

Amritsar. Dr Robb shows why this has been so, and why the traditional view is thoroughly unjust.

In the last two decades historians of modern India have concentrated on detailed studies of Indian nationalist politics, and the study of government and its policies in the British period has been thoroughly unfashionable. One welcomes Dr Robb's disregard for fashion, as nationalist politics cannot be fully understood in isolation from government policy and practice. To his study he has brought a formidable knowledge of the public records and private papers and an admirable capacity to write clearly about complex issues. The one fault is not the author's, but the publishers': the references and notes are at the end of the book. Surely at least those which comment on or amplify the text could have gone at the foot of the appropriate pages.

In the genesis of the reforms and in writing the Montagu-Chelmsford Report a leading part was played by William Marris, the most eminent New Zealand member of the Indian Civil Service. It is a happy coincidence that this admirable study of those events should have been written by one of Marris's fellow countrymen.

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*The Shapes of Time: A New Look at the Philosophy of History.* By Peter Munz. Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1977. xi, 382 pp. US price: \$16.00.

PROFESSOR MUNZ has set out to provide us neither with a coherent speculative philosophy of history, nor a detached account of the philosophical implications of the historian's enterprise. Rather, he has sought to establish and describe the relationship between speculative philosophy of history and history: 'speculative philosophies of history are both important and necessary,' he writes, 'because they alone can establish the connection between the separate, detailed studies historians specialise in.' This thesis is pursued with urgency and vigour in the book because Munz has set himself to perform two rescues before he reaches the last page: history is to be rescued from the hands of academic specialists and speculative philosophies of history are to be snatched from 'the dissecting tools of analytic philosophers.' In the latter enterprise particularly, Munz follows close on the heels of Hayden White, whose work he praises.

The basis theme can be stated thus: history is the science of change over time, so that the best form of historical writing is narrative. But since historians generally deal with short periods, they tend to lose sight of the long-term trends (and thus of history itself), and unless these disparate studies are linked in the construction of a narrative of change they are not part of history. But historians cannot articulate the relationship among the individual studies unless they appeal to a philosophy of history. The difference between

philosophies of history and ordinary narratives is one of degree only; the philosophies make meaning more explicit.

The work can be criticized in various respects, but it is certain that many historians will have the most serious reservations about Munz's definition of history. History, as we have seen, is the science of change. 'This means that I understand by history not just any preoccupation with or study of the past, but a very special study of the past. History is . . . concerned with the succession of events — with the study of how one event is superseded by another.' But it soon becomes clear that the changes which are the proper focus of the historian must be great and long-term. An account of twenty-five years in a limited region may be interesting, but given that there is likely to be little change in a short period of time, such an account is unlikely to be history. Clearly, many practising historians only think they are; they are, in fact, the 'academic specialists' from whom history must be rescued.

One of the main points at issue is the relationship between time and history. That is, the question of whether pastness is merely incidental to history, or whether the fact that the events which historians study happened in the past makes history qualitatively different from other intellectual activities. Appealing to the necessity of the historian's concentration on change, Munz argues that the pastness of the events it studies endows history with peculiar attributes. Other historians, represented notably by the French historical school centred on the *Annales* argue that it does not, and there is the implication here that such historians are academic grave-robbers, looting the past of events to be put to non-historical purposes. Munz's plea for the recognition of his definition of history is all the more urgent, since the canker of *le style annale* seems to have infected many of the recent cohorts of historians.

The question must be whether Munz's definition of history is not too restrictive. Does an account of the past rate as history only when it covers whole societies and whole centuries? Where is one to draw the line, on the continuum of events, only outside which is there scope for historical analysis? If 'relatively static' situations are not the proper subject of the historian's study, how dramatic does change have to be? The answers to these questions are related to Munz's insistence that a philosophy of history is necessary to history. Philosophies of history must be cast in broad terms and can generally deal only with large-scale events. In order for history and the philosophy of history to be, in a sense, congruent, history too must deal with the same breadth of events.

It is possible that this insistence on these points will obscure the useful points Munz makes on the nature of ordinary history. It is unfortunate that so many historians appear to be unconscious of the nature and implications of their activity, and it does no harm to remind them, as this book does, of such facts that there is no real past with which they can compare their histories. The book is written in a lively, provocative manner, and with a minimum of the technical language which must frequently deter historians from reading works in the philosophy of history. It is likely that Munz's book will provoke a good deal of thought about the nature of history, and there can be no better recommendation than that.