

# Reviews

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Gerard Labuda, *Rozwój metod dziejopisarskich od starożytności do współczesności (The Development of Historiographical Methods from the Antiquity to the Present Day)*. Part I: *Do schyłku XIX wieku (Until the End of the 19th Century)*, Poznań 2003, Wydawnictwo Forum Naukowe, 226 pp.

The author is a senior scholar of the Polish historical milieu. His enormous output (cf. bibliography in: *Ars historica*. Poznań 1976, pp. 9–88; “Zapiski Historyczne” vol. LII, 1987, fasc. 4 pp. 229–253 and vol. LXI, 1996, fasc. 4 pp. 8–23) contains a number of theoretical works which support the research workshop especially of medievalists, but also of historians of all periods. Drawing on his great experience, reflections and observations as a witness of his times (the whole second half of the turbulent 20th century, together with the previous twenty inter-war years), on the threshold of a free era, symbolized by the abolition of censorship, he shares with the younger generation his deliberations on the evolution of historiographical methods. In his book he refers to his lectures on the history of Polish historiography at the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań. We have now received the first part of his work, covering the period till the end of the 19th century.

The author precedes his main exposition with an introduction, where he draws attention to two manners of presenting the history of historiography: 1) theoretico-methodological, in Polish literature represented by Wanda Moszczyńska and Jerzy Topolski, and 2) practical-methodical, discussed by Marcei Handelsman in his text-book entitled *Historyka*, which, although published in 1928, is still up-to-date. On his part he simply poses the question: “how was history written and understood”, and answers it — frequently analysing complicated issues — in a way that is clear not only to the specialist reader. He treats historiographic methods as a sequence of stages: the logographic one (annals, chronicles), narrative, pragmatic, genetic, spiritualist and materialist ones, and finally the structuralist method, which is now being developed on their basis.

His work is to consist of two parts; the first one finishes with the period of the materialist-dialectical method of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (chapt. VI, pp. 111–178). The earliest methods are treated rather succinctly (pp. 15–40), in accordance with the needs of this exposition, which presents more extensively the genetic (historico-critical) method, connected with the development of critical historiography and its ancillary sciences (pp. 41–76); the latter emerged in the era of the Enlightenment, and developed hand in hand with evolutionary conceptions in biology and can be treated as the first scientific method in historiography. The author emphasizes the importance of historical and historiographical facts found in the sources, and includes the spiritualist-dialectical method of G. W. F. Hegel (chapt. V, pp. 77–109).

While dealing with the achievements of this German philosopher at the turn of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, G. Labuda also takes into consideration the contribution of three other thinkers of that era (Kant, Fichte and Schelling) to the creation of the theory of general and national histories, and concludes by saying that “Hegel’s philosophy of history not only played an important role in the formation of a new theory of general history”, but also “due to its extreme spiritualist-dialectical character influenced the creation of the doctrine of dialectical and historical materialism”.

Chapter VI, devoted to this doctrine, is composed of three parts: historical, methodological and paradigmatic. In the first the author discusses the birth of the theory and method, analyses *The Communist Manifesto* as a *Historiographical Manifesto*; he shows the contribution of Engels to the development of Marx's doctrine, as well as two currents: evolutionary and revolutionary, in the latter. Of special importance to the history of the latest historiography is part III, dealing with the Marxist paradigm in Russia and the Soviet Union (the syntheses of history, social formations, rules and regularities as well as the problem of class struggle) and especially the adaptation of this doctrine in Poland in the second half of the 20th century. He starts with the works of Ludwik Krzywicki, created almost a whole century earlier, in conditions of freedom of thought and publication, that is without the interference of state censorship. This eminent sociologist based his conception of history on political economy. "One can hardly imagine a study of Marxism in Poland without the knowledge of Krzywicki's writings" — remarks the author (p. 154), who also does not overlook the voice of Stanisław Brzozowski, although attributing to him a much smaller role. While passing to the period after the end of World War II, he first shows the reasons why the Marxist thought was stifled in Poland after the Bolshevik invasion of 1920, and in new political conditions it could be developed creatively only after the breakthrough of October 1956. He shows the role of the theorist-doctrinarian Adam Schaff (1950) as well as the attempts at a creative utilization of the doctrine by Henryk Łowmiański (*Podstawy gospodarcze formowania się państw słowiańskich — The Economic Basis of the Formation of Slavic States*) in 1953. The clashes between tradition and political realities on the one hand, and theory and practice on the other, were testified by the discussions at the First Congress of Polish Science (1951), earlier on at the Seventh General Congress of Polish Historians in Wrocław (1948) and a bit later — when political pressure was at its height — during the methodological conference of historians at Otwock (1952). The author brings into focus particular milieus (with Warsaw as the leader), enumerates prominent names, underlining that "the degree of each of the mentioned persons' commitment to the propagation of Marxism was different, sometimes they were even *revisionists*". While exemplifying new trends in the academic *Historia Polski (History of Poland, vol. I: until 1764)*, he draws attention to the first criticisms — though for the sake of tactics, rather mild ones — voiced in 1958 by historians, concerning the Sovietization of scholarship (Tadeusz Manteuffel, Witold Kula) as well as to the advantageous evolutionary changes and departures from the vulgarized doctrine in the next decades. The author confirms the earlier opinions that Polish studies of the past — in comparison to other countries of "peoples' democracy" — passed the difficult test of this period without much dishonour. He also perceives not only the *disadvantages* but also the *advantages* of the materialist-dialectical method, which he presents with insight and clarity, *sine ira et studio*, unlike many exponents of generally extreme or superficial views represented by both sides in this dispute. He finishes his analysis with the conclusion (p. 178):

"In sum — what was inspiring and vital in the materialist-dialectical approach to the comprehension of history, has been absorbed to better or worse effect and developed by the new historiographical methods that appeared successively in the 20th century, while the attempts to bring the Marxist method up-to-date, in a modernized form, made in the last half century produced positive, in fact critical and revisionist results in the area of philosophical discussions of dialectical materialism; however, they did not lead to the activation of historical materialism as an infallible historiographical method, especially in its late-Soviet version that stuck the fastest to the original model; currently, even there the first symptoms appear of a new approach to the inherited paradigm of Marxism, especially among historians of culture and historians of historiography".

The book is supplemented by three appendices closely connected with its content — the reprints of articles *O metodzie kształcenia młodych historyków (On*

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*the Method of Educating Young Historians*) (a voice in the discussion in "Kwartalnik Historyczny" of 1966), *Historia est magistra vitae?* (a lecture delivered at the University of Gdańsk in 1984 on the occasion of receiving the doctorate honoris causa of this university, published in "Gdańskie Zeszyty Humanistyczne" XXVI, N° 30) as well as *O pewnej zapomnianej niezapomnianej dyskusji: Maksyma Cyserona "Historia magistra vitae" przed trybunałem historyków* (*On a Certain Forgotten Unforgettable Discussion: Cicero's Maxim "Historia magistra vitae" Before the Tribunal of Historians*) (a text concerning the discussion of Tadeusz Korzon's paper at the Second General Congress of Polish Historians in Lwów in 1890 published for the first time in "Historyka" vol. XVIII of 1988). These treatises testify that Gerard Labuda has always been genuinely interested in the cognitive and educational functions of history — both the discovery and revision of historical secrets and methodological deliberations, which are presented by him (a rare phenomenon!) in a clear, solid and original way.

Marceli Kosman