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# Intellectual History in a Global Age

*Donald R. Kelley*

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The history of ideas began as an interdisciplinary field served by history but dominated by philosophy, which allowed “ideas,” and even “unit ideas,” to act as currency across time and space, between languages and traditions, churches and heresies, classes and nations, natives and Others. From the beginning, however, the history of ideas in Lovejoy’s sense of the phrase was criticized for its neglect of historical context; for as Juan Luis Borges has written, “ideas are not eternal like marble,” and the criticisms of Lovejoy have followed the spirit of this warning.<sup>1</sup>

In a famous exchange, recalling the ancient warfare between philology and philosophy, Leo Spitzer criticized Lovejoy for abstracting and dehumanizing “ideas” in order to show the parallels between Romanticism and Hitlerism divorced from the “climate” in which each phenomenon “organically” arose (alluding here to Joseph Glanvil’s notion of a “climate of opinion”).<sup>2</sup> What Spitzer opposed to Lovejoy’s analysis of ideas as “isolated units” was the literary and holistic method of *Geistesgeschichte*, yet tied as well to the premises of Ranke’s scientific history, which viewed Romanticism and Hitlerism as terms not merely as philosophical interpretation but as “factually existent” phenomena, each with its own determinable but incomparable historical context, which resists logical and reductionist analysis.

In general the project of intellectual history has been carried on between two poles of inquiry which have been commonly known as internalist and externalist—or “intellectualist” and “contextualist”—methods.<sup>3</sup> The first of

<sup>1</sup> “Daybreak” (Amanecer): “las ideas/ no son eternas como el mármol.”

<sup>2</sup> “Geistesgeschichte vs. History of Ideas as Applied to Hitlerism,” and Lovejoy, “Reply to Prof. Spitzer.” *JHI*, 5 (1944), 191-203 and 204-19, repr. *The History of Ideas: Canon and Variations*, ed. D. R. Kelley (Rochester, N.Y., 1990).

<sup>3</sup> See Robert E. Butts and James Robert Brown (eds.), *Constructivism and Science* (Dordrecht, 1989); Clifford Geertz, “The Strange Estrangement: Taylor and the Natural Sciences,” in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question*, ed. James Tully

these polar positions is located in individual psychology and mental phenomena, the second in collective behavior, inherited or learned practice, and cultural surroundings. For history this takes the form on the one hand of tracing ideas in terms of an inner dynamic, or familiar logic, similar to what the eighteenth century called “reasoned” or “conjectural” history, and on the other hand of trying somehow to place ideas in the context of their own particular time, place, and environment, without assuming continuities of familiar meanings.

One thing common to Lovejoy, Spitzer, and Marx is the effort to “get behind the back of language” (in the phrase of Gadamer). These scholars all operated before the recent linguistic turn, which has undermined the spiritualist conception of ideas and their history, the intuitions of *Geistesgeschichte*, and the simple correlations of vulgar Marxism. These days we seem to have moved beyond such short-cuts, for the past is indeed a “foreign country”; and while ordinary human communication may be the hermeneutical project of “finding the I in the Thou,” intellectual history cannot be satisfied with finding the We in—or forcing the We upon—the They.<sup>4</sup> Hegel to the contrary notwithstanding, it’s not just about us. Historical meaning extends over many horizons, and a dictionary of ideas (not to mention a dictionary of intellectual historians) must be open not only to undefined and perhaps even undefinable cultural alterity but also to ambiguities, anomalies, and differences within many semantic fields.

There is nothing at all new in this suggestion, and indeed well over a half-century ago that forgotten prophet Benjamin Lee Whorf regarded his linguistic insights as a “new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same pattern of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated.”<sup>5</sup> Intellectual historians are limited by a similar principle of relativity in even more confusing fields of observation, nor can historical “meaning” be exempt from this condition. For Heidegger language is the “house of being,” but for him the European house is altogether different than those of other cultures, and (as he concluded) “a dialogue from house to house is nearly impossible.”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in our own “house of being,” we are denizens, actors, and even creators but never quite masters, and this further complicates the quest for meaning.

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(Cambridge, 1994); Jan Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science* (Cambridge, 1998); Mary Hesse, *Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science* (Bloomington, Ind., 1980); and Vasiliki Betty Smocovitis, *Unifying Biology: The Evolutionary Synthesis and Evolutionary Biology* (Princeton, N.J., 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, VII (Leipzig, 1927), 191 (Entwürfe zur Kritik der historischen Vernunft): “Das Verstehen ist ein Wiederfinden des Ich im Du.”

<sup>5</sup> *Language, Thought, and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 158.

<sup>6</sup> See “A Dialogue on Language,” *On the Way to Language*, tr. Peter D. Hertz (New York, 1982).

In the wake of Foucault, our post-modern Descartes (or parodist of Descartes, as Allan Megill suggests) it has become unfashionable to speak of a thinking subject, but our hermeneutical predicament and the medium of language which connects or divides us does not allow us to dispense with this construct, which has been under attack ever since Hume. In other words we cannot avoid the horizon-structure of experience and inquiry, including what Gadamer has called the “experience of tradition,” and the subjective standpoint at the center of this horizon which language requires of us as speaking, inquiring, judging, and interpreting subjects in a world of alien objects.<sup>7</sup> Whatever its post-Foucauldian epistemological status, subjectivity, as Emile Benveniste has argued, is embedded in language, and so, in the form of predication, is objectivity.<sup>8</sup> It is out of this grammatical substructure that epistemological problems of “subjectivity” and “objectivity” have arisen to puzzle historians and social scientists who actually live humanly not in an open universe but in a local cultural and linguistic house of being.

Within the medium of language we cannot avoid or transcend the I-O arrangement of our intellectual formulations. The I-O distinction has become controversial among historians of science. Ian Hacking sums up the issue in this way:

External history is a matter of politics, economics, the funding of institutes, the circulation of journals, and all the social circumstances that are external to knowledge itself. Internal history is the history of individual items of knowledge, conjectures, experiments, refutations, perhaps.<sup>9</sup>

And he adds that “We have no good account of the relationship between external and internal history.”

In a longer perspective the Outside, the inaccessible historical *Ding an sich*, refers to “what really happened,” in Ranke’s notorious formula descended from the classical topos referring to the actions or things (*res gestae*) described by the historian in an alien cultural context. The Inside is the author who seeks to reduce what appears Outside the immediate field of vision and inquiry into a narration of reality (*rerum gestarum narratio*), which then becomes part of the Outside, even for the author. Thus intellectual history may be seen as the inside

<sup>7</sup> *Truth and Method*, tr. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York, 1975), 321.

<sup>8</sup> “De la subjectivité dans le langage, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris, 1966), 258-66.

<sup>9</sup> Hacking, “How Should We Do the History of Statistics?” *The Foucault Effect*, ed. Graham Burchell et al. (Chicago, 1991), 191.

of cultural history, cultural history as the outside of intellectual history, and the challenge for the historian is to bring the two into alliance.<sup>10</sup>

The earliest sites of this “inner-outer” distinction have been the histories of religion and of philosophy, where the dualism of body and soul still prevails. In the mid-eighteenth century J. L. Mosheim organized his ecclesiastical history (1755) according to just this division. “As the history of the church is *External* or *Internal*,” he remarked, “so the manner of treating it must be suited to that division.”<sup>11</sup> The external history of the church included matters of government, secular learning, and major events, and the internal history matters of the spirit, such as doctrine, heresy, and ceremony.

The history of philosophy, which had emerged as a new discipline in the seventeenth century, displays a similar structure. At first this took the form of doxography in the style of the classic (but also trivial and untrustworthy) work of Diogenes Laertius on the “lives and opinions of philosophers.” As the historian of philosophy, Ephraim Gerhard, complained in 1711, doxographers were interested only in external matters such as anecdotes about Pythagoras’s father, Plato’s mother, or Aristotle’s son, in the physical condition or temperaments of philosophers, or in the later *fortuna* of their writings.<sup>12</sup>

The very first periodical devoted to the history of philosophy, the *Acta Philosophorum* edited by C. A. Heumann beginning in 1715, exemplified the old doxography as expanded by new scholarship.<sup>13</sup> Heumann himself believed that philosophical self-understanding required not merely inward-looking speculation but also inquiry into the human conditions of philosophizing, since, as Heumann aphorized, “Philosophers are made, not born” (*Philosophi fiunt, non nascuntur*), reversing the condition of the poet (*nascitur non fit*).<sup>14</sup> Following Augustine, Heumann also went on to wonder if bastards had a special talent and whether women or *castrati* were capable of philosophy. Beyond psychological factors, Heumann considered the influence of environment, climate, the stars, race, nationality, and historical periods.

In sharp contrast to this vulgar externalism was the work of such thinkers as Jakob Thomasius, who was, *ante litteram*, a historians of ideas, who traced

<sup>10</sup> “Intellectual and Cultural History: The Inside and the Outside,” *History of the Human Sciences*, 15 (2002).

<sup>11</sup> *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*, tr. Archibald Maclaine (2 vols.; New York, 1867).

<sup>12</sup> *Introductio praeliminaris in historiam philosophicam* (Jena, 1711), 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Acta Philosophorum, Gründl. Nachrichten aus der Historia Philosophica*, ed. C. A. Heumann (Halle, 1715-21).

<sup>14</sup> *Acta Philosophorum*, I, 567-656, “Von dem Ingenio Philosophico.” Cf. William Ringler, “*Posta nascitur non fit*: On the History of an Aphorism,” *JHI*, 2 (1941), 497-504. The formulas *Criticus non fit, sed nascitur*, attributed to David Ruhken, and *interpres not fit, sed nascitur*, are reported by Phillip August Boeck, “Theory of Hermeneutics,” in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Kurt Mueller Vollmer (London, 1986), 139.

concepts of God, nature, being, etc. from the ancient schools down to his own age. As his former student Leibniz wrote to him in 1669, “Most others are skilled rather in antiquity than in science and give us lives rather than doctrines. You will give us the history of philosophy [*historia philosophica*], not of philosophers.”<sup>15</sup> In the terminology used by Leibniz (and given new currency in our time by Thomas Kuhn), Thomasius tried to reveal not the outside but the inside—not the body but the soul—of the history of philosophy.

The internalist view came to full flower in Hegel’s concept of *Philosophiegeschichte*. “The essential connection between what is apparently past and the present state reached by philosophy,” he wrote, “is not one of the external considerations which might have attention in the history of philosophy but expresses instead the inner nature of its character.” For Hegel this internalist history had nothing to do with an alien Thou and everything to do with the philosophizing I. “Was innen ist ist aussen,” as he put it; and moreover, he added, “The course of history does not show us the Becoming of things foreign to us but the Becoming of ourselves and of our own knowledge.”<sup>16</sup>

The result was to emphasize the doctrinal and what I would call the propositional conception of the history of philosophy and of ideas. Not the wit, wisdom, and life-style of Diogenes, we may say, or of his intellectual community, but the ideas and theories which produced common ground between Plato and Leibniz and which permitted the discussion of “perennial questions” by a philosophical “we” without regard to the limits of seventeenth-century cultural horizons or indeed of language in general. As Georg Simmel, himself torn between philosophy and sociology, put it, “If history is not a mere puppet show, then it must be a history of mental processes.... Attempts to reconstruct the physical conditions responsible for the peculiarities of historical events does not alter this fact.”<sup>17</sup> In this way the external history of philosophy was overshadowed by an internal, spiritual history which produced a rational, triumphalist, and “Whiggish” narrative of the progress of reason down to the present—or rather, the history of “our” reason down to “our” times.

The war between internalism and externalism has left its mark on the study of literary history, another discipline that emerged in the seventeenth century. Histories of literature have been divided generally between indiscriminating surveys of authors and books or else critical and opinionated studies of capital-

<sup>15</sup> Preface (20/30 April 1669) to Nizolio, *De Veris Principis et vera ratione philosophandi contra pseudophilosophos libri IV* (Frankfurt, 1670), fol. 2<sup>v</sup> (“non philosophorum, sed philosophiae historia”); also in *Philosophical papers and Letters*, tr. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht, 1969), 93. For the exchanges on the history of philosophy see *Leibniz-Thomasius: Correspondence 1663-1672*, ed. and tr. Richard Bodéüs (Paris, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, tr. E. S. Haldane (Lincoln, Neb., 1995), 4.

<sup>17</sup> *The Problems of the Philosophy of History: An Epistemological Essay*, tr. Guy Oakes (New York, 1979), 39.

L “Literature.” As Leibniz wanted a history of Philosophy not of philosophers, not just old-fashioned doxography, so Friedrich Schlegel wanted a history of Literature and not just a sequence of authors.<sup>18</sup> Yet in general the externalist road was taken by historians of literature, while the internalist path was followed by capital-C “Critics,” who treated questions of aesthetics, originality, and the “classical” status of texts. For critics literature is the offspring of individual genius and risks being spoiled by analysis and considerations of climate and context. For the historians, according to the famous aphorism of the Vicomte de Bonald, “Literature is an expression of society.”<sup>19</sup>

In literary history constructivism is of two sorts, one psychological and the other social, and each of these is nicely represented by a French master of the last century. Psychological constructivism, or reductionism, was the specialty of the great critic Sainte-Beuve. What he did in his weekly column, the *Lundis*, was to shift attention from the creative artist to another self (*un autre moi*) that appeared not in the published *oeuvre* but rather in letters, social gossip, and the perceived “character” inferred from behavior in the context of salon culture. This externalist impulse also underlay Sainte-Beuve’s monumental study of seventeenth-century intellectual history, which was defined not merely by the ideas of Arnauld, Jansen, and Pascal but by the lives, opinions, and interactions of all the members of the monastery of Port-Royal and by the changing social context.<sup>20</sup> (Recall that Sainte-Beuve was himself the victim of such anecdotalism as a result of his affair with Victor Hugo’s wife; whether or not this scandal shed light on the literary practice of either, it was, said the externalist scholar Irving Babbitt, a delicious morsel for the ultra-biographical school.)

To literary artists and historians who championed the internalist values of aesthetics this attention to gossip and character seemed a violation of the autonomy of art and the privileges and the genius of the artist. “The man is nothing,” Flaubert told Georges Sand; “the work is everything.”<sup>21</sup> This line of protest was summed up in Marcel Proust’s *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, which denounced the critic on the grounds that he “sees literature under the category of time” and follows a method which “consists in not separating the man from his work.”<sup>22</sup> In other words he sees the outside but not the inside of the artist.

<sup>18</sup> Ernst Behler, “Problems of Origins in Modern Literary Theory,” in *Theoretical Issues in Literary History*, ed. David Perkins (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 12.

<sup>19</sup> Louis de Bonald, *Législation primitif* (Paris, 1829), II, 223.

<sup>20</sup> Letter to Renan, 29 August 1852, *Correspondance générale*, ed. Jean Bonnerot, n. s., IX. Paris, 1959), IX, 172, and Lundi, 9 Mar. 1857; also René Wellek (1965) *A History of Literary Criticism* (New Haven, Conn., 1965), III, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to Georges Sand (Dec. 1875), *The Selected Letters*, tr. Francis Steegmuller (New York, 1953), 249.

<sup>22</sup> *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (Paris, 1954), 127.

As for the social version of constructivism, this was associated especially with a the younger French literary critic and historian, Hippolyte Taine, who regarded Sainte-Beuve (as Proust remarked) as a predecessor in the discovery of the scientific method formulated more rigidly by Taine himself.<sup>23</sup> Taine's method was expressed most famously in the contextualist trinity of "race, moment, milieu," which relate literary creations to the external dispositions of national character, pressures of the natural environment, and periods of cultural development. To literary artists like Flaubert, Taine's "fatalism" was no less objectionable than Sainte-Beuve's psychologism. For Taine, Flaubert complained, "The masterpiece no longer has any significance except as a historical document."<sup>24</sup>

What Taine seemed to disregard was the vast distance between document and artistic work (according to the distinction of Heidegger)—between "tradition and the individual talent" (in the phrase of T. S. Eliot).<sup>25</sup> How can one distinguish between authors living in the same century and "moral climate"? "One can indeed show all the relations they have with the time in which they are born and live....," Sainte-Beuve wrote in a critique of Taine, "but one cannot tell in advance that [the age] will give birth to a particular kind of individual or talent. Why Pascal rather than La Fontaine?"<sup>26</sup> These are questions which seem to be ignored by externalist interpretations.

Constructivism is associated with another distraction from authorial autonomy, which goes by the name of contextualism.<sup>27</sup> A classic debate over this issue was staged two generations ago between the "Responsible Critic" from Cambridge, F. R. Leavis, and F. W. Bateson of Oxford, posing as the champion of scholarship and what he called "the discipline of contextual reading" (exemplified by Rosamond Tuve).<sup>28</sup> The notoriously opinionated Leavis demurred, arguing that the idea of placing a poem back into "total context" was nonsense and "social context" was an illusion arising involuntarily "out of one's personal living" situated in the twentieth century. For Leavis in any case "social" was an invidious term which should not be allowed to contaminate the high art of Literature, and such pretensions to scholarship suggested an inability to read

<sup>23</sup> Proust, *ibid.*, 124, referring to Taine's preface to his *L'Intelligence*; Paul Lacombe, *La Psychologie des individus et des sociétés chez Taine, historien des littératures* (Paris, 1906), François Leger, *Monsieur Taine* (Paris, 1993), and Regina Pozzi, *Hippolyte Taine: Scienze umane e politica nell'Ottocento* (Venice, 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Gustav Flaubert, *The Selected Letters*, tr. Francis Steegmuller (New York, 1953).

<sup>25</sup> T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Essays* (New York, 1950); Martin Heidegger (1971), "The Origin of the Work of Art," and Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983), 26, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Sainte-Beuve, *op. cit.*, III, 213.

<sup>27</sup> Hacking (1999).

<sup>28</sup> Leavis, *A Selection from Scrutiny*, ed. F. R. Leavis (Cambridge, 1968), II, 280ff.



poetry and to make the sort of intuitive aesthetic judgments that were the office of the critic.<sup>29</sup> Diverted by biographical details and irrelevant context—“Shakespeare’s laundry lists” was the scornful phrase—some literary critics and historians tended to lose sight of what Wellek and Warren called the “intrinsic study of literature” and “modes of existence of the literary work of art.”<sup>30</sup>

This debate was revived a generation later by another Cambridge scholar, Quentin Skinner, who invoked Bateson and his “contextualist reading” against Leavis and transported the arguments into the “context” of political theory, which had suffered the same sort of contempt for history that Leavis had displayed with regard to literature.<sup>31</sup> The vulgar and socially reductionist versions of contextualism were represented, on the left and right respectively, by Marx and Lewis Namier, focusing on social background; they studied history and behavior but were looking for something else. Skinner, however, advocated a less ideological (or anti-ideological) and more linguistic attention to historical context in order to avoid anachronism and to understand original authorial intention and meaning.

One classic example of this polarity in the intellectual history itself appears in the critical reactions to Arthur O. Lovejoy’s *The Great Chain of Being* of 1936, which is a paradigm of the internalist history of ideas. The next year, in the “Marxian Quarterly,” *Science and Society*, the young scholar Charles Trinkaus found his neglect of “the social determinants and consequences” of this idea” to be “a serious omission,” since the concept of cosmic hierarchy, which was homologous to the gradation of social and political ranks, “not only reflected the structure of class society but also appears to have been used to justify and strength class domination.”<sup>32</sup> Nor was it surprising, Trinkaus added, that the “temporalization” of the great chain and evolutionary ideas coincided chronologically with “the advent of progressive bourgeois capitalism” and its attendant hierarchies.

Trinkaus himself later turned to the most purely internalist sort of intellectual history, becoming a leading historian of Renaissance moral (and conspicuously not political) thought.<sup>33</sup> At this point, however, he was following a Marxist model of externalist history, and he was taken to task by the analytical philosopher Ernest Nagel for his assumptions, in particular the notion of ideas being a “reflection” of social conditions, which was a metaphor that neither explained nor predicted anything, at least without evidence that Trinkaus had

<sup>29</sup> *Anna Karenina and other essays* (London, 1967), 195.

<sup>30</sup> René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York, 1949), 139.

<sup>31</sup> See *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, N.J., 1988), 69.

<sup>32</sup> Review of Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, in *Science & Society*, 1 (1937).

<sup>33</sup> *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (2 vols.; Chicago, 1967).

not offered. Having criticized Lovejoy for his own departures from logic, Nagel applied the same internalist rigor to the contextualist suggestions ventured by Trinkaus.

This illustration concerns the history of ideas in its classic and innocent state, but on one point Lovejoy and his critics were in agreement—the need for an interdisciplinary approach. In fact the most important advances in intellectual history in this century have been made not in history as such but rather in some of these overlapping disciplines, especially in the history of philosophy, of natural science, and of literature. These disciplines have all been scenes of I-O conflicts, and in my recent historical survey of intellectual history I have drawn on each of these independent traditions for perspectives on the past and insight into the present state of the question.<sup>34</sup>

The contrast I have been making also has an epistemological aspect, which is between what has been called “makers knowledge” and the social or cultural construction of knowledge.<sup>35</sup> The first is the old belief—going back to Vico, Hobbes, and indeed Plato—that one is able to understand only what one has made, or is able humanly to make, and this implies a meeting of minds across the ages through ideas, theories, and other intellectual creations, so that in effect all history is internalized. The second is the newer belief that knowledge is shaped or even determined by the material conditions—limitations as well as possibilities—of a society and questions of power relations, class structure, and factors of gender, race, nationality, etc. Put differently, the contrast is between a *phenomenological* view which takes ideas on their own terms, that is, as mental phenomena, and a reductionist or *constructivist* view which treats them as something else—or at least as derivative of a particular cultural context.

For some scholars this internalist-externalist distinction, which was restored to currency a generation ago in the wake of debates provoked by Thomas Kuhn, has fallen out of favor. Steven Shapin has rejected it as “silly” and unworthy of discussion, apparently because he believes that the latter, constructivist approach has prevailed and assimilated the naive internalist view.<sup>36</sup> But such Angloid revisionism (Dr. Johnson’s kicking the stones of vain philosophy) is hardly the last word on the subject. A distinction between “inner” and “outer” will persist until there is an end to asking questions about the history of concepts, theories, paradigms, revolutions, thematic origins of scientific thought, and other decontextualizable epiphenomena which have occupied thinkers for centuries in many contexts and hermeneutical conditions. In fact the opposi-

<sup>34</sup> *The Descent of Ideas: A History of Intellectual History* (Aldershot, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> See Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999); and Antonio Pérez-Ramos, *Francis Bacon’s Idea of Science and the Maker’s Knowledge Tradition* (Oxford, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, 1996).

tion between internal and external is deeply embedded in western thought and languages, most obviously and most paradigmatically, perhaps, in Plato's distinction between the true (and inner) world of ideas and the false (and outer) world of appearances. This fundamental polarity was reinforced by the Christian dualisms of body-and-soul and letter-and-spirit, as well as the Cartesian distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, Kant's "starry heaven above and "moral law within," and Nietzsche's opposition of Platonic ideas to the "truth in appearances." Nor do I think that either history or language allows us to evade this conventional structure of thought, no matter how many rocks we may kick or what our context or imagined Archimedean vantage point.

The one accessible place where internalist and externalist concerns seem to intersect is language, which is internalized in individuals but which is also the object of science and which can be analyzed in terms both of both maker's knowledge and of social construction. What Emile Durkheim said of religion applies also, and even more fundamentally, to language: "Collective representations are the result of an immense co-operation, which stretches not only into space but into time as well; to make them, a multitude of minds have associated, united, and combined their ideas and sentiments...."<sup>37</sup> Or as Karl Mannheim put it, "Strictly speaking it is incorrect to say that the single mind thinks. Rather it is more correct to insist that he participates in thinking further what other men have thought before him."<sup>38</sup> In these days of the linguistic and textualist turns one should substitute "writing" for "ideas," "sentiments," and "thinking"; for it is in the effort of writing in particular that the subject—philosopher, scientist, literary artist—ventures out into the surrounding cultural space and perhaps historical notice. The author's thought is already a cultural construction, no doubt, but communication and dialogue gives it external form subject to interpretation and criticism.

In short (and to return to the original analogy) *parole* occupies the center of the horizons of understanding (in the Saussurean formula), while *langue* fills up the rest. (This is the case with technical as well as ordinary languages.) Here the "I" and the "Thou" meet in a common medium—lexicographically if not spiritually. Here intellectual and cultural history intersect, and the internalist-externalist dilemma retreats into the realm of pure epistemology, where it will cause less trouble for the research agenda of intellectual and cultural historians.

To shift from the horizon analogy to a more linear model, intellectual history can be seen as defining a large spectrum ranging from the most restricted sort of history of ideas (the Tusi couple in Copernicus, the Merton rule in Galileo, the topoi studied by Ernst Curtius) to the most expansive and theoretical efforts

<sup>37</sup> *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, tr. Joseph Ward Swain (New York, 1915), 29.

<sup>38</sup> Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, tr. L. Wirth and E. Shils (New York, 1952), 3.

to relate human efforts to a larger collective reality, whether designated spirit, climate of opinion, culture, *Weltanschauung*, social base, ideology, mentality, practice, tradition, paradigm, or “universe of discourse.”<sup>39</sup>

There are many contexts—diachronic, synchronic, disciplinary, professional, rhetorical, etc.—which can be (and for centuries have been) put to use by historians.<sup>40</sup> The point is not to privilege one sort of interpretation as Ideologically or Methodologically Correct. This is a counsel not so much of relativism as of complementarity and a reminder of the enduring concern of history, which is not final closure but continuing inquiry into the ups and downs—and ins and outs—of history, and perhaps, with this vicarious experience, some measure of wisdom, the self-knowledge that come not only from reflection on the “I” but also from the many alien “Thous” that are encountered in the study of intellectual and cultural history.

Think of the I-O duality as contrasting or complementary forms of inquiry undertaken within a horizon structure of experience. The center of this intellectual space locates the historical subject (conscious, intentional, and even unconscious), or perhaps an act of discovery, or creation, or conceptualization—a pure phenomenological moment that becomes a target of historical examination. The surrounding space encompasses contexts of the subject of study—preconditions, possibilities, resonances, influences, interconnections, and effects involving other fields of cultural activity, states of disciplinary questions, and “climate of opinion.” And beyond the edge of the circle we may imagine the transition from intellectual and cultural history to future ideals, and so to cultural criticism and action.

Another (and these days more fashionable) possibility would be a decentered horizon structure, which is implied by notions of the death of the conscious subject, the author, the socially conscious agent, and (one would infer) the far-seeing critic. Here meaning is not something registered by a stable subject or

<sup>39</sup> Henri Poincaré, *Science and Hypothesis* (New York, 1954).

<sup>40</sup> Peter Machimer, “Selection, System and Historiography,” in *Trends in the Historiography of Science*, ed. Kostas Gavroglu et al. (Dordrecht, 1994), 149-60, posits the following five levels of inquiry:

(1) individual human level: ideas, cognitive schemes, strategies or goals, desire for money, fame, power, background beliefs, paradigms, religious beliefs, unconscious needs, leadership, genius, anomie, alienation, sexuality, patriotism

(2) small group level: families, mother-father-children, sibling order, political parties, friends, church, armies, trade unions, clubs, corporations

(3) large group level: educational systems, political structures, legal systems, religious institutions, nations, bureaucracies, transnational entities, alliances, systems of trade

(4) cultural level: intellectual fields, habits, shared metaphors, linguistic schemes, languages, kinship structures, economic systems, race, status, rituals, clan structures, power, ideology

(5) material conditions level: climate, diet, agriculture, geographic location, material resources, technology, gender, physicality.

intelligent analyst but rather an illusion or a Derridean “ghost” (as Allan Megill calls it) which resists definition in the infinite and indeterminate free-play of signs. This version of the paradigm, however, invites not historical inquiry nor even historical skepticism but only silence—which may be a sort of wisdom but which is not what historical writing is about.

Since Hegel (if not Nicholas of Cusa) philosophers and social theorists have tried to resolve the I-O problem. In various ways Husserl, Heidegger, and Cassirer have also sought to join subject and object, inside and outside, in a single field of cognition; and Georges Gusdorf performed the prodigious feat of writing a history of all the sciences, human as well as natural, in phenomenological terms. Social theorists have approached the question from the opposite—an external—standpoint. Marx (or vulgar Marxists anyway) proceeded by identifying the ideal with ideology and rendering it a function of material reality, and other more or less reductionist methods have sought to place external factors at the center of historical analysis. Vilfredo Pareto’s residues, Critical Theory, Pierre Bourdieu’s fields of cultural and literary production, Foucauldian archeology, Cultural Materialism, the New Historicism, and sociobiology all in different ways claim to have found a privileged view imagined outside.

Historians, however, do not have the luxury of settling down into such comfortable theories. History is still (as it has been since Herodotus) a critical art of inquiry which must question such resolutions as well as its own procedures. Historians do not have a metalanguage to bring about explanatory closure, or indeed to define exhaustively its own field of operations; and so they must continue both to reflect and to scan the horizons of experience—both to essay retrospective mind-reading to assess motives, intentions, lines of argument, goals, values, etc., and to seek connections with external conditions and forces. Of historical questions there can be no end, and no final answers—nor is there, on this side of the grave, any way to evade the Inside and the Outside of our common hermeneutical predicament.

For many years I have been studying the nature of historical thought and writing. I began by rephrasing the old question “what is history?” as “what has history been,” and I would repeat the maneuver here for intellectual history—as Clifford Geertz did in a recent self-analysis of anthropology.<sup>41</sup> How have the master intellectual historians, their apprentices, and their critics, practiced their craft and in some cases theorized about it? The point is not to offer prescriptions, as so many theorists have done, but rather to assemble a sort of multi-cultural agenda, or encyclopedia, of topics, questions, and practices concerning intellectual aspects of local, national, and global history; and here I would defer to Ulrich Schneider and Maryanne Horowitz, who are both involved in

<sup>41</sup> *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford, Calif., 1988).

projects associated with this encyclopedic ideal—and indeed to the rest of you who have accepted our invitation to this magnificent site of encyclopedia learning, the Herzog-August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, where Lessing made many of his contributions to the education of the human race.

Despite the facilitations, complications, and intimidations of computerized electro-erudition and the “information overload” which Ann Blair and others have warned us about,<sup>42</sup> we are still, in our various ways, caught within a horizon structure of knowledge; and I hope that these horizons will be filled in and expanded by the *International Dictionary of Intellectual Historians* and the *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, as well as by the cooperation of the International Society for the History of Ideas and the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, whatever the fortunes of these vehicles of our old but ever renewed interdisciplinary project.

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<sup>42</sup> See *JHI*, 64 (2003), 1-72.