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**Peter Burke**, *What Is the History of Knowledge?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016. Pp. 156. US\$59.95 (cloth); US\$19.95 (paper).

Peter Burke's long-standing and varied career in historiography continues to surprise with highly original works. Starting in the 1970s with books on the Italian Renaissance and early modern Europe, he has also been prolific in the history of history writing with celebrated works like *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929–1989* (1990), *What Is Cultural History?* (2004), and his two-volume *A Social History of Knowledge* (2000, 2012)—just to name a few of his many fine books. No one seems to be more apt than Peter Burke to write the current *What Is the History of Knowledge?*, which is part of the *What Is History* series by Polity Press.

The result is stunning and provides for a highly pleasant read—in any case for those who like historiographical overviews (like this reviewer). In just 125 pages of main text (plus 25 pages of notes, a time line, and a further reading section), Burke unfolds the new field of history of knowledge into four main topics, which are also the titles of the book's four chapters: "Knowledges and Their Histories," "Concepts," "Processes," and "Problems and Prospects." However, these chapters are subdivided into a range of smaller sections that do not appear in the table of contents. These sections, and sometimes subsections, read like mini-essays and bear names such as "Historiography," "What is knowledge," "Knowledges in the plural," "History and its neighbors" (in the first chapter); "Authorities and monopolies," "Interdisciplinarity," "Orders of knowledge," "Practices," "Regimes of ignorance," "Situated knowledges," "Styles of thought," "Tacit knowledge" (in the "Concepts" chapter); "Attempting objectivity," "Gathering knowledges," "Analysing knowledges," "Disseminating knowledges," "Employing knowledges" (in the "Processes" chapter); and "Internal versus external histories," "Continuities versus revolutions," "Anachronism," "Relativism," "Triumphalism," "Constructivism," "Gender" (in the "Problems and Prospects" chapter). It is these sections, the mini-essays, that constitute the backbone of the book: while they could be read as stand-alone entries, they form a logical line of thought that could hardly be put in a different order. It is a bit of a shame that this line of thought is not reflected in the table of contents.

Burke starts off by noting that the history of knowledge is a very young field. He recalls that when he began working on his book *A Social History of Knowledge* in the 1990s, he was virtually alone, while nowadays the number of books on the topic is exploding. Burke's recollection stands, however, in a surprising contrast with his "Timeline: Studies of Knowledge, a Select Chronology" at the end of his book, where he gives a list of around seventy works. According to his time line, the studies on the history of knowledge can be traced back to such volumes as Stolle's *Anleitung zur*

*Histoire der Gelehrtheit* (Introduction to the history of learning) from 1718 and Candelolle's *Histoire des sciences et des savants* (History of the sciences and scholars) from 1873. And for the 1990s, when Burke reportedly was almost alone in his interest, he lists Shapin's *A Social History of Truth*, Worsley's *Knowledges*, and Poovey's *A History of Modern Fact*. Burke's time line contains also another surprise: while the recent field of history of disciplines and the even more recent field of history of the humanities are well represented in the time line, the field of history of science is virtually absent. It can hardly be denied that the historiography of science is—like the history of the humanities—a crucial part of the history of knowledge. Sure enough, trying to reduce the immense bibliography of history of science to a few titles is tricky and perhaps Burke did not want to open Pandora's box for his time line.

So what then is the history of knowledge? Is it the history of all knowledge-making disciplines taken together, that is, the history of the sciences, the humanities, and the arts? Or is it the history of all human knowing, not just of *Wissenschaft* but of *Wissen*? Burke opts for the latter: knowledge includes both practical and theoretical knowledge, and thus historiography of knowledge has to do justice to both the knowledge of masons as opposed to architects, and of midwives as opposed (or next) to doctors. Whatever kind of knowledge we focus on, the problems related to the history of knowledge are relevant for the history of the humanities and history of science as well: the internal-external debate, the problem of continuities, anachronism, relativism, and triumphalism are part and parcel of areas like history and philosophy of science. This raises the question whether the *history* of knowledge stands in a similar relationship to the *philosophy* of knowledge as *history* of science relates to *philosophy* of science. It is here that I believe Burke has missed an important chance: the history of knowledge is in fact directly relevant for and strongly connected to the philosophy of knowledge, better known as epistemology. Long-standing, open problems in epistemology are, for example, Hume's and Goodman's problems. Hume's problem is often referred to as the problem of induction, that is, is there any justification to generalize about the properties of objects based on a finite number of observations of particular instances? (Take the "All swans are white" observation that will be overruled by the observation of just one black swan.) Goodman's problem is also related to the problem of inductive knowledge, that is, a finite sequence of observations or events can always be taken as conforming to a great many, even infinitely many, different general patterns. Now, the question that I would like to have seen discussed in Burke's book is, what can the history of knowledge contribute to such issues as Hume's and Goodman's problems—if anything at all? The history of science as well as the history of humanities have taken their own view and regard the problem of inductive knowledge as a historical one. At different times and places, historical actors have dealt differently with the justification

of generalizations and patterns. There is not just one way how, say, linguists and astronomers from the eighteenth through the twentieth century have dealt with generalizations over different languages and different planets. This exactly reflects the main tension between the historian and the philosopher, and it may best be captured by the question, how did people in different periods draw generalizations and patterns over separate facts and events, and are there any universal ways of drawing such generalizations and patterns? It is here that the historian of knowledge can inform the philosopher of knowledge.

*Rens Bod*