

***From Universal History to World History
Carroll Quigley (1910-1977)
and the Shaping of New Historical Paradigms***

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Universal History in the twentieth century is especially related to the figure of Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975), the historian-turned-prophet who devised a complex and fascinating interpretation of the civilizational process. He was since 1925 professor of History of International Relations at the London School of Economics and director of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. His name is associated to *A Study of History*, a monumental work of immense erudition that explains the evolution of civilizations through the concept of ‘challenge and response’.¹ Immediately after the Second World War the echo of Toynbee’s work was particularly intense and the abridged version of his *magnum opus* turned out to be a bestseller, especially in the United States where it was published in 1947 with much fanfare and the support of Henry Luce, owner of *Time* magazine.² However, this enormous success did not guarantee his author a significant place in the historiographical landscape of the following decades. Throughout the 1950s, reactions ranged from positive feedbacks to very harsh criticisms: as the latter prevailed, his work was almost completely marginalized.³ It should be remembered that William H. McNeill, Toynbee’s ancient disciple as well as fine historian of his own, paved the way to a reconsideration by publishing his biography in 1989; but in spite of this partial renewal of interest, Toynbee still remains a minor figure in modern historiography.⁴

We can therefore say that an initial interest quickly reversed in an estranged relationship between the British scholar and his fellow historians: as soon as in the early 1960s, not only his work but Universal History on the whole was generally at a low ebb, also in the United States. However, its fundamental core – the discovery of common patterns emerging from different cultures through the application of interpretative models – was far from being unrelated to American culture. Not only

¹ ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE, *A Study of History*, 12 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934-1961).

² ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE, *A Study of History*. Abridgement of vols. I–VI by David C. Somervell, with a preface by Arnold J. Toynbee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).

³ PIETER GEYL, “Toynbee the Prophet”, in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 16 (1955): 260-74; HUGH TREVOR-ROPER, “Arnold Toynbee’s Millennium”, in *Encounter* 8, 16 (1957), 14-28.

⁴ WILLIAM H. MCNEILL, *Arnold J. Toynbee: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); CARL T. MCINTIRE and MARVIN PERRY, eds, *Toynbee: Reappraisals* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989). See also GORDON MARTEL, “Toynbee, McNeill, and the Myth of History”, in *The International History Review* 12, 2 (1990), 330-48. More recently, see TEODORO TAGLIAFERRI, *Storia Ecumenica. Materiali per lo studio dell’opera di Toynbee* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2002); TEODORO TAGLIAFERRI, *La repubblica dell’umanità: fonti culturali e religiose dell’universalismo imperiale britannico* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2012).

were readers familiar with a controversial author like Oswald Spengler, whose works were early translated and widely read in the 1920s; the evidence of this link can be noticed more clearly by connecting this approach to different research practices, well established in the academe outside historical departments. This kind of scholarship, more oriented to building general paradigms than grounded in archival research, actually found a wider recognition by other communities, being especially valued among social scientists. Cultural anthropologists proved to be particularly inclined to follow this approach, as influential scholars like Alfred Kroeber lent their reputation to the comparative method, bringing credibility to concepts such as cycles and developmental stages. From the 1930s, Kroeber introduced the concept of ‘style pattern’ – whose best example is represented by artistic or philosophical schools –, intended as an ideal model that unifies and gives coherence to a culture, defines its values and directs its development: over the course of its evolution, a style is refined and reaches its own climax, whereupon it loses its effectiveness and eventually disappears to be replaced by another style. This evolutionary process of rise and fall explains how societies are transformed through the adoption of successive patterns.⁵

Against this background, another portrait should be placed – that of Carroll Quigley (1910-1977), an almost forgotten figure of historian, teacher and public intellectual. A better understanding of how US historiography evolved in the post-World War II era could be attained by taking into account his place in that landscape. For instance, the Toynbian heritage is just one of the features shared by Quigley and William H. McNeill, the forerunner of modern world historians. The similarities between his and McNeill’s works are striking and will be highlighted in this essay. At a broader level, we might posit the question why the shift from Universal History to new historical paradigms occurred in one direction (World History, post-colonial studies, etc.) rather than another (e.g. the comparative approach to the study of civilizations to be found in Samuel Huntington, or more generally in the International Relations field). Quigley’s original approach cut across a wide range of topics; his scholarship bears an eclectic mark that casts a light on some aspects of the professional historiography of his times. As a result, his achievements allow us today to reconsider him as a transitional figure between such diverse historiographic trends.

A ‘Generalist’ Approach to Historical Research

In June 1938, Carroll Quigley obtained his doctorate in History at Harvard. His dissertation – entitled *The Public Administration of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy (1805-*

⁵ Alfred Louis Kroeber (1876-1960), professor at the University of California at Berkeley, was a disciple of Franz Boas and in turn formed a generation of cultural anthropologists. His research on the field mainly concerned Native American cultures, on which he made innovative contributions. From an interdisciplinary point of view, the conceptual tools he developed were not less significant: ALFRED LOUIS KROEBER, *Configurations of Culture Growth* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1944); ALFRED LOUIS KROEBER, *Style and Civilizations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1957).

1814) – should have been, in his intent, the first step of a career as a specialist in European history. He was born in 1910; as a student of the Boston Latin School between 1924 and 1929, he showed outstanding intellectual talents and a rigorous application to study, receiving awards at national level. After enrolling at Harvard, he obtained a B.A. magna cum laude in 1933 and an M.A. in the following year. In 1935, after being admitted to a Ph.D., he went to Princeton with an appointment as ‘preceptor.’ He owed this appointment to Charles Howard McIlwain – the celebrated historian of the American revolution that Quigley, years later, was to recognize with veneration as his mentor.⁶ There, the young scholar began to conceive the research programme that later would have become the subject of his doctoral dissertation: a work of political and constitutional history, intended as the foundational layer of a lifetime project with a clear goal – to write the history of the formation of the modern state in Europe.⁷

The in-depth analysis of this text, despite its considerable interest and its sound scholarship, is beyond the scope of this essay. The main concern here is to highlight the solid groundwork of Quigley’s formative years, and at the same time to identify the reasons that led him subsequently to follow a completely different path. In fact, events did not turn out as he expected: his dissertation did not find its way to the press – it is still unpublished today. From 1937 to 1940, Quigley completed a three-year stint at Harvard as a tutor of advanced students. During that time he fostered his academic career under the guidance of specialists in European history: Clarence Crane Brinton (1898-1968), a scholar of the French revolution who is best known for theoretically ambitious works such as *The Anatomy of Revolution*;⁸ and Donald Cope McKay (1902-1959), who wrote about the *ateliers nationaux* as well as Atlantic relations.⁹ None of these, with the partial exception of Brinton,¹⁰ was to be remembered as an influential figure in the subsequent scholarly debate. In addition to this, it must be remembered the role exerted by Gaetano Salvemini (1873-1957) as a co-tutor of Quigley’s dissertation. Salvemini was an Italian historian, university teacher, public intellectual and politician with socialist leanings. Being a resolute

⁶ Charles Howard McIlwain (1871–1968) taught at Princeton and from 1916 at Harvard; in 1935 he became president of the American Historical Association. His major works include: *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan, 1924); *Constitutionalism: Ancient and Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940).

⁷ CARROLL QUIGLEY, “The Public Administration of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy (1805-1814)”, (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1938).

⁸ CRANE BRINTON, *The Jacobins: an Essay in the New History* (New York: Macmillan, 1930); Crane Brinton, *Ideas and Men: the Story of Western Thought* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1950); Id., *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1938; expanded ed. New York: Vintage, 1965).

⁹ DONALD C. MCKAY, *The National Workshops: A Study in the French Revolution of 1848* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933; *The United States and France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951).

¹⁰ BAILEY STONE, *The Anatomy of Revolution Revisited. A Comparative Analysis of England, France, and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

opponent of Fascism, in 1923 he had to leave Italy as an exile, fleeing to France and then to the United States. He obtained the chair of History of Italian civilization at Harvard in 1933 and was granted American citizenship. After the war he returned to his country where he resumed his university teaching as well as his longtime interest in political reforms, writing about the problems of Italian society – from the backwardness of the southern regions to the needs of a modern educational system. He was trained as a historian of the Middle Ages – a field in which he was able to make meaningful advancements –¹¹ but later directed his interests to late modern history, especially the French revolution and the Italian Risorgimento. While Salvemini's magisterial influence undoubtedly widened the young Quigley's research avenues, his weak academic position (he left his chair after returning to Italy in 1949) reinforces the idea that Quigley developed his own career in isolation, detached from the support of a strong historiographical school.

Moreover, as a Catholic of Irish descent, Quigley perceived the further pursuit of his academic career in a WASP milieu like Harvard as a daunting task. This prompted him to accept an offer from Georgetown University where, in 1941, he joined the teaching staff of the School of Foreign Service, at first as 'lecturer in History and Civilization' and later as 'professor of European History.' There he embraced with full satisfaction a career based on a fruitful exchange between his intense and highly rewarding teaching duties, and a research work aimed to build large interpretative frameworks in which to place the results of his case studies.

We know how this personal evolution matured because Quigley himself recounted it during his last public appearance, a few months after his retirement in June 1976 – which should have opened a fruitful phase of new research – and a few months before his untimely demise, which occurred due to heart failure on January 3, 1977. This minimal autobiographical fragment belongs to the first of the three lectures he gave in October 1976, which in a way represent his spiritual testament. The theme chosen by Quigley for those public lectures was the formation of the modern state in a time span of ten centuries that stretched to his days. His interest in constitutional history, matured while he was writing his doctoral dissertation, regained centrality in his last speech.¹² Quigley opened it with a reference to that work of forty years earlier and how it had influenced his following historiographical production:

¹¹ GAETANO SALVEMINI, *Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1295* (Firenze:G. Carnesecchi, 1899).

¹² CARROLL QUIGLEY, "Public Authority and the State in the Western Tradition. A Thousand Years of Growth, A.D. 976-1976. Part one: The State of Communities, A.D. 976-1576; Part two: The State of Estates, A.D. 1576-1776; Part three: The State of Individuals, A.D. 1776-1976", The Oscar Iden Lectures, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 13-20-29 October 1976. The Oscar Iden Lectures represent a Georgetown University tradition that began in 1976 and continues to this day; over time, they have counted high-profile ambassadors, politicians and military men among their speakers. The first edition was inaugurated by Quigley and was his farewell to teaching at Georgetown.

My doctoral dissertation on The Public Administration of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy was never published because overspecialized experts who read the version revised for publication persisted in rejecting the aspects of the book in which they were not specialists. The only man who read it and had the slightest idea what it was all about was Salvemini, the great historian from the University of Florence, who was a refugee in this country at the time. The book's message could be understood only by an historian who knew the history of Italy, France, and Austria, and was equally familiar with events before the French Revolution and afterwards. But these national and chronological boundaries are exactly the ones recent historians hesitate to cross [...].

Quigley accounted for the reluctance of his reviewers by the excessive specialization of the historical profession, which nurtured debates of limited scope. This fact prompted him to beat alternative paths:

No one was much interested in my discovery that the French state as it developed under Napoleon was based largely on Italian precedents. For example, while the French state before 1789 had no budgets or accounts, Napoleon's budgets in both France and Italy were strikingly similar to the budgets of the Duchy of Milan in the sixteenth century. Similarly, the unified educational system established by Napoleon in France in 1808 was anticipated in the Kingdom of Piedmont in the 1720's. Such discoveries form part of the history of the growth of the European state, but are not of much interest to the narrow and overspecialized controversies of the last half century.

So instead of writing the history of public authority, I got into what was, I suppose, my much stronger activity: the creation of the necessary conceptual paradigms, structures, and frameworks for understanding historical processes.¹³

His choice to embrace the comparative horizon of 'macrohistory'¹⁴ as he defined the disciplinary sector he chose – can be traced back, at least as an initial inspiration, to this episode. The heavy teaching duties that his new job entailed, as well as the alleged inadequacy of the Georgetown library compared to that of Harvard, were only the contingent reasons; actually, his disappointment relating to the reception of his thesis was the feeling that pushed him to change his mind. A relative academic failure opened up a different path to him, more suited to a scholar devoted, as he was, to vast conceptualizations.

The first result in this new season of Quigley's career was the publication, in 1961, of *The Evolution of Civilizations. An Introduction to Historical Analysis*.¹⁵ With this

¹³ CARROLL QUIGLEY, "The State of Communities, A.D. 976-1576".

¹⁴ This approach, based on the identification of the life cycles of civilizations, has been practiced since ancient times by authors like Polybius up to twentieth-century scholars like Spengler and Toynbee: see JOHAN GALTUNG and SOHAIL INAYATULLAH, eds, *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians* (Westport: Praeger, 1997).

¹⁵ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *The Evolution of Civilizations. An Introduction to Historical Analysis* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc., 1979; ed. or. New York: Macmillan, 1961).

methodological book, in which he poured the results of twenty years of studies, he aimed at integrating the social sciences in historical research from a truly interdisciplinary perspective. It should be recalled that this book also served as the outline for the lessons on which he built his fame as a legendary teacher. For decades, the Alumni at Georgetown singled out his courses as the most impactful on their careers among those they had attended. The best known of these students was Bill Clinton, who remembered Quigley as his mentor while addressing the delegates at the Democratic National Convention in 1992.¹⁶ The uneventful life of this history teacher contrasts with the strong impression his lessons made on his students' lives. Quigley is an eclectic figure, who would deserve a deeper scrutiny. The present essay is intended to rediscover some of his key achievements as a scholar, with the aim of finding his place in the trajectory from Universal History to World History.

The Limits of the Technocratic Society

A key term that helps to understand the Quigleyan contribution to the methodology of historical research is 'holism,' used in opposition to 'reductionism.' The word 'holism' was coined by Jan Smuts (1870-1950), a South African military man and politician, supporter of the British Empire from a federalist perspective. Smuts, a leading figure on the international relations scene in the first two decades of the twentieth century, exerted a significant influence on Toynbee, who met him at the Versailles peace conference and subsequently read his book *Holism and Evolution*, published in 1926, just when Toynbee had started working on *A Study of History*. Smuts supported holism as a general evolutionary theory, aimed at overcoming the weaknesses of both idealism and materialism. According to his definition, holism is 'the tendency in nature to form wholes that are greater than the sum of the parts through creative evolution'.¹⁷

Quigley embraced this viewpoint as he maintained that the extreme specialization of studies prevents from grasping an overall vision. As early as 1938, while discussing the vast archival material used in his deeply researched dissertation, he argued that 'not only was examination of all the sources impossible but it would have been unnecessary and undesirable. It would be impossible to see the forest because of the trees'¹⁸. His methodological approach supports historical perspective – and the use of interdisciplinary knowledge, especially from the social sciences, which allows one to activate comparative interpretation – even to offset the lack of primary sources.

¹⁶ WILLIAM J. CLINTON, "A New Covenant", Democratic Party nomination acceptance speech, 16 July 1992.

¹⁷ JAN C. SMUTS, *Holism and Evolution* (London: Macmillan, 1926), 88.

¹⁸ CARROLL QUIGLEY, "The Public Administration of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy", 25.

According to the Georgetown historian, grasping the ‘whole picture’ – in science as well as in any aspect of life – had become difficult because of the sectorialisation that permeates the technocratic society. The necessary renewal of Western civilization was to be achieved through a reform of education: the adoption of a new holistic approach would have allowed interpretative models to adapt to a constantly changing reality, replacing the outdated reductionist schemes of nineteenth-century positivism. With such stances, Quigley joined the debate about the ‘end of ideologies,’ opened by influential sociologists such as Daniel Bell (1919-2011) and Seymour Lipset (1922-2006), who from the early 1960s theorized on the disappearance of ideologies from Western societies, on the verge of transitioning from ideological regimes to technocratic governments.¹⁹ Quigley argued that individuals belonging to each civilization internalize their own system of categories, values and judgments. At the same time, he maintained that the contemporary world requires done to overcome the absoluteness of one’s point of view, recognizing its conventionality. Education must lead to ‘cognitive sophistication’, based on the awareness that there are different value systems: through the exercise of criticism and the overcoming of stereotypes one can acquire the ability to translate effectively from one table of values to another. This is also necessary within a rapidly changing society, where people with different values and principles are unable to understand each other as they are separated by cultural barriers.²⁰

Quigley, like Toynbee, applied this holistic approach to the comparative study of civilizations. Both scholars believed that civilizations were the basic units of historical analysis, as they assumed that only civilizations – and not nation-states – represent ‘the comprehensible social unit or entity in which historical changes occur’.²¹ Quigley adopted this method as the only way to reach his main goal: the creation of interpretative schemes that shed light on the causes of historical changes. Working on a large scale was crucial, as rigid geographical and chronological boundaries are detrimental to the discovery of those ‘regularities,’ or patterns, that shape change. According to Quigley, the identification of paradigms based on recurring patterns is the best way to express the complexity of historical development without falling into the reductionism of those who analyse individual facts and isolate them from their context. However, the interpretative paradigms proposed by Quigley describe tendencies which are always subject to exceptions – a very different approach from postulating strict historical laws.

¹⁹ DANIEL BELL, *The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960); Seymour Lipset, *Political Man. The Social Bases of Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1960).

²⁰ CARROLL QUIGLEY, “Needed: A Revolution in Thinking”, in *Today’s Education* (March-April 1975), first published in *National Education Association Journal* 57 (May 1968): 8-10.

²¹ CARROLL QUIGLEY, “Review of Matthew Melko, *The Nature of Civilizations*, introduction by Crane Brinton (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1969)”, in *The American Anthropologist* 72, 6 (1970), 1474-76 (1475).

The first example of pattern provided by Quigley concerns social ‘instruments’—i.e. organizations devoted to the achievement of specific goals in all levels of society (political, economic, military, etc.). Such instruments inevitably go through a process of ossification which Quigley calls ‘institutionalization.’ As a result of this process, they are transformed from end-oriented means into means that are ends in themselves. This process starts when those who control the instruments stop using them for the purposes initially established and bend them to their own advantage. This happens not only for selfish reasons but also because of the natural rigidity of complex organizations: the special interests – which he labelled ‘vested interests’—react with difficulty to the push towards change coming from a constantly changing reality.

It should be emphasized that this uncommon specific terminology, including concepts such as ‘instruments,’ ‘institutions,’ and ‘vested interests,’ is a clear indicator of the influence exerted on Quigley by the work of the American sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929). In his first and best known book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), and more in detail in *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904), Veblen described social phenomena as the result of human behaviour rooted in a fundamental contrast between ‘technology’ and ‘institutions,’ or between instrumental attitudes and ceremonial attitudes. According to Veblen, technology encompasses the range of instrumental abilities expressed by the industrial society and embodies a progressive force, while institutions, which dominate the productive structures and bend them to market interests, derive their authority from the past and resist change, supporting obsolete processes. On the basis of this general opposition he underlined, at the economic level, a dichotomy between ‘industry’ and ‘business,’ where the former – embodied by the engineers of the nascent factories – represents the instrument for satisfying social needs, while the latter – portrayed in the ‘robber barons’ of the Gilded Age – is the institution that sabotages the society by jeopardizing production efficiency and development potentialities. By means of this contrast, which later became known as ‘Veblenian Dichotomy,’ he distinguished what is of public utility and promotes social well-being from what damages the common good and helps to maintain privileges.²²

This contrast is accepted and reinterpreted by Quigley with some differences, which in my opinion can be summarized by his superior concreteness compared to the more abstract Veblenian model, and in the more objective interpretation of the process she describes, while the Veblenian approach is instead strongly prescriptive and value-based. Above all, Veblen’s radicalism suggests that the social goals he deems worthy of being pursued can be achieved through the replacement of one organization with another. Sociologically, he considers instruments and institutions

²² Cf. WILLIAM T. WALLER JR., “The Evolution of the Veblenian Dichotomy: Veblen, Hamilton, Ayres, and Foster”, in *Journal of Economic Issues* 16, 3 (1982), 757-71.

as two alternative social structures. As a historian, Quigley on the other hand reads them in diachronic terms, interpreting their relationship as a gradual change over time. The second is simply the stiffening of the first, not an ontologically different reality. Institutions are only a negative evolution that can be reformed, thus reproducing the conditions required for the instruments to satisfy their corresponding social needs.

How Civilizations Change: From Expansion to Conflict

On this theoretical basis, Quigley introduced a peculiar concept, that of ‘instrument of expansion,’ as a means to explain the evolution of a civilization. It consists of three interacting elements: ‘incentive to invent, accumulation of surplus, and application of this surplus to the new inventions’.²³ This terminology, as he plainly acknowledged, closely follows the economic factors of innovation, savings and investment. The elites who hold the power are identified by Quigley with the classes that control the surplus: the purposes for which they allocate this surplus determine whether the civilizations they lead can activate an expansive phase and maintain it. They not only own the capital – they directly control investments and indirectly control incentives for innovation. When the surplus is destined for a productive purpose, the three factors are linked together in a virtuous circle and the capitals invested in innovative ideas generate development. Otherwise, when the surplus is wasted in unproductive activities, the instrument of expansion – which is bound to undergo the same process as any instrument – goes bankrupt, plunging into crisis the civilization which is based on it.

The paradigm represented by the ‘instrument of expansion’ is the cornerstone of Quigley’s model. In fact, its creation and subsequent institutionalization is the most significant pattern in the history of each civilization. During the stage of expansion, the social organization of a civilization and the political consensus of its members are oriented towards increase of economic production, territorial expansion, demographic growth and progress in intellectual and scientific fields. When the rate of expansion begins to increase less quickly, a civilization – which is still focused on growth – enters a period of crisis, moving from expansion to its next stage: conflict.

According to Quigley, the initial stage of an age of conflict –when expansion continues but at a lower growth rate and with a trend to further decreasing – is among the most interesting historical periods. This phase, which corresponds to the ‘Times of Troubles’ of the Toynbian scheme, covers the existences of several generations and is usually an age characterized by great hopes. However, ambitious reform projects are often frustrated by the resistance of the vested interests. The slowdown in growth – a symptom of the institutionalization which is at the root of

²³ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *The Evolution of Civilizations*, 132.

the crisis – is caused by a reduction in investments. This generally happens because ‘the social group controlling the surplus ceases to apply it to new ways of doing things because they have a vested interest in the old ways of doing things’.²⁴ In an attempt to preserve their position, the vested interests create or subsidize new institutions, on political, military and intellectual levels, in order to contain the masses or direct them against the necessary reforms. There is a number of examples of vested interests provided by Quigley – he mentions the priestly caste of the Mesopotamian civilization, the landed elites of slave-owners in the classical age, the German bourgeoisie during the 1930s. In all three cases those responsible for the old and broken instruments of expansion favoured the rise of new political and military actors (the Sumerian kings, the legions formed by mercenaries, the Nazi party) as a proxy through which to preserve their hegemony, only to be soon replaced by the latter as true holders of power. The decline was therefore caused by the inability to adapt to change by the elites who had led the expansion.

Directly linking the effects of historical changes with their causes, this model, according to Quigley, offers a more cogent – and less Eurocentric – periodization than the usual subdivision of ancient, medieval and modern history. It is also important to underline the role played in Quigley’s account by the spatial dimension. Firstly, the geographic aspect of the expansion creates a dialectic between centre and periphery. During this stage of its evolution, a civilization expands itself from its core area to occupy more peripheral areas. For instance, the core area of Classical civilization was Greece, especially the territories around the shores of the Aegean Sea, while its periphery came to include the entire Mediterranean basin. Likewise, Western civilization was born in the region between England and Northern Italy and subsequently spread to the rest of Europe (until eastern Polish borders), North and South America, and Oceania.²⁵

While transitioning from expansion to the stage of conflict, war appears most often within the boundaries of the civilization itself, as the centre-periphery relationship tends to be reversed. Quigley points out that the slowing down of expansion does not occur uniformly: generally, it occurs first in the core of the civilization and then in its more distant areas. When a civilization experiences a widespread decline, its periphery – which has continued to grow while the centre has already slowed down – has filled the gap and in many cases is wealthier and more powerful than the civilization’s core. Since the cultural diffusion acts differently as to its material and nonmaterial elements – as we shall see later when dealing with exchanges between civilizations –, a misalignment arises in the development between centre and periphery: unlike the former, in the latter the economic and military levels can develop more rapidly than the social, political or intellectual levels. This makes it

²⁴ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *The Evolution of Civilizations*, 139.

²⁵ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *The Evolution of Civilizations*, 150.

possible to explain why comparatively backward areas are able to prevail over areas with a more refined culture.

Quigley provides a detailed account of this process for many different civilizations. In Mesopotamian civilization, the core city-states like Ur and Lagash were conquered by more peripheral states like Babylon. This in turn was conquered by Assyria, and ultimately by the even more peripheral Persia. In Classical civilization we find an analogous sequence – from core to periphery – in which the hegemony is handed over from the cities of the Ionian core area led by Athens to the semiperipheral Dorian states (Sparta and Thebes), then to the more peripheral Macedonia and finally to Rome. The same pattern worked for other civilizations, like Mesoamerican and Andean regions, Islamic countries, India, or China. For instance, the latter, after the Mongol invasions (1260-1368), was seized by the Ming (1368-1644) and by the Qing (1644-1912), two peripheral dynasties, respectively of southern and northern origin.²⁶

Each of these conflicts thus appears to follow a repeated pattern. This regular dynamic describes how the periphery replaces the old centre: eventually a winning power emerges from internal wars and creates a ‘Universal Empire,’ uniting the entire civilization into a single political entity. From the military point of view, distressed countries tend to transfer their internal difficulties outside the area they control by means of a deliberate use of force: recognizing the impossibility of continuing the expansion, they try to obtain the resources they need by plundering other populations. At the same time, they also steer internal social conflicts towards an outside enemy, often mobilizing irrational ideologies against them. The resulting wars have therefore an imperialist connotation. Examples can be found in contemporary history, with an explicit reference to the fascist powers responsible for the Second World War, but not only: Quigley mentions the Hundred Years’ War, the Italian wars (1494-1559) and the Napoleonic wars. Each of these imperialist wars ‘reflected a situation where older institutions continued to work for a war that newer instrumental developments had made unnecessary and unrewarding’.²⁷

Towards World History: Voices from the Scholarly Debate

Quigley openly admitted the academic weakness of his position, when he stated: ‘We holists are a small minority with little influence’.²⁸ Nonetheless, his role appears to

²⁶ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *The Evolution of Civilizations*, 154-57.

²⁷ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *The Evolution of Civilizations*, 372.

²⁸ CARROLL QUIGLEY, “The Search for a Solution to the World Crisis,” *The Futurist* 9 (1975), 38-41. In its essence, this article was the review of a book by sociologist Victor Ferkiss, one of his colleagues at Georgetown: VICTOR C. FERKISS, *The Future of Technological Civilization* (New York: George Braziller, 1974). When reviewing another book by Ferkiss, Quigley described him in terms that sound like a sort of self-portrait: ‘Ferkiss not only knows this material, but he has the ability to think about it without emotional or personal bias and without committing himself to any special point of view or any narrow outlook. His thinking is hard-headed and skeptical without being materialistic, egocentric, or cynical.’

have been recognized by peers that were following similar research paths. For instance, the theme of the centre-periphery relationship and of the subsequent dislocations of the centre according to the new balances of power, illustrated by Quigley in the early 1960s, later became one of the cornerstones of the World-Systems Theory, whose key figure is the American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein.²⁹ Some exponents of this school, like Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas D. Hall, acknowledged Quigley's contribution in the development of the concept³⁰. These connections must be emphasized to give the Georgetown historian a fair credit for his scholarly endeavour.

The two decades that saw Quigley's direct participation in the scholarly debate, the 1960s and 1970s, are also the years of the fading out of Universal History and the rise of World History. The former is grounded in a tradition dating back to Polybius, and elaborates his comprehensive look at the whole history of humankind through a 'heroic' effort to dominate each and any relevant aspect of past events on a planetary scale. In its current approximation – by its founder's explicit acknowledgment–,³¹ i.e. the 'Big History,' man's history is placed in the background of billion years of cosmic evolution. The latter, in turn, gives up the teleological perspective, and builds its general interpretation by focusing on the interconnections generated by individuals and groups overlapping boundaries and cultures while involved in trades, epidemics, migrations.³² This entails the choice to adopt the – often fragmentary – sources left by those groups, instead of questioning again the 'official' documents produced by the institutions that set how memory was to be constructed.

His skepticism reminds me of Crane Brinton, a similarity which extends also to his verbal style and facility of expression, while his ability to deal with complex social problems, often from an original point of view, is similar to Kenneth Galbraith's.: CARROLL QUIGLEY, "The Future in the Light of Technology", in *The Washington Sunday Star*, 6 July 1969. Review of VICTOR C. FERKISS, *Technological Man: The Myth and the Reality* (New York: George Braziller, 1969).

²⁹ IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN, *The Modern World-System*, 4 vols. (New York: Academic Press, 1974, 1980, 1989; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

³⁰ CHRISTOPHER CHASE-DUNN, THOMAS D. HALL, *Rise and Demise: Comparing World-Systems* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 78. See also DAVID WILKINSON, "Cores, Peripheries, and Civilizations," in *Core/Periphery Relations in Precapitalist Worlds*, CHRISTOPHER CHASE-DUNN, THOMAS D. HALL, eds. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 113-66.

³¹ DAVID CHRISTIAN, "The Return of Universal History", in *History and Theory* 49, 4 (2010), 6-27.

³² A selected bibliography on World History includes: PATRICK MANNING, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); BENEDIKT STUCHTEY and ECKHARDT FUCHS, eds, *Writing World History, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); CHRISTOPHER ALAN BAYLY, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914. Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2004); LAURA DI FIORE, MARCO MERIGGI, *World History. Le nuove rotte della storia* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2011); JERRY H. BENTLEY, ed, *The Oxford Handbook of World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); ERIC VANHAUTE, *World History. An Introduction* (London-New York: Routledge, 2013); SEBASTIAN CONRAD, *Globalgeschichte. Eine Einführung* (München: Beck, 2013, Ital. transl. *Storia globale. Un'introduzione* (Roma: Carocci, 2015); JÜRGEN OSTERHAMMEL, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); SEBASTIAN CONRAD, *What is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

In this evolving landscape, Quigley should be situated as a link between these two approaches: or, at least, as the individual that embodied the passage from the more traditional comparative perspective focused on civilizations to the new theories based on sociological concepts. Quigley was an influential member of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (ISCSC), established in 1961 by Toynbee and the Russian-born sociologist Pitirim A. Sorokin (1889-1968). At the same time, he worked on a topic – i.e., the centre-periphery relationship – that would have become, as we have seen, the central theme of the World-Systems Theory. It is interesting to remark that, after Quigley's death, scholars belonging to these two groups intensified their collaboration, based on the eventual acknowledgment of the reciprocal commonalities of their viewpoints³³.

Another transitional figure, early recognized as one of the precursors of World History, was William H. McNeill (1917-2016), the Canadian-born historian of the University of Chicago.³⁴ For McNeill the reconstruction of large scenarios is essential to give meaning, order and consistency to history. This process, that McNeill calls 'pattern recognition' – by which a mere catalogue of facts is recast into a comprehensible pattern –, is shared by both natural and social scientists, although the latter are not always aware of it.³⁵ Quigley held similar ideas, on which he built his long-time quest for historical patterns.³⁶ He found himself very close to McNeill, whom he praised highly several times. Quigley saw a common ground between his work and that of his colleague in the shared belief of the necessity to put specialists' research 'into the framework of a general picture'.³⁷

As a result of its theoretical inclination, 'macrohistory leans towards simplification in the interest of generalizability,' and as such should be counterbalanced by a stress on individual lives and events.³⁸ With this goal in mind, four years after *The Evolution of Civilizations* Quigley authored another book: *Tragedy*

³³ STEPHEN K. SANDERSON, ed, "Civilizations and World Systems", Special Issue of *Comparative Civilizations Review* 30, 30 (1994).

³⁴ William Hardy McNeill (1917-2016) made a fundamental contribution to modern historiography by innovating the methodology of inquiry into contacts and exchanges between different civilizations – especially at the cultural, military, epidemiological and environmental levels –, starting with his best known work, *The Rise of the West. A History of the Human Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). See also WILLIAM H. MCNEILL, "The Rise of the West After 25 Years", in *Journal of World History* 1, 1 (1990), 1-21.

³⁵ Cf. WILLIAM H. MCNEILL, "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians", in *The American Historical Review* 91, 1 (1986), 1-10.

³⁶ Cf. CARROLL QUIGLEY, *The Evolution of Civilizations*, 42-47 and 416-17.

³⁷ CARROLL QUIGLEY, "An Exercise in Historical Perspective", in *The Washington Sunday Star*, 13 August 1967. Review of WILLIAM H. MCNEILL, *A World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). See also CARROLL QUIGLEY, "The Generalists' Past: Power Patterns of Human History", in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 24 August 1963. Review of WILLIAM H. MCNEILL, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

³⁸ FRANCESCA TRIVELLATO, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?", in *California Italian Studies* 2, 1 (2011): iii, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0z94n9hq>.

and Hope. A History of the World in Our Time.³⁹ Starting from its very title, this work was a step towards World History, merging the methodological approach with the narrative one, with the aim of providing a comprehensive account of the last century (1860-1960). Issues of political, economic, and military history are largely explored, but relevant pages of social and intellectual history are included as well; an incredible amount of knowledge is packed into this lengthy book of over a thousand pages. Unfortunately, this excessive length played against him, as Quigley did not always find a good balance among its several topics. A missed chance, we could say, but one that should not lead to overlook the wealth of original ideas that intersperses its narrative.

Throughout his career, Quigley never questioned his adherence to the Toynbian scheme of classification. Given his affinity to McNeill, it is legitimate to ask why Quigley continued to maintain the idea of several distinct civilizations rather than one single world civilization. Why did he take this apparent detour on the way towards World History? The most comprehensive and direct answer can be found in one of his lesser writings: the review of a book by Brazilian anthropologist and politician Darcy Ribeiro, a noteworthy figure of a scholar and social reformer. In a brief but dense appraisal, Quigley stated that cultural diffusion, which shapes the various civilizations by linking them together, is not determined solely by technological factors; on the contrary, the intangible factors (which escape Marxist or predominantly materialist approaches) are of extreme importance. The ability to use technical knowledge at one's disposal, autonomously conceived or obtained by diffusion from other cultures, actually depends on socially accepted organizational patterns. Intangible factors, which are harder to modify, transfer and adapt, can therefore be identified as characteristic traits of individual civilizations, united by a dense network of contacts but featuring autonomous profiles.⁴⁰ On this premise, Quigley came to accept the idea that underdevelopment was not a form of backwardness but the outcome of a process of subordination – a central idea in the World-Systems Theory, and one that we could find in seminal works by more recent authors, such as Janet Abu-Lughod.⁴¹

The Diffusion of Cultures and the Many Ways to Modernization

Quigley's reflection on these kinds of problems is another testament to his ability to keep up with the most innovative trends and integrate them into his own reasoning. Understanding the outcomes of cultural diffusion is a fundamental goal for a

³⁹ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *Tragedy and Hope. A History of the World in Our Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

⁴⁰ CARROLL QUIGLEY, "An Important Work on Civilization", in *The Washington Sunday Star*, 29 June 1969.

⁴¹ JANET ABU-LUGHOD, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

historiography that aims to explain the connections between civilizations from a World History perspective. In parallel with McNeill, who adopts diffusion as the main key to historical change, Quigley produces his own reflection on this topic, marking a substantial shift from the essentialism of the masters of modern comparatism – Spengler and Toynbee.

His understanding of civilization as the result of diverse and equally important components has meaningful consequences, because the ways in which the cultural diffusion operates differ as to material aspects and nonmaterial ones. The barriers between civilizations are much more permeable to the former, while they represent far greater obstacles to the latter. It is therefore relatively easy, for example, to transfer Western technology but it is far more complex to convey Western values. Leveraging his thesis about the relationship between centre and periphery, he observes that the degree of permeability to nonmaterial elements determines whether the target area becomes the new periphery of a civilization or maintains its individuality.

Cultural diffusion has the potential to produce both beneficial and harmful outcomes, depending on how material and nonmaterial elements fit together. Quigley summarizes the terms of the question as follows:

In general, importation of an element of material culture from one society to another is helpful to the importing society in the long run only if it is (a) productive, (b) can be made within the society itself, and (c) can be fitted into the nonmaterial culture of the importing society without demoralizing it. The destructive impact of Western Civilization upon so many other societies rests on its ability to demoralize their ideological and spiritual culture as much as its ability to destroy them in a material sense with firearms.⁴²

The material culture of the West is based on its technological advances, which Quigley divides into four main areas: weapons; agricultural and industrial production; medicine; transport and communications. He focuses in particular on the last three, far more relevant than the first in determining Western supremacy over the long run. The increase in food production due to the agricultural revolution, which started in Great Britain around 1725, made it possible that the subsequent increase in European population escaped the ‘Malthusian trap.’ Quigley does not use this term, but his reasoning is clear: only those radical changes in agriculture managed to prevent a potentially catastrophic aftermath of the demographic expansion, enabled by the advances in medicine that began to appear about fifty years after the agricultural revolution. Another effect of the agricultural revolution was the increase in efficiency: when a smaller number of people was required for the same output of food production, a substantial workforce could be employed in new tasks. These

⁴² CARROLL QUIGLEY, *Tragedy and Hope*, 14.

advances in agriculture and medicine provided the basis on which the industrial revolution, as well as the revolution in transport and communications, built their extraordinary results.

It is important to underline the fact that Quigley assigns the utmost importance to the chronological sequence in which these innovations have been achieved in the West. A different sequence would have generated very different results: and this was precisely what actually happened when innovations spread to non-Western societies. The transport revolution is provided as an example. While the building of the railways could rely, in the more developed European and American regions, on an autonomous industrial base, those states that were in a pre-industrial stage were able to develop their infrastructures only by becoming debtors to the Western powers. Even more important is the link between the agricultural revolution on the one hand, and the industrial and health revolutions on the other. The non-European populations entered the phase of industrialization before having completed the agricultural revolution that had made the industrial revolution in Europe possible. Quigley explains how in the twentieth century the developing countries were forced to face an alternative: attracting foreign investments, that is borrowing capital, or extracting more resources from rural populations in order to support the production of industrial goods, in a context in which the agricultural revolution had not yet taken off. The first option became less viable mainly because the efforts of those countries towards industrialization had political motivations, which excluded a further dependence on Western countries. Where the second option was chosen, some of the major tragedies of the twentieth century inevitably followed. The oppression suffered by the peasants in the USSR under Stalin and in China under Mao Zedong are directly connected to the different chronology with which the advancements of the West reached Asia.

The demographic problem, which has been affecting most non-Western countries since the second half of the twentieth century, is another example of diffusion. Also, in this case, the same reversal of the sequence of development happened. The increase in the birth rate and the decrease in the mortality rate, due to improvements in the health sector, caused a strong demographic pressure on a socio-economic fabric unable to sustain it, thus generating large political instability at the global level. As a general pattern these problems stem from the fact that the achievements of Western civilization became part of the structure of other civilizations not only at different times but also in quite a different order. According to Quigley, the chronological sequence in which innovations in the West became global is one of the most significant factors in understanding World History.⁴³

⁴³ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *Tragedy and Hope*, 22.

It is interesting to examine Quigley's views in parallel with other theories of development of the same years. The most immediate comparison can be made with the Modernization Theory, promoted since the 1950s by the American economist W. W. Rostow (1916-2003). This model maintains that economic modernization is achieved through five successive stages: traditional society, preconditions for development, industrial take-off, technological maturity, and high mass consumption society. This theory is one of the most significant results of the so-called Modernization School, to which important sociologists such as Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils belonged. Explicitly proposed as an interpretative model competing with the Marxist doctrine, the Modernization Theory was heavily debated within the social sciences as well as in policy making. In fact, Rostow's analysis was adopted as the theoretical foundation of the development aid policies addressed to Third World countries.⁴⁴ However, the unsatisfactory results of those policies ended up in a refutation of the theory.⁴⁵ During the 1960s a rival school emerged, which emphasized the mechanisms of exploitation to which the economies of non-advanced countries were exposed. According to this interpretation, known as Dependency Theory, non-industrialized nations must be seen not as societies in transition towards development but as societies connected to capitalist nations by asymmetrical relations that cause dependency; their integration into the global trading system is not the solution but the very cause of their underdevelopment.⁴⁶ This approach was later integrated into the World-Systems Theory, which – unlike the Modernization Theory and the same Dependency Theory – no longer assumes the nation-state but the whole world as its unit of analysis.

Quigley elaborated a critical view of the principles exposed by Rostow, following his ideas that the goal of development, and consequently of peace, should be achieved not by deploying quantifiable, technological, material instruments, but by strengthening those organizational patterns that are featured in different cultures. The ways in which the Modernization Theory was applied in countries falling under the US sphere of influence, such as the Latin American ones, as well as the use of human and financial resources destined to reproduce the Western development model in distinct contexts, appeared to him as a typical manifestation of that reductionist and technocratic mind-set that he opposed tirelessly. In his opinion, an

⁴⁴ WALT W. ROSTOW, "The Stages of Economic Growth", in *Economic History Review* 12, 1 (1959), 1-16; WALT W. ROSTOW, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Cf. NILS GILMAN, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

⁴⁵ Cf. JOYCE APPLEBY, "Modernization Theory and the Formation of Modern Social Theories in England and America", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, 2 (1978), 259-85; ALBERTO MARTINELLI, *Global Modernization: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (London: SAGE, 2005), 40-41.

⁴⁶ Among the most significant works related to the Dependency Theory we find: RAÚL PREBISCH, *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems* (New York: United Nations, 1950); ANDRE GUNDER FRANK, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

authentic transformation can only be achieved through a progressive evolution of social and cultural patterns already existing and rooted in non-advanced societies. The transfer of the know-how, albeit mythologized by the US elites, is ineffective if it is not accompanied by this process, which is much more complicated and unlikely to be treated with quantitative methods. Rather than an increase in material resources, what these societies lack are the patterns needed to make existing resources effective. The solution to problems of development therefore does not lie in applying methods from outside, but in devising techniques and procedures which are based on local culture and capable of working in that context. The goal of the modernization policies promoted by the capitalist countries –‘westernizing’ the Third World and implementing the model of the consumer society everywhere – is both unrealizable and undesirable. Probably, the best synthesis of Quigley’s position on this issue is what he said in 1957, before the officers of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and reaffirmed constantly over the following two decades: ‘The American way of life is not exportable’.⁴⁷

Conclusions

As a historian, Quigley committed himself to researching and teaching from a global standpoint. At the time, the holistic method he advocated struggled in vain to reach mainstream recognition. Actually, a comprehensive scholarly paradigm was available, based on Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s General Systems Theory, but it was largely rejected. According to Quigley, this failure left historians bereft of a powerful interpretative tool.

However, US academia found another way to explore new avenues and cope with the new position assigned to the country by the post-war diplomatic balance. It has been posited that Area studies, which saw a burgeoning development after 1945, contributed to build a favourable context for the development of World History.⁴⁸ Their success was crucial in urging historians and social scientists to carry out research on topics that were unfamiliar to most American scholars. Conspicuous funding for Area studies came from both the government and – especially – the corporate foundations, since these subjects were also intended as tools for supporting America’s role as an imperial force of the new geopolitical order.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ CARROLL QUIGLEY, “Comparative National Cultures”, lecture presented at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, D.C., 13 November 1957.

⁴⁸ EDOARDO TORTAROLO, “Universal History Between the Two Wars. Research Avenues for a History of the Interaction Between Europe and America”, in *Modern European-American Relations in the Transatlantic Space. Recent Trends in History Writing*, MAURIZIO VAUDAGNA, ed. (Turin: Otto, 2015), 11-30.

⁴⁹ DAVID NUGENT, “Knowledge and Empire: The Social Sciences and United States Imperial Expansion”, in *Identities* 17 (2010), 2-44. See also: GUIDO FRANZINETTI, “The strange death of area studies and the normative turn”, in *Quaderni storici* 3 (2015), 835-47.

At the School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University, Quigley's course on the development of civilizations was undoubtedly part of this overall effort – but with a personal flair. He repeatedly affirmed that his aim was 'to train executives rather than clerks,' helping his students to structure a mind-set based on the principle of 'cognitive sophistication,' which is needed to understand other cultures and act consistently without applying ethnocentric patterns of judgement.⁵⁰ As to Area studies, their crisis was caused by funding bodies' reorientation after the end of the Cold War. At the same time, post-colonial studies, in their attack on prior historical tradition, were highly critical of such scholarship.⁵¹ While for biographical reasons Quigley does not belong to this debate, it is easily understood that, despite undergoing a deep crisis, Western civilization plays the lead role in his history of the world. All things considered, Quigley was able to arrange diverse notions from different fields into a single, robust explanatory model. His openness to dialogue as well as his commitment to breaking down disciplinary boundaries endure today as, perhaps, his most valuable lessons.

⁵⁰ CARROLL QUIGLEY, *The Evolution of Civilizations*, 420.

⁵¹ See DIPESH CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).