

## MEN AND THEIR HISTORY

On July 10, 1834, Michelet said to one of his classes at the Collège de France, “In history things happen the way they do in Sterne’s novel, what is being done in the drawing room is also being done in the kitchen. Exactly like two congenial watches of which one, two hundred leagues away, marks the hour while the other chimes it.” He added the following example: “It was no different in the Middle Ages. Abelard’s philosophy chimed liberty while the communes of Picardy marked it.” A few years later Berlin students could hear Ranke on *Epochen der Neueren Geschichte*, Droysen on *Enzyklopadie und Methodologie der Geschichte (Historik)*. Both of them rejected the philosophy of history that Hegel had attempted to impose; in their view, the historian must try to discover the *leading ideas of history*. Today Fernand Braudel aims at less ambitious objectives: “Our role, fellow historians, is to be first of all, on solid ground, in contact with things and beings, with what is visible, what can be proved and what can be objectively established. At the crossroads where we find the groping social sciences, all the contacts that one establishes with facts, figures, statistics, increase our doubts more than our certainties. Now, is it our fault if our wider curiosity seems to raise rather than resolve new and fascinating problems in which the precise role that the mysterious laws of numbers can play is unknown?” These lines of Fernand Braudel, extracted from the conclusion of one of the monuments of modern historical science

Translated by Elaine P. Halperin.

—*La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*—sheds light on one of the major concerns of present-day historians; of those who, five years ago, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment, by Emmanuel de Martinne, of the first university “Laboratory of Geography” at Rennes; of those who, a year ago, gathered to celebrate the seventy-fifth birthday of Lucien Febvre to whom historians, linguists, geographers, economists, sociologists or ethnologists offered, in homage, a *Fan of Living History*. But, you might say, others before them have evidenced an interest in what is visible, what can be proved and established objectively, notably those who, trained in the school of a Lavisse or a Seignobos—to say nothing of Sorel or Bourgeois—today represent the declining “historical history.” Undoubtedly, but nonetheless a fundamental change has taken place. Where is it to be found if it is so true that one can say with Thibaudet that great upheavals are to be construed as mere choices on the level of intelligence? Our concerns are neither with the “philosophy of history” (who, incidentally, ever believed in it?) nor with the “science of history.” What we must envisage lies elsewhere.

In 1897, Seignobos and Langlois published an *Introduction aux études historiques* which, for a long time, was considered a bible. According to them, the historian could be compared to a landscape painter anxious to omit nothing—except his own person, except that which makes an event a human reality. One must admit that they are not without some justification, that they are in the same position as Cournot, Paul Lacombe, Ranke, Burckhardt, Fustel de Coulanges—but not Michelet, who today finds himself to be what he never should have ceased to be, the Master. Undoubtedly history is written “with texts,” but without texts prehistory writes the longest chapter of the human adventure. Undoubtedly a knowledge of economic history requires statistics, but how can one understand them if one is totally ignorant of technology or the social significance of a salary and price curve? It is useless to separate ideas from the men who expressed them, institutions from those who built them, words from what they signify in everyday life—not for linguists, but for peasants, workers, and business people. Thus, every reflection on the evolution of historical science from the beginning of the century collides with the problem of facts. For a long time it was accepted as dogma that the scholar was a man who, putting his eye to the microscope, immediately apprehended facts that he had only to record, classify, and date. But what is a fact? It can be compared to a point in geometry. Just as the point has no meaning in itself, just as it is merely the result of an intellectual operation thanks to

which imaginary lines intersect each other, just as it possesses no significance except in terms of the lines whose intersection it defines, so the historical fact is merely the expression of a convergence of currents. In his preface to *Trois essais sur Histoire et Culture* by Charles Morazé, Lucien Febvre writes: "History does not turn up its nose at facts. . . . But architecture is no more made of bricks than history is of facts. No architecture without an architect's plan. No history without a working hypothesis." This parallels Magendie's remark: "I walk about in it like a rag man and at every step I find something interesting to put in my hut," with which Lapicque compared Dastre's remark: "When you don't know what you are looking for, you don't know what you will find."

Charles Morazé, in his *Trois essais*, strives to show all that is represented by a precise fact: the advent of Jules Ferry as head of the French government. This fact brings into play the entire economic and social evolution, the recruiting of the political personnel, the training of men. To make Jules Ferry's advent possible a certain opinion had to prevail. This opinion was inspired by the events of the preceding years as well as by the economic situation, in which American or African developments played their part; a certain harmony between world events and French events had to exist. Saint-Dié, Jules Ferry's birth-place, is the key to those valleys of the Vosges where Alsatian industrialists settled after 1871; they sought in India a cotton which, for some time, the United States had ceased to provide. Mulhouse was, therefore, a place where Protestantism was active (Siegfried and Freycinet were Protestants, and so were the founders of l'Ecole des Sciences Politiques)—at a time when the silver currency of Catholic Austria was being devaluated because of the huge sums that had come in from the Far East and from new mines on the other side of the Atlantic. This weakening of Catholicism in France resulted in the "rallying" of Leon XIII who, at the same time, and even though he was the victor of the Kulturkampf, advised the German Catholics to support the imperialist policy of their sovereign. Why should not this weakening of Catholicism be related to the land crisis which suddenly decreased the value of farms in all countries, caused an agricultural recession in the United States and the ruin of numerous provincial aristocracies in France? Yet everywhere, in the United States as well as in Europe, a new upward movement of urban civilization was manifesting itself. Is not the simultaneity of agricultural crises and upsurge of cities a general phenomenon? Isn't it true that technology makes the most rapid progress during a period of crisis—that it aids the development of urban civilization while

agriculture remains as sensitive to the pedological and climatic changes as it was during prehistoric times? And so what we might call “the Ferry fact” seems to be an expression of a very complex economic and social ensemble. It was around the time when Ferry acceded to power that growing quantities of wheat and meats from the other side of the Atlantic were being unloaded in French ports—raw silks from the Far East, flax and hemp from eastern Baltic. This is a far cry from the usual and simple chronological dissection. Louis Halphen—one of the champions of “historical history”—believes that in this domain science consists in finding the chain of firmly established facts, that this causality is enough to constitute “a rigorous science.” But no Providence exists to provide historians with the kind of raw facts which are endowed with a simple and irreducible existence. “As for historical facts,” Lucien Febvre says so excellently, “it is the historian who brings them to life . . . in such a way that we know that this assemblage of facts—which is so often presented to us as raw material and which automatically should constitute history transcribed at the very moment when the events occur—has a history of its own which is the history of the progress of knowledge and of the historians’ awareness. In order to accept the lessons events offer, we have the right to demand that first we should have some contact with the critical work that paved the way for the chain of these events in the mind of whoever evokes them.”

For a long time historians made a fetish of facts. Their task was to gather as many as possible, to classify them according to well-determined categories of activity: internal or foreign policy, economic and social life, etc. Then a man appeared who was not a historian but a geographer, Paul Vidal de la Blache. Modern geography was born from his meditations on the maps that he studied, on the field that he cultivated unceasingly, on the books of nineteenth century German geographers, notably Alexander de Humboldt and Karl Ritter, and those of travelers and of “curious people”: Darwin, Cook, Bougainville, Marco Polo, Worsae, etc. Vidalian geography stemmed from history. It emerged from the framework of the more or less descriptive nomenclatures to attain the level of an exploratory science of the conditions which the various regions of the land presented and continue to present to life, of the economic activity of human societies. From that time on great books appeared: Raoul Blanchard’s theses on *La Flandre* (1906), Albert Demangeon’s on *La Picardie* (1905), Jules Sion’s on *Les Paysans de la Normandie orientale* (1909), etc. Meanwhile, in 1908, Vidal de la Blache published his *Tableau de la géographie de la France* in Lavisser’s *Histoire de France*, and in 1922 Lucien Febvre dropped his bombshell, *La*

*terre et l'évolution humaine*, which once again took up the whole problem sometimes erroneously thought of as that of "determinism." During this period Marc Bloch was already preoccupied with agrarian history. Undoubtedly there were agricultural historians, but they were content with erudite classifications (forgetting, for example, that for the peasant world, the Middle Ages extended at least until the night of August 4). They concerned themselves more with their records than with the peasants. Marc Bloch went beyond abstractions and chronological trivialities to deal with realities, to probe human problems, states of mind, different kinds of lives, hopes and disappointments, resignation and revolts, resources, currency, etc. He quickly recognized that he could not limit himself to French frontiers. With Lucien Febvre and Henri Pirenne of the famous *Discours sur l'histoire comparée*, he sought outside of France the solution to the problems he encountered in France. He analyzed as many of the old texts as possible and learned about the realities of agricultural life, the rotation of soil cultivation, peasant techniques. He explored the immense domain of governmental land surveys and of the systems of strip farming: why fields were uniformly elongated in one place and square and massive in another; why they were enclosed by hedges in one place and devoid of trees or hedges in another. How much could be explained by geographical factors and how much by human intent? Could one go back as far as a Brittany of open fields, without hedges or ditches, similar to the Beauce or Champagne areas? In 1929 he and Lucien Febvre founded the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, with the help of Henri Pirenne, Sir William Ashley and Albert Demangeon—men who rejected the dried up disciplines of the purely factual. Everything began with this movement of the *Annales*. Everything, including *War and Human Progress* by John U. Nef, *Studi di storia economica medievale* by Armando Sapori, *American Treasure and the Price Revolution in Spain (1501–1650)* by Earl J. Hamilton. One of the features on which not enough emphasis has been placed, from our point of view, is the convergence of different disciplines which this concept of history implies. Two great associates of Bloch and Febvre were the geographers Jules Sion and Albert Demangeon. In 1932, denouncing the errors made by Ellen Churchill Semple in *Geography of the Mediterranean Region* (which aggravated those in *Influences of Geographic Environment*), Jules Sion wrote: "The geographer should not embark upon such large and formidable topics. The mere fact that he has a different training and curiosities other than those of the historian can lead him to hope that he will be able, at times, to indicate new points of view, to bring up an old prob-

lem by emphasizing natural factors that were hitherto neglected, to raise problems even though he is not qualified to resolve them. He must think as a historian as well as a geographer." This was also Demangeon's opinion. Just as the geologist cannot know the surface facts unless he knows the deeper ones, the exegete of human societies—the geographer is only that—must first know the phases prior to their evolution. Such was also the opinion of Henri Pirenne, the man who inspired this comparative method, who urged that the historian's interests should embrace a larger space as well as a longer time span.

But whence, then, do the impulses of individuals and of the masses emanate? Let no one misunderstand the meaning of this question. When one studies the relationship between human beings and their geographical environment one soon realizes the necessity of considering groups, not individuals. The proper unit of research is the group—a position that history confirms by demonstrating that as far back as the earliest times "we see, not isolated men in action, but groups of men." (The quotation is from Demangeon.) Indeed, achievements such as the development of irrigation in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, the domestication of animals, etc., must have been collective enterprises. "Geographically, man acts and possesses significance only in groups," Vidal de la Blache wrote in his *Principes de géographie humaine*. The individual is never more than his era and his social environment permit him to be. One can say therefore that the social environment permeates the author of a historical work, encloses him, in a large measure determines him—and when this work is achieved, it survives only through the collaboration of the masses, the impact of the milieu. And so we find ourselves far from the kind of history that is confined to a few notes carefully filed, from the kind of history which, seeking solutions at all costs, forgets the problems. Around 1880–1890, history was understood to be merely a method—the critical method—which enabled historians to dispense with the necessity of asking themselves, what is history? The sociologists attacked it. The Durkheimians annexed everything which, in their opinion, lent itself to rational analysis. All that remained for history was chronology; it could only result in careful accounts, in multiple details, and in "forgetting nothing." Valéry had an easy time of it, since it was understood, once and for all, that the appearance of the discount at the beginning of the seventeenth century or that of electric lighting in the country were no more important than a diplomatic congress that arrived at tentative solutions. But it is true that Valéry had not read a line of Bloch, of Hauser or of Pirenne and that he

was as ignorant of *Les Chroniques gall-romaines* by Julien as he was of Sion's *Etudes Méditerranéennes*.

In 1933, Lucien Febvre, who occupied the chair of general history and historical method which the Collège de France had just reestablished for him (it had been abolished in 1892 at the death of Alfred Maury), issued this manifesto: "History, a science of man and not at all a science of things or of concepts. Who professes ideas external to men? Ideas, merely elements among many others in the mental baggage packed with influences, recollections, speeches and conversations which every one of us carries around? Institutions, isolated from those who created them, who, while respecting them, are forever modifying them? No. There is no history save that of man, and history in the largest sense of the word." One must therefore rediscover the men who experienced the events to which one refers, penetrate to the human substance of the words, and not be satisfied with texts. Is it possible to study ancient peoples without a pollinic analysis of the tides and of the bog-waters?

Little by little the reality of the social, that underlying reality of man, imposed itself. All the social symbols to which we had been accustomed lost their substance. Intellectual concepts were distorted or destroyed. A new world—why not a new history? It is not a matter of disavowing the reality of events or the role of individuals; that would be puerile. But no one is entirely self-contained in a living reality. All individual experiences are based upon the complex reality of the social—an interlocking reality, as the sociologists say. The problem therefore is not to disavow the individual on the pretext that he is stamped by contingencies, but to go beyond him, to distinguish him from forces that are different from him and so to react against a history reduced to the actions of a few quintessential "heroes." Treitschke believed that "men make history." History also makes men—a profound, silent and anonymous history whose task is to attack social realities in themselves and for themselves: in other words, to attack the great forms of collective life—economies, institutions, social structures, civilizations.

In 1951 Fernand Braudel and Ruggiero Romano published *Navires et marchands à l'entrée du port de Livourne, 1547-1611*, in *Ports, Routes, Trafics*, one of the new collections begun by the *Centre de recherches historiques*, a great innovation since the aim of the Center is "to assemble within a solidly organized framework, a group of researchers whose efforts are joined and who are capable of working together as a team on those collective projects without which certain zones of history—not merely economic

history—would never be surveyed.” The following year, in the collection entitled *Monnaie, Prix, Conjoncture*, Carlo M. Cipolla presented *Les mouvements monétaires dans l’Etat de Milan, 1580–1700*. In *Affaires and gens d’affaires* Armando Sapori evoked *Le marchand italien au moyen âge*. A major impetus had been provided. But lest people think that economic history alone is involved we will take, for example, the Florence of 1580 to 1585. There we observe a crisis which increases and becomes overwhelming. This is attested by the repatriation of Florentine merchants who left France and North Germany, abandoning their shops in order to buy land in Tuscany. The crisis could be verified only when coherent series of prices had been established. Was it merely Tuscan or general? It was noted in Venice and Ferraro. Therefore one must journey to all the archives of Europe—at a time when the Far East controlled the circulation of precious metals and hence the rhythm of the entire economic life of the world. Difficult years in the Far East for the trade in spices and pepper coincided closely in time with these years of Florentine crisis. This trade passed from Portuguese hands into those of Moorish merchants, the old frequenters of the Indian Ocean and of the Sunda Isles, then into the hands of the caravan drivers of India, to disappear, finally, in Northern Asia and in China.

Thus the crisis of the century involved not only Venice or Lisbon, Antwerp or Seville, Lyons or Milan, but also the economy of the Baltic, the old rhythms of the Mediterranean, the currents of the Iberian Atlantic or Pacific. On the one hand, the fifteenth century, on the other the seventeenth, it was concerned not only with the general movement of prices, but also with the cluster of these prices and their comparison. The prices of wine and of landed property preceded the others in their decline. Here lies the explanation of that civilization of vineyards and wine, the increasingly numerous northward departures of ships loaded with wine casks from Seville, the Portuguese coast and the Gironde—as well as the rows of tilted carts, the *carrettoni*, which brought wines from Friuli and Venetia into Germany via the Brenner. This was also the period when artillery was installed on bridges of ships, when tonnage decreased, when the small Greek, Provençal or Scandinavian sailboats carried cargoes heavier than the large Venetian or Ragusan ones. It was also a time when the meaning of death changed. Alberto Tenanti has shown the deep chasm that materialized then. For a “celestial” death, turned toward the hereafter, a wide open door through which man passed without too much fear, there was substituted a “human” death, already marked in an initial way by reason. Slow to show its true countenance, this death seems to have arisen long



before in the Rhenish areas; we find ourselves here in contact with the silent history of civilizations, far from the customary décor of the Reformation. One must read the pious books and the testaments, collect all the iconographic proofs and consult the papers of the *Inquisitori contra Bestemmie* in Venice, those precious “black archives” of moral control.

For a long time, under the influence of Max Weber's *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* and of R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, it was acknowledged that modern capitalism was born of Protestantism. The reasoning was as follows: although Catholicism accepted the exchange of one commodity for another, or the sale of a commodity for money in order to buy another (therefore the Marxist sequences M-M or M-A-M) it rejected A-M-A and regarded A-A as a “mortal sin.” (A-A: the Bank.) This is true but inadequate. One must still explain the “see-saw” movement which transferred the world's economic center of gravity from the Mediterranean to England. John U. Nef appears to acknowledge that the religious factor is sufficient to explain the contrasts, at the time of the Thirty Years' War, between the economic development of the southern Low Countries and that of the northern Low Countries. He likens these contrasts to those that existed in the same epoch between the states that had formerly been subject to the sovereignty of Charles V and the countries of northern Europe. Nef seems to concede that the religious explanation suffices. This factor was operative, but it alone cannot constitute a principle of absolute causality. In a commercial market dominated by Spain's loss of control over the precious metals, by crises of conjuncture which resulted in instability of a structural order, banking techniques underwent a real change: the contract of exchange was transformed into the letter of exchange, which became a negotiable and discountable instrument of trade. Modern finance dates from this technical change. One must also bear in mind the expansion of large-scale maritime and colonial commerce. London was victorious over Amsterdam. On March 26, 1714, John Freeke published the first weekly stock quotations. Joint-stock companies multiplied. England was experiencing then what was known as “the first industrial revolution,” characterized in the main by the introduction of pit-coal as a major combustible of the industry. This industrial revolution marked the decline of the Mediterranean countries, which lacked this new form of energy. For a world centered upon the Mediterranean there was substituted a world centered upon Northwestern Europe overlooking all the oceans. This “industrial revolution” was not enough. One must bear in mind the “technological revolution” of the

eighteenth century, which was made possible by the transition from the world of the approximate to the universe of the exact, as well as by the birth of a technology. Machinism was born in the eighteenth century, when Greek science had not yet engendered a logistic. The horizons that open up are so vast that one is justified in wondering if research should not remain fragmentary in order to be valid. Everything must be reexamined and explored.

What, for example, do the *Lettres de negociants marseillais: les frères Hermitte (1570–1612)* which Micheline Bauland has just published contribute? First of all, we still have inadequate information about commercial activity in Marseilles during the sixteenth century. Furthermore, merchants' letters and papers are so scarce that one is justified in studying them minutely. They introduce us to the very core of the practices and realities of everyday life. One such letter, for example, dated February 20, 1589, which seems rather dull at first, contains valuable notations about the city of Marseilles and its place, about the role of Genoese silk buyers, about the importance of the exchange in Lyon, the attractions of Seville and Cadiz, the transportation of American cochineal to the Levant, silver rates in Marseilles, the sailings of ships to Alexandria and Tripoli, etc. In the same collection there have just been published *Le pacte de Ricorsa et le marché italien des changes au XVII siècle* by Guilia Mandich and *Simon Ruiz et les asientos de Philippe II* by Henry Lapeyre. We are waiting for the letters that his correspondents in Antwerp wrote to the great merchant of Medina del Campo, Simon Ruiz; Valentin Vasquez de Prade has retranscribed the text. All the letters gain in meaning by being juxtaposed, compared to analogous documents, and thus immersed again in a "day by day" account of economic history, as explained by its actors. This kind of history generally has only a remote relationship to the portrayals that the great books, which style themselves works "of synthesis," offer—when they do offer them. We also have *Les Prix à Lwow (XVI–XVII centuries)* by Stanislas Hosrowski who, as early as 1928, was one of the first to deal scientifically with the great historical problem of prices, which Avenel, Thorold Rogers, Wiebe, and several others had treated in the most false and least scientific manner imaginable. This study teaches us that prices at Lwow rose vigorously and regularly from 1530 to 1600. In the case of cereals, the essential product, they quadrupled, just as they did in the rest of Europe. After 1600 their rise continued until at least 1650. Thereafter they began to decline. As for wages, they breathlessly attempted to keep pace with this rise and then began to decline before prices did. Thus real

wages in the conjuncture of the rise as well as in that of the fall, but mainly in the former, did not cease to diminish. It would be suggestive to compare this with the results obtained for Spain by Earl J. Hamilton, making allowances, of course, for geographical differentiations.

In 1501 Spanish imports rose to 0.6 million pesos, in 1601 to 34 millions. They thus increased from the index number 14 to 141. The first consequence of this massive arrival of precious metals was an immense and protracted rise in prices; the second, an acceleration of commercial activity. But what were the social repercussions, and how did they occur? According to regions, according to the more or less sturdy cohesiveness of social structures? It is unnecessary to emphasize the social consequences of that rise in prices. This is perhaps one of the factors that explains the orientation of the works of Ernest Labrousse, Marc Bloch's successor in the chair of economic history at the Sorbonne. The possessor of a great deal of economic knowledge, Labrousse approached Marx as an economist, an attitude so rare as to be remarked, and rather significant if we think of the discussions between Marx and Engels on the place which the chapter on *Value* should occupy in *Das Kapital*. Perhaps this played a part in determining Labrousse's penchant for the eighteenth century, the study of which he approaches through the intermediary of prices which, here as elsewhere, play a "revealing" role. To a large extent a good part of his current work owes its orientation and its strength to his doctoral thesis: *Esquisse du mouvement des prix et des revenus en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. From the very outset of the first volume of *La crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'ancien régime et au début de la Révolution*, he states in all its breadth one of the great problems of the history of human societies: "It would appear from the evidence of prices, whose meaning varies according to the era, that when a rise succeeds a decline, a crisis occurs in economies of the modern type which are dominated by metallurgy, or more generally, by commodities whose production tends to vary in the same manner as prices. A crisis occurs in economies of the old type, dominated by wheat and rye, or more generally, by agricultural goods whose prices tend to vary inversely with production, when a rise succeeds a decline or a plateau." We can see from this how much modern history is concerned with economic history. In all its domains—prices, production, distribution, profit, consumption—economic life is merely a succession of disequilibriums, a chain of fluctuations of more or less protracted duration, of alternating rises and falls, of expansion and contraction, of prosperity and recession, usually classified according to how long they last. But one thing must be clearly understood:

the crisis is merely an accident in the cycle, a cyclical phenomenon. The crises of 1770, of 1782–1784, of 1789–1799, of 1795, of 1802–1803, of 1812, of 1817, mark the great moments of pre-revolutionary, revolutionary, and post-revolutionary economic history. We might add the crises of 1830 and of 1847: great economic moments can also be great historical moments. Whether relative or absolute, whether or not they exhibit an increasing seriousness, economic recessions are interpreted by contemporaries, who ascribe them to institutions or, more often, to men, just as they attributed or would attribute the credit for success to institutions and to men. An unfavorable economic situation creates an unfavorable political situation, all the more so as the evolution of private revenues is not without effect upon public revenues, hence upon the relative weight of fiscal burdens. The study of economic fluctuations, of those classified and hierarchized fluctuations all of whose nuances, “variables,” and historicity are known—fluctuations whose uninterrupted chain spreads over the seasons, the years, the centuries—is one of the expansion and recession of revenues, of the variations in the material condition of men. These variations concern all of society, not only because they represent a great human event but because they are alertly perceived by men. One pays less attention to the state people are in than to their movements, less to the scale of living than to changes in it. Since the appearance of classes—or to be more exact, since the affirmation of class-consciousness—a multitude of men are more or less resigned to living “poorly,” less to impoverishment or even to the mere aggravation of social differences. This economic movement is linked with all other human activities and, to a certain extent, controls them. The historian’s problem is to examine and to determine this extent. For a long time it has been noted that a rising tide of wealth brings to the classes that benefit by it a large purchasing power which is used to buy luxury items, particularly intellectual and artistic products for which an enlarged and impatient clientèle competes. With wealth and education, the mentality and taste of the classes are transformed. These are not new ideas, but they are, to a very large extent, the consequence of movements of long duration. Cyclical movements are no less important; their historic dynamism is considerable. The cyclical crisis, in fact, is a natural period of unrest and of political difficulties of all kinds. We know that 1789, 1830, 1847 were years of crisis.

Pierre Leon’s doctoral thesis, *La naissance de la grande industrie en Dauphiné—fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup>—1869*, fits into this perspective. It upsets chronology, for it takes us from the “economy of famines” to the be-

ginnings of the “economy of over-production.” This economic history rightly reclaims economic frontiers: that of the early seventeenth century, largely at the point of contact with the medieval artisan class (with horizons opening on an economy which the eighteenth century was to modify profoundly)—that of 1869–1870, which marks the split between a long period of revolution and of industrial expansion that was ending and the period of contraction which was to follow and during which new techniques were to appear. Between the two lies the history of the survival and of the slow death of a certain artisan class at grips with commercial and industrial capitalism. The Dauphiné cycle coincides rather markedly with the national cycle; the great crises appear there in about the same periods. The crisis of the old economy begins with poor harvests followed by a rise in the cost of living which is climaxed by a cyclical maximum in grain prices. Simultaneously, industrial activity tends to decline: the high cost of living, the reduced rate of employment, the contraction of profits superimpose their effects. The second third of the century corresponds to the entry into an intermediate economic period, and until the end of the Second Empire one witnesses the “chain of catastrophes”: spasms of grain prices and bankruptcies, agricultural crises and commercial crises persist in coinciding to a certain degree. And so, in spite of railways, in spite of the development of the metallurgical industry (whose rhythm of activity at times tended to prolong the crises rather than to shorten them), in spite of the improvement in working conditions, the functioning of economic society remained in very large measure unchanged. A considerable part of society was still threatened by catastrophes that were typical of earlier times; the simultaneity of food and business crises, of rises in the cost of living and drops in wage levels and employment. Over and above this regional framework the entire French economy of the nineteenth century becomes manifest. The crisis of agricultural underproduction seemed to play the role of the prime mover by unleashing a crisis of relative industrial underconsumption in an economy in which the metallurgical industry and even its suppliers, like the entire industrial economy itself, did not yet play a determining role. Here, by bearing in mind Simiand’s observation that the “cause” becomes confused with the nonsubstitutable, or the least substitutable antecedent, one can succeed in understanding the origins of crises of the old type. Pierre Leon’s study terminated at the date of a “birth,” not of a maturation: all in all, the world of production had not yet completely freed itself from ancient frameworks, and society lagged, as it always must, behind the economy.

A fragmentary history? How could it be otherwise? How could one react otherwise than by working in the face of the failure of a would-be “philosophy of history” which did not concern itself with history—in the face of the sclerosis of a history which declared itself dedicated to facts but neglected to define them?

Does this mean that if one rejects “synthesis” one must return to narrow specialization? Certainly not. One of the great battles waged by the *Annales* against “*histoire-historisante*” was directed precisely against the state of mind that ends up by viewing only the wars of Louis XIV without situating them in their historical context, that makes one study the wars of Napoleon without bothering about the evolution that led to the concept of the citizen-soldier and to the development of military matériel and technology, to the establishment of timetables, to post-mortems on strategy, to regaining Wagram or losing Waterloo all over again. In 1933 Lucien Febvre spoke out against this spirit of specialization: “I have said: No, not sciences—those circumstantial and local combinations of elements that are often arbitrarily associated. Break up abstract frameworks, go straight to the problems that the non-specialist bears within himself, raise them for him and for others apart from all preoccupation with schools of thought. . . . In this way the unity of the human spirit, the unity of human uneasiness in the face of the unknown will be made palpable to all: a unity hidden by the multiplication of petty disciplines, jealous of their autonomy and clinging desperately to an autarchy as useless and as disastrous in the intellectual domain as in the economic. Let us prepare, when there is reason to, Treatises and Manuals of our respective sciences. This is a practical necessity. But they will have human value only if they are animated by a broad-minded spirit of scientific unity.” As Simiand remarked ironically: “One does not discover the laws of meteorology by locking oneself within the four walls of one’s garden!”

No matter how fragmentary they may seem, the works of economic history to which we alluded earlier are such only by virtue of their “matter” and not by virtue of their objective or their conception. It is quite evident that price movements are not all of history—but one cannot understand history without introducing them as an explanatory factor. There is no such thing as unilateral history. But there is such a thing as the history of price movements, just as there is of demographic increases, racial tensions, technological progress, economic rhythms, psychological eddies, or that diffuse spiritualism to which Ranke referred. Moreover, we should mistrust overhasty definitions. In *Die weltgeschichtliche Stellung*

des 16, Erich Hassinger makes Charles VIII's invasion of Italy and the "Northern Peace" the bounds of the sixteenth century. This is an indication of the interest which some people feel the problems of periodization—incidentally incapable of solution—deserve. George von Below defined these problems in *Ueber historische Periodisierung*, but he forgot that one could apply to chronological subdivisions Alain's dictum about numbers: "They are a quality not of things but of our minds." Hassinger, for example, neglects the extension of space, that renewal of horizons which was to overturn so many things, that substitution of Atlantic perspectives for Mediterranean ones. He likewise neglects demographic factors and price revolutions. Thus he ends up with a sixteenth century that is exclusively political and religious, which he sees as being "one." Actually, sixteenth-century Germany offers the historian the possibility of a twofold experiment: to reconstitute the entire life of a heterogeneous whole—to link this history of Germany with that of Europe and to see whether both of them did or did not accept the same rhythms. This is why the stress must be placed upon the history of structures and of conjunctures. Only an episodic importance should be given to great men and resounding events—to Maximilian or Charles V, to Dürer or Luther, to the Diet of Worms or the battle of Muhlberg. The study of geography and consequently of German diversity, the analysis of the mechanisms of the markets of Frankfurt on the Main and Leipzig, the description of the realities of material life, the demographic problems—all these are fully meaningful only when they are linked with classical portrayals and explanations of the religious, intellectual, and political life of Germany.

The study of conjunctures, according to the books of Wilhelm Abel and Elsass (whose conclusions at times call for some reservations) lead us to the core of this reconstruction. Actually, so far as Germany is concerned, the two centuries are split. The first, the sixteenth, begins around 1450 and ends about 1530–1540. The second extends to the beginning of the Thirty Years War which, according to the different regions, was more or less ahead of schedule, also more or less catastrophic. What remains to be done is to follow the transition from the first to the second of these periods, to analyze over and above traditional explanations those hinge-years from 1530 to 1550, from the *Reichstag* of Augsburg to the tomorrows of Muhlberg. In particular, is it possible to establish a relationship between the economic crises and the growing tensions of the religious and political situation? The most recent studies by German historians view this connection with a certain indifference. It seems to us that Germany functioned at

that time in accordance with the rhythms of Europe and of the world, and that the sixteenth century was similarly dualistic everywhere. Showing but slight animation until its mid-point had been reached, it seemed then to be roused by a wave of prosperity which excluded neither the surprises nor the sufferings linked with overpopulation, the rise in prices, and the continuous wage crisis. Did not Jacob Strieder concentrate too exclusively on the great epoch of the Fuggers and of Augsburg and neglect the last fifty years of the century—years so rich in material for study of structural changes, the displacement of industrial, transport, and commercial centers? An apparently sluggish Germany, lacking great men and historic dramas, was the scene and victim of multiple changes. Need one not seek historical reasons of a general order rather than purely German ones, to explain such a fate?

Similar problems confront one in regard to France, largely open at that time to the external world. There is an advantage—despite the contrary view of Lucien Romier and Pierre Champion—in explaining France not on the basis of a period of several years but through all the phases of the sixteenth century, in thus understanding her without reference to charts of events, in recognizing the rhythms of her conjunctures and the more or less permanent characteristics of her structure. All of these are considerations which, once again, lead one to reexamine the profound crisis of the middle of the century. For the conflicts, on both sides of this caesura, throw light on the entire destiny of the century. Would there not be some advantage in studying more attentively than has as yet been done, the social disturbances of the last decade of the century, the spread of the Reformation, the geographical localization of the first three religious wars, which would lead one to locate the entire importance of the “turning point” of 1568 in the history of French Protestantism?

However, it is necessary to give historical studies a chronological framework. This was the feeling of the promoters of the *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* of UNESCO, edited by Lucien Febvre, who conceives of them as materials for a future “history of the world.” The formula is a happy one. The only people who may not like it are those who would prefer definitive answers to questions which they do not put to themselves, or the false security of the “Manual” to the indecision of the investigator. In a few months (thanks to André Varagnac) the first volume of a new collection, *Destins du monde*, will appear. It too is edited by Lucien Febvre. He wishes to break with concepts developed by those who clung to western frameworks, paying no attention to non-European mentalities—



without, however, giving the impression of omniscience. "It is better frankly to reveal our inability to conceive in its entirety, today, a true History of the World—and to curtail our ambition (if it really is a question of 'curtailment'), in order to study in concrete terms a certain number of the major problems which trouble and haunt us." But then what would the chronological frameworks be like? Is it possible to speak of world chronological frameworks—that is to say, to establish the existence, among parts of the world that have long been unaware of each other, of rhythms of growth and development susceptible of global interpretation? Voltaire made a bold gesture when he began his *Histoire de mœurs* with China, when, shortly before, Bossuet had begun his work with the people of Israel. This gesture had no sequel. The great work was something to think about rather than to execute because greater enlightenment is less important than a change in the realm of concepts.

The problem which thus arises is one of organizing, in terms of their presumable importance, the chaos of events, of introducing order into the mass of ideas and of facts, into the permanent and the contingent which make use of history, without, however, evidencing in any way a critical or discriminating approach. Such a task can be undertaken only by teams of researchers. It is necessary to launch converging investigations thought out in their entirety and begun simultaneously so that this or that monetary, transportational, populational or psychological phenomenon might be studied in the same spirit or within the framework of civilizations separated in time and space. Otherwise only a linear account is possible, which means subjection to the most outdated chronological frameworks and to the most arbitrarily schematized events.

All this is well and good, but what can be the utility of such a work—*what purpose does history serve?* Napoleon III answered: "History is war." True, if it consists of a series of intrigues and princely stratagems, of attacks and furors, of pillages and conquests directed by "heroes." History is actually the long sequence of efforts made by men to leave their imprint upon the planet, to adapt themselves collectively to physical and social settings which are perpetually changing. It is the effort of societies to arrange their past pragmatically, to project behind the images which they themselves form of their life, of their collective ends, of the qualities necessary for the achievement of these ends, a sort of prefiguration of this reality—simplified, to be sure, but endowed with a tradition upon which religion confers a sacred character. To understand history (which is infinitely more important than to learn it) is therefore to become aware of

the need men feel to organize the past in terms of the present, to project upon the past (at least upon that part of it which is known) the dreams and anxieties of the present.

This kind of history places no obligations on anyone, but without it nothing solid can be built. The architect is not forced to employ any special style because of the nature of the terrain, but he cannot build without knowing the terrain. The same is true of history, of the kind that is an atmosphere rather than a lesson.

It may be that great catastrophes are not the agents of real revolutions. However, they herald them and impose the obligation to reconsider various problems. The meditations of Saint-Simon, Comte, Proudhon and Marx stemmed from revolutionary upheavals. During the winter of 1871, Jakob Burckhardt wondered what subject he would deal with in the course he was about to give at the University of Basle. He chose the French Revolution, which he declared to be merely the first act, the beginning of a cycle. It was early in July 1940 that Gaston Roupnel constructed *Histoire et Destin*. When everything was crumbling, history, as Michelet had understood it, was starting all over again.

How can it remain outside of the world's upheavals, when its sense of the concrete has led it to revise its methods, to call upon all disciplines in order to succeed in achieving simultaneous awareness of time and space? It is by being problematical that history rediscovers life.