

西方文明简史

北京大学西学影印丛书
历史学系列

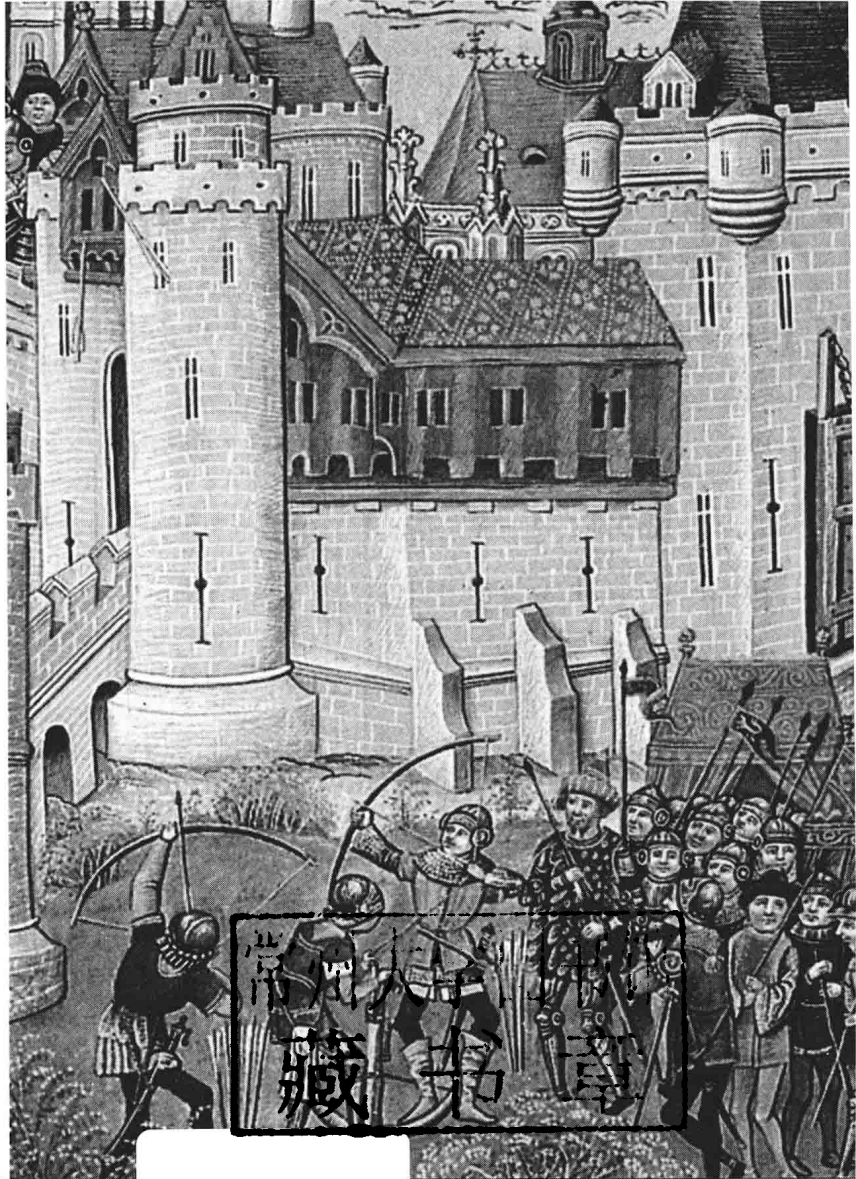
历史中的主导权和多样性 (英文影印版)

A Concise Survey of Western Civilization
Supremacies and Diversities throughout History

〔美〕布莱恩·A·帕夫莱克 著
高毅 导读



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导 读

高 毅

(北京大学历史系教授)

历史是可以常讲常新的,而种种引人入胜、启人心智的历史教材,都必定饱含作者个人对史学和历史教学事业的独特感悟。

布莱恩·帕夫莱克的《西方文明简史》就是一部这样的历史教材。帕夫莱克是美国宾夕法尼亚州威尔克斯巴尔市国王学院历史系主任,Herve A. LeBlanc 杰出贡献教授。他从小就喜爱历史,而且乐此不疲,终于要矢志不渝地跟历史研究与教学打一辈子交道。而他之所以要写这本书,按他自己的说法,是因为经过多年的教学实践,他对历史教育中“哪些事情比较重要”有了他“自己的看法”(第 xii 页)。一个历史教师能够达到这样的境界,应该算是很成功的了。

细看帕夫莱克的某些“自己的看法”,感到的确颇有些特色。比如他给自己这本书设定的副标题——“主导权和多样性”,就集中地反映了他对一般历史发展动力的独到见解。在他看来,人类历史上,总有一些人或势力想在各种领域称霸,让其他人或势力向自己俯首称臣,而其他人或势力往往又不会甘心受奴役,总是要通过种种形式的抗争来维持和发展自己的个性——正是这种关于“同一与差异”、“权力与自由”的不同诉求之间的张力,创造了一个又一个发展机遇,演化出许许多多历史活剧,推动着人类文明不断前行。听起来,这种历史观很有点黑格尔的味道,而作者对人性和思想观念在历史上的作用也的确强调得有点过,但要是我们就此便给它贴上“历史唯心主义”的标签并把它打入“另册”,却又非常不妥:因为说实在的,这种解释道出的终究也是一种真实——另一个层面的真实,而这种真实也是完整的历史认识所不能忽略的。又比如,帕夫莱克说,他这部“简史”会演示各历史时期政治、经济、技术、社会和文化的发展动态,而不会特别关注历史上人民的日常生活,理由是“生活方式虽然可以反映某些较大的问题,但本身却很少能推动变化”(第 xiii 页)。在当今仍循着年鉴派史学的路数关注社会文化问题的许多学者看来,帕夫莱克的这个观点无疑也是相当另类的,也许他还在延续上世纪 80 年

代开始的“回归事件”的潮流,在认真地反制历史的“碎化”?看看他为自己的叙述设置的五大主题吧——技术革新,移民与征服,政治和经济决策,教会与国家,有关生活意义的争辩(第 xiii-xiv 页):几乎都是“事件史”的主题。尽管就此把帕夫莱克看作“传统史学卫道士”也是荒谬的(他的这部“大而化之”的《西方文明简史》,无论如何算不上实证主义的传统史学作品),但他对短时段现象的高度关注终究是显而易见的。“事件”,或显见的变化,只要产生过深远的历史影响,就是帕夫莱克必定要搜罗进他的这本小书的历史“干货”。

他这本书的确不大,因而特别宏观,四百多页就写完了整整一部西方文明史。所以他只能挑在他看来最重要的一些史事来写,而这也正是他写作此书的初衷:提供受过教育的人都应该知道的最低限度的历史信息,同时提供一个紧扣中心主题的叙述和解释结构。这种事件史取向的历史书写一般都有一种优势:可读性强。而帕夫莱克作为一名优秀的历史教师,自然是会像讲究授课的生动性一样讲究著作的可读性的。他明白,要想推动历史学的发展,并充分发挥历史学的社会功能,史学工作者就必须刻意“把学习历史变成一种享受,变成一件连不是专门学历史的、对过去不感兴趣的人都喜欢做的事情”(第 xiii 页)。对重大历史事件的精选与关注,深入浅出的明快阐释,循循善诱的比较学习法,生动活泼的课堂教学方式,以及图像、格言栏和大事年表等等辅助手段,再加上作者“小说家般的文笔”……所有这一切,已经使帕夫莱克这本书赢得了学界同行的广泛赞誉。

如今这本书已从西方大量同类出版物中脱颖而出,由北大出版社介绍到了中国读书界。这是件很好的事情,有助于开拓我们的眼界。不过粗览全书后,我感到我们在读它的时候,还须多留个心眼——说句俗套话,要注意“取其精华去其糟粕”,尤其是作者在书的结语中已明确表示,他这本书主要是面向西方读者,尤其是青年学生的,是要唤醒他们对于西方文明的某种忧患意识(第 389 页)。作者是美国人,有点“西方本位主义”倒也没什么不对,只是从历史上看,这种“西方本位主义”往往有可能和“西方中心主义”存在或产生某种潜在的关联,这就特别值得我们注意了。

2014 年 3 月 18 日

草于蓝旗营寓所

A Concise Survey of
Western Civilization

*Supremacies and Diversities
throughout History*

BRIAN A. PAVLAC

Acknowledgments

I was interested in history from a young age, as most kids are. Too often, as they grow older, kids lose their fascination with the past, partly because it becomes another something they have to learn rather than a path of self-understanding or even just “neat stuff.” Wonderful teachers taught me history through the years, and partly inspired by them, I foolishly went on to study history in college. Before I knew it, history became my intended profession; and I have been fortunate to make a living from history.

In teaching courses over the years, I found my own voice about what mattered. Instead of simply sharing my thoughts in lectures, I produced this book. Former teachers, books I have read and documentaries I have viewed, historical sites I have visited, all have contributed to the knowledge poured into these pages. Likewise, many students, too many to be named, have sharpened both words and focus. I owe thanks to the many readers whose suggestions have improved the text. For their help to me in getting this project as far as it has come, I have to thank a number of specific people. I appreciate my editor, Susan McEachern, who gave the book her time and consideration, and her associate, Carrie Broadwell-Tkach, as well as Michele Tomiak and Jehanne Schweitzer. Various people have read drafts and offered useful suggestions: Mark Reinbrecht, Linae Steitz Marek, Megan Lloyd, and especially Jean O’Brien. I thank Cristofer Scarboro, Charles Ingram, Nicole Mares, and Ada Borkowski-Gunn for their feedback from teaching. Helping me with reviewing and editing have been my daughters, Helen K. Pavlac and Margaret Mackenzie Pavlac. Finally, most of all, my spouse, Elizabeth Lott, has sustained me through it all. Her skills in grammar, logic, and good sense have made this a far better book.

The final version is never complete. Every new history source I read makes me want to adjust an adjective, nudge a nuance, or fix a fact. With every reading of this text, I find room for improvement. I have made a great effort for accuracy. Should any errors have crept in, please forgive the oversight and contact me with your proposed corrections.

How to Use This Book

Learning is difficult. If it were easy, everyone would be educated. In this age of multimedia, reading still remains one of the best ways to learn something. Of course, reading well is not always easy. You cannot read a nonfiction informative work such as this in the same way as you would a Harry Potter novel. Those novels, though, are full of information with strange new terms, from *muggles* to *Hogwarts*, that people learn easily and absorb into their knowledge. The same could be true of learning history if you loved it as much as historians do.

I hope to make learning history as enjoyable as possible, even to those who are not historians, not in love with the past. Even as a survey, this book offers one person's opinion about what is good, bad, useful, and wasteful to know about our wider civilization. As it is meant to be a concise book, I have tried to keep it brief. This book covers the minimum historical information that educated adults should know, in the author's opinion, while also providing a tightly focused narrative and interpretive structure. This approach applies major themes of conflict and creativity. Other approaches might be equally as valuable. Indeed, to be truly educated, you should be looking at a variety of views about the past. History is rarely simple. This version provides a foundation for learning more.

The phrase "supremacies and diversities" describes the unifying theme through which this text evaluates the past. "Supremacies" focus on the use of power to dominate societies, ranging from warfare to ideologies. Supremacy seeks stability, order, and amalgamation. "Diversities" encompass the creative impulse that creates new ideas as well as people's efforts to define themselves as different. Diversity creates change, opportunity, and individuality. A tension, of course, arises between the "supremacy" desire for conformity and the "diversity" idea of individuality. This interaction has clearly driven historical conflict and change.

Fulfilling the survey function, this narrative develops political, economic, technological, social, and cultural trends, depending on the historical period. The book does not much emphasize the everyday-life aspects of people in the past. While lifestyle can offer an interesting reflection of larger issues, it in itself rarely promotes change. Five main topical themes regularly inform how this text looks at change: technological innovation, migration and conquest, political and economic decision

making, church and state, and disputes about the meaning of life. These topics have significantly altered history and are still influential in the present.

How could you best learn from this book? Read well. This time-tested advice applies to anything you might want to learn thoroughly for the rest of your life. Here are a few steps:

1. Read the text in a space and at a time conducive to reading—not in the few minutes before class, not with television and music blaring.
2. Prudently mark up, underline, highlight, and otherwise annotate your text as you study. Use the margins for notes, questions, comments, and marks to remind you of some important point.
3. Critique the book as you read; enter into its conversation. You might comment in the margins on the following points:
 - Connections between themes, ideas, or subjects
 - Ideas you agree with
 - Ideas you disagree with
 - Reactions provoked by the text
 - Points or subjects of particular interest to you
 - Points or subjects you would like to know more about
4. At the end of each section, jot down notes or write a brief essay about what you read. The review question at the end of each section and the open space there provide a useful opportunity.
5. Use the timelines to review and structure your knowledge according to theme or time period. The most important terms in the text appear in **boldface** and are listed in the timelines. Additionally, definitions for important terms, which appear in ***boldface italics*** in the text, are given in the glossary.
6. If you wish to deepen your experience with the past, try the “Suggested Readings” listed at the end of the book. They provide essential points of view or capture the spirit of their times, sometimes at great length. For other useful and concise sources and study information, see the website.

Finally, connect what you learn here to the rest of your experience. The more you know, the more you can know. And, according to the liberal arts credo, the more you know, the better will be your decisions about your life.

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