

On Arnold Toynbee

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Introduction

Marshall provided an interesting appreciation of Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883) in the preface he provided in 1887 for LLFR Price's Industrial Peace (London: Macmillan, 1887), a report on work sponsored by Toynbee Trust. This appreciation was excluded from the version of the preface published under the title, "A Fair Rate of Wages" in Memorials of Alfred Marshall (London: Macmillan, 1925; edited by A.C. Pigou) and seems well worth reproducing since Price's book is now rare (1). For background on the preparation of the preface see J.K. Whitaker (ed.), The Correspondence of Alfred Marshall, Economist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, Vol. I, pp. 239-240). For details of the difference between the original and Memorials versions of the preface see [J.K. Whitaker, "How far do the 'Memorials' versions of Marshall's essays correspond to their original texts?", in this issue.](#)

Marshall's Appreciation of Arnold Toynbee

[...]

I knew Arnold Toynbee first when he had just begun to lecture at Oxford on Economics. He was full of enthusiasm for his work, but also he was a little anxious about it; as all earnest people are when the responsibility first presses on them of giving opinions that may influence the actions of others on a subject which is so subtle and intricate, and yet for which academic training by itself is so inadequate a preparation. He had indeed been brought at an early age into contact with the realities of life, and had been impelled in the first instance to economic studies by seeing with his own eyes, and hearing with his own ears, the results of that physical and moral degradation and suffering which are caused by poverty. He was struck by the fact that the sources of evil have their roots very far below the surface, and that what at first sight appears to be the best remedy for them, scarcely ever turns out to be the best, and in fact often aggravates them.

But he was impatient with the attitude of passionless observation, which he thought many of the older economists took. Some of their studies of the way in which competition works itself out, seemed to him like the exercises of a chess player, delighting in brilliant combinations, and without a sigh for the knights or the pawns who may be sacrificed on the way. Economic problems were to him pregnant with the fates of the suffering toilers whom he knew so well, and he could not bear to have them treated as mere exercises of analytical reasoning.

But as time went on he somewhat changed his attitude towards the earlier economists. He learned to understand their difficulties better, to see what led them at times to make assumptions which at first sight appear perversely unreal; and he got to distinguish their

own opinions from those which are attributed to them by people who want to quote economic authority for partisan purposes. Gradually he settled himself down to work very much on the old fashioned lines, but giving prominence to historical studies, and never for a moment losing sight of the question whether it may not be possible to prevent any class from being so poor as to be debarred from a healthy, happy, and cultured life.

He had many sides, as the readers of the memoir of him by the Master of Balliol will know (2). But on the few occasions which I met him, the talk ran chiefly on social and economic questions. He was always brilliant in thought, eager in speculation; but his intellect, fresh and vigorous as it was, was not the chief part of him: the leading controlling strain of his character was emotional. He was thus the ideal modern representative of the mediæval saint: strong every way, but with all other parts of his nature merged and contained in an earnest and tender love towards God and man.

I knew this in a way when talking to him; but I did not realise it fully till he had left us; not until I had been invited to Oxford to lecture in his place, and had got to see there how his life had influenced many of the best of those around him. As time goes on this influence spreads: in London and Cambridge no less than in Oxford his name is familiar as the watchword of a great movement. The mediæval saint of whom he was the modern representative was St. Francis, the founder of a new order, the leader of a new and more direct attack on the evils of the age. In this modern age, as in earlier times, it is through his personal influence that the leader has made himself felt; and the new impulse that Toynbee gave was towards a more intimate personal contact of those who are well nurtured, well cultured and strong, with those who are ill nourished and ignorant and weak.

Such he was, and such his portrait would tell him to be if it could speak clearly. The frontispiece of the present volume is reproduced from the best likeness of him that there is; but it is not quite satisfactory, it does not adequately represent the beauty and strength of his character. It will however help those who knew him to freshen their own memories of him, and it will enable others to form some imperfect notion of what he was.

In complying with the request of the Trustees of the Toynbee fund to write a preface to Mr. Price's admirable Report, my chief thought has been how it would have given joy to Toynbee. It is work after his own heart on subjects in which he was deeply interested. He held that the organised warfare of strikes and lock-outs on a modern pattern was in some respect less evil than the old fashioned guerrilla warfare, which attracted less public attention; but which was really more bitter, and had more mean and cruel incidents in it. He welcomed the growing power of trades unions, because they brought generally the best men to the front, and clothed them with a grave responsibility, which was itself an education and fitted them to educate others by their leadership; and he welcomed the effect of public criticism which was brought to bear on both the belligerents when the war was carried on openly in the full light of the day. But he yearned for a time of Industrial Peace; and his praise of trades unions was never warmer than when he was speaking of the way in which they had promoted the growth of arbitration and conciliation [...].

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Notes

1. The full text of the introduction appeared in 1993 in a publication by the Dipartimento di Economia Politica of the University of Modena: A. Picchio (ed.), *Longe, Marshall, Webb. A Game of Chess or a Struggle for Survival*.

2. See *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England: Popular Addresses, Notes and Other Fragments by the Late Arnold Toynbee. With a Short Memoir by B. Jowett*, London, 1884; second edition 1887 [editorial note].