

it explicitly sets out to be not only critical but also dialogical. According to the blurb, 'the book breaks new ground, in taking the form of a dialogue between experts on the fields about which Gibbon himself wrote and eighteenth-century intellectual historians'. According to the Introduction, the book 'is structured . . . as a kind of dialogue examining particular portions of Gibbon's narrative, especially in his interpretations of empire and the intellectual context in which he formulated them, against a background of eighteenth- and twentieth-century knowledge of late antiquity and the Middle Ages' (p. 2). Certainly, the book contains a good deal of criticism, in the negative evaluative sense, as well as in the sense of historiographical (especially source) criticism. And the thoughtful epilogue, in which the editors join forces with Balliol's Professor of European Thought, offers a kind of review (in both senses) of the preceding essays. But of genuine dialogue among the contributors there seems to be a limited supply. Indeed, on some of the most basic issues flat contradiction rather than productive polyphony seems to be the order of the day.

For example, was Gibbon an 'Ancient' or a 'Modern' historian? Was chronologically sequenced political narrative his primary medium, and war the stuff of his history? Was he more interested in striking attitudes than in conducting historical analysis, let alone attempting explanations? Did rhetoric overmaster his historical judgement? What, if any, was his historical philosophy? If we were to conduct a Plutarchan *comparatio* of (say) Matthews and Ghosh, or Howard-Johnston and Shepard, we might be forced to conclude that we are listening in on a *dialogue des sourds*. A large part of the problem is that few of the contributors, only two of whom (Womersley and Ghosh) may be called specialist Gibbonians, seem to know their author's *oeuvre*—all of it, including the work he or his literary executor published originally or solely in French—sufficiently well. But at least the contributors, like us, will be in an excellent position to emulate the master and 'hold the balance with a steady and equal hand' once they have had the chance to read through this volume as a whole. They, and we, moreover, will shortly have a further chance when the proceedings of the other Oxford bicentenary Gibbon colloquium are published: D. Womersley (ed.) *Gibbon: Bicentenary Essays*.

Gibbon ended his history with a 'new race of pilgrims', that is Grand Tourists (as he had himself been), seeking 'the relics, not of superstition, but of empire'. Not the least grand relic of the Roman empire, rearing its head above the fragments of the Roman Forum in the manner of Pope Leo IV, is the *Decline and Fall* itself. Long may it continue to be abused, so long as it is also properly and profitably used, for instruction as well as pleasure.

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MOMMSEN

A. HEUSS: *Theodor Mommsen und das 19. Jahrhundert* (reprint of the 1956 edition with a forward by J. Bleicken). Pp. 285. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996. Paper, DM/Sw. frs. 76/öS 593. ISBN: 3-515-06966-6.

There has been considerable interest in Germany in the personality of Mommsen in recent years, partly in response to the publication by Alexander Demandt in 1992 of his lecture notes on the *History of Rome under the Emperors*. The decision to reprint Alfred Heuss's study, under the auspices of Jochen Bleicken (who, as one of Heuss's doctoral students, helped produce the original 1956 text), is welcome. H. wrestled

with Mommsen throughout his life (1909–96: cf. the obituary by H. J. Gehrke in *Gnomon* 69 [1997], 276–87), and notwithstanding Wickert's more detailed but effectively incomplete biography, H. remains probably the best synopsis of Mommsen's achievement within the context of nineteenth-century political history. The original edition passed strangely unnoticed in the English-speaking world (the only review that I am aware of was by G. P. Gooch in *EHR* 73 [1958], 376, mainly devoted to emphasizing that Mommsen was politically a 'good' German).

H. begins with a short biographical chapter of which barely two pages are dedicated to the last fifty years of M.'s life (in Zurich, Breslau, and Berlin). The lack of balance is justified because this is not a biography, but a description of the intellectual influences on the young M., different and sometimes contradictory influences out of which the rest of his life is explicitly said to have developed (p. 24).

The following four chapters then analyse distinct aspects of M.'s work. Primacy is emphatically awarded to M. the jurist: H. demonstrates that this was M.'s profession, and locates his ideas in the context of the arguments between Romanists and Germanists as to which was the authentic expression of the 'spirit' of German law. H. notes that one of the things that was distinctive about M. was that, while he shared the Germanists' devotion to nationalism and liberalism, he claimed that it was the Roman law tradition that 'represented a unifying tradition and was therefore the palladium of true national interests' for nineteenth-century German nationalists (p. 38). The other distinctive thing was that M. used the ideas of Savigny and the Pandectists to look for a 'pure' Roman law freed from later historical accretions and interpretations: M. applied this to constitutional law, which he wrote as a system consisting of a limited number of ideal elements (H. suggests just three: magistracy, citizenry, and senate). H. argues that it was precisely because M. saw the Roman constitution as a constant and ideal system unaffected by historical contingencies ('it is tempting to talk of the total triumph of the system over history', p. 52) that he was driven to look at the study of the actual course of Roman history as something completely separate. In Chapter 3 he goes on to consider M. as a historian; he points out that the invitation to write the *History of Rome* was pure chance, and judges M.'s writing as an aspect of his journalism. English readers may well wish to pass over some of H.'s literary judgements, the ideas about the nature and philosophy of history which so fascinated H., and emphasis on Hegel (M.'s 'Caesar is the incarnation of the World Spirit', p. 79, though, as H. points out, there is no evidence that M. had ever read a line of Hegel: p. 76); but there are also useful insights, e.g. that M.'s 'dichotomic and dialectical' style of writing has led to misunderstandings because partial judgements can easily be taken out of their full context. But historical writing was a 'diversion' (p. 92) from M.'s scholarly work, considered in Chapter 4; M. himself contrasted the 'philological method' which aligned him with Classical scholars to the 'dilettantism' he ascribed to the writers of history. H. emphasizes that, in common with other nineteenth-century scientists, M.'s scholarship aimed at ordering material for its own sake ('That there should be order in the archive of the past', p. 103), and not as part of any specific project: in other words, the studies he published were the result, not the purpose, of the collections of evidence in the form of epigraphical material and the editions of texts. H. also points out how, like contemporary scientists, M. emphasized specialization and the division of labour in this task.

The next and longest chapter is devoted to M.'s political career, divided between the revolutionary activities in Schleswig-Holstein and Saxony in 1848/9, and as a Prussian and imperial parliamentarian from the 1860s on. H. is anxious to keep politics separate not just from scholarship, but also from history-writing: the *History of Rome*

is emphatically not contemporary politics in disguise, and parallels between Roman and contemporary institutions and situations are primarily intended to be explanatory (a view which needs considerable modification in the light of the lectures on the *Emperors*). While the chapter continues to be the best summary of M.'s activities within the changing framework of German domestic politics over a period of sixty years, its insistence that these activities cannot be integrated into M.'s career as a scholar risks making it appear less interesting to classicists. It is symptomatic that there is no discussion of M.'s rôle in academic politics—his influence over appointments throughout the German-speaking world, particularly through the Prussian education ministry official Friedrich Althoff, and his seizure of control of research projects such as the *Limeskommission*. For H., as he states in a short concluding chapter, the only common themes in different aspects of M.'s work are to be found in their origins in the interests of his youth (p. 232).

There are forty-five pages of source references (although H., writing before even the first volume of Wickert's biography appeared, repeatedly complains about the absence of crucial biographical information). It is striking how well aware H. is of personal factors, while leaving them undiscussed—M.'s fear of poverty, his hatred of Catholicism, and attitude to Denmark. He is even aware of the importance of Macaulay for M.'s historical writing (pp. 62, 223). The relevance of private life to scholarly (or public) activity was not obvious to German academics in the 1950s, or even more recently (cf. the striking absence of references to anything personal in Karl Christ's *Neue Profile der Alten Geschichte*). But the availability of a wider range of sources might well have led H. to put more emphasis on M.'s personality, and that would surely have led to a more integrated picture.

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