

[Recommendation letter by Harold Cherniss and Erwin Panofsky, 1950]

ERNST H. KANTOROWICZ

The creation of the School of Historical Studies last year by the combination of the School of Humanistic Studies and the School of Economics and Politics had as one of its purposes the closer integration of the non-mathematical and non-physical activities of the Institute. At the same time, the loss of all three professors of economics has emphasized the need of producing greater internal cohesiveness in the activities of the School and has provided the opportunity through new professorial appointments not only to expand and reinforce our work in Modern History but to bridge the gap that exists between this field of our interest and our work in Hellenic civilization and the History of Art.

Theoretically there are many directions in which it would be possible to expand and by expansion to achieve the desired integration, but practically the solution is restricted by the existence and availability of men whose scholarship and interests are both profound enough and broad enough to make them desirable for themselves as well as for the formal area of their activity. With an open mind the School considered such avowedly synoptic disciplines as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, and sociology but found in these fields no-one whose candidacy it could support with confidence and enthusiasm. In the field of Mediaeval History, however, a field of study which of itself is clearly pertinent to the work of the School and which now is a painful vacuum between the fields which we cultivate, there suggested itself almost immediately the name of a man who by the eminence of his attainments, the solid excellence of his scholarship, and the breadth and intensity of his interests would, we feel sure, contribute to a maximum degree that new strength which we desire for the School, the Institute, and the scholarly community of Princeton.

This man is Ernst H. Kantorowicz. He was born in Posen on May 3, 1895, was Professor of History in the University of Frankfurt from 1930 to 1934, in 1934 was Visiting Professor in Oxford, and in 1939 became Professor of History at the University of California in Berkeley where he has remained until the present time.

In the formal academic sense Professor Kantorowicz may be classified as a mediaeval historian; in fact, to quote a letter from Professor Felix Gilbert, he is "the best mediaeval historian now active." His work and interests, however, transcend the field of mediaeval history as commonly defined in time and space and in subject-matter and method. In time they range from the later phases of classical antiquity to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; in space they embrace both western Europe and the Byzantine and Islamic East; in subject-matter and method they treat complicated problems of many facets by viewing them from all the various angles from which his familiarity with widely different specialties and techniques enables him to illumine all of them. It is significant that even in his doctoral dissertation, "On the Nature of Moslem Artisans' Corporations" (Heidelberg, 1921), Kantorowicz had already focused his attention upon the intersection of the two cultural spheres, the inter-action of which was an important factor in determining the course of mediaeval history. So also the central figure of the book which brought him at the early age of thirty-two fame and criticism--both justified--, Frederick II, belongs to the

East as well as to the West, to paganism as well as to Christianity, to the Middle Ages and yet to classical antiquity and the Renaissance also.

Being aware of the indissoluble connection that exists among overtly disparate sets of historical phenomena, Kantorowicz developed an admirable method of combining the study of texts and documents with that of sculpture, painting, book illumination, and coins in such a manner that the visual material is not merely adduced as supplementary evidence but is treated as subject matter *sui iuris*. This requires a command of various techniques and of different fields of knowledge which are ordinarily at the disposal only of different specialists but over which Kantorowicz has achieved a combined mastery with the result that his studies are no less important to the Early Christian and Byzantine archaeologist, the historian of art, and the numismatist than they are to the political and social historian, the historian of philosophy, and the theologian. We should like to give one example from among Kantorowicz's numerous essays, an example which will show the fruitfulness of his method and the scope of its results. The subject of a well-known portrait by Roger van der Weyden, which is preserved in the Metropolitan Museum, is designated as a member of the Este family by heraldic devices and had always been identified with Lionello d'Este, a famous patron of the arts and letters known to have been a client of Roger. Since Lionello died in October, 1450 and had never left Italy, the portrait was thus held to have been executed at Ferrara on the occasion of Roger's supposed pilgrimage to Italy in that year and was considered not only as proof of this pilgrimage but also as a cornerstone of the painter's chronology. On the basis of a hitherto neglected inscription, Kantorowicz formed the hypothesis that the real sitter was not Lionello d'Este but his illegitimate son, Francesco, who was educated at the Court of Burgundy, and that the picture was painted in the Netherlands about 1460 rather than in Ferrara in 1450. Converting this hypothesis into a certainty by a minute investigation of documents and other portraits, he thus constrained the art-historians to revise their ideas about one of the greatest painters while at the same time he provided the students of cultural and political relations between the Italy of the Renaissance and the "Gothic North" with a vivid new insight into these relations.

Recently Kantorowicz has devoted much of his time to a comprehensive study of the idea of Kingship in Byzantium and Western Europe. Since these reporters do not feel competent in this field, they take the liberty of quoting Professor A. M. Friend, Jr., Director of Research at the Institute of Dumbarton Oaks which is especially devoted to Byzantine studies (and, incidentally, has extended an invitation to Kantorowicz for the current academic year):

From this (scil. Frederick II) Kantorowicz went on to further studies in the theories of kingship and authority. In more recent years his *Ivories and Litanies* in the Journal of the Warburg Institute (1942) and his longer study *Laudes Regiae* (1946) have given a new orientation to the history of art, of liturgy and of music along the fundamental line of the imperial and royal expressions of authority and power. For today, when the conceptions of power are so mistaken or so little understood, the exact studies of Kantorowicz, so clearly and interestingly thought

out, have a continuing value. They very forcefully illustrate the real place of mediaeval studies in our own time.

Mr. Friend concludes his letter with the statement, "Among living mediaeval historians it would be difficult for me to name a greater than Ernst H. Kantorowicz."

Besides the professional ability so fully attested by his accomplishments, Ernest Kantorowicz recommends himself to us by the quality of mind, easier to sense than to define, which enlivens whatever it touches. It is therefore with real urgency that the School of Historical Studies requests the Faculty to endorse his nomination for a professorship in the Institute for Advanced Study.