

1 Jan 74, written in back leaves of P. Burke, Economy & Society

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[4 Feb 74

"Synchronic & Diachronic" accd. to Braudel.

typed]

[Critique of Braudel's "History & Social Sciences"]

Synchrony is the artificial description of society by structure, the same basically in medieval organological as in modern functionalist conceptions. It is the artificial, intellectual way of summarizing society. Diachrony is the actual condition of the society which locks individual during their lives, and over generations, into their place or function in society. It is the unconscious history of Braudel, *si je ne me trompe pas*, for while they are aware of how they differ from others in status, etc., over time, to some extent, they always develop a mentality of their particular role as being natural to themselves, and find satisfactions and happiness within it, and so mythologizes the actuality; the actuality is made artificial and for the ~~xxxx~~ purposes of the intellectual historian it becomes "unconscious" to those living it.

If, in this convoluted scheme, one takes the subject-object relationship into account, from the point of view of the living subject ~~xxxx~~ the ~~xxxx~~ synchronic might be taken to be the actual, for he does know where he stands in the hierarchy of society in his times, while the diachronic is the artificial because he creates a myth of himself as sovereign. From the "object" ~~xxx~~ point of view--i.e., the history of society--the synchronic is artificial as far it is an analytic construction of what never really ~~is~~ because time does not stop, whereas the diachronic is the accurate description of things over a period of times that has human significance--a generation, say. It becomes ~~xxxx~~ arbitrary & "unhistorical" to declare that this or that historical time span is more or less significant. This is the problem that Braudel becomes enmeshed in, but it is not the real issue. The real issue is to comprehend the synchronic-diachronic distinction au profond, and then realize that the diachronic has many quantitative dimensions. Which of them is suitable depends on the problem being studied. If one is obsessed with "total history" one does not easily find the proper diachronic unit of study, when Braudel's method-~~xxx~~ logical problem is compounded. He has seen the anomaly of historiography all right, but he has not given a viable new paradigmatic resolution. Indeed, he ~~xxx~~ ultimately only wants a total description of the past, not a set of formulary explanations that would provide the ~~xxxx~~ basis of a new "normal science" of historiography.

Had Braudel clearly thought through the problem of defining "eras" and adopted paradigm theory, then the issue of court durée and longue durée would not be a dilemma: the size of the unit of society he chose and the topic of analysis within it, would ~~xxx~~ yield up its own chronological paradigm limits, sometimes short, sometimes long. To struggle as he does with the question of the length of the durée is to belabor the obvious and escape seeing that the meaningful ~~xxx~~ durée is determined by the problem itself when structured according to paradigm theory.

~~xxxx~~ The above remarks were inspired by things said on p. 26. But on p. 33 when speaking of models, Braudel emerges with virtually a paradigm theory and meets most of the objections I have ~~xxx~~ raised. He puts the method of ~~xxx~~ models of ~~xxxx~~ qualitative mathematics to this ~~xxx~~ purpose, and supposes it will serve the very long durée; I don't see that long or short durée are the questions