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Phyllis Deane, *The Life and Times of J. Neville Keynes: A Beacon in the Tempest* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001), pp. xvii, 315, \$100. ISBN 1 84064 534 2.

Phyllis Deane, the professor emeritus of economic history at the University of Cambridge and honorary fellow at Newnham College, can look back with some pride on a distinguished career as an economic historian and historian of economic thought. She hails from an earlier epoch, when academics strove to articulate significant propositions to undergraduates in a lucid and straightforward manner and, most importantly, believed it to be the height of intellectual dishonesty (or buffoonery) to dress up these direct statements with over-elaborate metaphors, needless classical references, superfluous mathematics, French philosophising, or showy econometrics. This earlier and more sensible generation of scholars took pride in exposing their ideas to the full force of the student's inquiring senses by eschewing cheap rhetorical gimmicks and rendering complex arguments simple (or at least as simple as humanly possible) through careful redrafting.

This perhaps explains why generations of undergraduates, at least from the Commonwealth countries, have been raised on Deane's well-known texts. For, contrary to the views of our more insecure colleagues, well-prepared and earnest undergraduates are not fools and quickly vote with their feet if they believe that they are being forced to read pretentious, badly written publications. They certainly voted in favor of Deane's bestselling texts, which include *The First Industrial Revolution* (1965) and *The Evolution of Economic Ideas* (1978). Many students may also remember the more ambitious *British Economic Growth 1688–1959* (1962), which was co-authored with W. A. Cole, and was often used as a secondary text in economic history courses. This panegyric of Deane's published writings should not, of course, be taken to infer that they are without fault. Indeed, I am almost certain that some readers of this journal have, in particular, one or two misgivings about the structure and content of *The Evolution of Economic Ideas*. My point, instead, is simply that Deane's style is always sufficiently concise, her rhetoric invariably honest, and her reasoning suitably close, that any supposed faults can be easily identified, isolated, and debated. Not many academics can make this claim in the modern age, in which

it seems that rhetorical strategies are increasingly employed to obfuscate and impress rather than to explicate and illuminate.

Deane, now near the end of her career, has employed this felicitous style yet again to produce an excellent biography of John Neville Keynes. An account of Keynes-the-elder has long been overdue, and Deane's volume may be interpreted as the third in a triumvirate of recent publications of importance on late-Victorian economics at Cambridge, the other two being Peter Groenewegen's *The Soaring Eagle: Alfred Marshall 1842–1924* (1995) and John Whitaker's *The Correspondence of Alfred Marshall: Economist* (1996). Deane has based her research predominantly on the multi-volume *Diaries of John Neville Keynes, 1864–1917* (ADD 7831–8), which are held at Cambridge University Library and which surely must be the archival high point in any historian's journey through the great manuscript rooms of the world. Keynes possessed a personality with many amiable flaws and strengths, and he used his diaries to record the charming day-to-day activities of his extraordinary family, his disparate intellectual observations, endless gossip about his contemporaries and, as a compulsive cataloger, fascinating lists (albeit very different lists to those compiled by his first-born son). Furthermore, in contrast to the crabbed, near indecipherable penmanship of most of his colleagues, Keynes wrote with such a clear and graceful hand that the text of his diaries is as easy to follow as the clipped fonts of the printed publication. These diaries are, in short, a delight to read and, fortunately for the next generation of researchers (and to the consternation of cash-strapped librarians), they have recently been reproduced on twelve reels of microfilm by Adam Mathew Publications for a cool \$1,550.00. Needless to add, these diaries should henceforth not be consulted without first reading the new biography that is currently under review. Deane has undertaken many years of patient scholarship to decipher the many obscure references within the diaries and, as one would expect, to draw connections between the events recorded there and those documented in other primary sources. She has also marshalled her facts with great skill to provide a nearly seamless account of the different stages of Keynes's unfolding life, ranging from his courtship of Florence Brown to the machinations associated with the institutionalization of economics at Cambridge. My only fear is that the polished finish and flowing structure of the work may cause readers to underestimate the number of "scholar" hours invested in it.

One objection, if an objection had to be made at all, is the sort of complaint one would expect from a selfish academic who is preoccupied with his own field of study, namely, that Deane has devoted an equal amount of space to the different divisions of Keynes's life and, as a result, some of the roles Keynes played in the field of economics are not delineated to the extent that they could have been. Thus, to take a rather important example, only nine pages are directly devoted to Keynes's involvement in the English *Methodenstreit* and the associated publication of his *Scope and Method of Political Economy* in 1891 (his only important contribution to economic literature). Nearly the same number of pages are devoted to the relationships between the Keynes's extended family and their domestic servants. An account of the latter domain of an individual's life will, of course, be of immense interest to social historians and, indeed, I must admit that I, too, took more than a little interest in Deane's description of the

fraught crisis arising from the housemaid's predilection to cavort with the cook's cousin. It also must be granted that the way in which Keynes handled these and other domestic affairs both sheds important light on certain aspects of his character and reminds the reader of what really preoccupied individuals from the Victorian age. I nonetheless feel that a little more space could have been devoted to Keynes's involvement in the methodological disputes of this period, especially as it is generally agreed that it was Keynes who was instrumental in bringing them to an end.

A similar criticism could be leveled at the amount of space Deane has allocated to reconstructing the intellectual and social networks that provided the environment for what eventually became known as the oral tradition in Cambridge economics. Deane makes many fascinating references throughout the biography to Keynes's part in these networks, but the book would have greatly benefited from a section devoted solely to such a reconstruction. After all, Keynes's diaries provide an abundance of raw material for such a reconstruction, not to mention a font of amusing character portraits of the individuals he met at the dinner parties and scholarly meetings that constituted these networks. I certainly believe that my own knowledge of late-Victorian economics has been enriched by Keynes's references to rumors that Joseph Nicholson drank too much whisky, gossip that people in London thought that Alfred Marshall was mad, and a story that implied that T. E. Cliffe Leslie's sensitiveness amounted to monomania.

These and other criticisms relating to what subject matter should have been emphasized in the biography are, of course, the quibbles of a specialist who is etching out a small space in an increasingly fractured discipline, and one should not make too much of them. Deane has set out to write a broad study of an attractive and self-effacing scholar for whom economics was just one of many interests. The biography is essential reading for those interested in late-Victorian economics, the history of Cambridge University and the early life of Keynes's first-born son. All good university libraries should hold a copy.

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