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MOMIGLIANO ON PEACE AND LIBERTY (1940)

Recently in Britain we celebrated the centenary of the birth of my revered teacher, Arnaldo Momigliano (1908–1987), one of the greatest historians of Europe and of the ancient world in the twentieth century.¹ I want to talk to you today in Prague about his experiences and ideas, not just out of piety, but because his life and his suffering belong to a history that you too, and all the peoples of central Europe especially, have shared. In terms of the persecution of intellectuals the twentieth century was ‘Europe’s dark century’,² probably the worst period of modern European history since the wars of religion of the seventeenth century: not since then have so many great thinkers suffered for their beliefs at the hands of corrupt and bigoted rulers. As we stand at the start of a new century, it is very hard to believe what our generation has experienced, and even harder to believe in the inevitability of progress. It is important for us all, young and old, to remember the dark past out of which we have so recently emerged after three generations of suffering, and to work for a future Europe based on tolerance and unity.

On 2nd September 1938, in pursuit of his aims of a closer alliance with Hitler, Mussolini issued his notorious racial decree dismissing from public office all those of Jewish origin. There had been little earlier sign of any danger to Italian Jews, who were indeed as completely assimilated as the Jews of England. From its beginnings the Fascist party itself had many Jewish supporters, who included the parents of Arnaldo Momigliano, and there was no discrimination against Jews in Italy.

Like all young scholars who sought appointment to university or other public posts in the Fascist period, Momigliano was required to be a nominal member of the party; but his chief intellectual contacts who supported him throughout their lives

¹ In preparing this account, in addition to the story told by Riccardo Di Donato (below n. 8) on the basis of his research in the Pisa archive and Italian sources, I have been able to draw on the archives in Oxford of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, and the Oxford University Press.

² See Mazower, 1998, esp. ch. 1.

were two famous figures from an older generation who were resolutely opposed to Fascism, His teacher Gaetano De Sanctis was a Catholic recusant who believed that ultimate authority lay with the Pope; his philosophical mentor, Benedetto Croce, was politically an old-fashioned liberal. Towards the end of his long life, his fellow pupil and rival Mario Attilio Levi who, despite his active membership of the Fascist party, had himself been dismissed from his university post in the decree of 1938, writing about Momigliano, candidly admitted, ‘These political oppositions found no echo in the university life of the second decade of the century, even if De Sanctis *and all his pupils, with the exception of myself*, [my italics] had taken up positions hostile to Fascism in a generally inactive fashion.’³ We shall see what this ‘inactive fashion’ meant for Momigliano.

In 1938 Momigliano had never travelled abroad;⁴ in Britain he had corresponded with Frank Adcock (1886–1968) and M.P. Charlesworth (1895–1950), two of the editors of the *Cambridge Ancient History*. They had commissioned, and Charlesworth had translated, the two chapters that Momigliano contributed to volume X, published in 1934, on Herod of Judaea and on Nero, and a third long section of a chapter on the provincial rebellions, covering the Jewish revolt of 66–70 A.D. It was Hugh Last (1894–1957), Camden Professor of Roman History at Oxford from 1936–1948, who had originally brought Momigliano to the attention of the editors of the *CAH*; in a review in the *Journal of Roman Studies* for 1932, he had recognised the brilliance of Momigliano’s first substantial book, written while he was still a graduate student, *L’opera del imperatore Claudio* (1932), and it was he who had arranged its English translation.⁵

Two days after the proclamation of the decree of dismissal Arnaldo Momigliano wrote in Italian to Hugh Last, on 4th September 1938, the day before his thirtieth birthday (I give the letter in Last’s translation made for the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning):

Dear Professor Last,

In consequence of the decree of 21 September I have been deprived, as a Jew, of my chair at the University of Turin. I am completely without private means, and I have a wife and daughter and other dependent relatives. I know that England is full of foreign Jews; yet I think it my duty to ask you if an arrangement of any sort, even the most humble, would be possible there – not so much as a teacher of ancient history (in which capacity there is certainly no need

³ I do not propose to enter the debate begun after his death by Momigliano’s personal enemies about the extent of his relations with Fascism: Professor Di Donato has dealt with the question in his introduction. The confession of Mario Attilio Levi is sufficient refutation: ‘Queste contrapposizioni politiche non avevano echo nella vita universitaria del secondo decennio del secolo, anche si De Sanctis e tutti i suoi allievi, a eccezione di chi scrive, avevano assunte posizioni ostili al fascismo in maniera generalmente non attiva, mentre L. Pareti aveva aderito al fascismo sin dal inizio.’ (Levi, 1989, 10).

⁴ All his contacts with foreign scholars were made in Rome; for instance he met D.M. Pippidi (1905–93) in 1931–3 when he was a young researcher at the Rumanian Academy; see the obituary by Fischer, 1997, 211–6: Momigliano contributed to the number of this journal in honour of Pippidi (Momigliano 1987, 121–134). For their close relations as young men see D.M. Pippidi, 1989, 15–33.

⁵ *Claudius: the Emperor and his Achievement* trans W.D Hogarth (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1934).

of me) as in the role of a reader of Italian or a clerk in a library (where I should be able to combine technical competence in antiquity with my pretty intimate knowledge of everything Italian). Naturally I should be available for a post in a private business like Blackwell's or something similar.

There has also occurred to me the possibility that the British School at Rome might be able to make use of an Italian librarian who was also an expert in ancient history. Before applying directly I should be glad of your opinion and, ultimately, of your support.

My knowledge of English is at present slight. In that I see an additional difficulty. Still obviously I should do everything possible to make good this defect, though I do not pick up languages easily.

I should be grateful to you if you could acknowledge this by return. And I should be grateful too if you would convey the contents of this letter to my Cambridge friends Charlesworth and Professor Adcock.

Yours very sincerely,

Arnaldo Momigliano

[And he added his formal cursus]

What Momigliano presumably did not realise, when he made his personal appeal, was that, like many other academics in Britain, Hugh Last was deeply involved in the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, an organisation founded by the future Lord Beveridge (author of the British Welfare State), who was at that time Principal of the London School of Economics. He had founded the Society in 1933; it was funded by voluntary contributions from British academics, by government grant and with the help of British and ultimately American charities. It was responsible for saving from Nazi persecution more than 500 great scholars and scientists with their families, people who went on to become some of the most distinguished intellectuals of 20th century British society; the importance of the scientists in particular to the Allied war effort was crucial, for it was they who invented the atom bomb. The archives of the Society are preserved in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and I have used them to uncover the story of Momigliano's arrival and early years in Britain.⁶

Experience with the refugees from Nazi Germany had taught the Society of the importance of speed in rescuing their colleagues. The same day that Last received Momigliano's letter he wrote urgently to the Society; within less than a week a reply came from the Secretary, who in the meantime had already written to the three names that Last had mentioned – Adcock, Charlesworth and Gaetano De Sanctis in Rome. On 14th September, Last partially filled out the standard form required by the Society for those who asked for its help, and by the end of September letters in support of Momigliano had arrived from all three of the referees that the Society had contacted. Thus within three weeks of his first appeal a preliminary dossier of references and

⁶ For the history of this amazing act of generosity see Lord Beveridge, 1959; and for the central role of Miss Simpson in its organisation see Cooper 1992; Cooper, 1996.

forms for an application to the Society had been collected, and it had in principle been decided to help him.

The formal dossier compiled by Momigliano himself was received on 19th February 1939. But by then the Society's committee had already met and decided on 28th January to award him a grant of £250 for a year from the date of his arrival in England to carry on historical work; Momigliano replied on 31st January. By 20th March the details of his stay in England were decided: he was invited to Oxford under the protection of Hugh Last. A note of 31st March 1939 in the archive records a telephone call from Professor Last, that Momigliano had arrived the previous night. By July his wife and daughter were also safely in Oxford. The speed with which the Society had acted and the absence of formal protocol are truly remarkable. Momigliano never forgot the debt that he owed to Hugh Last, who had saved the lives of both himself and his immediate family.

In Cambridge Sir Ernest Barker, Professor of Political Science (1927–38), and chairman of the History Faculty, had determined to contribute to the funds of the SPSL by persuading the Faculty to pay for a series of lectures by eminent refugee professors, each of whom was to receive £50; Momigliano was the only historian of the ancient world included in the list. This device of lectures was primarily a means of distributing its money to a deserving cause: there was no especial desire to hear the lectures, or indeed to honour the persons chosen. By the time the lectures were actually given there were very few students in Cambridge, and most of the faculty except for the elderly were already involved in war work; so the audiences were bound to be small. Nevertheless Momigliano agreed to give a series of eight lectures and seminars on the subject of 'Peace and Liberty in the Ancient World'. Subsequently in the same year he used these lectures as a proposal for a book to the Oxford University Press, whose archives reveal that it was the preparation of this book which served, as with so many other refugee scholars, as a basis for a series of grants made to him throughout the war by the OUP from money given by the Rockefeller Foundation.⁷

A manuscript of the book seems never to have existed, but after Momigliano's death in 1987 the complete English text of the lectures given in Cambridge in 1940 was found in his flat in Hammersmith and deposited in the Momigliano archive in Pisa. Its curator, Professor Riccardo Di Donato, published an Italian translation of the lectures in 1996;⁸ but the English original has remained unpublished until now, when he is about to publish the text in the tenth volume of Momigliano's collected works (*Decimo Contributo*, Roma 2010).

The lectures of Momigliano were delivered in January to March 1940, during that brief period known as 'the phoney war'; immediately afterwards the atmosphere changed. Churchill replaced Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister on May 10th, the British troops were evacuated from Dunkirk and French resistance disintegrated. On June 10th Italy declared war on Britain and France; and Momigliano and his family became 'enemy aliens'; in mid-July the Battle of Britain began. Amid these alarms all

⁷ These are recorded in the files of the Oxford University Press.

⁸ Momigliano 1996.

male German and Italian refugees were ordered to report for internment: it is alleged that when Momigliano presented himself at Oxford Police Station, he was asked to empty his pockets, and extracted John Stuart Mill's essay *On Liberty*. The months of internment in Cornwall and subsequently on the Isle of Man are recorded in the letters between Momigliano, his wife and the SPSL. They were anxious months for all refugees; their flavour is well brought out in an unpublished memoir by Paul Jacobsthal, describing life in the German refugee camp.⁹ The contrast between the two internment camps for Germans and Italians is captured in a story told by Momigliano about his 'Choice of Hercules'. The commandant of the Italian camp took pity on the three professors in his charge – Sraffa, Minio-Paluello and Momigliano – and offered them a transfer to the German camp, where they might find more intellectual companionship. The others were keen to go, on the grounds that it would improve their German; but Momigliano persuaded them to stay where they were, with the argument that it was better to be three professors in a camp full of waiters and chefs than three waiters in a camp full of German professors.

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The theme of the lectures of 1940, given in such tense and transitory circumstances, is the unity of Greek and Roman history as an expression of the fundamental ideals of western society. The Greeks understood and indeed created the western ideal of liberty, but could not reconcile it with the idea of peace; the Romans, who inherited something of the Greek idea of liberty, lost it in the pursuit of peace. These two great ideals of western man were in perpetual conflict until they were united by Christianity: only in Christianity could peace – the peace of God – be reconciled with the idea of the freedom of the individual. For anyone brought up in the empirical tradition of English historical research, this was and still is a completely alien way of looking at ancient history, as the interplay between great concepts, rather than as the history of events and the political and military power struggles of a long dead civilization.

Momigliano thus came to see religion as the key to the understanding of the relation between peace and liberty in the ancient world: world peace had created the conditions for a universal religion which had in turn contributed a new conception of liberty that transcended the old idea of political liberty. Momigliano's involvement with Judaism and Christianity as historical forces was central to his understanding of history in this period. This is most clearly revealed in some of the 49 surviving letters between Momigliano and De Sanctis, which run from 1930 to the death of De Sanctis in 1957.¹⁰ The openness and independence with which the young Momigliano expresses his feelings and the extraordinary warmth of the austere De Sanctis' response to his favourite and most loyal disciple are manifest; more surprising is the

⁹ I have read this in a copy obtained from the archivist of Christ Church College, Oxford.

¹⁰ Polverini 2006, 11–35; the letter is on pp. 18–9.

basis of their friendship in a mutual fascination with the relations between Judaism and Christianity in human history: ‘our age will perhaps have an essential value in human history because it is anxiously seeking to give a deep sense to human activity, to create a meaning for history without recourse to a distant God who no longer suffices for us,’ writes the 22-year old Momigliano on 12th October 1930:

But if it is true, as indeed it is, that you are more Jewish than me because Christianity validates Judaism, then I am more Christian than you because modern thought validates Christianity. In sum I do not believe in the actuality of Judaism as an established religion: from this point of view I am outside Judaism without a doubt and with good reason. But I believe that the Jews can today have a useful function in our culture, if they remain faithful to certain experiences of their history and certain demands of their mentality: super-nationalism (which is not internationalism) and the hard experience of persecutions should bring them, and often do bring them if in utopian ways, to seek the brotherhood of man; the need for justice, the profound sense of the sanctity of life, which is permeated with ethical values, can equally act as leaven for good, and are maintained by contact with the Hebrew tradition, and especially with the Bible. So I view with sympathy every Jewish cultural initiative. But I repeat, I believe that Jews can make something useful only if they intermingle, with the state of mind that comes to them from long tradition, the demands of our immanentistic and historicist way of thinking.

Such sentiments reveal the thinking behind Momigliano’s publicly expressed opposition to Italian Zionism in 1937,¹¹ and the sense in which he could say in 1939 in response to the standard question posed in the form of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning,

*Write “Yes” against the name of religion to which you belong/Schreiben Sie
“Ja” neben den Namen der Religion, der Sie angehören
Jewish Orthodox/Orthodox jüdisch
I am a Jew by birth. I profess no confessional religion*

They also explain the pride in the tradition of Jewish scholarship and its contribution to Italian culture that is expressed in his letter of resignation to the Faculty of Turin University, which was read out to the Council of the Faculty by its President on 20th October 1938 (but not recorded in the official minutes):

Dear President,

Now that I am compelled to leave this University, which was my *alma mater* before I became a teacher here, my thoughts reach out in gratitude towards you and the other teachers of the Faculty. From you I learned as a student to search

¹¹ See Di Donato 1995, 213–44.

disinterestedly for the truth in fulfilment of my primary duty towards my fatherland; and by you I was welcomed and fostered with renewed benevolence on my return. I consider myself able to state that in the eight years during which I had the privilege of numbering myself among the teachers of the Universities of Rome and Turin, I have proved myself not unworthy of you. I have loved deeply this school as the natural *locus* for the search of one's self, and this love has been reciprocated by my students, a living demonstration that differences of religion and any differences of race disappear in the communion of duty. I also consider myself able to state that I have always worked in accordance with the strictest Italian tradition, that which numbers among its most revered names those of Alessandro D'Ancona and Graziadio Ascoli, and has been hallowed by the learning of men such as Giacomo Venezian.

Whatever the future, now without hope, holds in store for me, my wish is that I might be able to continue to devote to Italy all my efforts. The memory of you all, teachers and students in this our Faculty, will be my constant companion.¹²

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The general conception of a history based on great ideas reflects the idealist tradition in Italian scholarship. Elsewhere in nineteenth century Europe the fundamental meaning of history had been seen in the development of nationhood; this nationalist tradition had replaced the old eighteenth century set of universal humanistic values with a view of history as a myth useful towards the creation of the nation-state, under the guise of establishing a form of scientific history based on archival research: few historians escaped this form of sophisticated tribalism, which was to lead directly to the struggles of European nation-states in two world wars. In Italy itself the concept of a national history, derived from the Risorgimento and the unification of Italy, was deeply embedded in society and lay at the foundation of the Fascist ideology.

It was Benedetto Croce and his disciples in southern Italy who created an Italian approach that offered an alternative liberal conception of history opposed to the nationalist tradition. Croce's idealist philosophy went back to Hegel in viewing history not as a random set of events, but as the actualisation of Reason in the world. As with Hegel, history was the history of the development of liberty; but whereas for Hegel history had reached its culmination in the freedom of the nineteenth-century individual, for Croce history must continue as the story of the struggles for liberty; 'all history [has] the character of "contemporary history" because, however remote in time events there recounted may seem to be, the history in reality refers to present needs and present situations wherein these events vibrate.'

But the idealism of Momigliano was tempered by the professional teaching of De Sanctis, which belonged to the strictly philological and positivist tradition inherited

¹² Cracco Ruggini 2006, 121–122.

by Italian scholarship from the German nineteenth century; this tradition saw history as a science, emphasised the importance of methodical research and the exercise of a rational scepticism in the discovery of true facts. As a young man his aim seems therefore to have been to use this methodology in order to illuminate the problems suggested to him by the idealist tradition, and so to provide a solid historical basis for the study of conceptual questions: As he says in his first lecture ‘What has no value, has no history. Yet the values of history are not matter for polemics, but for plain knowledge’.

In the Cambridge lectures he was building on his previous incomplete researches, which had been inhibited by the difficulty of speaking about liberty under Fascism: as he said later, ‘the true evil created by Fascism in the study of ancient history lies not in the stupidity of what was said but in the thoughts that were no longer thought. Many of the best, if they said nothing that should not have been said, refrained from saying everything that they could have said.’¹³

So even more clearly than before, in 1940 Momigliano saw that the stupendous conflict in which European civilization was involved was a conflict between liberty and a false peace, between liberalism and the sterility created by the unity of an alleged national purpose. On the other hand he avoided the confusion common among twentieth century historians: he did not connect the history of ideas with the history of ideologies, which in these lectures he particularly identified with certain right-wing tendencies in history, notably those of the Nazi Wilhelm Weber, the Fascist Mario Attilio Levi, and the eminent French historian and future Vichy collaborator, Jérôme Carcopino:

If we ignore ideology and look at reality or, better, if we give to ideology its own place, which is in hell and not in paradise, among the destructive and not among the constructive elements of history, we are left with two recent books, apart from the *Cambridge History*: the big memoir of the late Professor von Premerstein, *Vom Wesen des römischen Prinzipats*, on the essence of the Roman Principate, and above all, the recent very important book of Mr. Syme, *The Roman Revolution*.

The first important event that happened on Momigliano’s arrival in Britain was indeed not the outbreak of war, but (in the summer of 1939) the publication of the most significant book on Roman history since the beginning of the century, Ronald Syme’s *Roman Revolution*. He read Syme’s book ‘in a copy given to me by the author when war had just been declared and the nights grew ever longer in an Oxford plunged into darkness.’ From the start he recognised the power of Syme’s vision, and saw him both as a master historian and as the representative of an Anglo-Saxon historical tradition that he as a newcomer from continental idealism had to confront. He recognised the book’s fundamental dismissal of all forms of intellectual history in favour of a Machiavellian view of human nature based on self-interest and family power,

¹³ Momigliano 2010, 296 (my translation).

not ideals. Brought up in the Crocean tradition of history as the story of liberty, he was profoundly shocked; this was the source of a continuing conflict, however muted, between Syme and Momigliano that lasted for the rest of their long lives.¹⁴

The Cambridge lectures begin from the impact of this first encounter with Syme. That is the reason why the story of peace and liberty starts unexpectedly from an analysis of the modern historiography on Republican and Augustan Rome since Mommsen, and presents Augustan Rome as the turning-point in the history of the ancient world. It ends with a challenge:

The problem is clear. Is the passage from the Republic to the Empire a simple crisis inside the Roman-Italian leading class or is it a crisis of the whole Mediterranean world? The *Cambridge History* inclines to the second point of view, but not very clearly; Prof. v. Premerstein indirectly, Syme directly support the first interpretation. The choice is relevant to our immediate purpose. It amounts to establishing whether the Empire represented the mere replacement of six hundred lords – the Roman senators – by one lord – the Emperor – or whether it was a new form of human society. We must choose, we will choose.

The second lecture addresses the problem, what is the crisis of the Roman Republic? It begins with discussion of the prosopographical approach and its limitations:

Prosopographical research has the great virtue of dealing as much as possible with individuals or small groups, but does not explain their material or spiritual needs: it simply presupposes them. History is the history of problems, not of individuals or groups. If the tacit assumption of many prosopographical researches is that people are moved by personal or family ambitions, the assumption is not merely one-sided: it exchanges generic trends for concrete situations. Each ambition is possible only in *one* historical situation. The personal or family interests of every man depend directly or indirectly on the situation of thousands of other men. This argument, trivial as it is, is sufficient to show how absurd it is to think that in the last centuries of the Republic the history of Rome might be in the hands of some hundreds of leading men. Political power was in their hands, but not history, which is another matter.

He concludes with the magnificently epigrammatic statement, ‘The Principate was to be a product not of men, about whom it is possible to write articles in Pauly-Wissowa, but of the obscure people, whose name is legion.’

Momigliano then proceeds to discuss the meaning of clientship, and to show that the clients of the late Republic were intrinsically different from earlier forms of clientship, because they possessed serious political aims and grievances:

¹⁴ See Momigliano’s review of *The Roman Revolution* in *JRS* 30 (1940) 75–80 (Momigliano 1984, 407–416), and his 1962 introduction to the Italian translation of *The Roman Revolution* (Momigliano 1966, 729–737 esp. 730–731); what is suggested there is insisted on even more definitely in his review of Syme’s *Tacitus* (1961) in Momigliano 1966, 739.

The old Romans – the Romans of the aristocracy, the Romans of the *comitia* – lost their freedom because they had not shared it. The triumph of clientship completely confirms the fact that people who have not sufficient rights become the prey of the political agitator. Clientship is the manifestation of an immense movement of people, who to the freedom of the others preferred a government, which immediately gave them fair prospects of a career, and promised peace with tolerable justice. The monarch was, inevitably, monarch for everybody. If one considers the Augustan State as the simple result of a triumph of a party, one will never understand that for twelve or thirteen centuries, if not more, that State was the only conceivable State.

This is of course to anticipate the views of an entire post-war generation of Roman historians, from Ernst Badian in *Foreign Clientelae* (1958) to Peter Brunt in *Social Conflicts in the Roman Republic* (1971).

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The third and fourth lectures are concerned with the concept of peace as it developed in the ancient world. One of the crucial turning-points is for him the derivation of the *pax augusta*, the political peace of the Roman empire, from the Greek ideal of a ‘common peace’, *koine eirene*. The phrase *koine eirene* appeared as a political aspiration of the Greeks soon after the end of the Peloponnesian War, which had demonstrated the appalling cost of a generation of internecine warfare in search of an impossible hegemony, and had split the city-states of the Greek world under the leadership of Athens and Sparta. Autonomy seemed only possible for the smaller states with the acceptance by all cities of the overriding necessity of a ‘common peace’. But it was inevitable that this could only be imposed and maintained by an external political force: so the ‘King’s Peace’, presented as a command to the Greek world from the king of Persia, with Persian silver as backing and the Spartan state acting as its enforcers, set the conditions for a ‘common peace’.

This development in Greek international relations fascinated the generation that was struggling to establish through the League of Nations a new post-war international order. Not surprisingly historians of the ancient world saw the struggles of the fourth century B.C. in terms of the growth of strong powers under non-democratic regimes and the ultimate triumph of Macedonian monarchy over Greek liberty. The ancient phrase *koine eirene* came to reflect the hopes and failures of modern politics; was it simply a propaganda phrase designed to disguise the realities of the power struggle, or was it a genuine aspiration that many Greeks desired, however often it was betrayed in the event?

The young Momigliano had taken a leading role in the debate: ‘The struggle to organise a *koine eirene*, that is a permanent system of peace between the Greek cities guaranteed by sanctions, emerges ever more clearly as one of the most important goals in Greek history starting with the fourth century B.C.’ (1936). The idea of a

koine eirene was used to justify first the Persian and then the Macedonian hegemony over Greece; and finally it provided the ethical basis for Roman control of the Greek cities. As he wrote in 1935, 'I never understood so clearly the meaning of *pax romana* until I recognised the *koine eirene* as an ethical and juridical concept of fourth century Greece'.¹⁵

So in the lectures of 1940 he sees the continuity between Greek and Roman ideas:

The new [Augustan] peace absorbs the Greek aspirations; it is peace among the States and within the States. ... Yet the *pax romana*, the *pax augusta* remains a political idea and sometimes has a rather hard sound even in the most humane of the poets, *parcere subiectis*, but *debellare superbos*.

The fourth lecture explores in what ways the peace of Christianity is different from that offered by either Greeks or Romans:

Christendom affirms that peace not only is proper to men of good will, but is the very condition of the life in God. The *Epistle to the Romans* is particularly definite: 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (5); 'Grace and Peace, *charis* and *eirene*, go together through the *Epistles* of St. Paul. Peace is Salvation. 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' The quotations might be multiplied. Of course, in the end, this peace is the restfulness of a will surrendered to God.

It is now evident that the Christian idea of Peace, although born from Judaism, became more and more a reaction against the dry spiritual life of the Empire. ... As a rule, when people are not satisfied with a form of government, they try to replace it with another government. Political discontent ends up in a political crisis. Moments are very rare in the history of Mankind in which a political crisis turns into a change of religion. This is the case of the Roman Empire. Great as was the popularity of the idea of Rome in the provinces, the subjects of the Empire were less and less impressed by the government. People admired Rome and looked to it for political advantages, but had to find elsewhere a more profound interest for their life. The voice of the government was boisterous in propaganda, harsh in giving orders. It could impress, but not satisfy. In the third century A.D. weariness became widespread. Difficulties provoked not a greater concord but rebellions. Hearts failed. ... From a political point of view the rebellions were senseless. But they ended with the adoption of a new religion by Constantine. The crisis of the third century has its explanation in its achievement. People apparently fought about economic difficulties, about the Senate, about rivalries of unworthy or worthy men and about Barbarian

¹⁵ Momigliano 1966, 457. The articles on *koine eirene* are reprinted in Momigliano 1966: *La koine eirene* dal 386 al 338 a.C.' (1934), 393–419; ; Un momento di storia greca: la pace del 375 a.C e il Plataico di Isocrate (1936), 421–455; Per la storia della pubblicistica sulla *koine eirene* nel IV secolo a.C. (1936), 457–487; L'Europa come concetto politico presso Isocrate e gli Isocratei (1933), 489–97.

enemies – and they discovered a new religion. The Principate began with the triumph of the non-political man, it ended with the triumph of the religious man.

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The last four lectures turn to the history of liberty, and complete a project that had been in his mind since his first encounters with Croce and Benjamin Constant in the thirties, but which he had largely been unable to express before he came to Britain: ‘For many years I studied the problem of freedom and peace in the Ancient World as two different problems. Only slowly, the accurate analysis of the two terms compelled me to recognize that the problem I was studying was one; and one, too, the spiritual interest, which moved me in the research’:

Liberty is the eternal force of human activity. Where we find moral life, we may safely presuppose liberty. But liberty has historical manifestations of widely different character. The task of the historian is to recognize without any polemical deformation the historical forms of the problem of freedom during the centuries. Historians see with desperation or with satisfaction – in conformity with their personal outlook – centuries of history running without an apparent sign of freedom. Such are the centuries of the Roman Empire. These historians do not ask whether liberty assumed forms which are different from political freedom, whether human dignity, which was expelled from the field of political life, did not take refuge in the more inaccessible fields of spiritual life.

The sixth lecture traces the history of *eleutheria* among the Greeks, from its original conception as the right to take part in political life, ‘to rule and be ruled in turn’ as Aristotle put it, to the rejection of political life by the Cynics and their conception of freedom as independence from civic ties. In the seventh lecture he turns to Rome, and the fusion of a deeply held belief in political *libertas* that characterised the senatorial aristocracy with a personal view derived from Stoicism, that provided the individual with the possibility of being independent of fortune, while maintaining the belief in the primacy of political liberty. The result was a willingness to accept a form of political martyrdom and suicide that gave to the examples of Brutus and Cato a heroic status previously only accorded to Socrates in ancient thought. Even Augustus was forced to accept the essential primacy of Roman *libertas* in formulating the rules of his autocratic regime; and the Stoic opposition to the emperors continued as a form of senatorial resistance to imperial autocracy throughout the first century A.D.

In his last lecture Momigliano explores the relationship between the Christian freedom provided by a belief in God, and the freedom of the human spirit independent of any god that was offered by the Cynics and Stoics; both represent a turning away from the present world of the Roman Empire and an acceptance that true freedom lies in the spiritual life of the individual, which combines liberty and peace.

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Edward Gibbon had seen the decline and fall of the Roman empire as caused by the triumph of Christianity; Momigliano broadened the canvas: what was at stake was the decline and fall of the ancient world in all its varied manifestations, Greek, Roman and Jewish: ‘He who does not know the legacy of Greek and Jewish history may well renounce the study of Roman History’. Gibbon was right to connect the theme of decline and fall with the rise of Christianity, but he had been unable to explain that rise: for Momigliano it was the failure of the ancient world in its search to combine peace and liberty that had caused the victory of a new religion. When liberty is suppressed in one sphere it must emerge in another.

It must be said that at the time of their delivery in Cambridge in 1940 Momigliano’s lectures were hardly a success. The audience was minute: Momigliano wrote to his friend Carlo Dionisotti about his ‘audience faithful unto death’, which consisted in fact of seven (presumably) senior members. Some of the local names can be guessed – Barker, Charlesworth, Adcock and G.T. Griffith. Peter Brown describes them: ‘A barely repressed air of the ridiculous marked the occasion. The modern historians had omitted to mobilise their classical colleagues. No students came. Introduced by Ernest Barker, who evidently knew nothing of his work, Momigliano faced a thin row of refugee professors. Yet the discussion was worthwhile, enlivened by “a youngish-looking lady, who could have been a star girl student” – none other than Jocelyn Toynbee, the distinguished archaeologist.’¹⁶

Despite this miniscule audience, Momigliano had taken great trouble to prepare and write out the English text of his lectures in longhand; the preparation was done with the help of friends in Oxford – certainly his friend and mentor Isobel Henderson, daughter of the Rector of Lincoln College and Fellow of Somerville, and perhaps also his wartime student and admirer, the future novelist Iris Murdoch. The stress accents of English words and the need for pauses between sentences were marked in the text to help the lecturer: the sentences themselves were kept short and clearly separated in a way that suggests that Momigliano had not yet mastered the art of the subordinate clause in English.

To the end of his life Momigliano’s heavy Piedmontese accent was often found difficult by those who were not familiar with it. Moreover the content of the lectures was so different from anything on offer in British scholarship at the time as to compound the incomprehension. I can find no trace of any intellectual discussion or reflection of Momigliano’s ideas in the writing of others, and one wonders what the seminars (which must have involved some discussion) were actually like. As he said in 1972, ‘when I arrived in Oxford in 1939, it was enough to mention the word

¹⁶ Brown 1988, 413. Jocelyn Toynbee (1897–1985), sister of Arnold Toynbee, had been Fellow of Newnham and Lecturer in Classics at Cambridge since 1931; she was Laurence Professor of Archaeology from 1951–62. The economist Piero Sraffa, who was later a fellow-inmate with Momigliano of the internment camp on the Isle of Man, was in Cambridge at this time, and may have been one of the ‘thin row of refugee professors’.

'idea' to be given the address of the Warburg Institute.'¹⁷ Yet despite all this, in the surviving written text there emerges already a mastery of irony and sophistication, a clarity and a passionate belief in his subject which was to make Momigliano, like so many other refugees (Karl Popper, Ernst Gombrich, Erwin Panofsky, Raymond Klibansky), one of the great masters of English academic prose. Moreover the message of Momigliano is in my opinion the most profound interpretation of the meaning of ancient history that survives from the 20th century – something that can still inspire us all to understand today the true meaning of history. It is not surprising to find Momigliano writing to his closest friend still in Italy, Carlo Dionisotti, on the 17th March 1940, immediately after the lectures, 'all in all I do not seem to escape from the conclusion that here is my way forward, whether I succeed or fail' (*qui è la mia via, del fare o fallire*).¹⁸

We should not ask how it came about that someone brought up in an orthodox Jewish household within a dominant Catholic culture was able to transcend the rigidities of his environment and produce a theory of history that is superior to any other offered in his generation. This was an age of belief in the power of the human spirit rather than organised religion to rebuild a world of peace and liberty. Rather we should ask what led Momigliano subsequently to abandon (at least explicitly) this approach to history.

There was a turning-point some time in the Fifties. Perhaps Momigliano made a passing reference to it, when he said later in jest, 'I have now lost faith in my own theories, but I have not yet acquired faith in the theories of my colleagues.' Dan Davin, the New Zealand novelist and chief executive of Oxford University Press, once described to me a fraught meeting after the war when Momigliano announced to his editor that he had finally decided to abandon his book on 'Peace and Liberty', and study instead the unknown (and unpublishable) subject of the historiography of ancient history.

But why did he lose faith in the power of religion to carry forward the history of liberty, if that is what happened? I have no real answer to this question, and in a certain sense Momigliano's intellectual history presents a continuity from his earliest writings to the end of his life: these lectures on peace and liberty lie behind many of his subsequent preoccupations, especially in the last years, and underpin his lifelong interest in ancient biography, ancient liberty and the concept of the individual.

It may be that after the war Momigliano came to feel that, in turning to religion in order to protect his conception of liberty, he had too easily followed the example of those Romans in the Empire who had turned to Christianity in similar circumstances. Again if he abandoned his project through a loss of faith, it was perhaps not so much in his own ideas as in a view of western civilisation as being essentially based on Christianity. By 1945 Momigliano understood that the so-called Christian civilisation in which he had once put his trust was responsible for the murder of his own aged parents and the systematic destruction of the entire culture in which he had been brought

¹⁷ Momigliano 1980, 329.

¹⁸ Dionisotti 1989, 104.

up. Religion was not the answer. Rather the historian had a more mundane and more human task, the duty to rebuild western culture from its ruins. For Momigliano, as for others like Friedrich Meinecke and Ernst Robert Curtius, that could only be done by seeking to understand the methods by which one might create a true picture of the past as a model for the future: historiography, not as a trivial antiquarian pursuit but as the study of historical method, the study of how historical knowledge is attained, was the new task that he set himself.

Momigliano never abandoned the essential attitudes of his Crocean youth, the intense spiritual commitment to the task of the historian and a belief in the unity of history, together with the rejection of the trivial view that history is the simple collection of facts or solving of problems. In the modern age, when all ideas are out of fashion and history is seen as the province of the antiquarian dilettante and the technician, or worse of the propagandist for a return to a national past, we can learn from these lectures of Momigliano the lessons of the spiritual claims and the seriousness of history; they are in his words 'a way of thinking seriously about serious things.' In after-dinner mode in 1977 he asserted 'The historian can explain everything, but he cannot explain why it is that he has become a historian.'¹⁹ A hundred years after his birth, the understanding of the complexity of human society and the pursuit of liberty remain the two best reasons for the life of the historian; and these lectures can serve as an inspiration for a new generation.

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¹⁹ Momigliano 1987, 430.

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SUMMARY

MOMIGLIANO ON PEACE AND LIBERTY (1940)

Arnaldo Momigliano was dismissed by the Fascist government as a Jew in 1938 from his post as Professor in the University of Turin; he arrived in England as a refugee in 1939. In early 1940 he was invited to give a series of lectures at Cambridge University, and chose the theme 'Peace and Liberty in the Ancient World'. These lectures, which represent the culmination of his ideas in the 1930s, are about to be published for the first time in their original English version (an Italian translation was published in 1996). The lectures are one of the most important statements of liberal thought between the wars and a moving expression of the ideal of European culture.

SHRNUTÍ

MOMIGLIANO O MÍRU A SVOBODĚ (1940)

Arnaldo Momigliano byl jako Žid v roce 1938 propuštěn fašistickou vládou z místa profesora univerzity v Turíně. Jako emigrant přijel v roce 1939 do Anglie a počátkem roku 1940 byl pozván na univerzitu v Cambridgi, aby tam přednesl cyklus přednášek. Zvolil si téma „Mír a svoboda ve starověkém světě“. Tyto přednášky, které jsou vrcholným projevem jeho myšlení z 30. let, mají být poprvé publikovány v původní anglické verzi (jejich italský překlad vyšel v roce 1996). Přednášky jsou jedním z nejvýznamnějších dokladů liberálního myšlení mezi oběma světovými válkami a zároveň působivým vyjádřením ideálu evropské kultury.