
A Conversation with John Lukacs

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John Lukacs in Wyoming, photographed by his daughter Annemarie.

“**T**he tentacles of the suburban octopus are slouching ahead, pouring ceaseless cement, swarming with a hideous flow of cars and crowds shuffling in shopping malls, clicking computers, wanging videos, hiving in hotels, bombinating in bars, a compound of the mental (and sometimes the physical) climate of California

and Siberia.”¹ I knew what John Lukacs had written about when on one of the few days this past February when I could drive my car without fear for my life, I passed through the Valley Forge intersection where the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Schuylkill Expressway, Routes 202, 422, and God knows what else come together in the presence of three huge shopping malls and numerous hotels, one of which contains fantasy suites where couples may (or may not) enjoy the illusion of escaping to an era more romantic in spirit. But to find a different world, all you really have to do is drive about five miles west. Although there are some gas stations and modern red-brick churches, old Pennsylvania farm houses and some newer dwellings are pleasantly scattered over the landscape. This is John Lukacs’s world. This historian, author of seventeen books who last December retired after forty-six years of teaching at Chestnut Hill College and who turned seventy this January, has worked as hard as anyone to preserve the environment, in addition to the name, of Schuylkill Township.

“Enchanted” may be the word to describe the countryside where Professor Lukacs has made his home for over forty years, and which he so poetically evokes. He recounts the magic of discovering it in the late 1940s:

It was there that I first smelled that inimitable scent of old Chester County houses: a potpourri of a faintly spiced mustiness wafting out from old walnut beams and herbaceous flowers somewhere in the kitchen. . . . I became enchanted with this deep green Pennsylvania countryside that I have loved, with an aching longing, ever since. Unlike other beautiful American scenes, this landscape was rich, humanly rooted, old, near-Arcadian. Oddly—and this in spite of the old and respectable tradition of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania painting—no painter has done it justice, except perhaps for Daniel Garber and a few fine amateurs. . . . To describe this scenery further, its honest stone houses in the shade of enormous trees in a verdant and undulant and carefully cultivated land, to paint it with mere words would make no sense here. I will say that it has something old-world about it. Unlike the Philadelphia suburbs that had, here and there, an English touch, Chester County, the land and the atmosphere it breathed (except during the unbearable, hazy, semi-tropical summer days of heat) were not unlike portions of Western Europe, resembling southwestern German or Alsatian or Burgundian fields and hills; at any rate, solidly rooted and old. There have been other refugees in America who discovered elements reminiscent of their homelands in the eastern United States: Austrian refugees flocking to Vermont, for example. But this was different, not only because of the

landscape but because of the human presence dotting it. There was no place and no reason here for chalets, and not even for a French- or English-type manor house. Chester County was old-American, a rich Arcadia still inhabited, here and there, by remnants of old gnarled people leading a faintly arcadian agricultural existence, unscarred by the physical and emotional ravages of two world wars, even though their lives had become motorized and gassy and on the cusp of television filling up the recesses of their minds. Eventually I came to live in Chester County with my first wife, struggling for years to convert the ruins of an old schoolhouse and to clear some of the wilderness—yes, wilderness, because of the subtropical burgeoning of a weedy, spiky, bushy, brush-infested vegetation—into the house and garden and field to which I added and added, living there for thirty years, where I fathered my two children, wrote twelve books, wherefrom I buried my first wife who died young, and where I married the second, who remains young enough to lift my spirits with her laughter every day.²

I visited Professor Lukacs in the house, which he and his wife had designed, just down the road from the converted schoolhouse. He has called it “Pickering Close,” not only because it sits close to the Pickering Creek and Reservoir, but also because “close” is the word for an enclosed “clausum,” related to “cloister,” where people can work in peace, the term dating back to the Middle Ages. The reservoir was frozen solid during a winter where unprecedented snow and ice storms had worked havoc on eastern Pennsylvania. When I remarked how beautiful the view of the reservoir must look in the autumn, Professor Lukacs noted that at the moment the immobilized, ice-caked waters reminded him of the Bering Sea.

As we sat in the large, sun-drenched, two-storied library which contains thousands of books and a grand piano Professor Lukacs sometimes plays—I noticed some Ravel on the music stand—I experienced that combination of warmth, elegance, and Old World courtliness that I found in some of Professor Lukacs’s writings. We did not much discuss the facts of his life or the contents of his writings—these are wonderfully described in his *Confessions of an Original Sinner*—although the reader should know he was born in Hungary in 1924 and came to the United States in 1946 after being educated in England before the war, hiding from the Nazis rather serving with them during it, and getting his degree at the University of Budapest in 1946. Our conversation focused instead on Professor Lukacs as a Pennsylvanian and a historian, and how these have intersected within a man Paul Fussell has called “one of the most original and profound of contemporary thinkers.”³

WP: Can you tell me whether your teaching at Chestnut Hill College has affected the way you write history?

JL: I have taught undergraduates, not graduate students, except when I held visiting professorships a few times.⁴ But I think my writing and thinking have profited from teaching undergraduates. I was forced, or rather I forced myself, to express myself simply about complex and important things; economically, but not superficially. This has helped me improve my writing.

WP: How important is it for a historian to write well?

JL: History has no language of its own—unlike most of the sciences. History is not only written, but spoken, taught, and thought in everyday language. If history is not written well it means it's not thought out well. And historians should not write just for other historians—except when their researches lead to something another historian might be interested in.

WP: As the popularity of Ken Burns's Civil War television series, or good historians like David McCullough who write well demonstrates, there is a great public appetite for history.

JL: Yes, And one of the saddest and most ironic things is most academic historians are not aware of this. This appetite is healthy. Of course, appetite can also be fed with junk food. But that this appetite exists is a fact—and in this country, which in so many ways was not historically-minded in the past.

WP: Can you give an example?

JL: A favorite example of mine is the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, when there was almost no interest in history. The exhibits were filled with machinery. One hundred years later, during the Bicentennial in 1976, people were interested in history, all kinds of history, including the Tall Ships. Also, there are, I understand, three times as many local historical societies as there were forty years ago. Another example: the publishing industry is in very bad shape, and yet it's easier to have a work of history published than a novel. The opposite was true of the past.

WP: I know that's true for academic history. It seems every university has a press these days.

JL: But the academic world is remote from most people. A greater gap exists today between academics and the rest of the people than probably ever before. Does "political correctness" appeal to ordinary people? Also, forty or fifty years ago, there

were many intellectuals among the people who were not academics. Novels were written about them, about people such as Carol Kennicott in *Main Street*, lost in Sauk City or wherever it is, because she's interested in art.⁵ This breed is now dying. There are hardly any intellectuals left, there are only academics.

WP: Do you blame this on television?

JL: It has much to do with it.

WP: Tell me about how a diplomatic historian of the grand sweep of history came to write a book on Philadelphia?

JL: I liked writing it. I think it is one of my better books.

WP: I especially enjoyed the biographical essays. I believe there were seven of them, of those fascinating people like political boss Boies Penrose and art collector Albert Barnes who started the Barnes Foundation.

JL: There are also two chapters framing this book, "1900" and "1950" as well. But you ask how I came to write it. I'm interested in history, not in historianship. In this library, I have three or four hundred books on Philadelphia alone. I've lived here for a long time. My first wife was a Philadelphia girl. Her family were the first white settlers in this township. I'm living on that land now. I had finished a very large book on *The Last European War, 1939-1941*. I wanted to try my hand at a small canvas, much as a painter may move from a large canvas to a small one. I was interested in Philadelphia, and I believe one should read and write about whatever one is interested in.

WP: Your affection for Philadelphia and the entire area comes through in the book.

JL: I liked Philadelphia. I did not like New York. Here in Schuylkill Township I've been a member of the local planning commission trying to keep developers out. I'm a traditionalist. This is where my roots are, and this is my home. I wrote somewhere that while Europe is my mother, America is my wife.

WP: The Philadelphia you wrote about, the city of 1900 to 1950, was a city of neighborhoods, distinctive, Victorian, bourgeois in the best sense of the word . . .

JL: And in the worst. The subtitle of the book is "Patricians and Philistines." Sometimes patrician and philistine were both within the same person. Few Philadelphians (I know that this is a broad generalization) were and are confident intellectually. There are still some Philadelphian oddities, but much of this distinctiveness that grew like barnacles for three hundred years has eroded. When I read *Philadelphia Magazine*, I don't know any of those people in it. At least I used

to recognize certain names.

But then I come from a different tradition. I never liked to be identified as an intellectual. The word “intellectual” as a noun actually has Russian and Marxist origins. The adjective “intellectual” has always existed—intellectual ability, intellectual courage, etc. But *The Intellectual* appears in English around 1885, a notion brought by immigrants from Russia. I prefer to think of myself as a teacher and a writer. Now this is the positive side. The relative lack of intellectuality in Philadelphia never bothered me very much, although it irritated me sometimes. Digby Baltzell and I have been friends for almost forty years. But about his Philadelphia/Boston book I disagree.⁶ He wishes that Philadelphia were more like Boston, because Boston is more intellectual. I don't.

WP: What's wrong with Boston?

JL: It's too intellectual—meaning, among other things, absorbed in abstractions. Even though Philadelphia is north of the Mason-Dixon line, it has always had a slightly southern touch. People, for instance, drink more in Philadelphia than they do in Boston. Especially on this side of the Schuylkill. More than people in Chestnut Hill—too many Quakers there, or rather Episcopalians who were once Quakers.

WP: I'll certainly drink to that! And yet Philadelphia does have a great intellectual and cultural tradition—the Athenaeum, Philosophical Society, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Museum, Academy of Fine Arts, a symphony at least the equal of New York's and Boston's. The life of the mind is there for people who want it.

JL: Like libraries and bookstores. But do you know how late the Philadelphia Orchestra was started? In 1917. Philadelphia has always been behind New York. That's all right. Do you know why the orchestra hall is called the Academy of Music? Because of the Quaker influence: they thought that to call it the Opera House was too worldly. The Quakers, obsessed with education, preferred to name it the Academy of Music. Philadelphia had an opera house only for a short time, five or six years, while places such as Cairo, Peoria, and Cincinnati had opera houses.

I'm glad you liked the Philadelphia book. You say you are writing a biography of William Penn, who deserves far more credit than he has received. There are two fine biographies of him. Bonamy Dobrée in the early thirties wrote a pretty good literary biography. And then there was the professor at Swarthmore [William Wistar Comfort].⁷ I have often contrasted the Penn spirit and the Franklin spirit. I prefer the former.

WP: I first read your book, *A History of the Cold War*, when I was in graduate school. It impressed me because so many historians were not really trying to understand the Cold War, they were more interested in blaming someone for it: the leftists blamed the United States, the anti-Communists the Soviet Union.

JL: Well, perhaps. Now that's a book that came out of my teaching. I'm not a Soviet expert and I don't know Russian. I've read much about Russia, but in other languages. I never taught contemporary history, and in the classroom I never got much into politics. But I was working on *Historical Consciousness*, a book that took me almost thirteen years. Then I interrupted it. I had a low period in 1959. I thought, why not take the principles—I wouldn't call them ideas—I presented in *Historical Consciousness* and apply them to something concrete.⁸ Everybody had written about Communism but few had written about American-Russian relations going back to their beginning. On a yellow pad I wrote out the structure of the book, a structure many of my books follow. There is a short narrative, after which there is the analytical portion, where I describe the theme in layers. The Cold War book is a narrative of American-Russian relations to about 1960, when I wrote it: then come the chapters about the relations of the two societies, the two ideologies, the two states, the two nations. I sent the outline to my then-editor at Doubleday and then I forgot about it. That was a difficult winter for me (1959). My first wife was ill. And shortly before Christmas, the telephone rang. I was very small beer, a beginning writer, and the editor had called: "We'll give you a contract to do this book." I was very happy. I wrote that book in fourteen weekends, maybe a little more. I was teaching a lot, and because of this I had to do it all on the weekends. But in my teaching I had thought a lot about those matters for years—the structure of the book was very clear in my mind.

WP: Given you had to teach a lot at a small liberal arts college, how did you find the time to write so much?

JL: Yes, I taught a fair amount. But I arranged my classes so that I didn't teach Tuesday and Thursday. I also tried to be free of administrative duties. I had an office but I kept the absolute minimum of books there. I have a working library here, as I did in my old house, and I like to work at home. Of course I used the college library, the University of Pennsylvania, and other libraries when I had to.

For the Philadelphia book I did a fair amount of research. I had to go after the private papers of some of these people, but in most cases these were not interesting.

Philadelphians are very careful—nothing much that is personal is put down on paper, with few exceptions.

WP: Why do you want to write so much? Do you enjoy writing?

JL: An Englishman once wrote about his friend that he did not write for money; he did not write for professional advancement; he wrote because he couldn't help it. I think this might apply to me: I can't help it. Sometimes I am dismayed because what I am doing is not good and I really don't want to work on the bloody thing. Then I think of something else. People ask me if writing is fun. It is *not* fun! It's hard work. The fun—or rather, relief—is having written. I do not mean being published; I mean having done it. This morning, for instance, I got up very early, made myself a cup of strong coffee, and got started. I was trying to complete something that I started yesterday. By eight o'clock it was done—not polished, but done—and I felt good about it.

WP: Can you tell our readers something about your efforts to preserve the environment of this beautiful area.

JL: I wrote about that in *Confessions*. My first wife got me involved; I served on the Planning Commission for twenty-five years. We had some effect.⁹ I was a maverick, but I'm no longer such a maverick. Twenty-five years ago, if you questioned the worth of new highways, if you questioned "development," people said: he's crazy, he's against progress; how can you be against progress, against technology? This is no longer so.

WP: What do you think of the environmental movement in general?

JL: I'm very much in favor of it, except when they are dogmatic and utopian. There is a bad old American element in the environmental movement, going back to Thoreau: worshipping Nature but at the cost of anything that's human. But civilization is not wilderness. Civilization is landscape, and there is no landscape bereft of some kind of a human element. Landscape means a harmony between nature and humanity.

WP: I wondered why you stayed at Chestnut Hill College all these years. Surely you must have been offered jobs elsewhere?

JL: Well, I haven't. Perhaps I could have gotten another job if I wanted that very much: I didn't. It would have to be close to home. My roots are in this countryside. Also, when I was young and lonely, the nuns at Chestnut Hill were very good to me. So I felt my loyalty was to them. There is a third element, too. Coming from a

different tradition in Europe, I did not want to make my career on the academic step-ladder. I wanted to make my career through my work of writing. It took me thirty years to find out something that I had not suspected. The fact that I taught at a small college affected my reputation among academics. Of course this is bureaucratic and corporate America where everybody is identified by his association. I have not too many reasons to complain. In my scholarly life, I generally did what I wanted to.

WP: I guess no one at your college was telling you that you had to publish in a certain field.

JL: Thirty or forty years ago, that sort of thing did not exist. In this respect the academy has become much worse.

WP: What are you working on now? I notice a forthcoming book advertised from the University of Missouri Press.

JL: A book of mine is going to be published that I didn't have to write. It is a collection of some of my historical travel pieces. It was their idea. Here are all my publications. [Note: He pointed to an entire wall of bookshelves.] This includes my books, articles, book reviews, and some foreign editions. But a very dear lady at the University of Missouri Press, with whom I've had some correspondence—I had read some manuscripts for them—had this idea to publish a book of my travel pieces. The title is *Destinations Past*. One item in it: in 1965, when I was a visiting Fulbright Professor in France, I flew with my young son to Winston Churchill's funeral in London. There is also a short piece on Philadelphia in this book, first published in 1958 in *Encounter*, the English magazine that no longer exists, [contrasting the spirit of Penn and Franklin]. That was the nucleus, the kernel, from which the Philadelphia book came more than twenty years after. I was proud of the fact that it was included in a University of Chicago anthology of great prose in English.

WP: How do you write so well? Although you learned English at an early age, it still is not your native language.

JL: I don't think I write that well. I often feel—no, I *know*—that I ought to write better. But let me tell you two things about writing, one positive and one negative. I write, and tell my students (of course I have no students now) to write with the ear. I will not write something that somehow doesn't sound right to me. The other thing happened a few years ago. I went to a conference to give a paper. It was an

easy summary of something I had been working on. Then came a coffee break—you know how conferences are—and there was a man whom I know who did not notice I was standing behind him. Somebody asked him about me and he said: “He’s a historian, but he’s really a writer.” That in American academia has a pejorative tinge. Not in Europe, I must say. What he meant was—“He is a historian but he should not be taken seriously since he is also a writer.”

WP: What do you think is your best book? The book you most want people to remember you for?

JL: My best-written book is the Philadelphia book, and my second best-written book is *The Duel. Confessions*, the “auto-history,” is well-written, but not as well as the Philadelphia book. As for being remembered? Recall the definition of a celebrity: a celebrity is someone who is famous for being well-known. My ambition is to be famous for not being well-known.

There are thirty years of reading in back of *The Duel*, but *Historical Consciousness* is probably my most important book.¹⁰ But it has its faults. After that I would say the Philadelphia book, but I can’t divorce my feelings for it from remembering that I enjoyed working on it. There is much scholarship in it, you know. I read all thirty-six volumes of Agnes Repplier’s published works but I could only have a fifty-page chapter on her. I went after her letters; she was a great correspondent but her letters are scattered everywhere. I actually have a collection of letters, including some of Agnes Repplier’s, I picked up here and there from dealers.

WP: You did eventually break your own rule and write the book on Budapest.

JL: That was an exception. I never wrote primarily about Hungarian history before. One reason: I did not want to get involved in emigré history. When I left Hungary I was very pessimistic. I thought this Russian/Communist regime was going to last fifty years. (I was a few years off, thank God!) I did not want to be an emigré interpreter of Hungarian history for Americans. That is so often only superficial. What is pleasant now is that I am known in Hungary. I have a very considerable number of readers, reading at least three of my books in Hungarian.

WP: You recently taught in Hungary as a visiting professor. How do you feel about the prospects for Eastern Europe?

JL: It varies from country to country. In the long run I am optimistic about Hungary.¹¹

WP: Can you tell us a little about your family?

JL: This may sound sentimental, but my greatest blessing is my family. I lost my family, not during the war, but after it, when my mother and father died. I have two marvelous children. My son teaches American Literature at Loyola University in Baltimore. He *is*, in a way, more talented than I am. This year he is at Louvain, the Catholic University in Belgium. My daughter is a triumph of character, a lovely young woman, and both of my in-laws, their spouses, are splendid human beings. My first wife was a woman of great character and intellect. She was a Phi Beta Kappa at Smith; for a while she was the secretary to T. S. Eliot (by accident. She was in the secretarial pool at the Institute for Advanced Study and Eliot liked her.) She died very young, of lung cancer. My present, very beautiful wife is very sprightly and intelligent. She has read—and reviews—more of English literature than nine out of ten professors of it. She's my most demanding critic.

Professor Lukacs talked with me informally for quite some time thereafter, but what I sensed the most was a man who loved—his family, his house, his land, his town, his region, his nation, and his life's work. He told me that when the weather was better I should visit the family cemetery of which he is a trustee, and which has been the resting place of his first wife's family for generations. When I gave him some past issues of *Pennsylvania History* to thank him for his time, he commented admiringly on the work of the late Philip S. Klein (interviewed in the October, 1989 issue by editor Michael Birkner) and mentioned that his first wife was related to Pennsylvania's nineteenth-century political boss Matthew Stanley Quay, subject of an article by William Blair in the April, 1989 issue. I remarked that I hope I wasn't giving him too much to read. He told me not to worry: "I only read what I like to, except, of course, when I do research. I read in a most undisciplined way, sometimes four or five books at a time." When I asked him about his plans for the future, Professor Lukacs told me he was working on a "strange" book so he would prefer not to talk about it. Someday, he thinks he ought to consider a biography of John G. Johnson (1841-1917) who is mentioned in the Philadelphia book. He believes that Johnson may have possibly been the greatest practicing lawyer in American history, the son of a butcher who remained on the Philadelphia Bar rather than accept a seat on the United States Supreme Court.¹² More immediately, he was about to take off to Switzerland for two weeks to go skiing. One book about to be published, another in progress, a third being planned, and a ski trip—what a way to retire!

Books by John Lukacs

- The Great Powers and Eastern Europe* (New York: American Book Company, 1953).
 Editor and translator: *Tocqueville: The European Revolution and Correspondence with Gobineau* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959).
A History of the Cold War (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961; revised Anchor Books version, 1962).
Decline and Rise of Europe: A Study in Recent History, with Particular Emphasis on the Development of a European Consciousness (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965).
A New History of the Cold War (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966).
Historical Consciousness, or, The Remembered Past (New York: Harper & Row, 1968; revised edition, New York: Schocken Books, 1984, includes two new chapters; reprinted New Brunswick: Transaction Books/Rutgers Univ. Press, 1994).
The Passing of the Modern Age (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).
A Sketch of the History of Chestnut Hill College, 1924-1974 (Chestnut Hill: Chestnut Hill College, 1975).
The Last European War, September 1939/December 1941 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976).
1945, Year Zero (Garden City: Doubleday, 1978).
Philadelphia, Patricians & Philistines, 1900-1950

- (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981).
Outgrowing Democracy: A History of the United States in the Twentieth Century (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984).
Budapest 1900: A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988).
Confessions of an Original Sinner (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1990).
The Duel: 10 May-31 July, The Eighty-Day Struggle Between Churchill and Hitler (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1991).
The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of the Modern Age (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1993).
Destinations Past: Travels Through History with John Lukacs (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994).

- Essays about John Lukacs's Scholarship
 Eugene Genovese, "Outgrowing Democracy," *Salmagundi*, 67 (1985), 198-205.¹³
 Philip Gleason, "John Lukacs on History and Twentieth-Century America," *Catholic Historical Review*, 72 (1986), 639-47.
 Robert H. Ferrell, "Appreciating John Lukacs," *The Review of Politics* (Spring, 1992), 303-310.
 Patrick Allitt, "John Lukacs and the Idea of History," *The Intercollegiate Review*, 29 (1993), 11-19.

Notes

The editor thanks Jeannette Ullrich, reference librarian at the Ogontz Campus of Penn State, for her help in tracking down information. References below to John Lukacs's work if not otherwise noted.

1. *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, 298.
2. *Ibid.*, 125-26. By permission of Ticknor & Fields, publisher.
3. Dust jacket, *The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of the Modern Age*.
4. At Columbia, Georgetown, The Fletcher School of Diplomacy (Tufts University), University of Toulouse, Princeton University, and the University of Budapest.
5. The novel, first published in 1920, by Sinclair Lewis. The town's real name is Gopher Prairie.
6. E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethnics and the Spirit of*

Class Authority and Leadership (New York: The Free Press, 1979).

7. Bonamy Dobrée, *William Penn, Quaker and Pioneer* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1932); William Wistar Comfort, *William Penn 1644-1718: A Tercentenary Estimate* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944).

8. In the preface to *A New History of the Cold War*, Professor Lukacs writes: "The organization of part two especially illustrates my views on the relative hierarchy of modern historical factors" (xi-xii). He later elaborates: "the really important elements in this history of the Cold War ought not to be sought in world economic movements but within continents and nations and ultimately within the hearts of persons in the midst of nations. . . . Thus we come back to the history of ideas. There is no

such thing in history as an isolated material condition. . . . The great overlapping historical movements of our times are biological, racial, social, political, cultural, moral—in order of ascending significance” (388-390).

9. *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, ch. 8.

10. *Ibid.*, 238-241, describes the insights of *Historical Consciousness*, which I can only summarize here: “Its purpose is not the demonstration of a systematic knowledgability of history; to the contrary, it wishes to demonstrate the profound, yet considerably unsystematic, historicity of our knowledge.” Professor Lukacs discovered an “uncanny” resemblance between his insights on history and those of physicist Werner Heisenberg’s views about the indeterminacy of scientific knowledge: “about how things happen and how their ‘happening’ is inevitably involved with our own ‘observation’—that is, with our own participation, and with our knowledge of its limits. . . . This meant a new, anthropocentric recognition of the universe: the end of the Cartesian division and separation of ‘object’ from ‘subject,’ of observer from the observed, of matter from mind.” He has been disheartened by the lack of receptivity to what he had hoped would be “an intellectual discovery of great magnitude,” and quoted Stendhal that “it is a great mistake . . . to be more than one or two steps ahead of the public mind.” Historians may finally be catching up. See Brooke Williams’s remarks on the subjective/objective debate which has been filling the pages of the *American Historical Review* since 1987, in complete ignorance of the fact that Lukacs had moved beyond it years ago: “The historian’s reasoning is ‘complicated’ insofar as the object of its research is more complex than research into simply physical (or mind-independent) relations, because historical research addresses also primarily mind-dependent relations involving as such human design or accident. . . . The false framing of the logic of history within the objectivist-subjectivist complex . . . is a clue that the ‘problem’ of history lies not with the logic proper to it, but with the larger complex (to which history adapted its ‘method’ of research), which had no place for history.” Brooke Williams, “History and Semiotics in the 1990s,” *Semiotica* 83 (1991), 406-07. See also her support for Lukacs’s principle that historical

thinking provides the way to understand other forms of thought, rather than vice-versa: “Historical narrative is the only logic capable of situating competing traditions and incommensurate paradigms in a perspective that not only lends each a higher degree of clarity on its own terms as well as in relation to the others, but also decides which paradigms will emerge as victorious.” Brooke Williams, “Historiography as a Current Event,” in John Deely, ed., *Semiotics 1987* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), 480.

11. Professor Lukacs’s opinions on the state of the world c. 1993 may be found in *The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of the Modern World*.

12. Johnson is discussed in *Philadelphia*, 261-263.

13. Readers may be surprised, knowing that Lukacs considers himself a “reactionary” and Genovese is a Marxist, that the latter thinks *Historical Consciousness* “ought to be required reading in graduate history departments.” Genovese writes that “despite fundamental disagreements” he considers Lukacs “always thoughtful and uncommonly penetrating.” He laments: “Ten good books and the presidency of the Catholic Historical Association haven’t saved John Lukacs from becoming a virtual non-person among professional historians.” But “no evil consequences follow. After all, less and less history is being taught in the universities anyway, albeit by numerically swollen departments. And more and more of what is being taught is pseudo-scientific drivel, or a night at the movies. . . . Since our students, apparently ignorant but not stupid, have the wit to pay it all no mind, not much is lost by giving Lukacs the silent treatment.” Genovese concludes that Lukacs “writes with clarity, vigor, and wit for an educated public, not for a professional elite that increasingly writes, and writes badly, for itself.” Genovese’s praise thereby complements the compliment Lukacs paid to historian Christopher Hill’s *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714* (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1961), as similar in its organization and approach to his own *A History of the Cold War. (A New History of the Cold War, xii)*. Hill is also a leftist. But what could be more inspiring to historians than to know that among at least some master practitioners of their craft, ideological disagreement evaporates in the face of respect for professional achievement and profundity of insight?