

OSWALD SPENGLER

Selected Essays

translated
with an
introduction by
DONALD O. WHITE



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Reader's Notes For Selected Essays

The Selected Essays appear here for the first time on the Internet (June 2004). The reader will note Prussianism And Socialism is already on this site (above). As a corpus of work, the Essays are no less important than Spengler's other writings as keen expressions of the Conservative Revolution in Germany.

Oswald Spengler

Selected Essays

Translation and Introduction by Donald O. White

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Introduction

We leave it to the reader to 'read between the lines' of this critical introduction which appeared with this edition of the Essays.

Little remains today of the great international Oswald Spengler vogue of the 1920's and 1930's. The title of his two-volume magnum opus, *The Decline of the West*, [1] crops up now and again in a variety of contexts, but one rarely meets people who have actually read the work or even portions of it. It could be argued, of course, that even in the heyday of the Spenglerian cult the readers of his "outline of a morphology of world history" were few, and those who grasped what it was really about, still fewer. The cult was borne, it seems fair to say, by a widespread hunch that the all too palpable ills of the modern world had been accurately diagnosed by this Teutonic doctor-prophet. Spengler, the man of the perpetual scowl, became a whole generation's symbol for the futility of human endeavor. While scholars were busy ferreting out the many errors of detail that *The Decline of the West* contains, news of the book's somber message reached intellectual and pseudo-intellectual circles in all the Western countries and beyond. To participate in the futility rite it was quite unnecessary to have read the book; the mere mention of Spengler's name sufficed to express a whole mood of resignation in the face of the impersonal cruelty of history.

(1. Volume I appeared in 1918, Volume II in 1922.)

The reasons for the eventual passing of the Spengler cult are, I think, readily apparent. It is not that the historical methodology demonstrated in *The Decline of the West* has been conclusively judged fallacious or outmoded; historians and philosophers of history still attend to the developmental and "morphological" problems that the book presents, and, while unqualified assent is rare among the professionals, Spengler continues to be a respectable subject for scholarly inquiry. Nor is it true that the intellectual mood in the Western world has changed so fundamentally from that of thirty and forty years ago as to preclude an audience for Spengler's message. If anything, the pessimism, genuine or feigned, that put his name on thousands of lips in the

twenties and thirties has increased rather than subsided since his death. The modern totalitarian state, World War II, the emergence of Soviet Russia as a major world power, the ever more rapid advance of technology -- all of which he (however vaguely) foresaw and predicted in his writings -- ought to have assured his continued relevance in the Nuclear Age.

Aside from the appearance of other writers of imaginative power who have replaced him as spokesmen for the predicament of modern man, a number of external events have obscured Spengler's significance for the past thirty years. There is, first of all, the fact of his death in 1936, at a time when the regime in his own country had effectively muzzled him and when the remainder of the Western world had once again begun to suspect all things German. Spengler's disagreement with the National Socialist dictatorship, documented in his booklet *Years of Decision* (published in the summer of 1933), evoked a government ban on the mention of his name in the German press, and caused Spengler, already a physically broken man, to join the rank of the "inner emigration." Abroad, the image of the brooding *Geschichtsphilosoph* became linked with the frightening display of political cynicism personified by Hitler, the "new Caesar." The irony of this mistaken image has never been fully realized, despite the efforts of scholars in Germany and elsewhere to recount and explain the last years of Spengler's life to postwar readers.

In fact, little has ever been known outside of Germany of Spengler's active concern with contemporary politics from the time of publication of *The Decline of the West* to his death almost twenty years later. Judging from the paucity of translations of his shorter writings, one is inclined to conclude that the world was content with the notion of Spengler as the hermit genius, the Great Mind who stood utterly aloof from his time and society in order to formulate inspired and profound theories of universal history.

Perhaps the present selection of essays and speeches will help to alter this oversimplified portrait.

Once the overwhelming success of the first volume of *The Decline of the West* had become apparent, Spengler was frequently asked to write or speak on historical and political subjects. The prediction of future developments was, after all, part of the method propounded in *The Decline of the West*. Cultures, he had theorized there, had risen and fallen in the past; once it is established precisely where our own contemporary Western culture stands within the recurring pattern of birth, flowering, and decay, it will be possible to foretell, at least in general terms, the course of history in the time that remains at our disposal. Thus, when consulting him for pronouncements on future events and trends, the countless German and foreign clubs, newspapers, institutions, and individuals were in effect simply taking him at his word, and there is some evidence, in his correspondence as well as in the pronouncements themselves, that he was not entirely displeased by his role of popular oracle. And, like all famous oracles, he was most often deliberately vague and ambiguous when telling the future.

Readers may be surprised to discover in these shorter works that Spengler gave such attention to the political events of his day. In the opening paragraph of *Prussianism and Socialism*, written about a year after the first volume of *The Decline of the West* was published, we learn that the subject matter of this political tract comprises "at least in part, the germinal stage in the development of the entire thesis" of the larger work. And, indeed, the argument of *Prussianism and Socialism* reaches deep into past history in order to explain present-day affairs and to help predict the political configurations of tomorrow. The genuine worry and indignation that informed this pamphlet-length statement make it all the more plausible to seek the roots of his broader "morphological" view of

world history in his own conservative, nationalistic political beliefs.

Spengler was not entirely comfortable, however, when speaking out on contemporary politics -- not because he lacked convictions on such matters as parliamentary democracy and laissez faire economics, but because the language of the political pamphlet was simply not his idiom, and because the hectic pace of topical discussion did not appeal to his scholarly disposition. "I have just finished my political piece [*Prussianism and Socialism*]," he wrote to a friend in November, 1919, "under extreme nervous pressure, for each page had to be delivered immediately to the printer. I am not a born journalist, and consequently I wrote out 500 pages of rough draft in four weeks, and then started paring in order to get 100 printed pages of readable German. I realize now how I ought to work, and shall never again accept any assignment that carries a deadline with it." Rather than eliminate the signs of haste that the essay does have, I have translated it in its entirety, for I believe that the reader is entitled to sense the urgency that produced this statement from Spengler during the early months of the Weimar Republic. Together with the later booklet, *Years of Decision*, it remains his most important and detailed political manifesto.

The essay "Pessimism?" written in 1921 as a corrective to the simplistic popular response to the first volume of *The Decline of the West*, attempts to clarify the meaning of that best-selling book by distinguishing its method and approach from those of the academic historians and philosophers. To the many war-weary Europeans who harkened to the term *Untergang* as a confirmation of their worst fears for Western culture, Spengler offered in this short essay a somewhat brighter, if no less doggedly fatalistic view of our culture's prospects. The issue of pessimism touches on the paradox of all deterministic world views, including Spengler's: If the course of future events is inevitable, what use is there of trying to change it? Spengler's answer here makes, I think, more

emotional than logical sense. "No, I am not a pessimist," he writes. "Pessimism means not to see any more tasks. I see so many unsolved tasks that I fear we shall have neither time nor men enough to go at them." The essay closes with what is perhaps Spengler's most ominous prediction: "We Germans will never again produce a Goethe, but indeed a Caesar." A dozen years later, the prophet cringed at the fulfillment of his prophecy.

The speech on "Nietzsche and His Century" was delivered before invited guests at the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar on October, 1924. Throughout the 1920's Spengler maintained cordial relations with Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, the sister of the deceased philosopher. It was not until 1935, when Frau Förster-Nietzsche had invited Hitler to the Archive and blatantly compromised her brother's heritage by supporting the Nazis' ideological claim to Nietzsche as a "precursor," that Spengler, already benumbed by the official proscription of his *Years of Decision*, severed his connections with this irresponsible woman. The 1924 speech contains perceptive and even profound comment on Nietzsche's life and works, but also a great deal that is pertinent to the speaker himself. Nietzsche, he said in this Weimar lecture, "was the first to experience as a symphony the image of history that had been created by scholarly research out of data and numbers -- the rhythmic sequence of ages, customs, and attitudes." Anyone familiar with Nietzsche's writings will readily concede the truth of what Spengler said here, but he will also notice that the point is quite patently overstated. Clearly, Spengler was ascribing to one of his most important spiritual guides an achievement that was in fact his own.

The occasion for which Spengler composed his lecture entitled "The Two Faces of Russia and Germany's Eastern Problems" was a convention of captains of industry in the heart of the Ruhr district in early 1922. Before audiences such as this one he naturally indulged his penchant for oracular predictions; his remarks about

"the coming religion of Russia" might strike us as amusing now that we have witnessed Soviet developments from Stalin to Khrushchev and beyond. But there is enough depth and insight to this speech to make one suppose that Spengler may, allowing the Russian people enough time to come to itself, carry the day after all.

His observations "On the German National Character," written as an occasional piece for the first issue of the annual periodical *Deutschland* in 1927, are as accurate and illuminating as any writings I know on the same subject. Though his nationalist temperament shines through the discussion, he evidently saw more clearly than most of his contemporaries the inherent ambiguity of German habits and tendencies.

The final item is Spengler's cabled response to a poll of famous personages conducted by the American magazine *Hearst's International-Cosmopolitan*, and appeared in the January, 1936 issue (in barely adequate translation). The question put to the participants in this timely symposium was the following: "Will it finally be brought home to us that it is human nature itself, with its racial antagonisms, economic rivalries, and territorial squabbles, that will keep plunging us forever into wars? Or is there reason to believe that some day the peoples of the earth may abolish wholesale killing and enjoy their lives in security and peace?" Replies were received from nineteen prominent personalities, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Mark Sullivan, Amelia Earhart, Dean Inge, General "Billy" Mitchell, Havelock Ellis, Mahatma Gandhi, and Lin Yu T'ang. Their opinions ranged from Gandhi's and Mrs. Roosevelt's guarded optimism to the stark and hopeless picture drawn by Spengler.

This brief statement on world peace was Oswald Spengler's final public pronouncement. It is ironic that he should appear as the sole representative of Germany in the *Cosmopolitan* symposium;

American readers will have interpreted his biologicistic language and his remarks on the "colored peoples" as yet another manifestation of Nazi ideology. Unknown to the rest of the world was Spengler's frustration and sorrow over what was happening in his country. The oracle spoke, and was forever silent.

Pessimism?

First published in *Preußische Jahrbücher*, CLXXXIV (1921).

My book [1] has met with widespread misunderstandings. In a sense, that is almost an inevitable concomitant of any novel approach which arrives at new conclusions. Such a reaction is all the more to be expected when the conclusions reached, or even the perspectives and methodology that led to them, present a serious challenge to the prevailing mood of an age. When such a book chances to become fashionable, the misunderstandings will multiply. For then people are confronted suddenly by a complex of ideas which they should actually not have attempted to digest until after years of preparatory reading. With my own book there is the added difficulty that only the negative side of the picture has hitherto reached the public. Most critics have neglected to observe that this first volume represents only a fragment from which, as I was soon to realize, it is not easy to form conclusions about what is to follow. The forthcoming second volume will round out the "Morphology of World History," thus bringing to a close my examination of at least one aspect of the problem. Attentive readers will have noticed that I touched briefly on a second aspect, the ethical question, in my essay *Prussianism and Socialism*.

(1. *The Decline of the West*, Vol. I.)

One further obstacle to an understanding of my book is the rather disconcerting title it bears. I was careful to emphasize that this title was chosen years before publication, and that it objectively describes a simple fact for which evidence can be found in the most familiar events of world history. Still, there are people who cannot hear the word "decline" without thinking of a sudden and dreadful calamity. My title does *not* imply catastrophe. Perhaps we could eliminate the "pessimism" without altering the real sense of the title if we were to substitute for "decline" the word "fulfillment," bearing in mind the special functions that Goethe assigned to this concept in his own world view.

However, even the first installment of my book was not addressed to speculative persons, but to active ones. My aim was to present an image of the world to be lived with, rather than to devise a system for professional philosophers to brood over. I was not aware of this distinction at the time, but it will obviously prevent a large number of readers from arriving at a true understanding of what the book is about.

The active person lives in the world of phenomena and with it. He does not require logical proofs, indeed he often cannot understand them. "Physiognomic rhythm" -- one of the terms that practically no one has been able to comprehend fully -- gives him deeper insights than any method based on logical proof ever could. I made assertions in my book which scholarly readers have regarded as completely contradictory. Yet all these are things that have long been felt and cherished privately, though not necessarily consciously, by individuals who are inclined to a life of action. When such individuals read books, that is to say, when they enter the realm of theory, they reject the same "historical relativism" that is second nature to them when they are engaged in practical activity, or are observing people and situations for the purposes of action.

The contemplative person, on the other hand, is by nature remote from life. He views it from a distance, for it is strange and goes against the grain. As soon as it threatens to become something other than an observed object, he is annoyed. Contemplative persons collect, dissect, and arrange things, not for any practical purpose but simply because it makes them happy. They demand logical proofs and know how to go about getting them. To them, a book such as mine must forever remain an aberration. For I confess that I have never had anything but contempt for "philosophy for its own sake." To my way of thinking there is nothing more tedious than pure logic, scientific psychology, general ethics and esthetics. Life is not made up of science and generalities. Every line that is not written in the service of active living seems to me superfluous. At the risk of being taken too literally, I would say that my way of looking at the world is related to the "systematic" way as the memoirs of a statesman are related to the ideal state of a utopian. The former writes down what he has lived through; the latter records what he has dreamed up.

Now there does exist, particularly in the German tradition, what might be called a statesmanlike way of experiencing the world, an unforced and unsystematic attitude toward life which can be recorded only by means of a kind of metaphysical memoir-writing. It is important to realize that my book belongs in this tradition. If in the following I mention some illustrious names, it is not meant to imply anything about the quality of the book but merely to indicate the type of vision that went into its making.

A powerful stream of German thought runs from Leibniz to Goethe and Hegel, and on into the future. Like all things German, this stream was forced to run underground and to flow on unnoticed through the centuries. For over the same period even the creators of this tradition found that they had to adapt themselves to foreign and superficial patterns of thought.

Leibniz was Goethe's great teacher, although the latter was never really conscious of it. Goethe often adopted genuinely Leibnizian ideas, either out of a natural affinity for his thought or through the influence of his friend Herder. In such instances, however, he always referred to Spinoza, whose mode of thinking was in fact quite dissimilar. Leibniz's outstanding characteristic was his constant involvement in the important events of his time. If we were to remove from his works all the items that are concerned with politics, the reunification of the churches, mining projects, and the organization of science and mathematics, not much would be left. Goethe resembles him in that he always thought historically, i.e., with constant reference to the real facts of existence. Like Leibniz, he would never have been capable of constructing an abstract philosophical system.

Hegel was the last great thinker to take political realities as his point of departure without letting his thought be entirely smothered by abstractions. Then came Nietzsche, a dilettante in the best sense, who held firmly aloof from academic philosophy, which by his time had become altogether sterile. He was taken in by Darwin's theories, yet he transcended the age of English Darwinism. He gave us the vision with which we can now bring about a victory for a vital and practical approach to world history.

These are, as I now see, the premises that unconsciously influenced my writing. Among them there is not a single "system" of generalities. The historical compilations of Leibniz, Goethe's observations on nature, and Hegel's lectures on world history were all written in clear view of factual reality -- something that cannot be said of Kant's and Schopenhauer's works. I construe the relationships between reality and speculative thought in a manner wholly different from the systematic philosophers. For them reality is lifeless matter from which laws can be derived. For me, reality presents examples that illuminate an experienced thought, a thought which is communicable only in this form. Because this

approach is unscientific, it requires an uncommon facility for thinking in broad outlines and for synthesizing. It normally happens, as I have had occasion to notice, that as the reader concentrates on one point in my book he quickly loses sight of the others. In doing so he misconstrues everything, for the book is so cohesive that to isolate a single detail is tantamount to committing an error. Moreover, one must be able to read between the lines. Many things are merely hinted at, while others cannot be expressed at all in scientific fashion.

The central idea is the concept of Destiny. The reason it is so difficult to make the reader understand it is that the process of systematic, rational thought leads him to its very opposite: the idea of causality. Destiny and Chance are matters quite remote from the apprehension of cause and effect, antecedent and consequent. There is a danger that Destiny may be misunderstood as simply another way of referring to a causal sequence that exists without being readily visible. The scientific mind will never be able to grasp this. The ability to perceive facts of an emotional and vital nature ceases as soon as one begins to think analytically. Destiny is a word whose meaning is *felt*. Time, Yearning, and Life are closely related concepts. No one can presume to understand the essence of my thought unless he can sense the ultimate meaning of these words as *I* intended it.

The idea of Destiny leads to a kind of experience that is exceedingly difficult to comprehend. I call it "depth experience." It is more closely related to rational thought, but only in its end effect, not in its origins. This concept presents us with two of the most difficult problems of all. What is meant by the word "Time"? There is no scientific answer to this question. What is meant by the word "Space"? Here, rational thought may possibly provide us with an answer. Yet a connection exists between Destiny and Time, and also between Space and Causality. What, then, is the relationship between Destiny and Cause? The answer to this is

fundamental to the concept of depth experience, but it lies beyond all manners of scientific experience and communication. The fact of depth experience is as indisputable as it is inexplicable.

A third concept, likewise very difficult to grasp, is that of Physiognomic Rhythm. This is actually something which every human being possesses. He lives with it and constantly applies it to practical ends. It is something one is born with and which cannot be acquired. The proverbial naïveté and ludicrousness displayed in public affairs by the old-style abstract scholar is a result of the retarded development of this rhythm. Nevertheless, even this personality type possesses enough of it to go on living.

What I have in mind, however, is a very exalted form of this Rhythm, an unconscious technique of grasping not merely the phenomena of everyday life but the sense of the universe. Few persons can be said to master it. It is the technique that makes a genuine historian the equal of a born statesman, despite the disparity between theory and practice. Of the two principal techniques of gaining knowledge and understanding, it is without doubt the more important by far for history and real life. The other method, systematic thought, serves only to discover truths. But facts are more important than truths. The entire course of political and economic history, indeed of all human endeavors, is dependent on the constant application of this technique by individuals, including the insignificant individuals who are historically passive as well as the great ones who make history.

The physiognomic technique is predominant during most of the waking life of historically active and passive individuals. By comparison, the systematic technique, which is the only one recognized by philosophy, is virtually reduced to historical insignificance. What makes my approach so unorthodox is the fact that it is consciously based on the technique of real life. As a result it is inwardly consistent, though it lacks a system.

The concept that has caused the most serious misunderstandings is the one to which I assigned, not quite fortunately perhaps, the term "relativism." This has not the slightest thing in common with the relativism of physical science, which is based solely on the mathematical contrast between constant and function. It will take years for readers to become sufficiently familiar with my concept for it to gain real currency. For it is a completely *ethical* view of the world in which individual lives take their course. To those who have not understood the concept of Destiny, this term will be meaningless. As I see it, Relativism in history is an affirmation of the idea of Destiny. The uniqueness, irrevocability, and nonrecurrence of all events is the form in which Destiny manifests itself to the human eye.

Like the Physiognomic Technique, this Relativism has existed, either in active life or in passive observation, at all times. It is such a natural part of real life, and is in such complete control of everyday occurrences, that it does not reach the consciousness. In fact, when the mind is engaged in theorizing, i.e., when it is forming generalizations, the existence of this Relativism is usually denied emphatically. The idea is not really new as such. In our late age there can be no new ideas. Throughout the entire nineteenth century not one question was raised that had not already been discovered, reflected upon, and brilliantly formulated by the Scholastics. It is only because Relativism is such an intrinsic element of life, and thus so unphilosophical an idea, that it has not been considered suitable as part of a "system." The old adage, "One man's meat is another man's poison," is just about the reverse of all academic philosophy. The academic is bent on proving that one man's meat is *every* man's meat, i.e., that the ethical point he has just proved in his book is binding on all. I have quite consciously taken the opposite standpoint, namely that of life, not of thought. The two naïve positions maintain either that something exists that has normative value for all eternity regardless of Time and Destiny, or that such a thing does not exist.

However, what is here called Relativism is neither of these two positions. It is here that I have created something new. It is an experienced fact that "world history" is not a unified sequence of events, but rather a collection of high cultures, of which there have been eight in number up to now. The life histories of these cultures are quite independent of each other, yet each shares a similar structural pattern with all the others. This being established, I demonstrated that every observer, regardless of whether he thinks in terms of life or of thought only, thinks solely as a representative of his own particular time. With this we can dismiss one of the most absurd criticisms leveled against my views: the argument that Relativism carries with it its own refutation. The conclusion to be drawn is that for every culture, for every epoch within a culture, and for every kind of individual within an epoch there exists an overall perspective that is imposed and exacted by the time in question. This perspective must be considered absolute for that particular time, but *not* with respect to other times. There is a perspective imposed by our own time, yet it goes without saying that it is different from that of the Age of Goethe. "True" and "false" are concepts that cannot be applied here. The only pertinent descriptive terms are "deep" and "shallow." Whoever thinks differently is, in any case, incapable of thinking historically.

Any vital approach to the problems of history, including the one I am proposing, belongs to a single time. It evolved out of a previous approach and will in turn evolve into another. There are in all of history just as few totally correct or totally false approaches as there are right and wrong stages in the growth of a plant. All are necessary, and the only sensible thing to say is that a certain stage is successful or unsuccessful with respect to the demands of the moment. The same holds true for every world view, no matter when it arises. Even the most hard-bitten systematic philosopher feels this. He uses such terms as "obsolete," "typical for the age," and "premature" to describe the views of others. By so doing he is

admitting that the concepts of truth and falsity have meaning only for the outer shell of science, but not for its vital essence.

Thus we arrive at the distinction between *facts* and *truths*. A fact is something unique, something which has really existed or will really exist. A truth is something which can exist as a possibility without ever entering reality. Destiny has to do with facts; the relation between cause and effect is a truth. All this has been known since time immemorial. What men have failed to realize, however, is that life, for that very reason, has to do only with facts, that it is made up of facts exclusively, and that its only mode of response is factual. Truths are quantities of thought, and their importance lies solely within the realm of thought. Truths can be found in a doctoral dissertation in philosophy; flunking a doctoral examination is a fact. Reality begins where the realm of thought ends. No one, not even the most ascetic systematician, can overlook this fact of life. And, indeed, he does not overlook it. But he forgets it as soon as he starts thinking about life instead of living it.

If I can lay claim to any accomplishment at all, it is that no one can ever again view the future as an unwritten tablet on which anybody can inscribe whatever pleases his fancy. The capricious and arbitrary outlook that endorses the motto "It shall be thus!" must now give way to a cool and clear vision that sees the possible, and therefore necessary, facts of the future, and that makes its options accordingly. The first thing that confronts man in the form of Destiny is the time and place of his birth. This is an inescapable fact; no amount of thought can comprehend its origin, and no will can avert it. Moreover, it is the most decisive fact of all. Everyone is born into a people, a religion, a class, an age, a culture. It is Destiny that determines whether a man be born a slave in Periclean Athens, a knight at the time of the Crusades, or a laborer's or rich man's son in our own day. If anything can be called fate, fortune, or destiny, it is this. History means that life is constantly changing.

For the individual, however, life is precisely thus and so, and not otherwise. With his birth the individual receives his nature and a particular range of possible tasks, within which he has the privilege of free choice. Whatever his nature wills or is capable of, whatever his birth allows or prevents, for every individual there is prescribed a definite range of happiness or misery, greatness or cowardice, tragedy or absurdity, which will make up *his life only*. What is more, Destiny determines whether his life is to have significance for the lives of those around him, that is to say, whether it will be meaningful for history. In the light of this, the most fundamental of facts, all philosophizing about "the" task of "humanity" and "the" nature of "morality" is idle talk.

That is what is truly novel in my approach, an idea that had to be expressed and made accessible to life after the entire nineteenth century had striven toward it: Faustian man's *conscious* relation to history. People have not understood why I chose to substitute a new image for the usual pattern (antiquity -- Middle Ages -- modern times). Man lives constantly "in an image"; it governs his decisions, and shapes his mentality. He can never rid himself of an old image until he has acquired a new one and has made it completely his own.

"Historical vision" -- this is possible only for Western European man, and even for him it is possible only from this moment on. Nietzsche could still speak of the historical *disease*. He used this term to describe what he saw around him: the faint-hearted romanticism of the poets and writers, the philologists' dreamlike nostalgia for the distant past, the patriots' habit of timidly consulting previous history before arriving at any decisions, the urge to compare, symptomatic of insufficient mental independence.

Since 1870 we Germans have suffered more from this disease than any other nation. Is it not true that we have continually looked to

the ancient Teutons, to the Crusader knights, and Hölderlin's Greeks whenever we have been at a loss for what to do in the Age of Electricity? The British have been more fortunate. They have preserved all the institutions that sprang up in the wake of the Norman Conquest: their laws, freedoms, and customs. At all times they have been able to sustain an impressive tradition without ever seeing it in jeopardy. They have never felt the need to compensate for a thousand years of shattered ideals by gazing nostalgically into the remote past. The historical disease lingers on in the idealism and humanism of today's Germany. It is causing us to concoct pretentious plans for improving the world; each day brings some radically new and foolproof scheme for giving all aspects of life their final, correct form. The only practical outcome of all these designs lies in the fact that they are exhausting crucial energies through senseless quarreling, spoiling our chances to discover real opportunities, and failing to give London and Paris any real competition.

Historical vision is the direct opposite of this. Those who have it are experts -- confident, cool-headed experts. A thousand years of historical thought and research have spread out before us a vast treasure, not of knowledge, for that is relatively unimportant, but of experience. Once these experiences are viewed in the perspective I have just described, they take on an entirely new meaning. Up to now -- this is truer for the Germans than for any other nation -- we have looked to the past for models to live by. But there are *no* models. There are only examples of how the life of individuals, peoples, and cultures have evolved, reached maturity, and become extinct. These examples show us the relationships that exist between inborn character and external conditions, between Tempo and Duration. We are not given patterns to imitate. Rather, we can observe how something happened, and thus learn what consequences to expect from our own situation.

Up to now only a few persons have had such insights, and then only with regard to their immediate pupils, subordinates, or co-workers. Some superior statesmen have had it as well, but only in connection with personalities and nations of their own time. This was the refined art of controlling life's forces, acquired through the ability to seize its opportunities and predict its changes. With this art one could be master over others or even be Destiny itself. We are now in a position to do likewise for our own culture, predicting its course for centuries ahead as if it were an organism whose inner structure we had studied exhaustively. We realize that every fact is a chance occurrence, unforeseen and unpredictable. Yet with the picture of other cultures before us, we can be just as sure that the nature and course of future life, of individuals as well as of cultures, are *not* accidental. Future developments can, of course, be brought to perfection, threatened, corrupted, and destroyed by the free choice of active persons. But they can never be diverted from their real direction and meaning.

This has made possible for the first time a truly great form of education. It will require the recognition of inner potentialities. It will mean imposing obligations, not on the basis of "ideal" abstractions, but in agreement with the prediction of future facts. It will necessitate the training of individuals and whole generations for the fulfillment of these obligations. For the first time we are able to see that the entire literature of ideal "truths," all of those noble, well-meant, and foolhardy schemes, outlines, and brainstorm, all of those books, pamphlets, and speeches are absolutely useless. All other cultures have, at a corresponding stage in their development, labeled these things for what they are and consigned them to oblivion. Their only tangible effect was to have puny scholars write books about them later. Let me repeat: For the mere observer there may be such things as truths; for life there are no truths, only facts.

This leads me to the question of pessimism. When in 1911, under the impression of the events at Agadir, I suddenly discovered my "philosophy," the European-American world was infused with the trivial optimism of the Darwinist age. With the title of my book, chosen in instinctive opposition to the prevailing mood, I unconsciously put my finger on the aspect of evolution that no one was willing to see. If I had to choose again now, I would try with another formula to strike at today's equally trivial pessimism. I would be the last person to maintain that history can be appraised by means of a catchword.

Be that as it may, as far as the "goal of humanity" is concerned I am a convinced and thoroughgoing pessimist. As I see it, humanity is a zoological entity. I see no progress, no goal or path for mankind, except perhaps in the minds of Western progress-mongers. In this mere mass of population I can distinguish no such thing as a "spirit," not to speak of a unity of effort, feeling, or understanding. The only place where I can make out a meaningful advance of life toward a particular goal, a unity of soul, will, and experience, is in the history of single cultures. What we discover there is, to be sure, limited and factual. Yet it shows us a progression from desire to accomplishment, culminating in new tasks that do not take the form of ethical catchwords and generalities but, rather, of tangible historical goals.

Whoever chooses to call this pessimism will reveal thereby his utterly pedestrian idealism. This kind of person sees history as a highway, with mankind plodding along steadily in one direction, forever following some philosophical cliché or other. The philosophers, each in his own way but nonetheless "correctly" in every case, have long since hit upon the sublime and abstract terminology to describe the true goal and essence of our earthly sojourn. Yet optimism consists further in forever striving after these slogans without ever reaching them. A conceivable end to all

this striving would spoil the ideal. Whosoever objects to all this is a pessimist.

I would be ashamed to go through life with such tawdry ideals. There is in all of this the diffidence of born dreamers and cowards, people who cannot stand to face reality and formulate a real goal in a few sensible words. They insist on broad generalities that glitter in the distance. This calms the fears of those who are impotent when it comes to anything demanding leadership, enterprise, or initiative. I am aware that a book such as mine can have devastating consequences for these people. Germans have written to me from America that for persons who are determined to *be* something in life, the book has the effect of a bracing tonic. Still, those born only for dreaming, poetry, and oratory can be contaminated by any book. I know these "fair youths"; the universities and literary coteries are fairly crawling with them. First it was Schopenhauer, and then Nietzsche, who freed them from the obligation to expend energy. Now they have found a new liberator.

No, I am not a pessimist. Pessimism means not to see any more tasks. I see so many unsolved tasks that I fear we shall have neither time nor men enough to go at them. The practical aspects of physics and chemistry have come nowhere near the limits of their possibilities. Technology has yet to reach its peak in nearly all fields. One of the major tasks still facing modern classical philology is to create an image of antiquity that will remove from the minds of our educated populace the "classical" picture, with its invitation to pedestrian idealism.

There is no better place than Classical antiquity to learn how matters really stand in the world, and how romanticism and abstract ideals have been shattered time and again by factual events. Things would be quite different for us if we had spent more time in school on Thucydides and less on Homer. Up to now no

statesman has ever thought to write a commentary on Thucydides, Polybius, or Tacitus for our young people. We have neither an economic history of antiquity nor a history of ancient politics. Despite the astonishing parallels to Western European history no one has ever written a political history of China to the reign of Shih Huang Ti. The Law, imposed by the social and economic structure of our civilization, is still in the initial stages of being investigated. According to those most familiar with the field, the science of jurisprudence has yet to reach out beyond philology and dry scholasticism. Political economics is as yet not really a science at all.

I shall refrain from discussing the political, economic, and organizational tasks we face in our own future. What our contemplatives and idealists are seeking is a comfortable *Weltanschauung*, a philosophical system that requires only that one be convinced by it; they want a moral excuse for their timorousness. These are the born debaters who spend their days in the remote corners of life discussing things. Let them stay there.

We cannot fashion a program for the future millennia of humanity without running the risk of its being thwarted immediately by reality. It is possible, however, to do something of the sort for the next few centuries of Faustian culture, the historical outlines of which are visible. What are the implications of these facts? The Puritan pride of England says, "Everything is predestined. Therefore I must emerge victorious." The others say, "Everything is predestined. That is prosaic and not at all idealistic. Hence there is no use even trying." But the truth is that the tasks facing the factual persons among us Westerners are innumerable. For the romantics and ideologists, however, who cannot think of the world without writing poems, painting pictures, devising ethical systems, or living solemn *Weltanschauungen*, it is quite understandably a hopeless prospect.

I shall come right out and say it -- let those who wish cry out in protest: The historical significance of art and abstract thought is seriously overrated. No matter how important their role has been during great eras, there have always been more essential things. In the history of art the importance of Grünewald and Mozart cannot be overestimated. In the *real* history of the ages of Charles V and Louis XV their existence is of no consequence at all. It may happen that a great historical event stimulates an artist. The reverse has never occurred. What is being produced by way of art today does not even bear significance for art history. And as far as today's academic philosophy is concerned, none of its various "schools" has the slightest pertinence for life or the soul. Neither our educated citizenry nor scholars in the other disciplines are really paying attention to them. All they are good for is to have dissertations written about them, which will be quoted in later dissertations, none of which will ever be read except by future philosophy professors.

It was Nietzsche who questioned the validity of science. It is high time that we asked the same questions about art. Eras without genuine art and philosophy can still be great eras; the Romans have demonstrated this for us. Yet for those who are always a step behind the times, the arts are synonymous with Life itself.

Not for us, however. People have told me that without art life is not worth living. I ask in return: *For whom* is it not worth living? I should not care to have lived as a sculptor, ethical philosopher, or dramatist in the days of Marius and Caesar. Nor would I care to have been a member of some Stefan George Circle, attacking Roman politics from behind the Forum with the grand pose of the *littérateur*. No one can have a closer affinity for the great art of our past -- for there is none today -- than I. I should not care to live without Goethe, Shakespeare, or the great monuments of older architecture. I am thrilled by any sublime Renaissance masterpiece, precisely because I am aware of its limitations. I love Bach and

Mozart more than I can say; but this cannot make me speak of all the thousands of writers, painters, and philosophers that populate our cities as true artists and thinkers. There is more painting, writing, and "outlining" going on in Germany today than in all the other countries put together. Is this culture? Or is it a deficiency of our sense of reality? Are we so rich in creative talent, or are we lacking in practical energy? And do the results justify in any way at all the noisy self-advertisement?

Expressionism, yesterday's vogue, produced not a single personality or artistic work of any note. As soon as I began to question the sincerity of that movement I was shouted down by a thousand voices. Painters, musicians, and poets tried to prove me wrong, but with words, not with deeds. I shall stand corrected when they come forth with the equivalent of *Tristan*, the *Hammerklavier Sonata*, *King Lear*, or the paintings of Marées.

It is a great mistake to consider these flaccid, effeminate, superfluous "movements" as *the* necessary phenomena of our age. I call this the artsy-craftsy approach. Architecture, painting, poetry, religion, politics, even philosophy itself are treated as handicrafts, techniques that can be taught and learned within the four walls of the studio. This is the argument that emanates from all of our "circles" and brotherhoods, cafés and lecture halls, exhibits, journals, and publishing houses -- and it reeks to high heaven. It not only wants to be tolerated, it wants full sway. It calls itself German. It purports to claim the future.

Even in this area I see tasks ahead for us, yet I look in vain for the men (*men!*) to perform them. One of the tasks for our century is the German novel. Up to now we have had only Goethe. The art of the novel requires outstanding personalities, superior in vigor and breadth of vision, reared in cultural excellence, high-minded but tactful in their views. As yet there is no German prose to match the English and the French. What we have is the individual style of

single writers, isolated examples of personal mastery against a background of very poor average performance. The novel could bring about this improvement. Nowadays, however, practical men such as industrialists and army officers are using better, sounder, clearer, more profound language than the tenth-rate scribblers who think style is a sport.

Here in the land of Till Eulenspiegel we have yet to produce a comedy in the grand manner, sublime and profound, clever, tragic, light and refined. It is now almost the only remaining form in which a writer can be poet and philosopher at once, and without pretense. Like Nietzsche a while ago, I still feel the need for a German *Carmen*, full of spice and wit, sparkling with melody and rhythm, a work to stand in the proud tradition of Mozart, Johann Strauss, Bruckner, and the young Schumann. But the orchestral acrobats of today are incompetents. Since Wagner's death not one great creator of melody has appeared on the scene.

There was a time when art was a vital enterprise, when life's rhythm took hold of artists, their works, and their public to such an extent that profundity of thought, rather than formal exactitude, was the true criterion of artistic greatness. Instead of this vital rhythm, we have today what is called the "creative outline" -- the most despicable thing imaginable. Everything that lacks life is getting "outlined." They are "outlining" a private culture with theosophy and the leader-cult; they are "outlining" a private religion with editions of Buddha on hand-made paper; they are "outlining" a State in the spirit of Eros. Since the Revolution there have been "outlines" for agriculture, commerce, and industry.

These ideals should be dashed to pieces; the louder the noise, the better. Hardness, Roman hardness is taking over now. Soon there will be no room for anything else. Art, yes; but in concrete and steel. Literature, yes; but by men with iron nerves and uncompromising depth of vision. Religion, yes; but take up your

hymnbook, not your classy edition of Confucius, and go to church. Politics, yes; but in the hands of statesmen and not idealists. Nothing else will be of consequence. And we must never lose sight of what lies behind and ahead of us citizens of this century. We Germans will never again produce a Goethe, but indeed a Caesar.

On the German National Character

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The character of a people is the product of its destinies. In the last analysis it is not soil, climate, sky, and sea that determine this character. Nor is it race or blood. These things are merely the raw metal that gets hammered into shape by historical reality. Least of all is a people's character the result of its culture, that which it has

acquired through speech, writing, and reading. Such things cannot even be regarded as outer trappings.

In history, character is wrought more by suffering than by success. Roman character was not a consequence of the victories won in the great era following the Battle of Sentium. Rather, the victories presupposed the existence of this character, which was formed in the previous long centuries of misery when the Roman people constantly lived on the verge of annihilation.

The white peoples of today, even the oldest among them, are not more than one thousand years old. They have come into being since the time of Charlemagne, when Germanic tribes mingled with the scattered remains of past nations, thus creating a handful of new lines. What has since happened to them can be read in their national characters, which may exhibit weak or strong, sublime or ridiculous, profound or shallow traits. There it can be seen whether they feel at home or estranged in the world, whether they seek their fortune in it or suffer by it. Yet even the intense gaiety of some regions, even the laughter of the inns and folk festivals still bears testimony to streams of blood and tears, to countless massacres, heartbreaking disappointments, the sacrifice of whole generations, and repeated failures and defeats. "World history," which gave these peoples their character as heroes, martyrs, or fools, is a single great tragedy. And as long as it continues it will remain one. It is simply that most of us are too cultured to believe it.

There are peoples whose character is simplicity itself. Others are unable to figure themselves out, not to speak of anyone else understanding them. The Englishman is a puzzle to no one. English history moves in a straight line -- amid much bloodshed, to be sure, but without sharp turns or hesitations. The Englishman harbors no troubles within his breast; all his problems can be found on a map.

All the more enigmatic are the Germans. From the start they have spent their lives pondering their problems, each one occupied with

his own and many with those of their fellow countrymen. Have they found an answer? It has been suggested that the German people lacks a character entirely. Perhaps that is correct. It has not one, but several characters -- as many as there are Germans, perhaps more. All other national characters are reflected in ours. We have among us Roman and Greek, English, Spanish, and Norse types, and we are constantly longing for a true home in some distant clime.

The reasons for this are evident if we glance at history. All other peoples have a history, a path leading from a beginning to an end. In this sense our history is different. Ours is an often repeated attempt to find a beginning. England's destiny had its distinct and significant beginning with the Norman Conquest; France's began with the Franks, Spain's with the Visigoths. German destiny had its dubious start with the unification of Saxons, Swabians, Bavarians, Franconians, and Thuringians under a mystical crown. The "face" of Germany looks like the map of 1400 or 1700.

Too much character then? Yes, that too. We are characteristic to the point of lunacy. Our intelligentsia is a veritable collection of eccentrics. Such profound thought-systems! Such *Weltanschauungen*! Such political ideas! Each writes his own German, each behaves in his own way, each believes and desires something different. But is that our true nature, or is it a role we are playing for our own benefit while we wait for the real thing? The soul of the German people is filled with surprising and dumfounding capabilities for excellence and failure. Many have claimed to understand this soul, but none has figured correctly. Hence the suspicion felt toward us on the outside, and the even stronger suspicion we hold against each other. We are insecure in a world where everyone wants to be sure of his neighbor.

Other peoples, during the course of their history, have used up or worn off certain character traits they acquired in the dark, remote

times of their beginnings. We are still in possession of these traits, for we lack a history. We have retained the vestiges of Nordic instincts as portrayed in the Icelandic sagas: unsociability, taciturnity, the hermit instinct, doggedness, obstinacy; we have more mavericks than masterminds. Would we as a people, with better luck in political affairs, have been able to create unaided the genteel society of the eighteenth century? Good form, as an imperative, as an exalted duty or as a challenge, is contrary to our nature. We are in the habit of letting ourselves go -- poetically, intellectually, and socially, in full view of ourselves and others. We do this least frequently in music; but we have experimented with the verse forms of all times and all peoples, and the most extravagant fantasy is our proper domain. No other people could have profited more from careful upbringing by a refined society. But then there is our seriousness, our tenacity, our quiet, patient adherence to duties once assumed, our devotion to everything we have been able to preserve in spite of our lack of self-confidence. Our capacity for work, particularly that of our economic and technological leaders, is inimitable. Future generations will look back with incredulous admiration on the reconstruction we have accomplished within just four years of such a catastrophe.

And now to the decisive factor: our boundless urge to follow and serve, to worship anyone or anything, to believe blindly and with doglike loyalty, all advice to the contrary notwithstanding. This too is a vestigial trait from the distant past. In modern situations it can either be great or desperately comical, but it dominates the history of our sovereigns, churches, and parties. In no other country is a "cause" or a leader, not even the caricature of one, so sure of a following. For one who knows how to use it, this is a latent source of immense power. We have had too little historical experience to be skeptical about this. Every peasant in the Balkans, every American longshoreman has more political know-how than we do. Are we children? Perhaps. Grown-up children of this sort have more than once altered the path of history.

But we must not forget one other aspect: our sluggish blood, our *Gemüt*, our irresoluteness. Nietzsche once wrote, "A German is capable of great things, but it is improbable that he will do them." Difficult to set in motion, having little self-assurance, disinclined to pathos in ourselves, we are a far cry from the theater-like political scene of Southern Europe, where the play can still go on in spite of failures. All in all, no other people today is more in need of a leader in order simply to have faith in itself. And yet no other people can mean more to a great leader. In the right hands, all of its faults will turn to merits. What the outcome of this might be is impossible to foretell with the customary methods of political prognostication.

At times when government and diplomacy are conducted along strict traditional lines, as they were in the eighteenth century, such a national character as ours is doomed to prolonged slumber. Germany's political potential had been forgotten, and Napoleon was very much surprised when he suddenly met up with it. Today there are no longer any venerable forms of political existence whose age is an almost unassailable power. Violence has come into its own, opportunism as well. History is returning to the freedom of its primitive instincts, and the lands and the seas are the spoils.

Does that make us a timely people?

Nietzsche And His Century

An address delivered on October 15, 1924, Nietzsche's eightieth birthday, at the Nietzsche Archive, Weimar

First published in Spengler, *Reden und Aufsätze* (Munich, 1937).

Looking back at the nineteenth century and letting its great men pass before the mind's eye, we can observe an amazing thing about the figure of Friedrich Nietzsche, something that was hardly noticeable in his own time. All the other outstanding personages, including Wagner, Strindberg, and Tolstoy, reflect to a certain degree the color and shape of those years. Each of them was somehow bound up with the shallow optimism of the progress-mongers, with their social ethics and utilitarianism, their philosophy of matter and energy, pragmatism and "adaptation"; each of them made sacrifice after sacrifice to the spirit of the time. Only one person represents a radical departure from this pattern. If the word "untimely," which he himself coined, is applicable to anyone at all, then it is Nietzsche. One searches in vain throughout his whole life and all of his thought for any indication that he might have yielded inwardly to any vogue or fad.

In this respect he is the antithesis of, and yet in some ways profoundly related to, the second German of modern times whose life was one great symbol: Goethe. These are the only two notable Germans whose existence has profound significance apart from and in addition to their works. Because both were aware of this from the beginning and continually gave utterance to this awareness, their existence has become a treasure for our nation and an integral part of its spiritual history.

It was Goethe's good fortune to be born at the high noon of Western culture, at a time of rich and mature intellectuality which

he himself eventually came to represent. He had only to become the epitome of his own time in order to achieve the disciplined grandeur implied by those who later called him the "Olympian." Nietzsche lived a century later, and in the meantime a great change had occurred, one which we are only now able to comprehend. It was his fate to come into the world after the Rococo period, and to stand amid the totally cultureless 1860's and 1870's. Consider the streets and houses he had to live in, the clothing fashions, furniture, and social mores he had to observe. Consider the way people moved about in social circles in his day, the way they thought, wrote, and felt. Goethe lived at a time filled with respect for form; Nietzsche longed desperately for forms that had been shattered and abandoned. Goethe needed only to affirm what he saw and experienced around him; Nietzsche had no recourse but to protest passionately against everything contemporary, if he was to rescue anything his forebears had bequeathed to him as a cultural heritage. Both of these men strove during their whole lives for strict inner form and discipline. But the eighteenth century was itself "in form." It possessed the highest type of society that Western Europe has ever known. The nineteenth century had neither a distinguished society nor any other kind of formal attributes. Apart from the incidental customs of the urban upper class it possessed only the scattered remains, preserved with great difficulty, of aristocratic and middle-class tradition. Goethe was able to understand and solve the great problems of his time as a recognized member of his society, as we learn in *Wilhelm Meister* and *Elective Affinities*; Nietzsche could remain true to his task only by turning his back on society. His frightful loneliness stands as a symbol over against Goethe's cheerful gregariousness. One of these great men gave shape to existing things; the other brooded over nonexistent things. One of them worked for a prevailing form; the other against a prevailing formlessness.

Aside from this, however, form was something very different for each of them. Of all the great German intellectuals, Nietzsche was

the only born musician. All the others -- thinkers, poets, and painters alike -- have either been shapers of material or have taken material apart. Nietzsche lived, felt, and thought by ear. He was, after all, hardly able to use his eyes. His prose is not "written," it is heard -- one might even say sung. The vowels and cadences are more important than the similes and metaphors. What he sensed as he surveyed the ages was their melody, their meter. He discovered the musical keys of foreign cultures. Before him, no one knew of the tempo of history. A great many of his concepts -- the Dionysian, the Pathos of Distance, the Eternal Recurrence -- are to be understood quite musically. He sensed the rhythm of what is called nobility, ethics, heroism, distinction, and master morality. He was the first to experience as a symphony the image of history that had been created by scholarly research out of data and numbers -- the rhythmic sequence of ages, customs, and attitudes.

He himself had music, just as he walked, spoke, dressed, experienced other people, stated problems, and drew conclusions. What *Bildung* had been for Goethe, was for Nietzsche tact in the broadest sense: social, moral, historical, and linguistic tact, a feeling for the proper sequence of things, made all the keener by his suffering in an age that had very little of this feeling. Like Zarathustra, Goethe's Tasso was born of suffering, but Tasso succumbed to a feeling of weakness when challenged by a contemporary world which he loved and which he regarded as superior to himself. Zarathustra abhorred the contemporary world, and fled from it to distant worlds of the past and future.

The inability to feel "at home" in one's own time -- that is a German curse. Because of the guilt of our past we came into bloom too late and too suddenly. Beginning with Klopstock and Lessing, we had to cover in eighty years a distance for which other nations had centuries. For this reason we never developed a formal inner tradition or a distinguished society that could act as guardian of such a tradition. We borrowed forms, motifs, problems, and

solutions from all sides and struggled with them, whereas others grew up with them and in them. Our end was implicit in our beginning. Heinrich von Kleist discovered -- he was the first to do so -- the problematics of Ibsen at the same time that he strove to emulate Shakespeare. This tragic state of affairs produced in Germany a series of outstanding artistic personalities at a time when England and France had already gone over to producing literati -- art and thought as a profession rather than a destiny. But it also caused the fragmentation and frustration expressed in much of our art, the thwarting of final aims and artistic thoroughness.

Today we use the terms "Classical" and "Romantic" to denote the antithesis that appeared around 1800 everywhere in Western Europe, literary Petersburg included. Goethe was a Classic to the same extent that Nietzsche was a Romantic, but these words merely designate the predominant hues in their essential natures. Each of them also possessed the other potentiality, which at times urged its way to the foreground. Goethe, whose *Faust*-monologues and *West-Eastern Divan* are high points of Romantic sensibility, strove at all times to confine this urge for distance and boundlessness within clear and strict traditional forms. Similarly, Nietzsche often suppressed his acquired inclination for the Classical and rational, which held a twofold fascination for him by reason of temperament and philological profession, to what he termed the Dionysian, at least when he was evaluating. Both men were borderline cases. Just as Goethe was the last of the Classics, Nietzsche was, next to Wagner, the last of the Romantics. By their lives and their creations they exhausted the possibilities of these two movements. After them, it was no longer possible to render the meaning of the ages in the same words and images -- the imitators of the Classical drama and the latter-day Zarathustras have proved this. Moreover, it is impossible to invent a new method of seeing and saying like theirs. Germany may well bring forth impressive formative minds in the future; however, fortunate for us, they will nonetheless be isolated occurrences, for we have reached the end

of the grand development. And they will always be overshadowed by the two great figures of Goethe and Nietzsche.

An essential characteristic of Western Classicism was its intense preoccupation with the contemporary world. While seeking to control human drives that tend in opposite directions, it attempted to make the past and the future coalesce in the contemporary situation. Goethe's dictum about the "Demands of the Day," his "cheerful present," imply after all that he called upon various kinds of past figures and events -- *his* Greeks, *his* Renaissance, Götz von Berlichingen, Faust, and Egmont -- in order to infuse them with the spirit of his own time. The result is that when reading such works as *Tasso* or *Iphigenia* we are not at all mindful of historical precedent. Just the opposite is the case with the Romantics; their proper domain was remote places and times. They longed for withdrawal from the present to distant and foreign realms, to the past and future of history. None of them ever had a profound relationship with the things that surrounded him.

The Romantic is enticed by whatever is strange to his nature, the Classic by what is proper to his nature. Noble dreamers on the one hand, noble masters of dreams on the other. The one type adored the conquerors, rebels, and criminals of the past, or ideal states and supermen of the future; the other type construed statesmanship in practical, methodical terms or, like Goethe and Humboldt, even practiced it themselves. One of Goethe's great masterpieces is the conversation between Egmont and William of Orange. He loved Napoleon, for he was witness to his deeds in his own time and locality. He was never able to recreate artistically the violent personalities of the past; his *Caesar* went unwritten. But that is precisely the type of personality that Nietzsche worshipped -- from a distance. At close range, as with Bismarck, he was repelled by them. Napoleon would also have repelled him. He would have seemed to him uncouth, shallow, and mindless, like the Napoleonic types that lived around him -- the great European politicians and

the rough-and-ready businessmen whom he never even saw, much less understood. He needed a vast distance between the Then and the Now in order to have a genuine relationship with a given reality. Thus he created his Superman and, almost as arbitrarily, the figure of Cesare Borgia.

These two tendencies are tragically present in the most recent German history. Bismarck was a Classic of politics. He based his calculations entirely on things that existed, things he could see and manipulate. The fanatical patriots neither loved nor understood him until his creative work appeared as a finished product, until he could be romantically transfigured as a mythic personage: "The Old Man of the Saxon Forests." On the other hand, Ludwig II of Bavaria, who perished as a Romantic and who never created or even could have created anything of enduring value, actually received this kind of love (without returning it), not only from the people at large, but also from artists and thinkers who should have looked more closely. Kleist is regarded in Germany with, at best, a reluctant admiration that is tantamount to rejection, particularly in those instances where he succeeded in overcoming his own Romantic nature. He is inwardly quite remote from most Germans, unlike Nietzsche, whose nature and destiny were in many ways similar to the Bavarian king's, and who is instinctively honored even by those who have never read him.

Nietzsche's longing for remoteness also explains his aristocratic taste, which was that of a completely lonely and visionary personality. Like the Ossian-type Romanticism that originated in Scotland, the early Classicism of the eighteenth century began on the Thames and was later taken across to the Continent. It is impossible to consider it apart from the Rationalism of the same period. The Classicists engaged in the act of creativity consciously and deliberately; they replaced free imagination with knowledge, at times even with scholarly erudition. They *understood* the Greeks, the Renaissance, and inevitably also the world of

contemporary active affairs. These English Classicists, all of them of high social standing, helped create liberalism as a philosophy of life as it was understood by Frederick the Great and his century: the deliberate ignoring of distinctions that were known to exist in the practical life but were in any case not considered as obstacles; the rational preoccupation with matters of public opinion that could neither be gotten rid of nor hushed up, but that somehow had to be rendered harmless. This upper-class Classicism gave rise to English democracy -- a superior form of tactics, not a codified political program. It was based on the long and intensive experience of a social stratum that habitually dealt with real and practicable possibilities, and that was therefore never in danger of losing its essential congeniality.

Goethe, who was also conscious of his social rank, was never an aristocrat in the passionate, theoretical sense -- unlike Nietzsche, who lacked the habituation to regular practical experience. Nietzsche never really became familiar with the democracy of his time in all its strength and weakness. To be sure, he rebelled against the herd instinct with the wrath of his extremely sensitive soul, but the chief cause of his anger was to be found somewhere in the historical past. He was doubtless the first to demonstrate in such radical fashion how in all cultures and epochs of the past the masses count for nothing, that they suffer from history but do not create it, that they are at all times the pawns and victims of the personal will of individuals and classes born to be rulers. People had sensed this often enough before, but Nietzsche was the first to destroy the traditional image of "humanity" as progress toward the solution of ideal problems through the agency of its leaders. Herein lies the immense difference between the historiography of a Niebuhr or a Ranke, which as an idea was likewise of Romantic origin, and Nietzsche's method of historical vision. His way of looking into the soul of past epochs and peoples overcame the mere pragmatic structure of facts and events.

Yet such a technique required detachment. English Classicism, which produced the first modern historian of Greece in George Grote -- a businessman and practical politician -- was quite exclusively the affair of higher society. It ennobled the Greeks by regarding them as peers, by "present-ing" them in the truest sense of the word as distinguished, cultivated, intellectually refined human beings who at all times acted "in good taste" -- even Harner and Pindar, poets whom the English school of classical philology was the first to prefer over Horace and Virgil. From the higher circles of English society this Classicism entered the only corresponding circles in Germany, the courts of the small principalities, where the tutors and preachers acted as intermediaries. The courtly atmosphere of Weimar was the world in which Goethe's life became the symbol of cheerful conviviality and purposeful activity. Weimar was the friendly center of intellectual Germany, a place that offered calm satisfaction to a degree unknown by any other German writer, an opportunity for harmonious growth, maturing, and ageing that was Classical in a specifically German sense.

Next to this career there is the other, which likewise ended in Weimar. It started out in the seclusion of a Protestant pastor's home, the cradle of many if not most of Germany's great minds, and reached its height in the sun-drenched solitude of the Engadin. No other German has ever lived such an impassioned private existence, far removed from all society and publicity -- though all Germans, even if they are "public" personalities, have a longing for such solitude. His intense yearning for friendship was in the last analysis simply his inability to lead a genuine social life, and thus it was a more spiritual form of loneliness. Instead of the friendly "Goethe house" on Weimar's Frauenplan, we see the joyless little cottages in Sils-Maria, the solitude of the mountains and the sea, and finally a solitary breakdown in Turin -- it was the most thoroughly Romantic career the nineteenth century ever offered.

Nevertheless, his need to communicate was stronger than he himself believed, much stronger at any rate than Goethe's, who was one of the most taciturn of men despite the social life that surrounded him. Goethe's *Elective Affinities* is a secretive book, not to speak of *Wilhelm Meister's Years of Wandering* and *Faust II*. His most profound poems are monologues. The aphorisms of Nietzsche are never monologues; nor are the *Night Song* and the *Dionysus Dithyrambs* completely monologues. An invisible witness is always present, always watching. That is why he remained at all times a believing Protestant. All the Romantics lived in schools and coteries, and Nietzsche invented something of the sort by imagining that his friends were, as listeners, his intellectual peers. Or again, he created in the remote past and future a circle of intimates, only to complain to them, like Novalis and Hölderlin, of his loneliness. His whole life was filled with the torture and bliss of renunciation, of the desire to surrender and to force his inner nature, to bind himself in same way to something that always proved to be foreign to himself. Yet that is how he developed insight into the soul of epochs and cultures that could never reveal their secrets to self-assured, Classical minds.

This organic pessimism of his being explains the works and the sequence in which they appeared. We who were not able to experience the great flourishing of materialism in the mid-nineteenth century should never cease to be amazed at the audacity that went into the writing, at such a tender age and contrary to the opinions of contemporary philological scholarship, of *The Birth of Tragedy*. The famous antithesis of Apollo and Dionysus contains much more than even today's average reader can comprehend. The most significant thing about that essay was not that its author discovered an inner conflict in "Classical" Greece, the Greece that had been the purest manifestation of "humanity" for all others except perhaps Bachofen and Burckhardt. More important still was that even at that age he possessed the superior vision that allowed him to peer into the heart of whole cultures as if they were organic,

living individuals. We need only read Mommsen and Curtius to notice the tremendous difference. The others regarded Greece simply as the sum of conditions and events occurring within a certain span of time and space. Our present-day method of looking at history owes its origin, but not its depth, to Romanticism. In Nietzsche's day, history, as far as Greece and Rome were concerned, was little more than applied philology, and as far as the Western peoples were concerned little more than applied archival research. It invented the idea that history began with written records.

The liberation from this view came out of the spirit of music. Nietzsche the musician invented the art of feeling one's way into the style and rhythm of foreign cultures, aside from and often in contradiction to the written documents. But what did written documents matter anyway? With the word "Dionysus" Nietzsche discovered what the archaeologists eventually brought to light thirty years later -- the underworld and the undersoul of Classical culture, and ultimately the spiritual force that underlies all of history. Historical description had become the psychology of history. The eighteenth century and Classicism, including Goethe, believed in "culture" -- a single, true, mental and moral culture as the task of a unified humanity. From the very beginning Nietzsche spoke quite unforcedly of "cultures" as of natural phenomena that simply began at a certain time and place, without reason or goal or whatever an all-too-human interpretation might wish to make of it. "At a certain time" -- the point was made clear from the very first time in Nietzsche's book that all of these cultures, truths, arts, and attitudes are peculiar to a mode of existence that makes its appearance at one certain time and then disappears for good. The idea that every historical fact is the expression of a spiritual stimulus, that cultures, epochs, estates, and races have a soul like that of individuals -- this was such a great step forward in historical depth-analysis that even the author himself was at the time not aware of its full implications.

However, one of the things the Romantic yearns for is to escape from himself. This yearning, together with the great misfortune of having been born in that particular period in history, caused Nietzsche to serve as a herald for the most banal form of realism in his second book, *Human, All-Too-Human*. These were the years when Western Rationalism, after abandoning its glorious beginnings with Rousseau, Voltaire, and Lessing, ended as a farce. Darwin's theories, together with the new faith in matter and energy, became the religion of the big cities; the soul was regarded as a chemical process involving proteins, and the meaning of the universe boiled down to the social ethics of enlightened philistines. Not a single fiber of Nietzsche's being was party to these developments. He had already given vent to his disgust in the first of his "Untimely Meditations," but the scholar in him envied Chamfort and Vauvenargues and their lighthearted and somewhat cynical manner of treating serious topics in the style of the *grand monde*. The artist and enthusiast in him was perplexed by the massive sobriety of an Eugen Dühring, which he mistook for true greatness. Priestly character that he was, he proceeded to unmask religion as prejudice. Now the goal of life was knowledge, and the goal of history became for him the development of intelligence. He said this in a tone of ridicule that served to heighten his own passion, precisely because it hurt to do so, and because he suffered from the unrealizable longing to create in the midst of his own time a seductive picture of the future that would contrast with everything he was born into.

While the ecstatic utilitarianism of the Darwinian school was extremely remote from his way of thinking, he took from it certain secret revelations that no true Darwinist ever dreamed of. In *The Dawn of Day* and *The Gay Science* there appeared, in addition to a way of looking at things that was meant to be prosaic and even scornful, another technique of examining the world -- a restrained, quiet, admiring attitude that penetrated deeper than any mere realist could ever hope to achieve. Who, before Nietzsche, had

ever spoken in the same way of the soul of an age, an estate, a profession, of the priest and the hero, or of man and woman? Who had ever been able to summarize the psychology of whole centuries in an almost metaphysical formula? Who had ever postulated in history, rather than facts and "eternal truths," the *types* of heroic, suffering, visionary, strong, and diseased life as the actual substance of events as they happen?

That was a wholly new kind of living forms, and could have been discovered only by a born musician with a feeling for rhythm and melody. Following this presentation of the physiognomy of the ages of history, a science of which he was and will always be the creator, he reached to the outer limits of his vision to describe the symbols of a future, *his* future, which he needed in order to be cleansed of the residue of contemporary thought. In one sublime moment he conjured the image of Eternal Recurrence, as it had been vaguely surmised by German mystics in the Middle Ages -- an endless circling in the eternal void, in the night of immeasurable eons, a way to lose one's soul utterly in the mysterious depths of the cosmos, regardless of whether such things are scientifically justifiable or not. Into the midst of this vision he placed the Superman and his prophet, Zarathustra, representing the incarnate meaning of human history, in all its brevity, on the planet that was his home. All three of these creations were completely distant, impossible to relate to contemporary conditions. For this very reason they have exerted a curious attraction on every German soul. For in every German soul there is a place where dreams are dreamed of social ideals and a finer future for mankind. Goethe lacked such a corner in his soul, and that is why he never became a truly popular personage. The people sensed this lack, and thus they called him aloof and frivolous. We shall never overcome this reverie of ours; it represents within us the unlived portion of a great past.

Once having arrived at this height, Nietzsche posed the question as to the value of the world, a question that had accompanied him since childhood. By doing so he brought to an end the period of Western philosophy that had considered the types of knowledge as its central problem. This new question likewise had two answers: a Classical and a Romantic answer or, to put it in the terms of the time, a social and an aristocratic answer. "Life has value to the same degree as it serves the totality" -- that was the answer of the educated Englishmen who had learned at Oxford to distinguish between what a person *stated* as his considered opinion and what the same person *did* at decisive moments as a politician or businessman. "Life is all the more valuable, the stronger its instincts are" -- that was the answer given by Nietzsche, whose own life was delicate and easily injured. Be that as it may, for the very reason that he was remote from the active life he was able to grasp its mysteries. His ultimate understanding of real history was that the Will to Power is stronger than all doctrines and principles, and that it has always made and forever will make history, no matter what others may prove or preach against it. He did not concern himself with the conceptual analysis of "will"; to him the most important thing was the image of active, creative, destructive Will in history. The "concept" of will gave way to the "aspect" of will. He did not teach, he simply pointed matters out: "Thus it was, and thus it shall be." Even if theoretical and priestly individuals will it a thousand times differently, the primeval instincts of life will still emerge victorious.

What a difference between Schopenhauer's world view and this one! And between Nietzsche's contemporaries, with their sentimental plans for improving the world, and this demonstration of hard facts! Such an accomplishment places this last Romantic thinker at the very pinnacle of his century. In this we are all his pupils, whether we wish to be or not, whether we know him well or not. His vision has already imperceptibly conquered the world. No one writes history any more without seeing things in his light.

He undertook to evaluate life using facts as the sole criteria, and the facts taught that the stronger or weaker will to succeed determines whether life is valuable or worthless, that goodness and success are almost mutually exclusive. His image of the world reached its culmination with a magnificent critique of morality in which, instead of preaching morality, he evaluated the moralities that have arisen in history -- not according to any "true" moral system but according to their success. This was indeed a "revaluation of all values," and although we now know that he misstated the antithesis of Christian and master-morality as a result of his personal suffering during the 1880's, nonetheless the ultimate antithesis of human existence lay behind his statement; he sought it, and sensed it, and believed that he had captured it with his formula.

If instead of "master morality" we were to say the instinctive practice of men who are determined to act, and instead of "Christian morality" the theoretical ways in which contemplative persons evaluate, then we would have before us the tragic nature of all mankind, whose dominant types will forever misunderstand, combat, and suffer from each other. Deed and thought, reality and ideal, success and redemption, strength and goodness -- these are forces that will never come to terms with one another. Yet in historical reality it is not the ideal, goodness, or morality that prevails -- their kingdom is not of this world -- but rather decisiveness, energy, presence of mind, practical talent. This fact cannot be gotten rid of with laments and moral condemnations. Man is *thus*, life is *thus*, history is *thus*.

Precisely because all action was foreign to him, because he knew only how to think, Nietzsche understood the fundamental essence of the active life better than any great active personality in the world. But the more he understood, the more shyly he withdrew from contact with action. In this way his Romantic destiny reached fulfillment. Under the force of these last insights, the final stage of

his career took shape in strict contrast to that of Goethe, who was not foreign to action but who regarded his true calling as poetry, and therefore restrained his actions cheerfully.

Goethe, the Privy Councillor and Minister, the celebrated focal point of European intellect, was able to confess during his last year of life, in the final act of his *Faust*, that he looked upon his life as having attained fulfillment. "Tarry now, thou art so fair!" -- that is a phrase expressive of the most blissful satiety, spoken at the moment when the active physical work is completed under Faust's command, to endure now and forevermore. It was the great and final symbol of the Classicism to which this life had been dedicated, and which led from the controlled cultural education of the eighteenth century to the controlled exercise of personal talent of the nineteenth.

Yet one cannot create distance, one can only proclaim it. Just as Faust's death brought a Classical career to an end, the mind of the loneliest of wanderers vanished with a curse upon his age during those mysterious days in Turin, when he watched the last mists disappear from his image of the world and the highest peaks come ever clear into view. This puzzling final episode of his life is the very reason Nietzsche's existence has had the stronger influence on the world ever since. Goethe's life was a full life, and that means that it brought something to completion. Countless Germans will honor Goethe, live with him, and seek his support; but he can never transform them. Nietzsche's effect is a transformation, for the melody of his vision did not end with his death. The Romantic attitude is eternal; though its form may at times be unified and complete, its thought never is. It will always conquer new areas, either destroying them or changing them radically. Nietzsche's type of vision will pass on to new friends and enemies, and these in turn will hand it down to other followers and adversaries. Even if someday no one reads his works any longer, his vision will endure and be creative.

His work is not a part of our past to be enjoyed; it is a task that makes servants of us all. As a task it is independent of his books and their subject matter, and thus a problem of German destiny. In an age that does not tolerate otherworldly ideals and takes vengeance on their authors, when the only thing of recognized value is the kind of ruthless action that Nietzsche baptized with the name of Cesare Borgia, when the morality of the ideologues and world improvers is limited more radically than ever to superfluous and innocuous writing and speech-making -- in such an age, unless we learn to act as real history wants us to act, we will cease to exist as a people. We cannot live without a form of wisdom that does not merely console in difficult situations, but helps one to get out of them. This kind of hard wisdom made its first appearance in German thought with Nietzsche, despite the fact that it was cloaked in thoughts and impressions he had gathered from other sources. To the people most famished for history in all the world, he showed history as it really is. His heritage is the obligation to live history in the same way.

The Two Faces Of Russia And Germany's Eastern Problems

An address delivered on February 14, 1922, at the Rhenish-Westphalian Business Convention in Essen

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In the light of the desperate situation in which Germany finds itself today -- defenseless, ruled from the West by the friends of its enemies, and the victim of undiminished warfare with economic and diplomatic means -- the great problems of the East, political and economic, have risen to decisive importance. If from our vantage point we wish to gain an understanding of the extremely complex real situation, it will not suffice merely to familiarize ourselves with contemporary conditions in the broad expanses to the east of us, with Russian domestic policy and the economic, geographic, and military factors that make up present-day Soviet Russia. More fundamental and imperative than this is an understanding of the world-historical fact of Russia itself, its situation and evolution over the centuries amid the great old cultures -- China, India, Islam, and the West -- the nature of its

people, and its national soul. Political and economic life is, after all, Life itself; even in what may appear to be prosaic aspects of day-to-day affairs it is a form, expression, and part of the larger entity that is Life.

One can attempt to observe these matters with "Russian" eyes, as our communist and democratic writers and party politicians have done, i.e., from the standpoint of Western social ideologies. But that is not "Russian" at all, no matter how many citified minds in Russia may think it is. Or one can try to judge them from a Western-European viewpoint by considering the Russian people as one might consider any other "European" people. But that is just as erroneous. In reality, the true Russian is basically very foreign to us, as foreign as the Indian and the Chinese, whose souls we can likewise never fully comprehend. Justifiably, the Russians draw a distinction between "Mother Russia" and the "fatherlands" of the Western peoples. These are, in fact, two quite different and alien worlds. The Russian understands this alienation. Unless he is of mixed blood, he never overcomes a shy aversion to or a naïve admiration of the Germans, French, and English. The Tartar and the Turk are, in their ways of life, closer and more comprehensible to him. We are easily deceived by the geographic concept of "Europe," which actually originated only after maps were first printed in 1500. The real Europe ends at the Vistula. The activity of the Teutonic knights in the Baltic area was the colonization of foreign territory, and the knights themselves never thought of it in any other way.

In order to reach an understanding of this foreign people we must review our own past. Russian history between 900 and 1900 A.D. does not correspond to the history of the West in the same centuries but, rather, to the period extending from the Age of Rome to Charlemagne and the Hohenstaufen emperors. Our heroic poetry, from Arminius to the lays of Hildebrand, Roland, and the Nibelungs, was recapitulated in the Russian heroic epics, the

byliny, which began with the knights at the court of Prince Vladimir (d. 1015), the Campaign of Igor, and with Ilya Muromets, and have remained a vital and fruitful art form through the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, the Burning of Moscow, and to the present day. [1] Yet each of these worlds of primeval poetry expresses a very different kind of basic feeling. Russian life has a different meaning altogether. The endless plains created a softer form of humanity, humble and morose, inclined to lose itself mentally in the flat expanses of its homeland, lacking a genuine personal will, and prone to servility. These characteristics are the background for high-level politics in Russia, from Genghis Khan to Lenin.

(1. Cf. my *The Decline of the West*, II, 192ff.)

Furthermore, the Russians are semi-nomads, even today. Not even the Soviet regimen will succeed in preventing the factory workers from drifting from one factory to another for no better reason than their inborn wanderlust. [2] That is why the skilled technician is such a rarity in Russia. [3] Similarly, the home of the peasant is not the village or the countryside into which he was born, but the great expanses. Even the *mir* or so-called agrarian commune -- not an ancient idea, but the outgrowth of administrative techniques employed by the tsarist governments for the raising of taxes -- was unable to bind the peasant, unlike his Germanic counterpart, to the soil. Many thousands of them flooded into the newly developed regions in the steppes of southern Russia, Turkestan, and the Caucasus, in order to satisfy their emotional search for the limits of the infinite. The result of this inner restlessness has been the extension of the Empire up to the natural borders, the seas and the high mountain ranges. In the sixteenth century Siberia was occupied and settled as far as Lake Baikal, in the seventeenth century up to the Pacific.

(2. Cf. several stories of Leskov, and particularly of Gorki.)

(3. Except perhaps in the earlier *arteli*, groups of workers under self-chosen leaders, which accepted contracts for certain kinds of work in factories and on estates. There is a good description on an *artel'* in Leskov's *The Memorable Angel*.)

Even more deep-seated than this nomadic trait of the Russians is their dark and mystical longing for Byzantium and Jerusalem. It appears in the outer form of Orthodox Christianity and numerous religious sects, and thus has been a powerful force in the political sphere as well. But within this mystical tendency there slumbers the unborn new religion of an as yet immature people. There is nothing Western about this at all, for the Poles and Balkan Slavs are also "Asiatics."

The economic life of this people has also assumed indigenous, totally non-European forms. The Stroganov family of merchants, which began conquering Siberia on its own under Ivan Grozny [4] and placed some of its own regiments at the tsar's disposal, had nothing at all in common with the great businessmen of the same century in the West. This huge country, with its nomadic population, might have remained in the same condition for centuries, or might perhaps have become the object of Western colonial ambitions, had it not been for the appearance of a man of immense world-political significance, Peter the Great.

(4. *Grozny* means "the terrifying, just, awe-inspiring" in the *positive* sense, not "the terrible" with Western overtones. Ivan IV was a creative personality as was Peter the Great, and one of the most important rulers of all time.)

There is probably no other example in all of history of the radical change in the destiny of an entire people such as this man brought about. His will and determination lifted Russia from its Asiatic matrix and turned it into a Western-style nation within the Western world of nations. His goal was to lead Russia, until then landlocked, to the sea -- at first, unsuccessfully, to the Sea of Asov,

and then with permanent success to the Baltic. The fact that the shores of the Pacific had already been reached was, in his eyes, wholly unimportant; the Baltic coast was for him the bridge to "Europe." There he founded Petersburg, symbolically giving it a German name. In place of the old Russian market centers and princely residences like Kiev, Moscow, and Nizhni-Novgorod, he planted Western European cities in the Russian landscape. Administration, legislation, and the state itself now functioned on foreign models. The *boyar* families of Old Russian chieftains became feudal nobility, as in England and France. His aim was to create above the rural population a "society" that would be unified as to dress, customs, language, and thought. And soon an upper social stratum actually formed in the cities, having a thin Western veneer. It played at erudition like the Germans, and took on *esprit* and manners like the French. The entire corpus of Western Rationalism made its entry -- scarcely understood, undigested, and with fateful consequences. Catherine II, a German, found it necessary to send writers such as Novikov and Radishchev into jail and exile because they wished to try out the ideas of the Enlightenment on the political and religious forms of Russia. [5]

(5. "Jehova, Jupiter, Brahma, God of Abraham, God of Moses, God of Confucius, God of Zoroaster, God of Socrates, God of Marcus Aurelius, God of the Christians -- Thou art everywhere the same, eternal God!" (Radishchev).)

And economic life changed also. In addition to its ages-old river traffic, Russia now began to engage in ocean shipping to distant ports. The old merchant tradition of the Stroganovs, with their caravan trade to China, and of the fairs at Nizhni-Novgorod, now received an overlay of Western European "money thinking" in terms of banks and stock exchanges. [6] Next to the old-style handicrafts and the primitive mining techniques in the Urals there appeared factories, machines, and eventually railroads and steamships.

(6. Cf. *Decline of the West*, II, 480f., 495.)

Most important of all, Western-style politics entered the Russian scene. It was supported by an army that no longer conformed to conditions of the wars against the Tartars, Turks, and Kirghiz; it had to be prepared to do battle against Western armies in Western territory, and by its very existence it continually misled the diplomats in Petersburg into thinking that the only political problems lay in the West.

Despite all the weaknesses of an artificial product made of stubborn material, Petrinism was a powerful force during the two hundred years of its duration. It will be possible to assess its true accomplishments only at some distant future time, when we can survey the rubble it will have left behind. It extended "Europe," theoretically at least, to the Urals, and made of it a cultural unity. An empire that stretched to the Bering Strait and the Hindu Kush had been Westernized to the extent that in 1900 there was hardly much difference between cities in Ireland and Portugal and those in Turkestan and the Caucasus. Travel was actually easier in Siberia than in some countries in Western Europe. The Trans-Siberian Railway was the final triumph, the final symbol of the Petrinist will before the collapse.

Yet this mighty exterior concealed an internal disaster. Petrinism was and remained an alien element among the Russian people. In reality there existed not one but two Russias, the apparent and the true, the official and the underground Russia. The foreign element brought with it the poison that caused that immense organism to fall ill and die. The spirit of Western Rationalism of the eighteenth century and Western Materialism of the nineteenth, both remote and incomprehensible to genuine Russian thought, came to lead a grotesque and subversive existence among the *intelligentsia* in the cities. There arose a type of Russian intellectual who, like the Reformed Turk, the Reformed Chinese, and the Reformed Indian,

was mentally and spiritually debased, impoverished, and ruined to the point of cynicism by Western Europe. It began with Voltaire, and continued from Proudhon and Marx to Spencer and Haeckel. In Tolstoy's day the upper class, irreligious and opposed to all native tradition, preened itself with blasé pretentiousness.

Gradually the new world view seeped down to the bohemians in the cities, the students, demagogues, and literati, who in turn took it "to the people" to implant in them a hatred of the Western-style upper classes. The result was doctrinaire bolshevism.

At first, however, it was solely the foreign policy of Russia that made itself painfully felt in the West. The original nature of the Russian people was ignored, or at least not understood. It was nothing but a harmless ethnographic curiosity, occasionally imitated at *bals masques* and in operettas. Russia meant for us a Great Power in the Western sense, one which played the game of high politics with skill and at times with true mastery.

What we did not notice was that two tendencies, alien and inimical to each other, were operative in Russia. One of these was the ancient, instinctive, unclear, unconscious, and subliminal drive that is present in the soul of every Russian, no matter how thoroughly westernized his conscious life may be -- a mystical yearning for the South, for Constantinople and Jerusalem, a genuine crusading spirit similar to the spirit our Gothic forebears had in their blood but which we hardly can appreciate today. Superimposed on this instinctive drive was the official foreign policy of a Great Power: Petersburg versus Moscow. Behind it lay the desire to play a role on the world stage, to be recognized and treated as an equal in "Europe." Hence the hyper-refined manners and mores, the faultless good taste -- things which had already begun to degenerate in Paris since Napoleon III. The finest tone of Western society was to be found in certain Petersburg circles.

At the same time, this kind of Russian did not really love any of the Western peoples. He admired, envied, ridiculed, or despised them, but his attitude depended practically always on whether Russia stood to gain or lose by them. Hence the respect shown for Prussia during the Wars of Liberation (Russia would have liked to pocket Prussian territory) and for France prior to the World War (the Russians laughed at her senile cries for *revanche*). Yet, for the ambitious and intelligent upper classes, Russia was the future master of Europe, intellectually and politically. Even Napoleon, in his time, was aware of this. The Russian army was mobilized at the western border; it was of Western proportions and was unmistakably trained for battle on Western terrain against Western foes. Russia's defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905 can be partly explained by the lack of training for warfare under anything but Western conditions.

Such policies were supported by a network of embassies in the great capitals of the West (which the Soviet government has replaced with Communist party centers for agitation). Catherine the Great took away Poland, and with it the final obstacle between East and West. The climax came with the symbolic journey of Alexander I, the "Savior of Europe," to Paris. At the Congress of Vienna, Russia at times played a decisive role, as also in the Holy Alliance, which Metternich called into being as a bulwark against the Western revolution, and which Nicholas I put to work in 1849 restoring order in the Habsburg state in the interest of his own government.

By means of the successful tradition of Petersburg diplomacy, Russia became more and more involved in great decisions of Western European politics. It took part in all the intrigues and calculations that not only concerned areas remote from Russia, but were also quite incomprehensible to the Russian spirit. The army at the western border was made the strongest in the world, and for no urgent reason -- Russia was the only country no one intended to

invade after Napoleon's defeat, while Germany was threatened by France and Russia, Italy by France and Austria, and Austria by France and Russia. One sought alliance with Russia in order to tip the military balance in one's favor, thus spurring the ambitions of Russian society toward ever greater efforts in non-Russian interests. All of us grew up under the impression that Russia was a European power and that the land beyond the Volga was colonial territory. The center of gravity of the Empire definitely lay to the west of Moscow, not in the Volga region. And the educated Russians thought the very same way. They regarded the defeat in the Far East in 1905 as an insignificant colonial adventure, whereas even the smallest setback at the western border was in their eyes a scandal, inasmuch as it occurred in full view of the Western nations. In the south and north of the Empire a fleet was constructed, quite superfluous for coastal defense: its sole purpose was to play a role in Western political machinations.

On the other hand, the Turkish Wars, waged with the aim of "liberating" the Christian Balkan peoples, touched the Russian soul more deeply. Russia as the heir to Turkey -- that was a mystical idea. There were no differences of opinion on this question. That was the Will of God. Only the Turkish Wars were truly popular wars in Russia. In 1807 Alexander I feared, not without reason, that he might be assassinated by an officers' conspiracy. The entire officers' corps preferred a war against the Turks to one against Napoleon. This led to Alexander's alliance with Napoleon at Tilsit, which dominated world politics until 1812. It is characteristic how Dostoyevsky, in contrast to Tolstoy, became ecstatic over the Turkish War in 1877. He suddenly came alive, constantly wrote down his metaphysical visions, and preached the religious mission of Russia against Byzantium. But the final portion of *Anna Karenina* was denied publication by the *Russian Messenger*, for one did not dare to offer Tolstoy's skepticism to the public.

As I have mentioned, the educated, irreligious, Westernized Russians also shared the mystical longing for Jerusalem, the Kiev monk's notion of the mother country as the "Third Rome," which after Papal Rome and Luther's Wittenberg was to take the fulfillment of Christ's message to the Jerusalem of the apostles. This barely conscious national instinct of all Russians opposes any power that might erect political barricades on the path that leads to Jerusalem by way of Byzantium. In all other countries such political obstacles would simply disturb either national conceit (in the West) or national apathy (in the Far East); in Russia, the mystical soul of the people itself was pierced and profoundly agitated. Hence the brilliant successes of the Slavophil movement, which was not so much interested in winning over Poles and Czechs as in gaining a foothold among the Slavs in the Christian Balkan countries, the neighbors of Constantinople. Even at an earlier date, the Holy War against Napoleon and the Burning of Moscow had involved the emotions of the entire Russian people. This was not just because of the invasion and plundering of the Russian countryside, but because of Napoleon's obvious long-range plans. In 1809 he had taken over the Illyrian provinces (the present Yugoslavia) and thus became master of the Adriatic. This had decisively strengthened his influence on Turkey to the disadvantage of Russia, and his next step would be, in alliance with Turkey and Persia, to open up the path to India, either from Illyria or from Moscow itself. The Russians' hatred of Napoleon was later transferred to the Habsburg monarchy, when its designs on Turkish territory -- in Metternich's time the Danubian principalities, and after 1878 Saloniki -- endangered Russian moves toward the south. Following the Crimean War they extended their hatred to include Great Britain, when that nation appeared to lay claim to Turkish lands by blockading the Straits and later by occupying Egypt and Cyprus.

Finally, Germany too became the object of this hatred, which goes very deep and cannot be allayed by practical considerations. After

1878, Germany neglected its role as a Russian ally to become more and more the protector and preserver of the crumbling Habsburg state, and thereby also, despite Bismarck's warning, the supporter of Austro-Hungarian intentions in the Balkans. The German government showed no understanding of the suggestion made by Count Witte, the last of the Russian diplomats friendly to Germany, to choose between Austria and Russia. We could have had a reliable ally in Russia if we had been willing to loosen our ties to Austria. A total reorientation of German policy might have been possible as late as 1911.

Following the Congress of Berlin, hatred of Germany began to spread to all of Russian society, for Bismarck succeeded in restraining Russian diplomacy in the interest of world peace and maintaining the balance of power in "Europe." From the German point of view this was probably correct, and in any case it was a master stroke of Bismarckian statesmanship. But in the eyes of Petersburg it was a mistake, for it deprived the Russian soul of the hope of winning Turkey, and favored England and Austria. And this Russian soul was one of the imponderables that defied diplomatic treatment. Hostility to Germany kept on growing and eventually entered all levels of Russian urban society. It was diverted momentarily when Japanese power, rising up suddenly and broadening the horizons of world politics, forced Russia to experience the Far East as a danger zone. But that was soon forgotten, especially since Germany was so grotesquely inept as to understand neither the immediate situation nor the future possibilities. In time, the senseless idea of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway came up; Germany now seemed intent on capturing full control of this path to Constantinople, a move which would have benefitted neither German politics nor the German economy.

Just as in the field of politics, the economic life of Russia was divided into two main tendencies -- the one active and aggressive, the other passive. The passive element was represented by the

Russian peasantry with its primitive agrarian economy; [7] by the old-style merchants with their fairs, caravans, and Volga barges; by Russian craftsmen; and finally by the primitive mining enterprises in the Urals, which developed out of the ancient techniques of pre-Christian "blacksmith tribes," independent of Western mining methods and experience. The forging of iron was invented in Russia in the second millennium B.C. -- the Greeks retained a vague recollection of the beginning of this art. This simple and traditional form of economy gradually found a powerful competitor in the civilized world of Western-style urban economy, with its banks, stock exchanges, factories, and railroads. Then it was money economy versus goods economy; each of these forms of economic existence abhors the other, each tries to attack and annihilate the other.

(7. On the contrast between agrarian and urban economy, see *Decline of the West*, II, 477ff.)

The Petrinist state needed a money economy in order to pay for its Westernized politics, its army, and its administrative hierarchy, which was laced with primitive corruption. Incidentally, this form of corruption was habitual *public* practice in Russia; it is a necessary psychological concomitant of an economy based on the exchange of goods, and is fundamentally different from the clandestine corruption practiced by Western European parliamentarians. The state protected and supported economic thinking that was oriented toward Western capitalism, a type of thinking that Russia neither created nor really understood, but had imported and now had to manage. Furthermore, Russia had also to face its doctrinary opposite, the economic theory of communism. Communism was in fact inseparable from Western economic thinking. It was the Marxist capitalism of the lower class, preached by students and agitators as a vague gospel to the masses in the Petrinist cities.

Still, the decisive and truly agitating factor for Russia's future was not this literary, theoretical trend in the urban underground. It was, rather, the Russians' profound, instinctively religious abhorrence of all Western economic practices. They considered "money" and all the economic schemes derived from it, socialistic as well as capitalistic, as sinful and satanic. This was a genuine religious feeling, much like the Western emotion which, during the Gothic centuries, opposed the economic practices of the Arabic-Jewish world and led to the prohibition for Christians of money-lending for interest. In the West, such attitudes had for centuries been little more than a cliché for chapel and pulpit, but now it became an acute spiritual problem in Russia. It caused the suicide of numerous Russians who were seized by "terror of the surplus value," whose primitive thought and emotions could not imagine a way of earning a living that would not entail the "exploitation" of "fellow human beings." This genuine Russian sentiment saw in the world of capitalism an enemy, a poison, the great sin that it ascribed to the Petrinist state despite the deep respect felt for "Little Father," the Tsar.

Such, then, are the deep and manifold roots of the Russian philosophy of intellectual nihilism, which began to grow at the time of the Crimean War and which produced as a final fruit the bolshevism that destroyed the Petrinist state in 1917, replacing it with something that would have been absolutely impossible in the West. Contained within this movement is the orthodox Slavophiles' hatred of Petersburg and all it stood for, [8] the peasants' hatred of the *mir*, the type of village commune that contradicted the rural concept of property passed down through countless family generations, as well as every Russian's hatred of capitalism, industrial economy, machines, railroads, and the state and army that offered protection to this cynical world against an eruption of Russian instincts. It was a primeval religious hatred of uncomprehended forces that were felt to be godless, that one could

not change and thus wished to destroy, in order that life could go on in the old-fashioned way.

(8. "The first requirement for the liberation of popular feeling in Russia is to hate Petersburg with heart and soul" (Aksakov to Dostoyevsky). Cf. *Decline of the West*, II, 193ff.)

The peasants detested the *intelligentsia* and its agitating just as strongly as they detested what these people were agitating against. Yet in time the agitation brought a small clique of clever but by and large mediocre personalities to the forefront of power. Even Lenin's creation is Western, it is Petersburg -- foreign, inimical, and despised by the majority of Russians. Some day, in some way or other, it will perish. It is a rebellion against the West, but born of Western ideas. It seeks to preserve the economic forms of industrial labor and capitalist speculation as well as the authoritarian state, except that it has replaced the Tsarist regime and private capitalist enterprise with an oligarchy and state capitalism, calling itself communism out of deference to doctrine.

It is a new victory for Petersburg over Moscow and, without any doubt, the final and enduring act of self-destruction committed by Petrinism from below. The actual victim is precisely the element that sought to liberate itself by means of the rebellion: the true Russian, the peasant and craftsman, the devout man of religion. Western revolutions such as the English and French seek to improve organically evolved conditions by means of theory, and they never succeed. In Russia, however, a whole world was made to vanish without resistance. Only the artificial quality of Peter the Great's creation can explain the fact that a small group of revolutionaries, almost without exception dunces and cowards, has had such an effect. Petrinism was an illusion that suddenly burst.

The bolshevism of the early years has thus had a double meaning. It has destroyed an artificial, foreign structure, leaving only itself as a remaining integral part. But beyond this, it has made the way

clear for a new culture that will some day awaken between "Europe" and East Asia. It is more a beginning than an end. It is temporary, superficial, and foreign only insofar as it represents the self-destruction of Petrinism, the grotesque attempt systematically to overturn the social superstructure of the nation according to the theories of Karl Marx. At the base of this nation lies the Russian peasantry, which doubtless played a more important role in the success of the 1917 Revolution than the intellectual crowd is willing to admit. These are the devout peasants of Russia who, although they do not yet fully realize it, are the archenemies of bolshevism and are oppressed by it even worse than they were by the Mongols and the old tsars. For this very reason, despite the hardships of the present, the peasantry will some day become conscious of its own will, which points in a wholly different direction.

The peasantry is the true Russian people of the future. It will not allow itself to be perverted and suffocated, and without a doubt, no matter how slowly, it will replace, transform, control, or annihilate bolshevism in its present form. How that will happen, no one can tell at the moment. It depends, among other things, on the appearance of decisive personalities, who, like Genghis Khan, Ivan IV, Peter the Great, and Lenin, can seize Destiny by their iron hand. Here, too, Dostoyevsky stands against Tolstoy as a symbol of the future against the present. Dostoyevsky was denounced as a reactionary because in his *Possessed* he no longer even recognized the problems of nihilism. For him, such things were just another aspect of the Petrinist system. But Tolstoy, the man of good society, lived in this element; he represented it even in his rebellion, a protest in Western form against the West. Tolstoy, and not Marx, was the leader to bolshevism. Dostoyevsky is its future conqueror.

There can be no doubt: a new Russian people is in the process of becoming. Shaken and threatened to the very soul by a frightful

destiny, forced to an inner resistance, it will in time become firm and come to bloom. It is passionately religious in a way we Western Europeans have not been, indeed could not have been, for centuries. As soon as this religious drive is directed toward a goal, it possesses an immense expansive potential. Unlike us, such a people does not count the victims who die for an idea, for it is a young, vigorous, and fertile people. The intense respect enjoyed over the past centuries by the "holy peasants" whom the regime often exiled to Siberia or liquidated in some other way -- such figures as the priest John of Kronstadt, even Rasputin, but also Ivan and Peter the Great -- will awaken a new type of leaders, leaders to new crusades and legendary conquests. The world round about, filled with religious yearning but no longer fertile in religious concerns, is torn and tired enough to allow it suddenly to take on a new character under the proper circumstances. Perhaps bolshevism itself will change in this way under new leaders; but that is not very probable. For this ruling horde -- it is a fraternity like the Mongols of the Golden Horde -- always has its sights set on the West as did Peter the Great, who likewise made the land of his dreams the goal of his politics. But the silent, deeper Russia has already forgotten the West and has long since begun to look toward Near and East Asia. It is a people of the great inland expanses, not a maritime people.

An interest in Western affairs is upheld only by the ruling group that organizes and supports the Communist parties in the individual countries -- without, as I see it, any chance of success. It is simply a consequence of Marxist theory, not an exercise in practical politics. The only way that Russia might again direct its attention to the West -- with disastrous results for *both* sides -- would be for other countries (Germany, for instance) to commit serious errors in foreign policy, which could conceivably result in a "crusade" of the Western powers against bolshevism -- in the interest, of course, of Franco-British financial capital. Russia's secret desire is to move toward Jerusalem and Central Asia, and

"the" enemy will always be the one who blocks those paths. The fact that England established the Baltic states and placed them under its influence, thereby causing Russia to lose the Baltic Sea, has not had a profound effect. Petersburg has already been given up for lost, an expendable relic of the Petrinist era. Moscow is once again the center of the nation. But the destruction of Turkey, the partition of that country into French and English spheres of influence, France's establishment of the Little Entente which closed off and threatened the area from Rumania southwards, French attempts to win control of the Danubian principalities and the Black Sea by aiding the reconstruction of the Hapsburg state -- all these events have made England and, above all, France the heirs to Russian hatred. What the Russians see is the revivification of Napoleonic tendencies; the crossing of the Beresina was perhaps not, after all, the final symbolic event in that movement. Byzantium is and remains the Sublime Gateway to future Russian policy, while, on the other side, Central Asia is no longer a conquered area but part of the sacred earth of the Russian people.

In the face of this rapidly changing, growing Russia, German policy requires the tactical skill of a great statesman and expert in Eastern affairs, but as yet no such man has made his appearance. It is clear that we are not the enemies of Russia; but whose friends are we to be -- of the Russia of today, or of the Russia of tomorrow? Is it possible to be both, or does one exclude the other? Might we not jeopardize such friendship by forming careless alliances?

Similarly obscure and difficult are our economic connections, the actual ones and the potential ones. Politics and economics are two very different aspects of life, different in concept, methods, aims, and significance for the soul of a people. This is not realized in the age of practical materialism, but that does not make it any less fatefully true. Economics is subordinate to politics; it is without question the second and not the first factor in history. The

economic life of Russia is only superficially dominated by state capitalism. At its base it is subject to attitudes that are virtually religious in nature. At any rate it is not at all the same thing as top-level Russian politics. Moreover, it is very difficult to predict its short and long-range trends, and even more difficult to control these trends from abroad. The Russia of the last tsars gave the illusion of being an economic complex of Western stamp. Bolshevik Russia would like to give the same illusion; with its communist methods it would even like to become an example for the West. Yet in reality, when considered from the standpoint of Western economics, it is one huge colonial territory where the Russians of the farmlands and small towns work essentially as peasants and craftsmen. Industry and the transportation of industrial products over the rail networks, as well as the process of wholesale distribution of such products, are and will always remain inwardly foreign to this people. The businessman, the factory head, the engineer and inventor are not "Russian" types. As a people, no matter how far individuals may go toward adapting to modern patterns of world economics, the true Russians will always let foreigners do the kind of work they reject because they are inwardly not suited to it. A close comparison with the Age of the Crusades will clarify what I have in mind. [9] At that time, also, the young peoples of the North were nonurban, committed to an agrarian economy. Even the small cities, castle communities, and princely residences were essentially marketplaces for agricultural produce. The Jews and Arabs were a full thousand years "older," and functioned in their ghettos as experts in urban money economy. The Western European fulfills the same function in the Russia of today.

(9. Cf. *Decline of the West*, II, Chapters XIII and XIV, "The Form-World of Economic Life.")

Machine industry is basically non-Russian in spirit, and the Russians will forever regard it as alien, sinful, and diabolical. They

can bear with it and even respect it, as the Japanese do, as a means toward higher ends, for one casts out demons by the prince of demons. But they can never give their soul to it as did the Germanic nations, which created it with their dynamic sensibility as a symbol and method of their struggling existence. In Russia, industry will always remain essentially the concern of foreigners. But the Russians will be able to distinguish sensitively between what is to their own and what is to the foreigners' advantage.

As far as "money" is concerned, for the Russians the cities are markets for agricultural commodities; for us they have been since the eighteenth century the centers for the dynamics of money. "Money thinking" will be impossible for the Russians for a long time to come. For this reason, as I have explained, Russia is regarded as a colony by foreign business interests. Germany will be able to gain certain advantages from its proximity to the country, particularly in light of the fact that both powers have the same enemy, the financial interest-groups of the Allied nations.

Yet the German economy can never exploit these opportunities without support from superior politics. Without such support a chaotic seizure of opportunities will ensue, with dire consequences for the future. The economic policy of France has been for centuries, as a result of the sadistic character of the French people, myopic and purely destructive. And a serious German policy in economic affairs simply does not exist.

Therefore it is the prime task of German business to help create order in German domestic affairs, in order to set the stage for a foreign policy that will understand and meet its obligations. Business has not yet grasped the immense economic significance of this domestic task. It is decidedly not a question, as common prejudice would have it, of making politics submit to the momentary interests of single groups, such as has already occurred by means of the worst kind of politics imaginable, party politics. It

is not a question of advantages that might last for just a few years. Before the war it was the large agricultural interests, and since the war the large industrial interests, that attempted to focus national policy on the obtaining of temporary advantages, and the results were always nil. But the time for short-range tactics is over. The next decades will bring problems of world-historical dimensions, and that means that business must at all times be subordinate to national politics, not the other way around. Our business leaders must learn to think exclusively in political terms, not in terms of "economic politics." The basic requirement for great economic opportunity in the East is thus order in our politics at home.

Is World Peace Possible?

A cabled reply to an American poll

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The question whether world peace will ever be possible can only be answered by someone familiar with world history. To be familiar with world history means, however, to know human beings as they have been and always will be. There is a vast difference, which most people will never comprehend, between viewing future history as it will be and viewing it as one might like it to be. Peace is a desire, war is a fact; and history has never paid heed to human desires and ideals.

Life is a struggle involving plants, animals, and humans. It is a struggle between individuals, social classes, peoples, and nations, and it can take the form of economic, social, political, and military competition. It is a struggle for the power to make one's will prevail, to exploit one's advantage, or to advance one's opinion of what is just or expedient. When other means fail, recourse will be taken time and again to the ultimate means: violence. An individual who uses violence can be branded a criminal, a class can be called revolutionary or traitorous, a people bloodthirsty. But that does not alter the facts. Modern world-communism calls its wars "uprisings," imperialist nations describe theirs as "pacification of foreign peoples." And if the world existed as a unified state, wars would likewise be referred to as "uprisings." The distinctions here are purely verbal.

Talk of world peace is heard today only among the white peoples, and not among the much more numerous colored races. This is a perilous state of affairs. When individual thinkers and idealists talk of peace, as they have done since time immemorial, the effect is always negligible. But when whole peoples become pacifistic it is a symptom of senility. Strong and unspent races are not pacifistic. To adopt such a position is to abandon the future, for the pacifist ideal is a static, terminal condition that is contrary to the basic facts of existence.

As long as man continues to evolve there will be wars. Should the white peoples ever become so tired of war that their governments can no longer incite them to wage it, the earth will inevitably fall a victim to the colored men, just as the Roman Empire succumbed to the Teutons. Pacifism means yielding power to the inveterate nonpacifists. Among the latter there will always be white men -- adventurers, conquerors, leader-types -- whose following increases with every success. If a revolt against the whites were to occur today in Asia, countless whites would join the rebels simply because they are tired of peaceful living.

Pacifism will remain an ideal, war a fact. If the white races are resolved never to wage war again, the colored will act differently and be rulers of the world.