of the historical method:

It is now universally recognized as a fundamental principle in historical work that philological criticism (literary and quellenkritisch) is the necessary preparation for a satisfactory use of authorities. Documents are not ready for the constructive operations of the historian till they have been submitted to the analytical operations of the philologist.¹

It was now history which interested Bury in special philological problems; it had been the other way around in his earliest work. This transformation--from philology to history--is not as clear in Bury's work as one would like it to be. It occurred almost imperceptibly, for in many cases the distinction between the two is one of emphasis rather than of kind. As late as 1910, Bury published an article on a purely philological level.² As early as 1886, he was writing history.³ Yet, it is clear that history was Bury's second discipline. His training was as a classicist, and his knowledge of languages probably matched that of any of his contemporaries. Bury wooed Erato before he won Clio, and, after he consciously switched disciplines, his philological training not merely colored, but greatly aided, his historical work.

1 - Bury, J.B., "The Treatise De administrando imperio," op. cit., p. 517.

2 - Bury, J.B., "Note on the Metre of the Inscriptions in Popular Greek," The Annual of the British School at Athens, no. 17. (1910-1911).

3 - Bury, John B., "Eubolia before the Lelantine War," English Historical Review, vol. I (1886).

As a classicist, Bury was always interested in classical training and in the issue of its value to the educated man. One aspect of such training in which he participated in his early years was in the translation of modern poetry into classical verse or, as it was then called, "classical verse writing." Trinity College in Dublin had long been a home of the classics, boasting of such men as Tyrell and Mahaffy among a distinguished faculty. There had been a little publication, Kottabos, devoted to translations and parodies of the classics written by students and faculty at Trinity. It had been allowed to languish after 1881 as the practice of rendering modern verse into classical languages began to go out of fashion. Bury revived the publication in 1888 and became its chief contributor until its second life ended in 1895. Swinburne was his favorite, but he also translated Goethe (from the German), Landor, Tennyson, Edward Lear, Remy Belleau (from the French), Rossetti, Marlowe, Herrick, Shakespeare, ~~Matthew~~ Arnold, Shelley, and Coleridge. In addition he did a few popular rhymes and some humorous poetry.¹ This was a sideline, an exercise in the use of language, but, Bury felt, a very useful one. In 1897, he wrote a lament on the decline of the practice for the Saturday Review.

In the 1850's, 60's, and 70's, Bury stated, England took Greek and Latin verse translation seriously and was elaborating it into an art even while lagging behind

1 - Though Kottabos also contained humor and parody, Bury's contribution in these areas was almost nil. He did do an unusually clumsy parody of Gibbon, whom he admired, entitled "A Short Study in Style," Kottabos, N.S., vol. VI (1888), pp. 94-96.

German scholarship in philological studies. But, he stated, English scholarship has turned and having begun to woo "the favour of grimmer divinities" in an attempt to overtake Germany, "we are now groaning under the yoke of facts and statistics and other wearisome inventions." Science has invaded the old citadels, turning out the more artistic endeavors. "Classical scholarship," Bury asserted in an analogy with a friend's opinion of the merit of the Giant's Causeway, "is growing too damned scientific. It will soon become a branch of mathematics."¹

"The practice of verse composition in the ancient languages has been often deprecated as a slight pastime," he continued,

it may have been successfully defended, but it certainly has a use of the highest kind. I am not speaking of original composition in Latin and Greek.... I speak exclusively of the translation of modern poetry into those tongues. The practice of such translation supplies a training in the virtues of words--a training invaluable for a literary student and which nothing else can easily replace. Since words in poetry, like stars, create atmospheres around them, which cannot be displayed in a dictionary, and since most words in a modern and an ancient language do not exactly correspond even in meaning, much less in poetical worth; it is evident that the art of transforming English verses

1 - That Bury should criticize the revivification of English philological scholarship might seem wholly inconsistent in the face of his "scientific" contributions and his being one of the few Englishmen who could compete with the Germans on their own ground. However, he always reserved the right to aesthetic judgments on the basis of what might be termed "art for art's sake." As we shall see below, poetry was one of his recreations, especially in his twenties. His attitude here was in no way inconsistent with the aesthetic side, such as it was, of his criticism.

into Latin and Greek demands and develops a subtle feeling for the aesthetic values of phrases.

Bury claimed that there was still a use for classical verse translation, hinting at a combination of old aesthetics and new criticism in order to achieve "a more consistently high standard in the reproduction of the poetical virtues and effects of the original...." The philologist, he stated, were he to undergo such training, may "best win his way to the aesthetic apprehension of the poets whose delightful gifts to mankind it is his privilege to interpret to the world."¹

This attempt to maintain the tradition of translation into Greek and Latin was part of a larger battle in which Bury had participated some years before. The issue of Greek was not confined to philologists and translators, but was, in the 1890's, part of a general reassessment of the university curriculum. In England a battle was being waged on the value of maintaining the study of Greek as a compulsory part of university education. In the early part of the decade there was an election in Cambridge to determine whether the study of Greek would be retained on a compulsory basis. The supporters of Greek won, and Bury afterwards went on public record as one of their number. What he did dispute with those in his camp were the reasons they put forth in support of their stand. The "barbarians," as those who were against retention were symbolically called, had urged that Greek was useless and

1 - Bury, J.B., "The Decline of Classical Verse-Writing," Saturday Review, vol. LXXXIII (1897), pp. 375-376. Although there are no papers to show whether Bury ever did continue his translations in his study, no further illustrations of this art were published by him.

therefore an unnecessary study; in reply, stated Bury, the supporters of Greek jeopardize their position by attempting to prove Greek a useful study. "Greek is useless," cried Bury,

but its uselessness is the very strongest reason for its being a compulsory subject in the University course. For the true function of a University is the teaching of useless learning. And if she attempts to do anything else, she is going beyond her proper province. If she be seduced into running after the useful, she is simply denying herself. If she sets before herself other objects than learning for its own sake, she is abandoning her birthright; nay, she is changing herself into something different from a University. A University, as such, has no concern with making her students statesmen, or orators, or men of business, or men of religion. Instruction may be given, and subjects may be studied, there, which may afterwards prove useful to the statesmen, or the merchant, or the artist. But with such accidental results Universities are not concerned. That a subject may prove useful is no reason at all for including it in academic studies; that a subject is useful, and has only its utility to recommend it, would be a decisive argument against adopting it.

Thus, according to this criterion, Greek is the perfect university study. But Bury realized he could not make lack of utility into a godhead for university education and, after he had gotten the full shock value out of his uselessness criterion, he injected the more important guideline-- that of having something to do with Western culture. The place of Greek in Western culture cannot be disputed. The function of a university being to promote the best part of culture, to provide "the exact measure of learning which is needful for a liberal education," Greek naturally held a position equalled by few. Besides these qualifications Greek was distinguished for the example its people set: "They were always seeking knowledge for its own sake, with-

out any regard for results; their curiosity was not regulated by utility, or deterred by fear.... They were ready to follow reason." Indeed, he stated, the "true aim" of our universities ought to be to emulate the kind of education pursued by the Greeks.

Bury rejected the arguments of the enemies of Greek-- that of being in tune with the Zeitgeist, the "half-Greek" who advocates reading translations of the standard works of Greek literature and those who argue against Greek on the basis that students lose the language as soon as they pass out of the university. The voice of the Zeitgeist is likened to a Zeitungsgeschrei; for Bury, a university ought not be asked to progress in lines other than her own. The "half-Greeks" are the true barbarians, the men who do not recognize that "language and literature are fellows, and their relation is one of reciprocity." Bury agreed that Greek is lost once association with the university ends, but he argued that the man who learned Greek will never be the same as the man who never did. He closed with a reiteration of his stand, turning the epigram around to further demonstrate its validity: "A University is useful because what it teaches is useless."¹

1 - Bury, J.B., "Compulsory Greek: Reflections Suggested by the Greek Victory at Cambridge," Fortnightly Review, N.S., vol. L (1891), pp. 811-821, passim. Bury later recanted his position in a letter dated 28 November 1901 to his friend Wedd of King's College, Cambridge. In the letter Bury stated that though he was what he termed "an ardent Compulsionist" ten years previously, "reflexion" on the best interests of education had led him to believe that it would be best to make Greek an optional subject at Trinity. Bury asked Wedd whether he felt this might rupture Cambridge's close relationship with Dublin and inquired whether the rumor is true that the regulation on compulsory Greek at

In addition to his philological interests and his more minor considerations on language, translation into classical verse and the retention of Greek, Bury's early extra-historical work took in the area of philosophy and, more importantly, poetry. These, too, would never cease to hold his interest, though in the latter area his significant contributions were ended with the year 1892.

Philosophy was a study, part of his training, and it would be too much to say that he was in any way a philosopher. Yet, this training affected his work in many important ways, most significantly in making him conscious of problems historians generally disregarded. As consciousness breeds thought and thought attitudes, Bury, the amateur philosopher or the conscious individual was forced to maintain positions of a certain importance. Bury's training was sporadic, never fully systematic, and hardly complete. He was, of course, well acquainted with the Greek and Roman philosophers. In addition, in his earliest years, he admitted being most influenced by Hegel and McTaggart.¹ As an avowed rationalist, he read deeply into those men on whose work he would later write The Idea of Progress. As a Byzantinist and anti-clerical, he felt it necessary to read in those areas as well.

Unlike most historians, Bury thus had more than a nodding acquaintance with the history of Western philosophy. The nature of the man was such that he felt it incumbent

Cambridge can be evaded. The answer to the letter is not extant and Bury never publicly advocated making the requirement an optional one. Bury, J.B., letter, 28 November 1901, to N. Wedd, Wedd MS, King's College Library, Cambridge University.

1 - Baynes, Norman H., A Bibliography of the Works of J.B. Bury, with a Memoir, Cambridge: University Press, 1929, p. 41.

to justify his public stands--either on issues of the day or in the area of methodology and philosophy of history--with sound philosophical arguments. Bury was a historian first, but he did not shy away, as we shall see, from the more abstract problems of his craft. Rather, he rightly regarded them as important and spent much time and energy trying to resolve these issues. This interest and concern was the result of both temperament and training: he simply felt that one ought to think about his assumptions and make them as clear and correct as possible; and his early training made him somewhat at home with the abstractions and questions of philosophic disputation.

Poetry was also a consuming interest; in one form or another it stayed with him throughout his life. The most dominant period was the years from 1880 to 1892 when he edited Euripides and Pindar and wrote most of his classical emendations and his translations from Greek verse. He was at home with both the classics and moderns, but his major work was the editions of Pindar's Nemean and Isthmian odes and some critical studies of Browning. After 1892, with the publication of his edition of the Isthmian Odes Bury confined himself to periodical work in emendations and some brief expository essays. Again, history took the wind out of the sails of another discipline. Much of the later work was related to historical points: like philology, the classics and formal work in poetry in general took second place to historical interests.

Pindar was Bury's favorite because "of all Greek poets he is the most Greek," concerning himself more with the Hellenic spirit than with the universal forms of emotion reflected in most Greek tragedies. He thus gave a more distinctively Greek portrait than did any other poet

of the times.¹

In editing Pindar, Bury developed a theory of verbal responsions or echoes found in Pindar's poetry, using it as the way to discovering the meaning of the poet. Bury claimed that Pindar systematically practiced the artifice of "suggesting meanings by echoes," a subtle device much like the refrains of primitive poetry. Being a great poet, this art was generally hidden, but Bury used the idea continually in his interpretation of the Nemean Odes.² The only importance of the theory is that it was partially retracted two years later in the edition of the Isthmian Odes, and was never mentioned again by Bury, a tacit admission that his critics were at least partially correct in attacking the theory. In the Isthmian Odes Bury stated that his critics will be pleased to find that the idea of constantly recurring verbal responsions "has been more seldom introduced into the commentary, in deference to the judgment both of those who are entirely deaf to the echoes, and of those who, though willing to allow that such echoes are sometimes audible, think that I have carried the method to extremes."³

Another critical point which Bury discussed was the validity of certain types of emendations in the reconstruction of classical works. In dealing with passages which obviously needed correction, he stated, "my first principle has been that no conjecture is of the slightest critical

1 - Pindar, The Nemean Odes of Pindar, ed. with Introduction and Commentary by J.B. Bury, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1890, p. xi.

2 - Ibid., pp. xxx-xxxii.

3 - Pindar, The Isthmian Odes of Pindar, ed. with Introduction and Commentary by J.B. Bury, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1892, p. vii; see pp. vii-xi for a further exposition of the topic.

value unless it explains the origin of the corruption." He condemned the majority of emendations proposed in philological journals for not adhering to this standard.¹

One of the questions involved in such textual criticism was the issue of introducing into the Greek text words not found in the dictionary. Bury was inconclusive on this point, basing the issue on "a degree of probability." He admitted words not found in the contemporary literature which has been preserved, but found in the works of the Alexandrian writers and the compilers of glossaries. Another problem was the restoration of a word whose form is good, but which had not been preserved at all in the literature we have of the period. He distinguished two kinds of strange words; the first, a word "whose existence...is pre-supposed by actually existent forms"; the second, words not presupposed, but which, being formed on correct analogy, "may have been in use." In this case, Bury preferred the use of the first type to the second, admitting that in some cases the probability of each might be equal under certain circumstances. In uses of the second type, he acknowledged that such emendations must be considered doubtful, though they are possibly correct. In certain circumstances, with other supporting textual

1 - Pindar, The Nemean Odes of Pindar, op. cit., p. liv. Two years later, in 1892, while reviewing a work of Freeman, Bury stated: "Conjectual emendation often goes to such outrageous lengths, that sober-minded people who have a weakness for evidence are tempted to denounce it altogether. Yet they have to admit, when special circumstances are put before them, that conjectual emendation is permissible and desirable within certain limits. The real problem is to define these limits...." Bury regretted that Freeman did not do so. Bury, J.B., Review of The History of Sicily from the Earliest Times, vol. III, by Edward A. Freeman, Scottish Review, vol. XX (1892), p. 318.

evidence the degree of probability is greater. Bury stated that textual criticism is not based on strong premises, and that any general conclusions need modification in any particular instance. Furthermore, there is still a great amount of difference among the experts--"different minds will always estimate differently the amount of evidence required to render probable a conjecture of the kind here discussed."¹ Scientific philological criticism, Bury seemed to be saying, has hardly reached the point where there is a unanimity of opinion with reference to critical standards. This is perhaps one of the reasons he began to devote more of his time to history, where, on the level of methodology, the degree of certainty was certainly less speculative.

Even earlier than his work on Pindar, Bury had an interest in Browning and wrote two essays on his work. The most significant was the one entitled "Browning's Philosophy," where he tried to extract a philosophical system from Browning's poetry and revealed a good deal of his own thinking at the time it was written in 1882.²

Bury began his essay with the distinction used by Browning between the objective and the subjective poet. "The former is he who is impelled to embody his perceptions with reference to the many below; the latter to embody them with reference to the one above him,..." Browning, he stated, has transcended the confines of these categories; he is at once objective and subjective; "he supplies

1 - Pindar, The Nemean Odes of Pindar, op. cit., pp. lli-lxiv, passim.

2 - Bury, J.B., "Browning's Philosophy," Browning Society's Papers, vol. I.

mediating links between experience and the absolute truth." Bury insisted on the "necessity" of understanding Browning's "theory" first, before one can understand his practical conclusions.

For Bury, Browning starts from the individual and then relates to the universal. Bury stated that he will occupy himself first with the latter, the less obtrusive side, and then relate it in connection with the individual. "Browning's first principle or absolute truth is love." He further equated "love" with "truth" and with "God," and it is "most strictly philosophical." Love reveals "itself to itself...by its two modes, Power and Knowledge (or intellect). Power is the mode of Love's manifestation in nature. Knowledge is Love's recognition of itself through the medium of Power."

Bury had yet another dialectical dualism--that of truth and falsehood.¹ Citing many illustrations from Browning's poems, Bury pointed out that the "Truth of Love" cannot be arrested unless we know of its opposite--the reason evil exists in this imperfect world is to offer the possibility of truth.

The three elements of "Love, Power and Knowledge" are part of all experience, and it is "the inharmonious blending of these elements that puts souls out of tune." This accounts for the "infinite variety of shades" in men; man must harmonize them, "which he can do but incompletely until by the process of evolution he has become, as God, a perfect musician;..."

Bury then made a comparison of Browning's views with those of Hegel. Browning had to be a metaphysician and his method is called similar to that of Hegel. Were Browning to have been a philosopher proper, Bury stated, he would

1 - One is tempted to write Truth and Falsehood.

have been a Hegelian. Similarities and correspondences are noted. The truth of negation in Browning "is the essence of Hegel." Browning proceeds through a dialectical series to a suspended moment; for Browning the Idea is Love, for Hegel it is Being. Browning is different in that he does not give a history of the progress of Love, but uses poetic insight by "seeing into souls." For Bury, at his own suspended moment in time, both represent a duality, one side of a perfect universe.

The essay now moved to the religious and individual side of Browning's ideas. Browning, stated Bury, recognizes the truth of Christianity but not the myths in which it has been wrapped. This recognition of Browning--that God, in whom man "lives, moves, and has his being, is Love"--"is the soul of Christianity." The dogma is true for Browning; the history of the Church and the subsequent myths of the Christian creed are false. With regard to the individual, he teaches that each being "has a worth and meaning in and for himself" independent of the world. His relation to the "Absolute" is as an individual and as such he possesses universal value. The universe and the individual exist for one another. The individual is thus immortal, but not in the usual sense. Immortality "implies a state inconceivable to us, limited as we are by phenomenal conditions,..." It implies freeing oneself from the limitations of space and time. According to Browning, there is one way to gain a "foretaste" of immortality and that is by music, which fuses ideas and emotion, unites love and knowledge. Bury did not choose to go further into Browning's views on the validity of

more conventional ideas on immortality.¹

This essay is not similar to anything else ever written by Bury and is remarkable for its style and type of thought. Bury was never a Romantic, and never again publicly dabbled in poetical and philosophical metaphysics. Indeed, though he often admitted to having been influenced by Hegel,² he never again tried to imitate his style or type of thought. The essay was written at the age of twenty-one and was most probably the product of a youthful intoxication with Hegelian thought, metaphysics, and a Romantic vision. It is odd to read such a work by one who would soon be a consistent rationalist, who would find himself at home with Gibbon and Enlightenment philosophy. Bury's writing style turned out to be one which was not remarkable, but which was always clear and inconspicuous. He may occasionally have been diffuse in his historical work, but he was generally easy to read--whether he was being polemical or merely discussing a minor technical historical point. He never again became involved with the circumlocutions which especially belong to metaphysics. This Browning essay is the only published work which belongs in that category. In it, Bury seems to have tried to combine Hegel's involutions, bad poetical metaphor and archaic language, and a conscious attempt to be profound. The result is devastating. Were it not for the fact that the poet himself is said to have politely praised Bury after the paper

1 - Bury, J.B., "Browning's Philosophy," op. cit., pp. 259-277, passim.

2 - Baynes, op. cit., p. 41.

was delivered to The Browning Society,¹ one would conclude after reading it that Browning comes out more Hegelian than Hegel, more abstract than any metaphysician, and, most probably, more Bury than Browning.

Four years later, Bury wrote a short study of Browning's Aristophanes' Apology--to show why Browning was sympathetic to the Hellenistic age and spirit--containing none of the lucubrations of the other paper. It is a straightforward narrative essay, more a work on attitude toward history than a critical study.

The publication of the Isthmian Odes marked the end of Bury's devotion to serious scholarship unconnected with his historical work. The two overlapped by this time for Bury had already written historical works, but they would never meet again in quite the same independent way. History would now be his craft and as he was an ecumenical scholar in these years, he would become one of the truly ecumenical historians of his time. Henceforward, he would be concerned with the issues of his new *métier*: writing history, debating the nature and content of his study, and searching within for its meaning and worth.

1 - Ibid., p. 47.

Methodology and the Ideals of a Historian

The distinction between historical method and the philosophy of history is not always clear; for the significance that one attaches to a given set of facts or ideas is often heavily dependent on how one goes about determining what happened and the limits placed upon oneself by the rules of evidence. Yet, the distinction is a valid one, if only historically so, because the discipline of history as it developed in the nineteenth century created it for almost all historians. Positivism was not only a philosophy of history but came to be, in a quite different mode, an historical method. And if, as we shall see, on the level of meaning and cognition it was found inadequate at the turn of the century, on the other level of the everyday business of determining just what did happen, most of its tenets--founded not by positivists, but by working historians such as Ranke, Niebuhr, and Savigny--are still universally accepted. As Bury put it in his introduction to Gibbon's Decline and Fall: "To pass from scope and spirit to method... the growth of German erudition is one of the leading features of the intellectual history of the nineteenth century; and one of its most important contributions to historical method lies in the investigation of sources."¹ Just pointing out what might have been relevant to Gibbon's work, Bury listed the distinction between primary and secondary sources, greater care in distinguishing contemporary and later witnesses, criticism of sources to yield their precise historical value, the illegitimacy of blending the evidence of

1 - Gibbon, Edward, op. cit., p. xlv.

two distinct periods in order to give a complete picture of an institution, the progress of textual criticism and the availability of improved text, new materials from numismatics and seals, and the growth of the study of constitutional history and law.¹

By the time Bury began writing his histories, the diffusion of the methodological revolution begun in Germany in the early nineteenth century was virtually completed. Historical investigation had by common consent become professionalized and sources were analyzed on a much more sophisticated level than had been done before. Although the battle of philosophies of history was continually being fought, there was little discussion about the way to go about ascertaining an historical fact. Indeed, most historians by the end of the nineteenth century did not even bother entering into discussions of method, much less philosophy. They went about the business of writing their tomes with the vague thought that the accumulation of facts automatically constituted an accumulation of knowledge.² Historical method had by this time become rationalized and in this sense--in the sense of the verifiability and universality--history had become scientific.

Bury inherited this methodological tradition of the nineteenth century and contributed to it. From

1 - Ibid., pp. xlv-lili.

2 - See Simon, W.M., European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963, chs. 3-9, passim. See below, pp. 50-57 for a discussion of the influence of positivism in European historical thought.

his earliest work in philology, he became aware of the tenuous character of certain data; his writings in Ancient and Byzantine history only confirmed it, and his editing of Gibbon taught him the difference between the methodological assumptions of the late nineteenth and late eighteenth centuries.

Though Bury continually changed his position with reference to the meaning of history, his attitude on method was unitary throughout his lifetime. There is no sense of development in this area of his scholarship; the canons he laid down in 1886 for admitting certain evidence could be used in 1923. It should be noted, however, that this does not mean that he would have written precisely the same kind of history at any two different points in time. His idea of the meaning and relationship of the facts collected changed throughout his lifetime and, in this shadowy area, methodology and philosophy often meet. But in terms of ascertaining that a given thing occurred or that a document is admissible, Bury's attitude remained the same throughout his scholarly career.¹

Bury's first canon of historical investigation was

1 - One case where philosophy and methodology do meet, even possibly collide, is the case of bringing a classic "up to date." Bury did such work, having no compunctions in correcting some of Gibbon's errors and in revising Freeman's The Historical Geography of Europe. See below, pp. 59-60 for an elucidation of Bury's attitude in this area.

disinterestedness. Touched on in his Inaugural Lecture and in The Ancient Greek Historians, he took this to mean that even should the historian have an ancillary interest in mind, this must not intrude itself upon the investigation of the facts. This was, to Bury, a regulative principle--"it concerns only the methods and immediate aims of historians; it does not express the final purpose of their labours."¹ As an example of the necessity of history not being used for practical ends, Bury earlier spoke of the medieval period. "Christian historiography," he stated, "installed the superior guidance of an indefeasible authority...." The reconstruction "held men's minds throughout the Middle Ages, imposed as it was by the highest ecclesiastical authority." The synthesis was "grotesque," and man's knowledge did not advance. "History submitted to authority, and free inquiry was suspended for centuries."²

In dealing with the facts themselves, Bury made a number of isolated statements throughout his lifetime which indicated how he went about his own labors.³

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., p. 245.

2 - Ibid., pp. 238-239.

3 - Bury is listed in the Cambridge University Reporter as having given a lecture course entitled "The Use of Authorities" almost every year from 1904 to 1925. The manuscript has not been preserved. However, in an interview with Prof. Herbert Butterfield on 18 April 1963, Prof. Butterfield recalled that Prof. Harold Temperley had looked

He was ready, in general, to admit evidence that was not fully supported by independent sources, or evidence which might not be correct, but was the only statement available. Working as he did in Ancient and Byzantine history, the problems in these areas were especially acute. In an early article he had to face the issue in relation to the authority of Zosimos. Bury stated that although the authority of Zosimos "is by no means unimpeachable," historians are justified in accepting his statements as evidence of the division of the Empire into prefectures "provided they find no conflicting fact, resting on authority, which may be looked on either as certain, or as less impeachable than Zosimos. If we do find a conflicting statement better attested, that of Zosimos must fall."¹ Similarly, Bury laid down the rule that a piece of evidence which is not supported by any other authority must be compared to what internal evidence exists of the period before it can be accepted or rejected. He accepted as genuine the evidence of the chronicler

at the manuscript after Bury's death and considered it unworthy of publication. It was, Temperley stated, merely a rehash of Ernst Bernheim's Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode und der Geschichtsphilosophie, Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, 1889. The last edition of Bernheim was published in 1923.

- 1 - Bury, J.B., "The Praetorian Prefects and the Divisions of the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century A.D.," Royal Irish Academy Proceedings, Second Series, vol. II (1888), p. 490. In a note it is indicated that the paper was read before the academy on 13 December 1886.

Malalas on the relations of Olybrius¹ with the Emperor Leo, "even though it rests on the unsupported authority of Malalas; for it is quite in accordance with what we know of the period."¹ Thus, quite early in his career, Bury recognized the necessity of using some sort of conjecture in areas where the evidence is scanty. Rather than disregard certain possible factual material, he was willing to allow a kind of sophisticated guesswork along with the admission that what we do know might be totally wrong due to lack of supporting evidence.

In 1896, Bury and W.H. Hutton published a series of letters in The Guardian brought on by Hutton's disputing Bury's thesis in the Later Roman Empire that Justinian, in old age, "lapsed into the theological error which was known as apthasodocetism." The evidence massed on both sides was enormous and Bury tried to silence Hutton by appealing to

a principle of historical criticism which, I venture to think, is sound. The principle is that neither (1) arguments resting on considerations of improbability--impossibility is a different matter--nor (2), as a general rule, arguments ex silentio (which are, indeed, merely a particular case of 1) can be legitimately used to invalidate positive evidence which is not on independent grounds suspicious, unless there exist some evidence on the other side. In this case no such positive evidence is produced,...²

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- 1 - Bury, John B., "A Note on the Emperor Olybrius," English Historical Review, vol. I (1886), pp. 508-509.
- 2 - Bury, J.B., "Justinian's Heresy," The Guardian, vol. LI (1896), p. 362.

In introducing Gibbon, Bury again acknowledged the value and the necessity of sophisticated guesswork. In determining that Procopius was the author of the "Secret History," he did so by exclusion, by proving that no one but Procopius was in the position to write the history. He thus felt he could make the statement a declarative one "for this assumption [of there being no forger] is the only one which supplies an intelligible explanation of the facts."¹ Again, in judging Cratippus to be the author of a fragment of Greek history, Bury argued from "exclusion" and "that the few things we know about Cratippus correspond to the indications of the new text."²

In allowing for conjecture, guesswork and arguments from exclusion, Bury was not deceived that one arrived at any sort of final truth; as he stated about Gibbon: "Recognizing that Gibbon was accurate, we do not acknowledge by implication that he was always right; for accuracy is relative to opportunities."³ New methods of investigation and new knowledge could, he realized, shatter old conceptions. Nonetheless, rather than wait for the millenium when all possible information would be available, Bury was content to be accurate within the limits of present ability. He

1 - Gibbon, op. cit., p. lix.

2 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., p. 156.

3 - Gibbon, op. cit., p. xliv.

undoubtedly preferred to be revised than never to have written at all; and he was more willing to go out on an educated limb than to play for safety.

This attitude was summed up in his 1912 A History of the Eastern Roman Empire:

When he has submitted his material to the requisite critical analysis, and reconstructed a narrative accordingly, the historian has done all that he can, and his responsibility ends. When he has had before him a number of independent reports of the same events, he may hope to have elicited an approximation of the truth by a process of comparison. But how when he has only one?

He stated that in his volume there are several instances where he had derived a narrative from only one source. After eliminating obvious errors and inconsistencies, the usual practice is to accept the source as a generally valid one. "The single account is assumed to be veracious when there is no counter-evidence. But is this assumption valid?" Bury took the instance of the murder of Michael III. One source has been handed down, but he asked whether there is not a "serious probability" that this source, after all possible criticism, is at least partially inaccurate.

I have followed the usual practice--it is difficult to do otherwise; but I do not pretend to justify it. There are many portions of medieval and ancient 'recorded' history which will always remain more or less fables convenues, or for the accuracy of which, at least, no discreet person will be prepared to stand security even when scientific

method has done for them all it
can do.¹

Bury often had critical problems with chronology due to his work in Ancient and Byzantine history. He recognized that the issue of chronology is relative-- that a date is important only in relation to another. He deplored that the early historians of Greece lacked the sense of importance of reckoning time "by a fixed chronological era" and suggested that they might have adopted the Trojan War as a fixed date. That the date was uncertain did not matter, "so long as a definite year was fixed upon," so that events might be related to one another easily in time. The system adopted by Hellanicus of giving the years of magistrates or priests was "clumsy" and conveyed no sense of chronology. When cardinal numbers are used from a fixed year, "not only is calculation simplified, but the numbers present to the mental vision a clear historical perspective."² In one of his earliest articles, Bury expressed the same thought: "From a philosophical point of view the actual date of a dialogue is not of very great importance: the matter of importance is to determine the relative dates of

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- 1 - Bury, J.B., A History of the Eastern Roman Empire from the Fall of Irene to the Accession of Basil I, A.D. 802-867, London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1912, pp. ix-x. Bury then quickly listed areas in which he was totally restrained because the materials were "entirely insufficient."
 - 2 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

the dialogues--their chronological order."¹

One thing Bury greatly deplored was the writing of history for present purposes, especially for purposes of furthering modern nationalist sentiment. The arguments among the Hungarians and Roumanians especially incurred his wrath,² but his most acid comment was reserved for Ferdinand Gregorovius' work on medieval Athens. After praising Gregorovius as a historian and for his work, Bury stated that the practice of entering into modern politics in works where it is irrelevant

is emphatically to be deprecated. We do not underrate the importance for Germany of the war of 1870.... ~~But~~ we would suggest to them that it is quite possible, without being traitors to their country, to forbear alluding to Metz and Sedan in a book concerning a different epic of history and a different region of the world.

Bury imagined that there was "a Bismarckian decree in force" making it necessary to allude "to the exploits of which the Fatherland is so proud" before a book can be published. "We cannot congratulate Gregorovius

1 - Bury, John B., "Questions Connected with Plato's Phaidros," The Journal of Philology, vol. XV (1886), p. 83.

2 - Bury, J.B., "The Coming of the Hungarians: Their Origins and Early Homes," Scottish Review, vol. XX (1892), pp. 29-52; and Bury, J.B., "The History of the Roumanians," Scottish Review, vol. XXIX (1897), pp. 30-55.

in satisfying the apparently imperative condition."¹

In contrast to Gregorovius, Bury had nothing but admiration for Freeman, the man whom he regarded as his mentor, and what little he had to say on style was said about Freeman. Bury defended Freeman from attacks of being too repetitious, of saying the same thing too many times and ways. Rather than this being a weakness, Bury regarded it as a strength; this element, he felt, was what made Freeman stand out as a historian. "He gives everything elbow-room," does not rush his narrative, and lets each fact be seen from all possible perspectives. Thus, his "large and leisurely treatment" gives a "lasting impression." Far from being overly diffuse, this diffuseness conditioned Freeman's excellence.²

In his classical studies and more particularly in The Ancient Greek Historians Bury had many opinions

1 - Bury, J.B., "Medieval Athens," Quarterly Review, vol. CLXXIII (1891), p. 182. Bury is here echoing the sentiments of Fustel de Coulanges, who continually warned against appealing to antiquity in order to support one's political or national viewpoint. See Fustel de Coulanges, N.D., "Inaugural Lecture," in Stern, Fritz, The Varieties of History, New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1956, p. 188; and Fustel de Coulanges, N.D., The Ancient City, Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956, pp. 11-14.

2 - Bury, J.B., "Freeman's History of Sicily," Scottish Review, vol. XIX (1892), p. 31; and Bury, J.B., "Freeman's History of Sicily, Vol. III," Scottish Review, vol. XX (1892), pp. 300-321.

on the historical method of the classical writers and on the subject of what qualities were essential in a great historian. His most significant comments were on the distinction between Herodotus and Thucydides, the one often being called little more than a myth-maker, the other Bury's admired prototype of a historian. Bury often contrasted the two men and periodically conducted an imaginary feud between the two on the nature of method--Herodotus being used to illustrate weaknesses and Thucydides to illustrate strengths.

To Bury, Herodotus represented the continuation of the "mythopoeic faculty of the Greeks" which, instead of finding its form in epic poetry lodged itself in the person of Herodotus in epic history. He had a great "flair" for a story, but he resembled the old myth-makers in his disregard of the distinction between myth and rationality. "Herodotus is the Homer of...historical myths," stated Bury, his writings on the Persian War a "compact of fiction and history."¹ Among other things, Bury accused Herodotus of being naive, "expert in the act of not committing himself," incompetent in military matters, relating events without showing their inner connection, and a propagandist under the influence of any source he was using

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., pp. 56-58; Bury, J.B., A History of Greece, op. cit., p. 309.

at the moment.¹

Bury did not attribute Herodotus' incompetence as a historian to his methodological principles,² but to a particular frame of mind prevalent in the period, a mind unable to grasp the importance of rationalizing history in spite of such principles. Herodotus' temperament was a pre-sophist one, and he was unable, despite a somewhat critical attitude to rid himself of the features of the old epics--excurses in geography, digressions that are artistic rather than historical, an episodic quality, and, most important, the wish to produce a work whose primary purpose was to entertain. Bury placed Herodotus at the close of a period in Greek historiography and was content to give him a backhanded compliment: "if his criticism had been more penetrating and less naive, he could not have been a second Homer."³

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., pp. 60, 61, 72; Bury, J.B., "The Campaign of Artemisium and Thermopylae," The Annual of the British School of Athens, no. 2 (1895-96), p. 97; Bury, J.B., "The Battle of Marathon," Classical Review, vol. X (1896), p. 98; Bury, J.B., "The Epicene Oracle concerning Argos and Miletus," Klio; Beitrage zur alten Geschichte, vol. II (1902), pp. 14-25.

2 - These principles, which Bury approved, are listed as 1) suspicion of superhuman and miraculous occurrences, 2) open-mindedness in the face of conflicting evidence, and 3) the superiority of first-hand oral information to any type of second-hand information. The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

3 - Ibid., pp. 42-44, 74.

Herodotus is continually contrasted to the ancient historian, perhaps the historian, whom Bury most admired, Thucydides, "the first truly critical historian of the world." By critical, Bury meant rational and consistent, and this is at the center of his critical suppositions. Thucydides learned the great lesson of the Sophists-- "to consider and criticize facts, unprejudiced by authority and tradition;" he was logical rather than mythical, he did not write to extol but to understand, he was interested in recording events without wishing to entertain.¹

The first step for a critical historian being the discarding of myth, the necessity of a skeptical attitude, Thucydides then went on to develop "a new conception of history writing." He set up new standards by judging his material on the basis of accuracy and relevance within a total scheme. Bury contended that even his omissions and digressions are important, for they are based on a principle of exclusion: his subject being a political history, he will not digress into culture but give as large a view as possible within his chosen area. His object is "to examine and reveal political actions from an exclusively political point of view." He does not consider moral standards, his method is realistic and detached; he takes history as it is and examines it on its own merits."²

Writing in 1900, Bury contrasted the two men and

1 - Ibid., pp. 74-78.

2 - Ibid., pp. 81-91, passim, 140-141.

in so doing summed up his own attitude on the ideals of a great historian:

Only a few years can have separated the day on which Herodotus completed his work and the day on which Thucydides began his. But from the one to the other there is a sheer leap. When political events have passed through the brain of Herodotus, they come out as delightful stories. With the insatiable curiosity of an inquirer, he has little political insight; he has the instinct of a literary artist, his historical methods are rudimentary. The splendid work of Herodotus has more in common with the epic poets who went before him than with the historians who came after him. When he began to collect material for his history, the events of the Persian invasion were already encircled with a halo of legend, so that he had a subject thoroughly to his taste. It is a strange sensation to turn from the naive, uncritical, entrancing story-teller of Halicarnassus to the grave historian of Athens. The first History, in the true sense of the word, sprang full-grown into life, like Athena from the brain of Zeus; and it is still without a rival. Severe in its reserves, written from a purely intellectual point of view, unencumbered with platitudes and moral judgments, cold and critical, but exhibiting the rarest powers of dramatic and narrative art, the work of Thucydides is at every point a contrast to the work of Herodotus. Mankind might well despair if the science of criticism had not advanced further since the days of Thucydides; and we are not surprised to find that when he deals, on the threshold of his work, with the earlier history of Greece, he fails to carry his sceptical treatment far enough and accepts some traditions which on his own principles he should have questioned. But

the interval which divides Thucydides from his elder contemporary Herodotus is a whole heaven; the interval which divides Thucydides from a critic of our own day is small indeed.¹

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Greece, op. cit., p. 381.

Bury and Positivism

Even since it was coined by Voltaire, the term "philosophy of history" has given historians as many problems semantically as it has philosophically. In a time when philosophy has ceased to connote its traditional meaning and has become just another discipline, it is especially difficult to determine just what kind of ideas qualify to be dignified by the term. It is, as I have stated, obviously to be differentiated from methodology,¹ although, despite some noble efforts to extract it from general use,² the term has too many historical associations to discard it altogether. It has come to mean almost any type of abstract thought dealing with the nature, meaning and, in the twentieth century, the cognition of historical study. It will be used in such a fashion here, though it ought to be noted that Bury, like most historians, never systematically developed a philosophy of history in any full sense of the term. Rather, his high level of consciousness and his own peculiarity of temperament forced him to occasionally discuss these issues in isolated moments. Yet, in spite of his view of himself as a working historian and not a dealer in abstractions, the whole of Bury's work shows a decidedly positive attitude toward the value and importance of such speculations, and is, I think, the most enduring

1 - See above, pp. 31-32.

2 - Croce, for instance.

part of his work. Bury wrote at the time when the speculations on the philosophy of history went through one of its most crucial stages. Aside from England, where he was often misunderstood, he made little direct impact during his lifetime in this area. Further, beyond the speculation that he was aware of continental developments in the social sciences and philosophy because of his unusually large frame of reference, no one can know precisely what he did and did not read. His writings on the subject are unusually personal, either hidden as they often are in works belonging to a different category, or, when addressed to the philosophy of history itself, rarely referring to many predecessors or contemporaries. However, though the torturous dialogue was largely carried out in his own mind--between many of his selves, as it were--Bury's thoughts, as we shall see, were hardly isolated from the general atmosphere of his time. Indeed, he belongs to the turn of the century in this area far more than any Englishman, including his illustrious predecessor, Lord Acton. The problems he forced himself to face for his own personal self were the issues fought on the battleground of European thought.

Bury grew up with the growth, proliferation and general acceptance of positivism as a philosophy of history. Having its antecedents in the Enlightenment view of the social sciences, positivism was the culmination of the scientific view of man and the mechanical theory of the universe. First popularized by Auguste Comte, the term signified a different

approach to the social sciences from the one used by the German historians of the early part of the century, those men who had established the canons of historical methodology. Positivism was to be scientific in its interpretation of past events, in opposition to former metaphysical and theological interpretations. Its aim was to introduce into the study of social phenomena the identical method as that used in the natural sciences--facts were first to be ascertained, then laws were to be framed by induction.¹ The positivist felt that the laws which determined human events would be discovered when they had done for the social sciences what Newton had done for the natural sciences.²

There were indeed many other important influences in the historical thought of the century. Positivism

1 - Collingwood, op. cit., pp. 126-127. The best general work on historical positivism is Simon, W.M., European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963. Simon is especially excellent in tracing the influence of Comte's thought and writings. He quickly affirms the fact that Comte viewed positivism as more than a method, but as "a system of affirmations," "a system, a dogma." (pp. 4-5) Simon also gives testimony that positivism as a philosophy of history had a kind of intellectual "organization" in Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century, apart from the organization of the religion of positivism, a product of Comte's latter and declining years.

2 - Thompson, op. cit., p. 445. See below, pp. 50-57, for some of the more significant positivist works and attitudes.

began its growth out of a French tradition, but the German school of the early part of the century, which had worked out the critical assumptions of their new craft, did not pretend to be scientific in their interpretive approach. Rather, the facts which they collected were either left in their singularity or they used history as the handmaiden of philosophy, deriving metaphysical systems such as Hegel's unfolding of the Spirit,¹ or reasserting their theological commitments such as Ranke seeing history as the unfolding of the hand of God.² After positivism came to the fore, these men entirely rejected the intellectual invitation to work at the attempt to derive scientific systems from historical fact.³ What did happen, however, was that as positivism began to be generally accepted on the philosophical level, its coincidence with the German tradition on the plane of method helped it to usurp the field entirely, for the positivist could claim that all history was being written in the interest of the final scientific panacea. Its very philosophical assumptions encouraged the mighty opera of scholarship produced throughout Europe by historians and, with or without this justification in the back of their minds,

1 - Barnes, op. cit., p. 196.

2 - Gooch, G.P., History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century, Boston: Beacon Press, 1959, pp. 73, 80, 83, 95.

3 - On the two traditions in the philosophy of history, see Manuel, Frank E., "Two Styles of Philosophical History," Daedalus, vol. XCI (1962).

historians continued to work as before, letting those few who held the master key worry about the more abstract problems of the craft. In addition, positivism was aided by and in its turn aided the sheer growth of historical study throughout the century.

The first apostle of positivism was Comte and it was he who gave it its first impetus toward becoming a generally accepted thesis. Comte hoped to establish a new science called Sociology, a science which would use the facts gathered by history in order to discover its inherent laws. Society, he believed, had passed through its theological and metaphysical stages and, with the advent of his thought, it would now be permanently in the positivist period. Though men have until now been ignorant of the static and unchanging order of the world, they have always been subject to it. His new science, which he bracketed with mathematics, physics and chemistry, will reveal these laws to which men have been subject throughout history. With the discovery of these sociological laws, a new synthesis occurs which supercedes the theological and metaphysical speculations and is based on his "law of historical development."¹

Comte eventually came to believe that positivism would succeed in replacing every other type of thought and quickly establish its intellectual superiority. By discovering the laws which rule human society he

1 - Comte, Auguste, A General View of Positivism, trans. J.H. Bridges, New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1957, pp. 35-36, 29, 36, 366-367.

hoped to succeed in finding the ultimate interpretation of history--those forces which ruled human destiny would be explained in terms of scientific historical laws. "Positivism," Comte stated,

has gradually taken possession of the preliminary sciences of Physics and Biology, and in these the old system no longer prevails. All that remained was to complete the range of its influence by including the study of social phenomena. For this study metaphysics has proved incompetent; by theological thinkers it had only been pursued indirectly and empirically as a condition of government. I believe that my work on Positive Philosophy has so far supplied what was wanting. I think it must now be clear to all that the Positive spirit can embrace the entire range of thought without lessening, or rather with the effect of strengthening its original tendency to regulate practical life. And it is a further guarantee for the stability of the new intellectual synthesis that Social science, which is the final result of our researches, gives them that systematic character in which they had hitherto been wanting, by supplying the only connecting link of which they all admit.¹

In the spread of the positivist attitude to historical circles in Europe the names of Buckle, Darwin and Taine stand out. Written just before Darwin published his work in 1859, Buckle's first volume of his History of Civilization in England is a more sophisticated restatement of the Comtian idea, with specific reference to the discipline of history. Buckle lauded the fact

1 - Ibid., p. 12.

that historians have carefully carried out the initial part of the positivist program--that of the gathering of the data--but lamented that the "laws by which these facts are governed" have not been attempted. He, too, rejected metaphysics, feeling it unable to discover regulating laws; in its place he proposed a historical method essentially the same as that used in the Comtian philosophy.¹

Buckle's motives and expectations are highly illuminating, a classic statement of positivist historical thought:

...I hope to accomplish for the history of man something equivalent, or at all events analogous, to what has been effected by other inquirers for the different branches of natural science. In regard to nature, events apparently the most irregular and capricious have been explained, and have been shown to be in accordance with certain fixed and universal laws. This has been done because men of ability, and, above all, men of patient, untiring thought, have studied natural events with the view of discovering their regularity: and if human events were subjected to a similar treatment, we have every reason to expect similar results. For it is clear for they who affirm that the facts of history are incapable of being generalized, take for granted the very question at issue. Indeed they do more than this. They not only assume what they cannot prove, but they assume what in the present state of knowledge is highly improbable. Whoever is at all acquainted with what has been done in the last two centuries, must be aware that every generation demonstrates some events to be regular and predictable, which the preceding generation had declared to be irregular and unpredictable: so that the marked tendency of advancing

1 - Buckle, Henry Thomas, History of Civilization in England, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1859, vol. I, pp. 3, 121-125.

civilization is to strengthen our belief in the universality of order, of method, and of law.¹

This was followed by a speculation common to the positivist--in some ways the inheritors of Condorcet's dream of immutable progress and his mechanistic cosmology. After again declaring his belief in the scientific method, Buckle projected his thoughts into the future. He asserted that a century hence, with the growing use of scientific inquiry and the consequent establishment of the "chain of evidence," there is little doubt that any historian will be found who will not believe in the "undeviating regularity" of the world.²

The introduction of Darwinian ideas only reaffirmed and gave greater depth to the positivist hold on the historical mentality of the time. While evolutionary theories of social change had been proposed before 1859, it was not until then that they succeeded in taking hold of the public mind. Darwin himself abstained from ever transferring his biological theories into one of a generalized view of social change, but the analogy already being made between the natural sciences and the philosophy of history was greatly reinforced.³ Evolution, linear development, the passage of history

1 - Ibid., p. 6.

2 - Ibid., p. 29.

3 - Bock, Kenneth E., "Darwin and Social Theory," Philosophy of Science, vol. XXII (1955), p. 131.

from a lower to a higher type of thought with its final secrets extracted by the goddess science--all these ideas generated by Darwin hastened the acceptance of positivism. If the German school of the first half of the century had succeeded in professionalizing and popularizing history, the new scientism of the second half generated a new excitement on its behalf and drove it in a particular direction. Furthermore, this type of socio-historical thought was encouraged and given credence by Mill, whose Logic legitimized the establishment of a new science.¹ New works on the science of man, using history as its data, its culmination, or its justification, were rampant; popular philosophers such as Herbert Spencer had great influence in setting the tone of historical philosophy.

Taine's History of English Civilization, published in 1863, was the French counterpart of Buckle. Three categories, the "primordial forces" of race, surroundings and epoch, are used to explain the origin of civilization and its transformation. History is "but a mechanical problem," differing from the natural sciences only in that its means of notation are different. Yet, "the final result is produced after the same method" and scientific terminology is used to explain how in the future literature will be

1 - Mill, John Stuart, System of Logic, 8th ed., New York: Harper, 1891, part 6. The first edition of the Logic was published in 1843. In it, Mill approved the new method of Comte.

"regulated altogether by the 3 primordial forces." Taine did not deviate from his use of the idea of causation, using his categories as the cause and the historical happening as the effect. In using this method he hoped to establish laws and "rules of human growth." He regarded himself as a follower of Montesquieu, who could not succeed because he was a prisoner of the faulty notions of his time, and of Stendahl who was misunderstood because he "treated sentiments as they should be treated--in the manner of the naturalist and the natural philosopher, who classifies and weighs forces."¹ In brief, the history of literature is the same as any other field--there are laws to be found and science has shown the way.

The Comtes, Buckles and Taines were the exceptions, for as positivism began making headway, the establishment of laws was generally ignored and the critical part of historical scholarship--that part on which the consensus was absolute--began being carried out with medieval fervor: no problem was too microscopic, no tome was too lengthy. But the exceptions, the men who dealt in philosophy, had a profound influence on those whose only problems could lie in the realm of historical methodology and it was here that the

1 - Taine, Hippolyte A., History of English Literature, trans. H. Van Laun, Philadelphia: The Gebbie Publishing Company, Ltd., 1896, vol. I, pp. 17, 23-25, 32-33, 34.

philosophy of positivism changed, or rather brought into patent relief, the efforts of those men who had earlier established the methodological rules. Positivism conceived of facts as being separate, as being totally unrelated to each other, and had introduced the necessity for an attitude of total objectivity of judgment on the part of the working historian. This attitude, if history was a science, made each fact equal to any other; for, since the objective historian was unable to judge, any fact belonged in the total schema with a weight correspondent to that of every other fact. The idea of the objectivity of historical study has continued to plague historians until the present day. Furthermore, the tendency to make everything into a science tended to render an injustice to those areas which could not be studied scientifically; the critical history of art, music and philosophy was buried simply because the positivist philosophy and method was incapable of dealing with them.¹

There were, to be sure, important deviators from this doctrine, Carlyle and Droysen being among the most notable.² In addition, the German intellectual

1 - Collingwood, op. cit., pp. 130-132.

2 - In his criticism, Droysen emphasized the importance of epistemology, the distinction between the nature of history and the natural sciences, and the necessity of discovering a method to objectify the diverse subjective approaches of many investigators. He, more than any other historian, anticipated the revolt against positivism at the end of the nineteenth century.

tradition of a less mechanistic view of the social universe continued to persist and, in accord with this tradition, when the revolt against positivism would occur, it would begin from the German school. But until approximately 1890, positivism held the stage and the new science of human affairs worked to establish itself in the image of the old science of natural affairs.

Bury grew up in this scientific milieu and was radically affected by it. Although the Inaugural Lecture was his first systematic attempt to define a philosophy of history, it should be noted that Bury never can be designated a strict adherent of positivist philosophy, not even during the earliest years of his career.¹ Its imprint on his work was

See Droysen, Johann Gustav, Outline of the Principles of History, trans. E. Benjamin Andrews, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1893. For Carlyle, "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." Carlyle also heavily stressed the significance of the great man, the subjective elements in the writing of history and the inability of the observer to fully know or record the past as it actually occurred. See Carlyle, Thomas, On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, London: Oxford University Press, 1904; and Carlyle, Thomas, "On History," Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., n.d., vol. II, pp. 83-95.

- 1 - For an opposite viewpoint, see Collingwood, R.G., Review of Selected Essays of J.B. Bury, ed. Harold Temperley, English Historical Review, vol. XLVI (1931), pp. 461-465; and Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, op. cit., pp. 147-149.

always more methodological in character than philosophical, but, because of the kind of work he did, he often ended in an implicit approval of many of the assumptions of positivism. Explicitly, in those few discussions he had on the philosophy of history per se, he cannot be classified in any school of thought. They represent a certain type of groping common to the period; although, like many historians of the time, he never thought about the issues of philosophy in any systematic way.

Bury was most significantly influenced by the idea of causation, an undisputed assumption of the positivist mentality. Many of his articles, both before and after the Inaugural Lecture, singled out an event or a moment in time and then elucidated the causes of the happening. The most conspicuous example of this attitude is in the 1889 edition of his History of the Later Roman Empire, in which he traced the success of the barbarian invasion to specific, general causes,¹ a thesis he dramatically would abandon later when he developed a new type of causative norm based on accident.

The most obvious example of the influence of positivism was in the edition of Gibbon, published from 1896 to 1900. In his lengthy introduction, Bury discussed, among other things, errors made by Gibbon in translation, punctuation, and errors seemingly typographical rather than historical. In discussing

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of the Later Roman Empire from Arcadius to Irene, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1889, vol. I, pp. 25-36.

one sentence, Bury noted a "curious inaccuracy," corrected it in the introduction, and then stated: "I have no doubt that this was the sentence originally meant and probably written by Gibbon, and have felt no scruple in extirpating the inveterate error from the text." In a note Bury gave other cases where he corrected the text in the first volume and said he had "followed Sir William Smith's precedent in dealing freely with the punctuation and in modernizing the spelling of a few words."¹ This attitude of being able to bring Gibbon up to date, of adding from recent research to the number of facts in it, was one which viewed each fact as isolated, as capable of being ascertained and referred to meaningfully without reference to any others. Oddly enough, Bury admitted that were Gibbon writing in the late nineteenth century, his manner would be different, affected as it would have to be by the "merely historical point of view" of the century.² Yet, he failed to realize that adding to Gibbon or freely changing the punctuation and spelling of the text was a result of a mind trained in the "merely historical point of view" and that by doing so he immediately changed Gibbon. Furthermore, he succumbed to the positivist attitude that all facts are equal, not realizing the addition of one fact to Gibbon made every other fact totally different. As Collingwood points out, this type of thought "reached its classical

1 - Gibbon, Edward, op. cit., pp. xlii-xliii, xliii, note.

2 - Ibid., p. xxxix.

expression in the Cambridge histories....vast compilations where the chapters are written by different hands, the editor being given the task of assembling the fruit of this production into a single whole."¹ In planning the Cambridge Modern History Lord Acton hoped to make the work anonymous in the sense of making the reader unable to tell where one historian left off and another began,² the quintessence of the attitude of objectivity in historical study. Bury was the only man who wrote for all three series and he helped edit the Medieval and Ancient Histories.

In 1903, in his edition of Freeman's The Historical Geography of Europe, Bury seemed to have rejected this attitude in favor of treating the text of another man as inviolate. Freeman's work is a handbook and Bury did bring it up to date by "brief additions." But, he added: "In editing a manual of this kind, it does not seem incumbent or convenient to treat the text as sacrosanct, as one would treat Gibbon or the author's Freeman's own Norman Conquest."³ By that time he consciously rejected the positivist attitude on the lack of individuality

1 - Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, op. cit., p. 147.

2 - Acton, Lord, Letter to the Contributors to the "Cambridge Modern History", in Stern, Fritz, The Varieties of History, New York: Meridian Books, 1956, pp. 247-249.

3 - Freeman, Edward, The Historical Geography of Europe, 3rd ed., London: Longmans Green, 1903, pp. v-vi.

inherent in the treatment of historical facts.

Thus, in Bury's own work and in his early attitude toward editing he was typically positivist. But there are indications that previous to the Inaugural Lecture he rejected the scientism and some of the philosophic foundations of positivism. Causation did not enchant him all of the time and he sometimes implicitly admitted it was not the correct method to describe a certain event. In speaking of the changes taking place in both the West and the East during the eleventh century, he stated that we must not isolate one from the other, "we must assume that the new tide in the west was causally, or rather reciprocally--for reciprocity is generally the right category in history--connected with the ebb in the east."¹ Bury did not often adhere to the category of reciprocity, yet the statement, made as it was in the same year he was causally tracing the barbarian penetration, has a certain effect. It shows that though he was committed to scientific history, he was willing to follow his own path in determining the relationship of certain events, that while he could be claimed by the positivists, he was not a true believer.

Bury also rejected the argument by analogy in history, another part of the positivist creed, one necessary in order to determine their historical laws. While continuing to write articles of a type, he specifically repudiated, in 1896, historical analogies as being "futile."

1 - Bury, John B., "Roman Emperors from Basil II to Issac Komnenos," English Historical Review, vol. IV (1889), p. 41.

One day tells not another day, and history declines to repeat herself. Historical parallels are almost always superficial, and, like classical quotations useful to embellish an oration, not to determine a policy. The statesman of the present cannot employ the distant past to help his prognostications, because all the decisive circumstances (except permanent features of the earth and of la bête humaine) must of necessity be different. But parallels are often suggestive if they lead us to seek out the essential differences between two superficially similar phenomena, which are remote from one another in time. In the instance under consideration it may be safely said that all the resemblances are superficial, while the differences are radical and decisive.¹

Similarly, in 1896, in the midst of his introduction to Gibbon in which he acknowledged his right to update him, Bury made one crucial statement which is, on its face, a direct negation of positivism as a philosophy of history. In speaking about Gibbon's belief in progress, Bury recognized it to be "one of the chief data with which the philosophy of history has to reckon." But how are we to face the multiple problems involved in a definition of progress and in determining its laws? Any answer must make "some demand on faith." Furthermore, "there is certainly some reason for thinking these questions insoluble. We must say at least that the meaning of the philosophy of history is misapprehended until it is recognized that its function is not to solve

1 - Bury, J.B., "The British and the Roman Empire," Saturday Review, vol. LXXXI (1896), p. 645.

problems but to transform them."¹ It can be said that with this insight Bury rejected the guiding assumptions of the positivist philosophy of history. He had, as it were, struck out on his own, not knowing where methodology and philosophy intertwined, not clear in his own mind as to where he wanted to go. The rejection was unsystematic and was not elaborated, but the statement was not the aberration of a pseudo-scientist, rather a consciousness of certain larger problems that had not yet been satisfactorily answered.

That the problems arose from time to time is evident in one of Bury's earliest articles, written in 1891, the only piece directly concerned with a problem in the philosophy of history before the Inaugural Lecture. Entitled "Anima naturaliter pagana: A Quest of the Imagination," it attempted to answer the question of the ability of modern man to fully understand the mind and art of the ancient Greeks, thus entering into the question of being able to objectively understand past cultures. Bury imagined a modern pagan totally out of tune with his own time, who wishes to build a new spiritual home for himself in the past by using his imaginative faculties to project himself into a different era. Can he succeed?

Bury listed qualities of the Greek temperament which are different from the modern one in order to point out the extreme difficulty of the task attempted by his pagan. He then discussed the possibility of

1 - Gibbon, op. cit., pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

using translations of the classics in order to get an accurate view of the past. Translations, he concluded, are inadequate; the best are very good, but they have the inherent defect of being the work of a modern man. They undergo changes in mood from the original and "they are really works of English literature." The better the translation, the more deluding it happens to be. Thus, decided Bury, the "psychological hindrances" are too great; his imaginary pagan could never transport himself fully into another time. By implication, though Bury was with the Romantics in pleading for sympathy for the past, he was stating that we are all victims of our own time, that objectivity in historical study is a fiction which cannot be realized. He again took issue with the positivists, but he was dissatisfied with this relativist position and concluded with a bow to the future and a reassurance in the possibility of objectivity in historical thought. "A new method of historical psychology," he stated,

a new method in historical aesthetic, must be instituted in order to solve the problem. It is a gigantic work, demanding a liberal grant of time, and needing the subtlest of brains....

When historical methods of aesthetic have been perfected, there may be some chance of sifting out the Greek ideas in comparative purity; and it may be possible for the imagination, in some measure, to grasp the Greek world. The processes of analysis are slow, and our race shall have seen many generations of historians pass,... Yet the time may come when the patient work of multitudes will have made a road to a region whither the clipped

wings of the most ardent pagan Hellenist
cannot bear him now.¹

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Bury's History of Greece, published in 1900, also has that curious mixture of thought--sometimes positivist, sometimes highly individualist--which marked his earliest thinking on the subject. In the preface he stated that he is writing a history from his "own personal point of view,"² but the text shows that while the point of view may be personal, Bury occasionally felt that history is less fragile than that. On one occasion he spoke of "a general law which governs human societies" and on another he used a highly deterministic statement to explain the attempt of Persia to conquer Greece. "The history of the world," he stated, "does not depend on proximate causes." It was inevitable that Marathon would be followed by other battles.³

Bury's work up to the Inaugural Lecture thus shows a kind of divisiveness with reference to questions in the philosophy of history--while hoping for a new type of historical psychology, he can still think it correct to bring someone's work up to date; while believing rigidly in the concept of the cause, history is still a personal study. The only conclusion one can draw from the varied nature of his

1 - Bury, J.B., "Anima naturaliter pagana. A Quest of the Imagination," Fortnightly Review, New Series, vol. XLIX (1891), pp. 811-821, passim.

2 - Bury, J.B., A History of Greece, op. cit., p. ix.

3 - Ibid., pp. 307, 244.

thoughts in this area is that Bury never attempted to develop a somewhat systematic attitude in his early writings. In certain issues he was with the positivists, in others he was a positivist manqué, and yet in others he seems to have rejected many of their tenets. He belonged to the positivists by association rather than by belief. As we shall see, some of his thought, especially the essay dealing with a psychology of the aesthetic, if carried further, would have placed him early among those thinkers who were trying to develop systems to replace positivism. But Bury did not carry his ideas beyond their limited scope and he made enough occasional statements of a positivist quality to make it seem as if he believed history followed the precepts of natural science. Following the Inaugural Lecture, Bury would grow more systematic in his writings on the problem and he would be among those thinkers who viewed positivism as a pernicious influence in historical thought.

**The Spirit of the Age:
The Breakdown of Historical Positivism**

In 1913, Max Weber remarked: "Forty years ago there existed among the scholars working in our discipline the widespread belief that of all the possible points of view in the domain of practical-political preferences ultimately only one was the correct one." He added: "Today this is no longer the case."¹

This also came to be no longer the case in the field of history, as in the two decades or so before Weber's statement there occurred a revolt against positivism which resulted in its being discarded as a meaningful philosophy in all areas of social science. In history, and in the social sciences as well, this revolt stemmed from the German tradition rather than the French, that tradition which did not embrace positivism and the natural science analogy as the ultimate solution to the quest for universality in the interpretation of human affairs.

The giants of this revolt in the period up to 1914 were Dilthey, Croce and Weber. In addition Bergson, Windelband, Rickert, Simmel, Meyer, Troeltsch and Bury contributed either directly or indirectly to the breakdown of positivism as a universally accepted mode of thought. This movement, which began to proliferate in the last decade of the nineteenth century, did not end at that point; it went on and each of these men became

1 - Weber, Max, "The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality in Sociology and Economics," in Shils, Edward A. and Finch, Henry A., eds., The Methodology of the Social Sciences, Glencoe: Free Press, 1949, p. 8.

a significant twentieth century figure, and their digressions from positivism formed the basic theme of many new ideas whose impact is yet with us. It should be noted that these men often attacked what they called the method of positivism as well as its overall philosophy. However, by method they did not mean the critical method established by Ranke and others, but rather the philosophical method, the way positivism arrived at its so-called truths. When they speak of methodology they actually mean the philosophical foundations of positivism; only Weber made the distinction between method and philosophy in any careful way. Causation, for instance, was attacked, but was done so as a false way of inter-relating events; the rational inquiry into the validity of sources was not questioned.

Were Bury to have followed up his essay pleading for a psychology of aesthetics with a continued philosophical inquiry into the area, he might have ended in a similar position as that of Wilhelm Dilthey, whose Introduction to the Mental Sciences and other work in the philosophy of history led him to seek his answer to the riddle of history in the realm of psychology.¹ Dilthey's Introduction to the

1 - Dilthey, Wilhelm, Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1923; Dilthey, Wilhelm, Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1942. The translations used below are taken, as noted, from Hodges, Herbert A., Wilhelm Dilthey, an Introduction, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, Ltd., 1944; and Dilthey, Wilhelm, Pattern and Meaning in History, ed. H.P. Rickman, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961.

Mental Sciences was published in 1883 and, coming ten years before Croce's first presentation, eleven before Windelband's statement that "history lacks the fundamental characteristic of science," and thirteen before Rickert's first work in the area, it is generally regarded as being the first statement clearly attacking both the positivism of the latter half of the century and the German idealist school while attempting to construct a new system.

In the Introduction, Dilthey discussed his objections to the previous schools of historical thought and pointed the way to what he regarded as the answer to the problem. One of his major concerns was to establish a duality in the various academic disciplines; there are those sciences which are natural and those which are mental or cultural. Dilthey claimed that the methods of the natural sciences were correct in so far as they investigated natural phenomena. However, his great objection was in the transference of the methods of the natural sciences into the cultural ones.¹ Both areas, Dilthey

1 - The germ of Dilthey's distinction goes as far back as Vico's emphasis on poetry, myth, etymology and the use of imagination rather than causality in the Vichian system. Vico, however, included mathematics and the mathematical organization of material in his "new science" of man and history and only implicitly made the distinction between the method of the natural sciences and the method needed to understand the nature of man. See Vico, Giambattista, The New Science of Giambattista Vico, trans. T.G. Bergen and M.H. Fisch, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948.

maintained, can be studied in scientific fashion, but they are different in type and form; consequently, they cannot be grouped together, as the positivists were doing, under one philosophical method.¹ Moreover, Dilthey asserted that the mental sciences must be grouped together and a way found to investigate them by subject matter, and not by method as was asserted later by Rickert.² The common subject of the mental sciences is man--they are defined as "the totality of the sciences which have historico-societal reality as their subject-matter."³ Dilthey's rationale for separating the fields in this manner was that common subject matter necessitates common epistemological characteristics, epistemology eventually becoming Dilthey's central concern.

Dilthey viewed the problem historically in the following manner: When the Middle Ages ended the special sciences began to be emancipated. Yet, he stated, "the science of society and history, remained for a long time, far into the last century, in the old slavery to metaphysics."⁴ While the historical school--Herder, Burke, Niebuhr--at least had some idea "which completed the emancipation of the historical consciousness and of historical science,"

1 - Hughes, H. Stuart, Consciousness and Society, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958, p. 195.

2 - Hodges, Herbert A., op. cit., p. 34.

3 - Holborn, Hajo, "Wilhelm Dilthey and the Critique of Historical Reason," Journal of the History of Ideas, vol. XI (1950), p. 98, note.

4 - Hodges, op. cit., p. 110.

they too fell into error. They did not relate their ideas to the human consciousness. "In short," he stated, "it had no philosophical foundation. It had no relationship with epistemology and psychology." He praised such rebels as Carlyle and then launched his greatest attack on the Comtians: "The answers given to these questions by Comte and the positivists, J.S. Mill and the empiricists seemed to me to mutilate historical reality in order to adapt in to the natural sciences."¹

Dilthey bitterly attacked the positivists as confounding nature and history, laws and the world of ends and values. He referred to their system as metaphysical and compared their search for laws to the alchemists.² To combat this metaphysical preoccupation, Dilthey went back to his master, Kant. As Kant formulated the epistemological question for the natural sciences, Dilthey wished to substitute epistemology and psychology for the former metaphysical assumption in the mental sciences.³

Dilthey's conception of reality is often defined as "life" or "history." As Holborn states:

"/To Dilthey/ the individual himself is a historical being and the relations of

1 - Ibid., p. 112; Cf. Dilthey, Wilhelm, The Essence of Philosophy, trans. S.A. Emery and W.T. Emery, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954, pp. 21-22.

2 - Ibid., p. 140; Stein, Ludwig, "Historical Optimism," The Philosophical Review, vol. XXXIII (1924), p. 337.

3 - Holborn, op. cit., p. 99.

the life in which he finds himself are historical. Not only do the actual political and social conditions mould the life of which the individual is part, but its forms of consciousness and expression are also determined by history. Therefore, introspection can never answer the question of what is man; only history can.¹

Also, Dilthey made much of the fact that the mental sciences take into account the "lived experience" /Erlebnis/; that is, the process of understanding is not a totally intellectual act. Following Schleiermacher, on whom he had written, Dilthey called it a projection of the self into the other, an imaginative act. It is not totally logical, but partially intuitive.²

The purpose of historical study, according to Dilthey, is to know scientifically what we know in art by imagination.³ For Dilthey, the epistemologist must lay his foundations in psychology, and Dilthey attempted to formulate a new type, which he called descriptive psychology, contrasting it with the explanatory psychology of his day. The Introduction was a study of the inadequacies of his predecessors and it was meant to be a prelude to a projected Critique of Historical Reason, which was to have systematically formulated an epistemological base for historical knowledge. The Critique was never written

1 - Ibid., p. 106.

2 - Hodges, op. cit., pp. 24, 28.

3 - Ibid., p. 28.

and in the latter part of his life Dilthey worked on his psychological system and his idea of the Weltanschauung as the basis of an analysis of the history of philosophy.¹ By 1894, he presented an outline of his descriptive psychology, which he stated would have an empirical base and would emphasize "the inter-connectedness of all the functions of the human mind."²

Dilthey's use of psychology as the method of understanding historical thought has provoked a large body of criticism. Some, viewing his descriptive psychology as a natural science, point to it as Dilthey's major error, as he did not realize he was using a positivist approach to interpret the mental sciences.³ Others regard it not as a mixing up of his disciplines but as a serious attempt to put psychology on a new basis.⁴ Over and above this argument it is clear that though Dilthey was making an effort to break through the excessive formalism of his day, he was, almost out of necessity, fighting positivism with its own language. Dilthey was also aware he was treading on ground just as dangerous as absolutism in history--that of historical relativism.⁵ Actually, Dilthey

1 - See Dilthey, op. cit., pp. 39-42.

2 - Holborn, op. cit., p. 110.

3 - Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, op. cit., pp. 173-175.

4 - Holborn, op. cit., p. 110; Hughes, op. cit., p. 197.

5 - Hodges, op. cit., p. 146.

must be regarded as one of the first philosophers to attempt to free history from the positivist approach. He neither made a restatement of the old ideals, nor did he submit a new reality. His great achievement lies in the breakdown of the chains of positivist theory and in being the first to systematically realize the necessity for establishing that the basis for the study of history lies in a different realm.

Ten years after Dilthey published his Introduction, Benedetto Croce, a young historian of Naples, drafted his ideas on the philosophy of history, rejecting the positivist assumptions with which he had been working in the last few years. In the resulting essay, entitled History subsumed under the general concept of art,¹ Croce attempted to disassociate himself from the absorption of history by the natural sciences, to maintain the dignity of art which was "regarded as a hedonistic fact by the prevailing positivism," and to negate the idea that history was a separate third category from that of "aesthetic form and from that of thought."²

Croce began by presenting the duality of science and art. Both are cognitive activities, yet they are different. Art is knowledge of the individual. Science, at the opposite pole, is knowledge of the general;

1 - Croce, Benedetto, "La storia ridotta sotto il concetto generale dell' arte," Atti della Accademia Pontaniana, vol. XXIII (1893).

2 - Croce, Benedetto, Logic as the Science of the Pure Concept, trans. Douglas Ainslie, London: Macmillan and Company, 1917, p. 327, note.

it constructs concepts and relates them according to a particular method.¹ Given these two spheres, what does history try to do? "Historical writing does not elaborate concepts, but reproduces particular events in their concreteness."² History and art are identical. Both are a representation of the individual. Carrying his thesis forward, Croce stated that history is a part of the artistic sphere. Art represents what is possible. As a category of art, history narrates what really happened. Since history happened it is possible and is consequently one of the forms of art. It is the "intuition of the real."³

Though the argument contains weaknesses to which Croce readily admitted in later years,⁴ it is quite significant. Both Dilthey and Croce presented a similar duality, but Dilthey and other German thinkers of the time insisted that history, though different from the natural sciences, was yet a science. Bury's difficulties with the idea of a science in the Inaugural Lecture fall into a similar category--none of these men could free themselves from the dogma that if something is not "scientific" it has no validity. Even Bury's plea for a psychology of the aesthetic looked forward to the time when it will be formulated

1 - Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, op. cit., p. 191.

2 - Hughes, op. cit., p. 205.

3 - Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, op. cit., p. 191.

4 - See Croce, Logic, op. cit., p. 279.

in a scientific fashion. Croce, unlike Dilthey and Bury, was able to expunge the scientific idea from his mind by stating that history gives us an entirely different and equally profound truth as do the natural sciences, but that the attempt to systematize history under the sciences placed it in a sphere in which it did not belong.

Beginning his systematic studies with the Aesthetic of 1902, Croce, with a few unimportant reservations, maintained his original position. He stated that the positivist "sophisms" are due to their fear that their discipline will lose its dignity if it is not made into a science and to a fallacious idea of art. He ridiculed them by stating that they want to arrive at a concept of the individual, a contradiction in terms. All history can do, he repeated, is "represent the individual."¹ At the same time, Croce left himself open to criticism that he was so individualistic as to wind up in the subjective school.²

In the Logic of 1909, Croce adopted his second position. He claimed that the traditional distinction in logic between the universal and the particular is false. Both the particular intuitive elements and the logical universal, he stated, belong to history.³

1 - Croce, Benedetto, Aesthetic as the Science of Expression and General Linguistic, trans. Douglas Ainslie, London: Macmillan and Company, 1929, pp. 26-28; for further elucidation see pp. 39-41 and for his attack on the positivists see pp. 388-403.

2 - Ibid., pp. 133-135.

3 - Croce, Logic, op. cit., p. 279.

By showing that history contains a logical element while art need not, Croce eradicated the former identity of the two. He then proceeded to illustrate the thesis that fact and interpretation, subject and predicate, history and philosophy are not mutually exclusive. The facts are just accumulations of data without meaning until philosophy, with its abstractions, places an interpretation on them. Philosophy is meaningless abstraction without historical facts to interpret. Thus we cannot think of them as being separate, but rather they are one. The positivists erred in first establishing their categories and then fitting in the facts.¹

Croce's new thesis involved an unusual relationship between philosophy and history. "Philosophy and history," he stated, "are not two forms, they are one sole form." And, in fact, since history is the only individual reality, philosophy is subservient to it. Philosophy became the methodology of history, it functioned in order to think out the categories implied by the facts. "Philosophy and history are distinguished, as we know for didactic purposes.... But from the very fact that the narrative includes the concept, every narrative clarifies and solves philosophic problems. On the other hand, every system of concepts throws light upon the facts which are before the spirit."²

In his essays of 1912 and 1913, Croce directed

1 - Ibid., pp. 299-300, 305, 309.

2 - Ibid., pp. 324, 325, 333-334, 349-350; Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, op. cit., p. 199.

himself specifically to the problem of history and amplified his theory while completing the last volume of his Philosophy of the Spirit. "Every true history," he proclaimed, "is contemporary history." By this he meant that at the moment we are thinking about an historical fact it is a present interest and becomes identical in our minds with present affairs as well.¹ It is thus the task of the historian to re-live or re-experience the past in his own mind by criticizing and interpreting historical documents. As Croce stated it, after having written the Aesthetic, he gained an understanding of the various philosophers discussed "which cannot be acquired from reading their books but only be reenacting their mental drama in one's own person, under the stimulus of actual life."² This, as well as any other statement, defines what Croce called the intuitive process necessary in capturing the spirit.

There is thus a relationship between Croce's "presentism," Dilthey's "psychology" and Bury's early plea for a new "historical psychology." All three men, unlike the positivists, were concerned with the investigator and not simply the material being investigated. They all recognized the inability to "scientifically" understand the past as the nineteenth century saw it and agreed that the missing elements were the limits of imagination and the necessity to

1 - Croce, Benedetto, History: Its Theory and Practice, trans. Douglas Ainslie, New York: Harcourt, 1921, pp. 11-12.

2 - Croce, Benedetto, An Autobiography, trans. R.G. Collingwood, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927, pp. 64-65.

somehow objectify this imaginative factor. Though Bury was still so unsure of himself in 1891 that he yielded to the probability of a future solution, and though Dilthey's attempt to form a new psychology lapsed into an idea with positivist overtones, nonetheless they belong with Croce in seizing upon a similar idea to try to revise the dominant thesis on the nature of historical interpretation.

Croce then distinguished history from chronicle and philology and from pseudo-histories classified as poetical and rhetorical.¹ He further cast his invectives at both Romanticism and positivism in the historical section of his work,² comparing both forms of thought as thesis and antithesis.

In his attempt to divorce history from science, in the union of philosophy and history, and in his rejection of both positivism and Romanticism, Croce stands out in the attempt to define a new position with reference to the philosophy of history. Like his fellow philosopher, Dilthey, he did not articulate the basis of a new consensus of thought; his statements in the Philosophy of the Spirit are not final ones, but ought to be regarded as another attempt, similar to Dilthey in desire, but different in formulation, to break through the barrenness of the positivist doctrine.³

1 - Croce, History, op. cit., pp. 19, 29-30, 35, 41.

2 - Ibid., pp. 264, 270, 281, 277, 295-296, 302.

3 - Later, Croce expanded his formulation of the early part of the century by giving added meaning to the idea that all history is contemporary history. While continuing to denounce the

During the same period that Dilthey and Croce were developing their attack on positivism and attempting to formulate new philosophical norms for the study and meaning of history, Max Weber was addressing himself to a similar question with respect to the social sciences in general. The distinction made by Dilthey between the natural sciences and social sciences was already accepted at the turn of the century in German

distinction between philosophy and history and the idea of a philosophy of history, he related historical considerations to the ethical and practical spheres. The very essence of history, Croce now felt, required a selectivity and emphasis which are akin to the kinds of value-judgments made in practical life. Therefore, all history which is devoid of judgment is not "true history," but chronicle or some other form which only provides the basis for the mental processes necessary to transform it to "life," thereby finally making it "true history." The nature of these value-judgments are similar to the kinds of judgments we make in the present; thus, our evaluation of historical affairs is precisely the same as our evaluation of present-day affairs and both shed light upon one another. This ethical-historical quality of an identity between the past and the present also leads to the idea that our research is determined by problems which appear in the present and that this research cannot be "objective" in the traditional sense of the term. Croce, writing in the 1930's, also stressed freedom of choice in history and in the present. Because history and life are now a series of judgments,--indeed, these judgments are what elevate the prosaic to the "spiritual"--to abstain from choice is to deny life and to make it is to recognize the essential freedom of the human condition. See Croce, Benedetto, History as the Story of Liberty, trans. S. Sprigge, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1941.

intellectual circles. Weber went one step further within this framework and posed the next critical question: what are the limits of knowledge to be gained from the social sciences, and what method should be used to make them coherent?

In answering this question Weber pointed out that the belief in immutable natural laws and in the evolutionary principle had distorted the differences between ethical norms and empirical objectivity. The latter half of the nineteenth century had treated as one the two propositions of what "is" and what "ought to be." Weber rejected this viewpoint by positing the duality between empirical facts and value judgments. He consistently held throughout his lifetime that "it can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived."¹ The Comtian supposition that there will be a science of politics in which all value-judgments will be derived from social laws is rejected in its assumption. Weber carefully made the distinction between political science and "politics as a vocation."² The science has the task of investigating phenomena, of revealing implicit values and contradictions hidden in a given

1 - Weber, Max, "On Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," in Shils, op. cit., p. 52.

2 - For Weber's treatment of the vocation of politics, see the essay "Politics as a Vocation," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, trans. and ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.

course of action, of ascertaining the means to achieve an end. It is the job of the politician, on the other hand, to establish the values necessary, choosing among alternative courses of action. The one clarifies, the other retains the right of choice. Science, in short, can never tell us the meaning of the world.¹

Similarly, Dilthey's attempt to arrive at a cultural science in the full sense of the term and Croce's unification of philosophy and history, thus deriving guides for action from historical fact, become meaningless for Weber. For him the two worlds of fact and value could never meet, it was senseless to attempt to unify them. He thus had a different problem: given this duality "what is the meaning and purpose of the scientific criticism of ideals and value-judgments?" In restated form, the large issue was "what then does science actually contribute to practical and personal 'life'?"²

Weber delineated many ways in which empirical analysis can be useful, mainly in making clear the means necessary to attain a given end and in pointing out the value inherent in any given course of action. "An empirical science cannot tell anyone what he should do--but rather what he can do--and under certain circumstances--what he wishes to do."³

1 - Weber, Max, "Science as a Vocation," in Gerth, op. cit., pp. 141-143.

2 - Weber, Max, "On Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," op. cit., p. 52; Weber, Max, "Science as a Vocation," op. cit., p. 150.

3 - Ibid., pp. 52-54.

Weber believed in working with the concept of the cause within the limits of social science.¹ He defended the objectivity of his investigation by confining it to rational data and viewing the irrational elements as deviations from a rational norm.² He did not, however, delude himself into believing he had eliminated the realm of values from social science. The positivist attempt to reduce empirical science to laws is "meaningless," because social laws are merely aids for understanding social reality and the significance attached to social phenomena are individual ones. He did maintain that after value-relevance is recognized the social scientist could proceed objectively. In the method of investigation and the construction of the conceptual schema the "point of view" is important. In using the schema, however, the scientist is bound to the causal norm.

In order to overcome the inhibiting question of value, Weber developed his theory of ideal types. It enabled the investigator to free himself from internal subjectivity, to handle problems of significance in his own manner and to clearly state the arbitrary categories at the outset, thus leaving no room for the pretension and subsequent misapprehension of total objectivity.

As defined, an ideal type is

1 - Ibid., p. 82.

2 - Antoni, Carlo, From History to Sociology, trans. Hayden V. White, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1959, p. 144.

formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to these one-sidedly emphasized view-points into a unified analytical construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found anywhere in reality. It is a utopia.¹

Weber continued by stating that its significance is a limiting one by which all phenomena are compared in order to ascertain their significance for the major question; an ideal type is a fictional construct by which we judge the relevance of empirical events to a given problem. Ideal types can obviously be used on any level of abstraction from concepts of class to ideal constructs of individual phenomena, such as Christianity.

Weber applied this conceptual tool in all of his studies, and was always very careful to point out its use and significance. In his most famous study, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, he called his ideal types an "artificial simplicity,"² and used them methodologically as abstractions with which he compared various empirical data.

It should be noted that ideal types differ from both the concept of empirical class and the idea of historical laws. They are neither an average nor a force, and in no way represent a normative ideal.³

1 - Weber, Max, "On Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," op. cit., p. 90.

2 - Weber, Max, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, p. 98.

3 - Antoni, op. cit., pp. 173-174.

There is consequently a great divergence between Weber's method and that of the positivists. The positivists attempted to find a valid definition by empirically deciding on those characteristics of a phenomenon which are most abundant. Weber, on the other hand, searched for the unique features of any phenomenon. Reality is therefore not confused with statistical norm.¹

Weber's synthesis, unique as it was, did contain considerable elements of past eras. It was Romantic in the sense of placing ultimate reliance on values which can only be argued in philosophical terms. It was positivistic in placing the social sciences on a foundation of empirical data. Yet, it was neither, for the value-sphere was clearly defined as not interfering with the treatment of historical fact; and the empirical data were not meant to establish values or norms. The categories of thought were always in their proper place--in the subjective hands of the investigator.

Although Weber adamantly denied he was a relativist, in terms of his denial of the universality of metaphysical certainty or historical truth, he certainly was one.² Close to Dilthey and Croce in his rejection of positivism, Weber travelled a different course--from the realm of philosophy to that of sociology--

1 - Aron, Raymond, German Sociology, trans. M. and T. Bottomore, Glencoe: Free Press, 1957, pp. 73-74.

2 - For a discussion of Weber's relativism see Strauss, Leo, Natural Right and History, Chicago: University Press, 1953, pp. 175-176.

by placing limits on his ability to interpret every sphere of existence. In doing so he obtained the autonomy of the social sciences within the limited sphere in which it could operate. The positivist notion that the sciences of society could finally answer all questions of reality was relegated to the warehouse of antiquated beliefs.

The thought of these three men--Dilthey, Croce and Weber--and many others during this period resulted in an almost total rejection of positivism and all it had to offer. They all rejected the assumption that history was a study similar to that of the natural sciences and that universal laws could be framed. They all attacked the premise that history was an empirical science which could establish causal relationships entirely free of any subjective model. They all made efforts to introduce new ideas to replace the positivist one which they regarded as being outmoded.

As a system, positivism was riddled with weaknesses which were not recognized until the turn of the century. The introduction of the scientific method into historical thought made history as mechanical and deterministic as any natural science. This resulted in errors in logical thought such as the one made by Taine in espousing a type of racial determinism. He went in a circle by making generalizations from perceptions and then backing up the validity of his perceptions by making the generalizations into a force. As Gooch stated, his determinism "imprisoned history in an iron cage."¹

1 - Gooch, G.P., History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., p. 226.

The positivists never recognized their system was based on a series of assumptions as unprovable as those of Bossuet. They disregarded the role subjectivism played in the mind of the investigator and mistook history for a quantitative instead of a qualitative study. As Thompson pointed out, what might have been a useful analogy turned into a harmful identity.¹ Positivism did have a redeeming feature--it greatly advanced the cause of meticulous research and stimulated historians to achieve complete mastery over their material.

The multifold rejections of positivism, including Bury's own response, which we shall shortly discuss, did not result in a completely monolithic point of view. All those who agreed that the tyranny of the natural sciences ought to be replaced could not agree on the subject of the proper philosophy of history. By 1914--and beyond--no new system which could replace positivism and become, like the system rejected, a universally accepted idea can be seen. What happened from about 1890 on was that each of the various answers given became one of many new ideas to contend with in the era. After positivism no new unitary foundation was established. Rather, the European scene began to see many autonomous systems, each with its own secret for solving the issue of the nature, meaning and cognition of history. In time, this new atmosphere would become an accepted reality and the twentieth century saw relativism winning, not through the superiority of its tenets, but by default.

1 - Thompson, op. cit., p. 458.

**Bury and the Philosophy of History: The Dilemma
of the Twentieth Century Historian**

This intellectual environment--the breakdown of historical positivism and the consequent anarchy of historical values--can be seen, in microcosm, in Bury's development in this area from the Inaugural Lecture to his death in 1927. Bury was neither isolated from continental influences, nor did he occupy a mental ivory tower and disregard the importance of the problems in the philosophy of history. Rather, he was becoming more and more involved with these problems and after the Inaugural Lecture his writings on the philosophy of history became more unitary in terms of showing a sense of development and a more central concern with these issues than in his earlier period in which he discussed them in more or less isolated moments and in a dilettantish way. Bury was not writing his histories or thinking about their significance--both methodologically and philosophically--in any kind of mental seclusion: the Inaugural Lecture forced him to systematize his thought and with it he thereafter became involved in precisely the same kind of issues discussed by the European historical intellectual community.

As noted previously, the Inaugural Lecture was a plea for the autonomy of history, cloaked in the garb of attempting to define the discipline as a science. The use of the word "science" complicated the issue unnecessarily, for the lecture was delivered at the height of the controversy between the adherents and the opponents of positivism. Nonetheless, positivism is not directly mentioned and by science Bury meant the methodological assumptions of the

historian. In his attempt to define the practical uses of history, Bury failed, but it is this failure which is most instructive. The Inaugural Lecture resembled the 1891 essay, in which he did not follow up his speculations on the psychology of aesthetics, but rather closed with a bow to posterity and the possibility of clearing up the issue in the future. After discarding the association and subservience of history to any other discipline and placing his faith in its autonomy, Bury then left himself in a vacuum, for he was unable to show that history had any worth at all. Consumed with the idea of utility while denying it at the same time, he again closed with an assurance in the future. Should history "become a more and more powerful force in stripping the bandages of error from the eyes of men..." he stated, she had best go about her business in her own way, remembering that the key to the study lies in its autonomy and critical objectivity.¹ Bury thus denied the positivist association, rid history of its tie with any other area or type of thought, and then, having done so but failed to define its new limits and uses, held out the possibility of its contributing to a clarification of certain modern errors. As mentioned above, he rid history of its old ties, but was unable to build up a new, acceptable idea. The Inaugural Lecture was not an answer, merely the posing of a question. Yet it is significant and

1 - Bury, J.B., "Inaugural Lecture," in Temperley, op. cit., p. 22.

in accord with the times that Bury did not choose to answer the question with a rehash of old ideas, whether positivist or Romantic. Furthermore, he was seemingly unwilling to go beyond the idea of utility, as he did in a different way with the issue of the retention of compulsory Greek, to decide that history was useless in terms of everyday affairs and go on from there. Rather, he left the issue suspended in his first attempt to systematically solve the problem. He was unwilling or unable, at the moment, to go beyond the idea of autonomy. Yet, the question was posed and he continued to address himself to it periodically. Perhaps conscious of the ambiguity in his own mind and in an effort to clear up the haze, the next year, 1904, he delivered a lecture entitled "The Place of Modern History in the Perspective of Knowledge."

In the lecture Bury first rejected the view of Seeley and others that political history by itself dominates the study of history. He pleaded for a broader view, denigrating such an "unfortunate restriction" of the field.

Political development in the chronicle of society, or a set of societies, is correlated with other developments which are not political; the concrete history of a society is the collective history of all its various activities, all the manifestations of its intellectual, emotional, and material life.

History, he stated, does not only serve as the hand-maiden of political science; the latter is really one part of a larger study.¹

1 - Bury, J.B., "The Place of Modern History in the Perspective of Knowledge," in Temperley, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

Bury found another threat to the "liberty of history" in sociology, which studies man in a wider scope than does political science and which claims that history is studied solely to furnish data for its higher discipline. This idea runs counter to the axiom of history for its own sake, one which has been taken as self-evident in recent times. But Bury asked if this principle is theoretically justified, a necessary expedient, simply a regulative norm, or is it true that the ultimate value of history "lies in its potential service to another discipline, such as sociology?"¹

Thus, the issue is joined and it seemed as if Bury was explicitly and publicly going to decide on the question of history and sociology, the issue of the independence of the discipline or its subservience to another idea.

However, the answer given is curiously hypothetical. He stated that the solution must fall "according to the view we take of the relation of man's historical development to the whole of reality." The issue is to be decided by how one views the world as a whole. "Naturalism will imply a wholly different view from idealism." Should one think that the development of man can be explained along Comtian lines then history does merely supply the material for sociology. But, in an "idealistic" interpretation, history "belongs to a different order of ideas from the kingdom of nature and demands a different interpretation." This brings

1 - Ibid., p. 45.

in the idea of a philosophy of history which Bury defined as "the investigation of the rational principles which it is assumed, are disclosed in the historical process due to the cooperation and interaction of human minds under ~~terrestrial~~ conditions." Bury further noted that only in the interpretation of history as a movement of reason can the axiom of history for its own sake be justified. He disclosed the feeling that the philosophy of history is a necessary part of historical study, for any collection or sequence of facts is meaningless, "unless they mean something in terms of reason, unless we can hope to determine their vital connection in the whole system of reality."¹

According to Bury, the great defect of all philosophies of history, had been that their framework was made on a priori principles. Bury specifically discussed the systems of Hegel and Krause, calling them both "splendid failures."² In order to avoid the error into which these philosophies of history fell, Bury asserted that "we must go to history itself without any a priori assumptions or predetermined systems." Philosophy alone is inadequate, because it can only decide that history can disclose a certain kind of reality. The disclosure, however, is made by history; and Bury found that it is the historian and not the philosopher who must make this disclosure.

Finally getting back to the subject-matter of the

1 - Ibid., pp. 45-47.

2 - Ibid., p. 48.

title of the lecture, Bury proposed that the approach to a philosophy of history be changed. Instead of proceeding forward, he recommended that he who seeks the key to an interpretation of the past proceed backward: "he must start from the modern period." The reason given is that it is only in the modern period--the last three or four hundred years--that enough material has been preserved to give us a reasonably full picture of what happened; prior to the modern period there are too many gaps. Furthermore, our own mentality is too far away from medieval times; we are in a much better position for "sympathetic appreciation" of modern ideas and movements.¹ This attitude, the necessity of an irrational element in fully understanding the past, is not far from the positions of Dilthey and Croce and the idealist position outlined at the beginning of the lecture. Dilthey's idea of Erlebnis and Croce's "reenacting [the] mental drama" of history both tried to make this element of comprehension a precondition of any valid interpretation of the past. Like them, Bury admitted that the methods of the "scientific" historians of the nineteenth century were not fully acceptable and the individual historian must make a non-scientific mental adjustment in order to re-live a period in his own mind. For Bury, this was most easily accomplished in the more contemporary period.

Bury then elaborated his distinction between the

1 - Ibid., pp. 51-53.

modern and other periods and then suggested a change in the usual periodization. He was convinced that the nineteenth century marked as great a change in the history of man as did the sixteenth and proposed the adoption of a distinction already in force in Germany--the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries being die neuere Zeit, the nineteenth being die neueste Zeit.¹

At the end of the essay, Bury summed up his earlier attitude on the place of history in the realm of all knowledge. He again made the dichotomy between naturalism and idealism. If we are believers in naturalism, he said, then the only answer is that history "has its sole theoretical value in the function of providing material for the investigation of sociological laws. It must accept a position such as Comte assigns to it." But if we opt for the idealist position, then history is an independent study demanding a distinct interpretation and thus giving us a truth uniquely its own.²

Bury's answer was not explicit. But it seems clear that he was not merely ready not to agree with the Comtians, but that he falls into the idealist camp. Lacking any fundamental belief, other than the ability of reason to illuminate the area, he characteristically was unwilling to join forces with any school of thought. Rather, he carefully cloaked his thoughts in hypothetical answers to real problems of which he was obviously aware. Nonetheless, however

1 - Ibid., pp. 54-56.

2 - Ibid., pp. 58-59.

hypothetical he tried to be, the essay marked a turn in Bury's thought. Though he was unable to specifically state it, his preference for the idealistic position in place of the naturalist is clear in his remarks; in his first public discussion of the Comtian idea, he avoided associating himself with it in any way. All this can perhaps be traced to Bury's passionate belief in the autonomy of history and in some ways is a reiteration of his position, ambiguities and all, in the Inaugural Lecture. However, in one important sense, Bury deviated from his previous work. He no longer called for faith in the future to illuminate all that is now dark. Rather than leave the issue to posterity to discover laws and truths which were now not known, he shaped the answer with reference to present beliefs. Whatever remnants of hope had remained in the ability of positivism to discover these laws were now discarded. Personal belief in a system dictated one's answer; there were no longer any possible absolutes.

In the next year, in the preface to his Life of St. Patrick, Bury clarified his position with reference to history, science and objectivity. The distinction was made between the methodology of history, which Bury considered a science, and the writing of history, which he acknowledged to have some element of art. The confusion which grew up around the epigram of the Inaugural Lecture--"history is a science, no less and no more"--was made clear in a note; "...I never meant to suggest a proposition so indefensible as that the presentation of the results of historical research is not an art, requiring the

tact and skill in selection and arrangement which belongs to the literary faculty."¹

In the area of objectivity and history, however, he still clung to the belief that the investigation of material was a completely scientific phenomena and hinted that the solution to a historical problem could be reached by an impartial handling of the facts. This feature of his thought assumes that given the same set of materials, any two historians will reach the same historical conclusion.

It is a minor defect in Todd's St. Patrick that he is not impartial. By this I mean he wrote with an unmistakable ecclesiastical bias. It is not implied that he would have ever stooped to a misrepresentation of the evidence for the purpose of proving a particular thesis. He does not conceal that the conclusions to which the evidence, as he interpreted it, conducted him were conclusions which he wished to reach. In other words, he approached a historical problem with a distinct preference for one solution rather than another; and this preference was due to an interest totally irrelevant to mere historical truth. The business of a historian is to ascertain facts.²

He went on to state that one of the reasons for writing the work was his entirely detached attitude of mind, his purely intellectual interest in the subject. He hinted that thus, if he has methodologically accumulated all the facts, his biography will be definitive.

1 - Bury, J.B., The Life of St. Patrick, op. cit., p. viii, note.

2 - Ibid., pp. vi-vii.

For Bury, this was the last work in which he adhered to any aspect of positivism. As has been seen, Bury was never an out and out positivist, although in his early years he did seem, whether consciously or unconsciously, to adopt some of the results of positivist philosophy in his work. Furthermore, in the only two essays specifically related to the philosophy of history up to 1903, he held out hopes of a positivist future solution to present problems. If he was a positivist malgré lui in his early period, in 1904 he renounced even this in the area of philosophy. However, through the writing of St. Patrick, much of which was done prior to his appointment as Regius Professor, he still held some of the critical tenets which resulted from the near complete domination of positivism in the late nineteenth century. From 1905 to 1909, in which years he published an introduction to Gibbon's Autobiography, The Ancient Greek Historians, and a major essay entitled "Darwinism and History," Bury crossed the aisle from right center to left center. His favorable attitude towards unbiased fact-finding and absolute causality had diminished and he now became a historical relativist with scientific overtones.

The introduction to Gibbon's Autobiography, published in 1907, is remarkable for one assertion by Bury, never even remotely stated at any other time previously. Whether Bury wrote in a special mood, or whether he had actually radically changed his position at the time, is difficult to know. Nonetheless, in the midst of a standard appreciation of Gibbon there stands as clear a statement of the

relativist thought of the twentieth century as one is likely to find in its first decade.

The biography of an historian is valuable for the study of his work. It is slowly being recognized that history is in the last resort somebody's image of the past, and the image is conditioned by the mind and experience of the person who forms it. Only such things as dates, names, documents, can be considered purely objective facts. The reconstruction, which involves the discovery of causes and motives, which it is the historian's business to attempt, depends on subjective elements, which cannot be eliminated. Further, he can only realize, fully and vitally, the time in which he lives; this is really, however unconsciously, the starting-point for his travels in the ages of the past; he inevitably takes present values and modern measures with him; and the conscious allowances which he makes for difference of conditions cannot remove, though it may disguise or mitigate, this limitation of his mind. We cannot separate a history from its writer, or the writer from his time; and to appreciate the particular interpretation of the past which his work represents, it is of the highest importance to know the influences which moulded him and the external circumstances of his life.¹

The Lane Lecture delivered at Harvard University in 1908 and published as The Ancient Greek Historians contains the same note of relativism as in the previous

1 - Gibbon, Edward, Autobiography of Edward Gibbon, with an Introduction by J.B. Bury, London: Oxford University Press, 1907, p. xiv.

year. Bury used the same methodological standards he had always used as his standard of judgment in criticizing the historians discussed; however, he did not go beyond methodology and critical assumptions in his discussions of particular historians. Their views of the world are their own and cannot be judged in the same way. Bury was adopting the Weberian distinction of fact and value: he allowed himself to harshly criticize the way some ancient historians went about ascertaining their facts and their critical assumptions; questions of value were ignored.

Continuing his previous thoughts on the importance of the recorder and the individuality of perception, he stated: "A psychological reconstruction is thus always involved in history, a reconstruction carried out in the mind of the individual historian, and necessarily affected by his personal temperament and his psychological ability." Bury further remarked that this is an "inevitable subjective element" and is always present in the writing of history.¹ One passage facetiously goes further: "I know for myself that on days when I am a determinist I look on history in one way, and on days when I am an indeterminist, in quite another."²

At the end of the work, Bury took up the idea of "history for its own sake," calling it a "regulative principle," concerning only questions of methodology, not those relating to the purpose of

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historian, op. cit., pp. 107-108.

2 - Ibid., p. 204.

the work of the historian. Bury then again entered into the question of the utility of history, as he did in the Inaugural Lecture. He made much of the twin ideas of development and causality; by these he meant the modern use of the evolutionary conception and the necessity of seeking rational explanations of historical events.

In the Inaugural Lecture Bury dealt at length with the issue of the practical uses of history. Guided as he was by the possibility of yet finding a positivist solution to the problem of the philosophy of history, he begged the question and held out some vague hope of laboring for the enlightenment of future times. Now, only five years later, but with a commitment to relativism, he found some concrete answers to the problem.

In the first place, he stated, unlike the Greeks we cannot view history as supplying examples for present actions. However, with our conceptions of development and a rational explanation of events, we have shown that no given "social or political phenomena" can be understood without knowing its antecedents; "that to comprehend the significance of the present we must be acquainted with the history of the past."¹ Thus, history is a desirable study not merely for those in public affairs, but for an enlightened public as well.

Of deeper practical importance is the conditioning of the relatively new idea of historical

1 - Ibid., p. 249.

relativity. "We have come to see," stated Bury, "that all events in the past, however differing in importance, were relative to their historical conditions;" no event can be understood outside of its chronological context, and it has no meaning except in relation to the whole of which it is a part. For today, this means that present happenings "have no absolute value, but merely represent a particular stage of human development." This idea of historical relativity was perhaps "one of the most important results of the mental development of the nineteenth century."¹

Relativity also changes the relationship of the historian to his work. No longer can we pretend that there are final judgments. No longer can we hope for a Newton to provide the solution to the issue of the philosophy of history.

I may observe here, and by the way, that it is highly important for the historian to be aware that the doctrine of historical relativity applies no less to his own historical judgments than to other facts. His view is conditioned by the mentality of his own age; the focus of his vision is determined within narrow limits by the conditions of contemporary civilisation. There can therefore be nothing final about his judgments, and their permanent interest lies in the fact that they are judgments pronounced at a given epoch and are characteristic of the tendencies and ideas of that epoch.²

1 - Ibid., pp. 250-251.

2 - Ibid., p. 252.

Bury closed with a brief discussion of the idea of progress, calling it "a judgment of value, and is not scientific." The idea is, however, a "living force" in his time and has had a momentous effect on the study of history. He next reiterated his ideas on history and science, and in the context of his discussion of the importance of historical relativity it cannot now be misunderstood. History, he repeated, has "become a science," and its promotion to that rank "is due to the conception of development." The problem of the historian is to determine the connection, the causal relation and the significance of a phenomenon within its own context. This does not mean that the mysteries of the past will be solved once its full development has been investigated. This is an "unattainable ideal," for though history is faced with problems as scientific as those in the natural sciences the two areas "deal with different kinds of data and employ different methods."¹ Thus, using a combination of the elements used by those thinkers who initially attacked positivism, Bury explicitly rejected its major tenets. There are different kinds of sciences and the fact-value distinction must be kept in mind. For the first time in any of his major writings, Bury rejected the assumptions of positivism while coming out as the advocate of a new idea.

"Darwinism and History" repeats many of the ideas stated in the closing section of The Ancient

1 - Ibid., pp. 256-259.

Greek Historians. In a brief survey of the various attitudes on history from the Greek period to his own day, he stated: "The conception of the history of man as a causal development meant the elevation of historical inquiry to the dignity of a science." Once it shed its pragmatic approach, adopted the idea of cause and effect, and conceived of itself as tracing the development of man, history became "the object of scientific investigation." Progress is again called "a judgment of value."¹

Bury again stressed the necessity for a rational explanation of history, for if it serves another purpose, whether theological or metaphysical, it becomes something other than itself. The Darwinian contribution aided the study of history by bringing into relief the idea of continuity. However, the analogy between society and an organism, made at the time by many sociologists, was rejected and history

1 - Bury, J.B., "Darwinism and History," in Temperley, op. cit., pp. 26-27. Again, it should be pointed out that Bury used the word "science" in his individualistic way. By no stretch of the academic imagination can it be shown that he meant the similarity of history with the natural sciences. Like Dilthey--at least in The Ancient Greek Historians, this essay, and the works that followed--"science" meant for Bury any study with its own methods not serving the purposes of any other discipline and studied "for its own sake." Unfortunately, Bury never used any adjectives before the word--like the German Naturewissenschaft and Geisteswissenschaft--in order to clearly distinguish between the two. A whole academic controversy might have been avoided had he done so at the start.

was also distinguished from anthropology.¹

In the essay Bury specifically took up the question of the supposed identity of history with the natural sciences and, in his rejection of this position, anticipated an idea he would later elaborate more fully into a general thesis--that of contingency in history. He stated that the idea that every social movement can be explained by sociological generalizations "is still entertained by many in one form or another." Speaking in his usual guarded hypothetical tone, Bury noted that those who disagree with this view do not deny that uniformities do exist, but do deny "that such uniformities are laws or contain an explanation of the phenomena." The dissenters point to an element of chance and the importance of the wills of individuals which do not reflect the general tenor of the times but do shape and change history. Bury gives illustrations of this attitude and concluded that "it may be agreed that the action of individual wills is a determining and disturbing factor, too significant and effective to allow history to be grasped by sociological formulae."

The hypothetical tone of guarded caution is then dropped and Bury finally elucidated his opinion on the matter:

The truth is that Darwinism itself offers the best illustration of the insufficiency of general laws to account for historical development. The part played by coincidence, and the part played by individuals--limited by and related to, general social conditions--render it impossible to deduce

1 - Ibid., pp. 31-34, passim, p. 32, note, p. 28, note.

the course of the past history of man
or to predict the future.

After a sympathetic discussion of Lamprecht's attempt to arrive at a philosophy of history--"his system is the ablest product of the sociological school of historians"--Bury asserted that the "heel of Achilles in all historical speculations of this class has been the role of the individual." History always has had several roads open to it at any given moment; its development has always had the choice of diverging. The individual has too many choices open to him to be able to allow us to overgeneralize on the course of the past.¹

Thus, by 1909 the process which began in 1903 reached its ~~culmination~~. Ridding himself of the faith in a possible positivist solution, Bury became a cultural relativist discarding any possibility of a final synthesis in the philosophy of history. He still used the idea of the cause in interpreting events, but this is not to be confused with causal laws, the possibility of which he now entirely rejected. History became a more individualistic study--but this study had no relevance to the attempt to develop laws of society comparable to those in the natural sciences. The historian is ensnared in his own milieu, events cannot be understood outside of their immediate context. Like so many historians of his day, Bury came to reject the positivist approach for the more limited relativist one. In his emphasis on the importance of actions of individuals, he toyed

1 - Ibid., pp. 31-33, 36-41.

with a "great man" theory, thereby leaving history totally chaotic; however, he did not overemphasize this objection to sociological history, but came back to a more limited understanding of the past based on a relativist point of view. History no longer had to wait for the millenium to come in the future, for there would be no Messiah. The discipline did its work in the here and now and its educative function in terms of its being a part of all knowledge gave it its dignity and worth.

Historical relativism, with its hidden built-in feature of determinism, would not remain Bury's last position, to be repeated over and over again as present conditions and past interests changed. Since 1904 Bury had been moving toward what he termed an "idealist" position--history was differentiated from the methods of the natural sciences, its scope was limited to the interpretation of questions of fact and not of value, and it was a rational process not serving the interpretive end of some higher study. Relativism was consistent with this rational, non-sociological approach.

In 1916, in an essay entitled "Cleopatra's Nose," Bury's viewpoint underwent a second transformation. Though he tried to disguise contingency as a function of the rational approach to the study of history, the issue finally led him to a reaffirmation of much that he had denied in the previous decade. Chance, or contingency, is defined as "the valuable collision of two or more independent chains of causes--'valuable' meaning that it is attended with more or less important consequences."¹ Bury stated that it is obvious that

1 - Bury, J.B., "Cleopatra's Nose," in Temperley, op. cit., p. 61.

such circumstances do occur in history, that in many cases chance has affected the course of history to a great degree.

He proceeded to illustrate this theory by giving examples, such as the two chains of causation which produced the Peloponnesian wars and the Athenian plague. One of the results of the plague was the death of Pericles. The microbe had no interest in the war, yet its political consequences are manifest. Similarly, had George II been still reigning at the time of the American Revolution, or had George III been a different type of man, independence might have come but "at a later time and in another way."¹ Contingency also enters into the development of thought-- for instance, had Plato died in infancy, there is no reason to believe the ideas he developed would have been conceived in that particular form.

Bury concluded that "the course of history seems, then, to be marked at every stage by contingencies, some of greater, some of smaller import." He divided contingencies into pure and mixed: a pure contingency is one where two disinterested series of events meet up to produce an important occurrence; a mixed one is where the two sequences are not actually independent of one another. After giving some illustrations, Bury ended with the hopeful comment "that as time goes on contingencies will become less important in human evolution and chance have less power over the course of events...." As the world

1 - Ibid., p. 64.

grows more rationally ordered, it will become less subject to chance.¹

Bury did not conceive contingency to mean that history can no longer be understood even in the limited relativist sense which he had earlier adopted. Like Weber, he made contingency into a category by itself, a deviation from a rational norm.² What he did do was refuse to accept this accidental element as a part of the process of history; he tried to subsume it under a general scientific category. From 1904, at minimum, he had denied that history was scientific, that it could be understood in the positivist sense. Rather, his "idealist" position affirmed the idea that a different type of cognitive activity was necessary to study history. Historical relativism was a product of this negation of science, limiting history to an understanding of particular phenomena and limiting understanding itself by denying the validity of general laws. Contingency could have been used to further this idea; the accidental is the stuff of which history is made and this is what gives it its uniqueness as a study. However, he chose to make the accidental a function of the logical and, in so doing, slipped back to the naturalist position which he had earlier given up. His particular prejudice was not theological, metaphysical, or sociological--it was rational. As Collingwood perceptively pointed out,

1 - Ibid., pp. 66-69.

2 - Ibid., p. 61; Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955, pp. 303-304.

"instead of conceiving individuality as the very substance of the historical process, he had never thought of it as more than a partial and occasional interference with sequences which in their general structure are causal sequences."¹ After having given it up in favor of relativism, Bury went back to the old hopes of eliminating the contingent and making history into a purely causal study. It is not positivism, for he did not entertain the old idea of finding laws or an absolute synthesis. But it is determinism of a sort and it represents the breakdown of the attempt to find an adequate theory to replace positivism. It is curious that the element of contingency--the idea of the accidental in history--did not lead Bury to the position that the idea of causation must be given up and/or that history must be viewed as a series of independent accidents; rather, instead of attempting to formulate a new thesis out of this chaotic situation, he opted for rationality and causation, for a repudiation of his carefully built-up "idealism."

The position taken in "Cleopatra's Nose" was never modified. Bury remained a relativist, sympathetic to rationalist theory and devoted to the concept of the cause in the rest of his works. In his next major work, The Idea of Progress, there is an aside on the theory of contingency in which he reaffirmed his earlier position. In his discussion of Comte, he stated that Comte did not discuss a question

1 - Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of History, op. cit., p. 150.

vital to those who attempt to seek laws in history. "I mean the question of contingency. It must be remembered that contingency does not in the least affect the doctrine of determinism; it is compatible with the strictest interpretation of the principle of causation." After giving an example similar to those in the earlier essay, he stated that such a factor might explain the deviations in the historical process admitted by Comte, or such a contingent factor might "have once and again definitely altered direction of the movement."¹ As it was not his purpose in The Idea of Progress to decide the issue, Bury went no further, but his continued association of contingency with determinism and causation--rather than the opposite as one might expect--is a significant point.

The Idea of Progress interested Bury as far back as 1903 and he is listed as having given a series of lectures on the subject in 1914.² Bury's belief in the historical importance of the idea of development and his sympathy with rationalist thought in general naturally led him to an historical investigation of the dominant assumption of rationalist ideas. In the area of the philosophy of history, the importance of the work lies in Bury's reaffirmation of relativism, both historical and valiative: "...the Progress of humanity belongs to the same order of ideas as Providence or personal immortality. It is true or it is

1 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 303-304.

2 - See the Cambridge University Reporter for the academic year 1914-1915, vol. XLV.

false, and like them it cannot be proved either true or false. Belief in it is an act of faith." Furthermore, a theory of progress is dependent on a theory of history founded, as are the natural sciences, on invariable laws.¹

In the work Bury is critical of the positivist thinking of Comte, Buckle, Harrison, and Spencer. Comte was a poor historian whose "a priori treatment" failed to fulfill the requisites of a scientific hypothesis; Buckle's attempt was "disappointing," based as it was "on a fallacious view of the significance of statistical facts." In spite of Comte, Spencer and Harrison, the positivist belief in progress remains a "dogma."²

Those who attempted to discover scientific laws also relied on the false notion that having derived laws of the succession of past events, they can predict the future. Such a law, stated Bury, is empirical--"there is no guarantee that it would apply to phenomena outside those from which it was derived."

As for progress, Bury reiterated his earlier stand: "...does not Progress itself suggest that its value as a doctrine is only relative, corresponding to a certain not very advanced stage of civilization; just as Providence, in its day, was an idea of relative value, corresponding to a stage somewhat less advanced?"³

1 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 4, 144.

2 - Ibid., pp. 301-302, 310-311, 346-347.

3 - Ibid., p. 352.

In this manner Bury reaffirmed his earlier relativist position. Progress is a very appealing theory, but the theory is seen merely as a stage in civilization, as providence was the working idea of the Middle Ages. We may be progressing or regressing, there are no absolute criteria of judgment.

As mentioned above, in his earliest study of the Roman Empire (1889), Bury adopted conventional explanations in tracing its fall. In 1923 he wrote a new History of the Later Roman Empire, covering one-half the period of the earlier work. The assigning of general causes is abandoned in favor of contingent events.¹

The truth is that the success of the barbarians...cannot be explained by any general considerations. It is accounted for by the actual events and would be clearer if the story were known more fully. The gradual collapse of Roman power...was the consequence of a series of contingent events. No general causes can be assigned that made it inevitable.²

This work enables us to see that Bury did not deviate from the contingency theory which he proposed in 1916. He was firmly committed to it in his writings from that year on, and his final works offer no solutions to the problems of the philosophy of history. That he continued a relativist is evidenced by a

1 - which, it should be noted, then became causes themselves.

2 - Bury, J.B., History of the Later Roman Empire, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1958, vol. I, p. 311. See also Bury, J.B., "The Hellenistic Age and the History of Civilization," in Bury, J.B., et. al., The Hellenistic Age, Cambridge: University Press, 1923, p. 7.

letter written to the Morning Post in 1926. He stated that though it is generally assumed that freedom from bias and impartiality are requisites for good historical writing, he would disagree. "I do not think that freedom from bias is possible; and I do not think it is desirable. Whoever writes completely free from bias will produce a colorless and dull work."¹ This was his final statement.

Bury's various attitudes and his attempts to seek a solution to the problems inherent in the philosophy of history, if not a reflection in miniature of the very soul of his time, was certainly one of its characteristic products. His development was in accord with the dominant thought of the period in which he lived--but, unlike some of its other thinkers--this development cannot be regarded as linear or becoming more and more profound. Rather it is the symbol of the scholar, in his earliest years sure of himself and his ideas, eventually becoming a sceptic and frustrated in his search for truth. In his case, his own mentality forced him to search for a valid identity as a historian, and his limitations prevented him from ever coming to terms with the eternal predicament of the historian in search for himself. What remains the most admirable quality, however, is the self-consciousness which Bury brought to the problem, for he could have easily avoided coming to grips with it without any damage to his reputation and standing.

1 - Bury, J.B., "A Letter on the Writing of History," in Temperley, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

Nonetheless, having chosen to seek a solution, Bury had certain limitations which prevented him from ever going further than he did. Though he explicitly stated that the solution lay in the problem of psychology, unlike Dilthey he did not attempt but rather avoided, ever entering into the area of epistemology. His faith in the idea of causation and in the necessity of rationality in history blinded him towards seeking a solution in the individuality of history and, despite the theory of contingency, in the significance of the accident in shaping past events.

Contingency represented the final breakdown of his thought, for instead of leading him in a new direction, he used it to reaffirm his belief in rationality and causation; it became the partially positivist way out of a relativist solution, the reliance on an old faith to justify a new idea. Bury's own destruction of many aspects of positivism and his shift into the relativist school with its uncertainty with regard to historical cognition is a symptom of a lost ideal of the nineteenth century and the concurrent inability to fill this vacuum in the twentieth. Although he was neither as profound nor as radical as some of the others who were working in the same area, both his thought and historical thought in general have ended with at best a partial and inadequate answer to the total problem. In this sense he is not merely one of the products of the early twentieth century, but can be seen as highly symbolic of the time in which he lived. Bury's questioning of the prevailing assumptions of the late nineteenth century is typical of the realization in the early part of the twentieth century that positivism

was no longer a tenable thesis; the fact that he raised more questions than he was able to answer is representative of the kind of groping going on in many quarters in the search for an acceptable substitute for the problem of historical meaning and cognition.

Part II - The Individual Conscience

**Rationalism, Freedom and Liberty as Seen from the
Early Twentieth Century**

As a historian, Bury's interests were universal. But he was acutely conscious of his mission to truth and in most of his historical work--especially in the books and articles on Greece and the Byzantine Empire--one rarely, if ever, finds him acting as a counsellor for his personal beliefs. He did prefer Thucydides to Herodotus, he did have interesting ideas about Constantinople, yet his work as a historian was always taken with Ranke's ideal in mind. When he did argue a case, the case was always historical. Temperamentally, as well, Bury was suited to the role of a historian. He was shy and retiring and disliked contact with large groups of people. Bury came to Cambridge and King's College at the time when both were in a renaissance--Bloomsbury was beginning to exert influence and King's was the center of much of English intellectual activity. By intellect and, as we shall see, by personal belief, Bury was suited to join these groups or at least act on the periphery. Yet he did not, for he was more suited to sit in the archives than at high table; his intellect was of the sort that could not transfer itself to the drawing room.

Nevertheless, just as he could not hide his speculations on the philosophy of history behind the content of his histories, and just as he could not remain disengaged from the question of the ultimate significance of his work, so, too, he could not totally resign himself to remaining above the fray on some of the more significant issues of the day. His involvement was acute in both the areas of his historical and personal lives.

The distinction between Bury as a historian and Bury as an individual is as sharp as it is with any major historian of the twentieth century. Not only does one not intrude upon the other, but Bury did not use his histories, like Acton, to help derive or assert his moral philosophy. With the exception of a few works and rare instances in his histories, Bury took care to intrude as little of himself as possible. However, when he did decide to plunge, he did it with the fury of a polemicist and he always remained constant to his cause. The works in which the personal Bury appear are A History of Freedom of Thought, The Idea of Progress, History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, and various articles written for the Rationalist Press Association.

In his personal beliefs, Bury was a rationalist and had a deeply felt love of liberty of every sort. He defined rationalism as "the uncompromising assertion by reason of her absolute rights throughout the whole domain of thought..." and freethought as "the refusal of thought to be controlled by any authority but its own...."¹ These principles he upheld throughout his lifetime. In accord with these ideas, he castigated all societies which tried to deprive citizens of the right to seek their own truths. Most often, the Catholic Church was his adversary, but his scepticism enveloped even secular authority and all ideal societies were seen as "repellent," from those of Mercier to the Saint-

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, 2nd ed., London: Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 10.

Simonians.¹ It was authority of any sort which bothered him and when in doubt, Bury always chose the problems of freedom to the solutions of authority. It is possible that his approach to Byzantine history--from the administrative and constitutional point of view--stems from his preoccupation with the problem of authority, for he recognized at an early time that the key to freedom is not merely in the written or unwritten constitution of a government but resides in its administrative forms as well.

Bury's spiritual and historical father in his devotion to reason was Gibbon, whom he knew as well as any man living in the first quarter of the twentieth century. He described Gibbon as a "Rationalist" who lived in an England "unemancipated from ecclesiasticism," a man who could have gone to prison for having written the most enlightened history of his day. The most admirable qualities of Gibbon were his Enlightenment humanity and his use of reason. Bury admired him personally for the fact that "all cruelty and persecution were odious" to him and as a historian because: "in few historians has reason exercised so supreme a control over feeling. But it should be recognized finally that this sovereign mastery of reason, tyrannical and inflexible, was one of the conditions of Gibbon's great achievement."²

1 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 193, 285-286.

2 - Gibbon, Autobiography, op. cit., pp. xiv-xvi; Bury, J.B., "Gibbon's Autobiography," The Pilot, vol. III (1901), p. 75.

However, in spite of his admiration of Gibbon's great accomplishments in history and to reason, Bury was not unyielding in his respect. He regretted that Gibbon was not ahead of his time with reference to the idea of democracy and was disgusted with Gibbon's parliamentary career.¹ Naturally, Bury had certain reservations about Gibbon as a historian.²

Modern European history and modern English history were heavily influenced by rationalist thought and Bury was not out of either tradition when he wrote as a rationalist. Even the tone of his rationalist works might not be very much different from that of some of his predecessors, for A History of Freedom of Thought, his only fully rationalist work published during his lifetime, has as little relation to "pure" history as did Herodotus' "fables." The work is mainly a diatribe against the Catholic Church written as a lawyer's brief. Although punctuated with some scholarly apparatus, it is not a scholarly work and, for Bury, it is uniquely sloppy. Errors abound in the work of a historian who is noted mainly for his unusually learned mind and great accuracy.³ The

1 - Ibid., p. xii.

2 - Gibbon, Decline and Fall, op. cit., Intro., passim.

3 - In 1931, G.P. Gooch described Bury as "the greatest historian who has ever held the Cambridge Chair." The emphasis is, of course, on the word "historian." Gooch, G.P., "The Cambridge Chair of Modern History," op. cit., p. 319. Gooch later bracketed Bury with such men as Ranke, Mommsen, Stubbs, Gierke, Maitland, and Tout as a model for historical writing. Gooch, G.P., Harold Temperley, 1879-1939, London: Humphrey Milford, n.d., p. 27. In 1963 Gooch described Bury as "that great

tone of the work is quite personal and the selection of material seems haphazard. It is quite probable that Bury wrote the work without consulting any notes or sources, an accomplishment that would be viewed with pride only by a polemicist. A History of Freedom of Thought is also the only volume written by Bury with the general public in mind. Although The Idea of Progress and A History of Greece are general surveys, even without knowing they were written by Bury it is obvious they were produced by a first-rate scholar for a knowledgeable and serious audience. A History of Freedom of Thought, part of the Home University Library Series, could have been written by someone who was not a historian; indeed, were any historian without the prestige of a Bury to have written it, his reputation would have suffered. Yet, evidently, Bury felt the issue to be of sufficient importance to lend the weight of his reputation as a scholar to the support of the general issue. In support of Bury, it is obvious that the work is a personal one--philosophical issues are debated and he admitted that the selection of material is arbitrary. This small volume is the only one which Bury published in his lifetime in direct support of his own "faith."¹

scholar, the most learned of English Historians." Gooch, G.P., London, letter, 10 April 1963, to the author.

- 1 - It can be speculated that A History of Freedom of Thought was also written as a reply to Acton, who was Catholic and was willing to work in the framework of the Church, even though he viewed history as the progressive evolution of human freedom. Acton was used by Catholic pamphleteers

That A History of Freedom of Thought hit home is obvious from a few reactions immediately following its publication in 1913. In 1914 the Catholic Truth Society published two pamphlets directly attacking Bury's position and the book itself. Both pamphlets, one by Hilaire Belloc and the other by John G. Vance, are a part of a series called Anti-Rationalist Pamphlets published in order to counter some of the rationalist trends of the day.

Belloc's argument, entitled Anti-Catholic History: How It is Written, used Bury's work in order to attack "the writing of history in our Protestant universities...."¹ Most significantly, Belloc attacked the scholarship of the work. The bad scholarship, the inaccuracies of fact, of "proportion ...in the spirit of narration" were attributed to the complacency of academicians hiding behind their titles and realizing that works of this sort would not be criticized. Belloc used Bury to prove that the "Academic Authority" of those who attack the Church is "usually valueless," for the universities publish bad history.²

Vance, in Freedom of Thought and Christianity, compared Bury and Acton on the subject of liberty and freedom. He continually used Acton in counterpoint with Bury in order to prove his case that the Catholic

in order to prove Bury's thesis wrong.

1 - Belloc, Hilaire, Anti-Catholic History: How It is Written, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1914, p. 1.

2 - Ibid., passim.

Church has always been on the side of freedom and in "the Middle Ages, thought was not enslaved, reason was not in prison and knowledge did make progress."¹

Vance also enumerated Bury's many errors of fact and claimed these errors were what allowed Bury to make his argument against Catholicism. Calling the work a "rationalist tract," Vance urged the reader to go back to the teachings of Lord Acton and asked Bury to make a public apology in the form of "a little volume of 'retractions'" in order to recover his reputation.²

Of course, far from being the product of a Protestant plot, Bury's volume is, as Vance stated, a rationalist tract. But both Belloc and Vance seem to attack Bury where it would have hurt him, at this moment, the least. Were anyone to have attacked one of Bury's purely historical volumes with respect to its accuracy, had the case been half as strong as the attack on A History of Freedom of Thought, Bury would not only have retracted, but his own view of himself as a disinterested historian would have been shattered. The point is that Bury himself did not view the volume as one of history and the retraction would only be in order if he felt that his general viewpoint--that the Catholic Church has indeed hurt the cause of reason and his own philosophical justification of freedom of thought--were proven wrong. Needless to say, no

1 - Vance, John G., Freedom of Thought and Christianity: A Criticism of Professor Bury's "History of Freedom of Thought", London: Catholic Truth Society, 1914, p. 10.

2 - Ibid., passim.

retraction was forthcoming.

Bury appears as a polemicist in one other volume, his History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, published posthumously in 1930. The fact of posthumous publication is instructive, for Bury gave a set of lectures with the same title in the academic years 1906-07 and 1907-08, also having the subtitle "Pontificate of Pius IX."¹ The lectures were never repeated, contrary to Bury's custom which saw him give the same lectures for many years running.² Bury could easily have published the lectures had he desired to do so, but he chose neither to publish nor to repeat the series, indicating that he had some doubts about their value. The part that was published, including most of the pontificate of Pius IX, is, even without the footnotes which were supplied by the Rev. R.H. Murray, the editor, much more scholarly and judicious than A History of Freedom of Thought. Yet it, too, is obviously biased against Pius IX and the ultramontanes and in favor of, first, a liberalization of the Church, and second, the liberals within the Church. Bury was also quite patently afraid of the influence of the Church on the modern world and did not hesitate to state his fears. This work and A History of Freedom of Thought can be contrasted with

1 - Cambridge University Reporter, vols. XXXVII, XXXVIII (1906-1908).

2 - "The Use of Authorities" was given in Easter term every academic year from 1904-05 to 1925-26 with the exception of 1914-15. "The Barbarian Invasions," also published posthumously, under the title The Invasion of Europe by the Barbarians was given, sometimes with a slightly different title, many times from 1903-04 to 1925-26.

Bury's work on the Byzantine Empire in which his discussions of Church history show a remarkable lack of bias for anyone, much less a historian known to be a rationalist.

History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century was undoubtedly not published or repeated because of this combination of scholarly apparatus and personal bias. The book on freedom of thought is openly supporting a cause, the works on the Byzantine Empire are openly supporting scholarship. The lectures on the modern Papacy are in a twilight zone somewhere in between the two and, with that sharp distinction always in mind, Bury did not want to get his personal self mixed up with his historical one.

The Idea of Progress, which will be considered in much greater detail below, also reflects, though only in part, a personal commitment by Bury. For purposes of his position on rationalism and freedom of thought there is something to be gleaned from it. It should be noted here that The Idea of Progress is a thoroughly scholarly work and even where Bury does contemplate problems of freedom, liberty, rationalism and religion he is much more temperate and much clearer in stating that this is a personal prejudice than in any other of his works.

In addition to these three significant volumes, brief statements in other volumes and some articles, Bury, from 1915 on, occasionally wrote for the Rationalist Press Association. The Association was founded in 1899 as an outgrowth of the Agnostic Annual and the Rationalist Press Committee, whose function was "to assist in the production and circulation of

Rationalist publications." The leading members of the organization at its inception were Charles Albert Watts, whose printing firm published almost all of the works sponsored by the Association, C.E. Hooper, and A. Gowans Whyte. Leslie Stephen, John M. Robertson, Emile Zola and Ernst Haeckel were among its original Honorary Members. The principal work of the Association was in issuing pamphlets, cheap reprints and translations, and original works which aided the rationalist cause.

The Association consciously disliked the terms "freethinker" or "freethought," feeling that they were too militant or associated too closely with activist continental movements. As an organization it steadfastly maintained that it "is not committed to any political programme or any sociological theory," and thus, unlike many of the European Freemason or free-thinking societies prior to World War I, has been eminently non-political. While its sympathies lay with the Liberal and then the Labour Parties, it has carefully maintained a strict neutrality; because of this and its numerous publications and lectures, it has achieved a good measure of respectability in English social life.

In addition to its other publications, the Association also sponsored an Annual and Ethical Review to which Bury made brief contributions. Though Bury never belonged to the Association, it is easy to see, because of its policy of an unwillingness to go to extremes in disseminating rationalist beliefs, how it appealed to him as a place to air his views on the Church, tolerance and free-thought. Bury was

listed as an Honorary Associate of the organization, elected in 1913, no doubt a tribute to his A History of Freedom of Thought.¹

The rationalist idea was not a new trend of thought in England at the time when Bury was casting his invectives against religion. Modern rationalism can be traced back to the English Deists of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and their attacks on revelation coupled with the idea of a natural religion. In the eighteenth century Hume and Gibbon took up the cause in England and the Enlightenment in Europe tended to denigrate revelation in favor of reason.²

However, as the popularity of A.D. White's A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom,³ published in 1896, testifies, the issue was still an important one at the end of the nineteenth century. Hegel, Darwin, science, and the positivists had all made inroads into the traditional sphere of religion, but the period was neither so cynical as to reject religion altogether, nor so sophisticated as to be able to ignore the issue.⁴

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- 1 - See Whyte, A. Gowans, The Story of the R. P. A., 1899-1949, London: Watts and Company, 1949; and Hooper, Charles E., The R. P. A.: Its Origin and Growth, London: Watts and Company, n.d.
 - 2 - See Robertson, J.M., A History of Freethought, 4th ed., London: Watts and Company, 1936, vol. II.
 - 3 - White, Andrew Dickson, A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899, 2 vols.
 - 4 - See Benn, Alfred William, The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century, New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962, 2 vols., passim.

One of the works which undoubtedly influenced Bury was Lecky's History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe, published in 1865. Lecky had been a student at Trinity College, Dublin, and was the Liberal-Unionist M. P. for his old school from 1892 until his death in 1903. Lecky's work was enormously popular, having over twenty reprints in England after it was published.

The position of Lecky, though less militant than Bury's, was close to that of his constituent.¹ He saw Catholicism coming to hurt political democracy and democracy in the modern period being the champion of Christian ideals now ignored by modern Christianity.² In addition, like Bury, he tied together freedom, rationalism and progress.

Lecky differed in one significant way from most

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- 1 - Bury and Lecky knew one another and there is a letter dated 16 May 1902 from Bury to Lecky in Trinity College Library in which Bury thanks Lecky for sending him a copy of Lecky's Democracy and Liberty. Bury also implored Lecky not to resign as representative. He stated: "There has been a persistent rumour that you think of resigning your membership as our representative. I know that all my colleagues are unanimously of the same opinion as myself when I say that I should regard your resignation as a great misfortune, and earnestly hope that you are not contemplating such a step. You can hardly realise how strongly we all feel on this matter, and how highly we value our luck in having secured an ideal representative. We could not replace you." Letter from J.B. Bury to W.E.H. Lecky, Lecky MS, Trinity College, Dublin.
 - 2 - Lecky, W.E.H., History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, New York: George Braziller, 1955, vol. II, pp. 208-221.
 - 3 - Ibid., vol. II, pp. 346-357.

nineteenth and early twentieth century historians of rationalism in that he did not merely use the idea of rationalism as a mode of thought antithetical to religion. Writing at a time when the influence of Hegel was paramount, Lecky liked to speak of an age having "peculiar habits of thought, new modes of reasoning, new techniques of inquiry." He talked of the spirit of an age and saw the dominant trend of modern times as the "spirit of Rationalism." Thus, not merely theological tendencies are discussed but also political ones and he can be said to have been a precursor of modern sociology when he entitled a chapter "The Industrial History of Rationalism."¹ Thus, for Lecky the world is becoming rationalized; for many before World War I, including often Bury, it was simply a war between rationalism and theology.²

In addition to Lecky, Bury was influenced by historical criticism. Indeed, his very attitude toward history, that it must be "scientific," biased him toward a rejection of revelation and a special acceptance of the Bible as of divine origin. The introduction of Biblical criticism and the tendency in the nineteenth century to root the origin of Christianity in primitive beliefs as a result of anthropological investigation also determined his position.

1 - Ibid., vol. I, pp. xi-xx.

2 - Examples of those who defined rationalism or free-thought only in terms of theology are Robertson, John M., A Short History of Freethought, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1906, p. 9; and Benn, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 3-4.

By the time Bury began writing against prevailing religious beliefs--from the lectures on the History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century of 1906-07 to a discussion of the trial of Socrates in 1926--the issue had not yet taken on the pragmatic neutrality that it has in the twentieth century. Theology was indeed in "retreat," as one commentator had described it,¹ but nonetheless there was no certainty on the part of freethinkers that it would remain there. In England, the abolition of University Tests in 1871, the Education Act of 1870, the abolition of Church Rates in 1868, and the right of University dons to marry in 1882 were all reforms of recent memory and their wisdom was still debated in many circles. There was thus a Victorian militancy about the arguments for and against theology still present in the early twentieth century. One did not debate, one exhorted, and Bury's works in this area have this characteristically Victorian tone. There was great tolerance in England when he wrote A History of Freedom of Thought, but the issue was not the sort which led to friendly disputation. Though you marshalled as many scholarly and philosophical arguments as you could, you fought for rationalism with every rhetorical device as well. Bury's own writings in support of his personal beliefs have this same tone.

Bury's belief in a rationalist approach to the world, unlike his position on the philosophy of history, remained remarkably consistent over the years. If

1 - Benn, op. cit., vol. II, ch. 19.

he was never sure about the meaning or even the value of his historical studies, he nevertheless did not transfer this uncertainty onto the sphere of his personal beliefs. Perhaps this is because he thought that while scepticism can be maintained as a reasonable way of conducting a life, it cannot be a fully satisfactory method of conducting research. In order to complete his historical work, Bury needed some sort of unequivocal conclusion; yet, he felt that a complete life can be led simply by asking questions and appealing to reason.

That Bury believed this can be seen in his discussions of Socrates, whose example he admired without reservation. Bury found Socrates' historical significance to lie in his constant questioning of common-sense assumptions, his rejection of authority, and his realization that truth was a most elusive thing.¹ Like most commentators, Bury was fascinated by Socrates' trial and, most especially, his defense,² in which Socrates acknowledged the fact

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., p. 20; Bury, J.B., A History of Greece, op. cit., p. 563; Bury, J.B., "The Age of Illumination," in Cambridge Ancient History, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927, vol. V, pp. 386-397.

2 - Bury speculated that Socrates was tried for some sort of political reason and the charges of religious treason and corrupting the youth were used as an expedient in order to get him out of the way. See "The Trial of Socrates," in Temperley, op. cit., pp. 75-80. In A History of Freedom of Thought, p. 21, Bury stated: "There can, I think, be little doubt that the motives of the accusation were political."

that he did not worship the gods of Athens and defended the charge of corruption with a plea for free speech. For Bury, the most noteworthy aspect of the defense was Socrates' assertion of "the supremacy of individual conscience" and "the public value of free discussion." Bury thought this the "earliest justification of freedom of thought"¹ and he continually returned to it as the great example of the supremacy of reason.

As for Socrates' controversial choice when he is found guilty--death over banishment--the answer given is simply that he preferred death to a worthless life of silence. Bury indicated that he regarded this as a reasonable choice and summed up: "He cannot fitly be called a martyr, except in the wide, vague sense in which that word is often applied to any victim of intolerance. If he bore witness to any cause, it was to the cause of freedom of speech."²

Bury observed that society is generally opposed to progressive ideals and this, combined with the kind of intolerance which brought about the death of Socrates, told him something about the nature of man. The reason society is often unwilling to change its beliefs is simply that "the average brain is naturally lazy" and refuses even to consider any new ideas. With great

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- 1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 22-23. See Bury's own defense of freedom of speech below. It is not far from Socrates' plea, especially in using the idea that freedom is more useful to society than censorship.
 - 2 - Bury, J.B., "The Trial of Socrates," in Temperley, op. cit., p. 90; Bury, J.B., A History of Greece, op. cit., p. 565.

contempt, Bury felt that most men refuse to question traditional beliefs which have been given to them as dogma. This Bury called a "conservative instinct" and he thought the instinct supported by a "conservative doctrine" which views the world as an organic whole--any changes in a part of society will endanger the whole fabric of the universe. Psychologically, this doctrine is aided by the conservative nature of man and, to Bury, most men see the good of the state as "the preservation of its traditions and institutions unchanged."¹

In modern times, Bury regarded religious institutions as the main element in propagating this conservative doctrine, generally in order to preserve their traditional power against the influence of new ideas. Time and again in his discussions of the Catholic Church, Bury noted its unwillingness to accept new ideas in attempting to retain or regain its old power in the world. The editor of History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century revealed that when he asked Bury why he was interested in the modern Papacy, Bury replied: "I consider it the other side of the history of freedom of thought."² And it was not merely the modern Papacy which Bury viewed as antagonistic to the ideals of freedom. His continual concern with the subject can be described as a life-

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 2-3. Bury also noted there are elements of society which depend upon the status quo and support the ideas which prop it up.

2 - Bury, J.B., History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, 1864-1878, ed. with a memoir by Rev. R.H. Murray, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1930, p. ix.

long debate between Socrates and Innocent III.

The debate was seen by Bury as "a continuous struggle between authority and reason." To accept any idea on the basis of mere authority was odious, especially if such knowledge could not be theoretically ascertained by oneself. Bury's "average man," however, did accept ideas merely because of their support by some sort of authority; Bury found such authority pernicious and connected it mainly with theological beliefs. In contrast to this, Bury found himself supporting the forces of reason and freedom and tied together the attempts of rationalist beliefs to assert themselves with "the field of theology, because it was in that field that the self-assertion of reason was most violently and pertinaciously opposed." Moreover, those who claim authority generally tend to be coercive. Yet, the burden of proof does not lie on those who question traditional beliefs but on those who accept them, because for Bury the only acceptable authority is that which can be personally verified.¹ The powers of theological authorities were such, however, claimed Bury, that it was not until the modern period that the "intellectual revolutionary movement" of reason began to come to the fore and disturb the authority of the idea of providence.² Bury was trying to make those who support the "conservative doctrine" face up to the same intellectual problems as those who accepted his own reliance on reason.

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 7-11.

2 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

Christianity was the oppressor for Bury and the period which he saw as a kind of "dark ages" of freedom was the Middle Ages for the adoption of Christianity by Constantine "inaugurated a millenium in which reason was enchained, thought was enslaved, and knowledge made no progress." Bury accused Christianity of adopting a policy of tyranny over the minds of men because of its belief that the ultimate truth lay in the way of the Christian Church. This attitude of having a monopoly on truth could not but lead to a position of intolerance. In addition, the idea of sacred books hardened the belief in the efficacy of a traditional way of life. For Bury, the significance of St. Augustine in the history of freedom of thought was that "he formulated the principle of persecution...." Later, the Inquisition discarded "every reasonable means for the ascertainment of truth."¹

Not only the Middle Ages and Catholicism, but the Reformation and Protestantism came into Bury's disfavor on the issue of toleration. He considered it a hasty reading of history to think "that the Reformation established religious liberty and the right of private judgment." Indeed, the results--which led

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 36-44. As we shall see below, Bury recognized that history is anything but static and that modern Christianity is very different from its medieval form. However, he was far from pleased with the development of the modern Church. See "The Success of Christianity," R.P.A. Annual and Ethical Review, London: Watts and Company, 1915; and Bury, J.B., History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., pp. 21-22, 38-39.

to the idea of toleration--were not due to its ideology but to the new political and social conditions which it brought about. As for the idea of intolerance, the new and old ideas were not very much different; the Reformation in itself did little to help the cause of freedom. Calvin is regarded as the "blackest" of all Protestant theologians and only the Socinians receive some praise as having helped the cause of rationalism and liberty.¹

If Christianity hurt the cause of toleration, Bury did not give it high marks in its contribution to knowledge. The idea of rooting out heresy "injured the sense of truth," for it was done indiscriminately, even by the invention of tales and fables. What Christianity lacked was "a disinterested appreciation of truth" and as a result it put its dogmas in the way of all the scientific advances of the modern world. The medieval legacy was also condemned by Bury, for he thought the past lay heavily upon the modern thinkers, such as Bodin, who tried to formulate new ideas.²

In addition to hindering the cause of knowledge, Bury noted that the Christian tradition, with its adherence to a fixed truth, also injured the cause of critical history. At the beginning of the Middle Ages, Christianity reconstructed history in its own "theological interests." Whereas in the Ancient world, history

1 - Ruffini, Francesco, Religious Liberty, trans. J.P. Hayes, preface by J.B. Bury, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912, p. vi; Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 58-63.

2 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 46-49; Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., p. 41.

was, if not overly critical, at least free, Christian historiography installed the superior guidance of an indefeasible authority, the divinely inspired tradition of the Jewish records, whereby they determined the general frame and perspective of the history of the world. This was the first appearance of the principle which Cardinal Manning expressed in his famous saying that dogma must overcome history, and which guides all the historiography of the Ultramontane school.

Bury did credit the Church with assisting in the transition of the idea of universal history from the Ancient to the modern world, although the price of free inquiry was a high one to pay and Christianity, of necessity, abandoned the idea of a cyclical theory as incompatible with its central dogma.¹

Bury also asserted that Christianity had many social effects in areas related to the ideas of tolerance, rationalism and freethought. Particularly in the field of law, Christianity had the opportunity to effect theory and practice. Bury noted that in its influence on Roman law, "the catalogue of crimes was increased" and lawgivers in general were influenced by the ascetic ideals of early Christianity. In addition, he stated that "apologists" for Christianity will have to justify mutilation before they can "prove that the social effects of Christianity were beneficial."²

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., pp. 239, 252.

2 - Bury, J.B., "The Influence of Christianity on Roman Criminal Law," R.I.P.A. Annual and Ethical Review, London: Watts and Company, 1918, p. 24.

As Bury summed up his feelings on the Middle Ages:

"In the period, then, in which Christianity exercised its greatest influence, reason was enchained in the prison which Christianity had built around the human mind."¹

In his discussions of the modern Church, Bury was most concerned with the pontificate of Pius IX, the Syllabus of Modern Errors and the Vatican Council. The Syllabus proved to Bury that the relation of the modern Church to reason was the same as the medieval one. Reason was not expressly rejected or condemned, but the Church wants "to render both reason and science, bound hand and foot of ecclesiastical authority."²

In his interpretation of the events leading up to the issuing of the Syllabus and the final acceptance of the dogma of Infallibility, Bury, like Acton,³ strongly believed that the ultramontanes had the most influential position in the Church. They desired the Syllabus because it would be a reaction against the large wing of liberal Catholics, and Bury viewed the latter years of the reign of Pius IX as mainly a battle between the ultramontanes and the liberal Catholic group, with the ultramontanes ultimately winning the battles as well as the war. He unhappily saw the conservative view of the ultramontanes being

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

2 - Bury, J.B., History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., pp. 13-16.

3 - Acton, Lord, "The Vatican Council," Essays on Freedom and Power, op. cit., pp. 280-281, 311.

asserted in almost every area of the Church during these years. They were not merely responsible for the issuance of the Syllabus and the Encyclical Quanta Cura which accompanied it,¹ but for their contents as well. The idea that revelation is always perfect, that the Inquisition and Index have an important place in the affairs of the Church, the reassertion of the idea of special ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and, most significantly, that the state is subordinate to the Church, are all views which Bury attributed to ultramontane influence.² Furthermore, Bury saw the Syllabus implying a special ecclesiastical idea of history which is in opposition to modern thought. The ultramontane view of history, he stated, "is that it refuses to distinguish between historical periods"; that is, it does not make the distinction between the role and fate of the Church in modern and medieval times. "This unhistorical view is necessitated by the adhesion to the secular pretensions of the medieval Church"; and all of European civilization is still judged from the point of view of the power of the medieval Church. As Bury saw it, there was thus an incompatibility "between

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- 1 - Quanta Cura, an Encyclical letter sent along with the Syllabus to Catholic prelates, was a summation of the Syllabus, briefly discussing what the Syllabus went into in greater detail. Bury viewed its import as further emphasis of the attempt of the Church to usurp much of the authority now held by the modern state.
 - 2 - Bury, J.B., History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., pp. 4, 12, 14, 22, 25, 30, 40, 141.

the dogmatic point of view and the historical principle, which is one of the most important acquisitions of the nineteenth century." Until this is reconciled, it is obvious the Church and the modern world will always be at odds. The Syllabus was "a declaration of war against the enlightenment."¹

Unlike Acton and other liberal Catholics,² Bury refused to adopt the "historical principle" to mitigate the meaning of the Syllabus and the doctrine of Infallibility and interpret them as particular reactions to certain momentary trends. To Bury, "such explanations are only the desperate resorts to which those have to betake themselves who try to reconcile the polar opposites, liberty and papal authority, progress and ecclesiasticism."³ While Acton and Bury stood partially on the same side in their response to the reactionary forces of the Church, Bury felt that Acton fought a battle which could not possibly be won. For Acton attempted to work within the Church in order to obtain much the same kind of civil, political and intellectual freedom that Bury valued; but, to Bury, the very nature of the Church meant that one could not have both the institution and the liberal ideology at the same time. Bury regretted

1 - Ibid., pp. 45-46; Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., p. 168.

2 - Acton, Lord, "The Vatican Council," op. cit., p. 327; Quirinus, Letters from Rome on the Council, New York: Pott and Amery, 1870, is a compilation by Dollinger of the attitude of the liberal opposition.

3 - Bury, J.B., History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

that the ultramontanes were in control of the institution, but there is an almost deterministic attitude on his part in his discussion of the Church and liberalism: the Church could not be what it is and be liberal at the same time; Acton was condemned to a kind of Sisiphus existence in trying to have both. Indeed, while Bury would have preferred to have the liberal wing win the civil war within the Church, his ultimate view was that there ought to be no Church at all.

In his discussion of the affairs of the Church, Bury had a great advantage. Though, unlike Emile Combes, he had not been "raised in the harem" and therefore perhaps did not "know its inner secrets," he knew Church history and precedent as well as any theologian. He therefore took issue with the actions of Pius IX at the Council, declaring many of them to be the establishment of new precedents further adding to the power of the Papacy.¹ The restrictions upon members of the Council were many, and Bury argued some of them violated the tradition of the Church² and

1 - Again, there is agreement here with Acton's viewpoint. Acton first tried to stop the ultramontane trend and control by an appeal to precedent. Later, when he realized the futility of this approach, his attacks on the Council became more of an appeal to ideology than to tradition. Himmelfarb, Gertrude, Lord Acton, Chicago: University Press, 1952, pp. 99-117.

2 - Among the new precedents, Bury listed the following: the retention by the Pope of the right to decide what would be discussed; the fact that the proceedings of the Council were secret; and the independent position of the Pope in relation to the Council.

resulted in the fact that the Council "was not a free body in the sense in which this could be said of other Councils." He ridiculed the whole affair by claiming it was totally chaotic, the only principle of order being the Pope's "despotic will."¹ What Bury never realized was that the Council was never meant to be "free" in his sense of the term, but when he argued from a personal and not a historical point of view, his acute sense of historical and moral relativism entirely deserted him.

If the pontificate of Pius IX repelled him, Bury was also not particularly enamored with his character. Bury claimed that Pius IX had "certain psychological traits" which led him to cooperate in a movement led mainly by the Jesuits and ultramontanes; he even implied that the Pope was a captive of these groups and not a particularly strong personality. Bury pointed out that the Pope had no difficulty in believing in legends and prophecies and that there seemed to be more than a coincidental significance in the fact that certain dates, such as June 18, were important in the reign. If he were not a Pope, stated Bury, he would be described as having "megomania," thinking that the divine appeared in him. Moreover, in his propagation of certain cults and his being influenced by them, the "destinies of the Church were affected by the visions and prophecies of romantic women." Bury also felt that in attempting to proclaim the doctrine of Infallibility the Pope thought he had

1 - Bury, J.B., History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., pp. 78-80, 107.

a "special mission." In support of this a case was cited in which the Pope determined to have his way even at the expense of making septagenarian Patriarch resign. Bury also made much of the Guidi incident, in which the Pope demanded a confession of faith from Cardinal Guidi, who was in the minority at the Council and who had spoken against Infallibility. Guidi cited tradition in support of his stand and the Pope replied: "La Tradizione son' Io." Bury commented: "words which pregnantly express the ultramontane system."¹

Bury disliked the Church because of the position in which it put the role of liberty and the role of the individual and he was almost joyous in his personal statements when he described the breakdown of the medieval world; he even entitled the chapter in A History of Freedom of Thought "Prospect of Deliverance." This prospect began for Bury in Renaissance Italy as the "misty veil...which had hung over men's souls... began to lift." Bury saw this reaction in a typically Burckhardtian interpretation of the Renaissance, although perhaps not quite so typical for one whose

1 - Ibid., pp. 51-55, 101, 124. Acton also used the Incident to cap his frustration in failing to make the voice of liberal Catholicism a substantive one at the Council. For Acton, also, the ultramontane victory was cloaked in the garb of illegality and obscurantism. But Acton felt that the Church would eventually turn and become a potent force in the modern world by simply rejecting the decrees of the Council and accepting the combination of "faith and reason." Acton, Lord, "The Vatican Council," op. cit., p. 327.

historical work in the medieval period was never accused of bias and during a time when it was becoming respectable to challenge the Burckhardtian view of the Renaissance and, by implication, the medieval period.¹ When he cited some of the more important figures who helped bring about this "prospect of deliverance," Bury was so enthusiastic that he made them almost into martyrs for reason. Figures such as Bruno, Vanini, Kyd, Kett and Legate are all used to show the intolerance of authority and the attempt of individuals to believe according to their consciences. The confrontation of the Inquisition with Galileo is recapitulated--no doubt because of its great dramatic quality. All these men are almost sainted by Bury in his efforts to make them victims of persecution.²

1 - Unlike many commentators of the time, Bury did not view the Renaissance as opposing paganism and Christianity, but rather as a generous mixture of the two which did not automatically discard medieval ideas. Bury's "battle" between reason and authority did not begin until the seventeenth century when the Cartesian system "collided with the theory of an active Providence." The Renaissance was viewed as a transition period from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

2 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 54-55, 57, 64-69. Bury, like most other men, found an affinity with particular thinkers and adopted some of them as heroes of his rationalist creed. Most especially, in their historical context, he greatly admired the works of Bayle and Voltaire as attacks on "falsehood, prejudice, and imposture..." See Bury, J.B., "Bayle on Original Sin," R.P.A. Annual and Ethical Review, London: Watts and Company, 1923, and A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 121-124.

Modern science, anthropology, and the modern idea of the invariable laws of nature were all credited with helping to push the world of theology into the background.¹ Bury also did not neglect the contribution of the new historical methodology of the nineteenth century, for he felt that it removed the appeal of Christianity and the Bible from any factual basis. Strauss, Lachmann and other German scholars of the early nineteenth century are given credit for this excavation of the foundations of traditional Christian thought, but Bury was also acquainted with the more modern work of the Modernist movement and the attempts of Loisy to publicize the results of more contemporary Biblical scholarship in the effort to define the Church as an evolutionary institution. Because of Loisy and others, Biblical criticism was proving "a steady and powerful solvent of traditional beliefs; and today we see that within the Churches the men who have brains and are not afraid to use them are transforming the essential doctrines,..." Bury was not myopic enough to feel that all this scientific and historical criticism has affected in any way the doctrine of immortality and thus has changed the old appeal to authority rather than reason. He was aware that the "whole point of a revealed religion is that it is not based on scientific facts" and because of his conservative view of human nature thought that the basic appeal of a revealed religion could never be attacked. None-

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., pp. 251-252; Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 66-69, 141-146.

theless, he hoped that the more its intellectual foundations are eroded, the less might be its overall appeal.¹

Another inroad into religious beliefs, another victory for the forces of reason, was sounded on behalf of one of Bury's favorite themes, the idea of development. The idea was thought incompatible with the view of the world in the Middle Ages, for Augustinian theory need not worry about the question of change in this society. Indeed, Bury felt it impossible for the idea to appear in the Middle Ages-- "the whole spirit of mediaeval Christianity excluded it." Close to the ideas of Lecky, he postulated that the advance of freedom of thought was brought about by new modern attitudes stemming from the Renaissance. The idea of development and the idea of progress made great contributions to this change in attitude. In brief, a new theory of the universe was introduced and popularized in place of the old theological views. For Bury, "the idea of progress, freedom of thought and the decline of ecclesiastical power go together."²

Strangely enough, unlike his discussion of the Renaissance, Bury never entered into the question of the industrial revolution and the changes it brought about, as did Lecky, in terms of its helping to trans-

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., p. 252; Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 152-159.

2 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 20-21, 28-29; Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 146-149, 180-182, 184, 186.

form the quality of thought in the modern world. His stated theory of historical change was one of contingency, and, by definition, this included both the ideal and the material worlds: chance could bring together two or more independent ideas or events or a combination of both and the complex process of historical change would begin. In his historical world, Bury accepted the theory; however, in all of his discussions of the transformation from the medieval theological view of the world to the modern rationalist one, the motive force of history was always the world of ideas rather than the world of space and time. In his own personal existence it was ideas that counted and he chose the "idealist" position over the "naturalist" one.

At one point, Bury admitted that his study of the Papacy in the nineteenth century was based on more than a disinterested attempt to do some research. Rather, he desired to understand "the behaviour of the Roman Catholic Church in the present age" and it was this behaviour which alarmed him. He was probably most upset by the attempts of the Church to define its relationship with the modern state. In his commentary on the Syllabus he continually noted that should the extravagant claims of the Church of Pius IX be accepted, the state would merely become a function of it and would be subject to its dictates. Moreover, Bury's interpretation of Infallibility claimed that the Pope now had unusual power, a power not brought up since the medieval period. First, although the Pope's Infallibility is limited to the times when he is speaking ex cathedra, only the Pope can define

these times; also, the Pope is limited to revelation when speaking on dogma, but the idea "is too wide and elastic a conception to constitute a very definite limit or guarantee." Bury took the most exceptional of all historic claims of the Church, Unam Sanctam, to illustrate his thesis of why we should fear the Papacy today. He argued that the doctrine of the two swords has again been reasserted in its most extreme form and cited Jesuit and ultramontane writers in order to let them testify against themselves--though, of course, what Bury viewed as alarming, these men viewed as natural. As far as Bury was concerned, Unam Sanctam "has been confirmed by the Vatican decree, and its doctrine is binding de fide on members of the Church of Rome."¹

As for the practical relations of the Papacy with the modern state, Bury felt that the Italian government treated the Church quite fairly after taking Rome in 1870. He viewed the Kulturkampf as an "appropriate and pregnant name" because "it was a struggle between two different ideals of civilization, between the ecclesiastical order of the Middle Ages and

1 - Bury, J.B., History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., pp. 23, 24-33, 135-142. The liberal Catholic position was different, motivated as it was by its necessity to accept the institution of the Church but not much of its new doctrine. For the liberal Catholics, the acts of the Council were clearly illegal and thus did not have the binding force of dogma. Eventually, they felt, this momentary lapse of the Church would be rectified. See Acton, Lord, "The Vatican Council," op. cit., pp. 302, 308, 318, 327.

the secular order of modern society." A few years after his having given the lectures on the Papacy, the battle in France between Church and state reached its apex during the Combes ministry. This, to Bury, was "another victory for the modern State." He continued:

The victory is not surprising. For the fact which gives us the most cause for thought, and which I have endeavoured to bring out in these lectures is that the Papacy, based as it is in mediaeval ideas, has maintained and in many ways increased its moral power and influence, in an atmosphere which is repugnant to it, in the midst of social and political institutions, tendencies, and ideas to which it is fundamentally opposed.¹

During the World War, Bury took the opportunity to discuss the question of whether Christianity would survive, one debated by rationalists in the context of the larger question of the survival of civilization. He noted that there is no doubt that the war will affect "every tissue of our social fabric" and this means the relationship between "reason and tradition, freedom and authority" will also be affected. He anticipated that the ideological warfare between the two will perhaps become more acute and, comparing the later post-war period to the time after the Napoleonic Wars, he even prophesied that the forces of religion might gain.² The success of Christianity was not

1 - Ibid., p. 165.

2 - Bury, J.B., et. al., "Will Orthodox Christianity Survive the World War?: an attempt at forecast by representative humanists," R.P.A. Annual and Ethical Review, London: Watts and Company, 1917, p. 26.

attributed to its doctrine but to its organizational capacities. As a social phenomenon, Bury admitted that Christianity "has had a distinguished and instructive history." In giving the Church its historical due, he continued:

It answered social needs; it embodied an ideology satisfactory to the Western mind at a particular stage; it was in intimate touch with social development. Its effective organization gave it the means of exerting its social activities to their fullest extent--activities both good and evil. The nature of its metaphysical doctrines enables it to adapt and adjust itself to new phases of thought in a way which was not open to decline when it ceased to be fully adequate to the needs of the time and to correspond to all the tendencies of progress. The decomposition, like the growth, can be traced step by step.

However, it is the organization which survives. Bury was acutely aware that organizations tend to survive long after they outgrow their original aims. Even though social change comes more rapidly in the modern world than ever before, rationalists, even if they "feel impatient at the persistence of superstitious doctrine" must remember the nature of social change. He predicted that only an optimist could hope that Western civilization "will have dispensed entirely with theological dogmas" in three hundred years from the time he is writing--August 1914.¹ Three years later the same position was taken; the War will not affect theological beliefs and it would "be a mistake

1 - Bury, J.B., "The Success of Christianity," op. cit., p. 5.

for Rationalists to expect that the slow process of 'creeping from point to point' will be greatly accelerated."¹

In his personal discussion on the virtues of reason and the abuses of the Church, Bury, if biased, was not totally uncritical. The History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century uses the words of the Church to condemn and the selection and emphasis are not totally arbitrary. Similarly, he was not blinded by the forces of reason to the extent that he ever advocated its abuse in order to make it triumphant. He was uncompromising in his stand on liberty and tolerance, but these were never defined, as they so often are in the twentieth century, in a way to disregard them in their very name. As has been seen, Bury disliked any doctrine, spiritual or secular, which claimed to uncompromisingly know the truth and whose social ideal and social actions were rigidly based on that truth.² In his reliance on reason he had an Aristotelian quality--any sort of extreme seems repugnant; the purpose of the state is to enable man to lead the good life as they see it and for this liberty is necessary.

This quality of a distrust of extremes, as well as his sceptical temperament, led him to criticize abuses of reason as well as abuses of the Church. He was not blinded to the fact that even in his much admired Athens

1 - Bury, J.B., et. al., "Will Orthodox Christianity Survive the World War?," op. cit., p. 26.

2 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 198, 285-286, 305-306, 320.

anti-religious thought could occasionally be persecuted, not only out of political ends, but out of an occasional spirit of intolerance. Furthermore, he had great difficulty with Plato's Republic, as much as he admired the mind of the man. Plato's ideal state, Bury asserted, instituted a religion and meant that "all freedom of discussion was excluded under the cast-iron system which he conceived." In his discussion of the results of the freedom afforded by the Athenian polis, Bury included Plato among those who contributed to progress, but one feels this is reluctant recognition to a man Bury does not quite know where to place.¹

If Plato bothered Bury, as he has done many other men of Bury's persuasion, Rousseau positively scared him, as Rousseau has done to countless followers and predecessors of Bury. The Genevan is compared with the least tolerant Reformation figure and his ideal state, argued Bury, would be "little better than a theocracy." The problem with Rousseau is that he imposes "indispensable beliefs" and therefore "denies the principle of toleration."² Both Plato and Rousseau

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 121-124.

2 - Ibid., p. 97. In his almost Burkian fashion, Bury also denounced many of the aspects of the French Revolution (pp. 87-92). He especially deplored the idea of granting toleration, instead of assuming it existed as a principle prior to the establishment of authority. Rationalist cults and religions were considered as evil as Christian ones and Bury censured the Revolution for turning reason into a dogma of faith: "Never was the name of reason more grievously abused than by those who believed they were inaugurating its reign."

might be seen as necessary high points in the history of reason, yet, arguing quite consistently, that was not enough for Bury: they must not threaten the higher categories of liberty and toleration.

As often happens when a historian is presenting a case rather than writing history, there was a certain journalistic flair in Bury's personal writings on the modern period. He occasionally became a whig, a presentist, and tended to give excessive historical significance to contemporary events whose importance could not yet be known. This occurred most often when he was writing about the Church and he uncovered his fears and his hopes when doing so. Bury viewed with alarm, and no doubt overly seriously, "the efforts of the Catholic Church in the years following the Council to overthrow the French Republic and to rupture the new German Empire..." In his discussion of the Modernist and Monist movements, Bury's perspective was again distorted. His instincts were cautious enough to use the qualifying phrase that "some think" Modernism is the greatest internal crisis in the Church since the thirteenth century. He admired Modernism for its historical sense, was clearly in favor of its tendencies, and regretted that Pius X took action against it. Monism was being organized even closer to the time Bury was writing and he felt it expressed the new tendencies of the age. It was one of the many scientific movements growing up at the time, but Bury made much of it, especially emphasizing its sharp distinction between science and religion. He felt in 1913 that the movement would have great influence in

propagating rationalist thought.¹ It was never mentioned again in any context.

Intellectually, Bury was against all religion, and when he criticized Christianity he noted he was doing so as a rationalist. In the last decade of his life he summed up the rationalist position:

In the eyes of Rationalists, of course, Christianity, being simply a social product at a particular stage of human development, had, like all social conceptions and institutions, bad as well as good effects. In emphasizing or stigmatizing the evils caused by Christian Theology and the influence of the Church, the purpose of the Rationalist is to show that, judged by its fruits, Christianity is not justified in its pretensions to a privileged position as a phenomena of other than human origin. For the happiness which it has brought to many hearts, as for the untold sufferings which it has inflicted upon others, man, and man alone, is responsible.²

Pascal's epigram on Cleopatra's nose was adopted by Bury in order to introduce one of his most controversial ideas on the nature of history. Another of Pascal's propositions, that on the nature of belief, was attacked by the rationalist. Pascal had stated that if there is any chance, however small, that Christianity is true, it is common sense to adopt it in order to

1 - Ibid., pp. 168, 159, 182-184.

2 - Bury, J.B., "The Influence of Christianity on Roman Criminal Law," op. cit., p. 24. Bury also made it clear that he disliked the idea that socially religion was a good opiate for the people and ought to be accepted on grounds of utility.

ensure one's redemption. Bury called this "playing for safety" and argued that it is just as safe to be anything else. He found this kind of thinking to be "useless, because the only way of being safe would consist in holding a number of mutually exclusive beliefs at the same time."¹

Thus, Bury stood uncompromisingly against orthodox religious belief and suppression of any sort, religious or secular. He especially blamed religion, the Catholic Church in particular, for acts which violated all his principles. It should be noted, not to over-balance the picture, that even in his more personal writings, as when speaking of the organization of the Church,² Bury could give the Church its due; when not being totally vituperative, he rendered unto Innocent what was rightfully his. In addition, we must always keep in view that the peculiar division of Bury's mind--the sharp distinction he made between himself as historian and as an individual--holds throughout all of his comments. He was unusual in that the two lines, though running parallel throughout his lifetime, rarely, if ever, met. In the course of his prodigious historical researches--on Greece, Rome, Byzantium, the Middle Ages and others--Bury had many occasions to write about the Church and never descended to the level of Hyde Park, as is almost the case in A History of Freedom of Thought. When Bury was a

1 - Bury, J.B., "Playing for Safety," R.P.A. Annual and Ethical Review, London: Watts and Company, 1920, pp. 18-19.

2 - Bury, J.B., "The Success of Christianity," op. cit., p. 5.

historian, he pleaded no special cases; when he did plead a case, he made it clear, and then did so with all his power. This quality of honesty contributed to the lasting property of some of his historical work and to the great praise he received as a historian and man of knowledge from those who read and knew him.

Bury was not content to be a mere historical expositor but felt it incumbent to go into the realm of philosophy and justify his belief in reason and freedom of thought. For Bury, thought was not free unless there was the prior condition of freedom of speech. He stated that man could only conceal his thoughts with the utmost difficulty, especially if he differed radically from the society in which he lived. Thus, rather than go about the business of concealing their thoughts, some men will generally stop thinking in order to avoid difficulty: "freedom of thought, in any valuable sense, includes freedom of speech."¹

Bury did not try to justify his belief in freedom of thought on the basis of some abstract idea, but rather, following Mill and nineteenth century liberalism, on the basis of utility. He argued, in essence, that a society is better off when freedom of thought exists than when it does not. Thus, "altar and throne formed a sinister conspiracy against the progress of humanity" because in part they followed a policy of suppressing freedom, feeling

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., p. 1.

as they did that they were protecting society.

The argument that a man could not help holding his private beliefs, since he did not will that he should hold them but rather had them as a matter of conviction, is negated. On this basis Bury found that coercion could be justified; he followed the example of Mill throughout and went through Mill's argument before going into his own.¹

For Bury, "to advance knowledge and to correct errors, unrestricted freedom of discussion is required." If humanity is to progress the one absolute condition is freedom of thought and speech. Furthermore, Bury stated that a temporary violation of this principle in the interests of another kind of utility is unwarranted; the "permanent utility" of freedom is more important than any temporary advantage to be gained by abusing it. He recognized that the whole weight of his argument was based on the assumption that the progress of humanity, "its intellectual and moral development, is a reality and is valuable." To arrest a man merely for writing or preaching against existing beliefs is tyranny; as long as one acts within the law one has a right to do whatever one likes. Once liberty and progress are recognized as wedded, the utility of liberty is no longer regarded as just an expedient but "passes...into the sphere of higher expediency which we call justice."²

Thus, Bury justified his belief in freedom in the

1 - Ibid., pp. 186-191.

2 - Ibid., pp. 191-195.

idea that freedom is better for society than coercion. This justification had that same nineteenth century quality about it that most of his writing on the subject had and, harking back to Bentham and Mill, utility was still the principle on which social justice is founded. Freedom is valuable because absolute freedom allows a society to adopt new positions to meet changing circumstances. Even wrong opinions are more valuable than any measure of coercion.

This was written in 1912, in the days which Bury later called "the days before the Flood." Taking up the subject again just before the end of the World War, Bury was forced to modify his position. In the days before the catastrophe, Bury wrote that the struggle between reason and authority "has ended in what appears now to be a decisive and permanent victory for liberty." He saw the progress of liberty as an almost inevitable thing and in questioning whether this progress would be arrested he considered it "improbable," and only used the following limiting clause: "(apart from a catastrophe sweeping away European culture)."¹ Few, if any, saw the approach of a new "Flood" and Bury cannot be blamed for any lack of foresight. But the War did cause Bury, as it did many others, to mitigate his position. He was no longer in the nineteenth century; Mill and Bentham were no longer applicable.

In writing on "Freedom of Speech and the Censorship" in 1918, Bury noted the problems of the War in

1 - Ibid., pp. 198-199.

connection with the censorship policies of the British government. He asked whether or not his earlier position must be modified, recognizing, as all must do, that the "old Liberalism," no longer holds true in complex modern society, that there is now a place for government to act positively as well as negatively--"probably no political thinker would now accept it [The old Liberalism] as a true theory of the functions of the state."

Bury noted that the old argument of social utility assumed that truth emerged through argument and not through the force of arms. Thus, were the Alliance and Entente fighting a war of words, it would not be reasonable for any government to attempt suppression. But, because this is a war of arms, the conditions by which freedom of speech can be of utmost utility no longer exist. He surmised that it "may... be argued" that the conditions are so changed as to make the old principle no longer true.

This argument did not satisfy Bury, for he would not feel himself quite that easily and recognized that he was putting one utility against another. Nonetheless, he did reluctantly justify the idea that censorship is necessary under the new conditions: a "truer answer" to the problem, he stated, "is that every social principle is subject to the general limiting rule that it must not endanger its own existence." If this is applied to the situation of the War, which he saw as a "defence of freedom against tyranny," English society had a right to defend freedom by temporarily restricting it because of the new conditions that violence is the only defense: "it must

transgress its principle in order to save it. The principle ceases to be valid at the point at which its operation would be suicidal."¹

Thus, Bury felt his earlier position was not compromised by allowing a degree of censorship in the War. It is interesting that Bury did not attempt to contradict himself in this difficult and disagreeable situation--he did not pit one sort of utility against another. What he did was to add a new principle to Mill, that freedom is limited in that it "must not frustrate or destroy" itself. Of course, in many ways, Bury begged the question, for although he stated that the War was one of those situations in which the higher principle was operative, he did not in general define the conditions in which this new limitation would always operate. Perhaps he was pleading a special case; and it is probably more significant that he viewed the War as another of the battles between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, and this may account for his seeing the necessity of a limited censorship.

Bury's rationalism, tied in as it was with his idea of progress, was not of the same kind of dogmatic quality that one sees in the works of true believers. As noted previously, he never used his histories to plead a special case and, though he was especially angry at the Church, he was indiscriminate in his condemnation of all intolerance. Furthermore, and most significantly, his belief in the power of reason

1 - Bury, J.B., "Freedom of Speech and the Censorship," R.P.A. Annual and Ethical Review, London: Watts and Company, 1919.

and a continuation of progress, became an admitted faith and not a dogmatic truth.¹ He was too aware of his own assumptions to make them into absolute truth; he was too much the sceptic to believe he had found the answer to the riddle of the universe. His attitude toward the use of reason remained constant, however, throughout his lifetime. Gilbert Murray related that in speaking to Bury about the rise of asceticism and religious fervor in Greece between Plato and the Neo-Platonists, Bury replied: "It is not a rise, it is a fall or failure of something, a sort of failure of nerve."² And thus Murray acquired a famous title. Religion was to Bury "a...failure of nerve." It meant the rejection of man's highest qualities, the substitution of an easy answer for the agony of living with difficult questions; it was also the negation of one's value as an individual and the recognition of the efficacy of force over freedom. Thus his contempt for the Church, coercive states, and for Pascal whom he felt was unwilling to face the real problem in "playing for safety." For Bury, "there is nothing for it but to trust the light of our reason. Its candle power may be low, but it is the only light we have."³

1 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 102, 351-352; Gibbon, Decline and Fall, op. cit., pp. xxxviii-xxxix; see below pp. 206-208.

2 - Murray, Gilbert, Four Stages of Greek Religion, New York: Columbia University Press, 1912, pp. 7-8; Baynes, Norman, Byzantine Studies and Other Essays, London: The Athlone Press, 1955, p. 7.

3 - Bury, J.B., "Playing for Safety," op. cit., p. 19.

Education and Women's Rights

As an educator and an ardent rationalist, Bury was naturally concerned with the nature and quality of education in England. In A History of Freedom of Thought he closed with a plea for educational reform--the kind of reform which would make the process of educating the young a less authoritative one. He wanted the young to be taught to question authority and to cherish freedom of opinion: "It should be part of education to explain to children, as soon as they are old enough to understand, when it is reasonable, and when it is not, to accept what they are told, on authority." While discussing whether Christianity would survive the First World War, Bury made much the same point: Christianity will undoubtedly survive, and "reason cannot help to enter into her own" until there is a reform of the educational system--until men "are taught in childhood enough...to see that history is not the dossier of an incompetent Providence," but a record of progress. Bury even called for a governmental reform of the system.¹

Yet, strangely enough, Bury did not do much to reform education at Dublin and Cambridge. In spite of his enthusiastic beliefs, and in spite of his having been in an excellent position in both universities to affect some sort of change in general policy, he counted for little in the institutions in which he spent all of his adult life.

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 201-202; Bury, J.B., "Will Orthodox Christianity Survive the World War?", op. cit., pp. 26-27.

This odd situation can probably be ascribed to a distaste for the active life and not to weakness of belief. He regarded himself as a researcher, knew he was not an exciting lecturer, and did not like to take part in academic hassles. Thus, whether rightly or wrongly, he rarely involved himself in any of the more burning issues of the day; when he did involve himself, it was generally in the form of an article or a public statement and not in a formal academic meeting.

This predisposition to disregard the everyday affairs of the universities was discussed by those who knew him well. Bury rarely, if ever, sought out any pupils; he was generally interested in those who were technically equipped and had a great desire to study in his field, but that was all. Indeed, Bury disliked lecturing, which is possibly the reason he repeated many of his lectures year after year. During Bury's tenure at Cambridge there even grew the saying "doing a Bury." This was used when someone copied Bury's habit of scheduling a lecture at the time of a college meeting, then having to cancel the lecture; never noted at King's for his interest in college affairs, Bury could generally be found in the library at the time of meetings. As at Trinity, Bury was interested at King's in the elections of fellows, nothing more.¹

1 - Runciman, Hon. Sir Steven, personal interview, London, 30 April 1963, with the author; Adcock, Prof. Sir Frank, personal interview, Cambridge, 28 March 1963, with the author; Morris, Christopher, personal interview, Cambridge, 30 March 1963, with the author.

Both at Trinity and at King's, Bury was never a member of the Council, the small governing group of the colleges. He had a profound distaste for committee work and took no part in the administrative work at Dublin or Cambridge.¹ Thus, Bury was never a part of the academic establishment, in spite of his high position at both universities. He was a retiring man who did historical research and passionately believed in freedom of thought. The implementation of his beliefs he left mainly to others; he looked upon himself as a true "clerk."

The one issue which Bury could not ignore at Cambridge was the composition of the Historical Tripos. It is related that, along with the elections to fellowships, Bury's interest was sparked in this area and because of his great knowledge he was an excellent and conscientious examiner. The nature of the Tripos would unquestionably be a cause of concern, uniting as it did his interest in education and history.

The History Tripos and the serious study of history at Cambridge are not rooted in the ancient history of the University. Until Sir James Stephen became Regius Professor of Modern History in 1849, the Professorship itself was little more than a sinecure and Bury was the first man to obtain the Professorship by sole virtue of his historical work.² The History Tripos

1 - Bury, J.B., History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., pp. xxviii-xxx; Baynes, N.H., A Bibliography of the Works of J.B. Bury, with a Memoir, op. cit., p. 51.

2 - See above, pp. 2-3. For a general history of the Tripos, the disputes and solutions, see McLachlan, Jean O., "The Origin and Early Develop-

only dates as far back as 1873, and it can be said that history was not a professional study at Cambridge until about the time that Lord Acton became Regius Professor. This was not only due to Acton, but to a number of serious scholars generally at King's and Trinity Colleges. Before this, history was a study taken up by those incompetent or just too lazy to bother with traditional classical studies. Thus, Bury entered King's and took up the mantle of Regius Professor at a time when indeed history was "emancipating itself" from other disciplines and was becoming a "science."

From the recognition that it was desirable to have a separate Historical Tripos in 1873 and its establishment in 1875, there was a continued controversy among Cambridge historians about its composition and requirements. Reforms were made in 1885 and 1897, but the results were still regarded as unsatisfactory and another change was made in 1909, the only one during Bury's tenure. The reform of 1897 had its main effect in dividing the Tripos into two parts in order to make it possible for someone to take Honours in two history subjects. It was recognized that the problem of what should be included in each of the parts was essentially left unresolved after a long controversy. Maitland was particularly unhappy about the solution, calling it a "variety show" program, because of the haphazard and disunited form which it eventually took. After arguments carried on between Acton, Browning,

ment of the Cambridge Historical Tripos,"
Cambridge Historical Journal, vol. IX (1947),
pp. 78-106.

Cunningham, Tanner, Gwatkin and others the result was a hodgepodge which admittedly satisfied no one. The first part included eight papers, with an Essay, General European History: Medieval, English Constitutional History to 1485 and a Special Subject of two papers compulsory. The second part made an Essay, English Constitutional History after 1485 and General European History: Modern compulsory, with a choice of three other papers. Maitland called it "much too English, much too unhistorical, and much too miscellaneous." In general, the first part was weighted to a knowledge of facts and the second to political theory, political economy and the history of ideas in their non-compulsory topics.¹

It was clear that this compromise of a compromise had to be revised and the reform of 1909 was partly Bury's accomplishment, although he was dissatisfied with the final result. The defects of the 1897 reform were widely recognized, apart from the difficulty of administration. In particular the History Board noted that as it stood the student had to choose, at the beginning of his first term when he had little knowledge of history, between Ancient History and Comparative Politics, Social History and Political Economy, and between five Special Subjects of which he had to choose one. In addition the subjects were so disparate that it was recognized the student could not be expected to do all the work required, and that the first part of the Tripos had no "theoretical subject," meaning its content was totally factual and not interpretive

1 - McLachlan, op. cit., pp. 92-95.

in any way.¹

The result, the new Tripos requirements from 1909 to 1934, cured some of these defects. The English history topics, (first four, and then later cut to three) all compulsory, were all put into Part I, so that the reading for one would supplement the reading for the other. Medieval history and an essay were still required and the student was given a choice of political science or Ancient History among only six papers. The second part now had five papers, an essay, modern European history, and two papers on a Special Subject being required; the choice was between Political Science, Political Economy and International Law. It should be noted that the only "theoretical" subject in Part I was the non-required Political Science.

In accord with Bury's ideas on the usefulness of the past, he was most interested in giving great importance to modern history. In the discussions on the Tripos he tried to include more modern history in Part II. His first proposal was to make modern history the subject of two of the five papers; when this was defeated, Bury attempted to have the one modern subject count twice that of any other: this, too, was defeated.² Bury was also interested in confining the Special Subjects to Part II and no doubt argued for it; but it is difficult to determine what

1 - Ibid., pp. 96-97.

2 - Temperley, op. cit., p. xxii, note.

part he played in getting it passed.¹ Bury did not take part in all the public discussions.²

One discussion in which Bury did participate and which showed his great interest in the educational reform going on at the time was that of 13 May 1909, when the new regulations regarding the Tripos were approved. It is here that we have the clearest picture of Bury's attitude to the type of education current at Cambridge in his day. In the discussion, Bury immediately signified his opposition to the new Tripos by regretting that he was unable, as a member of the History Board, to sign the report,³ in spite of the fact that he agreed "very strongly" that a Tripos reform was needed. He admitted also that he approved of parts of the new Tripos, citing in particular the idea of having special subjects only in the second part. Nevertheless, his disapproval included several features of the new plan.

In the first place, he thought that what he could only describe as the boom in English History was very unfortunate. They would notice that in the First Part there were four papers in English History.

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- 1 - See Temperley, op. cit., pp. xxx-xxx1, note. McLachlan goes too far in saying (p. 96) that Temperley "directly attributes this reform to Bury."
 - 2 - For instance, Bury did not participate in a discussion of the subject on 7 May 1908 in the Senate House. Historical Tripos Report, 1908.
 - 3 - The new regulations were issued on 4 April 1909 and published in the Cambridge University Reporter of 4 May 1909, pp. 826-827. It was clear then that Bury was opposed: his name is not among those who signed. The discussion in which he did participate was held on 13 May 1909, presumably a meeting of the University Senate to

One of these, of course, was an alternative paper, but it was the paper of a selected period of English History which would certainly be taken by most historians. Mr. Glover had already explained that it was the line of least resistance, and, as a matter of fact, that was contemplated by the framers of the Report, because at the beginning of the preamble the solid blocks of English papers was emphatically dwelt upon as one of the new features in the scheme which would tend to lighten the burden hitherto imposed upon the memory of the candidates. So it was clear that the special selected period of English History lay in the line of least resistance, and practically all of the candidates would take the four English subjects. If they looked at the Tripos as a whole, they would find that there are nine subjects which every student had to take. He omitted the Essays because they were not prepared work. Every student had to take six of these nine subjects in the First Part and three in the Second Part. Of those nine subjects, four were English. He quite admitted that English History should occupy a large place in the Tripos, much larger than it should occupy as a subject at, say, a foreign University, but he thought that proportion was excessive. In fact, he thought that it was positively indecent. It gave a certain note of insularity to the Tripos which was much to be deplored.

ratify the new regulations. The minutes of this discussion are in the Cambridge University Reporter of 26 May 1909 (vol. XXXIX), pp. 964-974.

In his opinion, two papers on English Constitutional History were unnecessary and a defect; English Constitutional History would be quite well dealt with in one paper. What they really wanted was the English Parliament, and one paper was sufficient for that. The early part of English Constitutional History, which constituted a considerable part of the work that had to be prepared for the first paper, was altogether obscure and dubious and difficult and only fit for advanced students. He felt emphatically that English Constitutional History should be cut down to one paper.¹

Thus, Bury attacked the fact that English Constitutional History should be broken at 1485 and, more significantly, that the subject should be given as the topic of two compulsory papers. Most importantly, what Bury was attacking was the provincialism of English history. It should be recalled that Bury was as strange an "English historian" as was Acton, for he never wrote a work on England; Bury was, like Acton, a European historian in both senses of the term--his contributions were to European history and his influence spanned the continent perhaps in even greater degree than his own island. Here he felt totally out of place; to him the history of the West was being subordinated to national history and he argued, in vain, for a more ecumenical point of view.²

1 - Cambridge University Reporter, 26 May 1909 (vol. XXXIX), pp. 966-967.

2 - Although Bury was defeated in 1909 in trying to lessen the importance of English history, he was vindicated in the Tripos reforms of 1934 and 1949. In both cases less English history was made compulsory and the student had a wider choice of topics.

The second great defect which he found in the schedule of subjects was in the treatment of Ancient History. There a question of fundamental principle arose. Was Ancient History to be treated in that Tripos as simply an alternative course, a course which those students who cared for Ancient History might take if they liked, or was it to be treated as an integral part of the Tripos, compulsory to all students, or partly compulsory to them all? In the existing Tripos as also in the scheme they were discussing, it was, as a whole, treated as an alternative subject. He did not think that was the right course. For his own part he thought that Ancient History had far more educational value than Medieval, and he should like to see it made part of the compulsory work....

He entirely agreed with what Mr. Glover had said upon the subject of Medieval History. There was no objection whatever to a student omitting Medieval History and passing from Ancient History, which was full of interest and ideas, to Modern History which was also full of interest and ideas, whereas Medieval History only became full of interest when they could go down much deeper than the ordinary student was ever likely to do.¹

Like the argument for compulsory Greek, Bury here disliked the disregard of Ancient History, especially if placed alongside the compulsory requirement of a medieval paper. In spite of the fact that his most important research was in the general area of medieval history, he recognized its unpopularity, its

1 - Cambridge University Reporter, 26 May 1909
(vol. XXXIX), p. 967.

plodding difficulty, and argued, in essence, against his own research and in favor of his own values. He could not bring himself to see the ancients ignored, especially at the expense of putting in its place the requirement of learning the Middle Ages. Both Ancient and modern history were, he felt, "full of interest and ideas," not only for himself but for the student. It is clear from the argument that Bury did not conceive of Tripos work turning out trained professional historians. Rather, he viewed it simply as giving the student some knowledge of the past to be used as he saw fit. Thus, Ancient and modern were most important, for they contained the most vital elements of the past. Medieval history was "full of interest" but perhaps not quite so full of ideas and could only be appreciated by a fully trained and hardworking investigator. Better to let the students, who were probably viewed as at best dilettantes who might turn into historians, have an understanding of the most significant aspects of the past than to let them get bogged down in an area in which they would lack interest until they went far beyond their Tripos preparation.

For Bury, then, the function of the Tripos was to teach the student something of the more important history and ideas of the West and not to give him an excess of English history--the Inaugural and other writings stated what he thought of the relation between history and patriotism--or to begin his training as a professional historian, something too difficult to accomplish in that way and in that period of time,

something which began after Tripos work and generally accomplished by oneself. Bury went in opposition to his colleagues on this report, the discussion of which began just a few years after his coming to Cambridge. There was no other major attempt at Tripos reform in his lifetime and Bury never again tried to make his presence felt. His idea of a universal education, like his pronounced rationalism, was obviously out of tune with the dominant mode of his time.

In addition to efforts to champion the retention of compulsory Greek at the universities, which he later privately renounced,¹ Bury also came out as an advocate of educational and political rights for women. Both causes were burning issues in the days of the Pankhurst sisters, and Bury, as a rationalist, would naturally be on the side of emancipation. In 1896, he sarcastically chided the university authorities, the dons and mostly the committeemen for their inability to make a decision regarding the issue of giving university degrees to women. He ascribed part of the problem to the nature of committees and the people who take the trouble to sit on them; never interested in such work himself, he had total contempt for the way committeemen went about their business. To Bury, "the typical member of a committee guides his conduct by two principles, compromise and delay, which he regards as of supreme importance and universal application." He is incapable of making a decision, and therefore prefers not to say yes or no to an issue, but eventually opts for a third alterna-

1 - See above, pp. 20-21.

tive which has not been asked for and which nobody wants.

Shuffling is his highest wisdom; and he flatters himself that he has really 'scored' when he has eluded the point at issue. He reminds one of the typical diplomatist of the last century (nor is the genus Ostermann yet extinct) who imagined that the secret of conducting the foreign affairs of a State lay in the art of petty dissimulations and trivial expedients.... Similar are the methods of the academical Authority who is always seeking for a via media which, really leading nowhere, ~~shall~~ appear to take you to some extremely desirable destination. Few fallacies of metaphor do so much harm as that of the via media.¹

Bury maintained that this principle was applied when women asked for degrees at Oxford and Dublin. At Oxford it was proposed to give women a Diploma and not a Degree. "Both," Bury remarked, "begin with the same letter; the resemblance hardly goes further." Bury also feared that this policy would "bring our Universities into discredit and ridicule." At his own Dublin the same course was taken after a delay of three years. The question of the admission of women exposed the foolishness of the universities and Bury feared for both.²

On the issue of political rights for women, Bury came out as early as 1892 in favor of total equality, although he only addressed his argument to the issue of women's suffrage. Bury stated that on rational

1 - Bury, J.B., "Women at the Doors of the Universities," Saturday Review, vol. LXXXI (1896), pp. 269-270.

2 - Ibid., p. 270.

grounds the issue is clear, the arguments on the basis of "justice and consistency" all favor women. The problem, as he saw it, was that justice and consistency seemed to be irrelevant in determining the issue.

"They are idols; that is why they are admired; if they were realities, they would be detestable." He noted, as he did in his historical works, that consistency can be a vice in both public affairs and scholarship; Gladstone is admired as a politician because "he has made inconsistency a fine art;" he is denigrated as a Himeric critic because "he has clung consistently to one idea from his youth up." As for justice, that too is sometimes not a viable policy and Bury used the instance of England's Egyptian policy as an illustration.¹ What Bury seemed to be trying to do was to turn the tables on all the old arguments to find something new which can be brought up to the front ranks in favor of women.²

1 - Bury, J.B., "The Insurrection of Women," Fortnightly Review, vol. LVIII (1892), pp. 651-655, passim.

2 - On the general question of justice, Bury was unwilling to fully condemn his own time because of its unjust treatment of women. His historical relativism came into play here with the argument that an age must be seen in its own light. "It is irrelevant to refuse Athens the name of democracy on the ground that she had a large slave population....A thousand years hence, our own age will be regarded as unjust because it has withheld political rights from women; but we may hope that the historians of that time, when they are drawing the portraits of our statesmen, will not refuse them the quality of justice on the ground that they sat in a Parliament in which women were not represented." "Gibbon's Autobiography," op. cit., p. 74.

Bury noted the arguments brought up by those against voting rights for women and demolished these as well. He admitted that "sex is eternally fixed by nature" and from this biological difference there might come a number of psychological differences, giving women a different kind of intellectual ability than men--the popular notion being that of intuitive as opposed to rational qualities. Nonetheless, he refused to sanction that this difference might disqualify women from participation in public affairs. Granting the premises, "the inference does not follow." In fact, Bury insisted that women ought to loudly proclaim this difference, instead of trying to negate it, for the distinction between the sexes is viewed as an argument in favor of women's rights and not against it.

Bury ridiculed the standard arguments that the structure of the family would be broken or that equal rights would make women into asexual creatures as merely symptoms of the heat of the discussion. Furthermore, he noted if women got their voting rights, nature would hardly abandon its traditional ways and that women will be very much the same after they step out of the polling booth as before. The notions that such a step will encourage license, abolition of marriage or the end of "true women" as opposed to just plain "women" is regarded as absurd. Bury even imagined a parallel case on the planet of Mars in which traditionally women have had rights and used these same arguments to carefully deny voting rights for men for their own good.¹

1 - Bury, J.B., "The Insurrection of Women," op. cit., pp. 655-662, passim.

Arguing more positively, Bury insisted the attitude that equal rights will tend to negate the distinctions between the sexes is silly. And this is the very point women should use; they should adopt the argument of those who want to deny them their rights, for

the eternal distinction of sex is the palladium of women's suffrage. The perpetual, insuperable, unassailable differences, organic and functional, biological and psychological, between men and women are just the safeguard which may enable men without scruple and apprehension to make women their political peers. Women may safely be relieved from political disabilities simply because they could never become men.¹

Sex is too strong a distinction to possibly become uniform. Moreover, argued Bury, to give the women the vote would "tend to develop new types within the range of the female sex. It would not make women like men, but it would shape new kinds of women." For new experiences would be open to women and these would help to create new womanly qualities.

Yes, the true argument in favour of women's suffrage is that we have the chance of developing a new type. No such chance has come to the world for nearly two thousand years. Christianity gradually shaped a new type of woman, and that was one of its most important effects.... But it seems quite possible that the introduction of political equality between the sexes might so modify the world and women's way of looking at the world as to develop a

1 - Ibid., p. 663.

new type of woman as different from that developed by Christianity as that type is from the pagan.

This, to Bury, was the vital element in the argument for women's suffrage and it was at the time an entirely new argument. Women would not lose their femininity, they would broaden it. And a "New type" of individual might come into the landscape. This would thus make the human experience much more valuable and this in itself is the crucial argument in favor of giving women the vote. Bury clearly recognized that when he was writing the issue was a highly emotional one and no standard argument could have any weight. But to argue in favor of the distinction of the sexes and that a new kind of woman might eventually appear in history might be valuable. The argument is an odd one, yet it nonetheless has a certain charm and even a certain kind of historical logic. For Bury was aware that the issue "mainly concerns posterity;" that it is one which will not really affect the following year, "but the next century."

But, of course, this is never recognised. When women's suffrage comes to be granted, as it assuredly will, it will be granted for some utterly trivial reason. History is always sending her wares and products into the marketplace under false names, otherwise they would never be sold. It is tempting to guess at her secrets, but it is not either dangerous or useful. One will probably guess wrong, but no diviner, even if he guesses right, is in the least likely to affect the course of events. Perhaps, however, it has been worth while suggesting that the question of women's suffrage may have another

aspect besides those which are usually regarded.¹

1 - Ibid., p. 666.

The War

In his discussion on the nature of censorship during World War One, Bury justified the repressive actions of the authorities on the grounds that the times were extraordinary and that the principle of freedom of speech is limited by the "higher principle" that it must not be allowed to defeat itself. The Great War caused him to modify his ideas on the basis of defending a principle of civilization. In addition, besides the ache which the War caused in Bury and all sensitive men, the War made Bury a pamphleteer for a very brief period.

Perhaps more than any other war in history, World War I caused an outbreak of literature on all sides in defense of the battle. The finest minds in England, France, Germany and the rest of Europe became locked in a war of words on the causation, the validity, and, in many cases, the necessity, of war. Historians who had never written as much as a word on the nineteenth century began to delve into documents and contemporary events in order to discover the clue to the mighty puzzle of the causation and morality of such a devastating battle. Among Bury's friends, Gilbert Murray wrote essay after essay on almost every historical and moral question pertaining to the War. In August and September 1914 two of the larger issues were whether it was correct for the democracies to fight alongside Czarist Russia--ought not England and France be defending Germany, their historical colleague in the "civilized" world and not backward and wicked Russia?--and did England have the right to declare war on Germany on August 4, 1914. Murray came to the conclusion that England was justified in

its declaration of war and put himself on the side of those who were happy to join with Russia.¹ J.M. Robertson, one of the guiding lights of rationalist thought, also wrote against Germany and placed the legions of the forces of light on the battlefields in France.² The list of those of Bury's colleagues and acquaintances who wrote on the War is so numerous as to include almost every academician in England. It was the overriding issue of the time.

Bury's one pamphlet was published in 1914,³ probably not more than a few months after the outbreak of war. His aim, like Murray's and Robertson's, was to present the case for a justification of the role England chose to play; he tried to prove that an attempt to represent Germany "as the champion of enlightenment against Russian 'Barbarism'" must fail. For Bury, the War was indeed at least partially one of civilizations; however, he disputed Germany's claim to be on the side of civilization.

This position, unlike his attitude toward the Church, was not one which had been stated before the War; Bury had not been harboring this sentiment for many years as he had his antagonism to the social aspects of Christianity. He had written on German history, both as a peripheral and central theme,

1 - Murray, Gilbert, Faith, War, and Policy, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917, pp. 18, 20-21.

2 - Robertson, J.M., Britain 'versus' Germany, London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., n.d.

3 - Bury, J.B., Germany and Slavonic Civilisation, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1914.

before 1914, but his work shows no bias whatever; indeed, he numbered among his friends many German historians and acknowledged their contributions to history and civilization. His admiration for Krumbacher was so great that it is better described as adulation. No, this position was the result of a rethinking of the situation in the light of the disgusting mess of the War. Moreover, the sentiments expressed in his pamphlet, which publicly gave his position in favor of England's actions in August 1914 and inevitably preconditioned his new attitude toward censorship during the War, were never repeated or revised. He early placed himself on the side of the angels; he was not an activist but felt he must give his position; he then went back to his own work for "civilization," his scholarship.

That Bury, like most Englishmen, acknowledged and was happy about German influence on English and continental thought before the War, did not mean that he felt England and Germany to be flowing together in the same part of Herder's "streams of culture." They may have been different tributaries into the same ocean, but he did admit, albeit only implicitly, an essential historic difference before 1914. In his lectures on the barbarian invasions, Bury noted in an aside that the ancient German "states" embodied the principle of "the sovranity of the folk," a principle he stated was still present in Europe. However, the old idea of the folk had something of a constitutional quality, he felt, but as the Germans spread throughout Europe, some disregarded this. Bury stated that the Lombards, Franks, and Visigoths went

from the old constitution to total centralization, leaving no political influence to the people, whereas the Anglo-Saxons--the German invaders of Britain--kept their old local institutions. This, he indicated, accounted for some of the modern differences.¹

Bury was also unhappy about some of the more patent nationalistic qualities evidenced by German historians.² Reviewing Gregorovius' Geschichte der Stadt Athen im Mittelalter in 1891, he commented:

There is one matter, however, on which before proceeding further, we will venture to enter a protest. We consider that the practice of intruding modern politics into discussions, where they are completely irrelevant, is emphatically to be deprecated. We do not underrate the importance for Germany of the war of 1870, nor are we out of sympathy with the natural elation of the Germans at their success, but we should like to remind them that there is a season to be jubilant and a season not to be jubilant. We would suggest to them that it is quite possible, without being traitors to their country, to forbear alluding to Metz and Sedan in a book concerning a different epoch of history and a different region of the world. We think we may venture to speak on behalf of non-France-German Europe and assure the countrymen of Gregorovius that we are all quite ready to believe,

1 - Bury, J.B., The Invasion of Europe by the Barbarians, op. cit., pp. 14, 290-291.

2 - Bury also took the Roumanians and Hungarians to task for this quality. See Bury, J.B., "The History of the Roumanians," Scottish Review, vol. XXIX (1897), pp. 30-32.

that 'Corinthus was a son of Zeus,' or that 'the Germans thrashed the French' or any other article of belief they may choose to propound, provided they will only spare us unreasonable iterations. One might almost imagine that there is a Bismarckian decree in force, or at least that some tyrannous pressure of public opinion prevails in Germany, forbidding the publication of any book that does not contain a reference, or at least an allusion, to the recent military exploits of which the Fatherland is so proud. We cannot congratulate Gregorovius on his ingenuity in satisfying this apparently imperative condition. The Goths attacking and mocking Athens, the city of the booklearned... suggest to him that the Germans, 'who used to be mocked as the nation of bookworms and philosophical dreamers,' recently struck the world dumb by great achievements in war. How far-fetched, how frigid! If Gregorovius felt bound in honour and fealty to drag in the eternal deleta est Carthago, we think he might have managed it less clumsily. French scholars, indeed, are sometimes as frigid, though we might hardly expect it. We remember that M. Lenormant, writing about the campaigns of Sargon eight hundred years before Christ, went out of his way to animadvert [sic] on the ingratitude shown by the French Chamber to M. Thiers.¹

Apart from these comments, which are really in the nature of historical exposition and criticism, Bury had nothing to say before the War. His pamphlet, Germany and Slavonic Civilisation, interrupted a profound silence, as the War did for most English historians, on the essential and contrasting qualities

1 - Bury, J.B., "Medieval Athens," op. cit., pp. 182-183.

of German culture and civilization. In the pamphlet, Bury took up the main issues of the day and tried to show, along with Murray and others, that Germany had no right to denounce Russia as barbaric or to denounce other countries for having relations with and cooperating with Russia, and "that certain specific features of German civilization in the political sphere are, in principle, as fundamentally opposed to ideas for which Frenchmen and Britons, Americans and Italians, would be ready to lay down their lives, as are the specific features of Russian autocracy."¹

In order to refute the charge that the War was "a conflict between Teutonic and Slavonic civilisation" as some German critics had stated, Bury first discussed the diplomatic relations of Russia and Prussia from 1772, thus demolishing the foundations of the argument that the conflict was rooted in the historical traditions of the two states. He noted the cooperation of the two powers from the partitions of Poland, through the Reinsurance Treaty and elements of "goodwill" during the Russo-Japanese War. The point was that, at minimum, during the whole nineteenth century until the dismissal of Bismarck "the relations of Prussia and Russia...were almost invariably relations of friendship and cooperation." Moreover, the issue which German apologists now brought up, that of "Moscovite barbarism," was simply never in the thoughts of Prussian statesmen. Bury stated that he

1 - Bury, J.B., Germany and Slavonic Civilisation, op. cit., p. 3.

was not criticizing German policy but merely pointing out that when it was convenient for Prussia to do so, she cooperated with Russia. "Her policy has been legitimately determined by her conception of her own interests." Moreover, Bury pointed out that Russia was in the process of a great "transformation" in the direction of political liberty, ridding itself of the bureaucratic system built up by Germany and which was the "great obstacle to reform in Russia." In this, the allies might aid Russia and it might be hoped that Russia's new "intimacy with France and England will help her in her path, away from the autocratic system in which Germany always sought to confine her, towards the political ideals of Western civilisation."¹

As for Germany's charge that Russia is outside the sphere of European culture, Bury quickly negated this as absurd, quoting German works in order to do so. If the opposition between the two countries is

1 - Ibid., pp. 10-11. Bury felt as early as 1896 that Russia was destined to play a great role in the twentieth century. R.H. Murray relates that when lecturing on the Time of Troubles Bury prophesied: "Gentlemen, Russia is rotten, politically rotten, to the core. The period of troubles brought anarchy to Russia for generations. What has happened in the past may well happen in the future in a land where to-day not a few of the aristocracy are immoral and ruined, where there is an underpaid and corrupt bureaucracy, and where there is no middle class. In the twentieth century there may be another period of troubles lasting quite as long as that of the seventeenth, and with even graver effects upon the destinies of the world." See Murray's memoir in History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., p. xxiv.

thus not in the areas of art and literature, then Bury noted the "alleged antipathy must therefore be sought in the political and social institutions and ideals." And here, Bury admitted of great differences between the two countries; indeed there are also great differences between the common ideals of England and France with Germany as with Russia. If Russia is outside of the mainstream of Europe on this level, Bury charged that Germany is also so different from England, France, Italy and the United States in its institutions as also to be on the other side of the fence, though a different side than Russia.

Having made the case for Germany's odd civilization, stating that it is different in kind than "that Western civilization of which ours is a variety," Bury listed two distinctions affecting the international situation:

1. One of the features which has characterized Western civilization since the dissolution of the Holy Alliance has been the growth of sympathy with the spirit of nationality and a prevailing tendency to recognize the right of small peoples to enjoy political independence.

Bury charged that Russia belonged in this category and that "Prussia has never shown any sympathy with the spirit of nationality, apart from the national union of Germany itself."

2. At the outbreak of the present war, Germany gave the world a practical lesson in political philosophy. The doctrine that treaties need not be observed when they are seriously inconvenient is a logical deduction from the principle that the plea of political or military necessity justifies any action

on the part of a strong power. Its application, in the invasion of Belgium in 1914, marks the progress of Prussian political thought since the days of Bismarck.

Germany is thus again opposed to the prevailing principles of the West and, for Bury, "it is difficult to see why it is more natural and preferable for England and France to co-operate with Germany rather than with Russia."¹

Thus, to Bury, if the issue of the alignments of the powers in the First World War was on the basis of where one stood in relation to European civilization, Germany had no claim to the allegiance of England and France. Indeed, he bent over backwards to prove that Russia's claim was perhaps more acceptable than that of Germany. Germany was an autocratic state, totally outside the traditions of liberty of England and France. It is interesting to note that the two countries of England and France are always coupled for Bury, to him they stood for one tradition of political and civil liberty. Germany, on the other hand, was a symbol of autocratic rule, of authority without limitations or responsibility. In 1914, Bury had greater hopes that Russia would live up to his rationalist ideal of freedom than would Germany. He recognized that Russia was in an unusually fluid situation and he hoped that the Western influences would prevail so that Russia would become a constitutional regime. In the end, Bury's argument, of course, hinges on a definition of what

1 - Bury, J.B., Germany and Slavonic Civilisation, op. cit., pp. 13-15.

is vital in European civilization. As we have seen, for Bury, freedom of thought and the spirit of liberty and equality were the keynotes in his opinion of the value of European civilization. In this regard, modern Germany failed to live up to his standard and, for all his admiration for its scholarship and people, until Germany did so, England and France were correct in defending what Bury considered to be the gains of modern history. Germany was simply on the side of the forces of regress.

**The Idea of Progress: The Dilemma of
the Twentieth Century Man**

It is with all of Bury's personal beliefs in mind that one must approach The Idea of Progress, for the often unstated assumptions throughout the work are the values of the Enlightenment. The Idea of Progress is unlike any other work by Bury--it neither resembles his History of Freedom of Thought nor is it like his purely historical works. The work lacks any polemical character--it does not shout at the reader and does not urge him to give up his mythical or backward beliefs. Indeed, the scholarship is impeccable, the narrative is straightforward; almost half a century after publication, it is still a sound, standard secondary source.

However, for all its dispassion, the study is not a work of disinterested history to be compared to and bracketed with, for instance, Bury's histories of the later Roman Empire. It is more than this. It is the only work of Bury's which falls into both his personal and historical lives; it alone crosses over those lines which he kept apart so carefully and painfully throughout his lifetime. In The Idea of Progress Bury's personal and professional interests finally embrace. The work was his own kind of history as the story of liberty, though different from Croce's, or his own version of history as a process of continual liberation, though antagonistic to Acton. Here is where Bury--a man who defined himself at least partially in relation to history and not to any belief in providence--sought the ideas which made him what he was and which made mankind what it is. There is even the admission of a kind of religiosity at the end of the book. Like many significant

works,¹ it is antiseptically scholarly and intensely personal at the same time. Here is where Bury used the past in a different sense than he ever used it before, but in doing so he had too much reverence for the truth to misshape it for his own ends. Thus, The Idea of Progress is a kind of culmination of the man as historian in search of himself.

In The Idea of Progress, Bury is dealing really, though not quite fully explicitly, with the idea of social change and an interpretation of the dynamics of history. Oddly enough, although all history must consider the problem of change, Bury never handled it before this in quite so potent a fashion. A History of Freedom of Thought has a theory of change embodied within it, but no one would elevate the work to the level of pure history. Bury's other works handle the problem incidentally to the general narrative. In addition, The Idea of Progress is unusual in that, apart from A History of Freedom of Thought, there were no articles or any other hints that Bury was considering the larger subject. Progress is mentioned here and there in some of his earlier volumes, but no article ever handled the subject as even a peripheral matter. Bury lectured on the subject at Cambridge in the Michaelmas term of 1914, but afterwards never repeated the lectures. It is an isolated piece of his work, but its very isolation speaks of its significance and Bury's desire to go off and discover his own motivations as man and historian.

1 - Acton on the Council, Burckhardt on the Renaissance, and Croce on the history of the nineteenth century come to mind.

Bury's interest in progress and its significance in the modern world stemmed directly from his defense of freedom of thought. In his discussion of the advance of freedom and "the triumphs of reason in the nineteenth century," Bury admitted that the battle was not won simply by the power of logic over myth. New ideas grew up which tended to change the spirit of the times. "Now the idea of the progress of the human race must, I think, be held largely answerable for this change of attitude. It must, I think, be held to have operated powerfully as a solvent of theological beliefs."¹ Thus, progress was sometimes used to mean an interpretation of history and at other times used as a guide for judging certain ideas. The word is both normative and valiative and can be used both ways. Before the First World War it often meant both. Afterwards, it is difficult to know what certain commentators meant, for while one often talked of progress, its relativity in the realm of values was generally acknowledged.²

1 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 186-181.

2 - As instances of this problem between progress as a conception of the dynamics of history and progress as a value, see Ginsberg, Morris, The Idea of Progress: A Revaluation, Boston: Beacon Press, 1953, and Sampson, R.V., Progress in the Age of Reason, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956. Both acknowledge the relativity of the idea and speak in terms of finding the acceptability of a "rational ethic." If we agree on a "rational ethic" then progress becomes a "meaningful conception." While one sympathizes with the semantical and logical difficulties both men

Bury, ever candid in his assumptions, did not hesitate to define what he was speaking of when he used the term. He was an avowed rationalist, in his history as well as his home, and the idea of progress in the modern world meant a rational scheme. As early as 1900, in his discussion of Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Bury noted that the very ideas of decline and fall embodied "one of the chief data with which the philosophy of history has to reckon." For something must decline and fall in relation to some standard; what a Gibbon would call a decline, a Pio Nono will call a rise. Bury asked the question of whether such a standard existed, whether some ultimate judgment can be had in relation to such issues. In reply to his own question, however much he sympathized with Gibbon, he was forced to state: "Answers have been given since Gibbon's day, engaging to the intellect, but always making some demand on the faith--answers for which he would have the same smile as for Lee's Dogmatic Epistle."¹ Thus, for himself, progress was devoid of ultimate solution as a standard of value. Bury's beliefs were well known, but they were just that: beliefs with no ultimate metaphysical justification. In 1908, Bury again broached the subject, this time in discussing The

are trying to overcome, it should be noted that if we agree on an irrational ethic progress can still be a "meaningful conception." The vital word is not "rational" but "agree."

1 - Gibbon, Decline and Fall, op. cit., pp. xxviii-xxxiv.

Ancient Greek Historians. He stated that the modern world has dealt with an idea of progress in contrast to the ancients; indeed, it could hardly be avoided by a sensitive historian after the eighteenth century. But:

'Progress' of course implies a judgment of value, and is not scientific. It assumes a standard,--some end or ends, by relation to which we judge historical movements and declare that they mean progress.¹ We have no proof that absolute progress has been made, for we have no knowledge of an absolute end; and, therefore, scientifically we are not justified in speaking of the history of civilised man as progress; we can only be sure that it is a causal sequence of transformations.¹

In A History of Freedom of Thought, as we have seen, Bury was more outspoken in his discussion of progress as a valuative term: the "conservative instinct" of man is against the forces of progress, while all those who oppose authority and stand on the side of freedom are within the progressive scheme of things. This conservatism, blinded by reason, has operated throughout history and has continued "obstructing knowledge and progress."² It is clear in the work that Bury saw the struggle for freedom of thought as coincidentally a struggle for continued progress. This progress is not just an idea on the movement of history, but is based on these absolute standards which Bury used as a guide to attack the Church. Here he did not worry whether he was scientific

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., p. 256.

2 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., pp. 4, 1-13, passim.

or not and thus provided an invaluable guide to his beliefs. The Greeks were his heroes, the Middle Ages a time of darkness, an arrest of the progress of mankind.¹ Therefore, A History of Freedom of Thought is what The Idea of Progress is not: a frank discussion of how Bury thought mankind has progressed in terms of believing what is good and opposing that which is bad. Its very simplicity acts as a guide to Bury's innermost thoughts. As he himself stated: "freedom of thought is an axiom of human progress."²

In The Idea of Progress, Bury was not only more restrained, but on sounder philosophical footing in discussing progress as a regulative value. The idea of progress was taken to be one of these "ideas which bear on the mystery of life, such as Fate; Providence, or personal immortality." In brief, it is a metaphysical idea which cannot be decided on simple, utilitarian pragmatic grounds. Bury noted that in its purest form the idea simply means that civilization is headed in a direction which is desirable. And even if we agree on the conditions which we call progress, it is impossible to determine "that civilisation is

1 - Bury voiced similar, though modified and less ambitious, sentiments earlier. In speaking of Gibbon, he noted that the historical development, as seen by Gibbon, from the second century A.D. has been one of regress, the famous "triumph of barbarism and religion." Bury commented that although we knew much more than Gibbon the major point of the Decline and Fall is still true. Gibbon, Decline and Fall, op. cit., p. xxxviii. Bury also attacked Pío Nono as a foe of progress. History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, op. cit., p. 40.

2 - Bury, J.B., A History of Freedom of Thought, op. cit., p. 201.

moving in the right direction to realise this aim." We cannot reveal the future, however much we know about the past. True to his theory of contingency, Bury held that not only is progress an idea which is relative, but if all men of goodwill decided on what was progress, it would still be impossible to determine the future direction of mankind.

Thus, for Bury in the twentieth century, "the progress of humanity belongs to the same order of ideas as Providence or personal immortality. It is true or it is false, and like them it cannot be proved either true or false. Belief in it is an act of faith." Bury was undoubtedly quite willing to make that "act of faith" but his sceptical mental mechanism remained at work to know that one's acts of faith cannot, like Calvin's, be accorded the dignity of their imposition on all mankind.

Despite the fact that Bury classified the idea as one belonging to Spencer's category of the Unknowable, he did logically distinguish it from faith in any kind of providence, another belief which is indeed unknowable. The assumptions of a belief in progress, Bury's assumptions, he took to be totally incompatible with any belief in providence, and this is why he could view progress and any theological authority as at odds in the battle for the minds of humanity. Progress, he stated, implied a belief "based on an interpretation of history" that man was advancing from some lower to a higher state and doing so of his own free will. Should an "external will" be involved "there would be no guarantee of its continuance and its issue," and the idea of progress would lapse into the idea of

providence. Progress is thus the progress of man through his own efforts; should one believe that progress is indicated by some external deity then one no longer feels it has been the accomplishment of man; one must feel that it not only has a past resulting in a present but a present with an indefinite future. One cannot be Brooks Adams and believe in progress.¹

That the idea of progress is one of faith and not of fact is in accord with Bury's attitude on the philosophy of history. For among its other implications, any idea of progress, involving as it does "an interpretation of history," embodies a full-fledged philosophy of history. We have seen that at the time Bury published on the idea of progress, he was enchanted with the idea of contingency and entirely disregarded

1 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 1-7. That progress and providence are incompatible beliefs, while sustained by many contemporary thinkers (see, for instance, Becker, Carl, "Progress," Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, ed. Edwin R. Seligman, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935, vol. XII, pp. 495-499) has been challenged as well. Christopher Dawson, who views the culture of Western Europe as the product of the two forces of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the scientific tradition, sees the idea of progress and a continued belief in the vitality of the Christian tradition as so intertwined that if one is disregarded the other must be as well. He views religion as the continued dynamic in the social life, "and the vital changes in civilization are always linked with changes in religious beliefs and ideals." He concludes: "Either Europe must abandon the Christian tradition and with it the faith in progress and humanity, or it must return consciously to the religious foundation on which these ideas are based." Dawson, Christopher, Progress and Religion, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1933, pp. 246, 256.

the possibility of finding Newtonian laws as the key to the past. So, too, those whom he acknowledged as having made great contributions to the dissemination of the idea of progress are lamented in the fact that the search for a law was totally unsuccessful. The eighteenth century, Bury stated, as much as they believed and in many senses originated the idea of progress did not find and, like Condorcet, often did not seek for law. However, the nineteenth century raised a "mere hypothesis based on a very insufficient induction...to the rank of a scientific hypothesis" in their attempts to discover a law. The word "science" had been Bury's bête-noire in his attempts to publicize his attitude on history, but here there is no doubt of the contempt he had for the attempts of nineteenth century ideologists of progress to formulate a law. Saint-Simon is ridiculed, and although Bury acknowledged that Comte did more than any one to establish the idea as an assumption of the popular mind, he noted that "he failed himself as a diviner.... For the comprehension of history we have perhaps gained as little from Comte's positive laws as from Hegel's metaphysical categories."¹ One is more interested in what Comte tells us about the nineteenth century than in what he tells us about the world.

Thus, for Bury, in spite of what he believed and history often believed, progress was still a "dogma"; he was never willing to go so far as to turn his own beliefs into the goals of mankind. If Comte was a

1 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 284, 301.

theologian of progress and positivism, Bury would admit their theological qualities, but he would not be a high priest of the one and he completely denied the other. Bury's interest in progress was intensely personal and real, yet in The Idea of Progress he never claimed to have discovered the formula which revealed the secrets of the life of man. He believed in freedom of thought, liberty and tolerance and he would have liked to have believed in the idea of progress, but could not do so in the sense that Condorcet did. Bury was a product of the late nineteenth century and Condorcet a product of the late eighteenth--in between there lay the difference of what Bury called "the historical point of view" of the nineteenth century. If Condorcet would be an apostle, Bury would be his chronicler and though he was as sympathetic to the Condorcets, the Comtes, the Spencers as was any man, he would just remain the chronicler. And though he was personally in tune with the idea of progress he could not pretend he had alchemistically found the formula to unlock the secrets of the universe. One can imagine that were Bury to have lived one century before he did, he would have been a chapter in someone else's The Idea of Progress. But in the early twentieth century he had to acknowledge the idea, however appealing, as a "faith" and a "dogma" and remain true to himself by recording its history and not contributing to its theology.

Nevertheless, in spite of his reservations, Bury was no doubt inspired by a certain extra-historical motive. As we have seen, Bury felt the history of the idea of progress produced significant and valuable

results in the modern world in that it was a good operative principle in many cases. At the time he was writing, of course, the idea was being attacked. 1920 was not the most optimistic of years and the Great War did not contribute to the furtherance of any belief in progress. Indeed, Bury stopped his survey of the idea at about 1880 and one can easily believe that it was not only because, as a historian, he felt he could not go beyond that date methodologically, but because he might have feared personally going further in time and discovering a new trend. But Bury was not defending the idea against the forces of absurdity, unreason and future Spenglers as much as he was recording. He was not preaching a myopic happiness. If anything, the only area of life he did challenge was that of Christian theology, attacking the Syllabus and the incompatibility of progress and providence, defending modern history's belief in progress and its leavetaking of the assumptions of the medieval world. That this was necessary was brought out by the coincidence that the Romanes Lecture at Oxford in 1920 was given by the Very Rev. W.R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's and popular essayist and lecturer. This lecture was also entitled The Idea of Progress and is in direct contrast with Bury's attitudes.

Inge agreed with Bury on the central position of the idea of progress as the "working faith of the West" for the last century and a half. He was also a modern in that he did not try to glorify the Middle Ages or return to it; the modern period was frankly

preferred. However, to Inge, progress was a "superstition" which had hurt the West as it "vitiating our history, our political science, our philosophy, and our religion." It did this by raising itself to the level of what Bury called a "scientific hypothesis," but while Bury would credit the idea, however unscientific, with contributing to the growth of the West, Inge was unhappy about its effects. For Inge, historians were blinded to regress as they continually made the facts fit the new scheme, political scientists felt they could see the future and this automatically became what is good, and in philosophy Christianity has been hurt. Most significantly for Inge, religious beliefs have been affected. Inge deplored the secularization of religion and the distortion done to Christianity by the belief in the idea of progress. To Inge, human nature does not change and the distinction between modern man and primitive man is not very great, if there is one at all. Modern man may have more knowledge and better institutions but real progress is measured in terms of human nature and on this level the species has not changed.

What Inge would have liked to have seen is the introduction of an "absolute standard of values" and Inge was not a secular sceptic like Bury, for he believed that there were such values to be had. Inge was a Platonist and believed that absolute standards of "Truth, Goodness and Beauty" were to be found. He felt that in the social world simplification and not further complexity might be called progress. But in the end Inge did not believe in progress except in a

vague spiritual sense and then not for humanity in general but for individuals. To him the idea of progress as it existed historically was a myth which disregarded certain central problems. He was not a Pope who would condemn it as a modern error but he would try to redefine it.¹ The atmosphere in which Bury was writing was still hostile with regard to the value of the modern secular spirit. If Bury's work was a debate with the Catholic Church, it was one with the Anglican as well.

The idea of progress did not only imply certain values but it was a historical fact as well. It was this combination which intrigued Bury, along with the coincidence that the idea embodied a full-blown attitude toward history. Most of the book is not concerned with progress as a value, but as an assumption which grew and was accepted in one form or another by many of the major thinkers of the modern world and was eventually popularized so that it became a major ingredient in the definition of the nineteenth century. Bury had hinted its importance as early as his Inaugural Lecture when he spoke of the significance of the idea of development in the nineteenth century and how it transformed the very idea of history.² Later, in 1908, he made the vital distinction between progress as a belief and progress as one of the important guideposts of modern man.

1 - Inge, W.R., "The Idea of Progress," in Diary of a Dean, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950, pp. 190-207, passim.

2 - Bury, J.B., "Inaugural Lecture," in Temperley, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

Fully admitting its relativity in the realm of values, Bury nonetheless refused to disregard it: "The idea of progress is, in the present age, an actual living force;..."¹ It is as a "living force" that Bury discussed it and traced its growth in The Idea of Progress.

Methodologically, Bury was dealing with something new when writing on the idea of progress. Previously, his works fall into many categories: narrative history, monographs, philosophy, thoughts on and histories of the philosophy of history and others. Here, however, he was also concerned with a subject which fell purely into the category of the history of ideas. The only full-scale work resembling this was A History of Freedom of Thought and the resemblance is so remote in scholarship and serious history as to be non-existent. The first consideration in a work of this nature was to be as familiar as possible with the relevant primary work concerning the subject. For this, few were better suited than Bury and, like Burckhardt, he steeped himself in the primary literature. However, the history of ideas was a tenuous field--the great difficulty throughout the work seemed to be the establishment of the criteria for determining when one idea was ascendant and another in decline. In order to overcome this problem, Bury took another leaf from Burckhardt's works and spoke of "intellectual climates," "mental atmospheres," and "intellectual environments." "Ideas," he stated, "have their

1 - Bury, J.B., The Ancient Greek Historians, op. cit., p. 257.

intellectual climates, and I propose to show...that the intellectual climates of classical antiquity and the ensuing ages [until the sixteenth century] were not propitious to the birth of the doctrine of Progress."¹

Thus; what Bury did was to show why there was no idea of progress before the sixteenth century and how it grew after the transition from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth. It was the growth of Cartesianism, the end of authority in determining the destiny of science and philosophy, a new secular spirit, and, above all, the recognition that future ages might be better than one's own that resulted in the growth and acceptance of the idea. Progress is continually linked to the growth of rationalism, but here, unlike his other work on the subject, Bury was careful to maintain the distinction between historical fact and personal values. A great wealth of literature was cited and, amid all his sympathy for the idea, he was the careful historian throughout; he was writing a secondary source and not a rationalist polemic.

Bury distinguished three stages in the growth of progress. Until the French Revolution he saw it as being accepted "rather casually; it was taken for granted and received no searching examination either from philosophers or from historians." The nineteenth century recognized its significance and tried to find a law, Comte being the most important advocate. However, up to that time, about the middle of the century,

1 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., p. 7.

it "was not yet universally accepted as obviously true." Darwin marked the beginning of the third stage; its acceptance in the popular mind as one of the conditions of the universe.¹ Bury did not go much further and did not discuss the fourth stage or what has been commonly accepted as the end of the belief in progress, dated somewhere from 1900-1914.²

That which Bury did point out, and here he was something of a pioneer, was that the growth and acceptance of the idea of progress was one of the major characteristics of European civilization.³

1 - Ibid., pp. 334-335.

2 - Hayes, Carlton J.H., A Generation of Materialism, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941, pp. 328-330; Hughes, op. cit., pp. 375-376, 421, 426.

3 - Bury's work, one of the first and certainly the most comprehensive up to that time to point out the significance of the idea, has been challenged, by such people as Dawson and Inge, and revised, but is still one of the major general sources on the subject. Unlike A History of Freedom of Thought it has not become a period piece. Among the major works Carl Becker's The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers, New Haven: Yale University Press, n.d., actually supports Bury in his analysis of the Enlightenment and in his assertion of a "faith" in progress. Charles Frankel's The Faith of Reason, New York: King's Crown Press, 1949, also points out that reason was a "metaphysical" truth but considerably broadens the scope of the subject in the eighteenth century. Henry Vyverberg's Historical Pessimism in the French Enlightenment, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958, acts as an antidote in showing that decadence and flux were also serious ideas in the Enlightenment. Nonetheless, even Vyverberg admits (pp. 230-231) that the French Enlightenment retained its belief in progress.

Also, however Hegelian he was in methodology, his recording of the effects of the idea affirmed a belief in the ability of ideas to change the world. At a time when the social sciences were becoming a new vogue in historical investigation and when sociology itself was becoming a major discipline, Bury stated that the behavior of men was as much affected by the intellectual milieu in which they lived as it was by more basic environmental factors.

Thus, The Idea of Progress combined many separate strands in Bury's life--the personal, the historical, even the metaphysical. While Bury made other enduring historical contributions, this is the work by which he was defining modern man as well as himself. He was a child of the Victorian period who, despite his unusual temperament which saw him turn into a recluse before he had spent many years at Cambridge, became not only more learned but in many cases more cosmopolitan than any English professional historian of his day. He was at home in many disciplines; within the field of history he can be claimed by many specialties. In spite of the War, or perhaps because of it, Bury did not personally belong to the post-war period. There was a solidity, a point of view which belonged to the pre-1914 era. Perhaps realizing this, Bury did not take part in the post-war ideological battles; even when he talked of contingency in history, he did not carry the idea to its end, but retreated to causation. To him, progress was a vital idea, shattered though it may have been by contemporary events.

Progress was also related to Bury's interest in the uses of the past, an issue he contended with to his own obvious dissatisfaction from the time of the Inaugural

Lecture. He recognized that among the unstated assumptions of the idea was an unspoken "ethical principle." The principle was defined as "consideration for posterity," and it must be remembered that from 1903 he was asking the question of what he, as a historian, contributed to the welfare of present and future humanity. In addition, of course, progress "has been connected with the growth of modern science, with the growth of rationalism, and with the struggle for political and religious liberty."¹ For Bury, the rationalist, the idea of progress was the key in the struggle against the pernicious influences of a belief in providence, a reliance on authority instead of reason, and it was the major idea in the "slow but steady reinstatement of the kingdom of this world." For all this, it deserved an important place in the hearts of all men of reason.

Yet, however vital Bury may have considered progress to have been, it was not an illusion in the sense that the originators of the idea built up their own "heavenly city," or, if it was, it was an illusion of which he was aware. He was never so blinded by his sympathy for the idea as to go about preaching it as gospel, or indeed, even to give it the dignity of being a part of the final truth. Those who founded the idea and made it a part of the world-view of the nineteenth century were described as "high-priests and incense-bearers" of rationalism and, though Bury preferred these priests to those representing the Christian tradition, they too are gospel singers.

1 - Bury, J.B., The Idea of Progress, op. cit., pp. 247-248.

The idea helped to break down many old assumptions, among them "the illusion of finality." However, stated Bury; even the idea which overcame this illusion probably must fall to it eventually. If progress took the place of providence, there is no reason to believe, like Comte and Hegel, that it is any more final than was its predecessor.

In other words, does not Progress itself suggest that its value as a doctrine is only relative, corresponding to a certain not very advanced stage of civilisation; just as Providence, in its day, was an idea of relative value, corresponding to a stage somewhat less advanced? Or will it be said that this argument is merely a disconcerting trick of dialectic played under cover of the darkness in which the issue is safely hidden by Horace's prudent god?¹

One cannot know whether Bury was aware he was also writing the obituary of the idea as a vital force in the assumptions of civilization. However, one can admire the tenacity with which he clung to his position as a sceptic and questioner of all prevailing beliefs. It is easy to understand his attack on the Church and the influence of Christianity; his battle, for battle it was, with the idea of progress, is another issue. Here, in spite of his predelection and preconditioning he was in accord with his admiration of the scepticism of the Greeks. Like his beloved and admired Socrates--as scholar, historian and human being--Bury felt he got closer to the truth by asking questions than by answering them.

1 - Ibid., p. 352.

CONCLUSION

Bury's work was not successful in the sense of reaching any final conclusions or definitive answers. Like most historians, his thought was a continual series of readjustments and reassessments and he is not to be judged on the basis of his final statement, but on the overall quality of his work. It is generally accepted today that this quality was of a high rank, although not up to the level of the greatest modern historical minds. The questions to which he addressed himself, the problems he forced himself to contemplate, were the real ones of his time. The tragedy, not only in Bury, but in much of the twentieth century, is that he himself realized he was not totally successful both in his historical or personal quests. However, one certainly cannot call him any sort of failure either, for a man cannot be judged on whether or not he has solved the riddle of the universe, but on whether he attempted to do so with any kind of honesty and profundity.

Most significantly, in spite of the fact that he chose to be physically isolated from his contemporaries, Bury was not working in any sort of vacuum. He was engaged to the point where contemporary questions in history and in life consumed much of his time and energies. On the issue of the nature of history, he stands alongside such men as Dilthey, Croce, Weber, Bergson and Simmel in the recognition that the nineteenth century did not finally define the meaning and place of the discipline and, with these men, tried first to point out the inadequacy of positivism and then to formulate a new position. In his grapplings with the Church and the value of the idea of progress,

he is part of the continuing Enlightenment tradition, but modern in the sense that he legitimately could neither have the certainty nor the vision of the future of a Condorcet.

Bury did not solve the problem of what Marc Bloch has called "the science of eternal change." His ideas of relativism and contingency were not complete formulations in the end because he could not reconcile himself to the acceptance of such a fragile theory of change and he was too much the rationalist to ever carry it further and suggest as his basic proposition that the essence of the historical is the uniqueness of every datum. Finally, he was forced into a semi-positivist position although even he realized this was not really acceptable. One of Bury's problems in this area--it is most clear in his writings on rationalism and progress--was an unwillingness to ever completely reconcile his theory of contingency and his implied "idealist" position on the nature of change. He fully believed that the world of ideas provided the motive force for change, but contingency demanded, and he partly did so in his last work on the Later Roman Empire, that he affirm the significance of what was to him the fragile, the insignificant meaning of something like Cleopatra's nose. In the end, ideas were too important, for he lived a life of the mind and he could not deny its ultimate meaning, value and force.

The problems Bury met with in his attempt to formulate a philosophy of history were also encountered in his quest for personal values. The problem of

relativism again stopped him from ever elevating the idea of progress to the level of dogma. Even though he wanted to, Bury could not absolutize his beliefs, and though he carried on a private war with the Church and intolerance, his own weakness was that he could never have the same kind of Olympian certainty of opinion as did his opponents. Here, too, he adopted a kind of optimism tempered by relativism and contingency.

Perhaps one of Bury's great problems and a clue to the reason he does not rank among the great but only among the near-great historians, in spite of having all of the talents and capabilities of the great, was that he did not have what we might call an integrated personality. Unlike such men as Burckhardt, Croce and Acton, he did not unite his history with his life. On the contrary, he struggled too hard to keep them separate with the result that both his history and his life do not have a finished quality. Bury separated his personal ideas from his historical ones and, in consequence, his works on freedom of thought are not up to the level of those of a Croce or an Acton and while his histories are first-rate, they lack the kind of imaginative quality which would put them among the classics of historical writing. It is not that Bury did not have the imagination, it is that he was unwilling to use it when writing history. Only in The Idea of Progress do we get a hint of what Bury might have done had he not rigidly compartmentalized the two worlds and this remains his most lasting and substantial work, both for its content and for its thought.

There is a kind of Faustian quality about Bury in his attempts to become a homo universalis, although, of course, he was too sane and too uncertain of himself to ever sell his soul to the devil. He was the rationalist of the historical world at a time when both rationalists and anti-rationalists spoke to problems which demanded different answers than the traditional tirades against one another. Yet, he carried on an honest personal dialogue and, though he was with the Enlightenment in belief, he recognized there were new questions to be solved. All knowledge was his province, and he refused to learn it by rote or to find simple answers. This in itself is no small accomplishment and he can be admired for it.

APPENDICES

**A: A Note on the Biographical
Details of Bury's Life**

**B: Bury and the English
Historical Tradition**

Appendix A: A Note on the Biographical Details of
Bury's Life

Born in 1861, Bury was formally educated at Foyle College, Londonderry and Trinity College, Dublin. He is reported to have begun learning the classics at the age of four and to have impressed Prof. R.Y. Tyrrell with his Greek grammar at ten; in 1879, Bury was judged to be the best student of the classics at Trinity. He left Trinity with a double first in 1882 and in 1885 married a second cousin, Jane Bury, and accepted a fellowship at his old school. Bury enjoyed travel a great deal, and from 1880 to 1885 he spent considerable time in Germany, Italy, London and Switzerland. It is clear that Bury combined travel with his craft--studying, delivering papers, and visiting areas and archives to clarify certain historical points.

The first major work of Bury, and one which immediately put him on the first level of Byzantine scholarship, was his History of the Later Roman Empire, published in 1889. From that time until his death in 1927, he was regarded as one of Europe's important historians. In 1893, Bury was elected Professor of Modern History at Trinity College. He continued his travels as well, now mainly in the summers; up to 1895, he concentrated on Germany and England. In 1895, Bury visited Greece for the first time, a conscious prelude to his History of Greece, published in 1900. This was followed by trips to Sicily and Turkey. Bury was appointed Regius Professor of Greek at Trinity College in 1898, holding two of the important chairs

at the age of 37.

In late 1902, Bury was asked to succeed Acton as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. He accepted, and was elected a fellow at King's College. He retained these positions until his death. In his first years as Regius Professor Bury supplemented his travels by going to the United States, France, and revisiting North Italy and Berlin. Bury encountered health problems in 1910, and from then on he was plagued with eye difficulties. Now, his travels were restricted and he went to the Isle of Wight, Rome and Algiers in the winters from 1910 to 1913. From 1918 to 1927 Bury wintered in Rome.

Almost all of the important facts about Bury's external life are available in Baynes' A Bibliography of the Works of J.B. Bury, with a Memoir and the interested reader will find them throughout Baynes' affectionate memoir. Apart from those mentioned in the Preface, Bury had few close friends--if he had any who were close. Among them were R.C. Bosanquet, with whom he travelled in Greece; Spencer Jerome, the American Consul in Rome; the Rev. R.H. Murray, a student; and Harold Temperley, a student and, with the exception of Baynes, probably Bury's closest colleague among the historians at Cambridge. Bury's testament is in his works. He was not a great character, but he was a good, dedicated historian.

Appendix B: Bury and the English Historical Tradition

Although this study specifically deals with the thought and opinion of J.B. Bury, the question of Bury's relationship to the English historical tradition has arisen from time to time. While Bury was trained and worked in the English tradition, it has seemed that he drew on a wider heritage than his national one and was consequently, partly in the tradition of Acton, somewhat more cosmopolitan in thought and in his frame of reference than most English historians. As has been pointed out in the body of this work, Bury was a blend of both continental and English influences.

Actually, the English historical tradition and the continental one coincide as much as they differ. In its beginnings, during the Elizabethan Renaissance, the new English history was marked by a secularization of interest, the use and influence of new methods developed in Italy, and many new ideas of historical interpretation which did away with the usual appeal to authority.¹ The triumvirate of the eighteenth century--Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon--belong as much to the European Enlightenment as they do to England. Scott's influence was admitted by the new Romantic historians of Europe in the early nineteenth century.²

1 - See Fussner, F. Smith, The Historical Revolution, New York: Columbia University Press, 1962; and Hale, J.R., ed., The Evolution of British Historiography, New York: Meridian Books, 1964, pp. 22, 36-38.

2 - Peardon, Thomas Preston, The Transition in English Historical Writing, 1760-1830, New York: Columbia University Press, 1933, pp. 19-33.

Naturally, Acton was as much a European as he was an Englishman, and Bury's epigram on science would be unthinkable without taking into account the whole continental trend of the nineteenth century.

But, however much the two areas are related, and despite the fact that "the history of English historiography has yet to be written,"¹ there are clearly a few important points where the traditions on the continent and in England do not coincide. England, as well as partaking of many of the same trends as the rest of Europe, does have her own particular traditions. These traditions, which have persisted almost from the beginnings of English historiography, are: a special emphasis on the importance of history as literature, and what has been defined by Butterfield as the "whig interpretation." In England the narrative has often been as important as the content and history has often been used to glorify the present at the expense of the past.

The English narrative tradition--the importance placed on presentation as well as what is presented--stems all the way back to the seventeenth century and the relation of English literature and history in the Elizabethan and post-Elizabethan age. History was a branch of literature on its own² and from Raleigh and Clarendon through Gibbon to Trevelyan and Wedgwood the

1 - Thomson, M.A., Some Developments in English Historiography during the Eighteenth Century, London: H.K. Lewis and Co., Ltd., 1957, p. 3.

2 - Fussner, op. cit., p. 317.

literary side of historical writing has had a special importance in England. Along with this trend, and perhaps reinforcing it, there has been a tendency in England from the Reformation encouraging the composition and significance of national history. Cut off from the continent at that time, history assumed a patriotic tone, "Englishmen were primarily fascinated by themselves," and English historiography through Macaulay and beyond developed an "insularity" which stressed national and classical history and excluded many continental influences.¹

The crucial time for the English narrative tradition was in the middle of the nineteenth century when history was becoming more "scientific" and more professional. The positivist and academic influences from the continent were not negligible in England. Whereas history had previously been written by the learned amateur, it now began to fall under the aegis of the trained professional. The chairs of history at English universities were now taken seriously and the history school began to grow to the point where, when Bury came to Cambridge in 1903, it was among the most important academic disciplines. In addition, England had her Buckle--the man who treated history as a pure science--on the one side, and Stubbs, Gardiner and Maitland--men who kept abreast of continental scholarship and emulated it--on the other. Yet, Buckle has been called an "iconoclast" who was isolated in that one can find neither predecessors nor

1 - Hale, op. cit., pp. 11, 21, 28, 31, 45-47.

disciples; in England he produced a universal antipathy to the point where even the positivist Frederick Harrison denounced scientific history in 1898.¹ The school stemming from Stubbs was more lasting and it was in the methodological sense that England was influenced by the continental idea of "science." In addition, Buckle's ideas received little consideration because of the influence of the narrative tradition in developing in England a "notorious...antipathy to the theoretical or philosophical treatment of the problems of history."²

As for the professionalization of history, here England also escaped a total emulation of the continental trend. In the world of historical studies, England still maintained some of her insularity and in the last half of the nineteenth century English historical writing was less systematic and scientific and, perhaps most important, more national.³ The amateur or semi-professional who wrote literary national history which was popular, such as Green, was at least sharing the first position with his more "scientific" colleagues, and it is clear that English historians accepted the professionalization of history in a "half-

1 - Ibid., pp. 49, 55-58.

2 - Butterfield, Man on His Past, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

3 - Fitzsimons, Matthew A., et. al., eds., The Development of Historiography, Harrisburg, Pa.: The Stackpole Company, 1954, p. 202; Neff, Emory, The Poetry of History, New York: Columbia University Press, 1947, p. 197. See also Forbes, Duncan, The Liberal Anglican Idea of History, Cambridge: University Press, 1952.

hearted and hesitant manner." The importance of the literary quality in history was still defended and praised.¹

Thus, in its English context, Bury's remark that "history is a science, no less and no more," seemed to run counter to the English tradition and could therefore achieve the gross misunderstanding that it did. It was thought that in his statement he was challenging that which identified the English brand of history from any other and the idea of the importance of history as literature and art has been defended in the twentieth century in England with more vociferousness than anywhere else, most notably by Trevelyan and Wedgwood.

Trevelyan's defense dates back to 1904, a direct reaction to Bury's Inaugural Lecture.² This essay was later polished as a general statement on the nature of history and published in 1913 as "Clio, a Muse." In the essay, Trevelyan claimed that history was not a science and that there is no such thing as an absolute interpretation of the past: "...he will give the best interpretation who, having discovered and weighed all the important evidence obtainable, has the largest grasp of intellect, the warmest human sympathy, the highest imaginative powers." He stated that there was a clear distinction between the German scientific tradition and the English narrative one:

1 - Higham, John, et. al., History, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965, pp. 335-337.

2 - Trevelyan, "The Latest View of History," op. cit.

The English ought to look to the free, popular, literary traditions of history in our own land. Until quite recent times, from the days of Clarendon down through Gibbon, Carlyle, and Macaulay to Green and Lecky, historical writing was not merely the mutual conversation of scholars with one another, but was the means of spreading far and wide throughout all the reading classes a love and knowledge of history, an elevated and critical patriotism and certain qualities of mind and heart. But all that has been stopped, and an attempt has been made to drill us into so many Potsdam Guards of learning.

But Trevelyan did not argue on the simple level of patriotism. Rather, for him, history had three distinct functions: the scientific, the imaginative or speculative, and the literary. The literary aspect was not secondary, but one of the primary tasks of the historian: "Life is short, art is long, but history is longest, for it is art added to scholarship."¹

History, to those who follow the English narrative tradition, is a part of the national literature. The image evoked by Trevelyan is one of Clarendon, Carlyle, and Macaulay versus "Mommsen and Treitschke, at whose German shrines we have been instructed to sacrifice the traditions of English history...."²

1 - Trevelyan, George Macaulay, "Clio, a Muse," in The Recreations of an Historian, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1919, pp. 14, 37-40.

2 - Ibid., pp. 49-50.

He hints that history is not valid unless it also qualifies as high literature; for dispassion, "accuracy and good faith" are to be substituted; for the professionalization of history and the importance of the academy, Trevelyan prefers history written for the general public.¹

Ironically, Trevelyan became Regius Professor at Cambridge upon Bury's death in 1927. In his Inaugural Lecture he made it clear that Cambridge would be going back to the old English tradition. While recognizing the validity of other types of history, his ideal was still history as literature.²

C.V. Wedgwood, Trevelyan's successor as the foremost narrative historian in England, also continually emphasizes the literary aspects of the craft. Like Trevelyan, Wedgwood has no overriding philosophy of history, nor has she sought any. An understanding of the past is a personal effort, achieved by the "imagination" and not through any "scientific" truth. All opinions and judgments "are the outcome of personal beliefs."³ Wedgwood recognizes the importance of the

1 - Ibid., pp. 56-59; F.M. Powicke in Three Lectures, Oxford: University Press, 1947, p. 68, also has emphasized the poetic values of history.

2 - Trevelyan, George Macaulay, The Present Position of History, London: Longmans Green and Co., Ltd., 1927, p. 27. For a contrasting viewpoint in between Trevelyan's and the "scientific" one see Temperley, Harold, Research and Modern History, London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1930, p. 7. Bertrand Russell in History as an Art, Aldington: The Hand and Flower Press, 1954, also argues for the importance of popular literary history in the English tradition.

3 - Wedgwood, C.V., Truth and Opinion, London: Collins, 1960, pp. 26, 43.

introduction of the scientific method in the nineteenth century and the role played by Germany in propagating the new history. It is on the continent that she sees the break between history and literature occurring at that time. "But in England this divorce never became complete" and the English have retained their own type of history. For this, she is grateful, for the "scientific historians" are seen as having done damage to history.

If the historian has the good fortune to write in English he can further seek reassurance in contemplating that long alliance between history and literature which has been, and still is, one of the glories of the English-speaking peoples. The tradition stretches back five centuries past Gibbon, Clarendon, Bacon, Raleigh, to the Berners translation of Froissart: it has been upheld and renewed in the twentieth century on both sides of the Atlantic.

Wedgwood also attacks Bury's epigram and whatever influence it might have had. She is in the long row of English narrative scholars: "Literature and history were joined long since by the powers which shape the human brain; we cannot put them asunder."¹

The fact that Bury's epigram was misunderstood is, at the moment, irrelevant. For it is clear that Bury does not belong in the tradition represented in the twentieth century by Trevelyan and Wedgwood. Bury did acknowledge that history had an element of art, but for him the method of the scientific historians

1 - Ibid., pp. 62-63, 36, 91.

of the nineteenth century was most important. Perhaps history, because of its very nature, could not have that liberty that one must grant to art. Moreover, although he admired felicity of style and wrote well himself, the material was the primary consideration. He wrote monographs and was not interested in popular history. He viewed himself as a professional and was not afraid to write only for his peers. In this, Bury was influenced more by the continental, and more specifically German, style than by the English. History was autonomous, it did not even belong to literature and it did not matter whether it did.

On other levels as well, Bury stands outside the English narrative tradition and its insularity from continental influences. He did not care to write English history and was not beguiled by the importance of his own national traditions. His colleagues were few in his own country, but were many overseas. Bury disliked the importance placed on English history by the universities and wished to stress the tradition of the West over the tradition of his island. He was a better European than an Englishman, both professionally and personally, at a time when national values were exceedingly important.

Bury's speculations on the philosophy of history are perhaps his most important break with the English tradition. He did not fear such speculation, but welcomed it; he was not an empiricist, but drew his philosophy from the continental speculations of the nineteenth century. At a time when England was indeed isolated from the continent in the realm of the philosophy of history, he and Acton both tried to draw

them together. Far from simply worrying about his personal judgments, he made the effort at universality. At the time when the continent was in intellectual ferment, Bury was dealing with precisely the same questions. As we know, the simplistic division between history as science and art will no longer hold, but in his concern, in his writings, and in his assumptions about the nature of history, Bury stands outside this literary distinction which helps to define the nature of English historiography.

The other distinguishing element of English history is the whig tradition. Butterfield has pointed out that there is a characteristic English tradition in historical interpretation: the English historian, whether consciously or not, has from the seventeenth century viewed the past with special reference to the present and has used the past to glorify the present. There has thus been a bias on the part of English historians in stressing the continuity of history rather than viewing the past in any kind of impartial manner. The English tradition has been one of narrative, but the narrative has hardly been impartial. The act of interpretation has been made in stressing an unbroken line of progress in attempting to prove, through history, that English liberty has existed from the earliest times. This viewpoint was especially prevalent in the seventeenth century, but has had such force as to almost eliminate any tory interpretation from the time of the Stuarts. While the Marxists justify their actions by the future, and the French by appealing to the traditions of 1789, the English have attempted to cling to the continuity of history at all costs. This has produced an historical attitude

which has viewed past problems not for themselves alone but for the sake of illuminating present issues. From Coke to Churchill, the theme of English history and the way the past has been viewed has been in relation to their own history of liberty.¹

In the attempt to demonstrate a special principle of progress, the English historian thus has tended to stress the similarities between the past and present and not the differences. Most historians have been "Protestant, progressive and whig" and not "Catholics or Tories" as a result of attempting to elaborate this idea of progress. The whig is one who does not try to obtain historical understanding by looking at "history for its own sake," but biases his viewpoint by asking the question of what is similar and not what is different, by seeking historical change as a simple and not a complex thing, by seeking origins instead of accidents. In addition, the nature of the organization of history also aids the whig cause: history, of necessity, must be abridged; the more it is done so, the more it refers to problems of the present rather than the past.

Above all, the English whig tradition has behind it "the passionate desire to come to a judgment of values, to make history answer questions and decide issues and to give the historian the last word in a controversy...." Because of the special identification with continuity, English historians often feel

1 - Butterfield, Herbert, The Englishman and His History, Cambridge: University Press, 1944.

that history will absolve them in a very different way than do the Marxists. History does not exist in a moral vacuum for them, but is a constant series of judgments on present politics; history has its own wisdom and it is the function of the historian to act as an attorney in proving that the acts of the present are not stemming from the sins of the past; it is often the job of the historian to make innovation seem like tradition at the expense of historical truth.¹

This tendency to make judgments is not merely found in the realm of politics, but in the general area of morality. English historians have not been afraid of moral judgments and have often welcomed them.² This is also related to the English narrative tradition, its distrust of the attempt to write history from a neutral standpoint and its distaste for the continental "scientific" tradition. Oddly enough, Acton, who was among the most cosmopolitan of all English historians, nonetheless stands here in the broad English whig tradition. He did not fear morality in history, he welcomed it; for him, history was part of a larger moral function; history was exalted, because through history one was concerned about the present.³ Perhaps Acton never wrote his

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- 1 - Butterfield, Herbert, The Whig Interpretation of History, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.
 - 2 - See Wedgwood, Truth and Opinion, op. cit., p. 43.
 - 3 - Acton, Lord, "Inaugural Lecture," op. cit.;
Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History,
op. cit., pp. 109-113.

History of Liberty because of his inability to reconcile his whiggishness with the continental philosophy and methodology of which he was so much aware.

Bury's relationship to the whig tradition is much less than that of Acton. The function of history, for Bury, was not that of a moral quality and it was not studied in order to illuminate the personal area of ethics. When Bury could not find any utility in history, he was content to make the act of faith that history ought to be studied for its own sake. If, like Greek, it was a useless study, this was not a matter of concern. He rejected the very category of usefulness. As for politics, Bury neither viewed history as an adjunct to political science nor, with some exceptions which are not really a part of his historical writing, did he use it to approve or disapprove of the larger issues of public policy. To Bury, history was autonomous--it did not exist for any reason but itself.

On the more subtle aspects of the whig tradition, Bury also did not adopt the whig approach. In his histories he was neither whig nor tory; he did not take a presentist viewpoint and always tried to make that imaginative leap into the past in order to understand an age on its own terms. Even in The Idea of Progress, Bury refrained from looking at progress from a twentieth century point of view: he did not ask to what do we owe our theory of progress but rather how did it arise. Historical change to Bury was an enormously complex affair, and his attitude toward the nature of change grew less English as time went on--he started out with causation and wound up with

contingency; he felt it the function of the historian to point out the contingencies and not ratify the determinist attitude which sanctified present ideas. In all of the areas which distinguish the whig idea from the continental one of history as a neutral study, Bury was located on the wrong side of the Channel. Here, more than Acton, he belonged to Europe and not to England. Most significant, perhaps, is that Bury constantly acknowledged the limitations of the historian: historical morality was not an absolute; he did not worry about giving his approval to the results of his research.

The one exception to the above--and here Bury was more whig than the whigs themselves--is in these writings on rationalism in which he dropped all neutrality and took up the club of the historical polemicist. A History of Freedom of Thought, History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century, and the articles for the Rationalist Press Association all fall into the category of whig history. Yet, even apart from the fact that these were a small portion of the total body of his work, Bury was so clearly a whig in these writings that no one can accuse him of hiding his viewpoint behind the cloak of history. He was so open as to negate any attacks on purely historical grounds.

Thus, Bury stands outside the English historical tradition and alongside the European one. He was neither a literary historian nor a whig. In his use of the idea and hope for science, in his having been influenced more by European historians than by English ones, in his introspection and writings on the philosophy

of history and methodology, in his subject-matter, purely historical point of view, his concerns and his distaste for too much emphasis on national history, Bury was much more cosmopolitan than most historians who were English.

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The guiding source for any study of J.B. Bury is Norman Baynes' invaluable A Bibliography of the Works of J.B. Bury, with a Memoir, Cambridge: University Press, 1929, which lists all of Bury's works chronologically, occasionally commenting on the content or conclusions of the more esoteric articles. In order not to repeat, but rather to supplement, Baynes' bibliography, the list of primary sources below is divided into volumes and articles, reviews and other miscellaneous works, editions and introductions, and translations in chronological order within the separate categories. Letters, papers and interviews are listed separately. Baynes has omitted surprisingly few citations; those that are not in his bibliography are asterisked. Errors in Baynes' bibliography have been corrected.

In addition, a search was made for manuscript material and letters. With the assistance of Mr. J. P.T. Bury of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, I was able to ascertain that no manuscript or unpublished material of relevance to this study has been preserved in the Bury family; nor have I been able to find or hear of such material in London or Dublin. Some letters, however, have been kept in the library of King's College, Cambridge and in the Cambridge University Library. These will be cited below along with interviews with those people who were kind enough to offer their assistance and provide information on Bury.

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