DEFENCE OF THE WEST

HENRY MASSIS

BERSERKER

BOOKS

DEFENCE OF THE WEST

By Henri Massis

Translated by F. S. Flint

With a Preface by

G. K. Chesterton

PREFACE

By G. K. Chesterton

M. HENRI MASSIS is one of the ablest of a group of French writers who are already changing Europe and have hardly been heard of in England. The causes of this unnatural neglect lie far back in historical complications that we ought long ago to have left behind. They ought at the latest to have been killed at the Battle of the Marne. For they very largely consisted of an incapacity to understand the French intellect when it is militant; which is exactly when it is most French. It is rather like the confusion that still covers nearly all that is really to be said for and against Napoleon. The confusion arose from a coincidence; a rather curious coincidence by which both the progressive and the conservative traditions in this country inherited a legend of exaggerated horror. The Tory was prejudiced against a foreigner; the Radical was prejudiced against a soldier. Rather in the same way these new intellectual fighters in France do not fit in with our own conventions of controversy. Their ideas irri-

tate the mystic by being clear; and the sceptic by being Christian. They are in fact defending the Christian mysteries against mere mysticism; just as they are defending reason against mere rationalism. In all this they are full of the spirit of France; but not of the France that has been most familiar in England. It is more than a jest to say that that France was mostly Anatole France. That very anti-national genius was regarded as the genius of his nation. This was merely because he was the type of that nation which had become familiar in our own novels and newspapers; polished, epicurean, civilised and cynical. Even when he wrote about St. Joan of Arc, we did not realise that the very title refuted the tradition. He may have posed in France as a revolutionary figure; but he was accepted in England because he was a traditional figure. He might deny God or eternity; he might upset patriotism or chastity or the dignity of life; but he did not upset the English notion of a Frenchman. For that notion was quite accidental and at least a hundred years old; and was invented by men who had never met a Frenchman since Voltaire.

In meeting a Frenchman like M. Massis, we shall need no introduction so far as the intrinsic intellectual force and value of his own contentions

are concerned. But this very brief and inadequate introduction may find some sort of excuse, in the necessity of indicating here in England what everybody knows in France; what the intellectual quarrel is all about. M. Massis stands in all his works, and especially perhaps in this work, for the idea of a certain dignity and independence in the human soul, such as is expressed in the idea of free will and of a final choice between good and evil. In this he is equally opposed to all that type of materialism which makes the mind mechanical, and also to all that type of transcendentalism which would merely melt it into everything or into nothing. It is true that some of the German and other transcendentalists whom he attacks with so much vigour, have themselves talked a great deal about the Will. But in them it is so anarchic that it might more properly be called the Wish. It is not a command of conscious choice; but rather a surrender to the drive of unconscious desire. In the philosophy of M. Massis the Will is wedded to the Reason; and it is his whole point to protest against either sceptics or mystics putting asunder those whom God has joined to make Man. It is this sane tradition of a reasonable and responsible dignity in the Will which he here defends against all the vast intellectual invasion from Asia.

Only too often, unfortunately, the defence of the West has been merely a defence of the worst things in the West. Sometimes it has been especially a defence of the indefensible. By a strange paradox and inversion, we have claimed superiority in everything except the things in which we are superior. We have extended to Asia all the accidents of Europe; but we have hardly dared to say a word for the substance of Europe; least of all for the soul of Europe. We have taught Asiatics to dress in European clothes, at the very moment when those clothes were uglier than they ever were before or, let us hope, ever will be again. But so far from giving them the best European ideas, we have allowed them to give us the very worst Asiatic ideas. Fatalism, pessimism, the paralysis of the fighting spirit, the contempt for individual justice, all these things have been allowed to creep into our culture until they are practically the negative religion of our time. We have conquered the body of the East and let it conquer the soul of the West. It would be far more inspiriting if the fight were threatening to go the other way. It would be far better to defy all the armies of Xerxes, if what we had to defend were the spirit of Athens. But nobody has ever put up a temple like the Parthenon

amid a forest of Chinese pagodas. What we have put up is any number of our very vulgarest hotels and factories. It were better to be invaded in the manner of Spain, if it ended with something like the Cathedral of Seville. But nobody has set up anything like the Cathedral of Seville to face the Taj Mahal. We have set up only tents and golf clubs. It is this astonishing failure to fight for our own ideas that M. Massis castigates in this book; and he is leading a movement in which Englishmen ought to join, as they joined in the First Crusade.

For we in England have too easily forgotten that long stretch of history, of English history as well as of French history, in which the two nations were comrades or rivals in a common tradition of chivalry. Much has been written against the romances of chivalry; though all that was really to be said was said once and for all three hundred years ago by a single Spaniard of the Renaissance. But even the romances of chivalry, let alone of the realities of chivalry, had this fundamental sanity about them, that they concerned the exercise of the will in the defiance of circumstances, and not the mere submersion of the will by circumstances, as in so much of our realistic fiction of to-day. And even

the wildest of them contained also a recognition of reason which is often absent from the tamest tales of the rationalistic epoch. There was an aim, there was a test, there was a truth outside mere moods and impressions; there was a judgment which decided whether the quest had been attained or no. In short, they were stories; if they were prolix and repeated stories. They may have been sprawling and formless compared with the classical precision which the Renaissance hoped to attain. They were as pointed as anecdotes compared with the welter of anarchical subjectivity which our modern psychological novels have now actually attained. These two essentials, of a reasonable recognition of an end and a militant choice directed towards that end, these things existed once both for Gaul and Britain; for they were to be recognised even in the romances about Arthur of Britain or Amadis of Gaul. And it seems to me astounding that the very generation which has seen Gaul and Britain fighting side by side against barbarism, and both numbering heroes as splendid as the paladins of legend, should be sullen about that triumph and bewildered by that lucidity.

G. K. CHESTERTON.

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INTRODUCTION

THE future of Western civilisation, indeed the future of mankind, is to-day in jeopardy. This is no imaginary peril, none of those dark forebodings that weak minds love to dwell upon, to feed and nourish their fearful distaste for all effort. There is no worse moral collapse, no more degrading misfortune for a people, than to yield to these nameless fears, to this terror of the future, which betray only the disorder of minds anxious and defeated in advance.

Therefore, all those who are seeking to change us, to put a different bent on us, to turn us into other paths, never cease to prophesy our death throes, to appeal to our agonies, to call our culture in question, to throw doubt upon the worth of our possessions, in order finally to ruin our humanity in its principles. These prophets of disaster, the conspiracy of whose voices clashes over the mangled body of Europe—it is against their designs that we have first of all to defend ourselves. The sole certain outcome of such propa-

ganda, which is aimed far more at the overthrow of the order of the world than at its determination, can only be to make uneasiness universal and renunciation possible, to sap resistance and to darken counsel, to cause us to lose sight of the rules of preservation and to neglect the measures vital to our recovery. Of all the evils that afflict us, there are none more to be feared than these.

But in refusing to give way to this fatal disorder, in which the individual recoils before the effort necessary to defend himself, we do not any the less appreciate the mortal danger overhanging Europe. There is no man of sense, no thinking man heedful of the future, who does not feel both the tragic greatness of the danger, and the stern need to serve in order to survive. These are no vague conjectures: the facts are 'clear and pitiless,' and things have left us no choice. The series of events, as an outcome of which Western civilisation runs the risk of being engulfed or of falling into servitude, can be understood by everybody: they 'are in the newspapers.'[1]

It is no longer a question now of those too exact forecasts which observers who are alive to the

[1] The reader will remember the famous and often quoted pages of Paul Valéry in *La Crise de l'Esprit.* They are the starting point of all reflections on a subject like this.

harmony between ideas and facts, have been able to make in the light of experience, the nature of things and analogies drawn from history. The crisis of Western civilisation and the danger of Asiaticism are no longer questions reserved solely for the meditations of men of intellect. They are so important that at the present time they cross the path of the most sluggish and the most short-sighted policy. Even our governors, however devoid of imagination we may suppose them to be, however inclined to ignore spiritual realities, to leave out of account the crises of feelings and ideas which develop in the bosoms of those in whom great historic changes prepare their apparition, even our governors seem suddenly to have become aware of the danger.

As for the public conscience in France, the revolt of a Berber chieftain was required to give it a glimmering of the profound significance of an event that is less important for what it is than for what it presages. Until then, the formidable problems raised by the awakening of the nations of Asia and Africa, united by Bolshevism against Western civilisation, were scarcely understood at all. Let us hope that they will not become in their turn the commonplaces of a political system of

ideas lacking severity and rigour, whose powerlessness to save anything whatever is covered by these ample pretexts in order to account for its embarrassment and to justify its inactivity.

There is an abundance of documents from which to obtain an exact notion of signs and things. Wherever you turn, appetites and mysticisms, the spiritual and the temporal, are closely intermingled. There is nothing that is not questioned and that does not appear ready to be translated into action. It seems as though there were in preparation a complete reordering of humanity, a clashing of its contradictory ideals, of its dissimilar vital principles and its heterogeneous systems of knowledge—and this in the midst of the fever of the Asiatic peoples, aware of the discord in Europe, whose 'ideas' will have served merely to awaken their instincts and exasperate their jealousies and mistrusts.

At the very moment when technical progress seemed to be on the point of bringing about the unity of the human race, there occurred the most complete rupture of equilibrium that the world had ever known. For 'the human race is less united than it was under Titus, when all the civ-

ilised peoples were grouped under the *fasces*. The human race is less united than it was in the time of Saint Louis, when all the Christian peoples were confederated under the Triple Crown.'[1] The facility of material communications, which was, according to democratic doctrines, to bring about a union of minds, has succeeded in making the world *uniform*, but not in *uniting* it; for 'matter is essentially a divider and men communicate only on the immaterial plane.'

Thought, which is subdued to the character of national temperament, displays its incompatible differences. Where, demands the philosopher, are the 'happy civilisations of ancient Greece and of the France of former days, which were candid as the intelligence, and in which, in the most national of soils, took root a most universal and most human thought'?[2] The nations, like so many schisms, are set up against one another as antagonistic concepts, that claim to enthral the very essence of the mind. But the mind is cruelly 'wounded'; it has become

[1] Charles Maurras, *Kiel et Tangier*, p. 328. A German author, Hermann Platz, wrote in 1924: 'You may think what you like of Richelieu's policy, but you must agree that the word "Christendom" meant something to him, and that, under his domination, for he did dominate, Europe did not stumble.' (*Germany, France and the Western Idea*, Cologne.)

[2] Jacques Maritain, *Réflexions sur l'intelligence*, p. 265.

materialised in its turn, and seems to have lost all consciousness of its own purpose. Mechanical progress has so thoroughly corrupted it that nothing in the deadly dreams of the Utopians can be compared to its positive results. We are threatened with destruction by the very means by which we thought to live.

We see what is at the end of this stupid greed for material power that has diverted the West from its true mission. Europe, 'the brain of a vast body,' whose movements it no longer controls, is in a state against nature, and it cannot remain there. The war merely precipitated the course of events. On the very threshold of this inhuman age, Charles Maurras prophesied the consequences of these degrading follies in words ringing with the melancholy of wasted foresight: 'The whole of the nineteenth century,' he wrote in 1905, 'has been but one long scientific, industrial, and commercial effort to extend the scope of human power, to arrange the whole earth and to multiply civilisation by the sacrifice of barbarian labour. . . . But the barbarian is by no means a vassal; he is arming, he is making progress, and he is threatening. *Civilisation does not form a compact and united body;* it has its followers, its black and

yellow mercenaries. Imprudences and errors will have to be paid for, as they have been paid for in the course of history, at the price of blood.'

Twenty years have passed. European unity, which had been spiritually undone since the Reformation, was physically broken in 1914. It required nearly four centuries before the great Western Schism, morally accomplished at the very beginning of modern times, and completed politically by the Revolution, fully developed all its deadly powers. We are confronted to-day with the tragic epilogue to this inhuman and hideous division. It is *civilisation,* the idea even of civilisation, of which Europe claimed to be the holder, that is most deeply wounded. In the eyes of that part of the world which lived in the illusion of our homogeneity, civilisation seems vanquished. The war has made it unrecognisable.

Cited as their witness by all the nations whom the struggle had brought to the clash of arms, called and enrolled in the service of their rival propagandas, 'civilisation' excused everything, justified everything. Did not each of the groups, mad in their own destruction, claim to be the only one engaged in the defence of civilisation? And

the terrible work, in which souls were as bitterly opposed as bodies, went on under the invocation by all of the same obscure deity. The just reasons for the war—the struggle for our native soil and for political independence—no longer seemed sufficient causes. It became necessary to bring into the conflict spiritual and moral values, philosophies and dogmas, traditions and beliefs; to mobilise, under the adverse banners, Law and Justice, the whole crowd of divine personages. Now these idols are themselves laid waste, even more than the battlefields. In the midst of the tumult of discordant voices, the least that could be said was that the same words did not stand for the same things, and that those who used them betrayed not only their state of conflict, but also that they were divided in their very being, in their thoughts, in their soul, on the essential thing in life. Civilisation might very well mean matter and number, everything which creates antagonism of appetites and cupidities, and gives rise to massacres and destruction, but it did not form that *common good* on the strength of which it claims to impose itself on the rest of the world. The result has been a terrible crisis, a mental disorder, of which it is not yet possible to measure the effects.

Even more than the spectacle of the broils of war, the discords of Europe, where all shades of opinion are tearing each other to pieces, have singularly weakened our prestige as 'civilised peoples' in the eyes of the Asiatics. Asia, which has so long suffered under the domination of the Western yoke, is not only overjoyed to see Europeans vilified and beaten down by themselves; it has remembered the grievances and accusations that were spread by an imprudent propaganda to the farthest limits of the Oriental world. And here is this world, both judge and party in the huge lawsuit we have instituted over the whole face of the globe; it gives evidence in its turn, and throws into the debate all the title-deeds of its past, all that we have taught it to remember. We may have laid aside our arms; the battle of ideas continues.[1] *Our ideas no longer belong to us.* The words we used in order to enrol our mercenaries, to rally them to the defence of 'civilisation and right,' are taken up and turned against us by the mercenaries. It was inevitable that it should come to this.

All travellers, all foreigners who have lived for long in the Far East, assure us that in ten years

[1] 'The war,' writes Gandhi, 'was only the prelude to another war more important still.'

minds have changed more profoundly than in ten centuries. The old easy submission has been succeeded by a secret hostility, a veritable hatred that awaits only the favourable moment to be translated into action. From Calcutta to Shanghai, from the Mongolian steppes to the plains of Anatolia, the whole of Asia is stirred by an inexorable desire for freedom. The supremacy to which Europe has been accustomed, since the day when John Sobieski finally checked the onrush of the Turks and the Tartars beneath the walls of Vienna, is no longer recognised by the Asiatic peoples.[1] All these peoples are aspiring after the recovery of their unity against the 'white man,' whose overthrow they proclaim.[2]

The underlying reasons for this enormous recoil have been correctly stated by Abel Bonnard at the end of the story of his travels, *En Chine:* 'Simul-

[1] 'What does the European war mean to us Orientals?' writes Yone Noguchi. 'It represents the most lamentable breakdown of the so-called Western civilisation. The belief we had that it rested on loftier and solider foundations than our own was instantaneously overthrown and killed; we regret having, in a way, overestimated its chances of success, and allowed ourselves to be deceived by its apparent splendour.' ('The Downfall of Western Civilisation,' *The Nation,* Oct., 1924.)

[2] At the first meeting of the Association of Greater Asia, a famous geographer and explorer, Mr. Shigetaka Shiga, de-

taneously with the practice of a policy of domination,' he says, 'the white man spread ideas of equality; one day his ideas had to come into conflict with his actions. There is no doubt that new theories and principles for a long time have no result, remain as it were suspended in the air; and it really is a little too convenient at certain epochs, to take credit for liberal ideas, while at the same time profiting by the solidity of a world with the making of which liberalism had nothing to do. But these times are over. We are living in a period of penalties and consequences, in one of those dramatic eras when words take on flesh and press to be recognised as things. . . . Custom has deadened these words for us, but they recover their full effect when they are exercised on newer races. . . . By a combination of events which makes the drama still more startling, it is at the very moment when the white man is on the point, if not of giving up the ideas in which he believed, at least of

scribed in these terms the changes that are taking place throughout the East: 'I have travelled along the northern frontier of India and through the valley of the Himalayas. I have been as far as the foot of the plateaus of Arabia. *Everywhere I met with a state of hostility to the white race.* I wonder, after what I have seen and heard, whether, before long, the domination of the Europeans will not fall into dust in that part of the world.'

subjecting them to a severer scrutiny, that he sees these ideas escaping from him and a claim to benefit by them being put forward by other men. . . . Just when the principles of the modern world were about to be judged by the result of a first trial, another experiment was set on foot, vaster and more summary still, positively terrifying in its universal character.' Called forth by the idols of the West, the Asiatic crisis comes to a head at the moment when the West is turning away from them and is beginning to doubt their value.

Does Europe wish to save itself, or will it continue to slide down the slope of a general surrender which is fostered by the negative doctrines of its being? Does it believe itself to be immune from the intellectual, political and mystical ideals of the East, which is taking advantage of the state of reduced resistance in which it has surprised Europe, to deaden its will and to destroy the last germs of unity that survive in it? For Asia is not seeking merely to arouse its native peoples to revolt in order to deprive our impoverished continent of the immense resources Asia holds. It is the soul of the West that the East wishes to attack, that soul, divided, uncertain of its principles, con-

fusedly eager for spiritual liberation, and all the more ready to destroy itself in that it has of itself departed from its historical civilising order and its tradition.

On the pretext of bringing us what we need, a certain kind of Asiaticism[1] is disposing us to the final dispersal of the heritage of our culture and of all that which enables the man of the West still

[1] We say a *certain Asiaticism*—and it will be seen, in what follows, what we mean by that. But we wish to dispel, at the outset, any misunderstandings that might arise in the mind of the reader. When we speak of an 'Asiatic peril,' we are not accusing the East, in general, but denouncing the philosophic, moral, and social errors and the dubious idealism which Oriental propagandists, educated in our schools and served by certain European idea-mongers, set up in the name of the East against the West. Between these two worlds, we are not assuming irreducible antagonisms, founded on differences of nature and of race. We are not attacking the East, nor defending the West without distinction and *en bloc*. These great vocables designate—we know—complex and different aggregates; but how is it possible not to use them in order to synthesise certain facts and certain historical particularities, which form the characteristics of their cultures? But it is not our intention to give to these intellectual, political, or moral facts the value of absolute principles, and, still less, to set them up as radically hostile notions by which the spirit of separation is confirmed.

Germanism and Latinism, Slavism and Asiaticism are also necessary formulas for those desiring to give a name to general tendencies, duly ascertained, which are proper to the history of the Asiatics, the Slavs, the Germans, and the Latins. It is not lapsing into a sort of 'naturalistic' fatalism if from such lessons we draw conclusions concerning nature and history.

to keep himself upright on his feet. Personality, unity, stability, authority, continuity—these are the root ideas of the West. We are asked to break these to pieces for the sake of a doubtful Asiaticism in which all the forces of the human personality dissolve and return to nothingness. We are asked to destroy the lineaments of *man,* which he has spent long years and methodical and persevering efforts in acquiring.

Received without misgivings by curious minds that are attracted by any novelty and unsettled by any revelation, propaganda of this kind sows the seeds of spiritual anarchy in a troubled world, where too many decomposing mixtures eddy for it not to create opportunities for the desired upheavals. For this reason, we shall see it following the track of all the destructive fictions. For the civilisation of the West is to-day attacked with all the resources, all the powers, all the masks, and all the ruses of the mind. Let the forces of the mind organise the defence.

CHAPTER I

THIS new assault by the East on the Latin inheritance, that is to say, on all that remains to us of possibilities of order, protective substance and intimate cohesions, found, as was to be expected, its natural allies in those newly formed nations who have not kept step with the others in the march of human civilisation, and who belong only in an artificial and incomplete manner to the body of the West.

First of all in Germany, which is perpetually hesitating between Asiatic mysticism and the Latin spirit, and which seems to be in a state of permanent protest against the Roman idea. Overwhelmed by the sense of disaster, defeated Germany entered once more into contact with the native East, which presents remarkable affinities with her own thought.[1] A sort of instinct caused her to turn her gaze towards the confused East;

[1] 'To characterise the Germans, it will suffice to say that their mission was to link up the social order established in ancient Asia and to prepare the way for an entirely new epoch.' (Fichte, *Address to the German Nation.*)

and, in a dream of dragging the rest of the world with her in her fall, she began to prophesy, in dark apocalyptic tones,[1] the final bankruptcy of a world, the mastery of which had escaped her. Must not these people, who stood for action, hierarchy and organisation, and who flattered themselves that in them was accomplished the whole progress of the human race, have been shaken in their faith to have thus renounced the prerogatives of their 'culture,' and to have given up all

[1] 'The apocalyptic feeling of being at one of the great turnings in the history of the world, this feeling,' wrote Robert Ernst Curtius at that time, 'dominates German thought nowadays.' And Daniel Halévy replied: 'Germany can only utter a pathetic *Was nun?* and she is astonished and ready to tax us with lack of intelligence, because we do not utter it with her. She must understand once and for all that, if she is seeking for apocalypses, she must follow her quest alone.' Two years later, in 1924, Thomas Mann replied in his turn: 'France, it is certain, is beginning to dream of apocalypses. Her security appears to be more and more hazardous, and we Germans see in this reasons for hoping that the perturbations in France will enable us to breathe more freely.'

Thomas Mann based these hopes on the abandonment of classical education by M. Herriot. Post-war Germany, in fact, followed with absorbed interest this aspect of 'cultural politics.' M. Léon Bérard's plan appeared to her like a manifestation of 'the most absolute conservative traditionalism.' She saw, on the other hand, in M. Herriot's measure a proof that 'the French genius did not intend to allow itself to be enslaved by the Latin idea of civilisation.' And, like Thomas Mann, Robert Ernst Curtius wrote in this connection: 'The new turn of public opinion, which found political expression in the French

hope of anything except from something new and irrational?

It is from the pen of a famous German writer, the novelist, Thomas Mann, that we get this pathetic confession: 'The German people,' he says, 'were, in 1918, shaken to their depths: they were as weak as a new-born infant.' And he adds: 'The disaster suffered by France, after the defeat of 1870-1871, was mere child's play compared with the sufferings of Germany in the years preceding and following 1918. The German people suffered

elections of 11th May, 1924, will also manifest itself on the question of education. *The idea of Latin civilisation is undermined: it no longer reigns alone in men's minds.*' And Herr Curtius, full of hope, began to talk of the France of the 'Gothic spirit' and of 'Celtic France,' which, he said, 'is reawakening'; and he referred complacently to the works in which M. Schuré maintains that, in spite of the Roman conquest and the powerful influence of Rome over the Gauls, through classical culture and later the Catholic Church, an incessant struggle between the Latin spirit that works on the surface and the Celtic spirit that works in the depths of the nation, has existed for two thousand years of the history of France. (*Civilisation and Germanism;* cf. *Französischer Geist im Neuen Europa*, Berlin, 1925, pp. 233-236.)

Germany, whose culture is not homogeneous, is seeking to divide that which makes the unity of ours; she welcomes immediately any ethnical, historical, or linguistic theory that tends to dissociate it and to substitute antagonistic elements and the germs of schism and discord. The *Celtic* chimera, so profitable to her designs, was bound to find favour with her philosopher-historians.

a collapse, physical and mental, which they are a long way from having completely surmounted, such a collapse as history, doubtless, had never known before our time. For it is without precedent that a great civilised nation, conscious of having rendered eminent and original services to humanity, should find itself one fine day in the character and position of an outcast, an *inimicus humanae naturae,* stigmatised, outlawed and abandoned by all, and to be fought to the death by a league of all civilised nations. . . . What followed was an unparalleled fall, a complete and unconditional capitulation, the surrender of a moral fortress that had long defended itself with clenched teeth, but that, finally, was left without the slightest power of resistance. It was not merely a question of recognising with a calm moderation the faults and errors that had brought the catastrophe upon us. The demoralisation had no limits; it could be seen in the deep and almost fatal anxiety of a whole nation that despaired of itself, of its history, of its finest treasures; all of which, from its first origins, seemed refuted and reduced to absurdity by such a result; for it had all been morally implicated in a war which, for that very reason, it was declared, *must* absolutely be won, and

which, in fact, with such a weight of ideas behind it, ought not to have been lost.'[1]

This weight of ideas, which was Germano-Latin culture, post-war Germany made responsible for her defeat; she put it in the dock, and looked towards the East with a sort of messianic expectation. Must not this nation have been exceedingly uncertain of her foundations, and must she not have felt that there was nothing firm in her past on which to hold, for her to have been able to imagine that she would find salvation in new historical 'connections,' with another country, another wisdom, another civilisation than her own? Is it not rather because she had identified herself only by the chance of the encounter with the civilisation of the West, because she had adopted its ideal only in so far as it had seemed favourable to her, or in so far as she was able to include it in her personal calculations as a stroke of luck? Because her anticipations fall back upon her, and she suffers defeat from what should have assured her the victory, we find her concluding, not that the collapse is her own collapse, but that it is the collapse of science, method and reason,

[1] Thomas Mann: 'The spirit of Germany and its future between Slav mysticism and Latinity.' (*L'Europe nouvelle,* 14th March, 1925.)

and the bankruptcy of civilisation and of all its concepts, for she had appraised and defined it among her spiritual resources only as a factor of German success. The moment 'the primacy of the Germanic ego' is stricken, she rebels, and is caught cursing that which no longer satisfies her cupidity.

It matters little to her what disorders such a subversion may let loose on the rest of the world. The German knows no other humanity than his own; he stands only for himself and upon his own needs. 'Europe no longer affects me,' says Hermann Keyserling.[1] 'This world is too familiar to me to furnish new forms to my being: it is too limited. The whole of Europe nowadays is of one mind only. I want to escape to spaces where my life, to subsist, must be transformed.' This appeal for the sedition of the individual against the order of things is an essential characteristic of German individualism.[2] It was bound to find an echo in the soul of a Germany, broken in its present and

[1] Compare with this saying that of Romain Rolland: 'We are a certain number in Europe to whom the civilisation of Europe no longer suffices.'

[2] Goethe traces this German individualism back to the Reformation: 'Every German,' he says, 'goes his own gait; they all seek their own individual satisfaction, and trouble themselves not at all about other people, for the individual carries

broken in its past—an echo of its own distress and a sort of hope for the future. In the track of the thaumaturge of Darmstadt, a whole generation of young people, sick of Western knowledge and sighing for a new humanity and new forms of life (*eine neue Seelengestalt*), turned their gaze towards Asia and its mysterious possibilities.[1]

'Night falls on Europe,' wrote Walter Rathenau, some months before his tragic end. 'More and more, everything forces us to look towards the East. For us Germans, it is a question of life or death. . . . But it is not without a dreadful melancholy that men like us'—he was thinking of the men of his generation—'with their past, their prejudices and their traditions, turn away from the West—a sentimental attraction that we no longer have the right to feel, or even confess. This

about with him the idea of personal liberty, which may, indeed, inspire some excellent things, but also a good deal of absurdity.'

[1] Who, in the disarray in which the chaotic consciousness of the West is struggling, has sought to learn whether the four-thousand-year-old civilisations of India and China had no replies to make to our aspirations? The Germans, with their more urgent and tormented vitality, were the first to go to Asia for the food their hungry spirit no longer found to their liking in Europe, and the catastrophes of these last years precipitated this moral evolution, which was made up of disillusionment with political life and of enthusiasm for the inner life.' (Romain Rolland, preface to the *Danse de Çiva,* by Ananda Coomaraswamy.)

is the great consequence of the war; this is the great tragedy, which our children will not even understand. They will have become accustomed to being no more than *graeculi,* and our present distress will have no meaning for them. But we who have grown up with the pride of Europe . . .' And, during these four years (1918-1922), when the moral disarray of Germany was 'limitless,'[1] certain thinkers were devoting their energies to filling the world with their own disillusionment, and to cultivating the germs of a destructive Asiaticism, in order to scatter them over the nations of a devastated Europe.[2] A strange crisis, which doubtless affected only a part of the German intellectual world, the most sensitive and uneasy part. But, though it is only an episode, among many others, of the immense bankruptcy of post-war Germany, it seems to us particularly revealing, in that it enables us to perceive, in a stormy light, some few of the permanent characteristics of Germanism, its essential *constants.*

The Germany of 1918, frustrated in her ambition for spiritual hegemony, proclaimed, by the

[1] Thomas Mann, *loc. cit.*

[2] On the origins of this Orientalist movement in Germany, and on its post-war development, see Appendix I.

voice of Oswald Spengler, the decline of the West, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes.*[1] What did she find in this book, which was so eagerly snapped up and which opened up before her imagination the vast and shifting abysses of vanished civilisations? First of all, a catastrophic theory of history, illustrated with analogies and risky synchronisms, in which was foreshadowed the colossal *Dämmerung* that haunted her dreams. Did not Spengler say to her: 'The comparative study of cultures proves to us that we are passing through our old age. The destined hour has struck. An inexorable destiny, against which it would be childish to revolt. The last philosophy of the West, an historically necessary philosophy, is formulated in this book: it has no other object than to re-educate in us the social instincts of death, perverted by a dangerous illusion'? But what illusion is referred to here? That deceptive opti-

[1] Since the end of the world war, no philosophical work has had, in Central Europe, a success equal to that of Spengler's. His book sold more than fifty thousand copies. It gave rise to numerous commentaries and excited discussions, and birth to an enormous literature. Cf. Manfred Schroeter: *Der Streit um Spengler* (Beck, 1922). See too: *Un philosophe allemand contemporain: Oswald Spengler, le prophète du Déclin de l'Occident,* by André Fauconnet (Alcan, 1925), and *Pangermanistes d'après-guerre,* by E. Seillière (Alcan, 1924).

mism which bases its belief on an abstract, universal man. Such a man, according to Spengler, does not exist; life is without finality, humanity without transcendent aim; civilisation is a word devoid of meaning, or is nothing but the cycle accomplished, the infallible completion, of all the cultures in which, at certain periods, the living forces of a group of individualities expressive of history are integrated. For history alone is reality; there is no other logic, no other truth, than its own; human nature cannot be known apart from it. So history, the true substantial form, must henceforward set its face against the worn-out conceptions of the metaphysics of *being,* which is held to be responsible for that general notion of man which must be finally abolished.

It is this last affirmation, fraught with consequences for her which she perceived immediately, that post-war Germany was to turn to account, much more than the relativist and sceptical philosophy that rendered the idea of her decline supportable to her. Beneath the historico-scientific rubbish with which Spengler's system is encumbered, this is the leading idea, which she instinctively singled out, since it freed her from a

detestable responsibility[1]: it avenged her, and rehabilitated her in her own eyes. Humanity, that humanity from which it was sought to banish her, in the name of a civilisation and of a culture that was the depository of the eternal interests of the human race, 'humanity' was only a lure, an irritating phantom. Spengler taught that no culture, no civilisation, could lay claim to an absolute precellence, for the universal value on which the justification for this claim is based, the classical idea of man, is nothing but a false entity, contradicted by nature and by history.

The grossly primitive element in such a conception of culture, assimilated with the organic laws of life, was bound to cause it to be accepted with gratitude by German thinkers, whose doctrines are more often than not merely biological reactions set up as a system of the world. The new Spenglerian philosophy was not only timely in so

[1] This is the fixed idea of all German writers: 'The condition *sine qua non* for the recovery of Europe,' writes a young Berlin university man, 'is that the notorious question of responsibility (*Schuld*) should cease to be considered as of first importance. Indeed, it is not a question of responsibility or guilt, but much more one of fatality. It is not a question either of the misdeeds of certain individuals, certain classes or certain nations, but much more one of a transformation, a catastrophic fall of a whole period of humanity.' Spengler's historical fatalism furnished such a state of mind with arguments.

far as it washed the Germanic conscience clean of an illusory sin; it also flattered Germany's primordial appetites, for the word *humanity* calls forth in her no immediate echo, and takes on in her mind only a foreign significance. Fichte himself points this out: 'If the word *Menschlichkeit* had been said to a German instead of the word *Humanität,* he would have understood without any historical explanation. But he would have added: it is no great thing to be a man and not a wild beast. That is what a German would have said, differing in this from a Roman. And why? Because, in his language, the word *humanity* has remained an entirely sentient notion, and has never become, as with the Romans, the symbol of something supra-sentient.'

That which Fichte calls a 'symbol,' and which is nothing else than the rational idea of man[1] opposed to the instinctive forces of his nature, Spengler set out to destroy finally for the sake of

[1] It is this rational idea which German historicism wishes definitely to abolish: 'For us,' says Curtius, 'it is a spirit that is revealed to itself only in history, and that takes a different form with each new apparition. For a Frenchman, there is no creative evolution of the reason. The Græco-Romano-French tradition is considered, in a powerful simplification, as the adequate, insurpassable, and infallible realisation of reason in history. . . . Germany could find no place in such a framework.

an historical organicism that liberated German thought from humanist and Latin culture. This liberation it welcomed with a burst of enthusiasm that dulled the wound to its pride. It mattered little that Spengler prophesied next the end of the 'Gothic culture' which was that of Europe in his youth; it was a fine past. For did he not also open up indefinite possibilities for the future, by turning attention to Asiatic Russia, where the new humanity was being born? And, moreover, an era of 'civilisation' was beginning which would set at odds the two great universalist ideas of Western humanity: state control or Prussian socialism and anti-state control or English capitalism; a decisive struggle in which the Latin peoples, condemned to 'permanent anarchy,' would be reduced to the part of supers. . . .[1]

These harsh and gloomy anticipations which excited the Prussian, Spengler, the Baltic Key-

If Latin civilisation and the idea of humanity are identical, German is inhuman and outside humanity. She is brute nature, barbarianism, she is Germanism.' (*Op. cit.*, p. 256.) For the universalist notion of intelligence and being, which she calls the 'stabilism of our conception of the world,' Germany is seeking to substitute a 'dynamic' theory of civilisation, in which her original individualism is identified with the very rhythm of the cosmos, in a sort of 'organic communism.'

[1] Spengler: *Preussentum und Sozialismus*.

serling was to tone down with the idealism of his 'Oriental' subjectivism. What the first had attempted, in order to seduce the German individual from the standards of the Latin mind, the other meant to accomplish by addressing himself to his soul, and by elevating it to that spirituality the secrets of which Asiatic wisdom possesses.

What a strange figure is that of Count Hermann Keyserling, to whom an uneasy younger generation was to hand over its soul and the guidance of its destiny! What had he to offer it? The story of his life; for the personal problems that had driven him to the far corners of the world and to submission to the influences of the Tropics, India and China, so that he should not become fixed within the narrow framework of the old European system, his problems 'had become those of the West.' The intimate experience of this philosopher, in fact, was shown to be identical with that of the convulsed world, which had to be adjusted to the order of the cosmos, as he had adjusted his own being to it.[1] Of this dilettante, fond of soli-

[1] 'I had,' he says, 'the mentality of the European who, to be born to historical life, needs to see all the old States crumbling down about him: I therefore sought first of all to ignore the war, and, for about a year, I continued to live in that state of inner detachment which is described in the *Diary of a Phi-*

tude and inner detachment, of this æsthete who for years had sought to escape from the laws of time and space, the collapse of Europe suddenly made the 'necessary man,' the renovator of Germany, and the restorer of an œcumenical humanity. Keyserling, at any rate, asserted that this was so, and spread the news with a contagious frenzy. Confident in his psychical power, in that creative dynamism[1] which was now revealed to him, the author of the *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* had become conscious that his hour had struck. His active energies were liberated by the ruin of the old world. He felt strongly that his mission was 'to change men,' and to save the West by restoring to it its lost sense of things, which he had rediscovered in the ancient texts of China and India. For this work of complete reinstatement,

losopher. . . . I had scarcely taken my place once more in the world, towards 1918, when I discovered the fecundity of my previous meditations. My personality had acquired greater vigour. . . . The man of action in me that I had repressed for years had a lion's awakening. Like a volcano my nature burst forth with all its active energies. The quondam æsthete was therefore quite dead.' So, in defeated Germany, Keyserling found himself the man of the hour. M. Romain Rolland, if France had been vanquished, might, in the same way, have figured as a seer and a prophet.

[1] 'My spiritual dynamism is so strong,' he says, 'that it is impossible to endure it more than three days.'

of fusion of the East and West in an harmonious synthesis, a man was needed who had himself substituted the ideal of Asiatic wisdom for that of the materialistic science of Europe, a man who had learned to unite the spiritual forces of his soul with his instinctive life, a man in whom the Word had become flesh, and who was, so to speak, the *incarnation of Universality*.[1]

This new messiah, this saviour of a world delivered over to the chaos of modern barbarism, was Hermann Keyserling; and the *School of Wisdom* which he opened at Darmstadt, in 1920, was to become the 'radiating centre of his influence.' For there is no question here of a doctrine, nor of anything that resembles a rational and positive teaching.[2] Is not Europe dying of intellectualism and positivity? Nor does Keyserling believe in the abstract man, the definite personality. Therefore, he desires to act upon his audience, assembled each year in a voluntary retreat, only by a sort

[1] Cf. Christian Sénéchal: *La Philosophie de Hermann Keyserling* (*La Vie des Peuples,* No. 55). 'You know the Christian idea of the incarnate Logos. That is what I have, up to a certain point, become myself, with due regard to proportions, and modest proportions, of course.' (Declaration by Keyserling to Frédéric Lefèvre.)

[2] 'I give no new theory; I have none; but *I change men.* . . . What I am doing is applied magic.' (*Ibid.*)

of personal magic,[1] which incites them, in the manner of his example, to manifest themselves, to search their hearts, to allow themselves to be fertilised by the Spirit, and to learn to know themselves thoroughly in order to attain a certain level of 'life' that no name or form limits. At Darmstadt, there is no theoretically conceived perfection, but contacts, spiritual exchanges, which aim only at arousing the need for the inner life and the desire for communion with the absolute, according to the method of the Hindu *yogis*.

'The perfect realisation of oneself in the sphere of the psychical' is for Keyserling the supreme ideal of philosophy and religion. Ancient India, according to him, has attained and realised this ideal, which the West is still seeking. Without renouncing our own principles, our fundamental differences, it is from India, he says, that we must learn that 'art of interiorisation,' in which our dominant energies will relax without destroying themselves. For true progress consists in the

[1] 'Once a year, generally in September, we have a great *Tagung*, a session to which I convoke the most eminent minds of Germany; and then, on a theme chosen for the purpose and ample enough to enable all the most important individual points of view to be expressed, I give occasion to every one of these eminent minds to produce all that he is capable of giving.' (*Ibid.*)

spiritual orientation (*Einstellung*) which transforms the inner chaos into cosmos and makes of man a creator in the absolute sense of the term (*der Mensch ist unbedingt schöpferisch*). This superior development began in Hinduism; hence the miracle of its wisdom. 'The Hindus,' says Keyserling, 'have gone beyond the static notion of truth, and have replaced it by a dynamic notion that transfigures its sense. They do not suffer from the superstition that consists in believing that metaphysical truths can find an adequate form in a logical system whatever it may be. . . . Systems have no more consistency and are no more solid than any external aspect of Maya.' And Keyserling concludes: 'We too shall recognise sooner or later that we cannot attain to knowledge of Being[1] by perfecting the intellect,

[1] We meet here once more an old illusion of German philosophy. This text of Keyserling's might be compared with these words of Fichte (*Address to the German Nation*): 'True philosophy has life as its point of departure, life as such, immutable and identical for all eternity. This philosophy recognises that it is solely in its manifestation that life begins and ends, and that it is this law alone that permits it to arrive at being and reality. Only this philosophy is really German (*deustic*) that is to say, *primitive.*' The German, according to Fichte, in other words, the primitive man (*deutsch,* modification of *deustic,* from *diot,* popular, primitive), the man who is not stuck in arbitrary dogmas, can do no otherwise than

however far it may be carried, nor by the deep searching of consciousness as it is, but only by the acquisition of a new and higher form of consciousness. Man must raise himself above his age-old instrument of consciousness, and cross the biological frontiers, the abstract classical expression of which is contained in Kant's critique. He must go beyond the point he has attained hitherto; his consciousness, instead of remaining fixed at the surface, must learn to reflect the Spirit of the depths, which is the foundation of his being.'

Let us therefore give up attempting to define that which admits of no definition,[1] and, further, let us refuse to discuss that which admits of no discussion.[2] It is the sign of a critical spirit, a Latin mind, to attempt to arrive by analysis at 'the dynamic signification of the real.' Keyserling denounces this intellectualism[3] which attacks

abandon himself to philosophic speculations. Philosophy is therefore the mode of expression of uncultivated man. An astonishing confession!

[1] We shall devote a chapter, farther on, to the criticism of these doctrines. We must confine ourselves here to stating them merely.

[2] 'I am of opinion,' says Keyserling, 'that there is only one mortal sin against wisdom, viz., discussion. . . . Discussion is the only thing I do not admit.'

[3] Which, by the way, he reduces to rationalism.

everything and creates only disputes and discord: 'It has,' he says, 'eaten into the body of Europe like a worm'; but he believes that it is fated to destroy itself, because it refuses to submit to the 'creative fecundation of the Word.' How, for that matter, is it possible to give a name to this singular revelation, this dreadful mixture of Kantian idealism, Bergsonism and Freudism, that seeks to empty the mind of any objective content, exalts the primacy of the psychic and the individual, reduces truth to affective efficiency, sanctifies the ecstasy of the flesh, and lets loose vital forces on the pretext of spiritualising them? Neither the intelligence nor the understanding and its concepts can find a place here; they could not advance in this monstrous verbal polyphony. He who does not believe in the 'particular power of frenzy, in the flashes of the absurd, and in creative incoherence, who does not take a vomit of words for a torrent of essential perceptions' must abandon the hope of being a sage according to the gospel of Darmstadt.[1]

[1] Shall we add that Keyserling also praises great captains of industry like Stinnes, and that his idealism is based on very positive economics? For that matter, he compares the economic activity of the German nation to the 'peristaltic movements of the intestines,' thanks to which, no doubt, the German brain

To the uneasy spirituality of a part of the young German generation,[1] this appeal to nameless forces

can devote itself, without danger, to individualistic spiritualism. *Let life be earth and doctrine, heaven*, Luther said, in a phrase whose meaning is inexhaustible for the understanding of the history of Germany. In setting up this false antagonism of matter and spirit, nature and intelligence, pure reason and practical reason (as Kant has it later), Luther accounts for the part played by Germany in the modern world. All the subterfuges and all the falsifications of reality are in that doctrine, which splits up reality, as though to reserve for itself the equivocalness and to keep up the suspicious ambiguity which it will use in the sense of nature and instinct. What matter, after that, metaphysics, mysticism, transcendentalism, all that idealistic disorder in which German sensibility takes satisfaction? That is *heaven*, and, in this language, heaven is nothing but a cloud, a mirage which must be allowed to shine, which must even be kept up, in order to hide the enterprises of life, which, however, is earth, matter, and which organises itself, spreads out and knows no limits to its very real prosperities. Thus Luther left the German people, in the night of his vague dreamings, the illusion of his fantastic heaven; and he brought back the man of sin to the possessions of the earth, promising him riches and immediate conquests. Count Keyserling has proved faithful to the teaching of the German prophet. His School of Wisdom is open to the magnates of industrialism, 'to the Cæsars of economics.' Keyserling now declares without beating about the bush: 'In the world of brass which is coming into being, . . . the representative of the spirit himself could acquire no importance except as a warrior.' (*Le monde qui naît*, p. 172.) All these spiritualist ideas lead to the exaltation of the primacy of force

[1] Is this not what Novalis, in 1799, hailed as the token of an original German culture? 'Everywhere,' he says, 'is displayed a vast intuition of the creative free-will, of the limitless, of infinite magnificence, of the holy character and omnipotence of inner humanity.'

offered new possibilities of escape. It flattered them in their taste for the turbid, the unfinished, the thing that is not, the chaos whence anything may come, where the imagination may dream anything, and where nothing possesses either form or limit; and no doubt they found in this spiritualism, rejuvenated at the sources of Hindu and Chinese thought, that contradictory philosophy of infinite planes, that idealistic pantheism, which sleeps deep down in them.

The Darmstadt prophet belongs indeed to the race of old Germanic theologians, who all maintained that 'our nature is divine, that the absolute being is realised in us, and that we are the actuality of God.'[1] Better still than the texts of the Gospels and the Bible, from which the descendants of Luther had drawn their heretical exegeses, the ancient Oriental cosmogonies lent themselves to supplying with unexpected images[2] the confused mysticity of a Germany whose faith has no longer any transcendent object. For the Biblism which was formerly used, this Hindu pseudo-metaphysics

[1] Sebastian Franck, German theologian, 1548.

[2] 'Only the non-habitual stimulates,' says Keyserling; 'it causes an intenser vibration, even when the identity between the old and the new is evident.'

substituted the illusion of an unrestrained religiosity. Always this same desire to justify with texts, in appearance sacred, the appetites of the individual.'

Is that not, moreover, what Keyserling calls 'eternal Christianity'? 'The West,' he says, 'has need of Indo-mania, Japan of Christo-mania, as of another form for an identical belief'; and this 'reincarnation in another body' is finally to serve for 'one and the same expression of the divine.'[2] 'We are,' he concludes, 'at the beginning of an epoch similar to that of the first centuries after

[1] 'The true movement of our younger generation,' wrote Karl Wikler in 1921, 'is a purely religious movement whose importance has not yet been recognised and could not be for that matter.' It is, in fact, impossible to name it. How, he adds, shall we characterise 'this eager search for divinity? This divinity is not, it is true, the God of our fathers. . . . God here is the great cosmic force, the Elemental *par excellence.* You feel it otherwise than I, and I myself feel it otherwise than I shall to-morrow.'

[2] We shall again come across this strange syncretism, in which all religious forms are 'interchangeable,' in Tagore and Gandhi: it is one of the ordinary themes of Asiatic propaganda in the West. (Cf. *supra,* Ch. III.) But for a long time past, the books of Schuré and Maeterlinck have spread these ideas in Europe and in the Anglo-Saxon countries: 'The transformation of Christianity in the esoteric sense,' says the author of *Grands Initiés,* 'would involve that of Judaism and of Islamism, as well as a regeneration of Brahmanism and of Buddhism in the same direction: it would therefore provide *a religious basis for the reconciliation of Europe with Asia.*'

Christ. Just so did all sorts of reactions then take place; just so did the East and the West then unite, and, as then, the result will be a broadening of the bases of life. . . .'

That was what post-war Germany wished to hear to console herself for the collapse of her own culture.[1] A new spirit was to be created for the world, new spiritual values, a new ideal, found. 'What we have most at heart,' says a witness of this wounded generation, 'what clings in the depths of our soul, is the *new man.* And this new man will bring with him, not only the new Germany, but the world of *new men.*' Thomas Mann does not think otherwise: 'No nation,' he says, 'has been so completely thrown into disorder as ours . . . and none, no doubt, had so much need of it. We really and truly have our hands full of work. Intellectual, moral and political problems interpenetrate; they cannot be separated; they form one sole and supreme problem; the *question of man himself,* his condition and his state, rises

[1] Keyserling himself said on this point: 'A disheartening spectacle! That same Germany who, while she could hope for a decisive victory, was carried away by the spirit of pillage and impudence, passed without transition to idealism, so soon as it became evident that events were taking an evil turn.'

up like an imperious case of conscience before all our eyes, and our clearly perceived duty is to pour a new content into the concept of humanity.' *Das Alles neu werde—everything must be renewed,*[1] is the theme of the innumerable theories a disabled Germany elaborated to hide from herself her own fall. She welcomed everything that offered this promise; the most extraordinary propositions were then eagerly received. The most unexpected solutions would have been suffered with no surprise. The imagination revolted at nothing.[2]

Anthroposophism of Steiner, Hinduism of Rabindranath Tagore, nordic Neo-Paganism,

[1] 'For us,' wrote Robert Ernst Curtius in 1921, 'our overthrow incites us powerfully to modify our direction. We must, willy nilly, and with no distinction of party, *build up an entirely new existence.* In all domains, our point of departure is, in the measure of our experiences, that the past is passed. In any question of a European crisis, we are confirmed in this opinion by the sight of our national existence broken and placed in doubt.' (*The Trade Unionism of French Intellectual Workers,* Bonn, 1921, Fr. Cohen, publishers.) The crisis in German thought and the crisis in European thought are here made to seem identical in a very suggestive manner.

[2] 'Germany and Berlin in especial,' wrote Scheidemann in his *Memoirs,* 'were, after the collapse, a veritable madhouse.' (Quoted by Pierre Lafue, *La Restauration de l'Allemagne bismarckienne.*) 'Dispersion, collapse, chaos, pathological interregnum, anarchy,' is how the historian, Hansen, then defined the state of German philosophy.

Taoist mysticism, Buddhist wisdom,[1] what doctrines did Germany not examine in order to discover the elements of a spiritual revival? She believed in all the thaumaturges who spring up in troubled times; there was hardly an absurdity that did not seem to her to offer salvation. Intellectual youth itself turned from Goethe as from Nietzsche; Dostoevskiĭ became its literary hero. 'Cast an eye over present-day poetry,' wrote Hermann Hesse in the *Neue Rundschau,* 'you will observe everywhere the same affinity with Dostoevskiĭ . . . The ideal of the Karamazovs, an old Asiatic ideal, with the imprint of occultism, is gradually becoming the European ideal, and tends to swallow up the Western mind. For my part, I call this the ruin of the West. This fall is a

[1] For this reason, books concerning the language, philosophy and art of the Asiatic peoples had an extraordinary vogue. The entire works of Confucius were translated by Karl Neumann, *The Eternal Buddha* of Leopold Ziegler had thousands of readers; the enormous *History of Hindu Philosophy,* by Deussen, was reprinted. In spite of the crisis in publishing that raged then, the publisher, Diederich of Jena, did not hesitate, in 1922, when the mark was rapidly falling, to issue a translation in ten volumes of the principal treatises of Confucius, Lao-Tseu and Mencius. As for Rabindranath Tagore, he met nowhere with a better welcome than in the new Germany. New editions of his works constantly appeared. (Published by Kurt Wolff, of Munich.) Cf. also *The Voyage to India,* by Bonsels, and *Siddharta,* by Hermann Hesse; but these are purely literary works.

return to the *Alma Mater,* to Asia, to the sources, to the "mothers" Faust speaks of, and it goes without saying that, like all deaths, this death will beget a new birth.' Speaking of the *Idiot* and the *Possessed,* the same critic added: 'A new path is opened by these books, a new attitude of soul adopted. . . . It does not lead only to a further discussion of chaos, but to its acceptance, to a return to the unconscious, the brute, and far beyond the brute, to all the beginnings. Not to remain there, not in order to return to the animal, to the original mud, but in order to take a fresh direction, to discover, in the depths of our being, forgotten impulses and possibilities of development, in order to start afresh the creation, appraisement and partition of the world.'

But a desire for power, for positive utility, for discipline with a view to a result is mingled with all these divagations. And, as Barrès said, 'many of these curiosities, far from being resolved in nirvâna, might quite well be nothing more than new means of domination and conquest.'[1] Does not the whole endeavour of these thinkers tend secretly to win back spiritual primacy for the German

[1] *Enquête aux pays du Levant,* Vol. II. p. 190.

nation and to assure it a new hegemony? The programme formulated by Fichte in 1814 remains that of the theorists of the last gang: 'The loss of independence,' he wrote then in his famous *Address,* 'involves for a nation the impossibility of intervening in the flow of time and of determining events as it would wish. In this state, the totality of the existing world is withdrawn from any autonomous intervention on its part. . . . It will escape from this only on the express condition that a new world arises, the creation of which will mark the beginning of a new age, so far as it is concerned, a personal age, which it would fill with its particular development. Now, if it is possible that a world of this kind, the begetter of a new personality, can exist for a race that has lost its former personality, its former time, it belongs to the philosopher to give an interpretation of the age to come, and to inform us of the nature of this world.'[1]

Spengler and Keyserling, although they proceed from different metaphysics, do not think otherwise

[1] *Address to the German Nation.* A new Europe, a new history, a new culture, this is what Fichte meant to formulate. For this reason, Curtius can write: 'The nineteenth century may, in many respects, be called *the century of the German spirit.*'

than Fichte. Each in his way dreams of the future mission of Germany, and their self-imposed task is to define it. Spengler, whose synthesis is more massive and brutal, announces that the hour of German socialism has struck. Keyserling sees *Deutschlands politische Mission* in the victory of the metaphysical conscience. 'It is thanks to Germany, to her idealistic culture,' he says, 'that the unity of universal life, its indestructible continuity, will be expressed as never before in the domain of visible things; for, in us Germans, humanity has reached a stage of consciousness which necessarily looks beyond denominations and forms.' Thus Germany is apt to become once more the 'permanent conscience of the world' (*das dauernde Weltgewissen*)—at any rate the centre of gravity of the East, for the axis of Europe is about to be displaced: pole of attraction of the Slav and Asiatic peoples, she will be the initiator of Russian culture prophesied by Spengler.[1] In the depths of her despair, did she

[1] Cf. Carl Sternheim, 'Enquête sur l'Allemagne,' in the *Revue Européenne,* 1925, p. 68. 'Only the Russians and at their instigation, the Asiatics, who have become conscious, in the light of the great contemporary responsibility, of the new human necessities, of the new human duties, will bring us, without striking a blow, like a Gospel of peace, the fertile doctrine of a new life.'

not dream of becoming the Rome that would discipline the neo-messianism of the East,[1] the capital of that vast 'Eurasia' which would unite the East of Europe with the Asiatic steppes, to the exclusion of fallen Latinity?

All these doctrines have, in fact, this in common, that they postulate at the outset the failure of Western culture, and that their aim is to bring about the decline of Latinity[2] and its irremediable fall. To escape from the ancient Roman discipline is the fixed idea of all these innovators. Their great notion is that the misfortunes that have befallen Germany and Europe sprang from the 'accursed Roman spirit.' *Romanity* must be destroyed; we must turn aside from the spirit that has led European history since the Renaissance;

[1] Did not Oswald Spengler announce 'a great decisive struggle in which Germany would be called upon to play the part of Rome in the West, and to establish the new Roman peace'? 'The Prussians of the present time,' he said, 'are the equivalent of the Romans of yore.' The nationalists are translating these ideas into deeds. The Asiaticism consequent upon the defeat is being transformed into conquering Pan-Germanism, with the collusion of Prussian reactionaries and Muscovite extremists. Germany, delivered of her apocalypses, is making her way towards positive enterprises.

[2] Did not Herder himself declare that 'the Latins brought into the world a devastating night'?

at all costs we must have done with that spirit of Latinity which has reached its maximum of intensity and power in French thought.[1] And, under cover of an idealism that proclaims the downfall of technical and material civilisation, repudiates the idolatry of organisation, and exalts the inner contemplation of the East, it was her own intellectual revenge that the Germany of a Spengler was seeking to prepare, and her first care was to overthrow the values that would assure to France a too evident supremacy.

Nothing is more significant in this regard than the dialogue that, in 1919, arose involuntarily between the writers of France and Germany who were most desirous of understanding and reconciliation; and I purposely quote the Frenchman,

[1] 'So long as this notion of a civilisation stylised in the Roman fashion and based on the permanence of reason . . . is the official form of the national French idea,' writes Curtius, 'a collaboration of Germany and France, capable of carrying public opinion with it, will be impossible; there would be lacking a considered basis, unanimously recognised and solidly established, of political and cultural understanding.' (*Loc. cit.* pp. 246, 247.) We believe, on the contrary, that a universalist conception of man and intelligence is the surest foundation of all true understanding, for the human spirit will be its first beneficiary. In the long run, the human race will win back through it 'the natural conditions of a common language without which it can find neither order nor peace.'

Jacques Rivière, and the German, R. Ernst Curtius, because neither can be suspected of intellectual nationalism. What did the editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (Jacques Rivière) think at that time? 'French intelligence,' he said, 'is the only one there is in the world. We alone have been able to preserve an intellectual tradition; we alone have continued to believe in the principle of identity. We are the only people, I say it in all deliberation, who still know how to think. In philosophic, literary and artistic matters, only what we say will count.' And this is what Curtius wrote in reply: 'Young Germany looks towards the East and turns her back on the West. That is a decisive moment. It was always a need of the German mind to go seeking energies beyond itself, to allow itself to be fertilised by foreign elements suited to its nature. But wherever this tendency is alive and quick, wherever it is untrammelled by a pedantic and prematurely servile nationalism, it turns to Russia, and, farther still, to India and China. The sympathy shown to Bolshevism by a section of our younger generation is only one of the outward signs of this tendency. The political attitude adopted towards Bolshevism matters little. What is particularly remarkable in

its apparition is that it is the expression of a change in the tendencies of the Western mind. Ever since Descartes and Voltaire and the philosophers of France and England, it seemed that normally any spiritual emancipation, any social reform must come from the West. For us, those times are over. The German mind has ceased to gaze with any interest towards intellectual France.[1] For it to do so again, a new flood of light must prove to Germany that France is still capable of giving something new to the world, that she can produce something other than analyses of passions or refinements of style, that she can break the narrow framework in which she has shut herself up, and that she is about to intervene in the European dialogue with a word of life. Meanwhile, we Germans prefer to look towards the East and Asiatic cultures.' And the Bonn professor quotes as 'symptomatic' an article in the *Neue Rundschau,* in which Dr. Paquet wrote in March, 1921: 'The pillars of Germano-Latin civilisation are tottering, while, on the other hand, the Slavo-

[1] Curtius nevertheless acknowledges that France, with Germany, is 'the only great mind power.' There have been so many changes, with a disconcerting rapidity, since the war, in Germany, that some intellectuals are now attracted once more by French thought.

Germanic work of reconstruction is advancing. . . . Under the spiritual influence of the awakening East, which is reviving among Europeans the sentiments of primitive India and its age-old wisdom, a new morality is being formed in the West.'

Beneath this return to Asia preached by the philosophers, the German writers of the defeat, may be discovered a sort of rancour, of bitter resentment. It is certain that the East these ideamongers praise, is an East built up against the Western idea. They do not hesitate to stake the prestige of our civilisation in order to provide themselves with a fresh future; they are counting on probabilities. And even those who, like Thomas Mann, now denounce these Asiatic tendencies as a danger for the national spirit of Germany,[1]

[1] The Asiaticism following upon the defeat began to decline as the confidence caused by the financial recovery of Germany won ground. 'During certain years in the course of the war and after the war,' wrote Thomas Mann, 'we gave ourselves up to the East of Dostoevskiĭ with such impetuosity that we hailed with a kind of pleasure the phrase of a French critic affirming that the German soul is Asiatic in its deepest essence. *That time is no more.* The automatic rectification of a tendency that was dangerous for the national spirit on account of its exclusivism has undoubtedly begun. Germany is beginning again to turn her gaze towards the West.' Among recent evidences of this reaction against Oriental tendencies, we may quote Dr. Paquet's review, *Abendland,* Wilhelm Worringer's

raise at the same time the question whether the humanist tradition of classicism matters to the whole of humanity, and is humanly eternal, or whether it was not simply the spiritual form of an age that is coming to an end; and they conclude that 'both the ancient and the Christian ideas are outworn.' Germany has great hopes of this liberation.

This explains the sudden aversion she showed

account, *German Youth and the Eastern Spirit* (Bonn, 1924), and also Alfred Weber's work, *Germany and the Crisis of European Culture* (Berlin, 1924). Weber, who had been a devotee of Asiaticism, now believes 'in the renaissance of the old Germano-Roman dynamic.' For Curtius, the German spirit is to play the 'part of mediator between the East and the West': 'Though the German spirit during these latter years,' he says, 'was inclined definitely towards the East, we may, in accordance with its historical structure and essence, be assured that it will rectify this tendency by accepting once more values and forms coming from the West and South. Like the German landscape, the German mind is open to the West and the East.'

This evolution is the sign of the spiritual recovery of Germany. The feeling of her own mission grows with her reacquired prosperity; and, as she recovers her equilibrium, she is beginning to recognise that 'Asia would only thrust her more deeply into that indetermination which is her congenital danger.'

'The policy of the free hand as between East and West,' writes Thomas Mann, 'will always remain the one laid upon us from the point of view of intellectual formation and civilisation.' And such is, indeed, the spirit of the new German policy. The Treaty of Locarno meets the wishes of Germans

for Western humanity, for the Latin nations in which it is incarnate, and for everything that German culture had once taken so much trouble to understand, to imitate and to organise with so determined and intent a method. How was this possible? It is difficult for us to conceive. Is it conceivable that, after our defeat in 1870, thinkers like Renan and Taine, in their concern for the conditions favourable to our recovery, could ever

who, like Ludendorff, are faithful to the West; the Treaty of Berlin, the wishes of those who, like von Maltzar, turn to Asiatic Russia. These two treaties complete each other, and form the present synthesis of German policy. As M. Pierre Lafue remarks: 'Rapallo alone, or Locarno alone, bound the Reich to some extent, laid upon it a definitive attitude. But Locarno corrected by Berlin loses all the disadvantages it might have had; it retains only its advantages. By signing the Treaty of Berlin, Germany sought from the Soviets the power to resist the West, as she sought from the West, thanks to Locarno, the means of preventing a too great absorption by her Eastern alliance. . . . From the Germanic point of view, these agreements are the two masterpieces of one and the same system, thanks to which the Reich has recovered its liberty of action and its political independence.'

It will be seen how far the German system of ideas runs level with the movements of the German body; it motivates and subtends all the evolutions of political realism. These successive changes, with their disconcerting rapidity, German thought justifies by 'the will to realise the decisive tendencies of evolution.'

Among so many contradictory endeavours, an exception must nevertheless be made of the Catholic aspirations of certain young Germans. To cite but one example, Dr. Paquet and

have advised us to look to the maxims of Confucius or Lao-Tseu for the gospel of the new life?[1] If the German could think that he might 'dewesternise' himself by the same deliberate intent, if he has been seen to escape and to cut himself off so easily from a world that seemed no longer made for him, it is because civilisation, the intel-

the contributors to *Abendland* have set themselves the task of formulating these aspirations. These Catholic writers take up their stand, first of all, against the Hegelian conception of the State, the omnipotence of economic and technical considerations, the Marxist and materialistic notion of history. They desire to work for the restoration of human, European, values, which they conceive spiritually and Christianly. If Germany seems to them more divided and remote from the civilising order than any other nation, it is because, they say, she is outside the unity of the Roman Church and its beneficent power. As Catholics, they feel that their mission is to work for its return to Western spirituality. For this undertaking, they do not feel themselves so unprovided as Protestant writers, like Troeltsch and Meinicke, whose disastrous post-war system of ideas turns on the problem of German isolation.

'It is not,' they conclude, 'through her magnates of industry and finance, but through her Catholics that Germany is still linked up with the rest of the spiritual world.'

To revive the idea of the West, of the common good and of European civilisation is the task which the contributors to *Abendland* have undertaken. Without exaggerating the importance and the value of such a movement, which the politicians are already seeking to utilise for their own ends, we must not refuse to acknowledge it.

[1] But, as a German writer, Otto Flake, observes: 'There is a fundamental difference between the situation of Germany and that of France after her defeat in 1870. The French

lectual, social and moral progress that it represents, 'did not operate in the Germanic race as a result of an inner development'; it is because it was never the product of an 'indigenous progress, a progress inwardly accomplished.'[1]

The Græco-Latin culture denounced by Spengler and Keyserling has never seemed to Germany her own proper possession, the foundation of her humanity: it remained an acquisition of her learned men, her philologists. 'Philology,' says M. Sylvain Lévi, 'crossed the Rhine; it set foot on a soil that remained inaccessible to the Roman legions, in those immense tracts that Tacitus in the first century still described as we in the nineteenth described Central Africa or Australia; but no tradition, no movement, no hereditary instinct emerged as a commentary on these classic works, which remained foreign to the Germanic mind at

mind could draw from its traditions experiences so intense that it had no need to seek for itself, but only to find itself; I am speaking of its Catholic past, the importance of which is such that I shall not attempt to give a simple sketch of it. . . . While, as for us, on account of the greatest of our national misfortunes, the Reformation, that defective achievement, we do not know what to lean on in the past. . . . It is true that this may prove fortunate; for us there is no going back; we must press forward into the unknown.'

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, quoted by Paul Valéry: *Une conquête méthodique.*

bottom. Greek and Latin are the appanage of her savants, who are set apart from the mass of the people, mere books of "texts" to which German erudition applied its remarkable gifts for research and systematic construction; but the secret life that dwells beneath the works of the classic mind escapes it; it treats them as a working-stock of antiquities.'

Græco-Latin culture is not a fundamental asset of civilisation for the German, since he has not shared its past to the point of becoming identified with it. In the wake of a Goethe or a Hölderlin, he may have put forward a claim to have made the conquest of this civilisation; but it remains for him a thing borrowed which does not partake of the essence of his nature, and *from which he can turn away*.[1] His philologists discovered it for him; they will easily provide him with another. Have they not studied, classified and card-indexed all

[1] Moreover, as Badler has shown (*Berlin Romanticism*, 1921), German culture is not homogeneous; South-West Germany, Romanised, has evolved towards humanism and classicism; North-West Germany, Slavised, towards individualistic mysticism and romanticism. It has been many times pointed out that Protestantism penetrated Germany only in the provinces that Rome had not administered. The map of Catholic Germany coincides almost exactly with the limits of Roman Germania.

human civilisations? They are ready, with the help of philosopher-historians, to put together another historical *dossier,* establish another affiliation, another scheme of life.[1] And this all the more easily as no type of civilisation has ever succeeded in subduing the original individualism of the Germanic race. Hence the ease with which they adapt themselves to new forms of life, and receive contradictory impulses; hence their perpetual sedition against the order of the world, those historic upheavals which are a continual threat to older and more complete nations,[2] where

[1] Which caused Lessing to say: 'We Germans really do not lack systematic books. Give us a few verbal explanations, and we are able to deduce anything you like from them. We can do this better than any other nation.' For the rest, that is what her intellectuals call placing themselves 'in the service of life'; and they oppose this Germanic notion of *evolution* to the Western conception that believes 'in the natural law, eternal and divine, the similitude of men, and one sole determination of humanity.' Cf. Ernst Troeltsch: *Law and Humanity in the World Period,* Berlin, 1923.

[2] Robert Ernst Curtius has clearly seen this fundamental difference, and, although he relates it to the present and situates it in relation to the post-war period, his remarks should be quoted: 'The conqueror,' he says, 'has consolidated a threatened existence on its old bases. He considers everything from the point of view of utilisation, conservation, consolidation, continuation. He seeks assurances and securities. We Germans seek practical guiding points *with a view to a change.* We are immediately interested in theoretical conceptions which would

culture is preserved and transmitted as a long-tried practice which they could not break without harm to themselves.

permit us to effect, in the present state of the world, *a maximum of possibilities of change*. The Frenchman needs a maximum of permanency (which explains the strong opposition to Bergsonism to be seen in France to-day). *The notion of a European crisis has for us not only a theoretical but also a vital value*. For the Frenchman, it has an opposite meaning. It is disquieting, disturbing, threatening.' (*The Trade Unionism of Intellectual Workers in France,* Bonn, 1921, Fr. Cohen.)

CHAPTER II

THE same phenomenon—in a more acute form in so far as her connection with the West was still more fortuitous and savage—may be observed in that Russia which, after two centuries of forced Europeanisation, is returning to her Asiatic origins, and rousing herself and all the peoples of the East against a civilisation that she endured only under compulsion and in a spirit of bitter resistance.

At this turn of our destinies, it seems that the historical vocation of Russia is to bring face to face, in a decisive fashion, the principles on which East and West have founded their ideal of life, their metaphysic and their belief. What was only painful self-interrogation, the permanent anguish of a nation uncertain of its path, becomes the problem of the whole of humanity. That is the immense consequence of the Russian Revolution, its unexpected repercussion.

The politicians have indeed shown that, if the credit and prestige of all the States of Europe,

including England, are henceforward weakened in Asia, it is because the Muscovite power has collapsed. But they took into account in their calculations only the disequilibrium of the material forces which such an upheaval would produce; they forgot the terror which the Russian Empire inspired in the Asiatic populations, and the feeling of deliverance which its fall would give them. Accustomed to regard her as a European nation, they did not foresee that Russia, thrust out from the councils of Western countries, would place herself at the head of that movement towards independence and liberation which is exciting the whole of Asia. Even those who understood this did not go much farther, and did not perceive the disastrous consequences that may result for the future of the whole human race. They took to be a simple breaking off of political relations what, in fact, presents itself as a veritable *historical break,* the most serious known to our civilisation since it has existed.

A return of the barbarians, that is to say, a further triumph of the least conscious and least civilised parts of humanity over the most conscious and the most civilised, no longer seems impossible to us. The Bolshevist revolution has familiarised

us with this thought, which was yesterday still monstrous, and which, to-day, forces itself on our minds. We no longer think the warnings of Rousseau were foolish,[1] or of Bonald, who foresaw the time 'when exhausted Europe, as she was at the fall of the Roman Empire, would be an easy prey to those peoples whom nature conceals in the vast plains of Central Asia.' And we begin to reflect on what Renan, at the beginning of the war of 1870, prophesied to be the fatal consequence of the weakening of the Western States by social-democratic theories carried into effect: 'There exists still in the world,' he said, 'a reservoir of barbarian forces, nearly all of them placed under the control of Russia. While the civilised nations preserve their strong organisation, the rôle of this barbarianism is reduced almost to nothing'; but he added: 'Russia is a danger only if the rest of Europe abandons her to the false idea of an originality which she perhaps does not possess, and permits her to assemble in one bunch the barbarian tribes of the centre of Asia, tribes completely impotent by themselves, but capable of discipline,

[1] 'The Tartars,' said Rousseau, 'will become our masters; this revolution seems to me inevitable.'

and very liable to group themselves round a Muscovite Genghis Khan.[1]

Is that not the spectacle that is unrolling itself before the eyes of an egotistic and indifferent Europe? Instead of calling herself, as in the times of the Romanovs, the advance-guard of Europe in Asia, Bolshevik Russia is becoming once more, as in the times of the great Mongol and Tartar khans, the advance-guard of Asia in Europe. Conscious of her originality, of which she makes for herself a messianic notion, she believes herself to be the annunciatrix of the regeneration of the world. And the better to resolve the contradictions that torment her, she begins by trying to destroy all the values that have made of us what we are. Hellenic culture, the Latin world and Christian civilisation have never met a more lucid, a more implacable enemy than the one who is backed by the ramparts of the Urals.[2]

We have been too prone to regard Bolshevism only as a social and political theory; and the bor-

[1] *Revue des Deux Mondes,* 15th September, 1870. Cf. *Réforme intellectuelle et morale,* p. 125. Michelet, too, had foreseen the danger: 'What a misfortune,' he wrote, 'if, by turning the Russians away from Europe, we delivered Asia up to them.'

[2] Cf. Daye, *Moscou dans le souffle de l'Asie,* Perrin, 1925.

rowings it may have made from certain European systems, like Marxism,[1] have contributed not a little towards concealing its true nature. The reality is far more serious. Bolshevism is a danger because it is based on an anti-Western, anti-human principle, because it is the logical and resolute antagonist of the great spiritual tradition of which we are the holders.

This tradition Russia had adopted only with a feeling of dependency and shame. Liberated from her foreign bondage, she is turning against what now appears to her only to have been the cause of her humiliations and her shortcomings.[2] Therefore, the Russian revolution is nothing but the end of an equivocation, of a paradox that has lasted since the reign of Peter the Great. Tsar Nicholas II did not fall a victim to a European doc-

[1] 'Bolshevism, in so far as it is a reality,' says Keyserling, 'has nothing to do with Marxism.' (*The World in the Making*, Harcourt, Brace and Company.)

[2] Herzen prophesied, about 1850, the catastrophe of the West under the revolutionary thrust of Russia. But he included both himself and the Russian intellectuals in this failure of Western civilisation: 'In spite of all our protests,' he said, 'in spite of all our anger, we belong by our way of speaking to the same literary, scientific and political society that we would ruin. . . . *We are at the same time the corpse and the murderer, the sickness and the prosector of the old world; that is our vocation.*' And he added: 'The death of the old world

trine of progress. It was Peter I that was killed in his person; and his fall has opened up to the Russian popular soul, not, as has been believed, the road to Europe, but that of the return to Asia.[1]

The meaning of such an event was immediately perceived by all Russians, to whatever party they belonged. What do the refugee intellectuals who live among us tell us? 'If we have our backs against a precipice,' writes Prince Trubetskoï, 'it is because the road we followed was not the right one. Therefore, we now disown everything: your Western wisdom, your art, your machines and your communism. We want no more of Peter the Great, who led us to make your acquaintance. Do not look upon us as sons of Europe, devoid of talents. . . . She is not our mother. . . . The path clearly marked out for us goes East. . . .

will carry us away also; there is no salvation possible; our sick lungs can breathe no other than infected air. We are being hurried to inevitable ruin. It is altogether legitimate and indispensable; we feel that soon we shall be in the way; but, in disappearing with the old world, we shall be aware of the fatality that has bound us to it, and shall still deliver the most ferocious blows to it amid disaster and chaos; we shall passionately acclaim the new world—that world which does not belong to us—crying towards it our: "Cæsar, the dying salute thee."'

[1] German writers, like Spengler and Thomas Mann, have clearly understood this character of the Russian revolution.

Russia has sinned in having disavowed her Orientalism, and in having let herself be led astray by Western illusions.'[1] Communism apart—although Russian communism is something essentially Asiatic—Russia of the Soviets does not think any differently from this aristocrat. *To lead Russia back to her sources,* was Lenin's predominant idea; and this bold simplifier managed to take advantage of the disarray of the European mind to turn his country towards her true destiny. For this reason, the Russian people hailed him as the descendant of those great Eastward-facing autocrats whose line Peter the Great had interrupted.

The obscure masses of ancient Russia never ceased their opposition to the reforms of a Peter the Great, whom they received in terror, and in whom they saw, from the beginning, merely the approach of the end of the world, the coming of Antichrist. The Muscovite *raskol'niki* have never accepted the ideas imported from Europe by the

[1] All the refugee intellectuals do not profess the Eurasian theories of Prince Trubetskoï; there are those like the philosopher, Berdiaev, who denounce the 'influences of monstrous Asia.' But the Eurasian group is one of the most active, and it has been especially busy with its propaganda in Germany and in Eastern Europe. It has representatives in France to-day, such as L. Karsavin, V. Il'in, P. Suchinski, etc.

Tsars.[1] These Asiatics have never felt themselves linked up with the historic destinies of the West; and the struggle between 'Slavophils'[2] and 'Westerners,' the bloody episodes of which fill the annals of modern Russia, is in a way the foreshadowing of the great drama in which East and West come to grips. The Russian problem is essentially such a problem. Therein may be found all the stock subjects, all the grievances used by Bolshevist propaganda to stir up the ancient soul of Asia; and they are those which the conjugate fatalities of nature and history have imposed on this great nomadic people, that rests on the one side on China and on the other on Germany, and

[1] Heads had to fall before ideas could be imposed on the Russian people; and Peter the Great had his own son, Alexis, executed for opposing his reforms.

[2] The Slavophils were the precursors of the 'Eurasians' of to-day. Chadaev, in 1840, thus summed up the main themes of their propaganda: 'We are,' they proclaimed, 'the cherished children of the East. What need have we of the West? Is the West the fatherland of science and all profound things? It is from the East that we touch everywhere that we once drew our beliefs, our laws, our virtues. . . . The old East is passing. Are we not its natural heirs? It is among us henceforward that its admirable traditions will be perpetuated, and that all the grand and mysterious truths that were given to it to keep from the beginning of things will be realised.' That is the origin of the new anti-Western theories.

does not yet know for which side it was born.[1] 'We have never marched with the other nations,' said Chaadaev; 'we belong to none of the families of the human race. We are neither of the East nor of the West, and we have the traditions of neither.'

This 'historic torment' of Russia, attracted in turn by opposite poles, thrown back time after time from Europe on Asia, is expressed in her literature in a long wail, and the echo of her monotonous plaint is lost in the distance of the infinite plain.

Relegated to the confines of all the civilisations of the world, outside the countries in which the

[1] The Slavophils have never ceased to maintain that they do not belong to Europe. 'The Russian genius,' says Danilevskiĭ, 'stands at the antipodes of the European genius. Russia by becoming European fell into a trap. Since she has been gravitating in the orbit of Europe, she has servilely obeyed the leaders of that continent, who ordered her to Westernise Asia for their own advantage.' 'An absurd policy,' concludes Danilevskiĭ, who had drawn up a detailed plan for a Russian expedition to deliver India from the yoke of England.

As Ustrialov has remarked: 'There is in Bolshevism a large number of Slavophil ideas.' 'The great Asiatic idea' seems to have sprung from the 'great Slav idea,' dear to Dostoevskiĭ. M. Brianshaninov points out, moreover, that the recent conversions to Bolshevism, whether on principle or out of patriotism, have taken place among the Neo-Slavophils, among the 'Eurasians.'

enlightenments of faith and science had originally been concentrated, far from the centres whence they had sprung for so many centuries, this nation was condemned first of all to suffer in its solitude. There was nothing solid, limited, determinate in the great shapeless body that stretches over thousands of versts and touches directly upon the Asiatic steppes, whence for centuries on centuries surged hordes of pillagers: everything in it is level and indistinguishable. Solov'ev saw in the absence of *stone*—that 'stone' that has made the solidarity of our edifices and given its precision to the inner relationships of our States and our peoples—that which has deprived the Russian peasant of the sense of continuity and effort. There is no clear boundary line between the regions of his immense country; no durable dwellings that it would be painful to leave, but wooden, thatched cottages constantly destroyed by fire: hence his indifference to individual property, his vague communistic leanings,[1] which are less the result of disinterestedness than of improvidence and neglect. It seems as though there is nothing that holds him to his soil, but that something constantly fascinates him that calls him

[1] 'Russian life,' wrote Michelet, '*is communism.*'

elsewhere, towards the disturbing mirage of the indefinite horizon. His hold on life is equally wavering and irresolute. Is not this nomadism, this lack of fixity, this need to move on, this notorious *boisak* spirit, the characteristic trait of the Russian nation?[1]

Unlike ours, its peasants have no aggressive desire to settle on a chosen spot and to influence, in their own interests, the surroundings they have chosen. As Maxim Gor'kiĭ profoundly remarked: 'The man of the West, as soon as he stands up on his hind legs, sees everywhere the monumental results of the work of his ancestors. From the canals of Holland to the vineyards of Vesuvius, from the great works of England to the mighty factories of Silesia, the whole surface of Europe is abundantly covered by the splendid embodiments of the organised will of man, that will which has set before itself a proud aim: to subdue the elemental forces of nature to the rational interests of man. The soil is in the hands of man, and he is really its master. The child of the West sucks in this impression at the breast, and it breeds

[1] 'The Russian peasant,' says M. Brianshaninov, 'is nearer the Chinaman, the Tibetan anchorite, the Hindu pariah, than the European peasant.'

in him a consciousness of the value of man and a feeling of his personal importance as an inheritor of the marvels produced by the hand and brain of his ancestors.'[1] 'Such thoughts,' Gor'kiĭ concludes, 'such feelings and appreciations, would never arise in the soul of the Russian peasant. The endless plain, on which are huddled wooden villages covered with thatch, has the pernicious power of emptying a man and draining him of desires. The peasant leaves the confines of his village, he looks at the emptiness around him, and, in a little while, he feels that this emptiness has been poured into his soul. Nowhere are any lasting traces of work or creation to be seen. . . . All around, a limitless plain, and, at the centre of it, a tiny little man, thrown on to this wearisome earth to do the work of a convict. And the man is satiated with that feeling of indifference which

[1] The spectacle of the monuments of ancient Europe inspires the Russian intellectuals with a similar feeling, in which there is mingled a sort of rancour. 'This land has lived much,' said Herzen. 'Tens of centuries are seen behind each polished stone, each inherited opinion. Behind the shoulders of a European, you can see a long file of imposing figures, like the procession of ghosts in *Macbeth*. . . . The monuments, black or grey, give to Europe an aristocratic physiognomy, hurtful to anyone without such brilliant ancestors! Sometimes, we Scythians feel uncomfortable amid these inherited riches and these ruins that have been handed down.' (*Lettres de France et d'Italie*, p. 9.)

kills the capacity to think, to remember what has gone before, and to draw ideas from experience.[1]

A people without historical experience, that is the Russian people. They had no Middle Ages; they missed the long and laborious education of the European peoples. First, brutal barbarism, conflicts of tribe with tribe that continued for two or three centuries after they had ceased in the West; then, a Christianity vitiated by the spirit of the Lower Empire; and, before this seed had had time to germinate, came the Mongol invasion, the ebbing back to Asia reclaiming its prey. Four hundred years of foreign domination follow, under the pernicious yoke of the great Tartar khans, who fashioned their subjects to the degrading manners of the Oriental despots. Such was the youth of this people, that came out of paganism only to be colonised by invading Asiatics.

Russia has not known that youth of the nations, the time of great collective passions, that age of exuberant activity, of the excited play of moral forces, the memory of which is transmitted to future generations, who find in it both a lesson and a source of pleasure. Her first years were passed in a sort of motionless stupor, and, even up to

[1] Maxim Gor'kiĭ, *Lénine et le paysan russe,* p. 110.

the threshold of modern times, she was still in full chaotic fermentation. 'We are still,' said Turgenev, 'in the gaseous period.'

Therefore, the contribution of the Russian people to general civilisation has been almost nil. We must not forget that Russia is scarcely five centuries removed from the invasion of the Barbarians, while it is over fourteen centuries since the rest of Europe went through the same crisis. A civilisation that is older by a thousand years sets an immeasurable distance between the manners and customs of nations. This fundamental difference is the chief thing that isolates the Russian people, places them in a region of emptiness, and separates them from the historic destinies of the rest of humanity.

None better than Chaadaev has expressed the unhappy fate of his race, placed as it were outside time and unreached by the universal education of the human race:[1] 'We came into the world like

[1] Cf. *Œuvres choisies de Pierre Tchaadaieff*, published by the Père Gargarine, S.J., Paris, 1862. These 'philosophic letters' form a first-class document, which should be reprinted in their entirety; we borrow from them frequently.

The first, written in French and translated into Russian, was published by surprise in 1836, in the *Telescope*, a review appearing at Moscow. The Emperor, Nicholas I, suppressed the review and exiled the editor. The unhappy Chaadaev was

illegitimate children, with no heritage, no link with the men who preceded us on the earth; we have in us no trace of the teachings previous to our own existence. What in other people is a habit, an instinct, we have to drive into our heads with a hammer. We are, so to speak, strangers to ourselves. We march so peculiarly in time that, as we advance, the evening before escapes us never to return.[1] It is the natural result of an imported and imitative culture. We have no inner development, no natural progress, new ideas sweep away the old, because the new do not arise out of the old, but fall from one knows not where. As we adopt only ready-made ideas, the ineffaceable traces that a progressive movement leaves on the mind, and that gives it its strength, do not grave themselves on our intelligence. *We grow, but we do not ripen.'*

Thus the Russian intelligence found nowhere that patrimony of hereditary ideas and acquired

condemned to keep to his room, and, on a fixed day, a doctor appointed officially came to examine the state of his mind. This letter caused throughout Russia an excitement such as no writing had ever roused before.

[1] 'I have no desire to link up the present with the past,' says a character of Alexeï Tolstoï's; 'what existed yesterday is nothing to do with me; I don't know what to-morrow will bring forth; all I know is the trouble in my soul.'

notions which links up the present with the past, and assures the ease and freedom of play of the mind.[1] How strange is this situation of a nation, to which the experience of the ages seems null and void, as though the general law of humanity had been revoked for it, and which came into line with the movement of human thought, when it was awakened from its long torpor, only by a blind, superficial and clumsy imitation of other nations. Every important event in its history is an event imposed upon it: every new idea is nearly always an idea it has received from outside. Could it be otherwise? If Peter the Great had found, in his own nation, a rich and fruitful history, living traditions, institutions deeply rooted, would he not have hesitated before cutting it away from its past, and would he not, on the contrary, have sought there the bases of the regeneration of his country?[2]

[1] 'Respect for the past,' says Herzen. 'But what is the point of departure for modern Russian history, if it is not the entire negation of tradition? We are independent because we possess nothing, nothing we can love.' Herzen returns many times to this all-absorbing theme. 'With the old Western nations,' he wrote in 1860, 'the past is as living as the present. . . . We are as independent in time as in space. We have neither memories that bind us nor inheritance that imposes duties.'

[2] Cf. Chaadaev, *loc. cit.* p. 133. 'Peter the Great found in his country only some white paper, and with his strong hand he wrote these words: *Europe and the West;* thenceforward we belonged to Europe and the West.'

But he saw that the ' historical datum ' was almost completely lacking. For the history of a people is not composed only of a series of events succeeding each other in time, it is also a sequence of ideas linked up and imprinted in the deep places of men's souls. A thought and a principle must permeate them, developing through events and giving significance to them.

Religion, even when it is only considered from the point of view of the human order, is the great force that imprints on history that general character by which a people becomes conscious of its own vocation, and associates itself with the purpose it proposes to society as a whole. Whence comes it that Russia, in a way, has been deprived of the civilising benefits of Christianity, while the other countries of Europe owe to it all the elements of their social progress? The sole tradition she possessed, far from bringing her into accord with the undertakings of Christianity, only added to her isolation, and withdrew her from the action of the moral power that was transforming the world.

He who would understand the strange destiny of the Russian people must go to their religious history, for, until the last century, religion was the

only language in which they could express themselves. And to those who assert that Russia could not escape the influence of European culture, there is always the reply that Dostoevskiĭ used to make: 'There is a culture which we have no need to draw from a Western source, because its source is Russian. . . . I certify that our people have long been cultivated, since they assimilated the essence of the Christian doctrine.' And Dostoevskiĭ added: 'You may object: the Russian people do not know the Christian doctrine, and do not understand sermons. But that is an objection void of meaning: they know everything, everything that it is necessary to know, although they may fail over an examination in the catechism. They have learned in the churches, where, for centuries, they have heard prayers and hymns that are of more value than sermons.'[1]

[1] Dostoevskiĭ returns to this idea in a passage of the *Diary of an Author*. 'It is said that the Russian people know the Gospels but ill, and are ignorant of the fundamental rules of the faith. Perhaps, but they know Christ, and have always carried Him in their hearts. . . . Is it possible to know the true Christ without knowing the doctrine? But the knowledge of Christ through the heart is potent with our people. They are proud of their Orthodox belief, that is, of being those who profess Christ with the greatest truth and Orthodoxy. I repeat it is possible to know many things unconsciously.' (Cf. *La Confession de Stavroguine*, trans. Halpérine-Kaminsky, pp. 151-152.)

That is tantamount to saying that, although the heart of the Russian people is sensitive to religious emotions—their piety and their mysticism prove this—they have small understanding of the doctrine of Christ and the dogmas of the Church. Therefore, we must not be astonished that, deprived for centuries, through the fault of their spiritual leaders, of a really vivifying doctrinal enlightenment, left without any firm moral and religious direction, except as regards the more or less strict observance of the external part of religion, they have remained the prey of superstitions that hid the true faith from them, and laid bare their soul to the morbid terrors and irrational anxieties that painfully agitated it.[1]

The strangest aberrations, spread by innumerable sects, have divided their avid and tormented soul; there is no absurdity and no immorality that has not had proselytes and adepts among these ignorant and unfortunate people. Joseph de Maistre

[1] Cf. Brianshaninov, *La Tragédie Moscovite*. 'In Russia,' says M. Vyburov, 'there have been churches, there has never been a religion, unless it be primitive polytheism. The Church gradually dissolved paganism, without succeeding in substituting anything for it. The people, who remained without beliefs corresponding to their needs, have shown themselves to be accessible to all the superstitions and every oddity. In fact, Russia has never really been Christian, nor really Orthodox.'

was no doubt thinking of these monstrous heresies when he wrote to a Russian lady: 'It is better to deny the mystery than to make ill use of it. The sacraments being the life of Christianity and the perceptible link between the two worlds, wherever the exercise of these sacred practices is not accompanied by a pure, independent and vigorous teaching, it will lead to horrible abuses, which will in turn bring about a veritable moral degradation.'[1]

Such teaching, in which the dogmatic life of Christianity is manifested, and at the same time its action on minds and souls, the Russian people have never received, their religious guides have never given it to them. For hundreds of years, they went without religious instruction.[2] There could, in fact, be no talk of culture in connection with the ritualism, almost all of it formalist, of this Orthodox Church, for which the Byzantine tradition formed only a principle of stagnation and hostility to development.[3] Cut off by the schism

[1] Joseph de Maistre, *Un honnête homme ne doit-il jamais changer de religion?* p. 34. Paris, 1839.

[2] The people scarcely read anything but the *Chet'ia Mineia*, the martyrology of the Saints written in the Slavonic tongue.

[3] 'It took refuge in a sort of creek, inaccessible to every movement, while the peoples of Western Europe, embarked in the Roman vessel, penetrated an infinite ocean of activity,

of Photius from the universal brotherhood, long separated from the centres of the Christian world by the Mongol domination, removed both from Christian and ancient sources by the use of the Slavonic liturgy,[1] possessing neither common language nor sovereign authority, the Russian Church was kept outside the great unitary movement in which the Catholic idea was formulated. A stranger, so to speak, to the new destinies of the human race, it could produce on its own account neither doctrine nor principle the influence of which has contributed either to the progress of general civilisation or to that of Russian humanity. For there are two distinct things in Christianity, although they both tend to the same supernatural end; one is its action on the human person, the other its action on society. Is not the inferiority of the public and civil life of the Russian people

danger, poetry, and creation, with which was mingled a black and harsh internal labour.' (V. Rozanov, *L'Église russe,* Paris 1912.)

[1] 'It is not only in space, by separating it both from the West and the remainder of the East, it is in time also, by leaving it alien to classical civilisations, that ecclesiastical Slavonic has contributed to the isolation and the stagnation of Russia.' (Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *L'Empire des Tsars et les Russes,* t. III, *la Religion,* Paris, 1899.) At Kiev, however, the teaching was given in Latin from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

due in part to the intellectual immobility of its Church?

What, in fact, is its religious history, wholly absorbed in the scriptural revision of the Holy Books, in a constant discussion of the *Obriad* (ceremonial), the form and sign of the Cross, the orthography of the name of Jesus, or the number of the *prosfory* (wafers), when it is compared with the great controversies of Christian thought in the West?[1] The Russian clergy care little for doctrinal questions; definitions and logical deductions, all that which they contemptuously call 'Latin rationalism,' inspire them only with mistrust. Contempt like this condemns both human as well as divine science, and it is not astonishing that Russia has scarcely had any original theologians or philosophers. Preaching and direction, all those institutions by which Christianity has fostered the progress of morality and intelligence, have from this cause fallen into desuetude. It seems

[1] Nevertheless, there was an ascetic and mystic tradition that goes back to the Fathers, which must be remembered. It is from this that the holiness that still lives in this great separated fragment of the Church Body draws its strength. It has produced true saints, even in modern times. We are not unaware of this, while restricting ourselves to general indications which can be found in the statements of Russian writers themselves.

as though the East, worn out with its numerous heresies, has come to be suspicious of the living Word. Refraining from expounding dogma became a means of preserving it unchanged.

Moreover, there is nothing more vague and indefinite than the doctrinal frontiers of that *Pravoslavie* (Orthodoxy) which no uncontested magistracy directs. 'If a difference of opinion arose over purely theological matters,' said Mme. Svechin, having in mind the Jansenism and Quietism that had split the France of the seventeenth century, 'to what tribunal of the Orthodox Church would the question be submitted for decision?' The result has been a sort of spiritual numbness that has not only affected its speculative life, but also the depths of its religious life and even its ideal of holiness.

'Neither by the originality of their character or of their work, nor still less by their influence on history or on civilisation, can the Russian saints vie with the saints of the Latin Church or of a single Catholic nation, be it Italy, France or Spain. It would be vain to seek among them for figures to place against a Gregory VII or a Saint Bernard, a Thomas Aquinas, a Francis of Assisi, a

François de Sales or a Vincent de Paul.'[1] Is not this 'lack of personality in Russian holy men and Russian saints' due to the altogether Asiatic conception of Orthodox monachism? In no other country has the part played by the monks been more considerable than in Russia, nowhere has their influence been less fruitful. For the people, the model monk is the anchorite of the desert, the stylite on his column, the Christian gymnosophist, clad in his long beard, who still figures in the paintings of Muscovite convents, and the saints buried alive in the catacombs of Kiev. It was not the need to gather together for the struggle, but the love of retreat, the renunciation of the world and its combats that formerly peopled the innumerable monasteries of Russia. Too many Russian monks had in view neither intellectual activity, manual labour, charity, nor the apostolate; they resembled the Tibetan lamas rather than the sons of Saint Dominic or Saint Benedict. For this reason, Russia has produced nothing comparable with these lofty figures of 'pacific or warlike monks, men of action, men of the pen, if need be, statesmen, who have done so much in the Latin

[1] A. Leroy-Beaulieu, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

world. She has had monks but no religious orders.'[1]

Many of the gaps in the historical development of Russia are explained in this way. She has never known those great debates, of which the history of the West is full, those terrible struggles between beliefs, in which the whole life of the nations, roused by their doctrines and their apostles, became an idea, a sentiment of incomparable power. 'A superficial philosophy may make what noise it likes over religious wars and the burnings at the stake in fires lit by intolerance; as for us,' says Chaadaev, 'we can only envy the fate of nations who, in the clash of opinions, in their bloody conflicts for the cause of liberty, have made for themselves a world of ideas which it is impossible for us even to picture to ourselves.'

The religious struggles that have torn Russia, and given rise to a multitude of sects, have never been about great questions of dogma and morals. In the West, the greater part of the heresies have

[1] A. Leroy-Beaulieu, *op cit.*, pp. 225-6. These general views have no doubt their exceptions. Certain monastic institutions, like the Lavra of the catacombs of Kiev, seem to have really been inspired by the spirit of apostolacy and mercy. (Cf. *Irenikon*, No. 2.)

had as their origin audacities of intelligence, a revolt of the mind or of pride, and all claim to be justified before reason by a system of ideas subversive of revealed truth. *Oportet hæreses esse:* Catholic thought has, so to speak, been defined in these controversies; and even the obstacles it met with have tried its strength and served its development, since, for it, the period of doctrinal definitions still remains open. In Russia, it has long been closed, and the divisions that have disturbed Orthodoxy have never sprung from the waywardness of individual thought, but from obstinacy, the attachment to usages, from what has been called the *spirit of reverence.* It is not rationalism, but irrationalism, that is to be found at the beginning of its heresies. The *raskol,** the most famous of all, is also the one that most clearly reveals this out-and-out traditionalism, which is hostile by nature to true religious progress. The *raskol'nik* * or the *starover* * is the Muscovite who rejects Europe to remain Asiatic. These refractories personify 'the opposition of Russia to the West, the resistance of a people, isolated by geography and by history, as though it were en-

* These words mean respectively, schism or sect, sectary and old-believer. (*Translator.*)

closed within its own immensity, knowing and desiring to know nothing but itself.'[1]

This resistance—the origin of which we now understand—was revealed by Peter the Great in its true light. Of a theological revolt he made a social and civil revolt that divided his empire.[2] And we are watching now the epilogue of the struggle in which the Old Russian, a revolutionary by conservatism, has definitely won the victory over the 'accursed' Reformer.

There is something disturbing in this instinctive and tenacious defence of Russia against the man who sought to link her up arbitrarily with the Western order. Did she darkly foresee the disorders which this 'Europeanisation,' decided by ukase, would bring into her scarcely begun historical life; did she feel that, by forcing upon them a false and artificial history, by persuading them

[1] Cf. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

'The Russian clergy have always had their eyes turned towards the East, and have never willingly contemplated their Europeanisation.' (G. Plekhanov, *Introduction à l'histoire sociale de la Russie*, p. 93.)

[2] 'The fundamental obstacle that Russia met, on her path towards Europeanisation and culture, is the fact of the crushing predominance of the illiterate countryside over the town, the animal individualism of the peasant, and the almost complete absence in him of social emotions.' Gor'kiĭ, *op. cit.*

that they were what they were not, Peter the Great would prevent his subjects from becoming what they might have been?'

The Romanovs could have treated the Russian world either in the manner of the Carolingians or that of the Seleucids; they chose the régime of the modern West. To these primitive people, who were still in a state of intellectual infancy, they brought the arts and sciences of an advanced civilisation, the culture, the social ethics, the materialism of European towns.[2] Suddenly and with no preparation, they were sent first to the school of the French Encyclopædists, and then to that of German philosophy. They had never been taught the Catechism, and they were to be initiated

[1] Jean Jacques Rousseau, who pointed this out, said on this subject: 'Peter the Great tried first of all to make Germans and Englishmen, when he ought to have begun by making Russians.' Nevertheless these sensible words have been attributed to the creator of modern Russia: 'Europe is necessary to us for some decades; then we must turn our backs on her.' Whatever may have been the attraction exercised on him by European civilisation, Peter the Great could have been an 'Occidentalist' only in a temporary fashion. But his reform went farther than he had foreseen; it consummated the rupture between the Russian people and the more or less Europeanised higher class. Russian society was 'like a European colony lost amidst barbarians.'

[2] Cf. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes,* Vol. II, p. 232.

into the mysteries of pure Hegelianism. When Russia was opened to outside influences, it was to drink long draughts of the errors of an already corrupted Europe, from which nothing in herself could save her.

'We began our civilisation directly by perversion,' said Dostoevskiĭ.[1] In order to escape its ravages, the Russian lacked that mass of general notions which, in the form of feelings and ideas, fills the air we breathe, and which have already fashioned our moral being before even we are born. There is no tradition, either of criticism,[2]

[1] *Journal d'un écrivain,* p. 173; and Dostoevskiĭ adds: 'Many enigmas confront us, so much so that the expectation of their solution frightens us. It is foreseen that civilisation will pervert the people. It is thought that this progress will bring with it not only enlightenment, but also so many falsities, so many anxieties and bad usages that it will only be after several generations, perhaps after a new period of two hundred years, that the good seed will be able to rise; but, meanwhile, terrible things are reserved for us and our children.'

[2] Whence comes this lack of balance, of method and of logic that strikes us in Russian works of genius? 'The syllogism of the West is unknown to us,' writes Chaadaev. 'The best ideas, for lack of connection and sequence, sterile and bedazzling, become paralysed in our brains. . . . There is absolutely nothing general in our heads, and everything there is individual, floating and incomplete.' The Russian has no sense of *causality*. The great Dostoevskiĭ himself recognised that he 'lacked order in the creation of art.' 'I do not know why,' he said, 'but I have never yet learned how to order my abilities.'

of experience or of foresight; nothing but a sort of mystical naturism, which predisposed the Russians to submit to the influence of the most elementary negations. From the *Contrat social* and the antinomies of Kant to the absolute Ego of Stirner and the historical materialism of Karl Marx, there has been no chimæra that they have not welcomed with a sort of dark, logistic eagerness. From the moment an idea enters into the thought of a Russian, it ceases, in fact, to be an abstraction: it becomes a concrete truth: he judges everything by it; no difficulty of interpretation, no obscurity stops him.[1] There is no consideration of the unknown or the impossible. 'Why not set

[1] Speaking of the influence that men like John Stuart Mill, Darwin, and Strauss exercised on Russian youth, Dostoevskiĭ discusses what he calls '*the Russian aspect* of their doctrines.' 'This aspect,' he says, 'exists in fact. It consists in the conclusions deduced from these doctrines in Russia only, in the form of irrefutable axioms; in Europe, on the other hand, the possibility of such deductions is not even suspected.' (*Journal d'un écrivain.*)

We find in Maxim Gor'kiĭ a startling example: 'A Russian schoolteacher, having drawn up a plan for the suppression of the old and feeble, the upkeep of whom cost the people too much, sent in a report to the Soviet authorities. It began: "*Having regard to the fact that the celebrated scientist, Darwin,* established the necessity for an implacable struggle for existence, and that he makes no objection to the suppression of weak and useless men, etc. . . . this sort of expense must be reduced to zero."'

free all human impulses? Why not reduce the whole planet to fragments?' There is no answer, no resistance, only the call of an instinct drunk with the desire to destroy, whose fury is exasperated by the very worst of systems of ideas.[1]

'If you could shut up a Russian desire beneath a fortress,' said Joseph de Maistre, 'it would blow it up.' And Michelet himself was alarmed at the power for destruction represented by a nation so badly trained among the human races: 'When it is said that one of us of the West is a doubter, a sceptic,' he wrote in 1863, 'it is never absolutely true. A man may be a sceptic in history who is a firm believer in chemistry or physics. Here everyone believes in something, the soul is never empty. But in this Russian world, altogether ignorant, barbarous, kept empty of mind, and becoming so by tradition, if this state were to last, if man were once to start down the slope of doubt, there would be nothing to stop him, nothing to act as a counterpoise or balance; we should have the terrible spectacle of a populace without ideas, principles

[1] Dostoevskiĭ shows the Russian to us, 'caught and carried away by the fatal torrent of auto-negation and auto-destruction, so natural to the Russian character, a torrent that breaks loose with startling suddenness at certain epochs in the existence of the people.' (*Journal d'un écrivain.*)

or feelings; a people who would march towards the West with a blind movement, having lost its soul and will, striking at random, like a fearful automaton, like a dead body galvanised into action that strikes and can still kill.' And a few pages farther on, he remarked: 'The frontier of the world of Law is where it was in the Middle Ages, on the Vistula and the Danube. . . . When we admit Russia, we admit cholera, dissolution, death. —"What, O Philosopher," remonstrates in its softest voice the young Russian school that flourishes in our reviews, "you set yourselves apart from your brothers! Where is your philosophy?"' 'Such is Russian propaganda,' concludes Michelet, 'infinitely varied according to the peoples and the countries. Yesterday, it said to us: "I am Christianity." To-morrow, it will say: "I am Socialism."'

To-day, going back to her origins, Russia is turning towards the East, that East whose instincts the Russian has inherited from her rude Tartar masters, and kept alive by the contact of centuries; and it is to say to these peoples, who are well fitted to understand her: 'Russia stretches out her hand to Asia, not for her to embrace Russia's ideal, nor for her to share her social conceptions, but because

Russia needs eight hundred million Asiatics to fight European imperialism and capitalism.' These words, pronounced by Zinov'ev, at the Congress of Baku in 1920, are merely a commentary on the famous phrase of Lenin: 'Let us turn towards Asia, we shall overcome the West by way of the East.'

On its elevation to power, the Soviet government made the traditional change of front, consequent upon defeat.[1] In revolt against the West, its ideals and its institutions, it saw immediately the formidable advantage it could obtain from a watertight world, anterior to Romano-Christian civilisation, and from the power of destruction of the masses it contains. Thus Bolshevism realised, in its own way, the old dream that had been so many times formulated by the Slavophils and the Russian Nationalists.[2] 'It would be useful to Russia,' Dostoevskiĭ had already said, 'to forget

[1] Cf. Moysset, *Notes sur la Russie, Revue du monde slave,* January, 1925.

[2] 'It is incorrect to think that Bolshevism is "a tumour on the body of the people," and that, if it were suppressed, Russian life would resume its normal course. Bolshevism is not Lenin, it is not Trotskiĭ, it is the whole Russian people.' (*Muskova.*) And as Dostoevskiĭ had already said: 'Nihilism appeared among us *because we are all nihilists.* . . . What comical alarms among our wise men in the search for the origin of the nihilists! But they come from nowhere: they have always been with us,

Petersburg for a time, and to turn our mind to the East'; and shortly before his death, he pronounced these prophetic words: 'Give us Asia, and we will create no difficulty for Europe. . . . If we would devote ourselves to the organisation of our Asia, we should see a great national renaissance in Russia.'

The 'Scythianism'[1] of the revolutionaries of to-day feeds on these ideas. There are to be found, in the service of violence, the same declamations against 'the rotten West'—that commonplace of the Russian intellectuals—the same desire for uni-

in us, among us.' (*Les Possédés,* unpublished notebook published by Halpérine-Kaminsky, preface to *La Confession de Stavroguine.*)

[1] 'Yes, we are Scythians!' cries the great Russian poet, A. Blok. 'Yes, we are Asiatics, with greedy, slanting eyes.' And the new Scythianism has its adepts among the refugees as well as among the Bolshevists. Exactly like the 'Eurasians' who have taken refuge in Europe, the disciples of Lenin endeavour to prove, with much literary evidence, the irreducible enmity, the philosophic and historical antagonism of Russia and Europe. 'Between Europe and us,' says Tiushev, 'there can be neither negotiations nor armistice. The life of the one is the death of the other.' And this leads to the assertion that Russian Scythianism 'will reduce the whole world to ashes, and will tear the mask away from Atlas, that *petit bourgeois* of the world; for, in a hurricane of flame, in storm and tempest, a gospel has come into the world'—meaning the new revolutionary truth of the Scythians, the sole 'cosmic truth' destined to destroy Statist and materialistic Europe.

versal regeneration, founded on the conviction that the Russian people are the body of God, the God-bearing people,[1] and also the same irrationalism, that form of messianism which Karl Marx had ironically defined as 'the faith in the regeneration of Europe with the help of the knout and the forced admixture of Kalmuk and European blood.'

But, in Asia, the Bolshevists pose as idealists, mystics and liberators. In secret, they dream of giving an overlord to these Asiatic peoples, in whom there is an inarticulate desire for unity; and, in the Moscow Orientalist Review, *Novyĭ Vostok* (The New East), may be read these significant words: 'Recently, Russia has taken the name of Eurasia, and this new Russia is above all the master and guide of the East, which is groaning in the chains of moral and economic slavery, and which is struggling for a better future. Moscow is the Mecca and the Medina for all these subject peoples.'

[1] 'Do you know who are at present the only God-bearing people, the only people called upon to renew the world, and to save it in the name of a new God? It is the Russian people.' (Dostoevskiĭ, *Les Possédés.*) The dark faith of men like Lenin sprang, indirectly from this messianism.

And by the paths followed in the past by the soldiers and *chinovniki* (bureaucrats) of the Tsar, pioneers and organisers of another kind are penetrating to-day into Persia, India, China, Japan, Korea, and the Near East. 'They bring with them or find on the spot, the experimental formula of organisation suited to their schemes: to fertilise the latent nationalism of these Asiatic communities, subject to foreign dominations[1] and for long rendered immune against any outside germ, but which, having arrived at a certain point of decadence, are in a state of expectation, of prophetic, messianic and millennial exaltation, which is the precursor of great migratory movements, and which has been heightened by the universal upheaval of the war.'[2] And the period foretold by

[1] 'In Asia,' says Trotskiĭ, 'it is necessary to rely on the principle of nationalities struggling against foreign domination. In Europe or America, on the other hand, use must be made of the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.'

[2] Moysset, *loc. cit.* 'The Russian,' he says again, 'not only possesses knowledge of Asia, organised in centres of research and culture, and developed by uninterrupted use; he also knows her reflexes. He is able to interpret her silences and to utilise her rumours.' In 1920, the Soviet Government created, at the Military Academy of Moscow, an Oriental Section, for the purpose of training both a civil and a military staff to operate in Asia. This section sets its students to study both the language of the 'oppressed' Oriental country and that of the 'oppress-

Renan seems at hand, 'when the Slav, like the dragon of the Apocalypse, whose tail swept a third part of the stars, will drag in his train the masses of Central Asia, the old following of Genghis Khan and of Tamerlane.' [1]

ing' country, as well as Marxist theory, in order to enable them to make use of the social state of the country, and to judge whether it is better to take up a position based on the social conflict or one based on class war.

[1] Quoted by M. Muret, *le Crépuscule des nations blanches.* M. Albert Sarraut, in 1923, uttered similar warnings: 'In contact by her frontiers,' he said, 'with the Mussulmans of Turkey, Asia Minor, Persia, and Afghanistan; in contact with the passes to India, with Mongolia, Tibet and China, the Russia of the Soviets, after the failure of her assault on Europe, has fallen back on Asia, where she is preparing a new offensive against Europe: *that of the Asiatic world.*' (Cf. *supra,* Chap. III.)

CHAPTER III

FOR the purpose of the spiritual war it has declared on the human race, the Russo-Bolshevist idea could not but find in the Germanic idea a sort of pre-established complicity, a secret connivance, an identical fund of permanent hostility towards the principles of Romano-Christian culture; and it is for this reason that they constitute an identical danger for the future of civilisation.

Such an agreement is in a way in the nature of things. Astonishment has often been expressed over the extreme favour that Protestantism enjoys among the Orthodox, when it should have been as hated on the Neva as it is on the Tiber.[1] But the reason is that all isolated communities are at one in their hatred of unitary Catholicism. Thomas Mann quotes with praise the passage in which Dostoevskiĭ shows that Germany is a living protest against the Latin civilisation imposed by the Roman Empire on Western Europe—and this since the victory of Hermann over the legions of

[1] Cf. Joseph de Maistre, *Du Pape* and *Lettres à une dame russe.*

Varus. 'Although,' he says, 'the Germans have never given voice to their doctrine and their own ideal, in order to substitute them in a positive way for the old Roman idea they have shaken, I believe that one day they will be in a position to say this word, radiant with novelty, and, in so doing, decisively to take the lead of a higher humanity. At the time of the Lutheran revolt, the voice of God thundered through them over the world to announce the liberation of the mind. The method of protest was found, although the protest remained negative and the positive liberating word was never pronounced.'[1]

A new revelation—that is the common theme of the innumerable theories put forward by Germanism and Slavism in their claims to the hegemony of the future world. They imply the prior overthrow of all the forms of Western thought; and it is the principle itself of the *form* that they mean to destroy, under the pretext that everything has become 'fluid,' that the universe is once more plas-

[1] Quoted by E. Seillière, *Les Pangermanistes d'après-guerre*. Therefore, Dostoevskiĭ reproached Germany for its 'inconsequent Lutheranism.' In spite of his dislikes, he was in favour of an alliance with her; he maintained that an alliance of this kind would be of long duration, and that it was more necessary to Germany than to Russia.

tic in the hands of men, and that the latter may henceforward do with it what they will.[1]

Irrationality of this kind is singularly profitable to the savage appetites of races in rivalry, who do not hesitate to take advantage of it in order to let loose all the more freely their insubordinate forces. These disturbing doctrines, born on the confines of the Germanic forest and the Oriental 'deserts,' take advantage of the disarray of the European consciousness, that lassitude of the mind following upon great upheavals, to rear themselves up against civilisation, in the name of life[2] and of an instinct that claims a superiority for its intact freshness over the 'desiccation and exhaustion imputed to the whole instructed, cultivated and civilised race.'

Notions like these were bound to inspire peoples who are still young, and who still possess the acridness of barbarian blood, with the ambition of becoming the centre of gravity of a new humanity.

[1] Cf. G. Simmel, *Der Konflikt der modernen Kultur*, 1921; and H. G. Wells, *Mr. Britling*. 'In us,' says Keyserling, 'humanity has reached the stage of consciousness that necessarily looks beyond denominations and forms.'

[2] *Life*, in this vocabulary, means the absence of all fixed law, of all order and all dependence; *mind*, the absence of all direction, of all objective measure. These poor vocables, thus perverted, become the vehicles of disorder

The Russian idea immediately seized on these dark dreams that a Germany in catastrophe and disaster spread over our suffering planet; but it added to them a frenzy, a virginal ardour, that sprang from its lack of the attachments, traditions and interests of the West, and from the fact that it believes, with a primitive and tenacious faith, that its business in the world, is 'the politics of the human race.' The reformists and Slavophils of former days no doubt nourished their ardent dreams on the writings of Hegel, Stirner, Feuerbach, and Schopenhauer; but their successors, these Bolshevists, these Eurasians, who communicate in the 'great Asiatic idea,' and who profess so great a contempt for the 'Germano-Roman culture,' are the disciples of Hartmann, Spengler, and Keyserling. But although they find in Germany the theories by which they formulate their deepest tendencies, these spring from a racial mysticism that belongs to them alone. Here there is none of that reticence, nothing of that feverish uneasiness, those obscure regrets, that you feel throughout the apocalyptic utterances of the German idea-mongers of the defeat; for, at the height of their distress, when they seemed to be despairing of the West, you found them engaged with rational, Eu-

ropean politics, in an endeavour to save the form at least of the State.

The Russian soul has none of these timely prudences; it is from its humility, its abasement, that it draws the notion of its greatness. Long before it laid claim to spiritual ties with Asia, in order to liberate her from Western oppression, it had given tongue to all the grievances that the apostles of the East now put forward. It is in Dostoevskiĭ that we find the idea, taken up by Gandhi and Tagore, that the human race should fight against the 'mechanical transportation of the forms of European societies, against the servile transplantation of the West'; and Europeanism had no fiercer detractor than the author of *The Possessed.* In his eyes, all the sons of Europe are 'incurable liars,' and Europe itself is only 'a cemetery of great men and great thoughts that have already disappeared from the surface of the earth.' For Dostoevskiĭ, universal interests are foreign to Western States, which have been turned away from them by 'an animal struggle in which finally they will founder'; and this conviction he draws from the deepest depths of his religious soul, from his Orthodox faith. For it is Catholicism that he makes responsible for the decay of the West; and

he never tires of repeating that 'no culture is a greater enemy of Christianity than Roman culture.' 'Catholicism,' he says, 'is not the Christian faith; it is not even a faith, but the political conquest of the whole universe under the domination of Rome.'[1]

In these passionate invectives against the 'cold and legal dogmatics of the Church, in which the Roman law, the Roman State is embodied,' we find that irreducible suspicion of the apolitical, nomad Russian against the State, social life, institutions, and juridical and historical notions, to which he attributes a criminal, demoniacal nature. And it is the whole of humanism that his contempt

[1] The Rev. Father Michel d'Herbigny, during his stay in Moscow, in 1925, everywhere met with lively prejudices against the Catholic Church. 'I spoke,' he writes, 'of the sympathy of the clergy and the faithful in the West for the sufferings of souls in Russia, and they replied by reading to me the third Canon of the second Council of Constantinople and the twenty-eighth Canon of Chalcedony.' To this would be added: 'That condemns any pretensions of the Pope to anything more than the primacy of honour and to calling himself infallible.' The Father reports elsewhere the declaration made to him by one of the Tikhonian bishops who nowadays represent Orthodoxy: 'The union of the East and the West is a dream unless the Pope does penitence to be received into the Church.'

The Congress of Stockholm, on the other hand, raised great hopes in the Russian clergy. Did they not imagine that the Protestant world was quite ready to return to Orthodoxy, and to ask for baptism and all the sacraments from the Patriarch

for intelligence and reason condemns in the same breath, substituting for it a vague messianism that professes to reconcile every idea in a vast synthesis and thus to initiate a new life. 'To become truly and completely a Russian,' says Dostoevskiĭ in his famous discourse on Pushkin, 'means perhaps to become the brother of all men—everyman, if you like. . . . And, subsequently, I think, we, or rather those who come after us, will understand that to become a true Russian means precisely to endeavour to solve European contradictions, to show that the disquietude of the West has come to an end in their Russian soul, to welcome in that

of Moscow? (Cf. *Études, Seize jours à Moscow*, 5–25th December, 1925.)

Such is, moreover, says M. Tyskievicz, the spirit animating the review, *Put'* (*The Road*), the organ of the Russian Orthodox Faculty of Theology and of the Faculty of Russian Religious Philosophy, recently founded in Paris by the heads of the Orthodox Church, thanks to the generous gifts of the faithful of the Y.M.C.A., the Anglican clergy, and an Israelite banker.

In an article putting forward a programme, the priest, S. Bulgakov, a professor of the Faculty of Russian Theology of Paris, endeavours to prove that the Catholic Church is 'a prison, a State, an imperialism, that kills liberty, charity, and human thought.'

But what is most curious in this Orthodox publication is that side by side with theologians and philosophers, we find in it the leaders of the 'Eurasian' movement: L. Karsavin, V. Il'in, P. Savitskiĭ, P. Suvchinskiĭ, etc.

At the present moment, the 'Eurasians' are proposing to

soul all their brethren with an equal love, and also, perhaps, to pronounce the final word in the grand general harmony and the fraternal concord of all races in the evangelical law of Christ.'

We know what the Bolsheviks have substituted for this œcumenical evangelicism; but does not its very indetermination, its purely affective content, expose it to the strangest aberrations? And is it not from this independent Christianism, which is situated outside the limits of all definition and has degenerated into a sort of mystical syncretism, that Russian propaganda nowadays takes its inspiration, to win over the religious races of Asia? It is not solely on account of its violent hostility

unite all the anti-Catholic forces of Europe and Asia against the Roman Church; they are preaching to all the Russians—the four hundred thousand sheltered in France among others—that the Catholic civilisation must be destroyed at its roots. As M. Berdiaev says: 'They prefer Genghis Khan to Saint Vladimir. . . . The Mohammedans are nearer to their heart than the Christians of the West. They are seeking to create a united front with all the non-Christian religions of the East against the Christian creeds of the West.' And when the Eurasians assert that 'at the bottom of the Bolshevist evil there is a great good,' they show that between Photius and Lenin exists 'a spiritual kinship.' (Cf. S. Tyskievicz, *Études*, 1926, p. 125.) Orthodox Muscovitism, Slavophilism, Eurasianism, Bolshevism, these are the successive, but fundamentally identical, forms of the hostility to the West and to the Romano-Christian civilisation.

to Western civilisation that it is apt to seduce them; it is, in especial, on account of the mysterious harmony with their own thoughts that the Asiatics perceive in it

If the spiritual contact of Russia with the East was not, until the last revolution, as close as the ethnical relationships would have led one to believe, the survival of the Hindu type in the intellectual Slav type has long been recognised; and this thesis is supported by philological arguments drawn, in particular, from the resemblances between old Slavonic and Sanskrit.[1] Asiatic accents may be found even in popular Muscovite beliefs. An altogether pantheistic feeling pervades primitive Russian literature. The powers its heroes venerate are the obscure forces of the universe, and the invocations of the Slav, like those of the Brahmans, are addressed to the rivers, the forest, darkness, the winds, and the 'thrice holy' sun. What a difference from our Christian storytellers of the Middle Ages, who even then were such humanists![2] Their characters, whether they are warriors,

[1] Cf. de Vogüé, *Le Roman russe*, p. 3.

[2] 'Therefore, when the hordes of Batiy knocked at the doors of Kiev, in 1240, nothing there announced the birth of a Dante, and they did not interrupt the studious labours of a Duns

saints or the Virgin, are clear and distinct, and, when they bring heaven into the action, it is a well-defined heaven, in which reigns a personal and immutable God. In the eyes of many Russian peasants, the rites of the Church are at bottom nothing but magical charms, and its prayers incantations for the conjuration of malicious influences; they honour equally saint and demon, and the devil. Antichrist haunts their terrified imaginations. A sort of manicheism, of latent dualism,[1] seems to hide beneath Orthodox Christianity, to such an extent that resemblances could be found in it to the Persian religion, the cult of Zoroaster, in which Ariman, the god of evil, is as powerful as Ormuzd, the god of good.

More expressive still of its Oriental affinities are

Scotus, nor even of a Villehardouin.' Cf. Waliszewski, *Littérature russe*, p. 13.

[1] Cf. A. Leroy-Beaulieu, *op cit.*, III, p. 38. 'Our doubts, when we have any,' writes Berdiaev, 'spring neither from philosophy nor exegesis. What then is their source? In a very keen sense of evil and its power.' 'For the Russian idealists,' observes Vogüé, 'living and acting are an inextricable medley of good and evil; whoever acts, creates and destroys at the same time. . . . Therefore to refrain from thinking and acting is to suppress that fatality, the production of evil side by side with good, and as evil affects them more than good, they take refuge in nothingness.' It was to translate *nirvâna* that Burnuv invented the word *nihilism;* Russians and Hindus seem to meet in a same negative doctrine.

the heresies, into which the belief in an inner revelation and free inspiration was to lead Russian asceticism. Immanentism, that is the distinctive sign of Asiatic thought, what harmonises it with the deeper tendencies of German philosophy and Slav mysticism.[1] But it takes on, in the latter, a startling originality. Numerous are the sects in Russia that understand the dogmas of the Church in a symbolic manner. Ignorant muzhiks interpret the Christian mysteries in a manner analogous with that in which the Buddhists understand their own precepts. Thus for them the Incarnation is reproduced in the life of each of the faithful, and, if they admit a primitive stain, they trace it back to before the creation of the world; for, in their semi-gnostic cosmogony, they believe in the pre-existence of the soul. Some of them have carried their speculations to the point of denying to God any other than a subjective existence, and of identi-

[1] How the doctrines of the Theosophists, imported from Sweden and Germany, were received in Russia, is well known. Catherine II had to take severe measures to put a stop to the progress of illuminism. It began again in the reign of Alexander I, the friend of Mme. de Krudener. The craze was common to the whole of intellectual Russia of that time. Speranskiĭ, the author of the Code, the Russian, says de Vogüé, who had the greatest genius next to Peter the Great, recommended his friend Zier 'mystic contemplation, fixed on one point, preferably the navel.'

fying Him with man. 'God,' they say, 'is spirit: He is in us, we are God'[1]—which constitutes the very essence of Oriental theosophy.

The ideas of these obscure village reformers, these 'spiritual vagabonds,' can be found in the preachings of Tolstoĭ, in whom the messengers of the East saluted, and quite rightly, one of their prophets. Before them, in fact, the apostle of Tula had taught that 'the State, culture, and civilisation are only empty idols, condemned by Christ and by all true sages as evil and the source of perdition.' Tolstoĭ, too, wanted to destroy this ac-

[1] Similar beliefs, borrowed from the ancient sects of the *dukhobortsy* or the *khlysty,* inspire the present disciples, in Soviet Russia, of the ex-Metropolitan Antonin. And it is in the following terms that they expounded their creed to Father Michel d'Herbigny: 'The Holy Trinity should be understood as the symbolic revelation of the external and divine truths of communism. Did not Christ teach that the Church, a feminine principle, is another Self, his *alter ego?* Now, Christ is the collective will of the divine and the human; it is manifested in every man by the Holy Ghost, that is to say, by our innate tendencies towards universal sympathy, in which the world would discover the divine that is in it, if it were not prevented by the clergies. Every man, even Pagan man, is a Christ in whom God regenerates Himself, in order to communicate Himself to others in love under the name of the Holy Ghost.' (*Seize jours à Moscou, Études,* 5th and 25th December, 1925.) It is to these strange aberrations that the exaltation of sentiment leads on which Orthodoxy confers an exclusive religious value.

cursed society and to renew the face of the earth, by setting up here below the kingdom of God, which is nothing but 'peace among men.' In the pessimism of his point of departure, his indifference to all progress, his doctrine of renunciation, negative of personality, his religion of charity without God, his doctrine of non-resistance to evil, is not this strange Christian very nigh to Buddhism?[1] Therefore, he thought that Russia is called upon to play 'the part of mediator between the East and the West,' and this is the object of the correspondence he kept up during the last years of his life with Mussulmans, Chinese,[2] and Hindus. Tolstoï entertained great hopes of these peoples who, according to him, have not yet abandoned agriculture, are not depraved by military,

[1] Tolstoï is a descendant of those *startsy,* the 'Elders,' who were the real guides of Russian souls. Having a very Oriental turn of mind, they communicated to their disciples an altogether Oriental manner of regarding things of this earth and their relations with God. But, as Berdiaev says, 'the East is nearer than the West to religious sources; it is in the East that the sun rises, and it is only there that God speaks to man face to face, with no intermediary.' Brianshaninov, *La Troisième Rome.*

[2] Mr. Siu-Choan-Pao, in a thesis on *Le Droit des gens et la Chine antique,* compares the teaching of Lao-Tseu with that of Tolstoï: it is the same subjective idealism. Lao-Tseu also desires the disappearance of all authority. But the Chinese *non agere* is less absolute than Tolstoï's non-resistance to evil.

political, and industrial life, and have not lost faith in the divine law. 'In my opinion,' he wrote to a Chinaman in 1905, 'the work to be done, not only by the Chinese, but also by all the Asiatic peoples, does not consist solely in emancipating themselves from the evils they endure at the hands of their own governments, but also in showing all the Western peoples the issue from the situation in which they find themselves.'

It is well known to what bloody adventures and to what murderous xenophobia these idyllic visions have already led the China of Sun-Yat-Sen and his successors. It is also Tolstoï's teachings that have raised the India of the Swaraj; from them spring all the idea-mongers who from Germany to Tibet, from the shores of the Baltic to the banks of the Indus and the Ganges, reawaken age-old passions under the pretext of preparing the ways for a reconciliation between Asia and Europe, and thus accomplishing the 'common task: the greater civilisation, the whole human genius. . . .'[1]

[1] Romain Rolland, preface to *La Danse de Çiva,* p. 16. We are not judging here what there may be of authentic and just in the aspirations for independence that are exciting India and China, but the ideas that foment these revolutions.

Germanism, Slavism—it is at these sources that all that is in revolt against the West takes its strength. It is in contact with them that the old Asiatic heresies, which stand always ready to spring up again as soon as the solidarity of Europe is threatened, are galvanised into action and awaken their slumbering forces.

How comes it that, on the plea of promoting the fusion of the minds of East and West, the Tagores, the Okakuras, Gandhi himself, find themselves in agreement with all the most destructive elements in European doctrines? It is clear that they know where the breaches are, and are seeking for the lines of least spiritual resistance, in order to find their way into the disunited body of the West. The following passage from Kokuzo bears clear witness to this; we see in it how the Eastern nationalists, formed, moreover, in our own universities, make use of the ways of approach offered by what Ananda Coomaraswamy calls 'the religion of modern Europe, the *religion of idealistic individualism*': 'Our mission,' he says, 'does not consist merely in returning to our own ancient ideal, but also in feeling for and reviving the dormant life of the former unity of

Asia. The sorry problems of Western society urge us to seek in Indian religion and in Chinese ethics for a higher solution. *The tendencies of Europe, as shown in German philosophy and Russian mysticism, are turning towards the East,* and *help* us to discern the more subtle and more noble aspects of human life, which will carry these nations themselves nearer the stars in the night of their material surrender.'

German philosophy, Russian mysticism, these are the roads chosen, reconnoitred in advance, and idealism,[1] the mask under which these Asiatics hide their devouring glance, in order the better to seduce us, the better to make themselves understood. Sustained and aided in enterprises hostile to the race by refugees from all the European nations, by apostates from all the creeds, by the sectarians of all the religious aberrations that form with them the œcumenical council of coalised heresies, they are working with our worst ideas in order to turn them against us.[2] We are here at the

[1] 'To capture them by idealism,' said Lenin in defining his propaganda among the youth of Europe.

[2] Protestants, theosophists, devotees of Annie Besant, disciples of the 'mind cure' support the enterprises of the Oriental nationalists. There have been seen on the walls of New York and the great towns of America, enormous posters representing Gandhi squatting like Buddha on the terrestrial globe, and bearing these words: *The greatest man in the world.* What part

geometrical locus where the various counterfeits of spiritual communion meet and interpenetrate, and assemble their forces of division against 'the great faith, the great doctrine, the great school of energy' that has made the civilisation of the West.

But this confused predication, in which idealism is degraded down to theosophy, to form with Western rationalism a monstrous syncretism, is well adapted to deceive those falsely evangelical souls whom the strangest varieties of religions fascinate in turn, and whose individualism fights free of any hierarchy, any sacramental economy as of any doctrinal magistracy. Are they not condemned in advance to suffer the magic of the most singular aberrations of the spirit, whencesoever it may blow and whithersoever it may go—so much so that it has been said that it is from 'religion' and the spirit and not from matter and 'science' that we must henceforward expect the great peril of our century?

To all the *dilettanti* of faith, who cherish an emotional need to believe, a perverted taste for mystery, the stale Buddhism, the corrupt Hindu-

the propaganda of the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) has played in arousing the revolt of the Chinese Southerners will be seen later on.

ism, that the messengers of Asia spread over Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world, offer the illusion of a religiosity without constraint and of a contemplation without heroic virtues; a vague mysticism that decks itself out with an inefficacious compassion towards 'everything that suffers from life' and with the marvellous legends of age-old divinities.

Let there be no error about it: the ideal of Buddhism is not that atheistic wisdom, that godless Catholicism, tinged with positivism and Kantian ideas, that enchants the imagination of our pious agnostics. If we take it in its most strongly marked characteristics,[1] this ideal—as we shall see—is nothing but 'a cruel mutilation of man.'[2] Fallen from incoherence into decomposition,[3] it is nothing more nowadays, for the masses, than an intellectual and moral chaos, in which the lowest of ethics stands cheek by jowl with the most grossly superstitious of polytheisms. The unhealthy attraction it inspires is comparable only 'to those fright-

[1] Cf *supra*, Chap. IV.

[2] Oltramare, *La Théosophique bouddhique.* Cf. Bernard Allo, *L'Europe se fera-t-elle bouddhiste?* (*Revue des Jeunes*, 25th February, 1926.)

[3] According to Okakura, Buddhism is represented by twenty-five Indian schools, twelve Chinese schools, and thirteen Japanese schools.

ful monstrosities in which is revealed a glimpse of the secret abysses of nature.'[1] But is it not sufficient to look at what it has done in the East to doubt whether it is quite the thing to present as a remedy for the evils from which the West suffers?

The India of the *yoga* and the Vedanta—which must not be confused with the purely imaginary India of the poet, Rabindranath Tagore—has no more to teach us than this; and are those who think they see in Hindu idealism a mysticism capable of forming an alliance with our beliefs in the struggle against the materialistic invasion of Europe, aware that they are appealing to doctrines that would ruin the healthy and vivifying remnants of our own ideals? 'However prodigious may be the riches of its creations,' M. Sylvain Lévi asserts, 'Indian literature is and must remain inaccessible to the world, with the exception of a little group of scholars and inquirers. The conceptions it proceeds from, the society it depicts, the conventions and the symbols it is built upon, are too special, too particular to India for them ever to enter the common domain. . . . In reaction against an immeasurable nature, which reduces human life to a painful accident in the pullulation

[1] E. Renan, *Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse.*

of universal life, India has found for the problem of life and destiny a solution so peculiar that it separates her from the rest of the world. Impotent to see beyond the horizon of their native country, the Hindus have never been able to rise to a universal vision of man and human life.'[1]

Thus the Hindus have remained alien to the true interests of the human race. In the infinite variety of their systems, the dissolution of their thought has reached such a point that it is irremediably impotent to promote action or to sustain the will: it commits suicide by wearing itself down to nothing. Once the internal equilibrium is upset and the link between the mind and reality is definitely broken, thought, in fact, has no longer the power to take a grip on things. But that which exists is nothing for the Hindu. He has no idea of form, substance, constraint and limitation. He does not believe in facts, and he lacks the hierarchy of concepts. He has carried eclecticism so far, both

[1] Sylvain Lévi, *L'Œuvre de la civilisation indienne* (*Revue de Paris,* 15th February, 1926). Cf. also *Civilisation indienne et civilisation humaine.* This kind of rapid view of the general character of races and Asiatic doctrines, such as we can understand them, must be taken broadly. Although we judge from the point of view of the West, we do not, therefore, divide humanity into two, for the Oriental and the Westerner are not two distinct species. But to define them we are compelled to oppose the forms in which their reciprocal conceptions are translated.

in speculation and in everything else, that all argument drops into the void, whirls about in it, and is lost like a blow given to one of those inferior organisms that have no determined centre of life.

Indeed, India possesses nowhere a permanent centre. *In politics as in religion, it is the country of anarchy.*[1] 'In the religious order neither high priest nor temple universally considered the holy of holies; in the political order, no unity, no stable empire, no durable capital. India has never had a Jerusalem, a Delphi, an Athens, a Rome.[2] . . . The towns die as do empires, leaving nothing but a name on the soil that has borne them.' If you examine its religious history, whether it be in the matter of hierarchy or dogma, you find the same ceaseless work of disintegration and of continuous reconstruction. A Brahman imposing on the faithful the authority of the Vedas is all the more sure of an acceptance that will not become restive even

[1] We are here summing up the remarkable study of M. Sylvain Lévi.

[2] Okakura compares India to a museum of religion, where Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism co-exist side by side. Speaking of the 'innate individualism of the Buddhist ideal,' he notes that it exercises no influence on politics, on the State, or on social life. 'In reality,' he says, 'despite our temples and our monasteries, we have no Church.' And the author of *Idéaux de l'Orient* rejoices, because, for him, 'religion furnishes the means of true emancipation and carries individualism to its highest point.'

under the boldest changes in that the Vedas have never been formed into a canon; there has never been a council of Brahmans to separate the authentic from the apocryphal texts. In the divine hierarchy, there is the same confusion over the sacred persons. Brahma, who is supposed to occupy the first place among the gods, has practically no followers, no devotees. Siva and Vishnu as well are split up into an innumerable legion of local forms, who are worshipped as so many different and hostile divinities. Thus Hinduism sinks and deteriorates until it becomes nothing more than a paganism in the proper sense of the word.

That is what scholars who are familiar with its history, who have studied its doctrines in their sources, and who have spent their lives in meditation upon Pali and Sanscrit documents, think of Hindu civilisation; such is the judgment that men like Sylvain Lévi, Barth, Oldenberg, and Senart do not fear to give. Its objective severity is in contrast with the illusions of certain Western ideamongers, who look to India and its recent messiahs for a 'new wisdom,' 'new reasons to hope and to live,' and who ask of the 'land of eternal thought' a 'new viaticum for exhausted Europe.'

It is no less opposed to the sensitive effusions,

the cadenced imagery of a Tagore, who paints for us an India of mirage, whose 'light makes the eyes of its children shine with joy, whose springs purify them, whose fruits nourish them, and whose majestic mystery is like the proclamation of the infinite in music, perfume and colour, bringing to their souls a perpetual spring.' Thus the Hindu Bacchus sings to lull hearts wounded by Westernism with a sensual and confused dream.[1] Nothing can be less genuine than the 'mind-worship' of the Rousseauist ashrâm, in which the magus of Santiniketan dreams of 'uniting Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, and Christianity in the harmony of an active co-operation.'

Tagore and Gandhi are 'modernists'; and the Orientalism of those Westernised Asiatics, whose second-hand language is modelled on ours, is no less suspect to us than that of a Keyserling or a Romain Rolland.[2] Gandhi professes to be a de-

[1] Cf. Appendix II.

[2] 'Romain Rolland, who paints the India of Gandhi as Philostrates painted the India of the gymnosophists, does disservice to the India he tries to glorify; Tagore, who denounces to his compatriots, to China and to Japan, the faults and crimes of the West, and who sets up as a contrast a purely imaginary East, does injury to Asia, Europe, and his own ideal.' (Sylvain Lévi.)

It is M. Romain Rolland who introduced into France the *Young India* of Gandhi, and who was the channel through

voted admirer of Tolstoï and Ruskin; Tagore constantly refers to Shelley, Wordsworth and the English lyrical poets; and, to introduce us to Asiatic writings, Ananda Coomaraswamy elucidates them with the help of Kant, Jacob Boehme, and William Blake;[1] he compares the teaching of Chuang-

which the propaganda of other Hindu nationalists reached us. Therefore, it is from what he says and writes of the Mahatma that we are able to judge Gandhi, for it is by way of the Rollandist system of ideas that his thought has penetrated to us. M. Romain Rolland has tried to make the Hindu patriot the 'saint' and 'messiah' of his own ill-defined idealist religion; he presents the apostle of the *Ahisma* to us as 'a new Saint Francis of Assisi,' his mother as 'a Saint Elizabeth'; he sees in him 'the man who has started in human politics the most powerful movement for two thousand years,' and he even compares him to Christ.

We respect, where it is just, the national apostolate of Gandhi, and all the more because he has suffered for the cause he defends. But it is with M. Rolland's Gandhi we are dealing here: he belongs to us. (Cf. Gandhi, *La Jeune Inde,* translation by Hélène Hart, introduction by R. Rolland, Paris, 1924. Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi,* Paris, 1924.)

[1] Like André Gide, A. Coomaraswamy exalts William Blake, whom he considers 'the prophet of the union of East and West': 'It is striking,' he says, 'to find nothing in the Asiatic writings more characteristically Asiatic than the object of his passionate desire, the deliverance from the chains of division.' And he quotes these verses of Blake:

'I will go down to self-annihilation and to eternal death
Lest the Last Judgment come and find me unannihilate,
And I be seized and given into the hands of my own selfhood.'

Tseu with that of Walt Whitman, and shows us in the Nietzschean doctrine of the Superman[1] a simple transposition of sentences from the Hindu Maha Purusha, the Bodhisattra or the Jîvan Muka. It is inconceivable the anarchy of thought that such cross-breedings of cultures can produce; what is far worse is the frightful fecundity, the terrible vitality, of the mixed systems that such monstrous unions engender.

And though the native ideas of these Asiatics are altered and their orthodoxy runs the risk of corruption in the process, this does not advance the spiritual reconciliation with the West. These transformations, from which the most ancient theories of India issue scarcely modified, have no great consequences if you remember that, in Asia itself for centuries past, beliefs have been continuously assailed by ever fresh heresies, the proliferation of which is unlimited. The only result is a slightly increased swell in the ebb and flow of the

[1] And he concludes: 'Those who have understood the decline and fall of Western civilisation will recognise in Nietzsche the awakening of the conscience of the European'—you must understand the Europe that is awakening to the Asiatic conscience. (Cf. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *La Danse de Çiva,* fourteen essays on India, translated from the English original by Madeleine Rolland. Foreword by Romain Rolland, Paris, 1922.)

immense ocean of speculation, a vast dream into which everything penetrates, embraces and mingles, until it falls into the gulf of the indeterminate and returns to the place of the abyss.

After all, the Asiatic who returns from Europe, where he has studied our systems and our codes, brings back to his country European ideas 'Asiaticised' by himself. The Hindus who seek in the doctrines of the West the reform of their cult or their dogma, only look for what, in especial, may lead them, as they think, to a deeper comprehension of their own sacred writings. To their intellectual curiosities, as to their aspirations, they bring a genius that is absolutely and exclusively Oriental. And Gobineau, who once made these remarks, did not fail to add: 'I am quite convinced that what will come out of this will in no way be a tendency to link up with our civilisation. I am even inclined to believe that the dangers we shall run will be of no mean order—and it is moral dangers I mean. In this great Asiatic marsh, there will be produced some sort of unknown combustion of principles, ideas and pestilential theories, and the infection that will be given forth will spread more or less promptly, but inevitably. The whole of history is there to prove it.' And he adds:

'Asia has for thousands of years been a stagnant heap, but not a dead heap; it is, on the contrary, horribly fertile in monsters and in beings hostile to our species.'[1]

The powerful and formidable faculty of the Asiatics—Gobineau noted it—lies in this, that they never fail in some way or other 'to Asiaticise their object.' *They conquer and are not conquered.* Is there, for example, anything more than propaganda tactics for the use of the 'free minds' of Europe in the 'purified religion' of Mahatma Gandhi that pretends to be open to 'the worship of all the prophets of the world'? No doubt, it serves his purpose to appear to 'transcend Hinduism' by proclaiming that 'the Bible, the Koran and the Zend-Avesta are as divinely inspired as the Vedas.' But he invokes the Sermon on the Mount only to denounce immediately 'Western Christianity as a negation of the Christianity of Christ.' And he appeals to the Upanishads, the doctrine of the Samara, the discipline of the caste system, the worship of idols, and the 'protection

[1] Cf. *Les Religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale.* We have in mind here only the dangers that these Asiatic ideas present for the future of Europe. That they may be made healthy we shall show farther on. (Cf. Chap. V.)

of the cow,' in his effort to transform the nationalism of India into a religion, and to open up to the obedient and fanaticised mass of his followers the bloody but glorious path of sacrifice. What he teaches them is not that broad ethical religion 'founded on the laws that bind together all men in this world'; it is the gospel of Swadeshi, in which unadulterated traditionalism is raised to the power of an absolute: 'Just as we are called upon to serve the century in which we are born,' he tells them, 'so must we serve at all costs our native soil. . . . The emancipation of our soul must be sought by means of our own religion. . . . Our culture cannot be selected by us any more than our birth, or our family or our country. We must accept what has been given to us by Brahma; we have to receive our traditions as coming from him, and our strict duty is to conform to them. Anything else would be sin.'[1]

[1] Gandhi, who accuses European culture of having 'devirilised the youth of India,' has established a complete programme for 'a return to the systematic study of Asiatic cultures, Sanscrit, Arabic, Persian, Pali, and Maghadi, in order to rediscover the secrets of national strength.' Romain Rolland praises his attempt, and invites us to profit by it ourselves; which means no doubt that we should return to Christian and Græco-Latin disciplines, in which are the sources of our thought and faith. M. Romain Rolland does not understand it this way, and urges us to study Oriental theologies. Is that not

It is not thus that the East presents to the West its missionary thought. A shameful nationalism, it disguises itself as love, affects to live in the eternal, on the summit of the centuries. When it is exported, it is transformed into an humanitarian pacificism, into an idealistic syncretism for the use of a world that it seeks to stupefy and to confound, for it sows confusion only to reap profits for itself. But the India of Gandhi and Tagore preaches tolerance of all the religions only to reawaken its own beliefs and better to dissolve ours. Our strength—what remains to us of moral cohesion—comes to us from our traditions and our culture; and, by a double effort, they are seeking to imitate them among themselves, by returning to the mystical and contemplative past of their race, and to destroy them in us, by inoculating us with

perverting Gandhi's teaching? For it is only afterwards that the Mahatma finds room for other cultures, to satisfy 'the dream of a superior state of universal existence.' He directs his attention first of all to the threatened points. His synthesis is Indian, at any rate Oriental, Koranic and Buddhist. Ours is Helleno-Roman, the essential part of Judaism coming to us through this channel. And without prejudging the truth of the doctrine—for that alone can determine our choice—how comes it that M. Romain Rolland refuses to the West in peril this appeal to tradition which is valid for the threatened East, and that he sees his salvation only in submission to a spirit that is foreign?

the worst of spiritual opiates. On these wiles of the vanquished, the poet Tagore expends the ingenuity of a snake-charmer, and tunes his subtle lays from one end of the earth to the other; as for Gandhi, he attacks on his own soil the serpent that encoils him, and opposes it with a 'non-resistance' more formidable than any weapon.[1] But, for both, the snake is the civilisation of the West, 'satanic and perverse,' and exclusively dominated by the 'worship of Mammon.' And they denounce it, in emulation one with the other, as 'the black age,'

[1] The gentleness of this apostle has been, during these latter years, more formidable to the masters of India than the violence of politicians, for it fanaticised the masses. He preached the abandonment of the factory and the railway and a return to the patriarchal simplicity of the Vedic epoch, and, if he fought against the established powers, it was by means of civil disobedience, the refusal of all collaboration, and the permanent strike. In order to oppose Western industrialism, Gandhi urged his disciples to burn foreign cotton fabrics and to clothe themselves only with native cloths, woven on the wheel with their own hands. (Cf. René Grousset, *Le Réveil de l'Asie.*)

But the policy of 'non-co-operation' was doomed to irremediable failure. However ascetic, in fact, the temperament of a people may be, it is not possible to impose on it a collective mysticism, unless the exaltation of the soul promotes a positive activity and end. But the doctrine of Gandhi, which was a spirituality of despair, forced the masses to suicide. Therefore, his prestige is very much compromised; and other Hindu revolutionaries are already seen to be emerging, who are inspired by communist doctrines, and who prefer 'the military style of the West.'

'the age of darkness'; they brand with contemptuous phrases its evil desire for conflict and competition, and in the end they prophesy that 'the destiny that awaits it and will overthrow it unawares is as certain as death,' and that it 'carries in itself its own damnation.'

To the materialistic West, which is all Machine, they compare, with frantic insistency, the spirituality of the East, which is all Spirit.[1] This fierce revindication of oppressed Asia against the excesses of European concupiscence, you will find expressed a hundred times, during the last ten

[1] 'Asia is nothing, if not spiritual,' says Okakura, and for him too the 'glory of the West is the humiliation of the East.' But he adds: 'This glory has a reverse. The individuals who co-operated in the making of the great machine of the self-styled modern Western civilisation have become its slaves, and are pitilessly dominated by the master they have created. In spite of the spurious liberty of the West, genuine individuality has been destroyed by the competition for riches; happiness and joy are sacrificed to the insatiable desire of ever-greater possessions. The Westerner boasts of having emancipated himself from mediæval superstitions, but what then is this idolatrous worship of riches that has replaced them? What sufferings and discontent are hidden behind the sumptuous mask of the present!'

This, rightly understood, is a counsel of traditionalism the East gives the West; and that is the lofty sense of these appeals of Asia: they urge us to return to that Catholic spirituality in which we shall find the moral unity that, for our civilisation, is the most necessary of all goods.

years, in an identical form, by all Oriental nationalists, whether in India, China, or Japan. It is the theme tirelessly harped upon in the joint preachings of Tagore, Gandhi, Okakura, Ku-Ming[1] and all their followers: 'The force behind Western prosperity,' they say in one unanimous voice, 'is a force of evil. The present civilisation of Europe is the exclusive possession of the devil; but it yields to him only to slide, on the deceptive paths of prosperity, to the edge of the cataclysm.' They

[1] Ku-Hung-Ming, who, like Gandhi, was educated in Europe, has travelled in France and Germany, where he took his degree; he started in China—he was, in 1924, the secretary of the viceroy of Canton—a crusade similar to the Mahatma's. He endeavoured to convince his compatriots that they must unite to throw off 'Western barbarism,' not as the Japanese did, but by persuasion and the diffusion of true Chinese culture, 'a great reservoir of peace.' He has set out his leading ideas in *The Spirit of Chinese People.* M. Murat sums them up thus: 'If the Europeans attempt to destroy Chinese civilisation, and to put militarism in its place, their attempt will turn against them; they will have let loose immediately four hundred million men held back hitherto by their customs and their religion, and who, under the guidance of Japan, might become formidable to the rest of the world.' Ku-Ming rejected this hypothesis with horror, and relied only on the moral strength of his country, to bring about the reign of that human harmony, which, according to him, goes back to Confucius. The reply of facts to this pacific apostolate is known: and the Chinese crisis is as yet only at its beginnings. The anarchy latent since the revolution of 1911, stimulated by revolutionary elements, first of all broke out as xenophobia and then as a blind nationalism. What is there to dam this torrent?

feign sometimes to cherish the hope that 'when power becomes ashamed to occupy its throne and ready to yield to love, when the morning,' as Tagore says, 'effaces the bloody tracks of the footsteps of the Nation on the highroad of Humanity, India will be asked to bring her vessel of holy water to sweeten and purify the human race, and, beneath its rain, to bless and fructify the trodden dust of the centuries.' But *silet poeta.* Deep down within them, these oppressed races do not believe that 'Europe is ready to abandon its political inhumanity, since it expects nothing except from the modification of systems, and it has no hope of a change of heart.' And while Rabindranath Tagore holds that 'the East, with its ideals, in which are deposited centuries of sun and starry silence,' can wait patiently until Europe 'loses breath' and 'the Giant of Flesh disappears into the abyss,' Mahatma Gandhi, who is defending his threatened house, does not harbour these convenient illusions: *'The only effort needed,'* he says, *'is to drive out Western civilisation.'*[1]

[1] Cf. Rabindranath Tagore: *Nationalisme.* Considered apart from the hostile motives they conceal, these complaints seem to us well-founded. (Cf. *supra,* Chap. V.) But who first denounced the desire for material well-being as a bellicose element? It was Pope Benedict XV, while war was raging. Catholicism did not need to wait for 'the message of the East.'

That is the final word of this spiritual system of ideas, in which are embodied elementary forces that aim, in fact, at our annihilation. Ananda Coomaraswamy, in *La Danse de Çiva,* quotes these 'remarkable words' of Viscount Torio: 'Equality in peace will never be attained until it has been built up on the ruins of the annihilated Western states amid the ashes of the vanished European peoples.' One of the founders of the Oriental League of Tokio, M. Ikuta Choko, to whom Japan is indebted for a translation of Nietzsche, wrote in 1924: 'Western civilisation, sunk in materialism, is about to go under. Our League will have no *raison d'être* unless it undertakes to renew the life of humanity. *Our task is once again to Orientalise the world.*' And in the manifesto of the League, we read: '*Peace and happiness will not be assured to men until the day when Asia has conquered the Whites,* not driven to it by hatred, but solely by the intention of bringing them back to justice, to true civilisation, which is spiritual and not material.'[1]

The renaissance of Asia announced by its prophets is, at bottom, commanded by the very ideas

[1] Cf. A. Maybon: *Sur le Japon d'aujourd'hui* (*Europe,* March, 1924).

that they pretend to oppose. These ideas come to them from the West they curse; they borrowed them from the liberal vocabulary, the democratic system of ideas, and use them to lay claim to things that are fundamentally foreign to them. And the big words, Justice, Liberty, and Progress, like a totally new virus that no preliminary inoculation could weaken,[1] are thus made the vehicles of anarchy, in a world which they contaminate irremediably, and turn away from its destiny, a world in which we can hear already the rumble of the formidable riot.

This tragic awakening was inevitable. Has not Europe for half a century past done everything she could to 'renovate' the Asiatic races?[2] Has she not, by teaching and with the factory, by commerce and with the printed book, by arms and with the machine, given them her material civilisation, her aspirations and her needs, her will to power and her means of action? By setting

[1] There is not even any equivalent for these terms in their language. India, for example, has not a single native word for *nation*.

[2] This has been admirably shown by M. René Grousset in his prophetic book: *Le Réveil de l'Asie* (Plon, 1923). We give here the essential part of his argument. But the reader who wishes to know more of this agonising problem should read his book. May he meditate upon its lucid warnings.

up the vast administrative unity of India, have not the English, for example, united men in unifying the soil? They have unwittingly prepared the way for the creation of an Indian nation, hitherto broken up, lost in its immensity and as though foreign to itself.[1] And the university finally accomplished this internal unity which the railway and the telegraph had begun, by bringing together the Tamils and the Mahrattas of Bombay, the Sikhs of Lahore and the Bengalis of Calcutta. British centralisation created common bonds between peoples separated by distance and manners, who, until recently, did not understand each other; the university, where young Hindus studied the doctrines of Anglo-Saxon liberalism, and learned to think English, but 'in the Irish way'—was to make intellectuals in revolt and nationalists.[2]

The same transformation is to be seen in all the old nations of Asia. By modernising them, by bringing to them her ideas, her codes and her technology, Europe awakened them from their age-old lethargy; she resuscitated forces that seemed to have died out. On the arrival of the Europeans, most of these peoples were in com-

[1] René Grousset, *op. cit.*
[2] René Grousset, *op. cit.*

plete decadence. Conquest had for them 'the value of a *risorgimento*'; it restored their consciousness of themselves. Of the China of the Manchus, the nineteen provinces of which, at the beginning of this century, seemed still to be living in the time of Marco Polo, it has made the China of Sun-Yat-Sen and the Canton revolts; of the India of the great Mogols, the India of Gandhi and Swaraj; of the Turkey of the Sultans, the irreducible Kemalist Turkey that dreams of federating the Mussulman nationalities of Persia, Afghanistan and Arabia; of the Egypt of the Khedives, it has made the Egypt of Zaghlul Pasha. Thus it has been made possible to say that 'from the Europeanisation of Asia has sprung the revolt of Asia against Europe.'

And now the idea of national unity is giving place to the idea of Asiatic unity.[1] Imported from the West by Oriental intellectuals who have seen there the secret of our cohesion, and who would imitate it in spite of the obstacles nature has put in the way, the idea of a Greater Asia has found in Japan its most ardent theorists and propagandists; for it is Japan that intends to promote

[1] 'Thanks to Western ideas,' remarks J. D. Whelpley, 'the East is about to acquire a solidarity which would have been impossible under a purely Oriental régime.'

this renaissance. Does she not, owing to the good fortune of an uninterrupted national sovereignty and in the fierce pride in her race and her insular isolation, flatter herself that, of all the peoples of the East, she is the one that has best preserved the ancestral instincts? 'It is for her,' says Okakura,[1] 'to resuscitate by her policy, both in her art and her moral life, the old unity of Asia.' And this kinship that links up the nations distributed between the Gulf of Bombay and the Pacific, between the Indian Ocean, the valley of the Blue River, the steppes of Mongolia and Manchuria and the Japanese Archipelago, is what Kokuzo has striven to establish, in order to reconstruct on ethnical, historical, and religious bases, the identity of an Asiatic culture and civilisation, of which Japan claims to be the depository and the heir.[2]

This precellence that she takes upon herself, the right she claims to take the lead in the reawakening of the Oriental peoples, these peoples,

[1] Cf. Okakura (Kokuzo): *Les Idéaux de l'Orient: le réveil du Japon.* Introduction by Aug. Gérard, ex-Ambassador of France at Tokio.

[2] Okakura, *op. cit.* 'Asia is one; the Himalayas separate only the better to accentuate those two powerful civilisations: that of the communistic China of Confucius and that of the individualistic India of the Vedas. But these snowy barriers could

who are for the most part under foreign domination, do not dream of denying her; they bow before the free race who embodies their hopes. And is it not significant when the idealist Tagore extols the example of Japan, and praises her for her ability to accept, for the purpose of her own greatness, all the gifts of the modern century: 'Japan,' he says, 'has thus entered into contact with living times, and has accepted with passion and aptitude the responsibilities of the new civilisation. *That has given heart to the rest of Asia.* In this task of breaking down the barrier and of standing up to the world, Japan was the first in the East. She gave us hope, that hope which feeds the fire necessary for any creation. Asia feels henceforward that she must justify herself by producing a living creation, that she must not remain passively asleep, and be content with imitating the West in a cowardly or servile fashion, out of fear or in flattery. For all that, we offer our thanks to this Land of the Rising Sun, and we ask

not interrupt, even for a moment, the expansion of that passion for the absolute and the unreal, the spiritual patrimony common to Asiatic races, which enabled them to create all the great religions of the world and differentiated them from the maritime peoples of the Mediterranean, who love to confine themselves to the particular and to seek the means rather than the ends of life.'

it to remember that it has a mission to fulfil in the East.'

Thus India who 'tries to live peacefully and to think deeply,' India 'ignorant of all politics,' India 'who is of no nation,' and who asserts 'that she has no other ambition than to know the world as the world of the soul, to live all the moments of life in a humble spirit of worship,' the India of the Bengali poet who detests the machine and material progress, feels her heart beat and forbidden dreams surge up once more at the victorious accents of Japan, to whom she looks to return Asia to the Asiatics and to drive out the White Man.

For to all these peoples who live under foreign law the victory of Japan over the Russia of the Tsars, in 1905, had seemed like the sign of approaching deliverance. 'Was not the legend of the invincibility of the Europeans, of their natural primacy among human races, dispelled! Tsushima's guns informed the world that the divine right of the Westerner in Asia had come to an end! It was not Russia beaten by Japan, it was not the defeat of one power by another, it was something extraordinary and marvellous, the triumph of one civilisation over another, revenge

for centuries of humiliations, a hope for the peoples of the East, that began to dawn.'[1]

These Pan-Asiatic consequences of the Japanese victory were nowhere more keenly felt than in Japan itself. They became suddenly aware that they had received from heaven the mission of educating and grouping together all the nations of Asia. 'Formerly,' the *Nihonjin* wrote at the time, 'it was agreed that the Eastern question must be solved by the Europeans or the Americans alone. Henceforward, we know that it will be by us. The peace of the world demands that, by the union of all Orientals, under the transforming influence of Japan, there shall be set up in the Far East a great empire capable of preventing the intrusion of America and Europe. If the foreigners show any desire to consider China as they do India or Egypt, if they show disrespect, we shall hurl them into catastrophe!'

The European war, the evil peace that followed it, far from having appeased the revolt of the East, only united the Asiatics in a common animosity[2] against the domination of the Western

[1] Grousset. *op. cit.*

[2] Reporting, in the *Actes de la Société de géographie* (May, 1924), upon a tour he made in Asia just after the war, M.

powers, and strengthened a feeling of ethnic solidarity that is developing in a threatening fashion. Even before the opening at Nagasaki, in the month

Sylvain Lévi declared that he had everywhere met with *a veritable horror of European civilisation.* The eminent Indian scholar sees only three possible beneficiaries of such a state of mind. First of all, the Soviets: 'The Soviets are hailed and loved,' he says, 'less for what they bring than for what they destroy. They are regarded as the liberators who will humiliate and crush the masters whose oppression has caused such long suffering.' The second beneficiary is America. 'America stands to the East for the whole fruit of European civilisation, its culture, its technical equipment, its spiritual strength, its material power, and America does not bear the dead weight of Europe's past.' (The United States had not then shut their doors on Japan by the Immigration Act.)

Thus there is no need to be astonished because Tagore, the idealistic adversary of the machine, should have reserved his flatteries for America. He hailed in her 'the nation freed from the avarice of the past, whose traditions have not yet had time to throw their choking roots around men's hearts.' 'If it is really given to the West,' he says, 'to lift us out of the confusion we are in, so that we may attain the spiritual summit of humanity, I think it is the special mission of America to fulfil that hope of God and man. America is the country that desires and hopes for something other than what is. America is destined to justify Western civilisation in the eyes of the East.'

Finally, the third beneficiary, says M. Sylvain Lévi, is Germany; by having her colonies taken away from her, Germany was 'sanctified for the East.' And that is what explains Gandhi's consideration for Germany: 'Europe,' he says, 'gained nothing by the fall of Germany. . . . The Allies showed themselves quite as false, quite as cruel and quite as greedy as Germany was or would have been. Germany would not have fallen into the exaggeration (hypocritically pious) that can be observed in many of the actions of the Allies.'

of August, 1926, of the first conference of the Pan-Asiatic League,[1] many Japanese associations were created for the purpose of attracting India into the circle of Nippon imperialism and raising the East against the West: 'By marching on the West,' said Count Okuma, 'against the Balkans, France and Italy, the greater part of the world can be brought under our military power. The tyranny of the Anglo-Saxon at the Peace Conference filled men and gods with anger.' And

[1] The Nagasaki Conference was an event whose significance only those deny who cannot or will not understand. The mere fact that a Pan-Asiatic League has been constituted has an undeniable value. As *The Japan Adviser* pointed out, 'Anti-Western feeling was the only bond that united the members of the Conference.' In their idea, the League was created in opposition to the League of Nations, which seemed to the Asiatic peoples not only a purely European organisation, but also an instrument of European domination.

Let me quote one or two of the principal articles of its Statutes:

'Article 1.—The Pan-Asiatic League is founded in order to bring about a permanent peace based on equality and justice and to safeguard the perfect liberty and well-being of humanity by abolishing all distinctions of class, race, and religion.

'Article 2.—The League, in order to accomplish this aim, must bring about: the renaissance of Asiatic civilisation from the intellectual and material point of view; the reformation of the Asiatic races at present under foreign domination; the abolition of the unilateral treaties at present existing with Asiatic countries; co-operation between Asiatic races for intellectual, economic, and political progress; encouragement of the manufactures and products of Asia. . . .'

though intellectuals, like Kawakami, are content to announce 'the coming days when Asia will have recovered, in the matter of civilisation, a superiority that will throw Europe into the shade,' a very precise political realism is hidden beneath this cultural propaganda.

In spite of all sorts of vicissitudes and hesitations, the constitution of a Greater Asia, an Asiatic *bloc,* by the alliance of China and Japan, is being prepared: 'Russo-Japanese friendship,' wrote the Nippon statesman, Viscount Goto, two years ago, 'is the key of this alliance; it will bring into harmony the civilisations of East and West. A Russo-Sino-Japanese *entente* will found the peace of the Pacific on liberty and equality.'[1]

The agreement between Tokio and Moscow was signed on 20th January, 1925. As M. Maurice Muret has justly pointed out, in the *Crépuscule des nations blanches,* 'a nation so attached as Japan is to her monarchical and aristocratic institutions, must have been compelled by some harsh necessity for her to have exposed herself to the risks of an alliance with the Soviets.' It was, therefore, under the pressure of harsh compulsion that

[1] Cf. Maybon, *loc. cit.* A Russo-Japanese League was founded by Mr. Naito Tamigi; Japanese Russophils frequently travel to Moscow.

Japan ventured upon that perilous path.[1] 'To be quite frank,' confesses Mr. Kawakami, 'Japan fears isolation.'

Japan—abandoned by England, her war ally, hunted down, reduced to the narrow limits of the archipelago, in spite of the fantastic growth—nearly a million births a year—in her population, definitely excluded from American territory by the Immigration Act[2]—the 'greatest international error, the most pregnant with terrible consequences, that has been committed since the Peace'—Japan had to seek elsewhere for support and securities. The alliance with the Soviets saved her from isolation—and in particularly favourable

[1] An article of the treaty enjoins the Soviet *Komintern* to refrain from all Communist propaganda in the empire of the Mikado. But this restriction, remarks M. Muret, renders the Russo-Japanese alliance more significant still.

[2] 'Everything accomplished by the Washington Conference,' declares the *Asiatic Review*, 'was swept away by the Immigration Act.' Rabindranath Tagore, notwithstanding his recent advances to America, could not hide his anger: he left immediately for Japan, and gave a series of lectures at Osaka and Tokio, in which he inveighed against the Act. 'The affront,' he said, 'has been felt by all the Eastern peoples. They must unite: their alliance will save Asia and the world.' Then, calling for the future union of China and Japan, he concluded in these terms: 'Oriental culture and thought,' he said, 'must be rehabilitated, and the destructive spirit of European civilisation denounced.'

conditions, if we remember the enormous activity of Russia throughout the East.

Thus Japan, who westernised herself against her will, was thrown back on the Asiatic continent, the cradle of her civilisation and her race; Russia, cut off from Europe and drawn up against the West that it would attack in the rear, was also thrown back on Asia. And at the two extremities of this mysterious world, a colossal reservoir of human beings, two peoples more advanced in the path of progress look to each other and plan to conquer it.

At Moscow, the signing of the Russo-Japanese treaty was greeted as 'the signal for an essential change-about in the Far East and in international politics' (Chicherin). And M. Steklov, in *Izvestiia,* announced in regard to it that 'a new era was beginning in the history of the world, an era that would be marked by the coming alliance of Japan, Russia, China, and Germany.'[1] The Germano-Asiatic *bloc,* notwithstanding all obstacles, is seeking to come into being.

[1] Cf. *Izvestiia,* 22nd January, 1924. The Government journal of the Soviets added that Germany was still hesitating, but that she would soon see that her interests lay on the side of the Asiatic *bloc.* Several journalists in Tokio and Osaka and certain members of the Japanese Parliament have echoed these hopes.

Present events seem to be putting off this danger, but in appearance only. What will emerge from the Chinese revolution, fomented by men like Borodin and Karakhan, none can yet foresee. The great Western powers delay and hesitate; they feel that their prestige is at stake; but what means is there to re-establish order in that great, drifting country, that enormous, feckless human mass, led by a few agitators from the universities of Europe and America?[1] Moreover, they can

[1] Here again the idealism of their American or European educators has made revolutionaries of these young Chinese. They turn against the West what they have learned from it and in it. Henceforward, they look towards the Russia of Lenin and Zinov'ev; most of them think and act only in accordance with the political and social principles of Moscow. Have not certain young Chinese discovered that China practised communism long before Russia? 'Who knows,' they say, 'but that progress is in this very ancient novelty, of which we, the Chinese, have had experience in the course of our long history?'

For that matter, they are merely repeating the lessons that European idea-mongers have taught them in their own country. Did not Bertrand Russell say to them: 'China discovered and practised for centuries a kind of life which, if it were adopted by the whole world, would bring happiness to humanity. But Europe, whose absurd energy creates disturbance everywhere, wants none of it.' And his conclusion was that 'the young reformers of China were about to set up a human society and a culture infinitely better than the worn-out organism called European civilisation.' (Cf. Legendre, *La Civilisation chinoise moderne*, p. 260.)

So we must not be astonished at the diatribes of a Sun-Yat-

no longer count upon Japan, who is very careful not to support too openly the Northern troops of Chang-Tso-Lin.

But what would happen if Japan became reconciled with China, and, supported by a Bolshevist revolution in the Indies,[1] turned against the 'white intruders and undesirables'?

Sen against the West: 'A shameless civilisation, sweating with cunning and rotten with self-interested logic,' he cried at Kobe, at the headquarters of the Union of Asiatic Peoples. Yet this civilisation had educated him. The founder of the Kio-Ming-Tang revolutionary party had, in fact, been a student at the American college of Honolulu; then he attended a course at the English Faculty of Hong-Kong, and took his medical degree; and he finished his studies in London and Paris. A protestant in religion, a radical and even Marxist republican in politics, this drifting politician was the most ardent partisan of the Soviets in the South of China. A fine example of what Western culture, when it is not Catholic, makes of the Chinese: it spoils them irremediably.

[1] The recent revolt of the Dutch Indies was also fomented by Moscow. The crisis broke out at Java under the same conditions as in China and India. Intellectuals, educated by the West, succeeded in awakening autonomist sentiment, that was translated into a murderous xenophobia. The two most important parties, the *Sarekat Islam,* which has predominantly religious tendencies, and the *Boudi Outomo,* which makes use of socialistic formulas and recommends (just like Gandhi in India) the non-co-operation of the indigenes with the Dutch administration, have a definitely nationalist character. The agents of Moscow have taken it upon themselves to give a Bolshevist character to these aspirations for autonomy and independence.

Thus, by clever changes of front, the Soviets have found a way to encourage the particularism of all these peoples to the

The present episode, the Chinese crisis, is above all an act in the duel between civilisation and Bolshevism. Paul Morand was right when he said: 'Canton is the first straight blow delivered by Moscow to London. For us to rejoice over this discrimination would be madness. To Asia, all the whites resemble one another, and form but one people. Others will follow and we shall have our turn. To Europe—ignorant, isolated, divided, sceptical, with its eyes only half open on the

benefit and not the detriment of their power. By taking advantage of pre-existent affinities, Bolshevism is gradually conquering Asia. For the Soviets, seen from the East, appear to be an Oriental reaction against European civilisation.

The Government of Moscow dreams of the formation of a League of Asiatic Nations, placed under its guidance. We can already see the political consequences of this line of conduct, which is also extended to Asia Minor. Special treaties have just been concluded between Russia, China, and Turkey. The recent conversations of Chicherin and Rouchdy Bey at Odessa had reference to the conclusion of a five-power pact between Moscow, Angora, Teheran, Cabul, and Canton. It was Turkey's task to federate the Mussulman nations of Persia, Afghanistan and Arabia. But there was more than that: it was necessary to dissuade Angora from applying for admission to Geneva. The entry of Kemalist Turkey into the League of Nations would, in fact, have created the danger of compromising the influence of the Soviets in Asia and of ruining the idea of a Pan-Asiatic League, subjected to their preponderance.

And on the initiative of Moscow—supported in occult fashion by Berlin—political powers and economic forces are forming or endeavouring to form outside the Western nations and against them.

evident simplicity of the present conflict—is opposed an ardent, coherent and methodical doctrine, perfectly well informed and aimed with the whole strength of its leaders at the destruction of an ancient society that defends itself with the weapons of peace against an attacker with the weapons of war.'[1]

Such are the facts, such are the realities that are hidden beneath the rhapsody of a Tagore and the Tolstoïan gospel of a Gandhi. When the propagandists of the 'knowledge of the East' urge us to hearken to 'the spirit of India that has just surged from its temples and its forests,' when they labour to rehabilitate Asiatic culture and

[1] It must, moreover, be noted that the propaganda of Moscow has found valuable assistance in the protestant missionaries of the Y.M.C.A. This is what an eye-witness, M. André d'Ollivier, states: 'I picked up one day,' he says, 'in a street of Canton, a religious tract distributed by the missionaries of the Y.M.C.A., and this tract said to the Chinese: "The Europeans exploit you, rob you, pillage you, although they are your brethren; revolt against them, drive them out, pour out their blood. God wills it." The Y.M.C.A. is everywhere the agent of Communism. At the time of the Shanghai riots, I saw people sent by this group haranguing the coolies and advising them to kill all the English; I saw them at Pekin inciting the students against the Europeans; I saw them at Tokio place a hall at the disposal of Communist agitators in order to create the Rodominto (workers and peasants' party), and it was they, too, who lent the premises in which the Pan-Asiatic Congress of Nagasaki took place, and I could continue at length."

thought, and to denounce the destructive spirit of Western civilisation, they are furthering the plans of a political coalition that may give rise to a conflict more inhuman than all the others, and that would plunge our world into the abyss once more.

It is doubtless some such anticipation that intoxicates M. Romain Rolland when he writes: 'As an historian by trade, accustomed to watch the great tides of the mind ebb and flow, I describe this one that is rising in the depths of the East. It will not ebb until it has overflowed the banks of Europe.'

On the plea of welcoming the 'ample and calm metaphysics of India,' its conception of the universe, its 'wisdom of life,' the breach through which anarchy, no less barbarous than invasions, has always surged, dissolving our institutions and our customs, is being enlarged. The word so far in idealistic language, is only of a sort of spiritual invasion, ready to roll in upon us from the high plateaus of Asia to 'regenerate' the races of the West, abandoned in the night of their evil destiny. We must not wait until the avalanches longed for by certain European deserters have destroyed our world, before denouncing those who have become the accomplices of this Asiaticism. We must first

of all attack those who are propagating it amongst us. It is in the West that we must first look for the idea-mongers who, on the pretence of opening us up to the ideas of the East, are betraying civilisation and their own vocation. These are the real fosterers of the crisis in Western thought, or, to put it bluntly, in thought itself.

CHAPTER IV

AMONG all the subversive forces that are undermining Europe, ideas too generate events; and already they are coming to the surface of the body of thought that covers them. But the latter opens up the way for them, multiplies their dangers, and increases their fatal violence. The object is to disarm men's minds before their imminent assault.

First of all, this anti-Western propaganda, of which we have been following the multiple track, may be recognised by the fact that it takes advantage of the disorder in Europe to maintain in us the catastrophic feeling of deterioration and decline. Europe, who has now hardly any other education than the ruin of her memory, is only too ready to yield to the baleful wail of this historic

fatalism. To-day, the West feels only as a burden on its will and soul all those former civilisations that the immense work of erudition of the nineteenth century evoked from the past of humanity, and that it cannot harmonise in its mind. Hence the thirst for novelty that torments it. It adores change only because it feels bowed down beneath the weight of the weariness of the universe. At a time when it needs to expand all its energies in the defence of the eternal principles that are the foundation of civilisation, the mass of its historical memories overwhelms it, and prevents it from reacting in the direction of preservation and life.

Does Europe still hold the secret of civilisation? Her learned men ask themselves the question, and meditate in melancholy on the rise and fall of vanished communities. Have not revolutions and reconstructions confirmed them in the weakening belief that there is 'something in the world that is perpetually in process of surrender'? And their agnosticism is already consoling itself with the thought that 'the slaughter of one is the nourishment of another in this movement of natural cannibalism that varies so little from century to century.' Having arrived at the end of their researches by way of a series of disillusionments,

they can find nothing better to do than to leave 'the burden of the disappointed years' to other misled generations, who will bear it onwards to sepulchres yet to come. And in face of the Asiatic menace with which we are dealing here, are there not people who say to themselves like the aged Renan: 'There is no doubt that these peoples will bring new ideas to humanity. This will not happen without also causing a great disturbance in the general state of things. But the Barbarians also somewhat disturbed society in the fourth century, and there is no doubt that humanity is indebted to them for much.'[1] This is the point of view of Sirius, the mental débâcle of a humanity ready to surrender.

Does not history teach us other things besides scepticism? It shows us that the only societies to perish are those which neglect the conditions of all life and all liberty, the permanent rules of safety and the means of defence: history also

[1] A remark reported by M. Romain Rolland, Michelet, in the *Bible de l'humanité,* justly observes: 'Did Rome make the decadence? No, she inherited it. It was a finished world that fell into her hands. The depopulation, chaos, and military bacchanalia suffered by humanity after Alexander are too often forgotten. The orgy centred on Rome and expired there; but why call it Roman, when it was no more than a shadow even in the middle of Rome? It was the orgy of Asia, of the East.'

brings into evidence what has rightly been called the *law of the rampart.*

Another theme from the doctrines of dissolution that they are trying to acclimatise among us is that of the materialism of Western civilisation. We hear of a 'disanimation' of Europe, which is supposed to be the necessary consequence of our enslavement to material power, and Buddhism or Hinduism is presented to us as a counterpoise that will save us from being drawn into the abyss. For the barbarism that has the smell of the machine we are offered the barbarism that has the smell of the forest. We want neither.

Before the gloomy spectacle of Europe as we see her to-day, we should not dream of advancing on her behalf the 'homicidal benefits of a puny mastery over matter'; and, if we desire to defend the West against its detractors, it is not our aim to apologise for its defects or its surrenders. The wretched state of the modern world, 'the corpse of the Christian world,' goads us on with a special urgency to restore the true principles and traditions of our civilisation, those indeed that may save it and the human race with it.[1]

If, as an aid to this necessary recovery, we

[1] Cf. *supra*, Chap. V.

expect nothing from Asia, it is because the pseudo-Orientalism of her recent prophets is more often than not only an exotic form of the 'return to nature,' of that Rousseauism which appeals to the unsubdued instincts of the past deep down in us to let them loose on the world. It is the same distrust of true civilisation, the same hatred of society and of law. And we have seen a Rabindranath Tagore denounce the misdeeds of the machinery and technique of the West in the same tone in which Rousseau condemned the corruption of Athens, the decadence of Rome, and the humanism of the Renaissance, in order to exalt the Scythians, the Early Persians and the Germans of Tacitus. We find in the Asiatic propagandists and the Genevese philosopher the same savage declamations against industrial development, which is condemned not for its excesses, but for itself, in the name of virtue and of primitive simplicity.[1] *Ubi solitudinem faciunt pacem appel-*

[1] In truth, the Asiatics, no less than we, are dominated by the machine and the spirit of mechanism; it even seems as though they look to civilisation for nothing else but this power over the external world, which they have lacked hitherto.

Compare this statement by a young Hindu with the dubious lamentations of a Tagore against Western industrialism: 'The Oriental,' he says, 'has thrown down the gauntlet to industry, and henceforward Asia is the destined centre of an ever more embittered war between the Westerner, endeavouring to keep

lant. And this vague naturism that exploits the discontent of the modern soul, in order to rouse all human propensities against the defects of our present organisation, clothes itself in a spurious theosophism, that is as foreign to Hindu metaphysics as to ancient Chinese ethics.[1]

the Eastern market, and the Oriental, endeavouring to beat him in a struggle in which hitherto the Westerner has conquered with ease. . . . Rejecting his ancient tendency to be content with what he has, the Asiatic is studying the arts and sciences that have given the West its material prosperity. He is putting the results of his researches into practice, usually adjusting Western methods to his own needs and even improving them in certain cases.' (*The Indian Review,* quoted by Stoddard, *op. cit.,* p. 213.)

And Keyserling, who has observed this evolution, writes: 'It is among the younger peoples of the East that the most extreme technification meets with the least resistance. . . . It is no longer possible to look for spiritual enlightenment from the East; the latter will henceforward become the representative and the symbol of materialism, however great may be the depth of thought of the minorities who will continue to live there.' (*The World in the Making.*)

[1] 'Buddhism is in fashion,' writes M. Sylvain Lévi, 'it is much talked about. . . . This fantastic literature, these queer, sickly or quack writings, are more apt to retard science than to serve it.' (Introd. to the *Bouddha* of Oldenberg.) And M. René Grousset writes in a similar vein: 'Contemporary theosophy presents the appearance of a rather factitious modernism. A game for dilettanti or archeologists, which has only a few points in common with the Hinduism from which it claims to be derived; and, above all, it is a modernism that runs counter to the general direction of Hindu doctrines.' (*Histoire de la Philosophie Orientale,* p 10).

This is the teaching, for example, spread by the last books of Maurice Macterlinck. Everyone knows his famous contrast between what he calls the *Western lobe* and the *Eastern lobe* of the human brain: 'The one,' says the author of *l'Hôte inconnu,* 'produces here reason, science and consciousness; the other secretes yonder intuition, religion, and subconsciousness. The one reflects only the infinite and the unknowable; the other is interested only in what it can limit, what it can hope to understand. They represent, in an image that may be illusory, the struggle between the moral ideal and the material ideal of humanity. They have more than once tried to penetrate each other, to mingle, to work in harmony; but the Western lobe, at least over the most active part of our globe, has up to the present paralysed and almost annihilated the efforts of the other. We owe to it not only extraordinary progress in all the material sciences, but also catastrophes such as we are experiencing to-day, which, unless we take care, will not be the last nor the worst. . . . It is time,' Maeterlinck concludes, 'to awaken the paralysed Eastern lobe.'[1] And thereupon he elab-

[1] Cf. Maeterlinck, *Les Sentiers dans la Montagne,* pp. 181-182. Amiel, in his *Journal* (Vol. II, p. 74), presents a singular and illuminating case in which these two tendencies are at war:

orates for our use a sort of occult syncretism, in which the Mosaic revelation and the Christian revelation are supposed to be absorbed into a higher tradition and to satisfy all the religious needs which he exalts immoderately.

'Instead of a rational science or a revealed doctrine, both provided with verifiable titles to belief, a pseudo-tradition is put before us which can be referred neither to divine revelation nor to human reason, and the source of which is situated in a "reservoir of wisdom," formed "before even the coming of men on the earth," by "more spiritual entities" or "psychic beings."' A state of mind like this 'represents not only a menace to Christian faith; it also contains a threat of general dissolution to reason itself in its natural and most fundamental seat, and it gives rise to fears of a future, not so very far off perhaps, of disorders in the "religious consciousness," of which the

'My Western conscience, soaked in Christian moralism,' he says, 'has always persecuted my Oriental quietism. Between the relative that overwhelms me and the absolute I despair of attaining, I hover heedlessly, and I act only at the last extremity. Before any optional action, I doubt; before any speculative decision, I hesitate. I have not dared to be a thorough Buddhist. I am neither an Oriental nor a Westerner, neither a man nor altogether a woman; I have remained amorphous, atonic, agamous, neutral, lukewarm, and divided. Pah!'

gnostic and neo-Platonic aberrations at the beginning of the Christian era offer only a feeble notion.'[1] And such, indeed, was the state of our world when a similar dogma came to it from Alexandria: everywhere remedies were sought in ecstasy, in cosmogonic reveries, in theurgy, and in the illuminism of false prophets.

But for certain minds to-day, mystical theology and Christian asceticism are things so little known that they must needs seek the virtues of contemplation and sacrifice in the life of Mahatma Gandhi; and, if they extol the monastic vows, they are those of the *Satyagrah Ashrâm*.[2] Must we, as Maritain remarks, call the *Summa* of Saint Thomas the Baghavâd-Gita, turn the Council of Trent into an assembly of Tibetan lamas, dress up Saint John of the Cross or Saint Francis of Assisi in a bhiksu or the Curé of Ars in a cramana —in short, disguise our own religion in Asiatic rags, for these æsthetes, in their love of exotic

[1] Cf. Jacques Maritain, *Revue universelle* (15th August, 1921).

[2] Cf. Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi:* 'Whereas, in the ordinary convents, these vows, with the passage of time, become no more than a negative discipline, they are here throbbing with the spirit of pure love and sacrifice that animates the saints.' Everywhere this same prejudice at work disparaging and denying the spiritual values of our faith.

wisdom, to undertake its discovery and to admire its profundities?

Incapable of distinguishing true mysticism from its counterfeits, the revelations of a Ruysbroeck from the 'lotus flowers' of a Steiner, are they not willing and eager to submit to the spell of all the theosophists who claim, without God, to be able to penetrate to the 'great secret'? They will accept anything rather than Christ and the Incarnation. For has not the Christian religion, according to them, some difficulty in 'freeing itself from the heaven of Hipparchus and Ptolemæus'?[1] They must have the Brahmanic faith that 'embraces more of the universe.' And with their hearts

[1] Romain Rolland: *La Danse de Çiva.* The lyrical intoxication of the author of *Jean-Christophe* springs from the old romantic dream. Michelet had also greeted the 'divine Ramayana' with raving enthusiasm: 'Whoever has done or willed too much,' he wrote in 1863, 'let him drink from this deep cup a long draught of life and youth. . . . Everything is narrow in the West. Greece is small, and I stifle; Judæa is dry, and I pant. Let me look a little towards lofty Asia, the profound East. There I have my immense poem, vast as the Indian Ocean, golden with the sun, a book of divine harmony in which nothing rings false. . . . Receive me then, great poem! Let me plunge into it! . . . It is the sea of milk.'

This same Michelet, a few pages farther on, extols nevertheless, 'the proud genius of Rome, predestined to carry on Greek civilisation and to defend the world against the Oriental engorgement of the Gods of Asia, who came, cruel and lachrymose, to bury the human soul.'

beating to the rhythm of the Samsara, these modern disciples of Einstein and of Vishnu invite us 'to hear the cosmic symphony of the worlds succeeding one another, becoming extinct, rekindling, with their living souls, their humanities and their gods, in accordance with the law of the Eternal Becoming.' All the old Germanic intoxication from Schelling to Nietzsche reawakens to the sound of Siva, who 'dances in the heart of the world.'

It is dreadful to imagine the effects that 'the odious mixture of humanitarian moralism, of pseudo-mystical exasperation, of false historical erudition and of false philosophy—in short, the horrible confusionism that such doctrines may cast into a reason already weakened and disarmed by Kant and open to all the enterprises of modern vulgarisation.' For, in truth, the so-called Oriental[1] ideas which have been proposed to us in

[1] 'The champions of neo-Buddhism, theosophy and all the adulterated goods that profess to be derived from Hindu philosophy, noisily claim for India the honour of having given birth to these conceptions. The transmigration of souls and Karma are certainly noble hypotheses for the purpose of connecting man by a link of moral solidarity to the past and the future . . . but the experience on which they claim to be founded is, in the Eastern fashion, an intuition reserved to a select body of seers.' (Sylvain Lévi, *Essai sur l'humanisme.*)

these latter years are nothing but a sort of occultist esotericism, worked out by a professor of religious history, false Hindu prophets, and German philosophers, and they have been spread by theosophists and pacifists in the service of the most recent nationalisms. Put in this way, the famous East-and-West dilemma betrays its true origin.

Therefore, what must be impeached are the *old Western errors,* which, in order to clothe themselves in a sort of novelty and to recover their spell over men's souls, have borrowed from the myths of India or China a charm of poetry and mystery.[1] Behind the strange motives which they go seeking in the innumerable varieties of Hindu, Buddhist, or Confucian metaphysics or morals,

[1] It is, for the rest, an illusion of this pseudo-Orientalism to see in Hinduism or in Buddhism a philosophy which is, it is imagined, like 'the divine dream of early youth.' They seem rather the anxious and uneasy seekings of a prematurely senile thought: 'Neither in the language nor in the thoughts of the Rig-Veda,' writes Auguste Barth, 'can I recognise that character of simplicity which people are pleased to see in them. These poetic writings seem to me, on the contrary, singularly subtle and superficial, full of allusions and reticences, and of assumptions of mystery and theosophy; and the manner in which they are expressed reminds me rather of the phraseology in use among little groups of initiates than of the poetic speech of a great community.' (*Les Religions de l'Inde,* cf. *Quarante ans d'Indianisme.*)

in which anything can be found, we easily recognise their true face. All these Asiatic ideas would be inoperative if they were not, so to speak, galvanised by contact with the heresies of anti-Christian Western thought.

Let us take, for example, Buddhism, as defined by M. Sylvain Lévi. *Agnostic relativism* will find its own particular themes in this conception of human life in which 'existence is only an illusory accident in a series of incommensurable length'; it will no less enchant the *evolutionist,* who will find magnificent images in it. Similarly, the *pantheist* will extol a doctrine which makes of nature 'not a scene, a simple framework, but which considers man, the animals and even gross matter as temporary stages in the universal metamorphosis of life.' The *pessimist* will become giddy with excitement before the law of Karma which 'subjects every being to itself, from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell, and develops infinitely the moral consequences of acts once committed.' The *determinist,* in turn, will show the implacability of such a law as a blind force, while the *quietist* will retain of this doctrine only 'the virtues of wisdom, mildness, and pity, whose object is to attenuate its rigour and to

guarantee beatitude for ever in the peace of Nirvâna.'[1]

Every Western heresy might renew its powers of seduction and error by transposing the old sacred texts of Asia into its own language. And, in fact, a return to Oriental theologies has been discovered in the Bergsonian doctrine. Absolute becoming, a refusal to place a limit on one's thought, to identify it with being, in order the better to assimilate it to the vital spurt, mobility, pure intuition—at its most extreme, can there not be found in Bergsonism an attitude analogous to that of the Hindu yogis?[2] The *evolutionary monism* of Haeckel and Spencer does nothing more, in certain respects, than follow, line for line, the cosmological formulas of the Taoists, who, long before Hegel,[3] had conceived the identity of

[1] Cf. Sylvain Lévi: *Civilisation indienne et civilisation humaine.*

[2] These analogies have been pointed out on many occasions by the Hindus themselves. When Tagore came to France, and they told him of Bergson's philosophy, he arrogantly replied that India had passed that stage long ago. Cf. A. Thibaudet: *La philosophie bergsonienne.*

[3] So Orientals are especially fond of Spinoza and Hegel. 'We can understand them easily,' said a Persian philosopher to Gobineau. 'These two thinkers are Asiatic thinkers, and their theories on all points touch upon the doctrines known and enjoyed in the country of the Sun.'

opposites. There is cartesianism in the *atman* of the Upanishads, in that notion of *self,* of the interior being, the existence of which is directly grasped by the thinking subject. Schelling may be found in the Lao-Tseu, Auguste Comte in Çakya-Mouni, who, at the time of the great epochs of Chinese civilisation, had relegated the object of metaphysics to the domain of the unknowable. The *nihilism* of *Stirner* might find arguments to justify it in the Mâdhyamikas; *fideism,* too, could find support in the Yogacâras, which have added to the negative dialectics of the Brahmans a mysticism comparable to that of the Alexandrines. The *idealism of Kant* himself would discover a precursor in Dignana, who, on grounds comparable with those of Kantism, became aware, some centuries before our era, of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments: 'There is,' says the Hindu philosopher, 'no real thing indissolubly bound which can be logical reason, for it is said: the reason by which an event is the cause of another event, which is its logical consequence, does not depend on external being or non-being; it rests on the condition of inherence or of substance established by our thought.'[1] 'This trans-

[1] Cf. Masson-Oursel: *La Philosophie comparée*

position into idealistic terms of the vocabulary of the Naiyâikas,' says M. Masson-Oursel, 'was finally adopted after the elimination of Buddhism by Brahmanic thought itself; and thenceforward a logic was formed that was destined to rule in the whole of Oriental Asia with a sway as supreme as that enjoyed in the West by the Aristotelian theory of ratiocination.'[1]

A doctrine of this kind seems to have profound affinities with the philosophy of Germany, that 'India of Europe.' Hinduism had, in fact, formulated, right from the beginning, the theory of knowledge which Germany was to adopt.[2] It was

[1] M. Masson-Oursel also draws attention to the fact that the generative points of view of the Aristotelian doctrine, extent and comprehension, are not specified in the Hindu theories. The inferences admitted by the East do not coincide in any way with what we call deduction or induction. Mental operations for the Buddhists are 'syntheses' inherent as much in perception as in other forms of thought. Reasoning becomes for a Hindu a perceptive judgment. He is incapable of resolving the syllogism of Aristotle: 'Man is mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore Socrates is mortal.' This syllogism becomes for him: 'That is a mortal man, Socrates.' And Jacobi reminds us, in this connection, that this way of thinking is in agreement with the structure of Sanscrit, the tendency of which is to present in the form of a composite word what we should say in a phrase or even as an argument. The German language presents a somewhat analogous character.

[2] Indo-Germanic pantheism is the philosophy which is the true principle of German national life; and, from the Middle

Schopenhauer who showed first of all the affiliations of the Kantian philosophy with Asiatic thought: 'It was reserved to Kant,' he said, 'to secure the triumph in Europe and in philosophy

Ages, the Western countries of Germany were the real centre of the pantheistic heresy. Catharists, Henricians, Waldenses, all the sects hostile to the Church were welcomed there.

Ottlieb of Strassburg was condemned by Innocent III for having taught that 'man should abstain from everything that is external and follow the impulse of the Spirit within him.' He was the forerunner of the brethren of the *free spirit* who, towards the middle of the thirteenth century, spread over the Rhenish provinces, and who taught that 'God is in a formal manner all that is'; they even asserted that they 'were God by virtue of their nature, and that it was not possible to make any distinction between God and them.' And Ruysbroeck tells us, in his treatise, *De vera contemplatione,* of those German heretics for whom 'true contemplation consisted in believing that God is nothing, and that, in order to identify himself with Him, man had but one means, self-annihilation.' These are the authentic forerunners of the Neo-Buddhists of to-day.

Moreover, these *brethren of the free spirit* have been seen after the war in the streets of the German towns, clothed as beggars. Like their ancestors, they called themselves the *brethren of the new spirit.* Their doctrines were similar to those professed in the fourteenth century amidst the anarchy engendered by the wars. These 'false contemplators' seduced the priests (the intellectuals of that time) by the boldness of their theological speculations, the women and young people by their mysticism of renunciation, and the populace by the hope held out to them of liberation from civil and religious law. Count Keyserling's School of Wisdom can claim to be in a very ancient Germanic tradition. (Cf. Aug. Jundt, *Histoire du panthéisme populaire au moyen âge et au seizième siècle,* Strassburg, 1875.)

of the great idealistic point of view that reigns all over Asia not converted to Islamism, and dominates religion itself.' Schopenhauer had seen quite clearly that, by attacking speculative theology and the intellectualism that is inseparable from it, it was to the metaphysical realism of the West, the sovereignty of which had been maintained intact during antiquity, the Middle Ages and right up to the threshold of modern times, that Kant had delivered a fatal blow. He intended to finish this work by linking up with the teaching of the Vedas and of the Upanishads,[1] his own doctrine of absolute phenomenalism, conceptual nirvâna and subjective idealism.

The *Ding an Sich* of Kant, the World as Will

[1] 'If I were inclined to see in my philosophy the measure of truth,' said Schopenhauer, 'I should put Buddhism above all other religions. In any case, I rejoice to find so deep an agreement between my doctrine and a religion which, on this earth, has the majority for it, since it counts the largest number of followers.'

And Schopenhauer was indignant because the Europeans sent Christian missionaries to the Brahmans. 'Our religions,' he said, 'do not and will not take in India; human wisdom will not be deflected from its course by a happening in Galilee. No, but *Indian wisdom will flow once more over Europe and will transform from top to bottom our science and our thought.*' (*The World as Will and Idea.*) The return to Asia, preached by the German intellectuals of the defeat, has its origins there.

and Idea of Schopenhauer, the transcendentalism of Brahma—all these systems, in effect, tend only to annihilate the philosophy of *being* in which Western thought is embodied. If the concept of being has no real existence, then there is no absolute knowledge or objective truth. The universe is without causality and without finality; life is purely 'phenomenal'; the notions of good and evil and the idea of liberty are at once destroyed, like an illusion of Maya which consists in causing a presumption of unity to reappear at the heart of the multiplicity of phenomena; our body is nothing more than a 'colony of souls,' 'an aggregate of divergent tendencies and instincts,[1] and the *self* nothing more than a stronger instinct that prevails over the others.'

Such is the translation that German philosophy

[1] Keyserling is the last representative of this philosophy. Invoking the authority of Schopenhauer, who would not have the individual human soul spoken of 'as a well-known and well-accredited person,' he adds: 'The soul too is by its nature an aggregate of divergent tendencies and instincts, not less difficult to unite in one formula than the different parties of the German nation, and the conscious ego is by no means the common denominator of the different fractions. If you succeed in establishing unity, it is only exceptionally that you manage not to neglect a considerable part of the soul, which then leads one or more separate lives, crystallised round other centres of the ego.' Freudian psychology has served to illustrate this dissociative doctrine of the human person.

has given us of that Hindu metaphysics which is so strangely in harmony with its own thought. From Kant to Fichte, from Schopenhauer to Hartmann, from Nietzsche to Keyserling, it is in and through German thought that we know Hindu metaphysics. How far German thought has been false to Hindu metaphysics, by amalgamating it with ideas that are familiar to us and imposing on it a systematic cohesion that certain Orientalists cannot discover in it, is a problem that is not within our competence. What matters here is far less to know how the precepts of Hindu wisdom ring in the souls that have conceived them—for the thing is inexpressible, and we are compelled, in order to give a sense to them, to have recourse to venturous transpositions[1]—than to know how these wavering dreams become acclimatised among us, with what tendencies in West-

[1] All the Orientalists remark that it is almost impossible to find in European philosophic terms the equivalent of Sanscrit terms: we have to be content with approximations.

'Thus,' says M. Grousset, 'we are compelled to render the word *darçana* by "system." But when the word "system" is used in Western philosophic language, it applies to a construction complete in itself, exclusive of other constructions. There is nothing of this in the *darçanas,* which are rather points of view, different aspects of things that can quite well be reconciled and complete each other.' Now is that not just what would delight certain Bergsonians?

ern thought they find themselves in spontaneous agreement, and by what paths they obtain access to our minds and expose them to the danger of corruption.

The poison of the East, in the form most easily assimilated by us, insinuates itself, invisibly and subtly by way of German idealism and Slav mysticism, by certain attacks aimed at the very notion of personality, at autonomy, and at the spiritual and moral identity of the human composite.

What affinity has Asia with us, what feeling does she satisfy—in so far as we are capable of receiving her untranslatable message—unless it be a certain taste for *self-defeat,* a need, as it were, for *self-destruction?* The annihilation of the personality,[1] that is what, rightly or wrongly, we seek

[1] This dissolution of the human person is the feature that strikes us in the most recent manifestations of our young literary men, the disciples of Marcel Proust and André Gide, for example; it is the sign that marks this influence and this new literary acquisition. All the characters drawn by our young authors are recognisable by the fact that they are no longer *centred,* and this gives them a strange resemblance to each other that is well adapted to distinguish them from all the human types that have hitherto appeared in French literature. There is about them something loose, something like a refusal to take form, to be formed, and to make a unity of their discordances. There is no effort to concentrate on any point in their sensi-

and find in approaching her soul. For she begins by shattering all our ways of being and thinking, and disarms us, in advance, of the very qualities that should shelter us from her infection. She plunges us into a sort of diffused knowledge which, just because of the amount it claims to comprehend and embrace, must first of all give up the attempt to define itself. It seems that we can make no progress in the knowledge of Asia, except by ridding ourselves at the outset of that desire for precision, discrimination, and separation which is native to the Western mind in its full vigour; and whatever the Hindu or Chinese doctrines may at bottom be, that undoubtedly is the clearest result of their influence among us.

bility, but an entirely material sincerity in which the mind no longer plays a part. Not only have their intelligence and will no distinct aim, but it seems that the subject itself is looking for an indiscoverable 'ego,' as if modern subjectivism must finally result in a total dilution, a complete reabsorption into the original confusion of things. It might also be said that these new characters that have issued from the dissociations of a morbid psychology, are not even in search of an identity, in which they seem no longer to believe, and that they tend by instinct to 'escape from the grip of the world in order to slip away from themselves.' It is the lassitude of a generation that was bruised too soon by life, and that has no discipline of heart or mind to defend it against that feeling of powerlessness to which so many disappointments have made it prone. It is here that 'Asiaticism' lies in wait for us. Cf. *Jugements,* Vol. II, pp. 70-80.

The radical and essential opposition between the East and the West lies in the different idea that each has of man and his relation to the universe. In the West, man has desired *to be;* he has not consented to lose himself in things, or to regard the human person as a simple dependency of nature, which, for the Asiatic, plays itself out in the illusion of living forms, and entangles all life in an immense ambiguity.

It is this resistance that characterises the man of the West. Discrimination and choice, these are the marks of his thought, formulated once for all in the great ages in the classic maxim of Anaxagoras: 'At the beginning all things were confused; intelligence came and put each thing in its place.' It is from the vision of this order, the intellectual hierarchies it admits of, from the idea of resemblances and differences, that there springs, by a process at once rational and natural, that science of the general and, in particular, that development of personality which right from the beginning is so striking in the history of the West.[1]

[1] M. Masson-Oursel points out that there has never yet been a philosopher in Asia who has extracted from common sense those *concepts* which form the basis of the Western logical mind. The importance of such a remark cannot be exaggerated. 'Socrates,' he says, 'from whom Platonism and the peripatetic

Just as it distinguishes the *person* from the pure individuality that is common to the animal, the plant and the atom, so too reason here in the West imposes its form on the internal world of the soul, showing it, beneath the successive modes that affect it, its substantial reality, its unity, its specificity, and what in it is complete, autonomous, and free. It thus makes of the human person, ruler of the sensible world, the noblest and highest creature in nature. But it is careful not to cut it off from nature. Though it may discover to the soul its 'essential difference,' it is not so that it may fold itself up egotistically in 'an incestuous tranquillity.' A person, and not an individual whom nothing vivifies, and who, hidden away in his solitude, ends only in an incessant appraisement of himself. The idea of personality implies, on the contrary, the notion of an intelligible universe, common to all, both to the reason of the scientist and that of the sage, the end and aim of

philosophy drew their substance, appears to us as the initiator of doctrines without analogies elsewhere than in the Mediterranean world, and so far as the influence of these systems extends, i.e., right down to us, so far does the influence of the man who believed that we could *think in general terms* extend.' All the logics of Asia, even when tinged with idealism, bear on things, substances or phenomena, not on *concepts*. 'The Asiatic,' says Keyserling, 'does not work upon the work of thought.'

which are one and the same: the perfection of humanity, proposed to the will, in so far as it is disposed for absolute Good by the natural and divine law.'

The whole spiritual and moral life of the West takes its source from this central idea, that generates and directs an activism which, although it may have become wild and unruly, cannot be made healthy by abandonment to the internal and cosmic vertigo of the East. Our struggle with natural forces has become materialistic, in that it now seeks only to enslave them to our own needs; and it may be said that the Western man, by so doing, has lost the sense of his true destination. But is not that materialism still worse which consists in identifying the human soul with the universal confusion of things?

Absorption and inhibition in nature—that is what we receive from Asiatic thought. Whether the Eastern man no longer knows his own limits, and does not seek to defend them against the excessive powers of a climate that weighs him down, or whether he endeavours to triumph over

[1] 'For the creature itself,' says Saint Paul, 'also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

his body, and to find his own deliverance by dispersing himself in the universe and by flinging himself into the absolute void or the unknowable, the equilibrium in either case is upset. This equilibrium of thought and action is the peculiar quality of the West, its authentic philosophy. The hierarchy of the East, on the other hand, seems to have a character of pure force, pure immanence, or pure intellection and at the same time an arbitrary character either natural or human.[1]

From the first, Oriental speculation, made up of ceaseless analysis or indefinite synthesis, plunged into the contemplation of the One identical with the All, and the limits of the human person vanished in the troubled waves of the innumerable powers of the cosmos.

Turned fixedly inwards, accustomed to establish between himself and the world a narrow and perpetual correspondence, the Asiatic sage becomes absorbed in it until the identity of his ego, of the *atman,* with the absolute, inaccessible Being who animates and fills the universe is revealed to him.

Exhausted by this effort towards an inconceiv-

[1] 'For the Oriental,' says M. Sylvain Lévi, 'the universe is essentially something that happens in himself. The universe absorbs and penetrates him, while it offers itself to the contemplation and activity of the Westerner.'

able union, in which the transcendent object plunges into the unknown and ceaselessly evades him, he comes to regard his own life as a transitory and painful accident. Existence seems to him an evil, and personality the radical evil, of which he must divest himself in order to reach the Beatitude[1] which he can find only in an illusory transcendentalism, if not in a complete agnosticism, in which there is no longer any God, any soul, any object or subject—nothing but the torrent of things.

[1] We are speaking here of the doctrinally systematised forms of the spiritual life of the Orientals, the *theories* that present it in its most violent and acute state. In the concrete reality of the life of souls, many spontaneous rectifications must take place, and in especial grace itself act in hearts of good will, so that an authentic spiritual life is not excluded, nor, *a fortiori*, the presentiment of and the desire for this. For everywhere there are the beginnings and the primings of Christianity.

As Robert Hugh Benson says, 'It would be terrible if it were not so, for then we should no longer be able to maintain that our Saviour is the Saviour of the world. But that Jesus Who, we Catholics know, became flesh and lived the life told by the Gospels, that same Jesus has always lived an inner life in the heart of man. They say that an old Hindu, having heard one sermon only on the life of Jesus Christ, asked to be baptised. "How can you ask for this?" enquired the missionary: "have you ever heard before to-day the name of Jesus Christ?" "No," replied the old man, "but I have known Him and sought Him all my life."'

[2] Cf. René Grousset, *Histoire de la philosophie orientale, passim*. 'The saint who wishes to participate in this communion must annihilate in himself the faculty of reasoning and the

Whether it be the Upanishads or the Vedanta, which destroys the idea of the external world, the belief in the reality of the universe; or the Samkhya, which destroys the idea of God; or the Yoga which abolishes the reason and even the use of thought; or Buddhism, which denies the existence of the soul—all Asiatic philosophy arrives in the end at the final dissolution of personality.[1]

whole intellectual mechanism. The intelligence could grasp the absolute Being, Brahma, only as an object. Now, as an object, Brahma cannot be grasped. He is the subject *par excellence*, the unique and universal *self*, and it is as a *subject*, in the intuitive consciousness or rather in the subconscious substratum of the phenomena of consciousness that he can be reached. The sage who has arrived at this point, and who, in the internal light that has appeared in his heart, has discerned the presence of this subconscious, retreats to it and is literally dissociated in it. For him, according to the promise of the Upanishads, there is no longer anything internal or anything external, neither inside nor outside. There remains only Brahma, who is neither being nor non-being.' (Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.)

[1] 'The fundamental belief that supports the whole edifice of Indian thought,' says M. Sylvain Lévi, 'is in especial the transcendent irreality of the phenomenal world; the only immediate and incontestable reality is that given internally by the consciousness, the intuition that reveals, beneath the deceiving aspects of the Ego, the Absolute, either in a positive form, when it is being in itself, or in a negative form, when it is Nothingness. The world of phenomena, lying and hateful, is ruled by a fatal, implacable law: an act is the moral resultant of an incommensurable series of acts which will be its effects indefinitely transformed. The system of acts which constitutes the temporary personality is transformed into another system

'By whom is personality created?' asks Mara the Wicked of a Buddhist nun, in the *Bhikkuni Samyutta*. 'The person who is there, where is he? Where is the person who goes away?' To this 'temptation,' the learned disciple of Çakya-Mouni replies with the pure teaching of the Master: 'What dost thou mean, O Mara, when thou sayst there is a person? False is the doctrine.' And pointing to herself: 'This,' she says, 'is nothing but a mass of changing formations (*sankhâras*); no person is there.'

That this unreal phenomenalism annihilates human activity and breaks the nerve of action, that the latter inspires the Asiatic only with disgust and a transcendent pity, is a necessary consequence. But everything resides in this 'depersonalisation,' the end and aim of his effort, whether he seek salvation, deliverance—to escape from the whirl of incessant reincarnations, the pain of successive rebirths—or whether he destroy the illusion of consciousness, ridding himself of

which continues it by constituting a new personality also temporary, and so on throughout eternity.' And M. Sylvain Lévi concludes: 'Life, considered under this aspect, appears as the most dreadful of torments, as an eternal perpetuity of false personalities to be taken on and put off without rest or intermission. The sovereign good can therefore only be deliverance.' (*L'Œuvre de la civilisation indienne.*)

the material, sentient and intellectual *ego,* in order to plunge into the divine soul.

All these doctrines return finally to the pantheism from which they originally sprang; for all Oriental theosophies tend to one sole end, which is that of all mystical pantheisms: the identity of the subject and the object, of the individual soul, of man and of God.[1]

'He who knows Brahma, the Supreme Being, becomes Brahma himself,' is the last word in Hindu wisdom. Buddhist wisdom, which is not speculative but purely affective, says the same thing: 'There is no Buddha outside the heart. Outside the reality of the heart, everything is imaginary. The heart is Buddha and Buddha is the heart. To imagine a Buddha outside the heart, or that he is to be seen in an external place, is madness. . . . Everyone is Buddha for himself; everyone is his own Buddha, and all that is neces-

[1] This is one of the things that explain to us the affinities of romantic thought with that of India. 'It is the grandiose character of this race, the first in the world,' says Michelet, 'that it knows well that by continuous worship *it made the Gods.*' And quoting the words of the Rig-Veda: 'The mortal made the immortal,' Michelet adds: 'Therefore no superstition. If God forgot himself, became a tyrant, attempted to darken the imagination with servile terrors, he, going back to his origins, would say: "Who created thee? It was I."'

sary to do to reach the end is to recognise the immanence in oneself of this sole and only reality.' [1]

But this end is the hope of nirvâna, the supreme good and triumph over death. The Buddhist awaits it in an attitude of almost smiling serenity, which the certainty of approaching deliverance transforms into a kind of passive gladness: 'Those who do me hurt and those who give me joy, towards all I am the same,' says Buddha; 'I know neither inclination nor hatred. In pleasure and in pain, I remain unmoved; in honour and the absence of honour, everywhere I remain the same; it is the perfection of my unity of soul.'

We discover here the origin of that inert compassion of the Buddhist, which has so often been confused with the active charity of the Christian. We touch at the same time upon the fundamental problem in the whole history of humanity, and still too in the relations of the East and the West: 'What differences exist according as the spiritual

[1] This speech, which, according to tradition, was made by Bodhidharma, a Hindu monk who lived in community, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, before the emperor, Leang-Wu-Ti, contains the essence of the school of Dhyana. (Quoted by René Grousset, *op. cit.*, from the translation of Father Wieger, p. 278.)

forces are utilised by theosophy or by the Gospel, the tradition of the Church and the Fathers?'

'To be perfect,' says the Buddhist and the whole of Asiatic wisdom with him, 'extinguish the act, extinguish existence, extinguish desire.' For the Christian, on the contrary, perfection is the love of the living God, Who is the pure act, infinite existence, and the object of the highest desire. If it is necessary, to attain perfection, to seek for it in abandonment, in renunciation or in death, it is an heroic abandonment, in which the soul climbs to the summit of free activity, in which the person is transformed, in which his faculties are purified, deified by grace, without the destruction of his essence. This supereminent life of the Creature—the supreme conquest of the elect and the saints—is a conquest of personal energy that God Himself exalts by appealing to all our powers, by multiplying them to the extreme and beyond it with the infinite force of his love. 'My Father ceases not to act, and I too act,' such is the word of the Gospel.

The belief in action and in effort, the active attitude before reality, the permanent state of mobilisation against everything that encroaches on and mutilates the great good of existence, the

desire to live still more, to exist more, to surpass oneself in order to adhere to Him who has the plenitude of Being and of Life; that is the very essence of Christianity. The faith of the Christian is a working truth. The peace to which he aspires is not the false peace that the son of Maya seeks in an ascesis against nature or in an illusion of transcendence which, in practice, ends in sentient and depraved mysticism; it is the tranquillity of order to which the lucid transport of Charity and beatifying Union restores him.

The contemplation of the yogi who seeks to raise himself above 'holy reality' to live in spirit on the immutable substance is the suicide of thought, the adoption of nothingness, a desperate intellectual heroism which, carried to the limit of a logic gone mad, finishes in the inhuman and the absurd.[1] The contemplation of the Christian,

[1] 'The consequence of such a doctrine,' says Aug. Barth, 'can only be a morality of renunciation and the subordination, if not the disdain, of all established religion. The result is that there is very little question of positive duties in the Upanishads. The essential thing is to stifle desire, and the ideal of the devout life is the existence of the Sannyâsin, of *him who has rejected everything.*'

To what insensate aberrations have these practices not led? 'In the fourth century, the companions of Alexander could observe them in the Punjab, and we know, by the account of the death of Calanos, which Plutarch has preserved for us,

the fruit of the gift of intelligence and the gift of wisdom, is inseparable from the state of grace and divine life. If he must annihilate himself, it is still his personality that triumphs by allowing itself to be torn from all that is not itself, by breaking all that unites it to its individual of flesh, so that the living God may seize, assume and inhabit it. On the other hand, the sterile introspection of the Asiatic ascetic, that solitude of the soul which he opposes to the reign of terrestrial lusts and cupidities, is extinction, the end of being; it is not the true spiritual leisure, the active solitude in which the transformation of sin into holi-

that the custom of suicide among the monks is at least as ancient as that.'

The speculative and metaphysical point of departure was, in fact, very quickly passed, and the conceptual notion of the identity of the soul and the immutable substance which is God was no longer enough. It was claimed that the soul *felt* itself in communion with the absolute. It is at this point that this haughty theosophy falls heavily, and expiates its disdain of all practice and all observance. 'For a long time,' says Barth, 'a particular clairvoyance had been attributed to *dreams* and ecstatic phenomena. In these was seen a means of communicating with the invisible world and with divinity; it was made the true way of philosophising, the path of *yoga* and salvation.' And we find in the Upanishads a complete theory of ecstasy and the means to bring it about: the immobility of the body, a stupefying fixity of the eyes, the mental repetition of queer formulas, meditations on the impenetrable mysteries contained in a few monosyllables such as the famous *om,* which is Brahma

ness takes place, by the union of the soul with God in 'an intellectual light all full of love.'

This transforming union, so contrary to the precepts of annihilation and depersonalisation which Asiatic wisdom proposes to us, is for Western ascesis the term of mystical life and Christian life. A progressive mysticism which is an enrichment, an infinite enlargement of the human person. A faith which mutilates nothing, utilises everything, and seeks its equilibrium in the living, in living contraries; it brings into play our master pieces, the intelligence that knows, the will that desires; it demands a continual defence, a permanent striv-

himself, holding the breath, and a whole series of hypnotic exercises, by which it was imagined that the vital spirits could be made to enter the thought, the thought made to enter the soul, the latter being then gathered up entirely in the brain, and brought from there to the heart, the seat of the supreme *atman*. These processes have been gathered together and expounded *ex professo* by the *Yoga*. 'Conscientiously practised,' concludes Barth, 'they can only end in madness and idiocy, and it is, in fact, in the image of a madman or an idiot that, in the Purânas, for example, we often find the sage depicted.' It is only 'too evident how little this doctrine is disposed to place itself in the school of experience, how greatly it leads to spiritual pride, that racial sin which struck the Greeks so vividly when they entered into relations with the Brahmans, and how much it tends, even when relieved of its exaggerations, to weaken the conscience and to demean the spirit.' (Cf. Œuvres d'Auguste Barth, vol. I, *Les Religions de l'Inde,* pp. 80-84.)

ing after grace, for man can never love God as much as He should be loved.

The Christian is the runner in the stadium, the man who aims ever higher, who tirelessly propels his whole being towards that which is outside himself, in advance of himself, and which he will not reach until the end of his action, in a struggle in which defeat is rewarded with more than death. The heaven to which he aspires is not proposed to him as the annihilation of nirvâna, but as something to be taken by force and violence. *Quantum potes, tantum aude.*

Thus God is, for the man of the West, the immense multiplier of human life; and Western energy derives its strength from the profundities of an optimistic ascesis and an optimistic theology. For the Asiatic, God is only the unintelligible, the unfathomable, the pure void, and this mystic pessimism leads to the glooms of impotence, and to the moral and mental destruction of the human being, to whom it leaves nothing more than 'an ample liberty to die.'

There is a vast abyss between two conceptions of the world which have so different an ideal of spiritual life; but everything lies in the metaphysical notion which they form of being. The

Asiatic hierarchy is on the side of pantheism, becoming, and immanence; Christianity on the side of a personal God and the human person, unique, separated from nature, immortal, but of the eternity of Him Who gave it and from Whom it receives it. Thus man may love God and love nature as being really distinct from himself, for 'love desires personality.'[1]

For the Hindu Brahman and the Chinese ascetic, personality is the fall of man; for the Christian, it is the very purpose of God, the principle of the union, the natural summit of creation that He calls wholly to grace. By misunderstanding in a pantheistic fashion the fact that God is in man, man remains ever in himself, finds only his own inconstancy, and so comes to despair of his own will; by putting the accent on the fact that God surpasses man by all His infinity, that He is not identical with his soul, but that He may inhabit it out of love, man has surpassed himself, and unfurled to infinity his new being.

The whole moral, social, and political life of the West, in its most fruitful and efficacious

[1] Cf. G. K. Chesterton: *Orthodoxie,* trans. Ch. Grolleau, p. 190 *et seq.*

aspects, flows from this metaphysical and religious source, which regulates its movements and its course, in accordance with the ordinances of the true, by a sequence of real and infrangible relationships. It is from the idea of transcendent unity, the fruit of the purest wisdom, the object of the highest contemplation, that are generated, in accordance with the profound harmonies of nature and reason, that which is just and that which is good, that which is mind and that which is action, all the directive generalities, all the guardian notions of humanity, the totality of which composes the legislation of the human mind.

Let me not hear that Europe is becoming detached from Christianity. Its soul, its conception of life and the universe, its principles of discernment and of moral appraisement—Christianity made them. To know it in its essence, you must go seek it there. The Christian order and its living foundations have become so inherent in our being that our errors themselves seem still clothed with this greatness of origin.

At the moment when the East and the West are comparing their ideals, the foundations of their spiritual life, it would be wrong to deny this ini-

tial evidence. If we have anything to oppose to the Asiatic philosophy of identity and infinite confusion, to those doctrines of immanence that come to us from Tibet, from which the Eastern man can win nothing but introspection, isolation, quietism and indifference, it is to Catholicism that we owe it.

Everything proceeds, in what we think and what we are, from that Western theology, from that Judæo-Christian monotheism,[1] 'garbed in the heritage of Græco-Latin culture,' which put the accent on the unity, the personality and the finality of *being*: one sole God, one sole truth, and one sole humanity, and at the same time one law, one right, one reason, and one universal and common morality.[2] There is not one of our ideas that

[1] Judaism is bound up with Europe by the notion of *personality;* it accentuates with an extreme vigour the unity of the human person, the central character of the idea of God. In that, it is opposed to the spirit of the East.

Pascal points out moreover that the law of the Jewish people was the first law in the world: 'Before even the word law was in use among the Greeks, the Jews had received it and had been observing it for nearly a thousand years without interruption.'

[2] Cf. Paul Valéry, *L'Esprit européen:* 'Wherever,' he says, 'the names of Cæsar, Caius, Trajan and Virgil, wherever the names of Moses and Saint Paul, wherever the names of Aristotle, Plato and Euclid have had significance and authority, there is Europe. Every race and every soil that have been suc-

does not take its form and substance from this grand unitary principle. The Western man, on receiving it, discovered by it that the mind is made to dominate the sentient, the divine to command the human, the finite to be subordinate to the eternal, that everything has its place and its precise limits, which condition it by defining it.

This resistance of form to the formless, of unity to chaos, is what might be called the 'creative limits' of the West.[1] Everything real is penetrated and preserved; everything is sacred, consecrated. Between heaven and the earth, between the terrestrial city and the city of God, Catholicism has, in fact, been able to establish a sort of profound

cessively Romanised, Christianised and subjected, so far as the intelligence is concerned, to the discipline of the Greeks, is absolutely European.'

And speaking of Christianity, P. Valéry writes: 'Christianity propounds the most subtle, most important and most fruitful problems. Whether it be a question of the value of evidence, of the criticism of texts, of the sources and guarantees of knowledge; whether it be a question of the distinction of reason and of faith, of the declared opposition between them, of the antagonism between faith, acts and works; whether it be a question of liberty, servitude or grace; whether it be a question of the spiritual and material powers and their mutual conflict, of the equality of men, of the condition of women, and much else—Christianity has educated, excited and stirred up millions of minds for centuries and centuries.'

[1] Cf. G. K. Chesterton: *The New Jerusalem.*

communication, in which everything human and everything divine are integrated in a continuous, tenacious relationship, which is a relationship of fidelity—more, of affiliation. And within his just limits, man can enjoy the divine gifts of a true liberty, and dispose of himself and his acts.

It is a liberty which consists first of all in subordinating what is inferior in his nature to what is superior to him. The Catholic lives, in fact, according to principles, and that is the true definition of a reasonable life. These principles are not determined by that capricious sophistry which refers everything to itself, in order to modify it at pleasure, but by the authority of God Himself, Who, being the Creator, is also the Legislator. Every creation is first of all a distinction; and there where natures become confused, where things exceed their limits, the 'Eternal Measurer,' the 'All-powerful Jurisconsult,' distinguishes unceasingly, describes, prescribes, and defines by reason, for 'God Himself, if one may say so, can do nothing against reason.'[1] And, at the same time, errors are dissipated, and human liberty reconquered and capable of being exercised by adherence to truth alone. Thus the highest aims of the

[1] Bossuet.

creature are reached by intelligible and judicious paths, on which reason, as though drawn out of itself, submits without ever being annihilated.

This instinct of preservation, this science of the permanent needs of man, this sense of the possible and the impossible, and this external vigilance, which are the mark of Christianity and its living economy, are all unknown to that Asiatic world which is abandoned with an impetuous monotony to the cyclone of the unlimited.

As Chesterton says: 'There is in Asia a great demon who is trying to melt everything in the same crucible, and who represents everything as bathing in an immense pool.' Nothing is worse for the West than this pantheism which aims at abolishing the lines of demarcation, and transcending the spirit of definition and precision which is proper to us. For this reason, the struggle between it and us has never ceased. From the time of its divine establishment on this earth, Christianity has suffered several centuries of dissensions engendered by Asiaticism in revolt against the creative and legislative power of God, and against the unity of the Church. These great organic ideas are those which the Oriental sects attacked first of all,

in the name of gnosticism and a purely irrational mysticism; and at once they worked for the disorganisation of minds, the breaking up of institutions, rules and laws.

For these notions are naturally foreign and suspect to the Asiatic. How could he have attempted to organise human society when he conceives of man only in the isolated state? Logically, he can will only his destruction and his end. The Westerner does not even ask himself the question what a man might do if he were alone; he is not alone, the laws of nature tell him so, experience convinces him of it. For him, man is called society. The development of his personality, whether it be his religious or his intellectual and moral personality, demands the help of society and of the authority directing it. Therefore, in the West, side by side with the idea of the free and autonomous person, you see spring up the idea of order, authority, and jurisdiction; and it is in this that Catholicism manifests its profound harmony with the integral nature of man.

The idea of law, in its sovereign nature, does not exist in Asia.[1] Only the will of the despot is

[1] If the idea of an absolute, universally obligatory law has existed in India and from ancient times, the question becomes, up to what point, in practice, have the Hindu people ever had

known there, a power without morality and without justice, that people suffer as a lesser evil than anarchy, which does more hurt to the repose of each individual. Communism and autocracy are the two political forms between which the Oriental world oscillates. The ordering of the city is something to which it remains indifferent; it has never conceived of law and juridical relations; still less has it ever dreamed of establishing any such relations to govern justice towards persons. But what creative impulse, what sort of decisiveness in the ordering of human and social activity could it have drawn from a philosophy in which the final cause hides itself in murky darkness, and which implies, as if by nature, that one thing is as good as another, that there is neither good nor evil, neither merit nor demerit, or that everything is essentially evil?

It is because he believes in absolute Good, in the Just in itself, in those intelligible species which

a legislation? 'In how many cases,' observes Aug. Barth, 'can one say: this is what India believes or does not believe; this is what she approves or what she condemns? Long before our era, she was already, in theory, denying *caste* and confessing its vanity; she has none the less preserved it until this day; more than that, she has exaggerated it, and come to make of it something so odious and so chimerical that nobody can now explain it' (*Op. cit.*, p. 248.)

are like the reflection of the divine light in the human consciousness, that the Western man has been able to establish justice and law. All the hierarchal forms of justice, from positive law to the highest moral law, are ordered in the West round one sole axis, as immutable and eternal as the divine reason which disposes everything with a view to itself alone. The notion of the *common good,* which has its cause in God, is the centre of that great finalist doctrine which the Middle Ages, by Saint Thomas, have bequeathed to the West.[1] The State and authority find in it their legitimate justification according to the measure in which they pursue and protect the full development of the human person.[2] All social and political life receives its dignity from the Sovereign Good itself. There is no cleavage between the creature and the Creator, between nature and grace, between justice and charity, between earth and heaven. Every-

[1] The reader will find a remarkable exposition of this philosophy of Law and the State, according to Saint Thomas, in the fine book of M. G. de Lagarde: *Recherches sur l'esprit politique de la Réforme.* (Picard, 1926.)

[2] For this reason they should assure the security and the satisfaction of our material needs and our spiritual needs, for the human person is turned towards the conquest of the Sovereign Good, the Love of which should command every life and the possession of which alone can beatify us.

thing bathes in a sphere of intelligibility in which nature becomes conscious of itself and its order, in which reason tends to what makes its being, and in which the will adheres to its principle and aspires to realise its end.

There is only the visible and, so to speak, palpable fixity of Truth which can preserve the reign of the spirit on this earth. The Church of Christ alone has subordinated everything in man to the higher interests of the spirit; it takes possession of all the faculties of his soul, and leaves nothing there that it does not make use of to serve the accomplishment of his destiny. An interest so lofty that it can never be entirely satisfied here below.

For this reason, Christian societies are 'something that has been planned':[1] they must always advance. Here is the secret of the energy, the power, the extraordinary activity of the Western peoples whom Catholicism formed.[2] It puts into

[1] Jacques Rivière: *A la trace de Dieu.*

[2] Philosophers of the vital instinct, like M. Jules de Gaultier, admit this: 'The symptom is flagrant,' he says; 'not a single conquering people, i.e., capable, sheltered in its own strength, to embroider the tissue of a civilisation, has sprung from the races of Buddhist religion since they have been in competition with the monotheistic peoples. . . . The latter prosper at their expense.' (*De Kant à Nietzsche.*)

them the leaven of those principles of renewal which have always been unknown to the Asiatic races who reject the idea of a God distinct from the world, and who abandon themselves with enjoyment to the solitary contemplation of the universal soul.[1] For that which is most exalted in the doctrines and practices of the East leads too often to nothing but a satisfaction of the physical being; nothing in them soars to the need of the moral and social being.[2]

The religion of the West understood this danger; it felt intensely that it was not good for man

[1] 'A creed is a ladder,' says Chesterton, 'while an evolution is only a slope.'

[2] 'The highest conception to which human thought can reach,' says Ananda Coomaraswamy, 'is the identity of spirit and matter, of subject and object; this reunion is the marriage of Heaven and Hell. . . . There is then no longer anything sacred or profane, spiritual or sensual, but everything that exists is pure and empty. This world of birth and death is also the Great Abyss.' (*La Danse de Civa.*)

The Hindu philosopher shows here the affinities of Hindu thought with William Blake, Walt Whitman, and all those who have attempted a spiritualisation of what is sexual. 'Illicit love,' he says, 'is an image of salvation, for in India, where the conventions are so strict, a love of this kind entails the sacrifice of all the values of the world and sometimes of life.' Thus sensual love is considered as 'a path of spiritual evolution and final emancipation.'

There is a curious comparison to be made between Coomaraswamy's views and those of André Gide. (Cf. *Jugements*, vol. II, pp. 70-74.)

to be alone. In its eyes, the normal state of the creature is that rough sketch of the perfect order which is called civilisation. If you flee from society, you are either a brute beast or a saint. The Hindu yogi and the Slav anchorite pass with no transition from the animal to the saint: they leap man. What is in between, those clever adequations of nature and intelligence, all the rules of conservatism, and what of happy mean, equilibrium and logical order they imply, seem to them illusory; they confuse everything in an indefinite evolution which is the negation of all human progress.

These strange spiritual counterfeits which we see springing up under an Oriental mask find with us their accomplices in all the congeneric heresies which have gnawed at the Western body and which are at the origin of the great subversion of Christianity and the European order. The ungodly turn in a circle, said Saint Augustine, and new errors follow ceaselessly in the footsteps of the old.

There is no need, in effect, to go to Tolstoï or Gandhi for them to teach us that ' Christ forbids his disciples all jurisdiction, all human justice, all coercive authority.' In the Middle Ages, at the very moment when Saint Thomas, taking up once

more the ethics and the politics of Aristotle, illuminated them with the truths of Revelation, Marsile of Padua was already attacking the philosophy of natural order in these terms. It is not in the precepts of Lao-Tseu and Chan-Tung that the man of the West learned that 'everything that our understanding conceives, examines, resolves and contrives, is bad,' but by listening to John Calvin. It is not the Sannyâsins of the Punjab, but the disciples of Luther who told him with their master that 'you must conquer law and reason, if you would attain beatitude,' that 'law is of demoniac origin,' that everything in nature is nothing but matter, in man nothing but sin, and in intelligence nothing but pride and concupiscence of the spirit. Before anyone thought of looking for it in the maxims of the Boddhisatra, the idea that faith exempts from works had been preached by the Reformer. To the old moral and juridical order, detested and hated by him, he had opposed, before Tagore, a false order of love, in which there is no longer either fixed measure or certain standard.

From then onwards, the equilibrium was destroyed, nature attacked, the human person dissolved, society disunited, the Church rendered invisible as nothingness, universality ruined and the

spiritual world unbridled. Henceforward a dreadful unknown was to dominate and crush the whole of creation with its prodigious infinitude. And it is thus that, at the threshold of modern times, the West opened its heart to that metaphysic of identity which, through German idealism, Slav mysticism and Asiatic pantheism, seeks to settle once more among us.

It is these old Western errors that the Oriental parasites of to-day foster and support. The Coomaraswamys and the Tagores belong to that *religion of idealistic individualism,* whose 'origin,' they say, 'goes back to the great transformation which, under the influence of the philosophy of India, stirred up the soul of Germany, and imposed itself on European thought.' Thus the myth of an Asia all spirit comes to us through another legend, that of Germany entirely metaphysical.[1] And the propagandists of the East have to offer

[1] These illusions have also been spread in France by philosophers like Taine: 'The characteristic of Indian speculation,' he says, 'is the perspicacity that carries a principle to its conclusion; strictly speaking, they are the only people, with the Germans, who have metaphysical genius; the Greeks, with their subtlety, are cautious compared with the Indians, and it may be said, without exaggeration, that it is only on the banks of the Ganges and the Spree that the human mind has attacked the essence and substance of things.' Taine adds however: 'The absurdity of the consequences matters little.'

us, under cover of the Darçanas or the Upanishads, only a few absurdities compiled from Kant, Hegel, and Schelling, and a few substitutes of a false mysticism, the ravages of which we have suffered since Martin Luther.[1]

These degraded analogies with Asiatic spirituality serve, in fact, no other purpose than to favour the subversive system of ideas of the modern world, and to bring us back to Kantism and farther back still to Lutheranism, the object being to invigorate the essential negation of the latter by doubtful borrowings from Oriental theologies.

The messengers of the East seem, for their part, to take from German metaphysics only what is in harmony with their religious ideal. But how is it that they do not see that it is at the root of the two great evils which they denounce unanimously as the fatal dominants of European civilisation: materialism and nationalism? The consequences of a doctrine that became a doctrine of pillage from the day when it pronounced its separation from Catholic principles, these detestable results the

[1] A. Coomaraswamy specifies 'pure individualism as the ultimate religion of Asia and modern Europe.' For the rest, there are profound affinities between Protestantism and a 'wisdom' that says: 'Your eternal life does not depend on your works; while you think you will find salvation in effort, you will find that you do not know what salvation is.'

Orientals pretend to overlook—and this at the very moment when they are, in their turn, the prey of dividing passions and of that will to racial affirmation which—it is their reproach—the Westerners egotistically gratify. For it is not the unitary realism of the Church, the protectress of the human person, the guardian of the living economy of the peoples, that can be held responsible for that appetite for carnal greatness which undermines the foundations of Western order and of the whole race. For its origin, you must go back to Luther, in the religious domain, and to Kant, in the metaphysical domain.

By irreconcilably opposing matter and spirit, nature and good, social life and inner life, Lutheran egocentrism exalted the most brutal instincts on the pretext of spiritualising them. In so far as he prevented the human person from being sanctified by a real participation in divine life; in so far as he rejected the institutions which are the very source of faith; in so far as he attacked, all together, truth, the sacraments, the priesthood and all the supernatural means of salvation that the Church, the depositary of Revelation, dispenses to us, the Reformer led sinful man back to earthly possessions; he permitted life that no

longer knew any limits to its gluttonous enterprises, to go free and unbridled.[1] Moreover, by identifying the State with God, by giving to the 'collective self,' to 'secular sovereignty, the fulness of its right and power,' by breaking the fetters of the law and of the spiritual jurisdiction which alone placed something above the State, he created the system of ideas behind nationalism. For all nationalisms[2] that have sprung from schismatic thought, feel the need to spiritualise and divinise their appetites.

[1] 'The enlightened men of Germany,' says Mme. de Staël, 'fight vigorously in the domain of speculation, and suffer no let or hindrance here; but they quite readily leave to the powerful [illegible] the earth all the real things of life.'

[2] Nationalism, in the ethnical or racial sense of the term, consists in making of the land in which we are born (*nati*), a land elected, and from this election to deduce a doctrine which, on the pretext of a special investiture, would give us in the world a part and a mission, in the name of which we should think it right to subjugate and oppress other peoples. Something quite different is meant, when it is said, for example, that France is the eldest daughter of the Church. This has value in the mystical sense, and in so far as our country has acquired by the merits, the virtues, the holiness of her sons and her princes, in the eyes of Christ, special graces and divine favours. It gives her no right to make claims on any other people; and, if her Chief gives to the works she produces before Christendom, this homage of his affection and his love, it must be understood spiritually. For the rest, it is a question only of Christian vocation—and of a sort of precellence in the part of apostle and witness that is given to nations as to individuals.

Luther's revolt, begun under the sign of liberty of thought, flung law back to the world, making the State its exclusive giver, and ending thus in the idolatry of lay authority. The nation was at the same time deified in its attributes and its power. Henceforth, there was nothing more to be done but to transfer these prerogatives to the free will of the people, then to that of the individual, for the Lutheran principle, the generator of dissensions and conflicts, to develop its homicidal consequences. For, in destroying Christendom, the highest equilibrium that society has known, it also disunited the human species. Irreconcilable antagonisms, reciprocal incomprehensions, murderous hatreds, these are the bloody sequence of a 'religion' of discord which Kantian idealism was to transpose into the order of speculative knowledge.

By the absolute antagonism that it established between pure and practical reason, Emmanuel Kant's critique consummated the rupture, the germ of which Lutheranism had placed in men's souls, and at the same time strengthened the *quid proprium* of the individual and the nation. We must not be astonished if the Oriental nationalists

now take advantage of this. With the propagandists of the East and with the philosopher of Königsberg, it is the same pacific spiritualism for the use of other people, the same primacy of cultural rights for one's own use;[1] and if the Wilsonian decalogue came out of Kantian teachings, the 'racist' discourse of Fichte had a similar origin: their effects are equally odious.

But it can also be shown that the scientific materialism of the modern world was singularly favoured by the double revolution of Kant; for just as the practical reason stirred up a veritable moral fermentation, that gave it grace in the eyes of a Tolstoï, and just as it promoted the disquiet of all the races that are in search of an Absolute without Revelation, so too the pure reason and its agnostic postulate encouraged the naturalist encroachments of the nineteenth century.

While German metaphysics, under Hegel and Schelling, was seeking to escape from the negative principles of Kantism, in order to reconstruct an illusory synthesis, the Western intelligence, which

[1] Germany tends to take up opposition to any human civilisation in so far as it knows no limitation of the State by right. For Kant, as for Hegel, Jhering and Jellinek, it is the State which makes right; it is limited only to the degree it fixes itself.

had undergone their formidable influence, went resolutely forward in the direction of the conquest of inanimate matter. Did not Kant teach that the philosophy of *being* is inadmissible as a science, and that all attempts at theodicy, founded on being, were condemned to radical failure? The problems, the first cause, liberty, and the soul, being deprived of their object, the immediate data of common sense being destroyed or relegated to the categories of the ideal, there remained nothing else but the order of phenomena subjected to empiricism and the inductive method, and modern man was to arrogate to himself, with nothing to oppose his doing so, the immense kingdom of the concrete and the useful.

Thus, without its intending it, Kantian idealism can be made responsible for positivism and determinism, that despise all spiritual finality. Finality, however, got back into the scientific edifice, from which it was supposed to have been definitely driven. And we have seen science, faithless to agnosticism, declaring itself capable of solving the questions of the origin and essence of the world, and then setting itself up in its turn as religion and morals. But criticism had no difficulty in upsetting this scientific absolute, which was less

unyielding than the theological absolute; and the metaphysical problem, in all its independence, is posited once again. That is our present position.

Let us now cast an eye over the spiritual state of our time. The materialistic barricades are overthrown. Atomism is beaten, determinism wavering, and mechanism in full flight. The sceptics themselves 'lose their doubts, find them again,' and stumble in the unknown. Positivism, that vision of the world in which the supernatural has no place, is destroyed by the scientists, who, after having overthrown the dogmas of faith, are overthrowing their own dogmas. The scientific universe is once more full of mystery. It was once believed that science forced us into rationalism; it is now almost believed that it forces us into irrationalism.

It is a propitious moment for the equivocal enterprises of all the false mysticisms which mingle materialistic sensuality with spiritualistic confusions. For the spiritual forces are invading everything; but, since none knows any longer how to define what they are, an attempt is being made to measure and evaluate them with the instruments of the physicist, or to capture them in the chem-

ist's retort. Moreover, psychoanalysis, subconsciousness, dreams and inhibitions are the rage. The spirits are called, the divine is mobilised, the 'invisible host' is introduced. All the old mystagogics are coming out once more, and it is from the laboratory that the talismans and charms, the psychical entities, the ions and the occult phantasms escape, living once more a mad, disorderly life.[1]

It can no longer be said that the modern world is lacking in the supernatural. All sorts and varieties of it can be seen appearing; and the great evil to-day is no longer materialism and scientism, it is an unbridled spirituality. But the true supernatural is none the more recognised. 'Mystery' envelops everything, and is installed in the sombre regions of the ego it ravages, at the centre of the reason it drives away from its domain. Everybody is ready to reintroduce it everywhere, except in the divine order in which it really resides. For, though the irrational mystics have broken down all the barriers, man has not for that reason opened

[1] Cf. Chesterton. *The New Jerusalem, passim.* 'There is a return of mysticism,' he says, 'but without Christianity. Mysticism alone has returned, and it has brought with it seven devils stronger than itself.'

himself to the commerce of God and the revelations of faith.

The objective and the intellectual having been banished, theosophy can henceforward give itself free play;[1] and, in so far as it still lives on the principles of idealistic individualism, the West has nothing to oppose to these ruinous dreamings. Much more, it is logical, it is normal that, being called upon to remake a culture and to reconstruct a civilisation on these bases, that is to say, to restore an order of things, while it no longer believes in the reality of things, it should listen to the calls of an Asia that invokes these metaphysical premises.

The attraction that draws certain European idea-mongers to the East has therefore a profound reason. In their eyes, has not India set to work the data of Kantism centuries before us? For it is an article of their creed that Hindu wisdom formulated from the beginning 'the science of knowl-

[1] Aug. Barth shows, in his studies of Hinduism, that it was following the abandonment of the great intellectualist systems that ideas very similar to those of the Asiatics were seen to spread among us. 'When speculation,' he says, 'after having destroyed the notion of the real in the sensible object, is obliged to confess that the transcendent object escapes as well, the only alternative remaining is scepticism or the philosophy of despair.' (*Op. cit.*, p. 110.)

edge as the German genius rediscovered it.'[1] But this knowledge they themselves define as the 'science of illusion,' the 'science of the untrue.' What are they doing, except intoxicating themselves with the old Germanic intoxication, on the pretext of drinking at the sources of the native spirituality of Asia? Thus the West feeds on its own disease, on the vices which it keeps alive in itself, and with which it contaminates the Orientals themselves.

Because it has turned aside from theology, the guardian and protectress of the faith, not only has the West no truth to give to the world, but the world throws back at it its own follies, and that which it thinks it borrows from the world for its own renewal causes it to sink more deeply into the errors it would be cured of.

Because it is no longer sure of its laws or its institutions, because it carries in a sick body hostile and discordant souls, the West must defend itself

[1] Jules de Gaultier: *De Kant à Nietzsche*. 'Long before the speculations at which we have arrived only after a long effort to throw off the theological yoke,' he says, 'the same state of mind to which we are now only beginning to accede had been established in Brahmanic philosophy. And it is no question here of a fortuitous coincidence of conclusions: it is indeed the same deductions that lead forcibly to the same conclusions of similar minds' (*Op. cit.*, pp. 110-11.)

to-day against the false mysticisms which, under the cover of a second-hand Orientalism, exploit a dissatisfaction of mind and mask with the charm of exoticism, poetry and mystery, the savage appetites of the rivality of races. Never in the course of history have these great controversies of civilisation and culture taken on so tragic a character; for the differences that bring into play all the science of thought are of those that, some day or other, will bring into play all the science of war.

For this reason, there is no more urgent need for the Western man than that he should *define himself* anew. The embarrassment in which he finds himself is not due solely to the circumstances that are wounding and hurting him. The struggle that shakes the city rages in him first of all. And what is he suffering from? From his divers systems of thought, from his different faiths, from his unequal sciences, from his particularist moral systems and from his dissimilar systems of education. He lacks an ordering truth, in which to find the soul of his acts; or rather he has allowed its source to be corrupted, when he has not corrupted it himself. His deep, essential weakness is in his mind, which is perpetually drawn this way and that between his evidences and his conjectures, his

virtues and his appetites. Without a doctrine, without a common mind, without a 'philosophy which gives to the same things the same name, and understands by the same signs the same ideas, there is no remedy for the evils that desolate States as well as individuals.'[1]

The problem before us is *spiritual in the first place*. The important thing is to recreate the human person, to re-establish the hierarchy of being, and to defend it against all the errors that weaken it and tend only to destroy it. In order to impose on 'exaggerated matter a really living soul,' to give to the progress of modern science a really human spirit, nothing less is needed than a complete restoration of the principles of Græco-Latin civilisation and Catholicism. This great tradition of ancient and Christian wisdom may yet save what of viable there is in the world.

[1] Charles Maurras.

CHAPTER V

IF WE cast an eye over Europe as it is to-day, bruised in mind and body, it seems to us that what makes it one is a unity of suffering. And beneath the sombre frenzies of a world that appears, at first, only to desire to 'enjoy vehemently what will belong to-morrow to others,' we discern more or less confused movements towards the re-establishment of order.

The West is beginning to be aware of its malady, and at the same time humility seems to be returning to it. It no longer has a mad pride in progress, and the qualms of conscience troubling it cover an immense desire for spiritual liberation. Such tendencies, if undirected, would lead us back to the barbarianism that is already seeking to take advantage of their vagueness to capture them; but, brought within the higher order of intelligence, they would restore to the Western world, which is perishing for lack of faith in transcendent truth, the promise of its civilising destinies. For if Europe is in the agony we see it in, it is because it

has failed of its mission. And it is not a question only of saving the body of disunited Europe, but of restoring to it the consciousness of its internal energies, that *sense of humanity* which it has allowed to become obscured by an exclusive attention to material satisfactions.

The message of the East is presented to us as a return to our lost spirituality; it is a conception of wisdom that is urged against the West, exhausted by the struggle and emptied of its faith. If we think that the 'celestial songs' of Râdhâ and of Krishna are calculated only to disorganise men's souls and to hasten their decay; if we do not look for our salvation to a wisdom ignorant of the true life of the spirit; if, moreover, too many signs lead us to fear that the pseudo-Oriental doctrines enlisted in the service of the powers of disorder are only the first message of barbarianism, does that mean that there is nothing in the 'appeals of the East' upon which we may not meditate? If they have any meaning deserving of attention, these counsels urge us to return to that Catholic spirituality in which we shall find the moral unity which, for a civilisation, is the most necessary of all qualities.

For we are in agreement with those who affirm

that modern civilisation is the great vice, that it makes of material well-being the one aim of life, that it does not concern itself with the needs of the soul, that it infatuates Europeans and corrupts Orientals, and that it enslaves them to money, rendering them incapable of peace and internal leisure. It is a good thing that this protest should be raised and that these things should be said to the West. But whence proceeds this disorder and what are its causes, and must it be from Gandhi that the word of truth comes to us? 'Europe,' he says, 'is not Christian.'

A well-balanced mind would conclude from this: 'Europe and the world must be re-Christianised.' But this is not the path taken by the proselytes of Asiaticism. They dream only of exposing us to its strange cosmogonies, and that at the very time when the East is sinking into the quicksand of nationalistic fanaticism, when it is succumbing to the new needs created by the 'fertile absurdity' of Western technology.

For Asia is as remote as Europe from its sources of spiritual integrity. Both here and there an exchange has been made of the 'wisdom which is unity for the knowledge of multiple things.'[1] Both

[1] A. Coomaraswamy *op. cit.*

here and there, disappointed souls are in search of spirituality. It is to be wished that the colloquy that is beginning between the East and the West, amid the disorders of our suffering planet, may serve to prepare the way of reconciliation in Christianity which alone can recreate human unity.

A thing worthy of remark: there is not one of the diatribes of the propagandists of the East against European materialism that does not also praise mediæval Europe, the Christian civilisation of the thirteenth century, when 'the creative will of man, soaring beyond the frontiers of the individual, endeavoured to establish an order of the external world that would correspond with the universal order of the world of eternity.'[1] For him who understands aright, and can disentangle it from the hostile aims it conceals, this is a counsel of traditionalism the East gives to the West.[2] A

[1] A. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*—We understand a Rabindranath Tagore when he tells us in a somewhat hazy lyricism: 'Before all, do not lose faith in your ideal. At the present moment, pessimism should be more than ever barred. Be fundamentally optimistic, have confidence. Do not forget that faith is essentially creative. Western civilisation will not perish, if it seeks, now, the harmony that has been broken for the sake of material gain'

[2] They do not despair of reviving this great Indian tradition, this 'magnificent and living organisation,' which the Asiatic intellectuals compare to that of 'mediæval Europe.' It is to

rehabilitation of the past is what it proposes to itself: it would follow the development of its own beliefs, understand and love what it has left behind it, and find in this the foundation of its strength and its future. This operation of 'active introspection' seems to it indispensable at first.

We do not think otherwise. It is not, therefore, the Oriental ideal and the Western ideal that should be confronted with one another, but the ideal of the Middle Ages with the modern ideal, the ideal of perfection and unity with that of 'progress' and sundering force. Nothing, for that matter, is more revelatory, in these times of universal dissolution, than that nostalgia for the Middle Ages, that regret for the fine order of Christendom, that desire to reinvent, on the model they offer us, a true civilisation of a universal character.[1] Whether they believe a revival of its princi-

ours only that they object, in the name of Hindu evolutionism, which says that what has been perfect cannot be begun again.

[1] 'The Middle Ages,' says M. Achille Mestre, 'which the men of the eighteenth century regarded as a barbarous epoch, gave to the world, on the contrary, an admirable image of humanity. It is the Middle Ages, as they issued from Roman civilisation, revised by Christianity, to which we should to-day *look for a lesson.*

'It is thought, it was thought for a long time, that it was only at the Renaissance that humanity came into contact with antiquity. This theory has been abandoned, and everybody is

ples possible or impossible, men of the most varied turn of mind[1] are looking back to-day on this great organic epoch, when communion in one faith had made of the whole of Europe a single nation.

What do the most realistic of politicians tell us? 'Before being a Frenchman, an Italian, an Englishman or a German, the man of the Middle Ages was a citizen of a general civilisation, which had

aware that the great minds of the Middle Ages, both the theologians as well as the master-workmen, lived on this common fund of humanity, set free by Rome and afterwards revised by Christianity.' And the eminent professor of the Faculty of Law concludes in these terms: 'I am convinced, for my part, that it is *towards a new Romano-Greek period like the Middle Ages that we are proceeding at this moment; this, in my opinion, is the direction we should take.*

'There are abundant signs of this *return to the Middle Ages*. From the intellectual point of view, we are sick and tired of excessive specialisation in the sciences and in teaching, and our ideal is to place ourselves at a lofty point of view, whence we can, with one glance, survey the whole of human thought, and make a *summa* of it.

'This extreme distaste for specialisation which is felt both by those who teach and those who receive the teaching, this distaste which, for my part, I experience to a degree I cannot describe, is nothing else but an *introduction to a new mediævalism* and a new philosophy of things' (*Revue fédéraliste,* July, 1925.)

[1] As different as Keyserling and Maurras, Berdiaev, and Chesterton, to cite only these. 'It is from the Christian centuries of the Middle Ages,' says Lucien Romier, 'that we get most of our ideas, especially moral ideas, concerning civilisation.' (*Explication de notre temps.*)

its language, its mind, its manners, its faith, its science, its art, its feelings for things, with no concern for the boundaries of States. This was, it is no longer. We have had, but we have lost, human unity.' Since then, in fact, the different elements of the European body, no longer dominated by the beneficent authority of the Church, have become strangers one to another. Deprived of its maternal protection, they are the prey of their divergences, with no other brake than the insufficient equilibrium determined by their own antagonisms. These cruel, inevitable results, which day by day are becoming clearer to a world that day by day is becoming weaker, no one now dreams of refusing to acknowledge. About the malady from which it is suffering, we are unanimous.

But what is the use of pointing out that there is no longer any hierarchy among men, that instinct is everywhere denying to intelligence its primacy, and that, like the modern individual, the Europe of to-day is given up to the anarchy of its multiform and rival tendencies, if people obstinately and of deliberate intent shut their eyes to the origin of these misdoings? We cannot help it, the worshippers of evolution, the most frivolous species of believers, will say. We can first of all stop

pretending that the human race has won, when, in point of fact, it has lost; we can especially refrain from exhibiting as a sign of its growth and its progress that which is really the cause of its rupture and its decadence. And it is only simple and ordinary wisdom to try to discover at what moment and under the influence of what ideas, the deviation from its destiny took place; and this wisdom also requires us to go back beyond this point of historical rupture, in order to become better acquainted with the principles of civilisation from which humanity turned away. Finally, we must also penetrate the secret of that era of culture which attained in the thirteenth century its loftiest expression, its brightest vigour, not in order to return to an age that is accomplished, but in order to discover ' whether the human direction which it took was not the right one.' Therefore, it would be advisable to appraise its work objectively, to learn the value of its religious, philosophical and social doctrines, and to seek the reason of its marvellous progress that was stopped when in full flight. For the Middle Ages are perhaps greater by what they might have done than by what they did do, and left unfinished. They

remain and stand before us 'as one of the great possibilities of history.'[1]

This is the meaning of that return to a new mediævalism which, under very different forms, nowadays occupies the thoughts of the European *élite*. It is a living problem with which we are faced. In it may be discerned a need for Catholicity, œcumenism, a will to reconquer those great benefits of which we are deprived. It is entirely reasonable to make a preliminary examination of an age that enjoyed these inestimable advantages; for there is no question here of an absurd attempt to imitate and repeat, but of an active idea; and if we seek in the past a firm point of departure, it is in order to go farther.

A sterile century, in order to dispel its anxieties and to still its uneasiness, may dream of returning to the traditions of ancient times, and of finding vague substitutes for uncertain faith in a reconciliation of beliefs in 'a vast theme of eternal religion.' But creative epochs loathe these dilettante games. We are hungering for an authentic unity. But there is no veritable unity without an objective basis that the intelligence alone can furnish. Tradition is impotent to motivate our choice, or

[1] Cf. Chesterton, *The New Jerusalem*.

to determine us of necessity. The Asiatics invoke tradition in order to recreate themselves in the ideal of their race; Bolshevist Russia claims to be going back to tradition and to be carrying on the work interrupted by Peter the Great, setting up her own convenience as common law; Mussolini's Italy bases her aspirations after the *primato* on the marvellous examples of antiquity and the Renaissance; and even the Germany of the captains of industry has dreams of reviving the Holy Germanic Empire. Everywhere there is this same appetite for cultural universality; but nowhere a purpose that commands it and directs its movements.

Wherever the belief in an external authority is incomplete or faltering, such desires can engender only immense divagations and profound dissidences. And what positive contribution could an appeal to traditions so divergent bring to the solution of a problem that confronts the whole world and not a single race or a single continent only? None of them could prevail and establish the truth which alone contains and necessitates everything.

Because it is the Church of Truth, and it connects natural law with the eternal law which is

in God, the Catholic Church seems to us the sole power capable of restoring true civilisation. We have no need to humanise it to recognise what the human race may still expect of it. The ultimate ends it proposes are not of this world; but indirectly this world derives benefit from them. It is from its very divinity, from its spirit that transcends every carnal and terrestrial interest, that we expect these happy consequences for the common good of society. Though its integral unity springs from its spirituality, though its powers are ordained essentially for the sanctification of souls and their salvation, the great principles of order and of stability of social life are indebted to it nevertheless for having defended them with constant energy and efficacy wherever its magistracy extends. Far from opposing these interests, it harmonises them, for that unique competence it shows in the understanding and organisation of human things is, so to speak, exacted by 'its universal maternity and its mission of enlightenment.'[1] Therefore, the Christian City, established on supernatural truths, edified and compenetrated by the life and spirit of Jesus Christ, removes all differences of nationality, culture, race and environment.

[1] Cf Clérissac, *Le Mystère de l'Eglise.*

But does it not appear, in so far as our mind is capable of judging, that God has assigned to Europe the part of spreading little by little over the earth the advantages of Christian civilisation? And it is because she has failed of her vocation, because she now understands it only in a material, profane and usurping manner, that we must, first of all, defend her against herself, and place her once more under the conditions necessary for her own salvation.

All those who are uneasy over the destiny of the wounded West feel that, before the threatening powers of Asia, the holy fire of the religious spirit must be rekindled. European anarchy is due to the absence of a preponderant system that unites men's minds in a single communion of ideas. Without a common truth, nothing can be undertaken against what is attacking the very foundations of civilisation. For though Europe has tamed the barbarian nations, though she victoriously repulsed the Mussulman invasions, though in everything that does honour to humanity, she has constantly and everywhere shown herself a guide and mistress, nobody now doubts that she is indebted for it all to the religion that enabled her to undertake and accom-

plish these great things.' It is no longer denied that this beneficent work, which gave promise of continual progress, was interrupted by a dividing doctrine that, by breaking the unity of thought, broke the unity of human society. Since the Reformation, Europe has carried within the causes of discord, and has not ceased to exhaust her strength in internecine struggles and wars. No longer the bearer of a word valid for all men, her civilising work was compromised at the same time.

When an organic being decays and becomes corrupt, it means that it has ceased to function under the action of the causes that gave it its constitution and its form. There is no doubt that we must submit it once more to their vitalising action, if we desire it to recover the conditions of prosperity. If the West is in danger of perishing by what it thought was its life, it is because it has withdrawn from the salutary action of Christianity, which alone can preserve for it solidity of existence and fruitfulness in results.

Some seek to recreate European unity on a kind of transcendent materialism.[2] Europe has had her

[1] Cf. Leo XIII: Encyclical *Immortale Dei*

[2] 'Politics,' says Curtius, 'will lose in the consciousness of the twentieth century their emotional character, to become a practical technique of the organisation of humanity.'

fill of these chimerical constructors or of these self-styled realistic technicians. What she lacks is *saints,* those great saints like Vincent Ferrer, as the Middle Ages knew them, at the difficult and obscure periods of Christendom, whose asceticism and political genius could sway even the Popes themselves. And men dream of a new religious order, which will spring up, as of yore, from the deep necessities of the time, which will storm men's hearts, reawaken their minds to the word of Christ, and recivilise our world, for it is from within and from above that the life of the soul must be replenished.

If we speak here of the Church only as divine institution to be defended, and dwell only on the fate of Christian civilisation in terms of reason and history, it is not only our own threatened inheritance, the source of our historical formation, that we seek to protect. We are not defending Catholicism for the West, as Buddhism might be defended for China; we are not setting up one civilisation against another civilisation; we are defending the Church because it is the Truth, and because it has the living Word which will make all the nations curable. And, though we combat heresies and errors that seek to oust its doctrine,

though it seems to us seasonable to uphold for this purpose the privileges of Græco-Latin culture, this is because that culture alone can assure the rational equilibrium and universality of the intelligence, and because it has thus been able to furnish the supernatural life of the Church with the means used by theological wisdom, the nurse and protectress of the faith.

In a century in which rivalities of races and cultures run riot, the Catholic Church is the only institution which embodies a spiritual internationalism, establishes in the Love of the Living God a universal kinship, and possesses an œcumenical jurisprudence founded on Law and Revelation. If we insist on its historical rôle as the organiser of the West, it is because our civilisation has need of it in order to rediscover, with the integrity of its being, the secret of its apostolic force; but we do not restrict its message, which is addressed to the whole human race.

Therefore, Catholicism is 'the only possible assimilator of the Asiatic genius, and for the Asiatic genius the sole valid interpreter of Western thought.'[1] In spite of all the obstacles we have indicated, there can be no doubt that the Eastern

[1] Gonzague de Reynold, *Civilisation et catholicisme.*

world has many points that lie open to Christianity; and though these preparations and expectations must be sought elsewhere than in the pamphlets of the propagandists of the East, nevertheless preparations and beginnings exist, still buried under the errors of the mind. But the Church is divine enough to discern and foster what there is of natural desire for truth in the native wisdom of Asia, for truth is never radically destroyed in any man. It is our duty to bear witness to it, in order to assist it to know itself, and this without any metaphysical compromise or faltering of doctrine.

For the rest, there is no question of Latinising Asia, but of Christianising her, carrying to her a Christianity which is not identified with perishable forms of life, a universal Christianity, stripped of all national garments, a pure Catholicism, that is to say, one same love, one unique tradition, and one same truth. Christ alone, placed at the centre of everything, can reconcile the East and the West. *Ut sint unum.*

We know not when nor how the union desired by Christ will be realised. But it suffices that he has wished it for it to be realised. And if we must restore the integrity of our Europe and defend it

against everything that is threatening it, it is so that the citadel may be intact, whence will start the missionaries who will extend the Kingdom of God to the confines of the world. 1925-1927.

APPENDIX I

ASIATIC INFLUENCES ON THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF CONTEMPORARY GERMANY (1920) [1]

'The mysterious hour is drawing nigh, the hour that harbours in its breast the future of humanity, the hour when Asia and Europe will enter upon a discussion of the principles of their religions and metaphysical life' (Max Scheler, *Krieg und Aufbau*).

IT IS in Germany that the East has found new pioneers; the effect of the war was to make this tendency more evident, and to identify its determining causes. However, the beginnings of this movement date before the war. 'Its origin,' says R. E. Curtius, 'must be sought in the dissatisfaction with the substance of our modern culture among the intellectual *élite* of Germany. The awakening metaphysical consciousness sought in the mind of the East for sanction, nourishment and fecundating force. And, without any pre-concerted arrangement, people everywhere attempted to penetrate the various domains of Asiatic culture.'

'The Jews had a considerable share in this

[1] We analyse here for purposes of information a study published in 1920 by Robert Ernst Curtius in the *Revue de Genève*.

movement. It was Martin Buber who rediscovered the buried sources of Judæo-Oriental mysticism. He sought in Jewish-Chassidian mysticism—from the name of a Jewish sect founded in the eighteenth century in Podolia by the Rabbi Baal Schem—for the elements of a revival of Judaism which was to lead to a complete renaissance of the Western mind. Buber pointed out the mysterious and powerful affinities of the Chassidian doctrines with the metaphysics of Bergson. But he did not confine himself to Judaism. It was he who gave fresh life to that notion, which has been taken up since by all German Orientalists, "that the East forms a natural entity, manifested in its thought and in its works, and that a single soul inhabits the different groups of its peoples, differentiating them absolutely from the destiny and the genius of the West." Seeking to define the essence of this Oriental mind, Buber found its characteristic trait in what he calls *the doctrine*. By this must be understood a revelation that can be named neither science nor law, the content of which, identical always under the different modes of expression, is the proclamation of the perfect and only necessary Unity. A revelation which, according to Buber, has been manifested three times in history; in the

Hindu doctrine of salvation, in the Chinese doctrine of the Tao, and in the Jewish doctrine of the Kingdom of God.'

This study of the Asiatic philosophies led Martin Buber to translate into German the discourses and parables of Chuang-Tse: it was through this translation much more than through the activity he displayed in favour of a renaissance of Judaism that Buber had influence. For 'Taoism' was received with enthusiasm in Germany. 'It has exercised,' says Curtius, 'during the last years of the war and since, a surprising force of attraction over a great number of the best minds among German intellectual youth.' The little book of Chuang-Tse, whose parables introduce us to the intimate mysticism of ancient China, has become a veritable gospel in environments like that of the *Freideutsche Jugend.* The influential champion of its educational ideals, Gustav Wyncker, director of the *Freie Schulgemeinde,* at Wiekersdorf, has published in his review a translation of the *Tao te King* of *Lao-Tseu.* At the same time, other versions of the same work were issued by prominent publishers: 'No book can compare with this,' wrote Linke Poot, in the *Neue Rundschau* (April 1920), 'for it contains them all. It dominates them

all, in the Hegelian sense of the word; that is to say without annihilating them or refuting them, it assigns to each of them its true place. This book will be the breviary of a great number of Europeans during the succeeding half century, for it puts to us a question of vital importance.'

And Curtius remarked on this point: 'Taoist mysticism is at the present moment the secret religion of some of the best minds among our youth. What must we conclude? That it is turning away from intellectual activity and from any kind of activity, and that it is advancing towards the clear-cut ideal of a quietist and contemplative life. Politics, in the widest sense of the word, is set aside in favour of a more intense spiritual life.'

'To Chinese wisdom was added the message of primitive India. The texts of Vedic and Buddhist mysticism are studied by the young men. The review, *Freideutsche Jugend,* publishes in nearly every one of its numbers, articles on the philosophy of Asia. The Hindu influence was greatly fortified by the powerful impression produced by the works of Rabindranath Tagore. In *Sadhana,* his theory of the "realisation of life" was studied; his poems made known the cosmic amplitude and the pantheistic naturalism of the old Aryan spirit;

finally, his book on nationalism conferred on him, in the matter of morals, an authority that might be called "supernational." His criticism of the spirit of modern Europe has the character of a warning, and demands of us a serious examination of the foundations of our culture.'

'The war,' adds Curtius, 'could not but reinforce these currents that caused doubt to be cast on the value of Western culture. These doubts have received a terrible confirmation in the recent catastrophe . . . the fruit of this much vaunted culture. In Germany, the collapse of the old régime that followed the Revolution furnished this current of opinion with new matter. Young intellectuals of a revolutionary turn of mind are inclined to declare the definitive bankruptcy (intellectual, political and moral bankruptcy) of the West. And, in truth, the spirit of the Treaty of Versailles and the setback to the Wilson programme seem to furnish evident signs of this. . . . Radical minds have even gone so far as to condemn the attempts at a democratic reorganisation of Germany inspired, they say, by the worn-out ideals of Western civilisation. People turned all the more passionately towards the East. Russia, "the Orient of Europe," boasted of having been able to set up in

blood and terror a new human order. In their somewhat anarchical enthusiasm, which was often mingled with religious aspirations, certain young men of education invoked the Bolshevist ideal. Moreover, even to those who kept outside any political activity, the "large and human" soul of the Russian nation seemed like the spring in which Germany and Europe would be renewed. *It is not Goethe, nor even Nietzsche, but Dostoevskii who is the great literary hero of the young men of Germany.*'

Curtius next analysed Spengler's book, 'which enjoyed at the beginning a brilliant and perhaps too great success as an event of the day,' then Count Keyserling's enterprise. He showed the Slav elements in German literature (Werfel, Brod, Meyrink), and painting (Chagall, Kokoschka); he indicated, in the religious field, the spiritualism, fed from Hindu sources, of Rudolf Otto (*Das Heilige*), Fr. Heiler (*Das Gebet*), etc. . . . And he refused to say whether this Asiatic malady should be fought with an iron discipline, or whether there was to be seen in it only the fertilising contact of the West and the East, a contact from which a rejuvenation of the European soul might be hoped.

'queer cards,' notes M. Sylvain Lévi, disrespectfully—are to be met there.

'For my part,' he says, 'I saw, among others, a Polish Jew, who came down from the Himalayas; he had been a chemist in Canada, at the Cape, and in Siberia, and I think he was also a *fumiste*. However that may be, he offered to give a course at Tagore's University, or at any rate at the School. With his usual good humour, Tagore accepted him. He taught for a month and a half, and, one fine day, he disappeared, leaving no trace behind him.

'Similarly, during my stay, a Czech painter came in. He boasted of having spent seven years living in trees, in the south of India; he claimed to have theories that would upset the whole of the past of painting in India and Europe. He asked to be allowed to give a course; he too, before he had begun even, suddenly, one fine day, disappeared. It is, indeed,' concludes M. Sylvain Lévi, 'a country of marvellous dreams.'

However, Tagore resides but seldom at Santiniketan, for he travels over the two worlds spreading his gospel. On this point, M. Romain Rolland remarks that 'nowhere in Europe have the passage of Tagore and his appeal for a common work

of Europeano-Asiatic culture been so little noticed' as in France; and he concludes: 'A wall of self-satisfied indifference separates this country from the rest of the life of the world.' Should we not rather see in this a sign of intellectual health, a spontaneous reaction, the reason for which M. Daniel Halévy shows in the account he gives us of a lecture by Tagore in Paris, at which intellectuals, scholars, professors and society people were present?

'He spoke,' says M. Halévy, 'he spoke of the Spirit of the East which is all Spirit. Against the Spirit he set the Machine and the West, which is all Machine. I am exaggerating this opposition, no doubt. Tagore did not omit certain nuances, and acknowledged, when asked, that Europe had its noble traditions. But he had to be asked. At bottom it was as I say, and as his words were taking, his person splendid, he was heard religiously. As for me, I was indignant. I recalled our saints, our heroes, our citizens of Europe; I thought of all the work, all the discoveries, all the institutions, which their will had created, and it did not seem to me that we should bow down before the mystical, dreaming, lousy and ever idle East. When Tagore had finished speaking, there

was a long murmur of submissive admiration and approval. Someone answered him however: one of our excellent university men, the Hellenist, Maurice Croiset. He recalled the elementary facts which Tagore had overlooked, and which his audience, carried away by his voice, seemed themselves to have forgotten, namely, that the West had secured, so far as politics were concerned, liberty and the juridical equality of men, and that it has laid down, so far as thought was concerned, the methods of truth, law and science, two rather fine claims. M. Maurice Croiset agreed, however, that there was still much to do. I think if I remember rightly, he concluded thus: 'We know quite well that nothing can be done without love.' In pronouncing this last big word, which Tagore had used so much, our Parisian Hellenist slightly lowered his voice, as if he was committing a breach of good manners. I was struck by this fine touch of intellectual decency. The Oriental drapes himself in his mysticism like a showy garment. The Westerner is modest over it. . . .

'After this short reply, the conversation became general, and it seemed to me that Tagore, as he became less reserved in his speech, allowed what was really at the back of his mind to appear. I

mean, his race, his patriotic sorrow over seeing it enslaved, his desire to free it and to drive out the oppressor. I will even say that, despite the mildness of his words, the poet hardly concealed from us the simplicity of his hatred and the eagerness with which he awaited the catastrophe of Europe. . . .

'Shortly afterwards, Tagore went to Germany. We heard that he had an enthusiastic reception there, and that, in his own enthusiasm, he declared his admiration for the German people, the idealistic people, the only people in Europe who were ripe for the great renewal. These mutual embraces did not astonish us much. . . . Tagore's idealism covers a desire for vengeance, the same desire with which Germany is tempted, eaten up perhaps. In truth, if Germany desires to set off her catastrophe, it is natural that she should seek arms and spiritual dissolvents among the enemies of the West, the Asiatics. . . .

'If we desire to work for the restoration of European culture and harmony, we must beware of the Asiatics. Their counsel is worthless to us.' (*Revue de Genève,* September, 1921.)

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