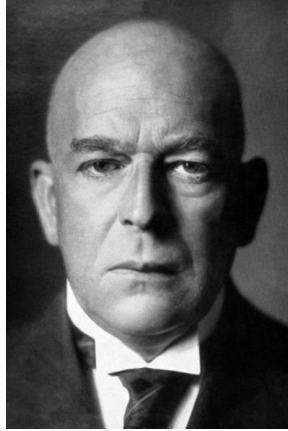


# The Decline of the West

By [Oswald Spengler](#)



Translated from the German by Charles Francis Atkinson

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## Spengler's Preface to the First Edition

The complete manuscript of this book — the outcome of three years' work — was ready when the Great War broke out. By the spring of 1917 it had been worked over again and — in certain details — supplemented and cleared up, but its appearance in print was still delayed by the conditions then prevailing.

Although a philosophy of history is its scope and subject, it possesses also a certain deeper significance as a commentary on the great epochal moment of which the portents were visible when the leading ideas were being formed.

The title, which had been decided upon in 1911, expresses quite literally the intention of the book, which was to describe, in the light of the decline of the Classical age, one world-historical phase of several centuries upon which we ourselves are now entering.

Events have justified much and refuted nothing. It became clear that these ideas must necessarily be brought forward at just this moment and in Germany, and, more, that the war itself was an element in the premisses from which the new world-picture could be made precise.

For I am convinced that it is not merely a question of writing one out of several possible and merely logically justifiable philosophies, but of writing the philosophy of our time, one that is to some extent a natural philosophy and is dimly presaged by all. This may be said without presumption; for an idea that is historically essential — that does not occur within an epoch but itself makes

that epoch — is only in a limited sense the property of him to whose lot it falls to parent it. It belongs to our time as a whole and influences all thinkers, without their knowing it; it is but the accidental, private attitude towards it (without which no philosophy can exist) that — with its faults and its merits — is the destiny and the happiness of the individual.

*Oswald Spengler*

*Munich, December 1917*

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### II

In this book is attempted for the first time the venture of predetermining history, of following the still untravelled stages in the destiny of a Culture, and

specifically of the only Culture of our time and on our planet which is actually in the phase of fulfilment — the West-European- American.

Hitherto the possibility of solving a problem so far-reaching has evidently never been envisaged, and even if it had been so, the means of dealing with it were either altogether unsuspected or, at best, inadequately used.

Is there a logic of history? Is there, beyond all the casual and incalculable elements of the separate events, something that we may call a metaphysical structure of historic humanity, something that is essentially independent of the outward forms — social, spiritual and political — which we see so clearly? Are not these actualities indeed secondary or derived from that something? Does world-history present to the seeing eye certain grand traits, again and again, with sufficient constancy to justify certain conclusions? And if so, what are the limits to which reasoning from such premisses may be pushed?

Is it possible to find in life itself — for human history is the sum of mighty life-courses which already have had to be endowed with ego and personality, in customary thought and expression, by predicating entities of a higher order like “the Classical” or “the Chinese Culture,” “Modern Civilization” — a series of stages which must be traversed, and traversed moreover in an ordered and obligatory sequence? For everything organic the notions of birth, death, youth, age, lifetime are fundamentals — may not these notions, in this sphere also, possess a rigorous meaning which no one has as yet extracted? In short, is all history founded upon general biographic archetypes?

The decline of the West, which at first sight may appear, like the corresponding decline of the Classical Culture, a phenomenon limited in time and space, we now perceive to be a philosophical problem, that, when comprehended in all its gravity, includes within itself every great question of Being.

If therefore we are to discover in what form the destiny of the Western Culture will be accomplished, we must first be clear as to what culture is, what its relations are to visible history, to life, to soul, to nature, to intellect, what the forms of its manifestation are and how far these forms — peoples, tongues and epochs, battles and ideas, states and gods, arts and craft-works, sciences, laws, economic types and world-ideas, great men and great events — may be accepted and pointed to as symbols.

### III

The means whereby to identify dead forms is Mathematical Law. The means whereby to understand living forms is Analogy. By these means we are enabled to distinguish polarity and periodicity in the world.

It is, and has always been, a matter of knowledge that the expression-forms of world-history are limited in number, and that eras, epochs, situations, persons are ever repeating themselves true to type. Napoleon has hardly ever been discussed without a side-glance at Caesar and Alexander — analogies of

which, as we shall see, the first is morphologically quite unacceptable and the second is correct — while Napoleon himself conceived of his situation as akin to Charlemagne's. The French Revolutionary Convention spoke of Carthage when it meant England, and the Jacobins styled themselves Romans. Other such comparisons, of all degrees of soundness and unsoundness, are those of Florence with Athens, Buddha with Christ, primitive Christianity with modern Socialism, the Roman financial magnate of Caesar's time with the Yankee. Petrarch, the first passionate archaeologist (and is not archaeology itself an expression of the sense that history is repetition?) related himself mentally to Cicero, and but lately Cecil Rhodes, the organizer of British South Africa, who had in his library specially prepared translations of the classical lives of the Caesars, felt himself akin to the Emperor Hadrian. The fated Charles XII of Sweden used to carry Quintus Curtius's life of Alexander in his pocket, and to copy that conqueror was his deliberate purpose.

Frederick the Great, in his political writings — such as his *Considerations*, 1738 — moves among analogies with perfect assurance. Thus he compares the French to the Macedonians under Philip and the Germans to the Greeks. "Even now," he says, "the Thermopylae of Germany, Alsace and Lorraine, are in the hands of Philip," therein exactly characterizing the policy of Cardinal Fleury. We find him drawing parallels also between the policies of the Houses of Habsburg and Bourbon and the proscriptions of Antony and of Octavius.

Still, all this was only fragmentary and arbitrary, and usually implied rather a momentary inclination to poetical or ingenious expressions than a really deep sense of historical forms.

Thus in the case of Ranke, a master of artistic analogy, we find that his parallels of Cyaxares and Henry the Fowler, of the inroads of the Cimmerians and those of the Hungarians, possess morphologically no significance, and his oft-quoted analogy between the Hellenic city-states and the Renaissance republics very little, while the deeper truth in his comparison of Alcibiades and Napoleon is accidental. Unlike the strict mathematician, who finds inner relationships between two groups of differential equations where the layman sees nothing but dissimilarities of outward form, Ranke and others draw their historical analogies with a Plutarchian, popular-romantic, touch, and aim merely at presenting comparable scenes on the world-stage.

It is easy to see that, at bottom, it is neither a principle nor a sense of historic necessity, but simple inclination, that governs the choice of the tableaux. From any technique of analogies we are far distant. They throng up (to-day more than ever) without scheme or unities, and if they do hit upon something which is true — in the essential sense of the word that remains to be determined — it is thanks to luck, more rarely to instinct, never to a principle. In this region no one hitherto has set himself to work out a method, nor has had the slightest inkling that there is here a root, in fact the only root, from which can come a broad solution of the problems of History.

Analogies, in so far as they laid bare the organic structure of history, might be a blessing to historical thought. Their technique, developing under the influence of a comprehensive idea, would surely eventuate in inevitable conclusions and logical mastery. But as hitherto understood and practised they have been a curse, for they have enabled the historians to follow their own tastes, instead of soberly realizing that their first and hardest task was concerned with the symbolism of history and its analogies, and, in consequence, the problem has till now not even been comprehended, let alone solved. Superficial in many cases (as for instance in designating Caesar as the creator of the official newspaper), these analogies are worse than superficial in others (as when phenomena of the Classical Age that are not only extremely complex but utterly alien to us are labelled with modern catchwords like Socialism, Impressionism, Capitalism, Clericalism), while occasionally they are bizarre to the point of perversity — witness the Jacobin clubs with their cult of Brutus, that millionaire-extortioner Brutus who, in the name of oligarchical doctrine and with the approval of the patrician senate, murdered the Man of the Democracy.

#### IV

Thus our theme, which originally comprised only the limited problem of present-day civilization, broadens itself into a new philosophy — the philosophy of the future, so far as the metaphysically-exhausted soil of the West can bear such, and in any case the only philosophy which is within the possibilities of the West-European mind in its next stages. It expands into the conception of a morphology of world history, of the world-as-history in contrast to the morphology of the world-as-nature that hitherto has been almost the only theme of philosophy. And it reviews once again the forms and movements of the world in their depths and final significance, but this time according to an entirely different ordering which groups them, not in an ensemble picture inclusive of everything known, but in a picture of life, and presents them not as things-become, but as things-becoming.

The world-as-history, conceived, viewed and given form from out of its opposite the world-as-nature — here is a new aspect of human existence on this earth. As yet, in spite of its immense significance, both practical and theoretical, this aspect has not been realized, still less presented. Some obscure inkling of it there may have been, a distant momentary glimpse there has often been, but no one has deliberately faced it and taken it in with all its implications. We have before us two possible ways in which man may inwardly possess and experience the world around him. With all rigour I distinguish (as to form, not substance) the organic from the mechanical world-impression, the content of images from that of laws, the picture and symbol from the formula and the system, the instantly actual from the constantly possible, the intents and purposes of imagination ordering according to plan from the intents and purposes of experience dissecting according to scheme; and — to mention even thus early an opposition that

has never yet been noted, in spite of its significance — the domain of chronological from that of mathematical number.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, in a research such as that lying before us, there can be no question of taking spiritual-political events, as they become visible day by day on the surface, at their face value, and arranging them on a scheme of “causes” or “effects” and following them up in the obvious and intellectually easy directions. Such a “pragmatic” handling of history would be nothing but a piece of “natural science” in disguise, and for their part, the supporters of the materialistic idea of history make no secret about it — it is their adversaries who largely fail to see the similarity of the two methods. What concerns us is not what the historical facts which appear at this or that time are, per se, but what they signify, what they point to, by appearing. Present-day historians think they are doing a work of supererogation in bringing in religious and social, or still more art-history, details to “illustrate” the political sense of an epoch. But the decisive factor — decisive, that is, in so far as visible history is the expression, sign and embodiment of soul — they forget. I have not hitherto found one who has carefully considered the morphological relationship that inwardly binds together the expression-forms of all branches of a Culture, who has gone beyond politics to grasp the ultimate and fundamental ideas of Greeks, Arabians, Indians and Westerners in mathematics, the meaning of their early ornamentation, the basic forms of their architecture, philosophies, dramas and lyrics, their choice and development of great arts, the detail of their craftsmanship and choice of materials — let alone appreciated the decisive importance of these matters for the form-problems of history. Who amongst them realizes that between the Differential Calculus and the dynastic principle of politics in the age of Louis XIV, between the Classical city-state and the Euclidean geometry, between the space-perspective of Western oil-painting and the conquest of space by railroad, telephone and long-range weapon, between contrapuntal music and credit economics, there are deep uniformities? Yet, viewed from this morphological standpoint, even the humdrum facts of politics assume a symbolic and even a metaphysical character, and — what has perhaps been impossible hitherto — things such as the Egyptian administrative system, the Classical coinage, analytical geometry, the cheque, the Suez Canal, the book-printing of the Chinese, the Prussian Army, and the Roman road-engineering can, as symbols, be made uniformly understandable and appreciable.

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<sup>1</sup> Kant’s error, an error of very wide bearing which has not even yet been overcome, was first of all in bringing the outer and inner Man into relation with the ideas of space and time by pure scheme, though the meanings of these are numerous and, above all, not unalterable; and secondly in allying arithmetic with the one and geometry with the other in an utterly mistaken way. It is not between arithmetic and geometry — we must here anticipate a little — but between chronological and mathematical number that there is fundamental opposition. Arithmetic and geometry are both spatial mathematics and in their higher regions they are no longer separable. Time-reckoning, of which the plain man is capable of a perfectly clear understanding through his senses, answers the question “When,” not “What” or “How Many.”

But at once the fact presents itself that as yet there exists no theory-enlightened art of historical treatment. What passes as such draws its methods almost exclusively from the domain of that science which alone has completely disciplined the methods of cognition, viz., physics, and thus we imagine ourselves to be carrying on historical research when we are really following out objective connexions of cause and effect. It is a remarkable fact that the old-fashioned philosophy never imagined even the possibility of there being any other relation than this between the conscious human understanding and the world outside. Kant, who in his main work established the formal rules of cognition, took nature only as the object of reason's activity, and neither he himself, nor anyone after him, noted the reservation. Knowledge, for Kant, is mathematical knowledge. He deals with innate intuition-forms and categories of the reason, but he never thinks of the wholly different mechanism by which historical impressions are apprehended. And Schopenhauer, who, significantly enough, retains but one of the Kantian categories, viz., causality, speaks contemptuously of history.<sup>2</sup> That there is, besides a necessity of cause and effect which I may call the logic of space — another necessity, an organic necessity in life, that of Destiny — the logic of time — is a fact of the deepest inward certainty, a fact which suffuses the whole of mythological religions and artistic thought and constitutes the essence and kernel of all history (in contradistinction to nature) but is unapproachable through the cognition-forms which the "Critique of Pure Reason" investigates. This fact still awaits its theoretical formulation. As Galileo says in a famous passage of his *Saggiatore*, philosophy, as Nature's great book, is written "in mathematical language." We await, to-day, the philosopher who will tell us in what language history is written and how it is to be read.

Mathematics and the principle of Causality lead to a naturalistic, Chronology and the idea of Destiny to a historical ordering of the phenomenal world. Both orderings, each on its own account, cover the whole world. The difference is only in the eyes by which and through which this world is realized.

## V

Nature is the shape in which the man of higher Cultures synthesizes and interprets the immediate impressions of his senses. History is that from which his imagination seeks comprehension of the living existence of the world in relation to his own life, which he thereby invests with a deeper reality. Whether he is capable of creating these shapes, which of them it is that

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<sup>2</sup> One cannot but be sensible how little depth and power of abstraction has been associated with the treatment of, say, the Renaissance or the Great Migrations, as compared with what is obviously required for the theory of functions and theoretical optics. Judged by the standards of the physicist and the mathematician, the historian becomes careless as soon as he has assembled and ordered his material and passes on to interpretation.

dominates his waking consciousness, is a primordial problem of all human existence.

Man, thus, has before him two possibilities of world-formation. But it must be noted, at the very outset, that these possibilities are not necessarily actualities, and if we are to enquire into the sense of all history we must begin by solving a question which has never yet been put, viz., for whom is there History? The question is seemingly paradoxical, for history is obviously for everyone to this extent, that every man, with his whole existence and consciousness, is a part of history. But it makes a great difference whether anyone lives under the constant impression that his life is an element in a far wider life-course that goes on for hundreds and thousands of years, or conceives of himself as something rounded off and self-contained. For the latter type of consciousness there is certainly no world-history, no world-as-history. But how if the self-consciousness of a whole nation, how if a whole Culture rests on this ahistoric spirit? How must actuality appear to it? The world? Life? Consider the Classical Culture. In the world-consciousness of the Hellenes all experience, not merely the personal but the common past, was immediately transmuted into a timeless, immobile, mythically-fashioned background for the particular momentary present; thus the history of Alexander the Great began even before his death to be merged by Classical sentiment in the Dionysus legend, and to Caesar there seemed at the least nothing preposterous in claiming descent from Venus.

Such a spiritual condition it is practically impossible for us men of the West, with a sense of time-distances so strong that we habitually and unquestioningly speak of so many years before or after Christ, to reproduce in ourselves. But we are not on that account entitled, in dealing with the problems of History, simply to ignore the fact.

What diaries and autobiographies yield in respect of an individual, that historical research in the widest and most inclusive sense — that is, every kind of psychological comparison and analysis of alien peoples, times and customs — yields as to the soul of a Culture as a whole. But the Classical culture possessed no memory, no organ of history in this special sense. The memory of the Classical man — so to call it, though it is somewhat arbitrary to apply to alien souls a notion derived from our own — is something different, since past and future, as arraying perspectives in the working consciousness, are absent and the “pure Present,” which so often roused Goethe’s admiration in every product of the Classical life and in sculpture particularly, fills that life with an intensity that to us is perfectly unknown.

This pure Present, whose greatest symbol is the Doric column, in itself predicates the negation of time (of direction). For Herodotus and Sophocles, as for Themistocles or a Roman consul, the past is subtilized instantly into an impression that is timeless and changeless, polar and not periodic in structure — in the last analysis, of such stuff as myths are made of — whereas for our



world-sense and our inner eye the past is a definitely periodic and purposeful organism of centuries or millennia.

But it is just this background which gives the life, whether it be the Classical or the Western life, its special colouring. What the Greek called Kosmos was the image of a world that is not continuous but complete. Inevitably, then, the Greek man himself was not a series but a term.

For this reason, although Classical man was well acquainted with the strict chronology and almanac-reckoning of the Babylonians and especially the Egyptians, and therefore with that eternity-sense and disregard of the present-as-such which revealed itself in their broadly-conceived operations of astronomy and their exact measurements of big time-intervals, none of this ever became intimately a part of him. What his philosophers occasionally told him on the subject they had heard, not experienced, and what a few brilliant minds in the Asiatic-Greek cities (such as Hipparchus and Aristarchus) discovered was rejected alike by the Stoic and by the Aristotelian, and outside a small professional circle not even noticed. Neither Plato nor Aristotle had an observatory. In the last years of Pericles, the Athenian people passed a decree by which all who propagated astronomical theories were made liable to impeachment. This last was an act of the deepest symbolic significance, expressive of the determination of the Classical soul to banish distance, in every aspect, from its world-consciousness.

As regards Classical history-writing, take Thucydides. The mastery of this man lies in his truly Classical power of making alive and self-explanatory the events of the present, and also in his possession of the magnificently practical outlook of the born statesman who has himself been both general and administrator. In virtue of this quality of experience (which we unfortunately confuse with the historical sense proper), his work confronts the merely learned and professional historian as an inimitable model, and quite rightly so. But what is absolutely hidden from Thucydides is perspective, the power of surveying the history of centuries, that which for us is implicit in the very conception of a historian. The fine pieces of Classical history-writing are invariably those which set forth matters within the political present of the writer, whereas for us it is the direct opposite, our historical masterpieces without exception being those which deal with a distant past. Thucydides would have broken down in handling even the Persian Wars, let alone the general history of Greece, while that of Egypt would have been utterly out of his reach. He, as well as Polybius and Tacitus (who like him were practical politicians), loses his sureness of eye from the moment when, in looking backwards, he encounters motive forces in any form that is unknown in his practical experience. For Polybius even the First Punic War, for Tacitus even the reign of Augustus, are inexplicable. As for Thucydides, his lack of historical feeling — in our sense of the phrase — is conclusively demonstrated on the very first page of his book by the astounding statement

that before his time (about 400 b.c.) no events of importance had occurred in the world!<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, Classical history down to the Persian Wars and for that matter the structure built up on traditions at much later periods, are the product of an essentially mythological thinking. The constitutional history of Sparta is a poem of the Hellenistic period, and Lycurgus, on whom it centres and whose “biography” we are given in full detail, was probably in the beginning an unimportant local god of Mount Taygetus. The invention of pre-Hannibalian Roman history was still going on even in Caesar’s time. The story of the expulsion of the Tarquins by Brutus is built round some contemporary of the Censor Appius Claudius (310 b.c.)<sup>4</sup> The names of the Roman kings were at that period made up from the names of certain plebeian families which had become wealthy (K. J. Neumann). In the sphere of constitutional history, setting aside altogether the “constitution” of Servius Tullius, we find that even the famous land law of Licinius (367 b.c.) was not in existence at the time of the Second Punic War (B. Niese). When Epaminondas gave freedom and statehood to the Messenians and the Arcadians, these peoples promptly provided themselves with an early history. But the astounding thing is not that history of this sort was produced, but that there was practically none of any other sort; and the opposition between the Classical and the modern outlook is sufficiently illustrated by saying that Roman history before 100 b.c., as known in Caesar’s time, was substantially a forgery, and that the little that we know has been established by ourselves and was entirely unknown to the later

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<sup>3</sup> The attempts of the Greeks to frame something like a calendar or a chronology after the Egyptian fashion, besides being very belated indeed, were of extreme naiveté. The Olympiad reckoning is not an era in the sense of, say, the Christian chronology, and is, moreover, a late and purely literary expedient, without popular currency. The people, in fact, had no general need of a numeration wherewith to date the experiences of their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, though a few learned persons might be interested in the calendar question. We are not here concerned with the soundness or unsoundness of a calendar, but with its currency, with the question of whether men regulated their lives by it or not; but, incidentally, even the list of Olympian victors before 500 is quite as much of an invention as the lists of earlier Athenian archons or Roman consuls. Of the colonizations, we possess not one single authentic date (E. Meyer. *Gesch. d. Alt.* II, 441. Beloch. *Griech. Gesch.* I, x, 119) “in Greece before the fifth century, no one ever thought of noting or reporting historical events.” (Beloch. I, 1, 1x5). We possess an inscription which sets forth a treaty between Elis and Heraea which “was to be valid for a hundred years from this year.” What “this year” was, is however not indicated. After a few years no one would have known how long the treaty had still to run. Evidently this was a point that no one had taken into account at the time — indeed, the very “men of the moment” who drew up the document, probably themselves soon forgot. Such was the childlike, fairy-story character of the Classical presentation of history that any ordered dating of the events of, say, the Trojan War (which occupies in their series the same position as the Crusades in ours) would have been felt as a sheer solecism.

Equally backward was the geographical science of the Classical world as compared with that of the Egyptians and the Babylonians. E. Meyer (*Gesch. d. Alt.* II, ix) shows how the Greeks’ knowledge of the form of Africa degenerated from Herodotus (who followed Persian authorities) to Aristotle. The same is true of the Romans as the heirs of the Carthaginians; they first repeated the information of their alien forerunners and then slowly forgot it.

<sup>4</sup> Mommsen clearly defined the West-European attitude towards this history when he said that “the Roman historians,” meaning especially Tacitus, “were men who said what it would have been meritorious to omit, and omitted what it was essential to say.”

Romans. In what sense the Classical world understood the word “history” we can see from the fact that the Alexandrine romance-literature exercised the strongest influence upon serious political and religious history, even as regards its matter. It never entered the Classical head to draw any distinction of principle between history as a story and history as documents. When, towards the end of the Roman republic, Varro set out to stabilize the religion that was fast vanishing from the people’s consciousness, he classified the deities whose cult was exactly and minutely observed by the State, into “certain” and “uncertain” gods, i.e., into gods of whom something was still known and gods that, in spite of the unbroken continuity of official worship, had survived in name only. In actual fact, the religion of Roman society in Varro’s time, the poet’s religion which Goethe and even Nietzsche reproduced in all innocence, was mainly a product of Hellenistic literature and had almost no relation to the ancient practices, which no one any longer understood.

In the Indian Culture we have the perfectly ahistoric soul. Its decisive expression is the Brahman Nirvana. There is no pure Indian astronomy, no calendar, and therefore no history so far as history is the track of a conscious spiritual evolution. Of the visible course of their Culture, which as regards its organic phase came to an end with the rise of Buddhism, we know even less than we do of Classical history, rich though it must have been in great events between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. And this is not surprising, since it was in dream-shapes and mythological figures that both came to be fixed. It is a full millennium after Buddha, about 500 a.d., when Ceylon first produces something remotely resembling historical work, the “Mahavansa.”

The world-consciousness of Indian man was so ahistorically built that it could not even treat the appearance of a book written by a single author as an event determinate in time. Instead of an organic series of writings by specific persons, there came into being gradually a vague mass of texts into which everyone inserted what he pleased, and notions such as those of intellectual individualism, intellectual evolution, intellectual epochs, played no part in the matter. It is in this anonymous form that we possess the Indian philosophy — which is at the same time all the Indian history that we have — and it is instructive to compare with it the philosophy-history of the West, which is a perfectly definite structure made up of individual books and personalities.

Indian man forgot everything, but Egyptian man forgot nothing. Hence, while the art of portraiture — which is biography in the kernel — was unknown in India, in Egypt it was practically the artist’s only theme.

The Egyptian soul, conspicuously historical in its texture and impelled with primitive passion towards the infinite, perceived past and future as its whole world, and the present (which is identical with waking consciousness) appeared to him simply as the narrow common frontier of two immeasurable stretches. The Egyptian Culture is an embodiment of care — which is the spiritual counterpoise of distance — care for the future expressed in the

choice of granite or basalt as the craftsman's materials,<sup>5</sup> in the chiselled archives, in the elaborate administrative system, in the net of irrigation works, and, necessarily bound up therewith, care for the past. The Egyptian mummy is a symbol of the first importance. The body of the dead man was made everlasting, just as his personality, his "Ka," was immortalized through the portrait-statuettes, which were often made in many copies and to which it was conceived to be attached by a transcendental likeness.

There is a deep relation between the attitude that is taken towards the historic past and the conception that is formed of death, and this relation is expressed in the disposal of the dead. The Egyptian denied mortality, the Classical man affirmed it in the whole symbolism of his Culture. The Egyptians embalmed even their history in chronological dates and figures. From pre-Solonian Greece nothing has been handed down, not a year-date, not a true name, not a tangible event — with the consequence that the later history, (which alone we know) assumes undue importance — but for Egypt we possess, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium and even earlier, the names and even the exact reign-dates of many of the kings, and the New Empire must have had a complete knowledge of them. To-day, pathetic symbols of the will to endure, the bodies of the great Pharaohs lie in our museums, their faces still recognizable. On the shining, polished-granite peak of the pyramid of Amenemhet III we can read to-day the words "Amenemhet looks upon the beauty of the Sun" and, on the other side, "Higher is the soul of Amenemhet than the height of Orion, and it is united with the underworld." Here indeed is victory over Mortality and the mere present; it is to the last degree un-Classical.

In opposition to this mighty group of Egyptian life-symbols, we meet at the threshold of the Classical Culture the custom, typifying the ease with which it could forget every piece of its inward and outward past, of burning the dead. To the Mycenaean age the elevation into a ritual of this particular funerary method amongst all those practised in turn by stone-age peoples, was essentially alien; indeed its Royal tombs suggest that earth-burial was regarded as peculiarly honourable. But in Homeric Greece, as in Vedic India, we find a change, so sudden that its origins must necessarily be psychological, from burial to that burning which (the Iliad gives us the full pathos of the symbolic act) was the ceremonial completion of death and the denial of all historical duration.

From this moment the plasticity of the individual spiritual evolution was at an end. Classical drama admitted truly historical motives just as little as it allowed themes of inward evolution, and it is well known how decisively the Hellenic instinct set itself against portraiture in the arts. Right into the imperial period

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Contrast with this the fact, symbolically of the highest importance and unparalleled in art-history, that the Hellenes, though they had before their eyes the works of the Mycenaean Age and their land was only too rich in stone, deliberately reverted to wood; hence the absence of architectural remains of the period 1200-600. The Egyptian plant-column was from the outset of stone, whereas the Doric column was wooden, a clear indication of the intense antipathy of the Classical soul towards duration.

Classical art handled only the matter that was, so to say, natural to it, the myth.<sup>6</sup> Even the “ideal” portraits of Hellenistic sculpture are mythical, of the same kind as the typical biographies of Plutarch’s sort. No great Greek ever wrote down any recollections that would serve to fix a phase of experience for his inner eye. Not even Socrates has told, regarding his inward life, anything important in our sense of the word. It is questionable indeed whether for a Classical mind it was even possible to react to the motive forces that are presupposed in the production of a Parzeval, a Hamlet, or a Werther. In Plato we fail to observe any conscious evolution of doctrine; his separate works are merely treatises written from very different standpoints which he took up from time to time, and it gave him no concern whether and how they hung together. On the contrary, a work of deep self-examination, the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, is found at the very outset of the spiritual history of the West. How little therefore of the Classical pure-present there really was in Goethe, the man who forgot nothing, the man whose works, as he avowed himself, are only fragments of a single great confession!

After the destruction of Athens by the Persians, all the older art-works were thrown on the dust-heap (whence we are now extracting them), and we do not hear that anyone in Hellas ever troubled himself about the ruins of Mycenae or Phaistos for the purpose of ascertaining historical facts. Men read Homer but never thought of excavating the hill of Troy as Schliemann did; for what they wanted was myth, not history. The works of Aeschylus and those of the pre-Socratic philosophers were already partially lost in the Hellenistic period. In the West, on the contrary, the piety inherent in and peculiar to the Culture manifested itself, five centuries before Schliemann, in Petrarch — the fine collector of antiquities, coins and manuscripts, the very type of historically-sensitive man, viewing the distant past and scanning the distant prospect (was he not the first to attempt an Alpine peak?), living in his time, yet essentially not of it. The soul of the collector is intelligible only by having regard to his conception of Time. Even more passionate perhaps, though of a different colouring, is the collecting-bent of the Chinese. In China, whoever travels assiduously pursues “old traces” (Ku-tsi) and the untranslatable “Tao,” the basic principle of Chinese existence, derives all its meaning from a deep historical feeling. In the Hellenistic period, objects were indeed collected and displayed everywhere, but they were curiosities of mythological appeal (as described by Pausanias) as to which questions of date or purpose simply did not arise — and this too in the very presence of Egypt,

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<sup>6</sup> From Homer to the tragedies of Seneca, a full thousand years, the same handful of myth-figures (Thyestes, Clytaemnestra, Heracles and the like) appear time after time without alteration, whereas in the poetry of the West, Faustian Man figures, first as Parzeval or Tristan, then (modified always into harmony with the epoch) as Hamlet, Don Quixote, Don Juan, and eventually Faust or Werther, and now as the hero of the modern world-city romance, but is always presented in the atmosphere and under the conditions of a particular century.

which even by the time of the great Thuthmosis had been transformed into one vast museum of strict tradition.

Amongst the Western peoples, it was the Germans who discovered the mechanical clock, the dread symbol of the flow of time, and the chimes of countless clock towers that echo day and night over West Europe are perhaps the most wonderful expression of which a historical world-feeling is capable.<sup>7</sup> In the timeless countrysides and cities of the Classical world, we find nothing of the sort. Till the epoch of Pericles, the time of day was estimated merely by the length of shadow, and it was only from that of Aristotle that the word *chpa* received the (Babylonian) significance of "hour"; prior to that there was no exact subdivision of the day. In Babylon and Egypt water-clocks and sundials were discovered in the very early stages, yet in Athens it was left to Plato to introduce a practically useful form of *clepsydra*, and this was merely a minor adjunct of everyday utility which could not have influenced the Classical life-feeling in the smallest degree.

It remains still to mention the corresponding difference, which is very deep and has never yet been properly appreciated, between Classical and modern mathematics. The former conceived of things as they are, as magnitudes, timeless and purely present, and so it proceeded to Euclidean geometry and mathematical statics, rounding off its intellectual system with the theory of conic sections. We conceive things as they become and behave, as function, and this brought us to dynamics, analytical geometry and thence to the Differential Calculus.<sup>8</sup> The modern theory of functions is the imposing marshalling of this whole mass of thought. It is a bizarre, but nevertheless psychologically exact, fact that the physics of the Greeks — being statics and not dynamics — neither knew the use nor felt the absence of the time-element, whereas we on the other hand work in thousandths of a second. The one and only evolution-idea that is timeless, ahistoric, is Aristotle's *entelechy*.

This, then, is our task. We men of the Western Culture are, with our historical sense, an exception and not a rule. World-history is our world picture and not all mankind's. Indian and Classical man formed no image of a world in progress, and perhaps when in due course the civilization of the West is extinguished, there will never again be a Culture and a human type in which "world-history" is so potent a form of the waking consciousness.

## VI

What, then, is world-history? Certainly, an ordered presentation of the past, an inner postulate, the expression of a capacity for feeling form. But a feeling for

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<sup>7</sup> It was about 1000 a.d. and therefore contemporaneously with the beginning of the Romanesque style and the Crusades — the first symptoms of a new Soul — that Abbot Gerbert (Pope Sylvester II), the friend of the Emperor Otto III, invented the mechanism of the chiming wheel-clock. In Germany too, the first tower-clocks made their appearance, about 1200, and the pocket watch somewhat later. Observe the significant association of time measurement with the edifices of religion.

<sup>8</sup> Newton's choice of the name "fluxions" for his calculus was meant to imply a standpoint towards certain metaphysical notions as to the nature of time. In Greek mathematics time figures not at all.

form, however definite, is not the same as form itself. No doubt we feel world-history, experience it, and believe that it is to be read just as a map is read. But, even to-day, it is only forms of it that we know and not the form of it, which is the mirror-image of our own inner life.

Everyone of course, if asked, would say that he saw the inward form of History quite clearly and definitely. The illusion subsists because no one has seriously reflected on it, still less conceived doubts as to his own knowledge, for no one has the slightest notion how wide a field for doubt there is. In fact, the lay-out of world-history is an unproved and subjective notion that has been handed down from generation to generation (not only of laymen but of professional historians) and stands badly in need of a little of that scepticism which from Galileo onward has regulated and deepened our inborn ideas of nature.

Thanks to the subdivision of history into “Ancient,” “Mediaeval” and “Modern” — an incredibly jejune and meaningless scheme, which has, however, entirely dominated our historical thinking — we have failed to perceive the true position in the general history of higher mankind, of the little part-world which has developed on West-European soil from the time of the German-Roman Empire, to judge of its relative importance and above all to estimate its direction.<sup>9</sup> The Cultures that are to come will find it difficult to believe that the validity of such a scheme with its simple rectilinear progression and its meaningless proportions, becoming more and more preposterous with each century, incapable of bringing into itself the new fields of history as they successively come into the light of our knowledge, was, in spite of all, never whole-heartedly attacked. The criticisms that it has long been the fashion of historical researchers to level at the scheme mean nothing; they have only obliterated the one existing plan without substituting for it any other. To toy with phrases such as “the Greek Middle Ages” or “Germanic antiquity” does not in the least help us to form a clear and inwardly-convincing picture in which China and Mexico, the empire of Axum and that

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<sup>9</sup> Here the historian is gravely influenced by preconceptions derived from geography, which assumes a Continent of Europe, and feels himself compelled to draw an ideal frontier corresponding to the physical frontier between “Europe” and “Asia.” The word “Europe” ought to be struck out of history. There is historically no “European” type, and it is sheer delusion to speak of the Hellenes as “European Antiquity” (were Homer and Heraclitus and Pythagoras, then, Asiatics?) and to enlarge upon their “mission” as such. These phrases express no realities but merely a sketchy interpretation of the map. It is thanks to this word “Europe” alone, and the complex of ideas resulting from it, that our historical consciousness has come to link Russia with the West in an utterly baseless unity — a mere abstraction derived from the reading of books — that has led to immense real consequences.

In the shape of Peter the Great, this word has falsified the historical tendencies of a primitive human mass for two centuries, whereas the Russian instinct has very truly and fundamentally divided “Europe” from “Mother Russia” with the hostility that we can see embodied in Tolstoj, Aksakov or Dostoyevski. “East” and “West” are notions that contain real history, whereas “Europe” is an empty sound. Everything great that the Classical world created, it created in pure denial of the existence of any continental barrier between Rome and Cyprus, Byzantium and Alexandria. Everything that we imply by the term European Culture came into existence between the Vistula and the Adriatic and the Guadalquivir and, even if we were to agree that Greece, the Greece of Pericles, lay in Europe, the Greece of to-day certainly does not.

of the Sassanids have their proper places. And the expedient of shifting the initial point of “modern history” from the Crusades to the Renaissance, or from the Renaissance to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, only goes to show that the scheme per se is regarded as unshakably sound.

It is not only that the scheme circumscribes the area of history. What is worse, it rigs the stage. The ground of West Europe is treated as a steady pole, a unique patch chosen on the surface of the sphere for no better reason, it seems, than because we live on it — and great histories of millennial duration and mighty Jar-away Cultures are made to revolve around this pole in all modesty. It is a quaintly conceived system of sun and planets! We select a single bit of ground as the natural centre of the historical system, and make it the central sun. From it all the events of history receive their real light, from it their importance is judged in perspective. But it is in our own West-European conceit alone that this phantom “world-history,” which a breath of scepticism would dissipate, is acted out.

We have to thank that conceit for the immense optical illusion (become natural from long habit) whereby distant histories of thousands of years, such as those of China and Egypt, are made to shrink to the dimensions of mere episodes while in the neighbourhood of our own position the decades since Luther, and particularly since Napoleon, loom large as Brocken-spectres. We know quite well that the slowness with which a high cloud or a railway train in the distance seems to move is only apparent, yet we believe that the tempo of all early Indian, Babylonian or Egyptian history was really slower than that of our own recent past. And we think of them as less substantial, more damped-down, more diluted, because we have not learned to make the allowance for (inward and outward) distances.

It is self-evident that for the Cultures of the West the existence of Athens, Florence or Paris is more important than that of Lo-Yang or Pataliputra. But is it permissible to found a scheme of world-history on estimates of such a sort? If so, then the Chinese historian is quite entitled to frame a world-history in which the Crusades, the Renaissance, Caesar and Frederick the Great are passed over in silence as insignificant. How, from the morphological point of view, should our 18<sup>th</sup> Century be more important than any other of the sixty centuries that preceded it? Is it not ridiculous to oppose a “modern” history of a few centuries, and that history to all intents localized in West Europe, to an “ancient” history which covers as many millennia — incidentally dumping into that “ancient history” the whole mass of the pre-Hellenic cultures, unprobed and unordered, as mere appendix-matter? This is no exaggeration. Do we not, for the sake of keeping the hoary scheme, dispose of Egypt and Babylon — each as an individual and self-contained history quite equal in the balance to our so-called “world-history” from Charlemagne to the World-War and well beyond it — as a prelude to classical history? Do we not relegate the vast complexes of Indian and Chinese culture to foot-notes, with a gesture of embarrassment?



As for the great American cultures, do we not, on the ground that they do not "fit in" (with what?), entirely ignore them?

The most appropriate designation for this current West-European scheme of history, in which the great Cultures are made to follow orbits round us as the presumed centre of all world-happenings, is the Ptolemaic system of history. The system that is put forward in this work in place of it I regard as the Copernican discovery in the historical sphere, in that it admits no sort of privileged position to the Classical or the Western Culture as against the Cultures of India, Babylon, China, Egypt, the Arabs, Mexico — separate worlds of dynamic being which in point of mass count for just as much in the general picture of history as the Classical, while frequently surpassing it in point of spiritual greatness and soaring power.

## VII

The scheme "ancient-mediaeval-modern" in its first form was a creation of the Magian world-sense. It first appeared in the Persian and Jewish religions after Cyrus,<sup>10</sup> received an apocalyptic sense in the teaching of the Book of Daniel on the four world-eras, and was developed into a world-history in the post-Christian religions of the East, notably the Gnostic systems.<sup>11</sup>

This important conception, within the very narrow limits which fixed its intellectual basis, was unimpeachable. Neither Indian nor even Egyptian history was included in the scope of the proposition. For the Magian thinker the expression "world-history" meant a unique and supremely dramatic act, having as its theatre the lands between Hellas and Persia, in which the strictly dualistic world-sense of the East expressed itself not by means of polar conceptions like the "soul and spirit," "good and evil" of contemporary metaphysics, but by the figure of a catastrophe, an epochal change of phase between world-creation and world-decay.<sup>12</sup>

No elements beyond those which we find stabilized in the Classical literature, on the one hand, and the Bible (or other sacred book of the particular system), on the other, came into the picture, which presents (as "The Old" and "The New," respectively) the easily-grasped contrasts of Gentile and Jewish, Christian and Heathen, Classical and Oriental, idol and dogma, nature and spirit with a time connotation — that is, as a drama in which the one prevails over the other. The historical change of period wears the characteristic dress of the religious "Redemption." This "world-history" in short was a conception narrow and provincial, but within its limits logical and complete. Necessarily, therefore, it was specific to this region and this humanity, and incapable of any natural extension.

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<sup>10</sup> See Vol. II, pp. 31, 75-.

<sup>11</sup> Windelband, *Gesch. d. Phil.* (1903), pp. 175 ff.

<sup>12</sup> In the New Testament the polar idea tends to appear in the dialectics of the Apostle Paul, while the periodic is represented by the Apocalypse.

But to these two there has been added a third epoch, the epoch that we call “modern” on Western soil, and it is this that for the first time gives the picture of history the look of a progression. The oriental picture was at rest. It presented a self-contained antithesis, with equilibrium as its outcome and a unique divine act as its turning-point. But, adopted and assumed by a wholly new type of mankind, it was quickly transformed (without anyone’s noticing the oddity of the change) into a conception of a linear progress: from Homer or Adam — the modern can substitute for these names the Indo-German, Old Stone Man, or the Pithecanthropus — through Jerusalem, Rome, Florence and Paris according to the taste of the individual historian, thinker or artist, who has unlimited freedom in the interpretation of the three-part scheme.

This third term, “modern times,” which in form asserts that it is the last and conclusive term of the series, has in fact, ever since the Crusades, been stretched and stretched again to the elastic limit at which it will bear no more.<sup>13</sup> It was at least implied if not stated in so many words, that here, beyond the ancient and the mediaeval, something definitive was beginning, a Third Kingdom in which, somewhere, there was to be fulfilment and culmination, and which had an objective point.

As to what this objective point is, each thinker, from Schoolman to present-day Socialist, backs his own peculiar discovery. Such a view into the course of things may be both easy and flattering to the patentee, but in fact he has simply taken the spirit of the West, as reflected in his own brain, for the meaning of the world. So it is that great thinkers, making a metaphysical virtue of intellectual necessity, have not only accepted without serious investigation the scheme of history agreed “by common consent” but have made of it the basis of their philosophies and dragged in God as author of this Or that “world-plan.” Evidently the mystic number three applied to the world-ages has something highly seductive for the metaphysician’s taste. History was described by Herder as the education of the human race, by Kant as an evolution of the idea of freedom, by Hegel as a self-expansion of the world-spirit, by others in other terms, but as regards its ground-plan everyone was quite satisfied when he had thought out some abstract meaning for the conventional threefold order.<sup>14</sup>

On the very threshold of the Western Culture we meet the great Joachim of Floris (c. 1145-1202), the first thinker of the Hegelian stamp who shattered the dualistic world-form of Augustine, and with his essentially Gothic intellect stated the new Christianity of his time in the form of a third term to the religions of the Old and the New Testaments, expressing them respectively as the Age of the Father, the Age of the Son and the Age of the Holy Ghost. His

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<sup>13</sup> As we can see from the expression, at once desperate and ridiculous, “newest time” (*neueste Zeit*).

<sup>14</sup> K. Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus*, 1918, pp. 48 et seq. (English readers may be referred to the article Joachim of Floris by Professor Alphandery in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, XI ed., TrO.

teaching moved the best of the Franciscans and the Dominicans, Dante, Thomas Aquinas, in their inmost souls and awakened a world-outlook which slowly but surely took entire possession of the historical sense of our Culture. Lessing — who often designated his own period, with reference to the Classical as the "after-world"<sup>15</sup> (Nachwelt) — took his idea of the "education of the human race" with its three stages of child, youth and man, from the teaching of the Fourteenth Century mystics. Ibsen treats it with thoroughness in his *Emperor and Galilean* (1873), in which he directly presents the Gnostic world-conception through the figure of the wizard Maximus, and advances not a step beyond it in his famous Stockholm address of 1887. It would appear, then, that the Western consciousness feels itself urged to predicate a sort of finality inherent in its own appearance.

But the creation of the Abbot of Floris was a mystical glance into the secrets of the divine world-order. It was bound to lose all meaning as soon as it was used in the way of reasoning and made a hypothesis of scientific thinking, as it has been — ever more and more frequently — since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

It is a quite indefensible method of presenting world-history to begin by giving rein to one's own religious, political or social convictions and endowing the sacrosanct three-phase system with tendencies that will bring it exactly to one's own standpoint. This is, in effect, making of some formula — say, the "Age of Reason," Humanity, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, enlightenment, economic progress, national freedom, the conquest of nature, or world-peace — a criterion whereby to judge whole millennia of history. And so we judge that they were ignorant of the "true path," or that they failed to follow it, when the fact is simply that their will and purposes were not the same as ours. Goethe's saying, "What is important in life is life and not a result of life," is the answer to any and every senseless attempt to solve the riddle of historical form by means of a programme.

It is the same picture that we find when we turn to the historians of each special art or science (and those of national economics and philosophy as well). We find:

\* "Painting" from the Egyptians (or the cave-men) to the Impressionists, or "Music" from Homer to Bayreuth and beyond, or

\* "Social Organization" from Lake Dwellings to Socialism, as the case may be, presented as a linear graph which steadily rises in conformity with the values of the (selected) arguments. No one has seriously considered the possibility that arts may have an allotted span of life and may be attached as forms of self-expression to particular regions and particular types of mankind, and that therefore the total history of an art may be merely an additive compilation of separate developments, of special arts, with no bond of union save the name and some details of craft-technique.

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<sup>15</sup> The expression "antique" — meant of course in the dualistic sense — is found as early as the *Isagoge* of Porphyry (c. 300 a.d.).

We know it to be true of every organism that the rhythm, form and duration of its life, and all the expression-details of that life as well, are determined by the properties of its species. No one, looking at the oak, with its millennial life, dare say that it is at this moment, now, about to start on its true and proper course. No one as he sees a caterpillar grow day by day expects that it will go on doing so for two or three years. In these cases we feel, with an unqualified certainty, a limit, and this sense of the limit is identical with our sense of the inward form. In the case of higher human history, on the contrary, we take our ideas as to the course of the future from an unbridled optimism that sets at naught all historical, i.e., organic, experience, and everyone therefore sets himself to discover in the accidental present terms that he can expand into some striking progression-series, the existence of which rests not on scientific proof but on predilection. He works upon unlimited possibilities — never a natural end — and from the momentary top-course of his bricks plans artlessly the continuation of his structure.

“Mankind,” however, has no aim, no idea, no plan, any more than the family of butterflies or orchids. “Mankind” is a zoological expression, or an empty word.<sup>16</sup> But conjure away the phantom, break the magic circle, and at once there emerges an astonishing wealth of actual forms — the Living with all its immense fullness, depth and movement — hitherto veiled by a catchword, a dryasdust scheme, and a set of personal “ideals.” I see, in place of that empty figment of one linear history which can only be kept up by shutting one’s eyes to the overwhelming multitude of the facts, the drama of a number of mighty Cultures, each springing with primitive strength from the soil of a mother-region to which it remains firmly bound throughout its whole life-cycle; each stamping its material, its mankind, in its own image; each having its own idea, its own passions, its own life, will and feeling, its own death. Here indeed are colours, lights, movements, that no intellectual eye has yet discovered. Here the Cultures, peoples, languages, truths, gods, landscapes bloom and age as the oaks and the stone-pines, the blossoms, twigs and leaves — but there is no ageing “Mankind.” Each Culture has its own new possibilities of self-expression which arise, ripen, decay, and never return. There is not one sculpture, one painting, one mathematics, one physics, but many, each in its deepest essence different from the others, each limited in duration and self-contained, just as each species of plant has its peculiar blossom or fruit, its special type of growth and decline. These cultures, sublimated life-essences, grow with the same superb aimlessness as the flowers of the field. They belong, like the plants and the animals, to the living Nature of Goethe, and not to the dead Nature of Newton. I see world-history as a picture of endless formations and transformations, of the marvellous waxing and waning of

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<sup>16</sup> “Mankind? It is an abstraction. There are, always have been, and always will be, men and only men.” (Goethe to Luden.)

organic forms. The professional historian, on the contrary, sees it as a sort of tapeworm industriously adding on to itself one epoch after another.

But the series “ancient-mediaeval-modern history” has at last exhausted its usefulness. Angular, narrow, shallow though it was as a scientific foundation, still we possessed no other form that was not wholly unphilosophical in which our data could be arranged, and world-history (as hitherto understood) has to thank it for filtering our classifiable solid residues. But the number of centuries that the scheme can by any stretch be made to cover has long since been exceeded, and with the rapid increase in the volume of our historical material — especially of material that cannot possibly be brought under the scheme — the picture is beginning to dissolve into a chaotic blur. Every historical student who is not quite blind knows and feels this, and it is as a drowning man that he clutches at the only scheme which he knows of. The word “Middle Age,”<sup>17</sup> invented in 1667 by Professor Horn of Leyden, has today to cover a formless and constantly extending mass which can only be defined, negatively, as everything not classifiable under any pretext in one of the other two (tolerably well-ordered) groups. We have an excellent example of this in our feeble treatment and hesitant judgment of modern Persian, Arabian and Russian history. But, above all, it has become impossible to conceal the fact that this so-called history of the world is a limited history, first of the Eastern Mediterranean region and then, — with an abrupt change of scene at the Migrations (an event important only to us and therefore greatly exaggerated by us, an event of purely Western and not even Arabian significance), — of West-Central Europe. When Hegel declared so naively that he meant to ignore those peoples which did not fit into his scheme of history, he was only making an honest avowal of methodic premisses that every historian finds necessary for his purpose and every historical work shows in its lay-out. In fact it has now become an affair of scientific tact to determine which of the historical developments shall be seriously taken into account and which not. Ranke is a good example.

## VIII

To-day we think in continents, and it is only our philosophers and historians who have not realized that we do so. Of what significance to us, then, are conceptions and purviews that they put before us as universally valid, when in truth their furthest horizon does not extend beyond the intellectual atmosphere of Western Man?

Examine, from this point of view, our best books. When Plato speaks of humanity, he means the Hellenes in contrast to the barbarians, which is entirely consonant with the ahistoric mode of the Classical life and thought,

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<sup>17</sup> “Middle Ages” connotes the history of the space-time region in which Latin was the language of the Church and the learned. The mighty course of Eastern Christianity, which, long before Boniface, spread over Turkestan into China and through Sabaea into Abyssinia, was entirely excluded from this “world-history.”

and his premisses take him to conclusions that for Greeks were complete and significant. When, however, Kant philosophizes, say on ethical ideas, he maintains the validity of his theses for men of all times and places. He does not say this in so many words, for, for himself and his readers, it is something that goes without saying. In his aesthetics he formulates the principles, not of Phidias's art, or Rembrandt's art, but of Art generally. But what he poses as necessary forms of thought are in reality only necessary forms of Western thought, though a glance at Aristotle and his essentially different conclusions should have sufficed to show that Aristotle's intellect, not less penetrating than his own, was of different structure from it. The categories of the Westerner are just as alien to Russian thought as those of the Chinaman or the ancient Greek are to him. For us, the effective and complete comprehension of Classical root-words is just as impossible as that of Russian<sup>18</sup> and Indian, and for the modern Chinese or Arab, with their utterly different intellectual constitutions, "philosophy from Bacon to Kant" has only a curiosity-value.

It is this that is lacking to the Western thinker, the very thinker in whom we might have expected to find it — insight into the historically relative character of his data, which are expressions of one specific existence and one only; knowledge of the necessary limits of their validity; the conviction that his "unshakable" truths and "eternal" views are simply true for him and eternal for his world-view; the duty of looking beyond them to find out what the men of other Cultures have with equal certainty evolved out of themselves. That and nothing else will impart completeness to the philosophy of the future, and only through an understanding of the living world shall we understand the symbolism of history. Here there is nothing constant, nothing universal. We must cease to speak of the forms of "Thought," the principles of "Tragedy," the mission of "The State." Universal validity involves always the fallacy of arguing from particular to particular.

But something much more disquieting than a logical fallacy begins to appear when the centre of gravity of philosophy shifts from the abstract-systematic to the practical-ethical and our Western thinkers from Schopenhauer onward turn from the problem of cognition to the problem of life (the will to life, to power, to action). Here it is not the ideal abstract "man" of Kant that is subjected to examination, but actual man as he has inhabited the earth during historical time, grouped, whether primitive or advanced, by peoples; and it is more than ever futile to define the structure of his highest ideas in terms of the "ancient-mediaeval-modern" scheme with its local limitations. But it is done, nevertheless.

Consider the historical horizon of Nietzsche. His conceptions of decadence, militarism, the transvaluation of all values, the will to power, lie deep in the essence of Western civilization and are for the analysis of that civilization of

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<sup>18</sup> 1 See Vol. II, p. 362, footnote. To the true Russian the basic proposition of Darwinism is as devoid of meaning as that of Copernicus is to a true Arab.

decisive importance. But what, do we find, was the foundation on which he built up his creation? Romans and Greeks, Renaissance and European present, with a fleeting and uncomprehending side-glance at Indian philosophy — in short “ancient, mediaeval and modern” history. Strictly speaking, he never once moved outside the scheme, not did any other thinker of his time.

What correlation, then, is there or can there be of his idea of the “Dionysian” with the inner life of a highly-civilized Chinese or an up-to-date American? What is the significance of his type of the “Superman” — for the world of Islam? Can image-forming antitheses of Nature and Intellect, Heathen and Christian, Classical and Modern, have any meaning for the soul of the Indian or the Russian? What can Tolstoi — who from the depths of his humanity rejected the whole Western world-idea as something alien and distant — do with the “Middle Ages,” with Dante, with Luther? What can a Japanese do with Parzeval and “Zarathustra,” or an Indian with Sophocles? And is the thought-range of Schopenhauer, Comte, Feuerbach, Hebbel or Strindberg any wider? Is not their whole psychology, for all its intention of world-wide validity, one of purely West-European significance?

How comic seem Ibsen’s woman-problems — which also challenge the attention of all “humanity” — when, for his famous Nora, the lady of the North-west European city with the horizon that is implied by a house-rent of £100 to £300 a year and a Protestant upbringing, we substitute Caesar’s wife, Madame de Sévigné, a Japanese or a Turkish peasant woman! But, for that matter, Ibsen’s own circle of vision is that of the middle class in a great city of yesterday and to-day. His conflicts, which start from spiritual premisses that did not exist till about 1850 and can scarcely last beyond 1950, are neither those of the great world nor those of the lower masses, still less those of the cities inhabited by non-European populations.

All these are local and temporary values — most of them indeed limited to the momentary “intelligentsia” of cities of West-European type. World-historical or “eternal” values they emphatically are not. Whatever the substantial importance of Ibsen’s and Nietzsche’s generation may be, it infringes the very meaning of the word “world-history” — which denotes the totality and not a selected part — to subordinate, to undervalue, or to ignore the factors which lie outside “modern” interests. Yet in fact they are so undervalued or ignored to an amazing extent. What the West has said and thought, hitherto, on the problems of space, time, motion, number, will, marriage, property, tragedy, science, has remained narrow and dubious, because men were always looking for the solution of the question. It was never seen that many questioners implies many answers, that any philosophical question is really a veiled desire to get an explicit affirmation of what is implicit in the question itself, that the great questions of any period are fluid beyond all conception, and that therefore it is only by obtaining a group of historically limited solutions and measuring it by utterly impersonal criteria

that the final secrets can be reached. The real student of mankind treats no standpoint as absolutely right or absolutely wrong. In the face of such grave problems as that of Time or that of Marriage, it is insufficient to appeal to personal experience, or an inner voice, or reason, or the opinion of ancestors or contemporaries. These may say what is true for the questioner himself and for his time, but that is not all. In other Cultures the phenomenon talks a different language, for other men there are different truths. The thinker must admit the validity of all, or of none.

How greatly, then, Western world-criticism can be widened and deepened! How immensely far beyond the innocent relativism of Nietzsche and his generation one must look — how fine one's sense for form and one's psychological insight must become — how completely one must free oneself from limitations of self, of practical interests, of horizon — before one dare assert the pretension to understand world-history, the world-as-history.

## **IX**

In opposition to all these arbitrary and narrow schemes, derived from tradition or personal choice, into which history is forced, I put forward the natural, the “Copernican,” form of the historical process which lies deep in the essence of that process and reveals itself only to an eye perfectly free from prepossessions.

Such an eye was Goethe's. That which Goethe called Living Nature is exactly that which we are calling here world-history, world-as-history. Goethe, who as artist portrayed the life and development, always the life and development, of his figures, the thing-becoming and not the thing-become (“Wilhelm Meister” and “Wahrheit und Dichtung”) hated Mathematics. For him, the world-as-mechanism stood opposed to the world-as-organism, dead nature to living nature, law to form. As naturalist, every line he wrote was meant to display the image of a thing-becoming, the “impressed form” living and developing. Sympathy, observation, comparison, immediate and inward certainty, intellectual flair — these were the means whereby he was enabled to approach the secrets of the phenomenal world in motion. Now these are the means of historical research — precisely these and no others. It was this godlike insight that prompted him to say at the bivouac fire on the evening of the Battle of Valmy: “Here and now begins a new epoch of world history, and you, gentlemen, can say that you ‘were there.’” No general, no diplomat, let alone the philosophers, ever so directly felt history “becoming.” It is the deepest judgment that any man ever uttered about a great historical act in the moment of its accomplishment.

And just as he followed out the development of the plant-form from the leaf, the birth of the vertebrate type, the process of the geological strata — the Destiny in nature and not the Causality — so here we shall develop the form-language of human history, its periodic structure, its organic logic out of the profusion of all the challenging details.



In other aspects, mankind is habitually, and rightly, reckoned as one of the organisms of the earth's surface. Its physical structure, its natural functions, the whole phenomenal conception of it, all belong to a more comprehensive unity. Only in this aspect is it treated otherwise, despite that deeply-felt relationship of plant destiny and human destiny which is an eternal theme of all lyrical poetry, and despite that similarity of human history to that of any other of the higher life-groups which is the refrain of endless beast-legends, sagas and fables.

But only bring analogy to bear on this aspect as on the rest, letting the world of human Cultures intimately and unreservedly work upon the imagination instead of forcing it into a ready-made scheme. Let the words youth, growth, maturity, decay — hitherto, and to-day more than ever, used to express subjective valuations and entirely personal preferences in sociology, ethics and aesthetics — be taken at last as objective descriptions of organic states. Set forth the Classical Culture as a self-contained phenomenon embodying and expressing the Classical soul, put it beside the Egyptian, the Indian, the Babylonian, the Chinese and the Western, and determine for each of these higher individuals what is typical in their surgings and what is necessary in the riot of incident. And then at last will unfold itself the picture of world-history that is natural to us, men of the West, and to us alone.

## X

Our narrower task, then, is primarily to determine, from such a world-survey, the state of West Europe and America as at the epoch of 1800-2000 — to establish the chronological position of this period in the ensemble of Western culture-history, its significance as a chapter that is in one or other guise necessarily found in the biography of every Culture, and the organic and symbolic meaning of its political, artistic, intellectual and social expression-forms.

Considered in the spirit of analogy, this period appears as chronologically parallel — “contemporary” in our special sense — with the phase of Hellenism, and its present culmination, marked by the World-War, corresponds with the transition from the Hellenistic to the Roman age. Rome, with its rigorous realism — uninspired, barbaric, disciplined, practical, Protestant, Prussian — will always give us, working as we must by analogies, the key to understanding our own future. The break of destiny that we express by hyphening the words “Greeks = Romans” is occurring for us also, separating that which is already fulfilled from that which is to come. Long ago we might and should have seen in the “Classical” world a development which is the complete counter-part of our own Western development, differing indeed from it in every detail of the surface but entirely similar as regards the inward power driving the great organism towards its end. We might have found the constant alter ego of our own actuality in establishing the correspondence, item by item, from the “Trojan War” and the Crusades, Homer and the Nibelungenlied, through Doric and Gothic, Dionysian

movement and Renaissance, Polycletus and John Sebastian Bach, Athens and Paris, Aristotle and Kant, Alexander and Napoleon, to the world-city and the imperialism common to both Cultures.

Unfortunately, this requires an interpretation of the picture of Classical history very different from the incredibly one-sided, superficial, prejudiced, limited picture that we have in fact given to it. We have, in truth been only too conscious of our near relation to the Classical Age, and only too prone in consequence to unconsidered assertion of it. Superficial similarity is a great snare, and our entire Classical study fell a victim to it as soon as it passed from the (admittedly masterly) ordering and critique of the discoveries to the interpretation of their spiritual meaning. That close inward relation in which we conceive ourselves to stand towards the Classical, and which leads us to think that we are its pupils and successors (whereas in reality we are simply its adorers), is a venerable prejudice which ought at last to be put aside. The whole religious-philosophical, art-historical and social-critical work of the 19th Century has been necessary to enable us, not to understand Aeschylus and Plato, Apollo and Dionysus, the Athenian state and Caesarism (which we are far indeed from doing), but to begin to realize, once and for all, how immeasurably alien and distant these things are from our inner selves — more alien, maybe, than Mexican gods and Indian architecture.

Our views of the Greco-Roman Culture have always swung between two extremes, and our standpoints have invariably been defined for us by the “ancient-mediaeval-modern” scheme. One “group, public men before all else — economists, politicians, jurists — opine that “present-day mankind” is making excellent progress, assess it and its performances at the very highest value and measure everything earlier by its standards. There is no modern party that has not weighed up Cleon, Marius, Themistocles, Catiline, the Gracchi, according to its own principles. On the other hand we have the group of artists, poets, philologists and philosophers. These feel themselves to be out of their element in the aforesaid present, and in consequence choose for themselves in this or that past epoch a standpoint that is in its way just as absolute and dogmatic from which to condemn “to-day.” The one group looks upon Greece as a “not yet” the other upon modernity as a “nevermore.” Both labour under the obsession of a scheme of history which treats the two epochs as part of the same straight line.

In this opposition it is the two souls of Faust that express themselves. The danger of the one group lies in a clever superficiality. In its hands there remains finally, of all Classical Culture, of all reflections of the Classical soul, nothing but a bundle of social, economic, political and physiological facts, and the rest is treated as “secondary results,” “reflexes,” “attendant phenomena.” In the books of this group we find not a hint of the mythical force of Aeschylus’s choruses, of the immense mother-earth struggle of the early sculpture, the Doric column, of the richness of the Apollo-cult, of the real depth of the Roman Emperor-worship. The other group, composed above all

of belated romanticists — represented in recent times by the three Basel professors Bachofen, Burckhardt and Nietzsche — succumb to the usual dangers of ideology. They lose themselves in the clouds of an antiquity that is really no more than the image of their own sensibility in a philological mirror. They rest their case upon the only evidence which they consider worthy to support it, viz., the relics of the old literature, yet there never was a Culture so incompletely represented for us by its great writers.<sup>19</sup> The first group, on the other hand, supports itself principally upon the humdrum material of law-sources, inscriptions and coins (which Burckhardt and Nietzsche, very much to their own loss, despised) and subordinates thereto, often with little or no sense of truth and fact, the surviving literature. Consequently, even in point of critical foundations, neither group takes the other seriously. I have never heard that Nietzsche and Mommsen had the smallest respect for each other.

But neither group has attained to that higher method of treatment which reduces this opposition of criteria to ashes, although it was within their power to do so. In their self-limitation they paid the penalty for taking over the causality-principle from natural science. Unconsciously they arrived at a pragmatism that sketchily copied the world-picture drawn by physics and, instead of revealing, obscured and confused the quite other-natured forms of history. They had no better expedient for subjecting the mass of historical material to critical and normative examination than to consider one complex of phenomena as being primary and causative and the rest as being secondary, as being consequences or effects. And it was not only the matter-of-fact school that resorted to this method. The romanticists did likewise, for History had not revealed even to their dreaming gaze its specific logic; and yet they felt that there was an immanent necessity in it to determine this somehow, rather than turn their backs upon History in despair like Schopenhauer.

## XI

Briefly, then, there are two ways of regarding the Classical — the materialistic and the ideological. By the former, it is asserted that the sinking of one scale-pan has its cause in the rising of the other, and it is shown that this occurs invariably (truly a striking theorem); and in this juxtaposing of cause and effect we naturally find the social and sexual, at all events the purely political, facts classed as causes and the religious, intellectual and (so far as the materialist tolerates them as facts at all) the artistic as effects. On the other hand, the ideologues show that the rising of one scale-pan follows from the sinking of the other, which they are able to prove of course with equal

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<sup>19</sup> This is conclusively proved by the selection that determined survival, which was governed not by mere chance but very definitely by a deliberate tendency. The Atticism of the Augustan Age, tired, sterile, pedantic, back-looking, conceived the hall-mark "classical" and allowed only a very small group of Greek works up to Plato to bear it. The rest, including the whole wealth of Hellenistic literature, was rejected and has been almost entirely lost. It is this pedagogue's anthology that has survived (almost in its entirety) and so fixed the imaginary picture of "Classical Antiquity" alike for the Renaissance Florentine and for Winckelmann, Holderlin, and even Nietzsche.

exactitude; this done, they lose themselves in cults, mysteries, customs, in the secrets of the strophe and the line, throwing scarcely a side-glance at the commonplace daily life — for them an unpleasant consequence of earthly imperfection. Each side, with its gaze fixed on causality, demonstrates that the other side either, cannot or will not understand the true linkages of things and each ends by calling the other blind, superficial, stupid, absurd or frivolous, oddities or Philistines. It shocks the ideologue if anyone deals with Hellenic finance-problems and instead of, for example, telling us the deep meanings of the Delphic oracle, describes the far-reaching money operations which the Oracle priests undertook with their accumulated treasures. The politician, on the other hand, has a superior smile for those who waste their enthusiasm on ritual formulas and the dress of Attic youths, instead of writing a book adorned with up-to-date catchwords about antique class-struggles.

The one type is foreshadowed from the very outset in Petrarch; it created Florence and Weimar and the Western classicism. The other type appears in the middle of the 18th Century, along with the rise of civilized, economic-megalopolitan politics, and England is therefore its birthplace (Grote). At bottom, the opposition is between the conceptions of culture-man and those of civilization-man, and it is too deep, too essentially human, to allow the weaknesses of both standpoints alike to be seen or overcome.

The materialist himself is on this point an idealist. He too, without wishing or desiring it, has made his views dependent upon his wishes. In fact all our finest minds without exception have bowed down reverently before the picture of the Classical, abdicating in this one instance alone their function of unrestricted criticism. The freedom and power of Classical research are always hindered, and its data obscured, by a certain almost religious awe. In all history there is no analogous case of one Culture making a passionate cult of the memory of another. Our devotion is evidenced yet again in the fact that since the Renaissance, a thousand years of history have been undervalued so that an ideal “Middle” Age may serve as a link between ourselves and antiquity. We Westerners have sacrificed on the Classical altar the purity and independence of our art, for we have not dared to create without a side-glance at the “sublime exemplar.” We have projected our own deepest spiritual needs and feelings on to the Classical picture. Some day a gifted psychologist will deal with this most fateful illusion and tell us the story of the “Classical” that we have so consistently revered since the days of Gothic. Few theses would be more helpful for the understanding of the Western soul from Otto III, the first victim of the South, to Nietzsche, the last.

Goethe on his Italian tour speaks with enthusiasm of the buildings of Palladio, whose frigid and academic work we to-day regard very sceptically: but when he goes on to Pompeii he does not conceal his dissatisfaction in experiencing “a strange, half-unpleasant impression,” and what he has to say on the temples of Paestum and Segesta — masterpieces of Hellenic art — is embarrassed and trivial. Palpably, when Classical antiquity in its full force met

him face to face, he did not recognize it. It is the same with all others. Much that was Classical they chose not to see, and so they saved their inward image of the Classical — which was in reality the background of a life-ideal that they themselves had created and nourished with their heart's blood, a vessel filled with their own world-feeling, a phantom, an idol. The audacious descriptions of Aristophanes, Juvenal or Petronius of life in the Classical cities — the southern dirt and riff-raff, terrors and brutalities, pleasure-boys and Phrynes, phallus worship and imperial orgies — excite the enthusiasm of the student and the dilettante, who find the same realities in the world-cities of to-day too lamentable and repulsive to face. "In the cities life is bad; there are too many of the lustful." — also sprach Zarathustra. They commend the state-sense of the Romans, but despise the man of to-day who permits himself any contact with public affairs. There is a type of scholar whose clarity of vision comes under some irresistible spell when it turns from a frock-coat to a toga, from a British football-ground to a Byzantine circus, from a transcontinental railway to a Roman road in the Alps, from a thirty-knot destroyer to a trireme, from Prussian bayonets to Roman spears — nowadays, even, from a modern engineer's Suez Canal to that of a Pharaoh. He would admit a steam-engine as a symbol of human passion and an expression of intellectual force if it were Hero of Alexandria who invented it, not otherwise. To such it seems blasphemous to talk of Roman central-heating or book-keeping in preference to the worship of the Great Mother of the Gods.

But the other school sees nothing but these things. It thinks it exhausts the essence of this Culture, alien as it is to ours, by treating the Greeks as simply equivalent, and it obtains its conclusions by means of simple factual substitutions, ignoring altogether the Classical soul. That there is not the slightest inward correlation between the things meant by "Republic," "freedom," "property" and the like then and there and the things meant by such words here and now, it has no notion whatever. It makes fun of the historians of the age of Goethe, who honestly expressed their own political ideals in classical history forms and revealed their own personal enthusiasms in vindications or condemnations of lay-figures named Lycurgus, Brutus, Cato, Cicero, Augustus — but it cannot itself write a chapter without reflecting the party opinion of its morning paper.

It is, however, much the same whether the past is treated in the spirit of Don Quixote or in that of Sancho Panza. Neither way leads to the end. In sum, each school permits itself to bring into high relief that part of the Classical which best expresses its own views — Nietzsche the pre-Socratic Athens, the economists the Hellenistic period, the politicians Republican Rome, poets the Imperial Age.

Not that religious and artistic phenomena are more primitive than social and economic, any more than the reverse. For the man who in these things has won his unconditional freedom of outlook, beyond all personal interests whatsoever, there is no dependence, no priority, no relation of cause and

effect, no differentiation of value or importance. That which assigns relative ranks amongst the individual detail-facts is simply the greater or less purity and force of their form-language, their symbolism, beyond all questions of good and evil, high and low, useful and ideal.

## XII

Looked at in this way, the “Decline of the West” comprises nothing less than the problem of Civilization. We have before us one of the fundamental questions of all higher history. What is Civilization, understood as the organic-logical sequel, fulfilment and finale of a culture?

For every Culture has its own Civilization. In this work, for the first time the two words, hitherto used to express an indefinite, more or less ethical, distinction are used in a periodic sense, to express a strict and necessary organic succession. The Civilization is the inevitable destiny of the Culture, and in this principle we obtain the viewpoint from which the deepest and gravest problems of historical morphology become capable of solution. Civilizations are the most external and artificial states of which a species of developed humanity is capable. They are a conclusion, the thing-become succeeding the thing-becoming, death following life, rigidity following expansion, intellectual age and the stone-built, petrifying world-city following mother-earth and the spiritual childhood of Doric and Gothic. They are an end, irrevocable, yet by inward necessity reached again and again.

So, for the first time, we are enabled to understand the Romans as the successors of the Greeks, and light is projected into the deepest secrets of the late-Classical period. What, but this, can be the meaning of the fact — which can only be disputed by vain phrases — that the Romans were barbarians who did not precede but closed a great development? Unspiritual, unphilosophical, devoid of art, clannish to the point of brutality, aiming relentlessly at tangible successes, they stand between the Hellenic Culture and nothingness. An imagination directed purely to practical objects — they had religious laws governing godward relations as they had other laws governing human relations, but there was no specifically Roman saga of gods — was something which is not found at all in Athens. In a word, Greek soul — Roman intellect; and this antithesis is the differentia between Culture and Civilization. Nor is it only to the Classical that it applies. Again and again there appears this type of strong-minded, completely non-metaphysical man, and in the hands of this type lies the intellectual and material destiny of each and every “late” period. Such are the men who carried through the Babylonian, the Egyptian, the Indian, the Chinese, the Roman Civilizations, and in such periods do Buddhism, Stoicism, Socialism ripen into definitive world-conceptions which enable a moribund humanity to be attacked and reformed in its intimate structure. Pure Civilization, as a historical process, consists in a progressive taking-down of forms that have become inorganic or dead.

The transition from Culture to Civilization was accomplished for the Classical world in the 4<sup>th</sup>, for the Western in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. From these periods onward the great intellectual decisions take place, not as in the days of the Orpheus-movement or the Reformation in the “whole world” where not a hamlet is too small to be unimportant, but in three or four world-cities that have absorbed into themselves the whole content of History, while the old wide landscape of the Culture, become merely provincial, serves only to feed the cities with what remains of its higher mankind.

World-city and province<sup>20</sup> — the two basic ideas of every civilization — bring up a wholly new form-problem of History, the very problem that we are living through to-day with hardly the remotest conception of its immensity. In place of a world, there is a city, a point, in which the whole life of broad regions is collecting while the rest dries up. In place of a type-true people, born of and grown on the soil, there is a new sort of nomad, cohering unstably in fluid masses, the parasitical city dweller, traditionless, utterly matter-of-fact, religionless, clever, unfruitful, deeply contemptuous of the countryman and especially that highest form of countryman, the country gentleman. This is a very great stride towards the inorganic, towards the end — what does it signify? France and England have already taken the step and Germany is beginning to do so. After Syracuse, Athens, and Alexandria comes Rome. After Madrid, Paris, London come Berlin and New York. It is the destiny of whole regions that lie outside the radiation-circle of one of these cities — of old Crete and Macedon and to-day the Scandinavian North<sup>21</sup> — to become “provinces.”

Of old, the field on which the opposed conception of an epoch came to battle was some world-problem of a metaphysical, religious or dogmatic kind, and the battle was between the soil-genius of the countryman (noble, priest) and the “worldly” patrician genius of the famous old small towns of Doric or Gothic springtime. Of such a character were the conflicts over the Dionysus religion — as in the tyranny of Kleisthenes of Sikyon<sup>22</sup> — and those of the Reformation in the German free cities and the Huguenot wars. But just as these cities overcame the country-side (already it is a purely civic world-outlook that appears in even Parmenides and Descartes), so in turn the world-city overcame them. It is the common intellectual process of later periods such as the Ionic and the Baroque, and to-day — as in the Hellenistic age which at its outset saw the foundation of artificial, land-alien Alexandria — Culture-cities like Florence, Nurnberg, Salamanca, Bruges and Prag, have become provincial towns and fight inwardly a lost battle against the world-

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<sup>20</sup> See Vol. II, pp. 117 et seq.

<sup>21</sup> One cannot fail to notice this in the development of Strindberg and especially in that of Ibsen, who was never quite at home in the civilized atmosphere of his problems. The motives of “Brand” and “Rosmersholm” are a wonderful mixture of innate provincialism and a theoretically-acquired megalopolitan outlook. Nora is the very type of the provincial derailed by reading.

<sup>22</sup> Who forbade the cult of the town’s hero Adrastus and the reading of the Homeric poems, with the object of cutting the Doric nobility from its spiritual roots (c. 560 b.c.).

cities. The world-city means cosmopolitanism in place of “home”<sup>23</sup> cold matter-of-fact in place of reverence for tradition and age, scientific irreligion as a fossil representative of the older religion of the heart, “society” in place of the state, natural instead of hard-earned rights. It was in the conception of money as an inorganic and abstract magnitude, entirely disconnected from the notion of the fruitful earth and the primitive values, that the Romans had the advantage of the Greeks.

Thenceforward any high ideal of life becomes largely a question of money. Unlike the Greek stoicism of Chrysippus, the Roman stoicism of Cato and Seneca presupposes a private income;<sup>24</sup> and, unlike that of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the social-ethical sentiment of the xoth, if it is to be realized at a higher level than that of professional (and lucrative) agitation, is a matter for millionaires. To the world-city belongs not a folk but a mass. Its uncomprehending hostility to all the traditions representative of the Culture (nobility, church, privileges, dynasties, convention in art and limits of knowledge in science), the keen and cold intelligence that confounds the wisdom of the peasant, the new-fashioned naturalism that in relation to all matters of sex and society goes back far beyond Rousseau and Socrates to quite primitive instincts and conditions, the reappearance of the *panem et circenses* in the form of wage-disputes and football-grounds — all these things betoken the definite closing-down of the Culture and the opening of a quite new phase of human existence — anti-provincial, late, futureless, but quite inevitable.

This is what has to be viewed, and viewed not with the eyes of the partisan, the ideologue, the up-to-date novelist, not from this or that “standpoint,” but in a high, time-free perspective embracing whole millenniums of historical world-forms, if we are really to comprehend the great crisis of the present.

To me it is a symbol of the first importance that in the Rome of Crassus — triumvir and all-powerful building-site speculator — the Roman people with its proud inscriptions, the people before whom Gauls, Greeks, Parthians, Syrians afar trembled, lived in appalling misery in the many-storied lodging-houses of dark suburbs,<sup>25</sup> accepting with indifference or even with a sort of sporting interest the consequences of the military expansion: that many famous old-noble families, descendants of the men who defeated the Celts and the Samnites, lost their ancestral homes through standing apart from the wild rush of speculation and were reduced to renting wretched apartments; that, while along the Appian Way there arose the splendid and still wonderful

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<sup>23</sup> A profound word which obtains its significance as soon as the barbarian becomes a culture-man and loses it again as soon as the civilization-man takes up the motto “Ubi bene, ibi patria.”

<sup>24</sup> Hence it was that the first to succumb to Christianity were the Romans who could not afford to be Stoics. See Vol. II, pp. 607 ct seq.

<sup>25</sup> In Rome and Byzantium, lodging-houses of six to ten stories (with street-widths of ten feet at most!) were built without any sort of official supervision, and frequently collapsed with all their inmates. A great part of the *cives* Romans, for whom *partem et circenses* constituted all existence, possessed no more than a high-priced sleeping-berth in one of the swarming ant-hills called *insula*, (Pohlmann, *Aus Altertum und Gegenwart*, 1911, pp. 199 ff.)



tombs of the financial magnates, the corpses of the people were thrown along with animal carcasses and town refuse into a monstrous common grave — till in Augustus's time it was banked over for the avoidance of pestilence and so became the site of Maecenas's renowned park; that in depopulated Athens, which lived on visitors and on the bounty of rich foreigners, the mob of parvenu tourists from Rome gaped at the works of the Periclean age with as little understanding as the American globe-trotter in the Sistine Chapel at those of Michelangelo, every removable art-piece having ere this been taken away or bought at fancy prices to be replaced by the Roman buildings which grew up, colossal and arrogant, by the side of the low and modest structures of the old time. In such things — which it is the historian's business not to praise or to blame but to consider morphologically — there lies, plain and immediate enough for one who has learnt to see, an idea.

For it will become manifest that, from this moment on, all great conflicts of world-outlook, of politics, of art, of science, of feeling will be under the influence of this one opposition. What is the hall-mark of a politic of Civilization to-day, in contrast to a politic of Culture yesterday? It is, for the Classical rhetoric, and for the Western journalism, both serving that abstract which represents the power of Civilization — money? It is the money-spirit which penetrates unremarked the historical forms of the people's existence, often with-out destroying or even in the least disturbing these forms — the form of the Roman state, for instance, underwent very much less alteration between the elder Scipio and Augustus than is usually imagined. Though forms subsist, the great political parties nevertheless cease to be more than reputed centres of decision. The decisions in fact lie elsewhere. A small number of superior heads, whose names are very likely not the best-known, settle everything, while below them are the great mass of second-rate politicians — rhetors, tribunes, deputies, journalists — selected through a provincially-conceived franchise to keep alive the illusion of popular self-determination. And art? Philosophy? The ideals of a Platonic or those of a Kantian age had for the higher mankind concerned a general validity. But those of a Hellenistic age, or those of our own, are valid exclusively for the brain of the Megalopolitan. For the villager's or, generally, the nature-man's world-feeling our Socialism — like its near relation Darwinism (how utterly un-Goethian are the formulas of "struggle for existence" and "natural selection"!), like its other relative the woman-and-marriage problem of Ibsen, Strindberg, and Shaw, like the impressionistic tendencies of anarchic sensuousness and the whole bundle of modern longings, temptations and pains expressed in Baudelaire's verse and Wagner's music — are simply non-existent. The smaller the town, the more unmeaning it becomes to busy oneself with painting or with music of these kinds. To the Culture belong gymnastics, the tournament, the agon, and to the Civilization belongs Sport. This is the true distinction between the Hellenic palaestra and the Roman

circus.<sup>26</sup> Art itself becomes a sport (hence the phrase “art for art’s sake”) to be played before a highly-intelligent audience of connoisseurs and buyers, whether the feat consist in mastering absurd instrumental tone-masses and taking harmonic fences, or in some tour de force of colouring. Then a new fact-philosophy appears, which can only spare a smile for metaphysical speculation, and a new literature that is a necessity of life for the megalopolitan palate and nerves and both unintelligible and ugly to the provincials. Neither Alexandrine poetry nor plein-air painting is anything to the “people.” And, then as now, the phase of transition is marked by a series of scandals only to be found at such moments. The anger evoked in the Athenian populace by Euripides and by the “Revolutionary” painting of Apollodorus, for example, is repeated in the opposition to Wagner, Manet, Ibsen, and Nietzsche.

It is possible to understand the Greeks without mentioning their economic relations; the Romans, on the other hand, can only be understood through these. Chaeronea and Leipzig were the last battles fought about an idea. In the First Punic War and in 1870 economic motives are no longer to be overlooked. Not till the Romans came with their practical energy was slave-holding given that big collective character which many students regard as the die-stamp of Classical economics, legislation and way of life, and which in any event vastly lowered both the value and the inner worthiness of such free labour as continued to exist side by side with gang-labour. And it was not the Latin, but the Germanic peoples of the West and America who developed out of the steam-engine a big industry that transformed the face of the land. The relation of these phenomena to Stoicism and to Socialism is unmistakable. Not till the Roman Caesarism — foreshadowed by C. Flaminius, shaped first by Marius, handled by strong-minded, large-scale men of fact — did the Classical World learn the pre-eminence of money. Without this fact neither Caesar, nor “Rome” generally, is understandable. In every Greek is a Don Quixote, in every Roman a Sancho Panza factor, and these factors are dominants.

### XIII

Considered in itself, the Roman world-dominion was a negative phenomenon, being the result not of a surplus of energy on the one side — that the Romans had never had since Zama — but of a deficiency of resistance on the other. That the Romans did not conquer the world is certain;<sup>27</sup> they merely took possession of a booty that lay open to everyone. The Imperium Romanum came into existence not as the result of such an extremity of military and financial effort as had characterized the Punic Wars, but because the old East forwent all external self-determinations. We must not be deluded by the

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<sup>26</sup> German gymnastics, from the intensely provincial and natural forms imparted to it by Jahn, has since 1813 been carried by a very rapid development into the sport category. The difference between a Berlin athletic ground on a big day and a Roman circus was even by 1914 very slight.

<sup>27</sup> See Vol. II, 549.

appearance of brilliant military successes. With a few ill-trained, ill-led, and sullen legions, Lucullus and Pompey conquered whole realms — a phenomenon that in the period of the battle of Ipsus would have been unthinkable. The Mithradatic danger, serious enough for a system of material force which had never been put to any real test, would have been nothing to the conquerors of Hannibal. After Zama, the Romans never again either waged or were capable of waging a war against a great military Power.<sup>28</sup> Their classic wars were those against the Samnites, Pyrrhus and Carthage. Their grand hour was Cannae. To maintain the heroic posture for centuries on end is beyond the power of any people. The Prussian-German people have had three great moments (1813, 1870 and 1914), and that is more than others have had.

Here, then, I lay it down that Imperialism, of which petrifacts such as the Egyptian empire, the Roman, the Chinese, the Indian may continue to exist for hundreds or thousands of years — dead bodies, amorphous and dispirited masses of men, scrap-material from a great history — is to be taken as the typical symbol of the passing away. Imperialism is Civilization unadulterated.

In this phenomenal form the destiny of the West is now irrevocably set. The energy of culture-man is directed inwards, that of civilization-man outwards. And thus I see in Cecil Rhodes the first man of a new age. He stands for the political style of a far-ranging, Western, Teutonic and especially German future, and his phrase “expansion is everything” is the Napoleonic reassertion of the indwelling tendency of every Civilization that has fully ripened — Roman, Arab or Chinese. It is not a matter of choice — it is not the conscious will of individuals, or even that of whole classes or peoples that decides. The expansive tendency is a doom, something daemonic and immense, which grips, forces into service, and uses up the late mankind of the world-city stage, willy-nilly, aware or unaware.<sup>29</sup> Life is the process of effecting possibilities, and for the brain-man there are only extensive possibilities.<sup>30</sup> Hard as the half-developed Socialism of to-day is fighting against expansion, one day it will become arch-expansionist with all the vehemence of destiny. Here the form-language of politics, as the direct intellectual expression of a certain type of humanity, touches on a deep metaphysical problem — on the fact, affirmed in the grant of unconditional validity to the causality-principle, that the soul is the complement of its extension.

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<sup>28</sup> The conquest of Gaul by Caesar was frankly a colonial, i.e., a one-sided, war; and the fact that it is the highest achievement in the later military history of Rome only shows that the well of real achievement was rapidly drying up.

<sup>29</sup> The modern Germans are a conspicuous example of a people that has become expansive without knowing it or willing it. They were already in that state while they still believed themselves to be the people of Goethe. Even Bismarck, the founder of the new age, never had the slightest idea of it, and believed himself to have reached the conclusion of a political process (cf. Vol. II, 52.9).

<sup>30</sup> This is probably the meaning of Napoleon’s significant words to Goethe: “What have we to-day to do with destiny? Policy is destiny.”

When, between 480 and 530,<sup>31</sup> the Chinese group of states was tending towards imperialism, it was entirely futile to combat the principle of Imperialism (Lien-heng), practised in particular by the “Roman” state of Tsin<sup>32</sup> and theoretically represented by the philosopher Dschang Yi, by ideas of a League of Nations (Hoh-tsung) largely derived from Wang Hii, a profound sceptic who had no illusions as to the men or the political possibilities of this “late” period. Both sides opposed the anti-political idealism of Lao-tse, but as between themselves it was Lien-heng and not Hoh-tsung which swam with the natural current of expansive Civilization.<sup>33</sup>

Rhodes is to be regarded as the first precursor of a Western type of Caesars, whose day is to come though yet distant. He stands midway between Napoleon and the force-men of the next centuries, just as Flaminius, who from 232 b.c. onward pressed the Romans to undertake the subjugation of Cisalpine Gaul and so initiated the policy of colonial expansion, stands between Alexander and Caesar. Strictly speaking, Flaminius was a private person — for his real power was of a kind not embodied in any constitutional office — who exercised a dominant influence in the state at a time when the state-idea was giving way to the pressure of economic factors. So far as Rome is concerned, he was the archetype of opposition Caesarism; with him there came to an end the idea of state-service and there began the “will to power” which ignored traditions and reckoned only with forces. Alexander and Napoleon were romantics; though they stood on the threshold of Civilization and in its cold clear air, the one fancied himself an Achilles and the other read Werther. Caesar, on the contrary, was a pure man of fact gifted with immense understanding.

But even for Rhodes political success means territorial and financial success, and only that. Of this Roman-ness within himself he was fully aware. But Western Civilization has not yet taken shape in such strength and purity as this. It was only before his maps that he could fall into a sort of poetic trance, this son of the parsonage who, sent out to South Africa without means, made a gigantic fortune and employed it as the engine of political aims. His idea of a trans-African railway from the Cape to Cairo, his project of a South African empire, his intellectual hold on the hard metal souls of the mining magnates whose wealth he forced into the service of his schemes, his capital Bulawayo, royally planned as a future Residence by a statesman who was all-powerful yet stood in no definite relation to the State, his wars, his diplomatic deals, his road-systems, his syndicates, his armies, his conception of the “great duty to civilization” of the man of brain — all this, broad and imposing, is the prelude of a future which is still in store for us and with which the history of West-European mankind will be definitely closed.

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<sup>31</sup> Corresponding to the 300-50 b.c. phase of the Classical world.

<sup>32</sup> Which in the end gave its name to the Empire (Tsin = China).

<sup>33</sup> See Vol. II, 521-539.

He who does not understand that this outcome is obligatory and insusceptible of modification, that our choice is between willing this and willing nothing at all, between cleaving to this destiny or despairing of the future and of life itself; he who cannot feel that there is grandeur also in the realizations of powerful intelligences, in the energy and discipline of metal-hard natures, in battles fought with the coldest and most abstract means; he who is obsessed with the idealism of a provincial and would pursue the ways of life of past ages — must forgo all desire to comprehend history, to live through history or to make history.

Thus regarded, the Imperium Romanum appears no longer as an isolated phenomenon, but as the normal product of a Strict and energetic, megalopolitan, predominantly practical spirituality, as typical of a final and irreversible condition which has occurred often enough though it has only been identified as such in this instance.

Let it be realized, then:

That the secret of historical form does not lie on the surface, that it cannot be grasped by means of similarities of costume and setting, and that in the history of men as in that of animals and plants there occur phenomena showing deceptive similarity but inwardly without any connexion — e.g., Charlemagne and Haroun-al-Raschid, Alexander and Caesar, the German wars upon Rome and the Mongol onslaughts upon West Europe — and other phenomena of extreme outward dissimilarity but of identical import — e.g., Trajan and Rameses II, the Bourbons and the Attic Demos, Mohammed and Pythagoras.

That the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, hitherto looked on as the highest point of an ascending straight line of world-history, are in reality a stage of life which may be observed in every Culture that has ripened to its limit — a stage of life characterized not by Socialists, Impressionists, electric railways, torpedoes and differential equations (for these are only body-constituents of the time), but by a civilized spirituality which possesses not only these but also quite other creative possibilities.

That, as our own time represents a transitional phase which occurs with certainty under particular conditions, there are perfectly well-defined states (such as have occurred more than once in the history of the past) later than the present-day state of West Europe, and therefore that The future of the West is not a limitless tending upwards and onwards for all time towards our present ideals, but a single phenomenon of history, strictly limited and defined as to form and duration, which covers a few centuries and can be viewed and, in essentials, calculated from available precedents.

#### **XIV**

This high plane of contemplation once attained, the rest is easy. To this single idea one can refer, and by it one can solve, without straining or forcing, all those separate problems of religion, art-history, epistemology, ethics, politics,

economics with which the modern intellect has so passionately — and so vainly — busied itself for decades.

This idea is one of those truths that have only to be expressed with full clarity to become indisputable. It is one of the inward necessities of the Western Culture and of its world-feeling. It is capable of entirely transforming the world-outlook of one who fully understands it, i.e., makes it intimately his own. It immensely deepens the world-picture natural and necessary to us in that, already trained to regard world-historical evolution as an organic unit seen backwards from our standpoint in the present, we are enabled by its aid to follow the broad lines into the future — a privilege of dream-calculation till now permitted only to the physicist. It is, I repeat, in effect the substitution of a Copernican for a Ptolemaic aspect of history, that is, an immeasurable widening of horizon.

Up to now everyone has been at liberty to hope what he pleased about the future. Where there are no facts, sentiment rules. But henceforward it will be every man's business to inform himself of what can happen and therefore of what with the unalterable necessity of destiny and irrespective of personal ideals, hopes or desires, will happen. When we use the risky word "freedom" we shall mean freedom to do, not this or that, but the necessary or nothing. The feeling that this is "just as it should be" is the hall-mark of the man of fact. To lament it and blame it is not to alter it. To birth belongs death, to youth age, to life generally its form and its allotted span. The present is a civilized, emphatically not a cultured time, and ipso facto a great number of life-capacities fall out as impossible. This may be deplorable, and may be and will be deplored in pessimist philosophy and poetry, but it is not in our power to make otherwise. It will not be — already it is not — permissible to defy clear historical experience and to expect, merely because we hope, that this will spring or that will flourish.

It will no doubt be objected that such a world-outlook, which in giving this certainty as to the outlines and tendency of the future cuts off all far-reaching hopes, would be unhealthy for all and fatal for many, once it ceased to be a mere theory and was adopted as a practical scheme of life by the group of personalities effectively moulding the future.

Such is not my opinion. We are civilized, not Gothic or Rococo, people; we have to reckon with the hard cold facts of a late life, to which the parallel is to be found not in Pericles's Athens but in Caesar's Rome. Of great painting or great music there can no longer be, for Western people, any question. Their architectural possibilities have been exhausted these hundred years. Only extensive possibilities are left to them. Yet, for a sound and vigorous generation that is filled with unlimited hopes, I fail to see that it is any disadvantage to discover betimes that some of these hopes must come to nothing. And if the hopes thus doomed should be those most dear, well, a man who is worth anything will not be dismayed. It is true that the issue may be a tragic one for some individuals who in their decisive years are

overpowered by the conviction that in the spheres of architecture, drama, painting, there is nothing left for them to conquer. What matter if they do go under! It has been the convention hitherto to admit no limits of any sort in these matters, and to believe that each period had its own task to do in each sphere. Tasks therefore were found by hook or by crook, leaving it to be settled posthumously whether or not the artist's faith was justified and his life-work necessary. Now, nobody but a pure romantic would take this way out. Such a pride is not the pride of a Roman. What are we to think of the individual who, standing before an exhausted quarry, would rather be told that a new vein will be struck to-morrow — the bait offered by the radically false and mannerized art of the moment — than be shown a rich and virgin clay-bed nearby? The lesson, I think, would be of benefit to the coming generations, as showing them what is possible — and therefore necessary — and what is excluded from the inward potentialities of their time. Hitherto an incredible total of intellect and power has been squandered in false directions. The West-European, however historically he may think and feel, is at a certain stage of life invariably uncertain of his own direction; he gropes and feels his way and, if unlucky in environment, he loses it. But now at last the work of centuries enables him to view the disposition of his own life in relation to the general culture-scheme and to test his own powers and purposes. And I can only hope that men of the new generation may be moved by this book to devote themselves to technics instead of lyrics, the sea instead of the paint-brush, and politics instead of epistemology. Better they could not do.

## XV

It still remains to consider the relation of a morphology of world-history to Philosophy. All genuine historical work is philosophy, unless it is mere anti-industry. But the operations of the systematic philosopher are subject to constant and serious error through his assuming the permanence of his results. He overlooks the fact that every thought lives in a historical world and is therefore involved in the common destiny of mortality. He supposes that higher thought possesses an everlasting and unalterable objectiveness (Gegenstand), that the great questions of all epochs are identical, and that therefore they are capable in the last analysis of unique answers.

But question and answer are here one, and the great questions are made great by the very fact that unequivocal answers to them are so passionately demanded, so that it is as life-symbols only that they possess significance. There are no eternal truths. Every philosophy is the expression of its own and only its own time, and — if by philosophy we mean effective philosophy and not academic triflings about judgment-forms, sense-categories and the like — no two ages possess the same philosophic intentions. The difference is not between perishable and imperishable doctrines but between doctrines which live their day and doctrines which never live at all. The immortality of thoughts-become is an illusion — the essential is, what kind of man comes to expression in them. The greater the man, the truer the philosophy, with the

inward truth that in a great work of art transcends all proof of its several elements or even of their compatibility with one another. At highest, the philosophy may absorb the entire content of an epoch, realize it within itself and then, embodying it in some grand form or personality, pass it on to be developed further and further. The scientific dress or the mark of learning adopted by a philosophy is here unimportant. Nothing is simpler than to make good poverty of ideas by founding a system, and even a good idea has little value when enunciated by a solemn ass. Only its necessity to life decides the eminence of a doctrine.

For me, therefore, the test of value to be applied to a thinker is his eye for the great facts of his own time. Only this can settle whether he is merely a clever architect of systems and principles, versed in definitions and analyses, or whether it is the very soul of his time that speaks in his works and his intuitions. A philosopher who cannot grasp and command actuality as well will never be of the first rank. The Pre-Socratics were merchants and politicians *en grand*. The desire to put his political ideas into practice in Syracuse nearly cost Plato his life, and it was the same Plato who discovered the set of geometrical theorems that enabled Euclid to build up the Classical system of mathematics. Pascal — whom Nietzsche knows only as the “broken Christian” — Descartes, Leibniz were the first mathematicians and technicians of their time.

The great “Pre-Socratics” of China from Kwan-tsi (about 670) to Confucius (550-478) were statesmen, regents, lawgivers like Pythagoras and Parmenides, like Hobbes and Leibniz. With Lao-tsze — the opponent of all state authority and high politics and the enthusiast of small peaceful communities — unworldliness and deed-shyness first appear, heralds of lecture-room and study philosophy. But Lao-tsze was in his time, the *ancien regime* of China, an exception in the midst of sturdy philosophers for whom epistemology meant the knowledge of the important relations of actual life.

And herein, I think, all the philosophers of the newest age are open to a serious criticism. What they do not possess is real standing in actual life. Not one of them has intervened effectively, either in higher politics, in the development of modern technics, in matters of communication, in economics, or in any other big actuality, with a single act or a single compelling idea. Not one of them counts in mathematics, in physics, in the science of government, even to the extent that Kant counted. Let us glance at other times. Confucius was several times a minister. Pythagoras was the organizer of an important political movement akin to the Cromwellian, the significance of which is even now far underestimated by Classical researchers. Goethe, besides being a model executive minister — though lacking, alas! the operative sphere of a great state — was interested in the Suez and Panama canals (the dates of which he foresaw with accuracy) and their effects on the economy of the world, and he busied himself again and again with the question of American economic life and its reactions on the Old World, and



with that of the dawning era of machine-industry. Hobbes was one of the originators of the great plan of winning South America for England, and although in execution the plan went no further than the occupation of Jamaica, he has the glory of being one of the founders of the British Colonial Empire. Leibniz, without doubt the greatest intellect in Western philosophy, the founder of the differential calculus and the analysis situs, conceived or co-operated in a number of major political schemes, one of which was to relieve Germany by drawing the attention of Louis XIV to the importance of Egypt as a factor in French world-policy. The ideas of the memorandum on this subject that he drew up for the Grand Monarch were so far in advance of their time (1671) that it has been thought that Napoleon made use of them for his Eastern venture. Even thus early, Leibniz laid down the principle that Napoleon grasped more and more clearly after Wagram, viz., that acquisitions on the Rhine and in Belgium would not permanently better the position of France and that the neck of Suez would one day be the key of world-dominance. Doubtless the King was not equal to these deep political and strategic conceptions of the Philosopher.

Turning from men of this mould to the “philosophers” of to-day, one is dismayed and shamed. How poor their personalities, how commonplace their political and practical outlook! Why is it that the mere idea of calling upon one of them to prove his intellectual eminence in government, diplomacy, large-scale organization, or direction of any big colonial, commercial or transport concern is enough to evoke our pity? And this insufficiency indicates, not that they possess inwardness, but simply that they lack weight. I look round in vain for an instance in which a modern “philosopher” has made a name by even one deep or far-seeing pronouncement on an important question of the day. I see nothing but provincial opinions of the same kind as anyone else’s. Whenever I take up a work by a modern thinker, I find myself asking: has he any idea whatever of the actualities of world-politics, world-city problems, capitalism, the future of the state, the relation of technics to the course of civilization, Russia, Science? Goethe would have understood all this and revelled in it, but there is not one living philosopher capable of taking it in. This sense of actualities is of course not the same thing as the content of a philosophy but, I repeat, it is an infallible symptom of its inward necessity, its fruitfulness and its symbolic importance.

We must allow ourselves no illusions as to the gravity of this negative result. It is palpable that we have lost sight of the final significance of effective philosophy. We confuse philosophy with preaching, with agitation, with novel-writing, with lecture-room jargon. We have descended from the perspective of the bird to that of the frog. It has come to this, that the very possibility of a real philosophy of to-day and to-morrow is in question. If not, it were far better to become a colonist or an engineer, to do something, no matter what, that is true and real, than to chew over once more the old dried-up themes under cover of an alleged “new wave of philosophic thought” —

far better to construct an aero-engine than a new theory of apperception that is not wanted. Truly it is a poor life's work to restate once more, in slightly different terms, views of a hundred predecessors on the Will or on psycho-physical parallelism. This may be a profession, but a philosophy it emphatically is not. A doctrine that does not attack and affect the life of the period in its inmost depths is no doctrine and had better not be taught. And what was possible even yesterday is, to-day, at least not indispensable.

To me, the depths and refinement of mathematical and physical theories are a joy; by comparison, the aesthete and the physiologist are fumblers. I would sooner have the fine mind-begotten forms of a fast steamer, a steel structure, a precision-lathe, the subtlety and elegance of many chemical and optical processes, than all the pickings and stealings of present-day "arts and crafts," architecture and painting included. I prefer one Roman aqueduct to all Roman temples and statues. I love the Colosseum and the giant vault of the Palatine, for they display for me to-day in the brown massiveness of their brick construction the real Rome and the grand practical sense of her engineers, but it is a matter of indifference to me whether the empty and pretentious marblery of the Caesars — their rows of statuary, their friezes, their overloaded architraves — is preserved or not. Glance at some reconstruction of the Imperial Fora — do we not find them the true counterpart of a modern International Exhibition, obtrusive, bulky, empty, a boasting in materials and dimensions wholly alien to Periclean Greece and the Rococo alike, but exactly paralleled in the Egyptian modernism that is displayed in the ruins of Rameses II (1300 b.c.) at Luxor and Karnak? It was not for nothing that the genuine Roman despised the Graculus history the kind of "artist" and the kind of "philosopher" to be found on the soil of Roman Civilization. The time for art and philosophy had passed; they were exhausted, used up, superfluous, and his instinct for the realities of life told him so. One Roman law weighed more than all the lyrics and school-metaphysics of the time together. And I maintain that to-day many an inventor, many a diplomat, many a financier is a sounder philosopher than all those who practise the dull craft of experimental psychology. This is a situation which regularly repeats itself at a certain historical level. It would have been absurd in a Roman of intellectual eminence, who might as Consul or Praetor lead armies, organize provinces, build cities and roads, or even be the Princeps in Rome, to want to hatch out some new variant of post-Platonic school philosophy at Athens or Rhodes. Consequently no one did so. It was not in harmony with the tendency of the age, and therefore it only attracted third-class men of the kind that always advances as far as the *Zeitgeist* of the day before yesterday. It is a very grave question whether this stage has or has not set in for us already.

A century of purely extensive effectiveness, excluding big artistic and metaphysical production — let us say frankly an irreligious time which coincides exactly with the idea of the world-city — is a time of decline. True. But we have not chosen this time. We cannot help it if we are born as men of

the early winter of full Civilization, instead of on the golden summit of a ripe Culture, in a Phidias or a Mozart time. Everything depends on our seeing our own position, our destiny, clearly, on our realizing that though we may lie to ourselves about it we cannot evade it. He who does not acknowledge this in his heart, ceases to be counted among the men of his generation, and remains either a simpleton, a charlatan, or a pedant.

Therefore, in approaching a problem of the present, one must begin by asking one's self — a question answered in advance by instinct in the case of the genuine adept — what to-day is possible and what he must forbid himself. Only a very few of the problems of metaphysics are, so to say, allocated for solution to any epoch of thought. Even thus soon, a whole world separates Nietzsche's time, in which a last trace of romanticism was still operative, from our own, which has shed every vestige of it.

Systematic philosophy closes with the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Kant put its utmost possibilities in forms both grand in themselves and — as a rule — final for the Western soul. He is followed, as Plato and Aristotle were followed, by a specifically megalopolitan philosophy that was not speculative but practical, irreligious, social-ethical. This philosophy — paralleled in the Chinese civilization by the schools of the "Epicurean" Yang-chu, the "Socialist" Mo-ti, the "Pessimist" Chuang-tsi, the "Positivist" Mencius, and in the Classical by the Cynics, the Cyrenaics, the Stoics and the Epicureans — begins in the West with Schopenhauer, who is the first to make the Will to life ("creative life-force") the centre of gravity of his thought, although the deeper tendency of his doctrine is obscured by his having, under the influence of a great tradition, maintained the obsolete distinctions of phenomena and things-in-themselves and suchlike. It is the same creative will-to-life that was Schopenhauer-wise denied in "Tristan" and Darwin-wise asserted in "Siegfried"; that was brilliantly and theatrically formulated by Nietzsche in "Zarathustra"; that led the Hegelian Marx to an economic and the Malthusian Darwin to a biological hypothesis which together have subtly transformed the world-outlook of the Western megalopolis; and that produced a homogeneous series of tragedy-conceptions extending from Hebbel's "Judith" to Ibsen's "Epilogue." It has embraced, therefore, all the possibilities of a true philosophy — and at the same time it has exhausted them.

Systematic philosophy, then, lies immensely far behind us, and ethical has been wound up. But a third -possibility, corresponding to the Classical Scepticism, still remains to the soul-world of the present-day West, and it can be brought to light by the hitherto unknown methods of historical morphology. That which is a possibility is a necessity. The Classical scepticism is ahistoric, it doubts by denying outright. But that of the West, if it is an inward necessity, a symbol of the autumn of our spirituality, is obliged to be historical through and through. Its solutions are got by treating everything as relative, as a historical phenomenon, and its procedure is psychological. Whereas the Sceptic philosophy arose within Hellenism as the negation of

philosophy — declaring philosophy to be purposeless — we, on the contrary, regard the history of philosophy as, in the last resort, philosophy's gravest theme. This is "skepsis," in the true sense, for whereas the Greek is led to renounce absolute standpoints by contempt for the intellectual past, we are led to do so by comprehension of that past as an organism.

In this work it will be our task to sketch out this unphilosophical philosophy — the last that West Europe will know. Scepticism is the expression of a pure Civilisation; and it dissipates the world-picture of the Culture that has gone before. For us, its success will lie in resolving all the older problems into one, the genetic. The conviction that what is also has become, that the natural and cognizable is rooted in the historic, that the World as the actual is founded on an Ego as the potential actualized, that the "when" and the "how long" hold as deep a secret as the "what," leads directly to the fact that everything, whatever else it may be, must at any rate be the expression of something living. Cognitions and judgments too are acts of living men. The thinkers of the past conceived external actuality as produced by cognition and motivating ethical judgments, but to the thought of the future they are above all expressions and symbols. The Morphology of world-history becomes inevitably a universal symbolism.

With that, the claim of higher thought to possess general and eternal truths falls to the ground. Truths are truths only in relation to a particular mankind. Thus, my own philosophy is able to express and reflect only the Western (as distinct from the Classical, Indian, or other) soul, and that soul only in its present civilized phase by which its conception of the world, its practical range and its sphere of effect are specified.

## XVI

In concluding this Introduction, I may be permitted to add a personal note. In 1911, I proposed to myself to put together some broad considerations on the political phenomena of the day and their possible developments. At that time the World-War appeared to me both as imminent and also as the inevitable outward manifestation of the historical crisis, and my endeavour was to comprehend it from an examination of the spirit of the preceding centuries — not years. In the course of this originally small task,<sup>34</sup> the conviction forced itself on me that for an effective understanding of the epoch the area to be taken into the foundation-plan must be very greatly enlarged, and that in an investigation of this sort, if the results were to be fundamentally conclusive and necessary results, it was impossible to restrict one's self to a single epoch and its political actualities, or to confine one's self to a pragmatistical framework, or even to do without purely metaphysical and highly transcendental methods of treatment. It became evident that a political problem could not be comprehended by means of politics themselves and that, frequently, important factors at work in the depths could only be grasped

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<sup>34</sup> The work referred to is embodied in Vol. II (pp. 541 et seq., 562 et seq., 631 et seq.).

through their artistic manifestations or even distantly seen in the form of scientific or purely philosophical ideas. Even the politico-social analysis of the last decades of the 19th century — a period of tense quiet between two immense and outstanding events: the one which, expressed in the Revolution and Napoleon, had fixed the picture of West-European actuality for a century and another of at least equal significance that was visibly and ever more rapidly approaching — was found in the last resort to be impossible without bringing in all the great problems of Being in all their aspects. For, in the historical as in the natural world-picture, there is found nothing, however small, that does not embody in itself the entire sum of fundamental tendencies. And thus the original theme came to be immensely widened. A vast number of unexpected (and in the main entirely novel) questions and interrelations presented themselves. And finally it became perfectly clear that no single fragment of history could be thoroughly illuminated unless and until the secret of world-history itself, to wit the story of higher mankind as an organism of regular structure, had been cleared up. And hitherto this has not been done, even in the least degree.

From this moment on, relations and connexions — previously often suspected, sometimes touched on but never comprehended — presented themselves in ever-increasing volume. The forms of the arts linked themselves to the forms of war and state-policy. Deep relations were revealed between political and mathematical aspects of the same Culture, between religious and technical conceptions, between mathematics, music and sculpture, between economics and cognition-forms. Clearly and unmistakably there appeared the fundamental dependence of the most modern physical and chemical theories on the mythological concepts of our Germanic ancestors, the style-congruence of tragedy and power-technics and up-to-date finance, and the fact (bizarre at first but soon self-evident) that oil-painting perspective, printing, the credit system, long-range weapons, and contrapuntal music in one case, and the nude statue, the city-state and coin-currency (discovered by the Greeks) in another were identical expressions of one and the same spiritual principle. And, beyond and above all, there stood out the fact that these great groups of morphological relations, each one of which symbolically represents a particular sort of mankind in the whole picture of world-history, are strictly symmetrical in structure. It is this perspective that first opens out for us the true style of history. Belonging itself as symbol and expression to one time and therefore inwardly possible and necessary only for present-day Western man, it can but be compared — distantly — to certain ideas of ultra-modern mathematics in the domain of the Theory of Groups. These were thoughts that had occupied me for many years, though dark and undefined until enabled by this method to emerge in tangible form.

Thereafter I saw the present — the approaching World-War — in a quite other light. It was no longer a momentary constellation of casual facts due to national sentiments, personal influences, or economic tendencies endowed

with an appearance of unity and necessity by some historian's scheme of political of social cause-and-effect, but the type of a historical change of phase occurring within a great historical organism of definable compass at the point preordained for it hundreds of years ago. The mark of the great crisis is its innumerable passionate questionings and probings. In our own case there were books and ideas by the thousand; but, scattered, disconnected, limited by the horizons of specialisms as they were, they incited, depressed and confounded but could not free. Hence, though these questions are seen, their identity is missed. Consider those art-problems that (though never comprehended in their depths) were evinced in the disputes between form and content, line and space, drawing and colour, in the notion of style, in the idea of Impressionism and the music of Wagner. Consider the decline of art and the failing authority of science; the grave problems arising out of the victory of the megalopolis over the country-side, such as childlessness and land-depopulation; the place in society of a fluctuating Fourth Estate; the crisis in materialism, in Socialism, in parliamentary government; the position of the individual vis-a-vis the State; the problem of private property with its pendant the problem of marriage. Consider at the same time one fact taken from what is apparently an entirely different field, the voluminous work that was being done in the domain of folk-psychology on the origins of myths, arts, religions and thought — and done, more-over, no longer from an ideal but from a strictly morphological standpoint. It is my belief that every one of these questions was really aimed in the same direction as every other, viz., towards that one Riddle of History that had never yet emerged with sufficient distinctness in the human consciousness. The tasks before men were not, as supposed, infinitely numerous — they were one and the same task. Everyone had an inkling that this was so, but no one from his own narrow standpoint had seen the single and comprehensive solution. And yet it had been in the air since Nietzsche, and Nietzsche himself had gripped all the decisive problems although, being a romantic, he had not dared to look strict reality in the face.

But herein precisely lies the inward necessity of the stock-taking doctrine, so to call it. It had to come, and it could only come at this time. Our scepticism is not an attack upon, but rather the verification of, our stock of thoughts and works. It confirms all that has been sought and achieved for generations past, in that it integrates all the truly living tendencies which it finds in the special spheres, no matter what their aim may be.

Above all, there discovered itself the opposition of History and Nature through which alone it is possible to grasp the essence of the former. As I have already said, man as an element and representative of the World is a member, not only of nature, but also of history — which is a second Cosmos different in structure and complexion, entirely neglected by Metaphysics in favour of the first. I was originally brought to reflect on this fundamental question of our world-consciousness through noticing how present-day historians as they fumble round tangible events, things-become, believe

themselves to have already grasped History, the happening, the becoming itself. This is a prejudice common to all who proceed by reason and cognition, as against intuitive perception.<sup>35</sup> And it had long ago been a source of perplexity to the great Eleatics with their doctrine that through cognition there could be no becoming, but only a being (or having-become). In other words, History was seen as Nature (in the objective sense of the physicist) and treated accordingly, and it is to this that we must ascribe the baneful mistake of applying the principles of causality, of law, of system — that is, the structure of rigid being — to the picture of happenings. It was assumed that a human culture existed just as electricity or gravitation existed, and that it was capable of analysis in much the same way as these. The habits of the scientific researcher were eagerly taken as a model, and if, from time to time, some student asked what Gothic, or Islam, or the Polis was, no one inquired why such symbols of something living inevitably appeared just then, and there, in that form, and for that space of time. Historians were content, whenever they met one of the innumerable similarities between widely discrete historical phenomena, simply to register it, adding some clever remarks as to the marvels of coincidence, dubbing Rhodes the “Venice of Antiquity” and Napoleon the “modern Alexander,” or the like; yet it was just these cases, in which the destiny-problem came to the fore as the true problem of history (viz., the problem of time), that needed to be treated with all possible seriousness and scientifically regulated physiognomic in order to find out what strangely-constituted necessity, so completely alien to the causal, was at work. That every phenomenon ipso facto propounds a metaphysical riddle, that the time of its occurrence is never irrelevant; that it still remained to be discovered what kind of a living interdependence (apart from the inorganic, natural-law interdependence) subsists within the world-picture, which radiates from nothing less than the whole man and not merely (as Kant thought) from the cognizing part of him; that a phenomenon is not only a fact for the understanding but also an expression of the spiritual, not only an object but a symbol as well, be it one of the highest creations of religion or art or a mere trifle of everyday life — all this was, philosophically, something new. And

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<sup>35</sup> The philosophy of this book I owe to the philosophy of Goethe, which is practically unknown to-day, and also (but in a far less degree) to that of Nietzsche. The position of Goethe in West-European metaphysics is still not understood in the least; when philosophy is being discussed he is not even named. For unfortunately he did not set down his doctrines in a rigid system, and so the systematic philosophy has overlooked him. Nevertheless he was a philosopher. His place vis-à-vis Kant is the same as that of Plato — who similarly eludes the would-be-systematizer — vis-à-vis Aristotle. Plato and Goethe stand for the philosophy of Becoming, Aristotle and Kant the philosophy of Being. Here we have intuition opposed to analysis. Something that it is practically impossible to convey by the methods of reason is found in individual sayings and poems of Goethe, e.g., in the *Orphische Urworte*, and stanzas like “Wenn im Unendlichen” and “Sagt es Niemand,” which must be regarded as the expression of a perfectly definite metaphysical doctrine. I would not have one single word changed in this: “The Godhead is effective in the living and not in the dead, in the becoming and the changing, not in the become and the set-fast; and therefore, similarly, the reason (*Vernunft*) is concerned only to strive towards the divine through the becoming and the living, and the understanding (*Verstand*) only to make use of the become and the set-fast” (to Eckermann). This sentence comprises my entire philosophy.

thus in the end I came to see the solution clearly before me in immense outlines, possessed of full inward necessity, a solution derived from one single principle that though discoverable had never been discovered, that from my youth had haunted and attracted me, tormenting me with the sense that it was there and must be attacked and yet defying me to seize it. Thus, from an almost accidental occasion of beginning, there has arisen the present work, which is put forward as the provisional expression of a new world-picture. The book is laden, as I know, with all the defects of a first attempt, incomplete, and certainly not free from inconsistencies. Nevertheless I am convinced that it contains the incontrovertible formulation of an idea which, once enunciated clearly, will (I repeat) be accepted without dispute.

If, then, the narrower theme is an analysis of the Decline of that West-European Culture which is now spread over the entire globe, yet the object in view is the development of a philosophy and of the operative method peculiar to it, which is now to be tried, viz., the method of comparative morphology in world-history. The work falls naturally into two parts. The first, "Form and Actuality," starts from the form-language of the great Cultures, attempts to penetrate to the deepest roots of their origin and so provides itself with the basis for a science of Symbolic. The second part, "World-historical Perspectives," starts from the facts of actual life, and from the historical practice of higher mankind seeks to obtain a quintessence of historical experience that we can set to work upon the formation of our own future.

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