

The goal of this text is accompanying a course taught in English and introducing Polish-speaking students to the general issues of economic history. Considering all the potential problems resulting from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, one must first show an outline economic history as a separate scientific discipline (or interdisciplinary study area). The issues mentioned may seem too abstract to someone rather unacquainted with the matter but the whole course is to be more accessible, specific and fact-oriented (although not abandoning the attempts to explain general historical economic processes).

1. Economic history – boundaries and development of the field

The first step in replying to the question about nature of economic history should be reflection about the nature of history. History without any additionally defining adjectives. There is no single, unifying definition of the subject of our inquiries, so the statement that it is complex and multi-dimensional would be rather trivial. Among many definitions of history, we may quote a few, but the most important seems to be the simple statement about different meanings of the word, from which two are most common. The first equals history with “past”, implying that associations with the past are often transferred to “history” in general. The second meaning is the “study of the past”, history perceived as an academic discipline (Jordanova 2000, p. 1). So, the first meaning is the object of scientific research, the second the research itself and its results. The use of “history” as synonym of the past is contested by more precise theorists who reserve the term only for the effect of historians’ inquiries over the past’s real shape in order to detach the surveyed object from the survey process. The definitions close to the second meaning can emphasize the effects of the whole process and collective effort of the whole scientific community - “knowledge produced by historians” (Arthur Marwick) - or the decisiveness of individual intellectual process “re-enactment of past thought in the historian’s own mind” (R. G. Collingwood; Marwick 2001, pp. 25, 42).¹

The first meaning is usually used more precisely and refers to the past of mankind, which corresponds to the classification of science of history (the second meaning) as one of the

¹ History as the effect of professional historical writing is often referred to as ‘historiography’. Usually it is used when wide category of works is concerned (f. ex.: Polish 19th-century historiography – Polish historical writing in the 19th century; historiography of feudalism – historical literature on the topic of feudalism). This term is also used as equivalent of either history of historical writing, or theory and methodology of historical writing.

humanities or, more recently, as one of the social sciences. The imprecise border between these two groups of sciences leads to assignment of the science of history to different places in the different formal classifications. It must be added that history has roots in the tradition of humanities, which is underlined by researchers from outside Anglo-Saxon cultural circle, like for example leading Italian economic historian Carlo Cipolla “History has always been the humane discipline *par excellence*” (Cipolla 1991, p. x). The sense of the different traditions between these two groups of sciences is felt particularly strong in Anglo-Saxon countries. The practical criterion allowing the observer for at least a partial overcoming the ambiguity was given by John Tosh: “Historians who believe in their subject’s practical functions habitually distance it from the humanities and place alongside the social sciences” (Tosh 2010, p. 53).

Besides being the field of interest of academic historians, history in the first meaning is also a subject of philosophy, or philosophy of history. Its specific reasoning gives history some specified properties, such as purpose and internal structure (being more than a mere periodization), making the whole idea of history more than simply “past”. It is usually combined with more or less precise predictions about the shape of the future. In the philosophical disputes such set of concepts of history is sometimes addressed as “historiosophy” or “historicism”. Most of ambitious philosophical systems had their own view on history. To the most important we can include Christian perception of history of mankind as a continuous conflict of good and evil with the final end on Judgement Day; the philosophy of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), based on the assumption of cyclical rather than linear character of historical phenomena; dialectic philosophies of Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1760-1831) and Karl Marx (1818-1883). Historiosophy, as term used especially by Polish followers of Hegel, August Cieszkowski (1814-1894) i Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński (1776-1853), is marked with the most idealistic and speculative aspects of philosophical reasoning about history. Perhaps the last work of world renown (also beyond the circle of professional academics) and a strong historicist basis (in that case Hegelian) was *The End of History and the Last Man* by American political scientist Francis Fukuyama (Fukuyama 1992). On the other hand, large, abstract intellectual constructs build upon such generalizations of the historical past and being applied to critique of present society, as also to policymaking and directing the social development, were opposed by some philosophers. Detailed critique was focused mostly on different aspects of Marxist pretensions of possessing knowledge of “rules of historical development”, as also their direct 20th-century political consequences. General critique doubted the existence of any teleological sense of history. Among those critics

perhaps the most prominent was Anglo-Austrian philosopher and political thinker Karl Popper (1902-1994), with his book *Poverty of Historicism* (1945).

It is worth adding that different philosophies did not influence 20th-century development of science of history (at least in Anglo-Saxon countries) as much, as it was in the case of social sciences with their tendencies to pursuit grand theories. The situation was somehow changed by post-modern critique of historical writing, having strong theoretical or even metaphysical basis (Marwick 2001, pp. 4-11).

Another general remark is that history, as the branch of science, can be defined by its opposition towards archaeology. The knowledge of the past is being produced by historians in the process of critical analysis of written sources, while archaeologists focus on material sources (artefacts left by our ancestors). Therefore history is firmly rooted in humanities and social sciences, while archaeology uses extensively methods borrowed from natural sciences, allowing for more exact specification of propensities of those material remains being archaeology's primary sources. The times for which there are no written sources are called prehistory, thus limiting the scope of history as the object of research (the "first-meaning" in our provisional classification).

The source-based opposition between archaeology and history, defines also their chronological fields of interests, which perhaps we all intuitively know. Archaeology usually deals with more remote periods, from which we have few or no written records available, history deals with later centuries until the very present, where it shares objects of research with different social sciences, such as political science, international relations, economics and sociology. The general distinction discussed above is being blurred by the periods, which left rich legacy of both, material and written sources, being researched interdependently by historians and archaeologists. The main such case is classical antiquity, with which the origins of both disciplines are strictly connected (pioneers of historical writing were ancient Greeks, archaeology started from the search for Greek and Roman reminiscences). In other cases, the earliest written records are so scarce, that there are quite long spans of time researched by both groups of scientists. It must be also added, that depending on the geographical location surveyed, the chronological boundary between archaeology and history changes considerably. In the case of Poland, its beginning could be located somewhere around the date of country's baptism, in the second half of the 10th century, while more detailed sources come from the early 12th century. Because of the scarcity of written information, the current progress in the knowledge about the beginnings of Polish state is mostly the result of archaeological evidence. The general impreciseness of the boundary is also increased by the recent tendency

of development of archaeology of the late Middle Ages and early-modern period (although most of the new knowledge of these periods is still being produced from the written sources).² There is a general rule in English of treating every account of the past as a source. Then there is a distinction between primary sources (original sources from the given period - accounts by immediate witnesses of the past happenings, documents left by the persons and institutions active in the surveyed period, or sometimes accounts being the chronologically closest to the events interesting the historian – an example could be medieval chronicles, which were compiled by monks sometimes decades later) and secondary sources, being accounts of the past made by scientists on the basis of primary sources. In Polish, the distinction is more pronounced, at least in terms of adequate vocabulary. *Źródło* (a source) means only primary source. Secondary source suits the term *opracowanie* (a study). It is often disturbed by the fact, that with the passage of time, secondary sources sometimes become primary sources. Examples could be again the medieval chronicles, which were result of work of some abbey scribes, creating them on the basis of then-existing documents, as also oral tradition, which were their primary sources from the point of view of our methodology. Because all the primary information (or at least most of it) vanished during the centuries, the chronicles usually are the only accounts of the specified sections of the past at our disposal.

The development of history was conditioned basically by the ability of historians to verify the authenticity of written sources, or, using professional terminology, to conduct their external criticism. The general doubt about authenticity of medieval documents was common among Renaissance humanists because of posthumous popularity of work of Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457), who proved in 1440 that so-called *Donation of Constantine*, testifying the transfer of power over Western Roman Empire from emperor Constantine the Great to the pope, was forgery. The questioning of some parts of medieval tradition was also result of later intellectual ferment inside the church, particularly works of the Jesuit priests, mainly associated with the Antwerp circle of Bollandists, called thus from the name of the leading Jesuit historian Jean Bolland (1596-1665). The search for reliable modes of authenticity verification was an effort of the representatives of the oldest order inside the Roman Catholic Church, possessing the richest archives, as also receiving biggest reputation losses from

² More detailed summing up of relations between history and archaeology see: Halsall 1997. There is however a recent tendency to use archaeological and biological evidence for the research of less remote periods or to find a very long term comparative perspective. The most important example is use of biological data (especially height) for the measurement of the standard of living. Such data are widely available for last two centuries in files left by military and medical bureaucracies but they are sometimes the only available data for prehistory thanks to numerous skeletal remnants or mummies, creating often sample statistically significant to draw wider conclusions and compare them with later epochs (Clark 2007, pp. 55-70; Kiple 2002, *passim*; Fogel 2004).

negligence of the documented church tradition. The six-volume work of French Benedictine monk, Jean Mabillon (1632-1707), *De re diplomatica*, published in 1681 is perceived as the turning point in the development of historical research. The multi-dimensional workshop of verifying document authenticity included, above all, some external propensities of the source, allowing for precise determination of the source's age – general type of document, handwriting, seal, heraldic emblems, etc. The knowledge of those basic features of the written source was developed into separate, auxiliary sciences of history. All of them are practised today and were initially strongly influenced by Mabillon's research. The traditional auxiliary disciplines include diplomatics (study of documents), palaeography (history of ancient and medieval handwriting), sigillography (history of document seals, also known under Greek-derived name sfragistics), numismatics (history of coins), genealogy (study of families and their lineage), chronology (study of locating events in time, along with history of calendar and systems of dating). In the countries, which unlike for example England, did not have their own offices of heraldry, dealing with families' coats of arms, also heraldry was to be refined and verified by professional historians. The achievement of Mabillon and his Benedictine fellow-brethren from congregation of St. Maur (hence also called Maurists) was also beginning of editing and publishing of critically verified and systematized collections of sources, being a basis for future research for further generations of historians, from that time not having to confront directly with the original (Marwick 2001, pp. 55-58, Szymański 2002, pp.18-20, 304-305, 441-442; Bloch 1954, pp. 81-85, Aylmer 1997, pp. 252-253, 267).

The workshop of historian, when created, was used first to research the history of the Roman Catholic Church and further to survey political history of separate countries, enabling thus creation of national histories of modern states, being a basis for wider national identities spreading from late 18th century. Because the auxiliary sciences developed by Mabillon were associated with research of Middle Ages, the knowledge of pre-modern and modern sources was also to be refined and systematized during that later period. These processes were preceded by institutionalization of science of history inside existing universities and most of the efforts increasing stock of historical knowledge and perfecting methods of research were coming from rising army of academics. Among this already quite impressive crowd, historiographers usually distinguish German scholar Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) who deserves most to be called father of modern historical science. The pressure was put on the use of wide variety of primary sources and their detailed examination, combined with identification of sources for every fragment of the text, allowing for verification of the work results by other historians. Features of Rankean empiricist orientation of historical research

were: domination of political history of the states as main theme, pursuit of objectivity (despite Ranke's conservative political orientation), particularly when describing conflicts, reconstruction of historical process ("how it actually was" – *wie es eigentlich gewesen*) as a main goal, without any far-reaching axiological or teleological aspirations, inductive method of reasoning from particular to general, possibly without any previous prejudices or assumptions, introduction of historical methodology to academic curricula. All the elements of Ranke's methodological attitude became points of reference for further generations of modern historians, even when they were challenging his views. The most often criticisms of later generations concerned pursuit of objectivity and impartiality and the possibility of full reconstruction of historical facts and processes (Marwick 2001, pp. 61-66; Bentley 1997, pp. 419-423; Green, Troup 1999, pp. 2-8).

At that point we can state, that the economic history can be defined most generally as history of economic activity of human societies.³ It is thus an effect of arbitrary classification of human activity, excluding most of it from the research, as it is in the case of economics. It differs in its scope from general political history, being the oldest and most traditional branch of historical science, shaped by Ranke and his contemporaries and focused on history of political developments in the national and international dimensions, with the state as primary category defining the field of research. The opposition between these two ideal types of historical writing does not exclude the cases of interdisciplinary works, crossing the rather artificial boundary, especially when we take into account the strong interdependency of political and economic factors in the process of historical development.

A similar situation of diverging focuses takes place when we take into account the relationship between economic history and social history. The latter surveys the historical record of different kinds of social processes and structures, usually those of non-economic character or at least non-reducible to purely economic components. In its methodology, economic history, besides the traditional historical workshop developed in the framework of political history, recalls the theoretical achievements of economics, while the basic analytical concepts and ideas of social history come rather from sociology (although in British tradition,

³ Of course, there are many more or less different definitions. Carlo Cipolla agrees with the definition of economic history included in *Dictionary of Modern Economics* (Horton, Ripley, Schnapper, Washington, DC, 1948): "Economic history is the study of past and *present* economic events in one or more countries" (Cipolla's emphasis; Cipolla 1991, p. 6). Such conceptualization underlines two factors – national economy as a main unit of analysis (or at least point of reference) and, which is more important, usefulness of results of historical research to analysis of current economic affairs. Cipolla also quotes in that place Polish economic historian Witold Kula "the notion that economic history is a science of the past and economics a science of the present just won't bear scrutiny" (*ibid.*, p. 6).

social history developed as off-topic of economic history, mainly history of labour, and became independent after World War II, mostly as a result of Marxist opposition to “traditional” economic history; Royle 2001, pp. 314-316). Because of the components taken from economics and sociology, both, economic and social history, can be treated as social sciences, having origin in the Enlightenment efforts to provide a scientific basis for state policies, rather than pure traditional humanities to which history (with long tradition developed before Enlightenment) is more often assigned. There is also a tradition more rooted in humanities and traditional history (although less visible in Anglo-Saxon countries), expressing scepticism concerning the role of history (and economic history) in formulating general rules. That scepticism is explained among others by changes in human behaviour induced by results of earlier experiences. Instead, humane orientation of economic history pronounces the role of historical inquiries as a source of knowledge about origins of current state of society, a goal being the adequate justification of its significance (Cipolla 1991, p. 13).

Economic history thus is a discipline of hybrid character and unclear boundaries, mediating between erudite tradition of humanities and Enlightenment tradition of social sciences with their tendency to be more “scientific” in method (i.e., to more resemble natural sciences) and ambition of formulating general, universal rules of human activity. One side is based on facts discovered through critical analysis of available source and then integrated into narrative thanks to creativity, intuition and experience of the researcher, rather than to any specified set of strict rules, the second is based on the widest possible use of numbers and quantifiable variables organized by logically formalized reasoning. (Cipolla 1991, p. x). History, especially in Ranke’s traditional version, is oriented towards particularities of the past and uniqueness of specified epoch and its more general characteristics. Such attitude is referred to as idiographic. Economics is nomothetic – it develops general theories, often claiming universality of application. The gap between both sciences is increasing along with the development of analytical framework of economics and its rising complexity.

Neither history, nor economics, does not meet the strict criteria of scientific research of natural sciences because of lack of possibility of adequately conducted experimental verification of theories. History deals with “experiments” that already happened and happened once. Historical sources are residuals of history’s “experiments” and historians try thanks to them construct possibly exact description of historical event or process. So in fact there are no experiments in history – the events are not repeatable and the researcher is not their observer. The scope of achieved generalizations is always limited and generalizations do not

lead to the creation of universal laws (exceptions are historiosophical concepts but they are usually created by people not being professional historians). In the case of economics, existence of general patterns is assumed and theories are expressed usually by modelling, which is based on defining relations between variables (including categorization of them into dependent and independent ones) and exclusion of all other phenomena from the model with the help of *ceteris paribus* clause, assuming that only model variables change. Such attitude is called a reductionist view on reality, where the picture is clear thanks to underlining some of its aspects and the removal of all the rest, deemed as insignificant. The simplification thus achieved allows for making more or less accurate predictions, a feature which is not possible in the case of idiographic methodology of history. So economics theories are created in order to approximate reality in the way the theories of natural sciences do but they cannot meet the condition of exact repetition of the experiment and their predictions are much less precise. History stands firm on the ground of its own methodology and rather does not attempt to emulate natural sciences (Cipolla 1991, p. 29; Gaddis 2004, pp. 54-68).

The distinction between economic history and other branches of history can be also explained, as it was in the case of relations between archaeology and history, by different kinds of sources used in the research. Political history concerns itself mostly with documents left by rulers and governments and their chanceries, as also with general accounts of the political developments coming from the period researched. Relatively narrow group of sources lets us describe quite comprehensively the main currents of political developments in a specified period, as well as their background. The economic historian researching the same period and trying to construct the basic outline of economic activity at that time, had to resort to a different group of documents, usually left by people and organizations engaged in economic activity, or that part of archival legacy left by rulers and governments, which was associated with state economic policy. Those sources are almost always much larger in volume (who in the society is not really engaged in economic activity?) and therefore need much larger effort during research. Hence the willingness to create quantitative indices in order to achieve some level of information synthesis, allowing to reduce the volume of the final work, as well as the tendency to narrow the source base in order to ensure the adequate level of carefulness during research and then to achieve general conclusion from the previously limited source base. The example of the latter tendency could be use of the records left by one city or a few landed estates in order to outline general situation in craft industry or agriculture in the whole country. Therefore much of the works on economic history, which are based on primary sources, are focused on quite detailed topics, especially when we compare them with the

representative works on political history. The same problem of quantity of initial material to be researched before reaching any conclusion is also a feature of social history.

To understand the sources and nature of the tensions between interests and methodologies of history and economics we must briefly look at the process of the development of the field between them - history of economic history. The interest in economic affairs as other cause of historical phenomena was paid even by some early-modern historians but the separation from mainstream historical science and development of distinctive features of the discipline took place in the 19th century, just after the fast development of political history and partially in opposition to it. It was also opposing the main current of rather speculative political economy, which was focused more on building general explanations than detailed looking through historical records, although Adam Smith (1723-1790), the founder of classical political economy, used quite extensively historical arguments. The significant impulse for the research of past economic events was the will of verification of achievements of British political economy advocating, among others, free-trade policies in external relations of the state. The members of so-called German Historical School of political economy argued in their works that free-trade attitude was a result of England's leading economic position, which was achieved thanks to protectionist policies in previous centuries. They supported the view that there was no universal economic policy, British case was particular and not representing general law, and the application of external barriers to trade was depending from the stage of economic development achieved by the country at that moment. That current in the history of economics had its predecessor in the person of Friedrich Georg List (1789-1846), and was represented by three generations of researchers (respectively old, young and youngest school). First included its real founder Wilhelm Roscher (1817-1894), as also Karl Knies (1821-1898) and Bruno Hildebrand (1812-1878), second was represented above all by Gustav Schmoller (1838-1917), third by Werner Sombart (1863-1941) and to some extent also by father of modern sociology, Max Weber (1864-1920). Their variety of interests caused that none of them is referred to as an economic historian, mostly they are classified as economists or sociologists. The practical policy advice of Historical School at its beginning was creation of high-tariffs at the outer borders (in order to protect from competition of more advanced countries the newly created industrial branches, called in modern terminology infant industries), associated with opposite internal policy of economic integration of German political area. The members of the School (especially Schmoller) supported state intervention in the economy and social paternalism of conservative state, reflected by the beginnings of modern social legislation, supposed to counteract German strong labour-class movement. The

scientific significance of the whole current of economic thought was resulting from the use of historical records so intensively for the first time in arguments over economic theory and policy, as also from the fact that the effect of historical research were extensive generalizations and policy prescriptions, an accident which would not take place too often in the following decades. (Morawski 2010, p. 7; Cipolla 1991, p. 68; Marwick 2001, p. 80; Bentley 1999, p. 86; Hodgson 2001, pp. 56-64, 116-134; Milonakis, Fine 2009, pp. 74-80). The concept of national economic development divided into separate stages, characterized by distinctively different features of economic system, which was one of main contributions of the School to economic history, became later subject to general criticism, mostly due to the lack of explanation for moving from one stage to the other.

German nationality of the thinkers associated with the Historical School meant the primacy of continental researchers at the beginnings of the study area. Germany was also the country of first journals dedicated solely to the subject (*Hansische Geschichtsblätter* were published for the first time as early as 1871, *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* in 1903, while most of leading journals from other countries started in three decades between 1925 and 1955; Cipolla 1991, p. 5). It was accompanied by high position of economic history in the academic curricula, as also of great significance of researchers engaged in historical inquiries in government's policymaking, especially on the ground of social policy (so-called *Kathedersozialismus*, socialism of professor's chair).

It must be also added, that historical references were used in opposition to the main current of political economy (especially that of David Ricardo), being the basis of modern, neoclassical economics. The divide was deepened along with transition of the discipline from political economy to economics, put in motion by marginal revolution (based on the concept of marginal utility) and increased use of refined mathematical analysis for economic problems. From 1883-1884 academic circles of German-speaking countries were the stage of so-called *Methodenstreit* (debate over method) between empirical and inductive German historicists (Schmoller) and apriorical and deductive Austrian School of neoclassical economics represented by Karl Menger (1840-1921). The latter, although admitted indispensability of historical research for understanding of economic phenomena, explicitly ascribed it the position of merely auxiliary to economics, not one of the constituting parts of political economy. (Bentley 1999, pp. 88-89; Hodgson 2001, pp. 77-94; Milonakis, Fine 2009, pp.

100-117, 150-151). From that point, economic theories based on historical research appeared usually on the fringes of mainstream economics.⁴

The late nineteenth century was also a period wider phenomenon of final division between major social academic disciplines (i.e. sociology, anthropology, political science, history, etc.), starting after ca. 1880, which made interdisciplinary flow of ideas more difficult. In that context, the debate over method was a symptom of gaining independence from external influences and criticisms by the newly created economics. The price was its individualistic methodology, opposing historical and social conditioning of economic processes (Sewell Jr. 2005, p. 2, Milonakis, Fine 2009, pp. 91-117).

The development of economic history as a study area is also closely associated also with the works of Karl Marx (1818-1883), German philosopher and social thinker, contemporary of the members of old German Historical School. His critique of capitalist system equipped economic history with still useful conceptual framework, although the weakness of the Marxist system was its historiosophy and ambitions of scientific prediction of the future. The term “dialectical materialism”, which is synonym of Marx’s philosophy, comes from reception of Hegel’s pattern of historical development as constant struggle of opposites, giving as a result synthesis, which is again opposed by its own contradiction. The dialectical development is determined, however, by developments in the material world, not in the sphere of ideas ruled by “spirit”, as it was in the case of Hegelianism. The concept of socio-economic forms, changing along with the development of production relations, consecutively from primordial (or tribal) community through ancient slavery, feudalism, capitalism to future final goal of communism, despite its utopian view on the end of history, was often used by later generations of historians inquiring the economic and social life in each of those great epochs (of course, except for communism, which never happened)⁵. According to Marx every

⁴ An echo of *Methodenstreit* can be seen in the views of Austrian economist and one of the founders of neoliberalism Friedrich August von Hayek (1899-1992). He criticized “historicism”, being a combination of making far-reaching generalizations from the study of history (laws of historical development, division of the past into distinct stages) and treating the historical phenomena as unique (historically specific). The latter component was making social and economic processes insusceptible to deductivist methodology represented by Hayek. Such critique was close to the Popper’s attack on historicism and also was focused on wider scope of thinkers than only historical economists (besides them, among others: Hegel, Comte, Marx; Milonakis, Fine 2009, p. 261).

⁵ An exception in the universalist pattern of consecutive row of great socio-economic forms described by Marx was so-called “Asiatic” mode of production, being a regional particularity, characterized by despotic form of government, managing big irrigation systems necessary for agricultural development and accompanied by lack (or rare occurrence) of private land ownership. It was to be determined by particular geographical conditions and according to Marx was still present in 19th-century India, China and some Islamic countries. Because it was a breach in the whole philosophical system, undermining claims to universal applicability of Marxist doctrine (due to particular allowance for role of natural conditions as determining force, as also because of purely regional

epoch (socio-economic form) developed on the foundation (base) of relations of production (shaped by available productive technology, and including social institutions determining its use - ownership of means of production, distribution of created income and labour participation in them) an ideological and cultural superstructure being an ex-post explanation of status quo. The relations of production were shaping class structure of society in the way assuring unavoidability of social conflict, which took the form of class struggle. The change of the epoch was always resulting from the change in the foundation fuelling class struggle. The perception of relations of production as decisive source of social change is the most known example of economic determinism in social sciences. The other feature of Marxism being significant to us was its class-conflict pronouncing opposition to neoclassical economics, on the grounds of interpretation of neoclassical doctrine as justifying capitalist status quo by seeking harmony within the market equilibrium. Conflict with the neoclassicists occurred despite common indebtedness of both schools of economic thought to the classical political economists like David Ricardo and Adam Smith.

Thus, two different approaches, at least partially critical to the abstracted, theoretical economics, were created on the European continent. The first was popular mostly in the zone of influence of German-speaking universities, second became widespread wherever Marxist left was gaining political importance.

The development of economic history in Anglo-Saxon countries was somewhat different and a little bit delayed. In Britain it was rather off-topic to mainstream economics and its significance was not appreciated also by traditional historians focused on political and constitutional issues. Earlier it had place in the writings of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers like David Hume (1711-1776), Adam Smith or Smith's pupil John Millar (1735-1801), but it was marginalized by later generation of political economists, led by David Ricardo (1772-1823). The ideological status quo, implying general disinterest in the economic past lasted until last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the outcome of economic crises of 1866 and 1873 shook the belief in adequacy of Ricardian political economy. In methodological disputes sparked in 1870's, an English proponent of enrooting political economy in historical context was Thomas Edward Cliffe Leslie (1826-1882), known to the public also thanks to application of political economy combined with historical research to the analysis of problems of contemporary agriculture. He polemised among others with the founder of marginal neoclassical economics, Stanley Jevons. His views were presented in 1876 article,

character of that form, indicated even by its name), it was neglected by official version of Marxism prevailing in Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries (Kołakowski 2001, pp. 418-422).

meaningfully entitled *On the Philosophical Method of Political Economy*. An interest in the past thus resulted from the epistemological confusion of economists. Leslie is perceived as the founder of English Historical School of political economy, which was however less known than the German one. On the other hand it was becoming less and less theoretical, transforming gradually its field into economic history. A significant achievement were the lectures given at Oxford University by Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883), published posthumously in 1884, introducing the concept of Industrial Revolution to the analysis of changes in British economy in the years 1760-1830, as also doubting in universality of most laws of economics. Other important representative of British economic history of the period of its creation was William Cunningham (1849-1919). His opposition to the use of assumptions of human behaviour and universality of economic laws prevalent in neoclassical economy, led to the dispute with Alfred Marshall, the most important neoclassical economist. The controversy, being an extension of earlier disputes of Cliffe Leslie, was also British counterpart of *Methodenstreit* but the positions of both sides in the history of world science indirectly show us asymmetry of influences of its main participants, something which less surely could be stated in the case of continental debate. Nevertheless, it ensured lasting separation of economic history from economics in the British science. Cunningham's attitude had also some practical policy implications – he was one of the first British academics preferring protectionism to free trade. In almost the same time the growing support for social reform among intellectuals resulted in beginnings of history of labour and social policies pioneered by Sidney (1859-1947) and Beatrice Webb (1858-1943), founding members of British reformist, non-Marxist socialist group, the Fabian Society. Their main works were *History of Trade Unionism* (1894) and multi-volume *English Local Government* (1906-1929). The Webbs along with other notable Fabians were also co-founders of the London School of Economics and Political Science, established in 1895, where economic history had its place in curriculum from the very beginning. Former Toynbee's and Schmoller's disciple William Ashley (1860-1927) was the first British economic historian using periodization not determined by political events, as also the first university professor of economic history in English-speaking world, employed at Harvard in 1892. First full-time university employments dedicated solely to economic history appeared in Britain over decade later (Marwick 2001, pp. 80, 99; Hudson 2003, pp. 226-228; Coleman 1987, pp. 9-17, 20-62; Harte 2001, p. 2, Lyons, Cain, Williamson 2008, pp. 5-6, Hobsbawm 1997, pp. 103-104; Hodgson 2001, pp. 104-110, Milonakis, Fine 2009, pp. 141-153).

The final separation of British economic history from economics took place in the interwar period, whole discipline was further institutionalized by creation of Economic History Society at LSE in 1926. It was followed by establishment of *Economic History Review* in 1927, one of the most important journals in the field at that time, as also in the post-war period. Leading British economic historians in those years were John H. Clapham (1873-1946), seeking for ideological neutrality and overcoming of Cunningham-Marshall methodological divide, author of three-volume *Economic History of Modern Britain* (published 1926-1938), and early-modern period specialist and supporter of social reforms in political life Richard Henry Tawney (1880-1962). The studies of medieval English economic history developed significantly mainly thanks to Eileen Power (1889-1940; Marwick 2001, pp. 99-101; Hudson 2003, pp. 226-228; Coleman 1987, pp. 63-96; Cipolla 1991, p. 5; Lambert 2003, p. 50; Harte 2001, pp. 1-6).

In the United States beginnings of the economic history were partially associated with the development of American school of institutional economics, focused on constraints and rules of economic activity created by law and social customs. Institutionalists were generally distrustful to neoclassical economics, which was perceived by them as too abstract, and were seeking for empirical basis of economics, hence their contribution also to development of statistical research of economy. It should be noticed that in the situation when American universities and business schools were still developing, an advisable element of academic curriculum was visit paid to one of the leading German or Austrian universities. It caused popularity of German Historical School among American economists in the last quarter of the 19th century, as also general awareness of problems of historical specificity and context of economic phenomena. The founder of institutionalism was Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), whose work *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) was a critique of some social aspects of capitalism (among them conspicuous consumption of title “leisure class” of businesspeople, being a parasite of materially productive industry) and capitalism’s indiscriminate approval by neoclassical economics. However, he also opposed historicists’ works as content with narrative description. In pursuit of coherent theory, Veblen attempted to include in it a more nuanced version of human psychology, supported by theories of pragmatist philosopher and psychologist William James and being contrary to neoclassicist assumption of always rational *homo economicus*, motivated by precisely defined self-interest. Later, Veblen’s followers started to apply concepts of behaviourist psychology, instead of pragmatism, which diminished the distance to neoclassicists. Institutions (defined by Veblen as “prevalent habits of thought with respect to particular relations and particular functions of the individual and of

community”) were subject to Darwinian processes of evolution and natural selection in the historical development. However, Veblen opposed application of concepts taken from biology to social science because it would deny the role of culture (irreducible to purely biological terms) in shaping of human societies. The institutions were constraining and modifying natural human behaviour and were themselves gradually modified by impact of technological change. The rapidness of technological progress and its consequences, being qualitatively new phenomenon, was slowed by institutions, culturally conditioned and inherited from the past. But interplay between technology and institutions would finally lead to completely new ways of revealing basic human instincts, as also new social relations. The main followers of Veblen were economics professors Wesley C. Mitchell (1874-1948) and John R. Commons (1862-1945), the former researching the macro-level business cycle on the basis of low-level empirical data and introducing systematic statistical research on American economic development at National Bureau of Economic Research, founded in 1920, the latter contributing to the development of separate sub-field of history of labour. The microeconomic and empirical approach of most of institutionalists caused that the USA had from the beginning very strongly developed current of business history, independent from mainstream economic history (mostly focused on researching whole economies from the macro perspective). It was partially reflected by the fact the first of important journals of the field was *Business History Review*, established in 1926. (Hodgson 2001, pp. 137-142; Hodgson 2004, pp. 381-383; Cipolla 1991, p. 5; Lyons, Cain, Williamson 2008, pp. 7-8; Milonakis, Fine 2009, pp. 159-171).

Interwar period was also associated with development of economic history as independent discipline in other countries, where researchers active before the war were gaining adequate eminence, as also new generations of historians spoke with their distinctive voice. From the former perhaps the most known was Belgian Henri Pirenne (1862-1935), focusing mainly on multidimensional research of history of Middle Ages. For the latter, the most important were events occurring in France, where reception of Pirenne works was immediate because of lack of language barriers and where *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* were established in 1929. The journal, usually called simply *Annales*, grouped many talented French historians, which constituted very specific school of historical thought, united by their holistic (all-embracing) approach, trying to include in the research all the sub-fields of history, as also achievements of different social sciences, because of interdependence of different categories of social phenomena. Hence the postulate of writing *histoire totale*, a total history, avoiding divisions between political history (although neglecting its significance and leading role in

research), history of culture, economic and social histories, etc. The economic history in the *Annales* version was thus more rooted in spatial, political, social and cultural contexts, than in most of the other academic orientations. The interdisciplinary character of *Annales* demanded great erudition, as also great talent of observation, enabling the researcher to gain maximum result from the source base thanks to use of different methodological approaches. A big achievement was introduction in the post-war period by Fernand Braudel three different timely perspectives of historical happenings. Some issues according to the *annalistes* belonged to the time of events, *l'histoire événementielle* (eventful history, the usual time perspective of traditional historical research, similar to perspectives of journalist or chronicler), some to cyclical and conjunctural history (*histoire cyclique et conjecturale*), with time horizon measured in years and decades, typical for perspectives of some social sciences, including economics, and some to *longue durée*, long term history, being a history of rigid, very slowly evolving or unchangeable (as in the case of geographical frameworks) structures and social inertia. The *longue durée* perspective was perceived as the most important for history, which meant important role of historical geography in the investigations and was contrary to the fashions of traditional, narrative-based, historical writing. Additional dimension of *Annales* resistance to the patterns of political history narratives was its interest in everyday life and minor, often anonymous people, not the “great men” described by political historians. (Morawski 2010, pp. 8-9; Santamaria, Bailey, 1984; Hunt 1986; Huppert 1997, pp. 873-887; Bentley 1999, pp. 107-115; Sewell 2005, p. 83).

Before World War II the most important members of *Annales* circle were the journal founders Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) and Marc Bloch (1886-1944), the former being the author of the whole concept of the journal. In the post-war period, when the journal was renamed to *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (in 1992 the title was again changed *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*), the most famous was Fernand Braudel (1902-1985), author of monumental works dedicated to creation of pre-modern capitalism and economic life of the Mediterranean (*The Mediterranean in the Time of Philip II*, 1949, 1966, Eng. ed. 1972-1973, Pol. ed. 1976-1977; *Civilisation and Capitalism: 15-18th Centuries*, 1967-1979, Eng. ed. 1979, Pol. ed. 1992), as also unfinished *Identity of France*, published posthumously in 1986 (Eng. ed. 1988). Besides him one may mention at least Pierre Chaunu (1923-2009), Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (1929-) and eminent medievalists Georges Duby (1919-1996) and Jacques Le Goff (1924-). The *Annales* school became highly influential in post-war years and gained international prominence. The third generation of *Annales* writers, associated with Le Roy Ladurie, initially focused on quantitative aspects of economic history, later (from ca.

1975) intensively researched long-lasting structures of mentalities as cultural constraints of human actions, at least partially abandoning pursuit of total history. The fourth generation focused on social history of cultural practices and historical anthropology. The most important among non-French authors influenced by *Annales* was perhaps Immanuel Wallerstein, author of *The World System* (1974, 2nd vol. 1981, 3rd vol. 1989, 4th vol. 2011), a controversial account of economic divergence caused by the development of international trade system after 1500 due to inequality of exchange between ‘core’ countries of Western Europe and rest of the world, being the system’s peripheries and semi-peripheries (Hunt 1986; Huppert 1997, pp. 875-887; Marwick 2001, pp. 90-96, 118-126; Sewell 2005, pp. 34-37, 67-70, 85-88; Dosse, pp. 129-131, 152-154, Lloyd 1993, pp. 117-127). The focus on circulation of goods, particularly for long distances, as main source of differentiation of economic structures was one of the basic features of *Annales* milieu and Wallerstein drew further-reaching consequences from this intellectual tradition. His books initiated increasing wave of studies into world history, based on world-system concept and hence applying global perspective (which tries to reject eurocentrism) and abandoning 19th-century tradition of using nation state as basic unit of analysis (Moore 1997, pp. 952-953).

Post-war period was associated with rapid development of the field, reflected by growing numbers of academic posts, often in newly created departments on newly created universities, rising membership levels of existing societies, creation of new national societies and journals in countries with no earlier institutionalization of economic history, as also growing integration of international economic history community. It had an effect in the form of International Congresses of Economic History. First Congress was organized in 1960 in Stockholm and at the same time International Economic History Association (IEHA) was created. IEHA organized another Congresses, held every three or four years (Coleman 1987, pp. 93-98; Cipolla 1990, p. 5; Lyons, Cain, Williamson, pp. 4-5).

The other feature of discipline’s growth was surging range of its sub-fields (histories of banking and finance, agriculture, transport, material culture, historical demography), focused on even more narrow aspects of human activity than economic history itself, often possessing separate journals and societies, many of international character. They increased enormously the knowledge about specified aspects of economic past but its critics point out that their development is associated with losing the perspective of broader historical process, which was a feature of most of earlier schools of economic history (Hudson 2003, pp. 233-234).

It must be added that World War II was a significant dividing line in the development of economic theory in the sense of marginalization of specificity-oriented, less universalistic

approaches and isolation of economics from other disciplines. The definition of economics (coined before the war by Lionel Robbins of the London School of Economics), as a science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses, became commonly accepted. The choices analysed by economists were in that approach excluded from any historical or social context, which was not so obvious in the case of approaches focused on creation and distribution of wealth or study of the business system. The critics argue that economic activity according to Robbins definition is in fact determined by its future ends shaping the uses of scarce, not the past events preceding the moment of decision. Robbins definition also indirectly rules out influence of other social sciences on economics and extends the impact of economics as the science of choice (which is always market-oriented) into their study areas (the process tagged as “economic imperialism”). More or less in those years institutionalism was losing ground at American universities, while German academic life was damaged by Nazism and consequences of war. Ordoliberalism, the main current of post-war German economic thought, represented among others by Walter Eucken (1891-1950) and strictly associated with defining economic system of Federal Republic of Germany, was opposing tradition of German Historical School. (Hodgson 2001, pp. 28, 174-175; Hodgson 2004, pp. 379-395; Backhouse 2010, pp. 40-42; Milonakis, Fine 2009, pp. 240-242).

Besides huge achievements of *Annales* School, the years after the war were marked with development of Marxist or Marx-inspired economic and social history also in Western countries. One of the factors behind growth of ranks of Marxist historians was the search for a broader theory, which Marx’s philosophy was supplying, differing thus from empiricist and descriptive traditional historical writing. Paradoxically, Marxism developed better in the West than in the Soviet Union, where censorship and Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy were preventing researchers from posing too uncomfortable questions. In Britain, Marxist influences were represented by the milieu of the journal *Past and Present*, established in 1952. The other significant periodical was *History Workshop Journal*, representing the current of “history from below” – history of the lower classes, based on the dispersed sources collected from their representatives (often by amateur historians from their closest environment) and supposed to reflect the perspective of common people, neglected by traditional historical narratives. The most distinguished representative of the British Marxist history was Eric Hobsbawm (1917-), beginning as social historian, initiator of debate about the general crisis of the seventeenth century, later an author of widely acclaimed syntheses of history of the “long” nineteenth century. Besides him one should mention leading social historian of the

1960's, Edward Thompson, author of influential (but controversial outside the circle of leftist historians) *Making of the English Working Class*, published in 1963, and 17th-century specialist Christopher Hill. (Bentley 1999, pp. 137-139; Sewell 2005, pp. 32-34; Eley 2003, pp. 68-78; Green, Troup 1999, pp. 36-41).

Except for Marxists who had more radical social perspective than pre-war social reformists, a significant group of British economic historians diverged from the local traditions by revising criticism of its predecessors towards social changes brought by industrialization. They got close in the views to free-market neoclassicists who by then had found themselves on the fringes of economics, dominated after the war by the Keynesians pronouncing active role of the state in the economy. The most quoted example of such shift is *The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830*, the work of Thomas S. Ashton, published in 1948, containing no condemnation of social changes like it was in the case of Fabians, quite oppositely perceiving Industrial Revolution as British escape from the results of demographic expansion and the fate of overpopulated agricultural Ireland. The orientation represented by Ashton, which also was dominant in British scientific circles despite delayed growth of Marxism, was pragmatic, avoiding general, theoretically constructed categories like "stages of growth" and focused on economic processes, not totalities, which was in contrast to *Annales* approach, treated initially on British Isles with a dose of underappreciation and misunderstanding. In the survey of economic processes analytical framework of neoclassical economics was employed, which constituted further shift from the heritage left by social reformists (Coleman 1987, pp. 82-85, 102-104, 111-119; Burke 1990, pp. 96-97).

Among the new currents of economic history, created completely after the war, two gained high appreciation. Although differing in terms of method and research instruments, both had in common attempts to introduce elements of neoclassical economics to explanation of historical phenomena, as also reflection of economic theory in historical records. Taking into account the traditions of history as a science, it meant abandoning Ranke's view of inapplicability of general laws to history. Whole process was part of broader interest of professional economists searching in the past for proofs (or denials) of economic theories, as also seeking more generalized and transparent historical description of economic development.

The first of new directions was initially known as new economic history, which after the charm of novelty had slowly melted, was renamed cliometrics (although the term was coined as early as in 1960). "Clio" from the name of Greek muse of history, "metrics" from the use of highly advanced methods of statistical and quantitative analysis introduced to the

economics by neo-Keynesian economists, which gave their use name “econometrics”. Thanks to application of formalized models (simplified and abstracted economic and social relationships, presented usually in the form of bunch of equations) borrowed mostly from the theory of economics, including explicit models of human behaviour (usually purely rational *homo oeconomicus* of neoclassical economics), cliometricians gained and used the possibility of counterfactual reasoning and assessment of alternative scenarios of historical development. It was with no doubt, most spectacular and most controversial part of the innovations brought by cliometrics and it is being contested until now, in part due to traditional perception of science of history, enrooted in Rankean “*Wie es eigentlich gewesen*” and resistant to speculations unsupported by direct evidence. On the other hand, cliometrics allowed for more precise reconstruction of past events and their interrelations. By reconstructions of trends it enabled also focus on long-term developments in economy, lasting for decades or centuries, escaping thus from short-termism, as also from incoherent and fragmented attempts of describing long-term changes. Thanks to formalization, cliometrics applies rigorous analytical framework, something which traditional economic history was lacking, with its usual use of hidden assumptions during reconstruction of economic processes and often occurrence of contradictory statements in the same piece of work.

Searching for the predecessors of cliometrics, it is stated that the use of statistics and economic models to the study of history was pioneered as early as in 1930’s, among others by American economist Paul M. Sweezy (1910-2004), who later switched his views to Marxism. Application of quantitative methods to economic history became more complex and better based in facts in the 1940’s and 1950’s thanks to American economist Simon Kuznets (1901-1985), former student of Mitchell and his long-time collaborator at NBER, the Nobel Prize winner in 1971. He was accompanied by such economists as Walt Rostow (1916-2003), future security advisor to presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, and Robert M. Solow (1924 -), the Nobel Prize winner in 1987. All of them surveyed the issue of long-term economic growth and its structure, which lead to the formulation of so-called Solow model of economic growth. (Lyons, Cain, Williamson 2008, pp. 12-13, 303-306). The fact that most precursors, as also members of the whole movement, were trained economists helps to explain its character. Taking some dose of simplification – it was application of methodology of neoclassical economics to the study of the past, instead of the study of the current affairs, as most of economists used to do. It was also opposite to European continental tradition of economic history, more closely associated with history than economics, which explains delayed reception of cliometrics in Europe. “With the exception of the historical school of

German economists in the nineteenth century, European economic historians – especially on the continent – have traditionally been extremely weak on theory. (...) The inadequate use that most European economic historians (including such major figures as Pirenne, Sapori and Braudel) have made of the conceptual tools of economics may be largely owing to their training as historians and lawyers.” (Cipolla 1991, p. 56).

The cliometric research really took off in the late 1950’s/early 1960’s, just after introduction of new quantitative techniques to the economics and soon became the most important sub-branch of economic history in the USA, to lesser degree also in other Anglo-Saxon countries, represented in the rising share of the content of economic history journals. First significant conference dedicated to the application of new methods took place in Williamstown, Massachusetts, in 1957. The conference volume *Trends in the American Economy in the Nineteenth Century* was published three years later. In the same year annual conference of cliometricians was organized for the first time at Purdue University, Indiana (later moved to Wisconsin University and other places, among them University of Iowa). Further institutionalization of cliometrics took place when Cliometric Society was found in 1983 and started to organize world congresses of the sub-field (first held in 1985). (Lyons, Cain, Williamson, 2008, pp. x-xi, 3-4, 10, 14-17).

Cliometrics spread to Europe gained momentum in the early 1990’s when European Historical Economics Society (EHES) was founded in 1990 during the 10th International Economic History Congress in Leuven. This shows delay of European reception of cliometrics, although many European cliometric projects were initiated in 1970’s. However, treating cliometricians as not belonging to historian profession and hence ignoring them was quite common in that period. The leading exception was France, where part of *Annales* school research became highly quantitative for about decade after 1965 but it was a temporal affair and it is assessed by cliometricians as not associated with adequate level of economic analysis despite amassing huge factual material. Typical inductive approach of historians was thus reflected in French “serial history”, collecting data available after critical evaluation of sources, without any econometric backward extrapolations of discovered trends. From 1990’s rising significance of quantitative surveys is being observed in most Western European countries. The alternative, although less popular recently, name of the school of thought, “historical economics”, shows the high importance of economics and its analytical instruments in relation to historical workshop during research process. The parallel tendency of increasing role of quantitative analysis in American social history, beginning in 1960’s and having its apogee in 1970’s was dubbed “new social history”. It should be also added that

among currents of economic history, business history was much less influenced by quantitative methods than “mainstream” economic history (Bentley 1999, pp. 133-134; Elton, Fogel 1983, pp. 23-31, 61; Sewell 2005, pp. 26-32; Lyons, Cain, Williamson 2008, pp. 37-38; Boldizzoni 2011, pp. 5, 124-125).

The more advanced quantitative techniques and their application to history contributed also to the development of more precise demographic studies, which enabled correction of many deep-rooted views on the historical population changes and indirectly also knowledge of living conditions and mechanisms of economic growth. The main obstacle was dealing with large data sets concerning whole population, which were initially based on information about individuals hidden in parish registers of England. The beginnings of new demographic history were associated with Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (set up in 1964) and the activity of Peter Laslett (1915-2001) and Edward Anthony (“Tony”) Wrigley (1931-). Development of information technology and further advancement of quantitative methods made historical demography perhaps the fastest developing sub-branch of economic history in the last decades.

The most eminent cliometrician is American Robert W. Fogel (1926-) who was awarded Nobel Prize in economics in 1993. His innovative and controversial research on influence of railways on American economic growth in the 19th century and on economic efficiency of slavery on American South sparked lively debates concerning methodological, as also axiological issues and changed their common perception. His views and defence of the earlier work on Southern slavery were presented in *Without Consent or Contract*, published in 1989. The immense popularity of cliometrics and a lot of contributory research amassed through the years allowed for writing whole syntheses of economic history from the cliometrician’s point of view. On British Isles, where quantification of research was slower than in the USA and Canada, breakthrough was *Economic History of Britain since 1700* edited by Roderick Floud and Donald McCloskey (1981), in the same year E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield summed up revisionist efforts of almost 20 years of research of British new demographers in *Population History of England 1541-1871*. A quite recent result of pan-European cooperation is *Cambridge Economic History of Modern Europe* (2010), edited by Steve Broadberry and Kevin O’Rourke.

The side-effect of the development of the sub-field, which from some time tended to dominate whole discipline, was partial rejection of work with primary sources and of source criticism, an indispensable, it would seem, part of historian’s craft. Quantitative evidence was strongly preferable to any form of literary evidence coming from primary sources. The search for

statistically significant general laws was perceived sometimes as leading to inability of dealing with particular, separate events, which were traditional interest of methodologically conservative historians. Despite ambitions to be “scientific” history, the results of the research appeared to be disputable also in the inner circle of cliometricians (Fogel, Elton, 1983, pp. 76-88, 118-121; Lyons, Cain, Williamson 2008, pp. 186-285). Basing on secondary data sets had some hidden dangers, underlined by historians from older generations: “Recently, especially in the United States, there has emerged a school of economic historians who, having been trained primarily as economists and being concerned above all with contemporary economic history, fail to appreciate the problems posed by the available sources. Concerned first and foremost with the theoretical ‘model’ that they have fabricated, and failing to unearth adequate sources to substantiate and verify the same ‘model’, they readily turn to so-called ‘proxy evidence’, assuming equivalences which instead should be often demonstrated” (Cipolla 1991, p. 17). The use of proxies and “guesstimates” became widespread partially because of illusive immediate precision of results they were giving. Despite refinement of analytical tools of econometrics and statistics, the unreliable data, requiring high criticism, or lack of data (even in the proxy form) remained serious limitation to the use of cliometrics. It concerns especially period before the nineteenth century, but in fact the twentieth century was a period of creation of full-fledged modern statistical apparatus of bureaucratic state. Even in the case of professionally gathered historical data, the issue of comparability in time and space remains serious because of different methodologies of receiving the final aggregates. So a lot of precise and, at first glance, solid results of cliometric research are prone to serious doubts because of the quality of data input (Hudson 2001, pp. 13-21).

The critique of cliometrics was also coming from historians combining their interests with the achievements of social sciences other than economics (sociology, anthropology) and humanities. From the social historian’s point of view cliometrics was transmitting equilibrium- and aggregate-based models taken from neoclassical economics into historical research, which was associated with abandoning of constructing narratives about whole socio-economic process and omitting structural, social and cultural factors. The reductionism of all the aspects of economic activity to purely quantitative terms, usually monetary values, skipped over all the qualitative aspects of economic life – social conditions, mentality, quality of goods, gains from increased leisure, non-monetary forms of exchange (very important for less developed economies), opportunities resulting from particular changes in economy and politics. The apex of quantification debate was reached in the late 1970’s, then together with the spread of relatively cheap personal computers second wave of quantification research led

to further increase of cliometrics importance in economic history, while historians dealing with sociocultural issues generally abandoned their interest in economic sphere of human activity, focusing on issues of language and culture (Lloyd 2003, pp. 97-98; Hudson 2001, pp. 4-6; Hudson 2003, pp. 231-233; Tosh 2010, p. 224-225). The criticism of cliometrics has, however, recently recurred. It is associated again with the resistance against apriorical subordinating the historical research to neoclassical economic theory and lack of understanding the non-quantifiable context but also goes further, indicating at political consequences of cliometrics as historical support of what is called as neoliberal doctrine (Boldizzoni 2011, pp. 3-13).

The other important contribution to theoretical development of economic history in the second half of the twentieth century brought new institutional economics (NIE) or new institutional history. Its main representative is Douglass C. North who was also a pioneer of cliometrics, hence repeating from time to time confusion of NIE with new economic history by less oriented scholars from outside the discipline (the other cause were attempts of constraining the reasoning by framework of cohesive theory, common for both cliometricians and new institutionalists, while more traditional historians were using concepts from social sciences in an eclectic way). North's beginning of studies on influence of institutions, or as he simply put it "rules of the game"⁶, on economic performance was resulting partially from disillusionment with cliometrics, failing to take into account non-quantifiable factors, leading to diverging patterns of economic development, as also to explain the major changes in

⁶ It is worth adding (to avoid further confusions), that institutions are generally of immaterial character and are either formalized rules (law, f. ex.) or generally accepted rules with source of the acceptance based in social custom or tradition. Polish word "instytucja", in the usual meaning of an administrative government body, usually with all its material infrastructure and personnel, is referred to as one of the types of "organization". Organizations are perceived in new institutionalism as type of institutions in terms of their internal rules, without all the material context, which is ascribed to them in colloquial Polish. In the latter meaning, they are perceived as "players" of the game, not "rules". Hodgson 2004, pp. 426-429; North 1990, p. 4. Definition of institutions by North: "Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. In consequence they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic. Institutional change shapes the way societies evolve through time and hence is the key to understanding historical change." North 1990, p. 3. Brief summary of new institutional approach was presented by Joel Mokyr: "The idea that institutions play a central role in determining economic outcomes and performance, long reviled by economists, has been revived in the past decades and become something of a mantra among economists interested in long-term development. The literature has not quite agreed what is precisely meant by 'institutions' but clearly the definition includes the rules by which the economic game is played, and how they are enforced and obeyed. It has been realized that a central issue in economic performance is what protected property and enforced contracts, and that any agent who was placed in charge of justice and law enforcement needed to be constrained in critical ways to avoid the situation in which the state would be taken over by rent seekers. Another insight of this literature is that some apparently inefficient past institutions that limited entry or protected privileges in one form or another, and which would have been detrimental in a world of well-functioning markets and perfect competition, may actually have been well suited to the highly imperfect world of pre-modern economies, where first-best arrangements were simply impossible." Mokyr 2011, p. 368.

economic past. He can be classified as historian of wide interest in social sciences, especially economics, while other leading new institutional economists, Elinor Ostrom and Olivier Williamson should be ascribed to economics. All three are Nobel Prize winners – North in 1993 (together with Fogel and appreciated as cliometrician), Ostrom and Williamson in 2009. The analytical framework of NIE was based on neoclassical model modified by introduction of more realistic assumptions closing it to the real life, among them the problem of transaction costs, assumed by the neoclassicists to be non-existing, and raised to significance as main determinant of organizational and institutional structures by another Nobel Prize laureate in economics, Ronald Coase (Lyons, Cain, Williamson 2008, pp. 197-198). However, new institutionalists are sometimes criticised for extending some general rules of economic behaviour taken from neoclassical economics into fields of other social sciences, and describing possibly widest range of social interactions in terms of market exchange, which is universalized by them, also when referring to economies very distant in the past and very different from contemporary market economy. The more recent romance of North and the new institutionalists with the evolutionary genetics of Richard Dawkins and sociobiology of Edward Wilson, which are used as a proof of universality of self-interest driven behaviour (or rather genome-interest determined selfish behaviour) is also criticized as biological reductionism based on highly speculative generalizations of evolutionary biology (Hodgson 2001, pp. 250-253, 274-275; Boldizzoni 2011, pp. 17-53).⁷

North, taking into account influence of knowledge, technology and demographic phenomena on economic performance (as also environmental constraint in the pre-industrial period), focused on the influence of institutional arrangements on economic performance and efficiency. In his subsequent books (North, Thomas 1973, North 1981, North 1990, North 2005), he was gradually moving further away from the neoclassical model in order to better describe the processes of economic change and stagnation. His general line of reasoning can be presented with general simplifications in the following manner. Institutional arrangements of the economy (including property rights) generally suit some basic proportions of rates of

⁷ It must be noted that North himself makes general distinction between evolution and large scale social processes: “In contrast to Darwinian evolutionary theory, the key to human evolutionary change is the intentionality of the players. The selection mechanisms in Darwinian evolutionary theory are not informed by beliefs about the eventual consequences. In contrast, human evolution is guided by the perceptions of the players;” North 2005, 3% Kindle edition. North’s perception of markets is also more nuanced than a standard neoclassical attitude: “Because there is a widespread prejudice among many neo-classical economists that simply an absence of government intervention is a sufficient condition for good economic performance in a particular market, it is important to stress that the performance characteristics of any market are a function of the set of constraints imposed by institutions (formal rules – including those by government – informal norms, and the enforcement characteristics) that determine the incentive structure in that market.” North 2005, p. 76 (40% Kindle ed.).

return from main production factors, which usually are conditioned by relations between their general quantities available. Along with the changes in rates of return (influenced by changes in relative scarcity of production factors or by changes in their productivity thanks to technical progress) the corrections in the institutional arrangements should follow. In the world without transaction costs it would result in the constant remodelling of social institutions and constant legislation. In fact, transaction costs of introducing institutional change, are often large enough to prevent any actions focused on changing status quo. It is mainly due to the fact, that most of social gains of new institutional arrangement would reach other persons (free-riders in economics slang) than initiators of the change of institutional arrangement. So ensuring well-defined (exclusive), secured and transferable property rights would lead to much more flexible adaptations of institutional system to changes in the economy and greater efficiency of the economy. In the situation of lack of adequate property rights the institutional system is much prone to inertia and hence deepening economic inefficiency as it responds in still lower grade to the productive potential of the economy. So economically inefficient institutional system can avoid reforms for long because nobody is adequately materially motivated towards any action in their favour, as also ruling elite is benefiting from the status quo. It explains thus the persistence of inefficient institutional arrangements and numerous cases of economic stagnation and decline of whole economies throughout centuries.

Another part of the mechanism described above is the phenomenon of path-dependency. The whole concept was invented in 1985 by Paul David and five years later adopted by North to the study of institutional systems. Choosing specified institutional arrangement in one field, usually leads to further arrangements implied by that one particular, earlier choice, which is usually irreversible because of high transaction cost of reversal. So further development of institutional structure is conditioned by historical legacy, which is often unfavourable. It shows difficulties of reforming inefficient institutions as also the fact that “history matters” – incentive structure for economic actors was largely predetermined in the past. For example, divergent developmental paths of North and Latin America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were reflecting the previous imposition of the institutional patterns from the mother countries upon the colonies, as also radically different ideological constructs influencing perceptions of economic actors, which were also conditioned by cultural differences between England and Spain. The problem of path-dependence concerns not only legal frameworks and property rights structures but also common, customary solutions of particular problems, including technical standards. Standardized machines and consumer appliances are rarely

technically most effective but the cost of individual choice of non-standardized technical solution is too high to allow for appearance of technically best choices once the specified standard became common. The often quoted example is persistence of uncomfortable QWERTY standard of typewriter keyboard, discussed by Paul David (North 1990, pp. 92-104; Dzionek-Kozłowska 2011, pp. 266-276; David 1985, pp. 332-337).

The economic history research of post-war period was also characterized by growing interest in the life of oppressed and discriminated minorities. This focus came from outside, mainly from social and cultural history and was accompanying the ideological development of New Left in Western politics and academic life. The whole tendency was reflected among others in the research of economic life of American Black population, including basic problem of economic characteristics of slavery. The other current was concerned with contribution of minorities to economic development. It included the role of minorities' social networks in facilitating international trade and diffusion of innovations, as also significance of economic advancement as a means of overcoming discrimination or offsetting its effects. Even more grew the studies over participation of women in economic life and their relative discrimination across the centuries, which was complementary to the fast development of gender studies, exceeding the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines. The research showed the underestimation of women's influence on the economic development, as also significance of women's rights and social position for economic success. It also helped to break many stereotypes concerning social roles of women in the past.

Together with the progress of decolonization process, newly created states initiated development of historical studies over their own past, perceived from the different point of view than it was in the case of their colonial powers where colonial affairs were often treated from "deck of the ship" perspective and at least part of conquered peoples were described as "people without history". Combining the effects of the new research of local historians with the rising interest of historians from former metropolises and the USA, as also with new global approaches, based often on core-periphery model drawn from *Annales* tradition and Wallerstein's work, gave new insights into pre-colonial past of Asia and Africa and the influence of European expansion on the life of local populations on both continents (Wesseling 2001, pp. 76-92). Processes treated as specific for Western world started to be perceived in the global context and with the inclusion of their echoes overseas. For example, British industrial revolution and European industrialization is more often discussed along with the collapse of handicraft industries and return to domination of agriculture in the 19th-century India, resulting from the massive inflow of cheap British fabrics on Indian market. The de-

Europeanization of perspective was later enhanced by Edward Said's (1935-2003) book *Orientalism* (published in 1978), underlining culturally constructed European perception of Asia and Muslim countries, almost without regard to real situation in conquered and penetrated lands, lasting also after decolonization. The global approach led also to comparisons between European and more advanced Asian economies of pre-industrial periods, which frequently appeared to be in favour of the latter until very late periods. Perhaps the most known work on the subject is Kenneth Pomeranz's (1958-) *Great Divergence* (2000), pronouncing high level of economic development in China before the nineteenth century.

These two revisionist approaches often appeared in a mixed form and their led to the questioning of many wisdoms of traditional historical writing. Careful studies of economies of the Indian Ocean in the period before European intrusion showed vibrant economic life created by many ethnic trading communities living in diasporas in main ports across the whole South Asian coasts. Except for piracy, it was generally based on the freedom of the seas principle and the trade relations were more market and free competition oriented than in the colonial times. The sophisticated economic system was soon destroyed by monopoly-pursuing European conquerors, first from Portugal, later from the Netherlands (Findlay, O'Rourke 2007, pp. 134-156). So free trade was in that region a completely "un-European" affair. Other category could be studies in the colonial societies and especially mixed, interracial populations, created by amalgamation of European and local culture and interracial marriages. Their role was often neglected by researchers focused on the market of the colonial metropolis and transfer of goods from colonies to home country by European merchants. An interesting example could be case study of local wives and mistresses of Dutch traders settling in the seventeenth century on the islands of today's Indonesia showed the significant role of merchants' spouses and concubines in the conduct of their businesses (often done at the cost of interests of Dutch East India Company, so not reflected in the Company's papers). The women were the useful contacts to local communities because of knowledge of local customs and languages, as also could control local affairs during the absence of their husbands, often sent to Europe or to other Asian ports. The whole situation led to the creation of thin caste of rich and independent women (often widowed by less acquainted to climate conditions and older husbands), living in the culture-crossing environment but also subject to ostracism or condemnation because of their unusual social position, conflicting traditional values of main religions of the multi-ethnic society (mostly Dutch Calvinism and Malay Islam). Inclusion of the local and cultural studies thus allowed for more complex and nuanced pictures of many

historical processes leading to the integration of world economy (Pomeranz, Topik 2006, 13-14%). Both of the currents discussed briefly above indicated also at different costs of processes dubbed as “economic progress” often paid by minorities or extra-European cultures, closing thus economic history to trends prevailing in other social sciences.

The so-called “linguistic turn” in historical science, which began in early 1980’s, by focusing on literary and narrative aspects of historical writing, as also paying less attention to highly conceptualized methodologies of “new” social and economic histories, changed the general interests and curricula in historical departments of universities in Anglo-Saxon countries, which was reflected by the retreat from research on economic history. It was also partially resulting from fall of Marxism as respectful social theory at that time and from impossibility of keeping the fast pace of development of institutionalized economic history recorded in three post-war decades (Jordanova 2000, pp. 202-203; Hudson 2003, p. 234; Coleman 1987, pp. 94-101; Lloyd 1993, pp. 67-68; Boldizzoni 2011, p. 169). On the other hand, rising interest in the past among economists and development of historical economics, as also dating from 1960’s expansion of economics into areas of other sciences, increased the role of people trained primarily in economics and econometrics and less interested in interdisciplinary approach combining social, cultural and political issues. The mediation between two different sciences, which was the unintended role of economic history, became even more difficult (Wallerstein 2001, pp. 420-422). One must notice, however, economic history, as its no-adjective-before older sister, has developed its own rich tradition and pluralism of schools, approaches and sub-fields. Pluralism is one of the basic values of modern society. In science it ensures constant competition of ideas leading to their gradual refinement or allowing for rapid breakthroughs. It does not exclude dialogue, what else, it is dialogue’s precondition – where there are no different opinions, dialogue is unnecessary. The values and procedures of academic community still ensure the flow of ideas between different branches of the still growing tree, so the development of the field will continue in the future.

2. Economic history in Poland

After the extended general outline of the field and review of research current in economic history, it is worth to take a look at specificity of its development in Poland, its contribution to the world trends as also some local flavour. The special features of Polish science of economic history were in part resulting from stormy political history of the country in the twentieth century. The growth of the discipline became faster after regaining the independence by Poland in 1918 and it was resembling contemporary processes in Western

European countries. Most of the founders of Polish economic history studied before World War I at Polish universities in Cracow and Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine) in the autonomous then Austrian partition or were educated at different Western European universities (Zurich, Paris, etc.). It was an side-effect of repression of Polish intellectual life in the Prussian and Russian partitions (especially in the latter). So from its very beginning Polish economic history was in close contact with contemporary developments abroad and it was a continental tradition in which Polish researchers participated. In 1931 a new journal, existing until now, *Roczniki dziejów społecznych i gospodarczych* (*Annals of Social and Economic History*) was created from the initiative of two leading economic historians, Jan Rutkowski (University of Poznań, himself educated in Lwów) and Franciszek Bujak (University of Lwów, founder of the so-called school of history of prices). When the nestors of Polish social and economic research like Ludwik Krzywicki (1859-1941) were still active, just before World War II new generation of historians educated on universities of independent Poland joined the academic circles and they continued research in new, unfavourable conditions after the war (Morawski 2010, p. 8).

World War II brought significant personal losses to the whole milieu (f. ex. the most prominent Bujak's disciple, Roman Rybarski, was killed in Auschwitz in 1942 for his engagement in structures of Polish Underground State, where he was the head of treasury department). Equally devastating impact took place in the material basis – during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising German troops and SS burned significant part of the historical archives, including most of still not researched files concerning economic history of Poland, especially state finances. It makes the exact survey of Polish economic development in the early modern period impossible, particularly in quantitative terms.

The break caused by the war, was extended by stalinization of Polish academic life in the years 1948-1956. Domination of orthodox Marxism resulted in retirement of old professors and stopped the careers of part of the younger generation. Despite that, together with political reforms of 1956, the relaxing of censorship constraints and destalinization process brought fast development of economic history and perhaps its best period, lasting from 1957 to 1968. Except for domestic policy causes, such developments were corresponding to general trends in Western countries. In that time *Annales* milieu under Braudel was becoming more and more influential in France and beyond its borders, cliometrician research took off and economics departments widened their perspectives by historical issues in the USA, the number of economic history departments and academic posts for economic historians was rising rapidly in the UK. (Lyons, Cain, Williamson 2008, pp. 303-413; Coleman 1987, pp.

100-119; Burke 1990, pp. 43-51). Summing up, it was period of unprecedented (and unrepeated) expansion of the whole discipline in the academic world.

Polish economic history during those years was dominated by unorthodox, westward oriented Marxism and rising influence of *Annales* school, maintaining lively contacts with Polish economic historians after 1956, which was renewal of tradition damaged by the war and Stalinism (Jan Rutkowski used to be one of journal's authors in the pre-war period). The most important centre was Warsaw University. Faculty of History was represented by Marian Małowist, specializing in the Middle Ages, early-modern period and the roots of the 16-century agricultural divide, whose works inspired members of *Annales* school, as also Wallerstein. Małowist's seminar was the most important place of formation of new academics. His pupils included (only among economic historians): Antoni Mączak, specializing in Polish trade history, history of voyages and social structures of clientelism, Bronisław Geremek surveying the lowest castes of medieval society and Henryk Samsonowicz specializing in economic and urban history of Poland in the Middle Ages and early-modern period. Faculty of Economics was the place of work of Witold Kula, theoretic of feudal system and historical methodology (*Economic Theory of the Feudal System*, published in Polish in 1962, English edition 1976), showing in his research behaviour patterns of economic actors of the feudal system as completely different from profit-maximizing, envisaged by neoclassical theory. Kula also had fundamental contribution to historical metrology, publishing *Measures and Men* (Polish ed. 1970, American ed. 1986). He was the mentor (among others) of 20th-century Poland historian Andrzej Jezierski, Marcin Kula (specialising in Latin American studies), Elżbieta Kaczyńska, Kazimierz Piesowicz (Morawski 2010, pp. 8-9; Kochanowicz 2006, pp. 169-171; Burke 1990, pp. 95-96; Boldizzoni 2011, pp. 87-94).

Economic history was also practiced by some of the researchers from the Warsaw-based Institute of History of Polish Academy of Sciences. Among them one must mention Maria Bogucka (1929-), a renowned urban historian of early modern period, specializing also in cultural history, and Polish pioneer of early modern women history.

Separate position was kept by economic historians based at Main School of Planning and Statistics (Szkoła Główna Planowania i Statystyki), where Krzywicki's pupil Andrzej Grodek (1901-1959), researching preindustrial history of Poland, was a rector. His successors as the heads of the department were agricultural historian Irena Kostrowicka (1922-2008) and leading specialist in Polish inter-war history Zbigniew Landau, co-author (with Jerzy Tomaszewski of Warsaw University) of monumental 4-volume synthesis of Polish economic

history between World Wars. Despite censorship limitations, archive-based research on history of communist Poland was begun by Janusz Kaliński.

The traditions of Rutkowski research were continued in Poznań by historians of Nazi economic policy Czesław Łuczak and Czesław Madajczyk and specialist in feudal system Jerzy Topolski. The Lwów school, however, did not survive the war as the institutionalized team of researchers.

In other academic centres groups of economic historians also formed relatively strong teams. Usually, the cities possessing both university and economic university had two separate teams of researchers, usually being in close contact, such was the case of Cracow, Poznań and Wrocław. Sometimes two groups were affiliated in different parts of the same university structure, as it was in Łódź. Universities in smaller cities had their teams, usually specializing in regional economic history.

The political changes of 1989 were reflected by final abandoning of already unused Marxist methodology and re-examination of some issues critically assessed by official Marxist history. Thanks to the cultivation of academic freedoms in adverse conditions by leading professors, the economic history milieu performed really well through the communist period, although the price was relative isolation from the new methodological propositions in Anglo-Saxon economic history research and distrust of too formalised methodologies. The other causes of such state of affairs could be the earlier predomination of humanities-based style of economic historical writing, attachment to European continental traditions of economic history, as also relatively narrow source base, resulting, among others, from partial destruction of archival deposits during World War II, limiting the possibilities of constructing large data sets. Also focusing on purely domestic affairs could be noticed, which is to be partially attributed to decrease in funding for archive work abroad.

The members of Polish community of economic historians participated actively in the international congresses of the field, as also contributed to the work of international research teams. For today, the most active on the international level are Jacek Kochanowicz of Warsaw University (former disciple of Witold Kula) and Piotr Franaszek of Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

In the last years the circles of economic historians were integrated by conferences co-organized by teams based in Wrocław at Economic University (led by Jędrzej Chumiński) and Faculty of History of Wrocław University (led by Elżbieta Kościk). The final result was the creation of Polish Society for Economic History in May 2011 with Wojciech Morawski of Szkoła Główna Handlowa (Warsaw School of Economics, formerly MSPS) as chairman.

3. Selected general problems of economic history

After the review of trends in economic history research, associated with closer look on particular Polish case, let us move to the main problems appearing in explanations of the past given by economic historians. They are associated with the basic question about the long-term determinants of economic growth and economic development or of social change in general. Are there any decisive factors behind them? Or maybe one, particular factor determines all the changes? And are the factors associated with the organization of human societies (in economics jargon: are they endogenous to societies)? Or maybe they are located outside societies (they are “exogenous” using more proper terminology).

Having in mind the objections about non-generalizing character of traditional historical research let us look at the different explanations, coming from the social-science bend of economic history or simply borrowed from social sciences. There are many theories of social change and economic development and mostly they are associated with endogenous properties of society. The theories pronouncing decisiveness of exogenous factors usually are associated with the role of geographical conditions, or more widely environmental characteristics, as main determinants of societies’ activities, including economy. The view that geography has the main causal power concerning economic and societal development is named geographical determinism. It must be noticed that in its more rigorous form it rejects the influence of endogenous factors, so it denies the human activity (especially in individual forms) any chance for diverting the developmental path. It is thus deeply pessimistic and it implies subordination of an individual to a geographically conditioned community, which is unique and separate among other big communities, because of uniqueness of every particular geographical area. So it is not a big surprise when we find elements of extreme geographical determinism in political ideologies of ethnical exclusivity and hostility to other ethnic groups. The most extreme example is official ideology of Hitler-era Germany, where except for racial component (*Blut* – blood) keeping together the ethnic community of *Volk*, the land (*Boden*) was the other prerequisite for German superiority.

An example of acceptable form of using geographical factors as explanation of historical process is the case of Russian separateness from Europe, as also from Asia, which is perceived by Russian historian Lev Gumilev (1912-1992) as an expression of distinctive Euro-Asian civilization, being a heir to former Giant Steppe civilization initiated by medieval Mongols. The influence of geography and environment is perceived indirectly, as a main determinant of economic activity of nomadic peoples, dependent from their herds. The

determinant exerts its influence in different directions because of changing environmental conditions, which in the longer perspective were never constant, and the author rejects strict geographical determinism (Gumilow 2004a, Gumilow 2004b, pp. 27-35). However, besides solid erudite basis, Gumilev's interpretation of history has its hidden anti-Western and anti-liberal attitude, as also openly anti-Chinese.

However, even when we underline the dangerous flaws of perceiving economy and society as geographically conditioned, there was some undeniable influence of geographical factor on the economic development across the centuries. Hence many interpretations of economic history included, more or less, geography along with significant endogenous variables. Even not all the determinist approaches lead to so deeply illiberal and fatal conclusions. Some of geographers and historians in Anglophone countries of the early twentieth century saw geography as directing the historical development but also perceived the history as change in the relationship between Man and Nature in favour of the former. One of the most influential hypotheses of American economic history, about decisive role of moving settlement frontier and constant availability of free land in the West, formulated by Frederick J. Turner (1861-1932) in 1894, pronounced the role of geography in the creation of American free spirit, distinctively separated from the roots in European civilization (Baker 2003, pp. 16-18; Butlin 1993, pp. 190-191). On the other hand, it is hard to find the Turner's view about American exceptionalism as liberal, it was rather result of search for deeper explanation of dominant societal values, pursuit similar in some aspects to the parallel European developments. However, the set of values explained did not bring so dangerous consequences, as for example search for proofs of Germanic superiority.

On the field of economic history, perhaps the role of geography was most pronounced in the writings of *Annales* historians, where geographical constraint on human activity was main cause of Braudelian *longue durée* phenomenon, which gave basis to the concept of "geohistory" (Dosse 1994, p. 109; Baker 2003, p. 22) and to describe the theoretical framework by external observers as "geohistorical structuralism" (Kinser 1981). But the concept of *longue durée*, perceived sometimes as "geographical time", next to its social and historical dimensions from Braudelian classification, did not include associations with superiority of any ethnic group. It was partially effect of pre-war critical reappraisal by Febvre the German human geography from the late nineteenth century, created by Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) and seeking for relationship between land and people as basis for German nationalism, subordinating society to the state and being very deterministic in its meaning. Febvre's main point of reference was French geographer, Pierre Vidal de la Blache (1845-

1918), surveying reciprocal, not one-way, interactions between culture and natural environment. (Febvre 1950, pp. 18-87; Bentley 1997, pp. 467-468; Dosse 1994, pp. 59, 95-96; Burke 1990, pp. 14-15, 37-38, Baker, pp. 19-24). It was rather pronouncing role of large geographic regions (“world-regions”) as basic economic entities, overlapping the ethnic and political boundaries, as it was in the case of Braudelian Mediterranean, or carefully studying smaller-than-nation historical regions, giving the final assessment that they were of historical origin, constructed as an effect of human activities, geographically very incoherent, not primarily determined. Such verdict was given by Febvre researching 16th-century Franche-Comté, as also by Bloch, concerning Ile-de-France. The other issue was constant character of geographical landscape – studies over historical landscape were showing that in the longer term it was being deeply transformed by the man, so the relation was not one-directional, as it had been previously simplified. Thus geography was perceived as a significant constraint on human activity but the final result depended from that activity, not its constraints. Even in more pessimistic, Braudelian view on Mediterranean as sort of cage or prison for its inhabitants, the need for pluralistic explanations was underlined (Burke 1990, pp. 38-41; Dosse 1994, pp. 54-60; Middell 2003, pp. 111-112; Febvre 1950, pp. 89-90; Geremek, Kula 2004, pp. 6-10).

The close attitude was represented by writings of American historian Edward Fox who tried to establish connection between geography and history in his book *History in Geographic Perspective*, published in 1971. He concentrated mainly (as the *Annalistes* did) on the history of pre-modern France and showed contrast between two different types of exchange of goods: trade (exchange of local products within the usual radius of market town, transport rather by land) and commerce (transactions over large distances, usually involving luxury goods, transport by water). Hence was coming his typology of exchange centres: trading towns (landlocked, hinterland areas) and commercial towns (located along coasts and rivers). His explorations of geographical constraints underlined also opportunities to human actions given by geography and perceived the constraints in two dimensions - spatial and environmental (Baker 2003, p. 23; Wuthnow 1989, pp. 41-43, Fox 1989, pp. 331-336).

The significance of geography and natural environment in determining development of human societies stays part of the tradition of research of very long-term growth, using the timely perspective close to *longue durée*. Good sample of such reasoning gives following quote from Eric Jones: “Good natural defences such as Britain, Spain and to a lesser degree France possess have helped to give them greater stability than Germany, Austria and Poland.” (...) “Burgundy seems a case in point. A congeries of smaller regions, some of them individually

well demarcated, the fluidity of its outer boundaries and the greater riches of the Ile de France put it at a long-run disadvantage. Burgundy became the region; the Ile de France became the centre of the French nation-state.” (Jones 2003, p. 107)

There are two main ways in which “geography” influences economies and their performance and structure in the explanations of the past. In first, the geographical constraint is understood as barrier to trade and travel resulting from the physical distance which people and goods have to pass, as also geographical determination of trade routes. So it could be simply addressed as transport constraint. It should be emphasized that using only physical distance as the measure of constraint’s rigidity would be highly misleading. Thing that matters is relative distance expressed in time of travel and transport cost, depending from the available transport techniques and transport infrastructure. Because at least from the mid-Middle Ages there was rather continuous process of improvements in these spheres of human activity, the phenomena of shrinking space and integration of local and regional markets could be observed, especially when we take into account longer time spans. The real breakthrough was, however, brought by the Industrial Revolution thanks to railways and steamships. Thus the economic history of last millennium could be partially resumed in terms of weakening grip of geographical transport constraint on economic activity. The abortive influence of transport constraint was especially significant for the transfer of goods and persons and its gradual removal led to integration of markets for physical goods and increased social mobility (on both national and international levels). The last two centuries saw also other breakthrough in overcoming spatial limitations - in the sphere of communications. The wave of inventions, beginning from telegraph, gradually integrated the spread of information around the globe. The development of information technology and communication networks in the latest decades by rapid reduction of costs added to that process new dimension of democratized and decentralized access. It resulted in many sweeping changes, beginning from abandonment of barriers to real-time coordination of the economic activity on the global scale on the one hand to the sudden availability of efficient and sophisticated information and communication technologies (ICT) to the members of the most underdeveloped societies on the other. The transformation, we are witnessing, has deep social and international consequences, of much larger scope than purely economic effects on productivity and internationalization of services sector and another boost for increased international division of labour. Probably it is in close relation to the process of economic convergence between developing and developed countries in the last decade (the former recording the biggest technological progress because of their initial backwardness).

The phenomenon of disappearing of geographical constraint had its implications not only in the terms of decreasing costs and integrating markets but also in the changes of geographical distribution of economic activity. The stagnant, agricultural economies with low urbanization and high transport costs (especially when land transport is concerned) were quite well characterized by settlement patterns implied by theoretical model developed by German geographer Johann Heinrich von Thünen (1783-1850), despite its many idealistic assumptions. Because of lack of possibilities of efficient long-distance land transportation of agricultural products (accounting then for vast majority of national income), the completely flat land surface was an independent, isolated area with central position of market town supplied from the countryside. Town was surrounded by rings of production of different ranges of products. The products requiring the most frequent transport to the town market were fruit & vegetables and the relatively quick wasting dairy products. So the closest circle was dedicated to intensive farming and gardening. The outer circles were forests (for wood used in construction and as a fuel in preindustrial economy), grain production (less bulky than wood) and herd breeding for meat (not requiring carriage transport – animals went to town's butchers on their legs), the least intensive form of land use. Outside the rings, the wilderness remained because of unprofitability of any economic activity arising from transport costs. So the rural landscape was determined by the distance from the market town. Additionally, the land rent (which was in the economics terminology an owner's return from a factor of production) and land price determined by rent were declining along with the distance. The highest were in the gardening/dairying ring, the lowest in outer pastures. The spatial differentiation of economic activity in Thünen model took place on the level of basic centrally-oriented unit but not among the units, which in their ideal form should have been similar to each other. The real situation was more complicated, however, and the model best fitted the "trade" subsystem from Edward Fox classification. The world of "commerce" was associated with greater spatial differentiation and hierarchization resulting from the regional specialization, as also different sizes and functions of urban centres.

The process of rising disparities between leading urban centres and those of only local importance, although already visible in the early modern period and even in the Middle Ages, significantly gained pace with the Industrial Revolution and new wave of urbanization induced by industrialization. The spatial differentiation of economic activity through processes of its concentration and agglomeration in metropolitan areas reached previously unrecorded levels. Although already von Thünen in his later works was concerned with agglomeration phenomenon, it was in fact soon forgotten. The whole process was mostly

explained in the extended framework of neoclassical economics, concerned with perfect competition. The idea of industrial localization advantages of big cities in the form of externalities (mostly influencing supply side of a company - access to thick labour market for specialised skills, access to specialised suppliers, but also to large market (so-called market linkages), inter-firm information and knowledge diffusion) was present for the first time in the works of Alfred Marshall (Cieślik 2004, pp. 115-119; Fujita, Krugman 2004, pp. 153-154; Fujita, Krugman, Venables 1999, pp. 4-5, 18). The explanations of agglomeration processes usually were later following some of Marshall insights, although the most important explanation of settlement patterns were the works of German economic geographers Walter Christaller (1893-1969) and August Lösch (1906-1945), combining the idea of central place with the gradual hierarchies and systemization of human settlements.

The new approach to the spatial economics was ensured quite recently (in the early 1990's) by the so-called new economic geography. Among its founders the central figure is American economist and Nobel prize laureate Paul Krugman (1953-). The sub-discipline based its development on sophisticated and formalized models based on the microeconomic theory. They were focused not only on the agglomeration processes on the lowest (i. e. urban) level but also included concentration of activity on the higher (national or regional) levels with the final stage of whole world economy divided into strongly concentrated activity of the core and spatially dispersed peripheral economies. On the micro level agglomeration was resulting from increasing returns to scale on company level, which implied imperfect, usually monopolistic, competition (smaller firms were in worse position to the bigger ones etc.). The rising scale of firms was partially constrained by rising transport costs of supplying new markets located outside the base of company. Increases of transport costs inside agglomeration are also constraint on its development. On the other hand, the rising positive externalities of the agglomeration process (big labour market, with very differentiated offer, attracting another businesses and workers, access to inputs, specialised services available only in very big cities, big local demand) lead to further development of urban area. Successes of firms facilitate inflow of labour, making the cities grow even bigger. The mechanism of agglomeration in the absence of significant centrifugal forces allowing for stabilizing growth in an equilibrium would mean rising advantage of once successful urban area or country with adequately concentrated economic activity at the beginning of a given period. In the historical terms it was explaining the stability of centres of economic growth in the long term and disappointing outcome of most hopes for gradual economic convergence between developed and undeveloped areas, suggested among others by Heckscher-Ohlin theory of international

trade. It also shows that slight change in the initial conditions can completely alternate the development paths of analysed territories, leading to strikingly contrasting outcomes. The areas almost similar at the beginning of the process, can form highly polarized core – periphery system at its end. On the other hand, that implies that there are in fact many possible equilibria as the ends of the process, depending from small changes in the initial conditions. All of it supports the argument for government intervention in the economy – even modest reaction can give hugely divergent results (however, it is hard to formulate specified policy prescriptions on the basis of NEG). Additionally, new economic geography indicates at the natural tendency of spatial systems of human settlement to evolve in the dynamic process towards more and more complex forms. On the lower levels of analysis, theory and its models explain the issues of regional economic specialization and very intensive concentration of firms of the same branch (the creation of so called business clusters, often competitive not only on regional or national level but also internationally). Finally, the impact of falling transport cost is counterintuitive – stagnating or falling settlement in remote areas, associated with quick development of centres (Cieślik 2005, pp. 122-148; Fujita, Krugman 2004, pp. 142-158).

It must be added that the NEG models best fit the economies driven by manufacturing. So Krugman himself admits that the strongest regional specialization and industry in the USA were recorded before 1920 and their decrease could be observed from the end of World War II. The latest transfer of industrial activity to the developing countries and rising role of non-exportable services in the local economies of the developed countries create puzzle for the new economic geography. However, the agglomeration and clustering typical for the USA over a century ago are today's reality of south-eastern China (Krugman 2010, pp. 10-16).

The second dimension of geographical influence on historical economic performance is the constraint of the set of physical properties of given territory, or even whole Earth, which could be defined as environmental capacity. It is usually pronounced by researchers directly or indirectly referring to the theories of Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834), author of *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, published in 1798 and gradually improved in another editions, last time in 1826. Malthus stated that population growth was outpacing in the long term the increase of available food due to shortage of arable land and declining marginal productivity of labour, when employing additional workers (being an effect of population growth) to fixed land area. What else, divergence of two trends was to be rising in the future because of arithmetical nature (constant amount added in every time unit) of food production increases compared to geometric progression (initial level multiplied by constant factor in

every time unit) of demographic developments. It meant declining output per capita in the conditions of population growth sparked by temporary rise of average income. The surge of numbers of people could not be fully contained to keep per capita output (and respectively wages) at that relatively higher level. It was happening because of deeply flawed human nature, steered by sheer instincts, unable to respond to falling incomes with adequately strong 'preventive checks' to the population resulting in the lower fertility ("vice" like contraception but also delayed marriage and moral restraint). The surplus left by the activity of preventive checks inside society, was to be reduced by the external factors like war, famine and epidemics ('positive checks'), stopping uncontrollable population growth by increased death rate after breaching the limit of equilibrium of stable population. That equilibrium was to be achieved only with people incomes lowered to the so-called subsistence level, ensuring survival of existing population but not allowing for feeding any additional people in the long term (Mokyr, Voth 2010, 5%). It must be added that subsistence level did not mean complete poverty but the lowest income adequate to resist usual temporary exogenous shocks, like bad crops, resulting in rising food prices. The views of Malthus were used in his epoch as argument for not increasing workers' wages because any additional income in the longer term would be consumed by population increases until return to subsistence level. Therefore they were criticized by utopian socialists and Marxists, pronouncing need to improve existence of the working class. It appeared that Malthus' pessimism was too strong because of rapid progress brought by Industrial Revolution, allowing for rise of living standards as also feeding of additional population (the latter thanks to rising agricultural productivity and enabling global flows of agricultural products by revolution in transportation techniques). Malthus simply did not predict that technological change could free whole economies from constraints of fixed supply.

Malthus theory and model of environmentally limited economic growth was finally opposed by Robert Solow who argued that the capital and labour could maintain high productivity ratios thanks to technical progress and did not take into account land as production factor (Bartkowiak 2011, pp. 99-104). Therefore when discussing the issues of preindustrial and modern economic growth, the tags Malthusian and Solow growth are often applied respectively. The discontinuity between the two periods characterized by divergent economic growth patterns urged some economists and economic historians to search for kind of unified theory, explaining in terms of theory of economics the transition from Malthusian to Solow (or Solowian) type of growth (Mokyr, Voth 2010, 3-5%).

After relative abandonment, Malthusianism was appreciated as general description of stagnating trends and cyclical nature of preindustrial economy, dominated by low-productivity agriculture. The existence of Malthusian barriers was treated however, as rather conditional and depending from outcome of policies and economic activity. Such was attitude of neo-institutionalists, reflected in following quotation: “Why did the thirteenth-century Europe not break out of the Malthusian trap? The answer lies in the nature of the property rights that developed, or failed to develop, during this century.” (North, Thomas 1973, p. 69). On the other hand, some researchers investigating traditional agriculture found no link between demographic expansion and stagnation. Instead, quite opposite process was to occur. According to Danish agricultural economist Esther Boserup (1910-1999), increased number of people was to speed technological progress thanks to increasing number of new ideas, technical solutions and spreading effects of learning-by-doing. Whole process was in best way summed up with the old proverb “necessity is the mother of invention”. Technological improvement and increased labour effort per unit of land were to allow for feeding population surplus and deeply transforming the agriculture. However, the intensification could not last as unlimited process, given constant population increases and barriers to growth were to be met in the long term in the pre-industrial conditions. The general crisis was thus long delayed, not avoided (Anderson 1995, pp. 30-33).

It should be added, that despite often cyclicity and sometimes sharp declines, the European population was not stagnating in the early modern period, which denies the most rigorous Malthusian thesis of long-term subsistence equilibrium. More detailed research on regional demographic trends and wages also show quite numerous cases of model variables behaving contrary to assumed interdependencies in different sections of the pre-industrial period. Sometimes simply population growth was accompanied by rising wages. In Tudor England, between 1495 and 1575 steep fall of wages was associated with longer-than-before life expectancy, which meant lack of allegedly unavoidable positive checks of high mortality. The other problem is that real wages do not reflect perfectly the trends in output per capita because of changing labour participation rates and number of hours worked by an employee. Sometimes, reserves were found in the leisure time sacrificed by the workers, motivated by the need of feeding their families, as also wider range of market goods available (something completely unaccounted by Malthusian model), which took place in the decades preceding Industrial Revolution. On the other hand, empirical failure of the most rigorous Malthusian predictions does not deny the more flexible Malthusian-type explanations. The existence of Malthusian-type equilibrating mechanisms was observed in many cases, especially when

concerning shorter terms, and rather without full model-based result. Lack of positive checks (or their weak activity) in the Renaissance England means also relative significance of preventive checks, mostly delayed marriage (Mokyr, Voth 2010, 5-6%; Ogilvie 2003, pp. 172-173). Lack of modern type of economic growth in the preindustrial period does not exclude, however, the existence of longer growth periods, at least partially breaking the Malthusian barriers. Opponents of Malthusianism indicate at two sources of temporary overcoming of pre-industrial stagnation. The first was the division of labour – specialization of workers in one, specified part of the complex production process, allowing for significant increase in output without any additional outlays. Because of Adam Smith's role in showing increases of wealth resulting from division of labour, this type of growth is called in economics jargon Smithian growth. The second source were the relatively rare and accidental technological changes, allowing for productivity increases and creating basis for so-called Schumpeterian growth (the adjective comes from the name of Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950), Austrian-American economist pronouncing role of technology and innovations in economic development). Despite unsustainability of both kinds of growth in the long term, they are said to allow for temporary crossing of Malthusian limitations and reaching new equilibrium at higher population level.

Revised Malthusian theories were applied to forecasting trends in global economy when in the early 1970's the danger of exhaustion of some natural resources became visible. The trend represented by series of gloomy predictions (most famous from 1972 report of international think-tank Club of Rome entitled *Limits to Growth*) was named neo-Malthusianism. Besides becoming ideological basis of some radical environmental movements, it renewed interest in the survey of relations between mankind and environment in the past. Part of the research was associated with works of historical anthropologists and archaeologists who were dealing with less complex and often pre-agricultural societies. Second part was coming from economic historians and historical demographers who researched relations between productivity, population level and standard of living throughout last centuries. It was enhanced by development of cliometric workshop, allowing for precise reconstitution of trends. The joint efforts resulted in attempts of describing the history of mankind in Malthusian terms, with perhaps the most radical Malthusian synthesis of economic and population history written by Gregory Clark (Clark 2007). According to neo-Malthusians, period before the Industrial Revolution was associated with no increase in the standard of living, while all the productivity increases resulting from random technical and organizational progress were in the longer term offset by population growth leading to new equilibria with income on the subsistence level.

The geographical, or rather environmental, constraint in the Malthusian sense is thus scarcity of natural resources limiting economic growth and leading to stagnation in the standard of living through the channel of population pressure. In preindustrial times the scarcity constraint was mainly limited supply of arable land, in modern economy we are said to cope in the future with limited supply of series of industrial inputs. The most often pronounced case of potential danger is the exhaustion of fossil fuels.

The separate category of environmental or geographical explanations of economic performance are those associated with long-term climatic change. Change of climatic conditions is echoed by responding swings in agricultural output, followed by economic, social, as also political adjustments. The problem is that analysis of available data usually do not let isolate the climatic influence from other causes of historical trend. The data, except for the last three centuries of meteorological measurement, are to be recovered mostly from the physical reminiscences from the given period, thanks to highly advanced methods of natural sciences, so also the methodological problems add to the uncertainty of the outcome. The explanations are of *longue durée* scale and the most known of them is the explanation of medieval crisis of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by cooling of the climate from the former warming with the peak around 1200. The cooling continued further into early modern period with the “Little Ice Age” from mid-sixteenth to mid-eighteenth century with the bottom in the seventeenth century when another crisis occurred. However, the catchy phrase for cold climate period is also applied to the years 1300-1500, when, for example, the Norse population of Greenland perished due to impossibility of agricultural activity in the new conditions. The European crises were accompanied by respective falls of Yuan (1368) and Ming (1644) dynasties in China, so the whole explanation assumes the highest, global level of climatic determinism. The climatic theories are based on causality from the supply-side of economic system and do not take into account demand factors resulting among others from demographic change, so they are opposed to classical Malthusianism. They usually do not include any regular pattern of moves of variables mediating between climatic and social change, especially population. For example, during the crisis of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the food prices were declining, so the population decrease was not generally caused by malnutrition. The accompanying abandonment of marginal, the most inappropriate for cultivation, lands was a response to falling demand, not result of technical impossibility of growing anything there. (Anderson 1995, pp. 23-25; Diamond 2005, pp. 371-373, 423-424). The extension of climatic theories are contemporary environmentalists’ predictions about the fatal outcome of global warming caused by the greenhouse effect, resulting from rising

presence of carbon dioxide, methane and some other gases in the atmosphere due to the increased consumption of fossil fuels.

Because of interdependence of the views about leading role of environment in economic development with natural sciences, much of the research is interdisciplinary and often concerned with prehistory. An example of work concerning influence of environment on historical development is *Guns, Germs and Steel* published in 1997 by American geographer and physiologist Jared Diamond (1937-). As he put it, the encapsulation of his book in one sentence should be “History followed different courses for different peoples because of differences among peoples’ environments, not because of biological differences among peoples themselves.” (Diamond 2005, p. 25). We can see that the two considered options were environmental perspective and racist one, not any of those concerned with purely social, economic or cultural phenomena. Further he added a creed-like statement: “Naturally, the notion that environmental geography and biogeography influenced societal development is an old idea. Nowadays, though, the view is not held in esteem by historians; it is considered wrong or simplistic, or it is caricatured as environmental determinism and dismissed, or else the whole subject of trying to understand worldwide differences is shelved as too difficult. Yet geography obviously has *some* effect on history; the open question concerns how much effect, and whether geography can account for history’s broad pattern.” (Diamond 2005, pp. 25-26).

Most of the representatives of the new current of environmental history, seeking its tradition in the works of earlier determinist geographers, are either geographers or historians, with almost no academics with the background in economics (Baker 2003, pp. 75-84).

Having discussed the role of exogenous factors in general explanations of the economic past we can move to the role of endogenous properties of society. They are usually divided in more or less general categories and the relationships studied are those among these categories like culture, religion, technology (although some argued, that technology was an independent variable due to its randomness and unpredictability), ideology, legal system, etc. The theoretical explanations tend to be associated with underlining different characteristics of society as the most crucial to economic development (and more widely - social change). Because of complex interdependencies between different characteristics of economy and society, attributing causal power to specified set of societal features is almost always disputable and unconvincing to significant part of the discourse participants. Perhaps the most popular among the theories of economic and social change were those associated with leading role of the technology in the modernization process - transition from traditional, agricultural

society to its modern, industrial stage. The role of the technology was associated with introduction of new modes of production, as also series of social processes induced by new technology (for example, new wave of urbanization sparked by location of modern factories outside traditional urban areas). The decisive role of technology was perceived in different ways and one of the first theories in that group was Marxism, with the central position of production relationships in shaping the social structure. Theories embracing technological determinism appeared also in the Western social science after World War II and were opposing Marxism. They usually assumed some universal pattern of development since the optimality of given technology was almost universal and independent from local conditions. The so called “logic of industrialization” was to influence the economic and social development towards one direction. Thus the most radical and technocratic type of such theories implied gradual convergence among countries to the common economic model, independent from the cultural and institutional factors (the latter implied that systemic differences between capitalist and communist countries were to disappear in the long period). Following the economic leader was in this way the best recipe in economic policy for fast catching-up. The most known example of search for universal pattern of economic and social change in history (besides works of sociologists and political scientists) was perhaps *Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960, 3rd ed. 1990) by Walt Rostow, seeking the crucial transition to industrial society in the take-off period of surging investment rate of the economy. However, Rostow took into account influence of a series of social and non-economic factors and his theory cannot be classified as an example of technological determinism, especially that his model had safety-valve in the assumption about necessity of country leaders’ will to modernize and he admitted some level of uniqueness of national patterns. After the economic failure of American aid to Latin America and the newly decolonized countries (mainly African) in 1960’s, the policy prescriptions based on universal pattern of development stopped to be applied and explanations of the past started to be focused on causes of technological development as preconditions of economic success. They were found, among others, in the legal system, giving incentives to seek for technological inventions and ensuring constant inflow of new technologies to the economy, thus allowing to keep the fast growth pace. Only countries with adequate patent law and safe property rights were to succeed in the long-term, independently of universal technological patterns. The exemplary work on the issue was *How the West Grew Rich* (1986, Polish ed. 1993) by Nathan Rosenberg and L. E. Birdzell. Thus technological determinism was exchanged by institutional conditioning, associated with the new institutional economics. Researchers interested

primarily in the influence of technology on economic development started to make more nuanced assumptions, abandoning the technological determinism. For example, the outcome of given technology application in different places could be different because of the interplay with the existing structures of society. Path-dependence of knowledge increases and its unpredictability also contribute to the multiplication of possible results of particular technological change (Lipsey, Carlaw, Bekar 2005, p. 16). Combined with increased interest in culture from the side of sociologists and historians (“cultural turn” in social sciences and history), new direction of seeking possibly general explanation of economic past turned to widely defined institutions, mostly those customary and informal, which could be described as part of the society’s culture. An example of cultural explanation of the economic development was *Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (1998, Polish ed. 2000) by David Landes, also renowned as technology historian, giving really deep insight in the reactions between social structures and technology (*The Unbound Prometheus*, 1969). The role of culture, underlined strongly by social sciences other than economics, became thus one of the issues strictly associated with the inquiries of economic historians. Analysing culture and its different aspects widened the scope of interest. Paradoxically, it meant in some aspect return to the current initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century by Werner Sombart (attributing genesis of capitalism to the “capitalist spirit”) and Max Weber who indicated at Protestant Reformation and its moral values (especially those of Calvinist version of Protestantism) as the source of the “spirit”. Ascribing decisive role to ideas, Sombart and Weber were opposing technological determinism of Karl Marx in terms of causality. This example shows clearly cyclical recurrence of particular debates.

This brief look at selected explanations seeking general features of society, responsible for its economic success, shows that most of the sets of causes were conditioned by some other factors, which also could be found decisive. Abstracting main line of economic development, having in mind decisiveness of social processes for final outcome (as opposed to geographical determinism), is very complicated task and always stays subject to further debate. General outlines and syntheses representing specific modes of economic historical reasoning are published quite rarely, usually by very experienced academics. Most of the research is associated with explanation of particular processes limited in space and time and not claiming universality.

To remember:

Historiosophy, primary & secondary sources, source criticism, auxiliary disciplines of history, Karl Marx, Leopold von Ranke, idiographic & nomothetic, German historical school of economics, institutional economics, *Annales*, Marc Bloch, *longue durée*, Fernand Braudel, cliometrics (new economic history), Robert Fogel, new institutional economics, Douglass North, geographical determinism, technological determinism, Malthusianism, Malthusian, Schumpeterian, Smithian and Solowian types of economic growth.

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