



## IDEAS AND HISTORY IN MEXICO: AN ESSAY ON METHODOLOGY

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In approaching the study of the relationship of ideas to history the inquiring student can easily be lost in a jungle of ambiguity not always of his own making. Well armed with Bernheim's canons as derived from the *Lehrbuch*, our adventurer eagerly seeks his prey. But unfortunately the path is difficult to follow having been obscured by an overgrowth of confused and confusing terminology. And if this welter of "World Spirits", "Ideal Forms", "Unit-Ideas", and "Mexican Minds" does not send our trained scholar back into the refuge of empirical and institutional studies; and again, if our man does take the time to observe his fellow hunters, he will notice that the object of his quest tends to blur and transform before his very eyes with no two hunters seeking the same end.

The problem, not always noticed by the participants in the chase, is primarily that of a methodological dilemma. Simply stated, this dilemma derives from a distinction between an internal and an external approach to ideas in historical study. Internal analysis usually studies ideas apart from questions of social origin. External analysis, on the other hand, traces the relationship of ideas, not to each other, but to events. The dilemma is one of resolving the often different conclusions which are obtained from two distinctive methods. The approaches, based upon different philosophical and methodological assumptions, produce if not conflicting at least very dissimilar results.

This distinction between internal and external analysis, while not often noted by Mexican writers, is easily distinguishable in the vocabulary of many North Americans. Arthur Lovejoy, R. W. B. Lewis, and Roy H. Pearce, who are all committed to an internal approach to ideas, speak of their task as that of the "history of ideas". In contradistinction to these scholars, historians like James Harvey Robinson, Crane Brinton, and Franklin L. Baumer refer to their own external analyses as that of "intellectual history".<sup>1</sup> And even if the terminology of the researcher does not indicate this difference, as it does not with

<sup>1</sup> Rush Welter surveys a list of writers who make the distinction between internal and external history of ideas in his "The History of Ideas in America: An essay in Redefinition", *The Journal of American History*, LI (March 1965), pp. 599-614.

John Higham for example, at least most North American historians of ideas are aware of the distinction.<sup>2</sup> In either case, most of these writers would not consider their activities as being synonymous with that known as the philosophy of history.<sup>3</sup>

The foregoing has been stated as part of the following major contention of this essay. These differences between the history of ideas, intellectual history, and the philosophy of history are not only important as problems in semantics. Rather, these differing activities reflect moods, intellectual attitudes, and philosophical traditions which distinguish North American from Mexican historiography of ideas. Thus before future trends for research into the relationship of ideas to history can be suggested, it will be necessary to understand the present status and nature of our inquiry and its current methodological problems. For this reason I have chosen to examine these approaches and their expressions in Mexican and non-Mexican writing in some detail.

Although there have been some attempts to resolve the dilemma of internal history of ideas versus external intellectual history, and to further prevent one discipline from splitting into two,<sup>4</sup> a synthesis of both is a difficult task since at bottom each approach is based upon divergent philosophical views. The internal approach to ideas assumes that the human mind has a creative vitality which is not dependent upon external circumstances; that is, ideas have a life of their own which transcend ordinary experience. Thus ideas create and/or reflect

<sup>2</sup> John Higham uses the term "intellectual history" in a general sense but does refer to the "...internal or the external view of intellectual history". See his essay "Intellectual History and Its Neighbors", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, xv (June 1954), pp. 339-347. Similarly, the Latin Americanist Harold Eugene Davis uses the term "the history of ideas" in an inclusive way to mean history of ideas, thought, and philosophy. Yet Davis does distinguish those writers who view ideas as autonomous from those, like Victor Alba or Jesús Silva Herzog, who see ideas as expressions of cultural conditions and social situations. Refer to Davis' essay, "The History of Ideas in Latin America", *Latin American Research Review*, III (Fall 1968), pp. 23-44.

<sup>3</sup> Some thinkers like Maurice Mandelbaum go further to distinguish the history of ideas and intellectual history from the history of philosophy. For Mandelbaum the formal thinking of the philosopher only represents one particular strand within the intellectual history of any period and he further suggests that philosophy has its own internal history in which specific ideas, or unit-ideas in Lovejoy's sense, are only one part. All of this is quite unlike the synthetic and speculative activity of the philosopher of history. See Mandelbaum, "The History of Ideas, Intellectual History, and the History of Philosophy", *The Historiography of the History of Philosophy* ("History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History", Beiheft 5; The Hague, 1965), pp. 33-66.

<sup>4</sup> Both Rush Welter and John Greene argue, although in different ways, for an inclusive approach which would synthesize internal and external analysis. See both Welter, "The History of Ideas in América", pp. 599-614 and Greene, "Objectives and Methods in Intellectual History", *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLIV (June 1957), pp. 58-74.

a separate world of values and aesthetics. This "idealist" view is quite different from the "functionalism" of the historian of external intellectual history. To the latter, mind is not characterized so much by vitality as by utility and ideas are important to the extent that they act as agents for adaptation and survival in the concrete realm of a socio-biological world.<sup>5</sup> In effect, it would appear that the two approaches reflect the differences between the philosophical traditions of Germanic Idealism on the one hand, and British Empiricism, Utilitarianism, and "positivism"<sup>6</sup> on the other.

While both internal and external analysis when pursued in isolation from one another lead to difficulties, the former lends itself to a special criticism. If ideas have no reference to the material conditions of human experience, then they become intangibles not subject to the ordinary canons of historical evidence. Historical inquiry can become a subjective process which is no longer distinguishable from philosophy, literature, arts, and letters. To say this is to only assert that which is not surprising, i.e., history, especially intellectual history, is a branch of the humanities.

Now it is certainly true that a philosopher like Arthur Lovejoy has contributed greatly to our understanding of the underlying unities of thought, and that a literary critic like Henry Nash Smith has aided in our knowledge of the role of myth and symbols in history.<sup>7</sup> Yet philosophy is only one aspect of human thought, and a formal one at that, and when intellectual history becomes a tool of literary criticism the tendency is one of illustrating aesthetic judgments rather than that of understanding human thought in an historical context. In addition, if the subjective and imaginative artist is given full rein his art becomes that of polemics.

Another difficulty with the internal approach lies with its intellectualistic bias. A philosophical and/or literary analysis often narrows the quest to that of the biography of an idea with the materials of history being restricted to autobiographies of literary giants or important philosophers and thinkers. When ideas are endowed with a special potency intellectual history is narrowed to become the history of intellectuals. Hegelians will be tempted to write an elitist history in which the "great man" or Hero will be the center of focus as the best or

<sup>5</sup> John Higham, "Intellectual History and Its Neighbors", p. 341.

<sup>6</sup> Although the term "positivism" has misleading connotations it is here used to refer not to any systematic philosophy in particular but to scientific thinking in general. In philosophy the term is used to distinguish scientific inquiries from idealist traditions. The positivist historian would argue for the validity of historical generalizations and the inductive nature of causal explanations. See William H. Dray, *Philosophy of History*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964, pp. 1-58.

<sup>7</sup> See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*. Boston, 1936 and Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. New York, 1950.

most adequate expression of the (World) Spirit of the Age. What started as a humble pursuit to understand historical thought becomes a speculative activity in which a higher reality is asserted which is not subject to any objective analysis of the role of ideas in history. History now becomes metahistory and the historian of ideas has become a grand theorist and a philosopher of history.<sup>8</sup>

Now it should be understood that philosophy of history is a credible and valiant activity.<sup>9</sup> But that is not the point. My concern is one of encouraging the historian to distinguish between the history of ideas and the idea of history. And, it should be noted, that distinction is not one of history writ small in contrast to universal history.

The task of universal history is one of discovering or interpreting general trends, directions, and patterns in world history. To this extent the activity of a A. J. Toynbee, for example, only differs in scope from that which the ordinary historian does. It is only when Toynbee, or Hegel, or any other grand theorist for that matter, attempts to answer larger questions that he leaps from history to philosophy (and maybe even theology). Thus when Toynbee asserts a mechanism like "challenge-and-response", or when Hegel speaks of the "dialectic", they are postulating not hypotheses to be verified but models which are intended to show how historical change *in general* takes place. The transcendence from ordinary history becomes even more obvious when these thinkers speculate about the meaning of human history. Toynbee thus concludes his *A Study of History* by suggesting that human history is purposive in that the history of civilizations, in spite of the cyclical growth patterns of organic birth and death, has been moving in a progressively linear direction towards transcendence from materiality to spirituality. This claim, while possibly true, is certainly beyond the capacities of historical demonstration.<sup>10</sup>

Having said all this it is time to determine what historians and scholars have said about the role of ideas in Mexico's history and to

<sup>8</sup> P. P. Wiener, in describing six types of history of ideas, mentions four which appear to be quite similar and would fit my description of the relationship of the history of ideas to the philosophy of history. These four are the biographical, the philological, the metaphysical and theological, and subsumption of ideas under patterns (e.g. Hegel's dialectic). See Wiener, "Some Problems and Methods in the History of Ideas", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, xxii (Oct.-Dec. 1961), pp. 538-546.

<sup>9</sup> By "philosophy of history" I mean what many philosophers call "speculative philosophy of history" in contrast to "critical philosophy of history". This is primarily a metaphysical, not an epistemological, activity in that the task is one of answering the question of what is ultimate historical reality instead of how does the historian know reality. For a more detailed treatment of this topic refer to W. H. Walsh, *Philosophy of History*. New York, 1960, pp. 13-28.

<sup>10</sup> See Dray, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 60-97. For a critique of Toynbee in particular see Charles Frankel, *The Case for Modern Man*. Boston, 1959, pp. 164-195.

establish, where possible, the methodological and philosophical concerns of these writers. To do this I have chosen to treat primarily the traditions as they exist in Mexican, not non-Mexican circles.

Intellectual history writing in Mexico has been, with few exceptions, a mid-twentieth century development. Late nineteenth century writers contributed more to the world of polemics and apologetics than they did to history proper. A few writers, of course, like Justo Sierra or Agustín Aragón do not fit this description.<sup>11</sup> In the early twentieth century the development of the history of ideas was delayed by the chaos of revolution and the urgencies of reform. Only Samuel Ramos, writing in the 1930's, was an important exception to this generalization.<sup>12</sup> Since 1940, however, at least two generations of Mexican historians have been extremely prolific in writing and publishing works in the area of the history of ideas. Primarily this has been due to individuals like José Gaos, Edmundo O'Gorman, Leopoldo Zea and other members of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Mexico.<sup>13</sup>

Many authors, Mexican and non-Mexican, have examined the intellectual antecedents of both contemporary Mexican historiography in general, and of the history of ideas in particular. Although these antecedents are varied in number, a similar quality of mood and attitude is shared by all of them. In effect the current situation is this: Many of Mexico's historians, and especially those who have been trained in the Gaos-Zea school of the history of ideas, are still waging a continuing spiritual revolt against positivism.

This "revolt", at least in philosophical terms, has been one of moving away from the external to the internal, from the objective to the subjective, from the universal to the particular, from scientific history to history as romantic art or philosophy. Rejecting scientism, an historian like José Gaos speaks in humanistic terms about history while Leopoldo Zea argues for the interdependence of history and philosophy. And, of course, O'Gorman in typical cavalier fashion dismisses scientific history and historians with informative epithets like "blind", "brutal", and "foolish".<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The contemporary historian especially owes a debt to Aragón for his outline of Comtean Positivism in Díaz's Mexico. See his study entitled *Essai sur l'histoire du positivisme au Mexique*. Mexico and Paris, 1898.

<sup>12</sup> Ramos, *El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México*. México, 1934. See also his later work *Historia de la filosofía en México*. México, 1943.

<sup>13</sup> Luis Villoro, "Historia de las ideas", *Historia Mexicana*, xv (October 1965-March 1966), p. 163.

<sup>14</sup> See both José Gaos, "O'Gorman y la idea del descubrimiento de América", *Historia Mexicana*, I (January-March 1952), p. 488 and Leopoldo Zea, *El positivismo en México*. México, 1943, p. 25. O'Gorman's comments about scientific history were quoted from *Crisis y porvenir de la ciencia histórica* by Merrill Rippey in his article "Theory of History: Twelve Mexicans", *The Americas*, xvii (January 1961), p. 227.

As has been indicated, the ideological sources of Mexico's contemporary historical thinking are many. They include, among others, Hegel's dialectic, Dilthey's neo-Kantian views, Croce's presentism, Bergson's vitalism, Mannheim's relativism, the humanism of Ramos, Ortega's perspectivism, and Heidegger's existentialism. All have influenced the recent attempt by Mexican writers to construct a national ethos and discover true Mexicanism through an awareness of "lo mexicano".<sup>15</sup>

The philosophical tradition which Mexico's historians of ideas have inherited is primarily that of Germanic Idealism. It started with Hegel and Kant, found expression in the writings of Wilhelm Dilthey, and has emerged in more recent times with the theoretical works of the historian Friedrich Meinecke. Of this general idealist tradition, the philosophy of history is only one concern. Influenced by Dilthey, idealist philosophers of history have developed their own thinking along separate lines in several countries outside Germany. Some of these spokesmen would include Benedetto Croce in Italy, José Ortega y Gasset in Spain, R. G. Collingwood in England, and of course, Leopoldo Zea in Mexico. If one word could possibly define this idealist type of philosophy of history it would be "historicism".

The importance of idealism and historicism for the history of ideas in Mexico has been recognized by the Mexican practitioners in the field. Thus Leopoldo Zea can readily assert in a recent article that "Romanticism in the nineteenth century and historicism of our times have offered the adequate methods for reverting to the past in order to delineate a basic, unique spirit".<sup>16</sup> The next issue to logically explore is this: since historicism is the source of the Mexican historian's methodology in the history of ideas, what are the philosophical assumptions of historicism and how do they affect the methodology?

The basic thesis of historicism seems to be that the subject matter of history is human life in all of its multiplicity. These "facts" of history are peculiar ones involving concrete, unrepeatable events and personalities. Because the subject matter of history is unique, any intellectual pursuit which only describes the common properties of historical entities will be inadequate since it will not lead to understanding of specific differences, i.e., the very "stuff" of history. Thus the rational and abstract systems of the philosopher, as well as the empirical explanations of the scientist, are to be rejected. In this respect history is more akin to literature than science in that the primary aim of a

<sup>15</sup> Some of these influences are noted in John L. Phelan's survey of Mexican writers entitled "México y lo mexicano", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, xxxvi (August 1956), pp. 309-318. See also Martin S. Stabb, *In Quest of Identity*. Chapel Hill, 1967, pp. 182-217.

<sup>16</sup> Leopoldo Zea, "Philosophy and Thought in Latin America". *Latin American Research Review*, iii (Spring 1968), p. 12.

historical narrative is to reconstruct events in terms of their individuality, not to formulate general laws.<sup>17</sup>

If then, history cannot be approached through a rational or empirical system, what method will suffice? It is here that the historicist affirms the principle of empathy. The "facts" of the past are only grasped in the mind of the present. The historian must recreate the past by feeling himself in the past. What the historian calls historical evidence is nothing other than the physical remains of past memory, and historical knowledge is not gained through direct experience but rather in the historian's thinking about past thought. This is why Collingwood speaks of "re-enacting past thinking in the thought of the present" or why Croce argues that "every true history is contemporary history".<sup>18</sup> In the final analysis historicism merges with Idealism by asserting that reality is spiritual with the ultimate constituents of the historical world consisting in human motives, purposes, and thoughts, rather than in social or institutional factors.

Now it is obvious that any study of ideas in history which is derived from and based upon the assumptions of historicism will be what I have referred to as internal history of ideas rather than external intellectual history. In addition, it would appear that there are very few individual Mexican historians who are working in the field of intellectual history proper. The genre of history of ideas has been appropriated primarily by philosophers. A few references to Mexican historical literature should suffice to demonstrate this statement.

Illustrative of this is a volume which has been recently translated into English by A. Robert Capronigri of the University of Notre Dame and which first appeared in 1963 under the title of *Estudios de historia de la filosofía en México*. Papers presented by historians and philosophers at the Thirteenth International Congress of Philosophy in Mexico City form the content of this volume. Now the historian who reaches for this book in hopes of finding an "objective" intellectual history will be disappointed. For example, with Rafael Moreno's essay on New Spain the reader is not presented with the historical impact of the Enlightenment or Jesuitic Humanism upon eighteenth-century Mexican thought, but rather with an internal study of the writings of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. Edmundo O'Gorman's study on American begins as a biography of the idea of the "New World" and ends as a religious testimony to the truthfulness of the gospel of the universalization of Western culture. And Leopoldo Zea, while entertaining the problem of the relationship of positivist ideology to the middle class, fails to demonstrate that relation-

<sup>17</sup> For both a definition and a critique of historicism refer to Hans Meyerhoff's anthology, *The Philosophy of History in Our Time*. New York 1959.

<sup>18</sup> See both Collingwood, *The Idea of History*. New York, 1956, pp. 282-314 and Meyerhoff, pp. 43-57.

ship. The "nativist" point of view of the writers leaves the reader feeling that the book is not really a history of philosophy, but rather a collective philosophy of history.<sup>19</sup>

Mention has been made about the tendency of internal history to become a narrow biography about the ideas of important individuals. Harold Davis, in writing about the literature of the history of ideas in Latin America, has noted that "Much of it treats the ideas of individuals; [which], while useful in filling out the picture . . . lacks any general concept, either of national intellectual history or of that of Latin America as a whole".<sup>20</sup> This is also the case when Mexican literature is surveyed. Of the one hundred and fifty works cited by Luis Villoro in a recent bibliographical essay on the history of ideas,<sup>21</sup> nearly forty per cent could be classified as biographies of men and/or ideas. Another forty per cent could be considered either history of philosophy or philosophy of history. The conclusion is evident. Very few Mexican writers employ an external analysis and produce histories which could properly be called intellectual.

In this context the writings of Leopoldo Zea should be briefly considered since the limitations of the internal approach to the history of ideas are well exemplified in Zea's classical two volumes on Positivism in nineteenth century México.<sup>22</sup> Like Villoro and O'Gorman, Zea's histories are goal-oriented since true history in the historicist sense must be contemporary history. Politically this end is one of developing a unitary society upon the foundations of a conscious Mexicanism. In philosophy the concern is that of deriving from New World conditions a universal and ethical system of thought. Unwilling to detach history from present or future concerns, viewing his role as that of a philosopher-savior who will direct Mexico's destinies toward a genuine historical consciousness in the Hegelian sense, Zea's subjective histories invite honest criticism.<sup>23</sup>

Two examples should suffice at this point to show how Zea's subjectivity and philosophical propensities lead him into historical

<sup>19</sup> The translated version is called *Major Trends in Mexican Philosophy*. Notre Dame and London, 1966. See also my review of this volume in *The Western Humanities Review*, XXI (Spring 1967), pp. 173-175.

<sup>20</sup> Davis, "The History of Ideas in Latin America", p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Villoro, "Historia de las ideas", pp. 167-195.

<sup>22</sup> Zea, *El positivismo en México*. México, 1943 and *Apogeo y decadencia del positivismo en México*. México, 1944. For a more inclusive list of Zea's works along with a critique of his methodology see my article "Leopoldo Zea and Mexican Positivism: A Reappraisal", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XLVIII (February 1968), pp. 1-18.

<sup>23</sup> To paraphrase Villoro: Mexico's history is purposive. Ideas and philosophies like historicism, existentialism, and humanism are manifestations of a single purpose, more or less conscious, in the development of Mexico's history. The role of the historian of ideas is that of making this purpose conscious. See Villoro, "Historia de las ideas", p. 163.



distortions. Zea argues, like Hegel, that México, and America for that matter, has not had a true history since México and Mexicans have not negated the past *dialectically* through assimilation but have only rejected the past *logically*. In Zea's words, "As long as such negation or such assimilation is not carried out, American will continue being a continent without history, a dependency of European history".<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, as Charles Hale has observed, Zea's concept of nineteenth century Mexican thought as an effort at mental emancipation is both inadequate and misleading. It is an interpretation based for the most part upon the rhetoric of liberal thinkers and as such it ignores conflicting evidence found in the personal correspondence and parliamentary debates of the era. For example, it can now be demonstrated that José María Luis Mora, one of Zea's mental emancipators, did not reject his Spanish heritage at all. On the contrary, Mora often sought intellectual inspiration from the reformers of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Spain.<sup>25</sup>

The concept of mental emancipation is also misleading in the context of the Porfiriato. My own research indicates that Comtean Positivism, one form of logical rejection and imitation for Zea, was not as widespread or as important for Mexico's late nineteenth century history as Zea would have us believe. Again Zea's argument or brief for Positivism was based mostly upon the rhetoric of liberals, clerics, and intellectuals. These sources were highly polemical and tended to exaggerate the actual diffusion of Positivism in México.<sup>26</sup>

The tendency for intellectual history to become the history of intellectuals has been noted before in this paper. Like many writers, Zea's history of ideas was in reality a history of the ideas of a few academics and intellectuals. Mexico's intellectual history was the history of a few elites which did not even include a large section of the reading public. Philosophical assumptions and logical propositions were emphasized while emotional attitudes and evocative symbols were ignored. The thinking of a very few individuals on the staff of *La Libertad* or the científicos within the ranks of government became, for Zea, representative of the age. The somewhat confused and inarticulate war against Positivism by the Reyistas, the army, the workers, and the Church was ignored in Zea's account.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Zea, *The Latin-American Mind*. Norman, 1963, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Charles A. Hale, "Colonial Values and Contemporary Latin America: The History of Ideas" (Unpublished essay first delivered to the Conference on Latin American History at the American Historical Association meeting in Toronto, December 1967), pp. 13-15. See also Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853*. New Haven and London, 1968.

<sup>26</sup> William D. Raat, "Positivism in Díaz Mexico" (Unpublished dissertation, University of Utah, 1967).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226-254.

The intent is not to belittle Zea's works. Rather, and this distinction is primarily for the benefit of my North American audience, it is that since Zea's studies are based upon the idea of the historicity of philosophy it is not always easy to determine whether he is writing history of philosophy. For Zea, the importance of his volumes on Positivism is found in their relationship to a larger context and concern, that of the philosophy of the history of the New World. Zea's synthesis has been described in some detail elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Here it should suffice to point out the key elements of pattern, mechanism, and purpose in his philosophy of history.

For Zea, Mexico's history from the conquest to the Revolution of 1910 was "unauthentic" in that México was indiscriminately imitating European culture writ large. This trend was first changed with the Revolution which ushered in the beginnings of a conscious Mexicanization of thought and society. The mechanism behind this process of history has been a kind of *Ortegian dialectic* in which "Utopian views" were in constant conflict. Thus in the colonial period the native and retrogressive Oriental population collided with the progressive forces of Spain resulting in an "immoral union". The logical dialectic of the nineteenth century was one of romantics, liberals, and positivists in opposition to the scholasticism and conservatism of an earlier era. In spite of the dialectics a genuine triad or synthesis did not result and the Mexican remained a European colonist.

Only in 1910 did the Mexican first begin to have a genuine history and assimilate his past. The universal was assimilated and applied to the Mexican circumstances. Now the Mexican as an American can universalize from his particular Mexican situation to develop a New World philosophy which can be shared with all humanity. American philosophy will save Occidental culture from the spiritual crisis of our times and turn the tide of dehumanization.

This, then, is Zea's grand scheme and hope for the future. It has been argued that philosophy of history is poor philosophy and bad history. All I can claim is that in the final analysis Zea's speculation about history is beyond the realm of ordinary historical analysis. It is metahistory, not intellectual history.

It is a bit inexplicable that North American historians, with some obvious exceptions like Irving Leonard's *Baroque Times in Old México* or Charles Hale's *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora*, have not been as prolific as their Mexican counterparts, and have often based their own research and writing upon the assumptions of their Mexican colleagues. Several scholars have written on Latin American positivism in Zea's terms. Two examples would be Karl

<sup>28</sup> See both Patrick Romanell, *Making of the Mexican Mind*. Notre Dame, 1967, pp. 166-176 and Harold Davis, "The History of Ideas in Latin America", pp. 32-36.

M. Schmitt's essay entitled "The Mexican Positivists and the Church State Question" and Patrick Romanell's description of positivism in his book, *Making of the Mexican Mind*.<sup>29</sup> This is even more surprising when one remembers that the historicist tradition has never been strong in the universities of the United States.

The subjective view of historical knowledge has never been as popular in the United States as it has in Latin America. A belief in the objective nature of historical reality has been the primary theory of several generations of United States' historians since the turn of the last century. The neo-Kantian thought of Dilthey is still missing from most discussions on historical methodology with that man's major works not being available in English as late as 1960. Only in the 1930's did relativism become attractive with Carl Becker's literary histories and Charles Beard's flirtations with Croce. Yet, even then most historians would have agreed with Arthur Lovejoy and other traditionalists that historical understanding requires transcending the biases of the present. This continuity of objectivity is noted by John Higham in an introduction to a study of history-writing in the United States when he says: "No one, including the 'literary' historians, rejected the ideal of objectivity in the ordinary sense of unbiased truth; no one gave up the effort to attain it; and no one thought it wholly unapproachable".<sup>30</sup> Even if the quest itself were subjective, relative, partial, and limited, the object of the quest remained real and external. The task of the historian was not to bring certainty, but to approximate objectivity.

In the special area of history of ideas, where the historian often argued for the autonomy of thought, the objective theory of historical knowledge was not only not rejected, but, in fact, openly defended. Arthur Lovejoy, a pioneer in developing internal analysis and in writing the history of an idea (or as he preferred, unit-ideas), argued against the neo-idealism of Croce and the relativism of Mannheim. The idealist doctrine of the "internality of all relations" was for him, a pluralist, incompatible with the correspondence theory of truth. To confuse a present idea with the past events to which it refers violated the basic canons of temporalism. And the relativism or relationalism of the sociologists was absurd, since even Karl Mannheim did not really believe "that the proposition that George Washington was a great landed proprietor is true for a Virginia Episcopalian but false for a Chicago Baptist".<sup>31</sup> This objective tradition

<sup>29</sup> Schmitt, *Church and State*, viii (Spring 1966), 200-213 and Romanell, pp. 42-66.

<sup>30</sup> John Higham, *et. al.*, *History: the Development of Historical Studies in the United States*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> See Maurice Mandelbaum, "Arthur O. Lovejoy and the Theory of Historiography", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, ix (October 1948), pp. 412-423. The

has enabled the historian of ideas in the United States to avoid the pitfalls of subjectivity which often accompany the internal approach.

Having made this brief survey the present need becomes obvious. There has been very little intellectual history written on México either by Mexicans or non-Mexicans. The available studies in the history of Mexican philosophy, art, and literature should be complemented with new studies that will seek to demonstrate the external relationship between ideas and society. In fact, the need is even greater than this. The historian of the near future should be encouraged to combine the skills and techniques of the philosopher with the understanding and methods of the empirical historian, in other words, a synthesis of internal and external history of ideas. And fortunately the models are available, one being the work of Elie Halévy.

Why does Halévy epitomize the ideal of the intellectual historian? Because he attempted with success to balance the results of internal analysis with external analysis. In his definitive work on the development of Benthamite utilitarianism in England entitled *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, Halévy began as a philosopher in analyzing the basic tenets of utilitarianism. By so doing he was able to demonstrate how a dichotomy in the system led to inconsistent activity on the part of many utilitarians. Yet even though he made clear the analytical structure of the doctrine, he never detached ideas from their historical context. Not only did he assert an influence for utilitarianism, but he ended his study by outlining the channels through which utilitarianism permeated English society. These means of intellectual diffusion included the universities, adult education centers, the press, Parliament, and Bentham's own correspondence. Needless to say the entire study was based upon extensive primary and secondary documentation with Halévy being the first of scholars to ever read and digest the Bentham manuscripts.<sup>32</sup>

This kind of task and achievement still awaits the historian of Mexican ideas and culture. The idealist tradition of historicism has been an important corrective to some of the naive assumptions of scientific history. Historical explanation is not analogous to that of the sciences. Concepts of causation do involve value considerations. The task is both subjective and limited. This the idealists have taught us in their revolt against positivism. Now it is time to seek a new historical understanding which will strive for the impossible by seeking the past while using the resources of the present, and which will

quote was taken from Lovejoy's essay, "Reflections on the History of Ideas", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 (January 1940), p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*. Boston, 1960. See also the review article by Charles C. Gillespie, "The Work of Elie Halévy: A Critical Appreciation", *The Journal of Modern History*, xxii (September 1950), pp. 232-249.

be responsive to our own age while remaining faithful to the integrity of an age gone by. Perhaps it will be the disinterested quest which will finally enable México and humanity to know itself.