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## CRITICISMS AND DISCUSSION

### SPRENGLER'S THEORY OF THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

OF MAKING many books there is no end, but of selling and even of reading them the end is often speedy, if indeed there was any beginning. Only now and then there appears a fateful volume, that seems to fall from the sky, from "the chill bosom of the desert air," which an age, a generation, a people at once recognizes as its own, as the large utterance of its inmost soul, and proceeds to appropriate, to assimilate, to embody in its own life and aspirations and destiny. Such a work, "sky-descended" like the Artemis-image at Ephesus, has now for over a year possessed the consciousness of Central Europe and filled it with amazement and awe. Whether it will finally establish its possession and mould the mind of the people into its own likeness, it is of course too early to say; but not too early to take the measure of the work itself, to set forth its central contentions, and to appraise their scientific and critical value.

The book in question is Oswald Spengler's, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, and in the beginning it must be admitted that only the first volume has reached the present writer. The tabulated contents of the second volume, however, do not promise any notable expansion of the wide horizon of thought already disclosed in the first, unless perhaps in the closing chapter, on "Russia and the Future," to which one must look forward with the keenest interest.

The title of the work, *Downfall of the Western World*, is certainly inadequate, nor does it so much as hint the essence either of the matter or the method of these pages; it merely indicates the alleged trend and issue of the historic process that Spengler claims to have discovered and identified and has certainly illuminated with

extraordinary splendor of scientific and philosophic, mathematical and historic, political and socio-economic learning, while at the same time interpreting with almost demonic skill in combination and depth of insight. Such, indeed, is the loftiness and aloofness of the author's spirit, that it seems strange beyond measure that his work should have made any popular appeal whatever, and it is a perpetual wonder, who buys the book? and still more, who reads it? For Spengler does not stoop to his readers; from beginning to end he seems to hold communion with himself on the Andean summits of the most recent mathematical, philosophical, archeological thought; like Nietzsche he might boast, and with far better reason, to "have sought the heights where blows the keenest air, and few there be find breathing easy there." Continental, in truth, is the range of his vision, reaching from Minkowski to G. B. Shaw, from the Entropy of Clausius to the counterpoint of Bach and Beethoven. The work may indeed have tendencies, but it seems singularly free from sympathies or human feelings. Apparently it might have been written by a Russian, or a Frenchman or Turk or Prussian, or even an Italian, nay even by an Englishman; if the author inclines at all from the vertical of impartiality, it would appear to be toward Britain or Egypt and away from Athens and Rome. More than all, however, he seems to resemble some piercing intelligence, from Mars perhaps, who has visited many planets and reports upon them all without hate and without love, unmoved as the "breast of some stone Dian at thirteen." If he has any passion at all, it is apparently for the Infinite Space of the Nordic Culture, for the intricate harmonies of Bachian music, for the stony simplicity of Egyptian art, for the character-drama of Shakespeare, above all for the poetic-philosophic mind of Goethe and its profound morphologic interpretation of Nature. If he has any pet aversion, it is seemingly Darwin and Haeckel and the jealous finity of the classical soul. Often he complains of the hopeless hardness, petrification, and death of the "world-city," of the cosmopolitan spirit, and one is tempted to wonder if the modern malady has not infected himself.

What then is the plan and aim of his volume? It is an interpretation, one might almost say a philosophy, of history. At this term the forms of Hegel and Buckle and Guizot and our own Draper and a host of others start from their slumber in the unconscious and float forward into light, but Spengler is not in line with any of these. Not one of them, significant men though they were, approached his

task with the rigorous technical equipment and mastery of Spengler. In particular, they rather depreciated or neglected mathematics, to which Spengler is by vocation devoted and if not the lord of all its subtleties—as who can be?—he is at least at home in its highest regions and possessed of its daring spirit. Neither did any of his elders follow either the idea or the method of Spengler, both shadowed forth in the subtitle—“Outlines of a Morphology of World-history.” He might indeed have inserted an adjective and called it Comparative Morphology; for he seems to contend that there is really no unital history, no career of Culture, but only many histories of many individual cultures. And here indeed by over-accent he is tempted to fall into unfortunate Pluralism and to lose hold of the Oneness of the world, which his adored master Goethe not only recognized and expressed, but would seem also to have felt even keenly. A Culture may indeed undergo fission like a protozoön, and some developments of the individual may outrun others in time, and so present the aspect of several cultures, but surely this does not overcome the fundamental unity of culture as a whole. That there is some One called Man, at least the Antique, the Egyptian, the Nordic Man, Spengler himself attests in speaking of their cultures as units, as expressions of different Souls, as living definite lives and moving forward to definite ends. But these expressions were each through countless millions of men; if this multiplicity did not attain the unity of the cultures, why should still further multiplicity, or any cleavage of men into Races, attain it? Indeed, the comparative morphology of cultures is implied in the whole process of our author’s thought. In every chapter, in almost every section, he is comparing some “stadium” of one culture with some “stadium” of another, identifying or contrasting the two, and this has no meaning unless there be some deeper unity of the cultures themselves; just as it signifies nothing to discover homologous organs in fish and birds, unless this points back to a primitive unity of pattern which the fish has realized along one line of growth and the bird along another. Of course, our author has not forgotten this, he indeed dwells upon the distinction between homologous and analogous, but he has not duly weighed all the implications, and has stressed unduly the severalty of cultures—a want of proportion that avenges itself by vitiating measurably his final conclusions.

To return, what then is the author’s main conception of Culture? The answer is that Culture for him is the realization of Soul-

possibility. In fact, Soul is for him "that which may or can be." In this realization he distinguishes anxiously if not always clearly between the process and the result, the Becoming and the Become. It is the former that constitutes Culture proper; the latter is civilization rather, which is really the consummation and death of Culture, the arterio-sclerosis of history. Much of this seems to hearken back to Goethe. The author conceives of culture as a growth, an organism, a plant that springs up from the soil,<sup>1</sup> and lifts and spreads its leaves and fronds and branches, and buds and blooms and waves all its splendor in the wind, and then fades and withers and falls back to earth. But the analogy does not hold throughout; for the plant scatters not only its leaves but its fruit, its seeds, upon the earth and renews itself in the next generation:

"Leaves now sheddeth the wind on the earth, now others the forest  
Buddeth anew in its bloom, when the spring-tide season appeareth."

But there is no recurrent spring for Spengler's Culture; once petrified or moribund in Civilization, its career is accomplished. However, men are actually like leaves:

"So generations of men: one passeth, and cometh another."

Possibly it were more just to Spengler to say that he regards a Culture as the budding, fruiting of a single branch on the great tree of Humanity, and Civilization as the fading and fall, the tree remaining to weave anew its songs of spring—but only on another branch. Again the image is imperfect. Any satisfactory theory of history should certainly take into consideration that men continue to inhabit this planet long after their culture has become rigidified and (according to Spengler) dead in decadent civilization. But for him they have no interest, he passes them by without notice; yet, interesting or no, they actually are, and they must in some way be fitted into the general scheme of history and historical theory. It is a serious delinquency of Spengler's that he makes no place for these multitudes. The continuity of history suffers violence at his hands.

But we must come closer to Spengler's notion of the Culture-Growth. Strive as we will, we cannot escape philosophy or even

<sup>1</sup> A Culture effloresces on the soil (Boden) of an exactly definable region (Landschaft) on which it remains bound, like a plant." "The classic soul (Seelentum) was born about 1000 B. C. of the region of the Aegean Sea." . . . "The Arabic Culture springs wholly from the bosom of the region between the Nile and the Euphrates, Cairo and Bagdad." . . . "The trend to the Infinite (and so to the Faustian) slumbered deep in the Northern region, long before the first Christian trod it." But Spengler makes little or no attempt to relate the characteristics of the Culture to the peculiarities of the parental "Landschaft."

metaphysic. Hartmann is right in avowing (*Kategorienlehre*, xiii.), in defiance of prevalent prejudice, that for him at least the centre of interest still remains in metaphysic; and our author commends his work by his frequent implication of a thoroughgoing Idealism (some might say Relativism rather). From no other viewpoint is interpretation of human history possible; from none other can a discussion of Values, of the great achievements of Man, of Art and Science and Literature, be even attempted. For Spengler, then, the active element in history is the human Soul or Mind or Spirit (there is no strife about words), which grows and struggles to express or objectify itself continually in all manner of forms, in Space and Time, in Percepts and Concepts, in Numbers and Diagrams, in Algebra and Geometry, in Analysis and Logic, in Physics and Metaphysics, in Architecture and Sculpture, in Painting and Music, in Literature, in Commerce, in Religion. One and all these are regarded as creations, as outputs of Culture-Soul.

If now we ask more closely what is the typical career of a Culture, the answer is that Spengler has given no formal and satisfactory statement, but on comparing a number of detached sayings he appears to conceive of a Culture as implicit in the racial soul inhabiting a certain definite region and bodying forth at birth a formless half-conscious mysticism, a cloud-land of dream experience, for which our sophisticated tongues have few or no symbols; as the Soul lives and grows it passes into the child-stage of myth-making, projecting its colossal creations upon the screen of folklore and poesy; advancing through youth into maturity it evolves its forms of philosophy and monotheistic religion and unrolls the rich tapestry of its art: its architecture, its sculpture, its monuments, its painting, and its music; in the days of its full strength it perfects and even begins to conventionalize all these, it develops a comprehensive and aggressive science, it systematizes and rationalizes both philosophy and religion; later it veers toward the arid regions of Materialism, it begins to lose the elasticity, the exultant bound, the joyous note of youth and early manhood, it adopts the steady stiffening step and the sobering hues of Age; now at length it has done its work, it has wrought out its Culture, it settles down into the rigidity and formalism of accomplished Civilization, it closes the cycle of its strange eventful history. Meantime it has elaborated many abstract Ideas, such as Time, Space, Number and others less mathematical, and it is on such that Spengler has delighted to expa-

tiate in contrasting the various Cultures. Thus he finds that the Egyptian Soul has fairly reveled in developing depth, the third dimension of Space. Its symbol is the Vista ("der Weg"). It ranges its figures in endless processions—on, on forever march its corridors of kings and gods and men and sphinxes. One is led to ask whether the Nile has not done its part in bringing to birth this child of the Egyptian Soul? The Greek or classical Soul realized its space-striving in the bounded Body, the definite form, whether of statue or temple, of drama or of state, of poetic measure or of Euclidean geometry,—and perhaps no other realization in history has been so nearly perfect. We naturally inquire, has the dominance of the Boundary in classic culture any connection with the narrow circumscription of the Isles of Greece?

The Nordic or modern Soul has burst the classic bars; it is possessed by restless yearning for the Infinite; its Space, like that of the opium-eater, swells to unimaginable dimensions, it projects titanic systems of mathematics swinging like a pendulum between the infinitely great and the infinitely small, it opens up ever widening perspectives in painting, it sounds unfathomable depths in astronomy, it dissolves the universe into limitless oceans of harmony in the polyphories of Beethoven and especially of Bach.

On all these and many other related themes, Spengler is intensely interesting and often illuminating, though not always convincing. In particular, he tells us nothing about the pre-natal pre-mystical phase of the Culture-Soul,—and yet such there must have been, if not a Soul performed, at least the preformative elements of a Soul, gathering on the "Landscape," as that wisp of cloud now gathers on the blue of the sky. Here, indeed, we stand at the parting of the ways, and it seems regrettable that Spengler has not more formally ranged himself in the ranks of positivistic Idealism, where he certainly belongs, as many dicta scattered through his volume attest (e. g., pp. 222ff., as "to be sure, man is an atom in the universe, but the universe at the same time is the product of his reason." . . . "This soul, and indeed the soul of each individual that experiences in itself the whole world of historic event and *therefore creates* it, etc."). But a Materialist, or at least a Realist, might grant many of his contentions and still think of the Culture-Soul not as a creator but only as an explorer amid a wholly material objective and independent world, as discovering a variety of relations among a "variety of things," things and relations that were

in full force before his own arrival on the scene, and are inappreciably affected by his presence, and will endure with perfect composure his early departure. He would say that such a mere observer and his race would also develop a culture of this kind or that according to the nature of the man and especially according to the nature of the milieu, of the object-world in which he finds himself immersed. Such a Realist would relate the peculiarities of the Greek culture in great measure to the geography of Hellas, to its pellucid air, its myriad-smiling seas, its rugged mountains, its mysterious glens, its marble quarries, its sparkling streams. He would try to state Homer and the Iliad, Plato and the Republic, Phidias and the Parthenon in thermo-barohygro-metric terms, even as Taine correlates Shakespeare, Milton and the rest with the snow and foam and tempest of the low-stretched North-Sea shore, and its low-hung clouds swart under heaven, its starless skies, its short fierce summer, and its winter without end. In the hands of a Buckle such an explanation may attain a momentary plausibility, and we are not able to deny that such or indeed any environment may modify more or less, may shape and tinge the outward projection of the inmost Soul. But any profounder influence is unthinkable, and the materialistic interpretation of history leaves it in the main uninterpreted. Burns may have sung of field mice and Highland Mary and chill November and Saturday night rather than of olive groves and tournaments and April skies and cathedral aisles, because he was a peasant of Scotland and not of Italy or Provence, but no amount of environment will ever explain why he sang or felt at all.

But has Spengler anything better to offer? And here it must be confessed that logical rigor is not the *pièce de résistance* in this author's work. His thought is amazingly abundant. Throw open his volume anywhere, and ideas seem to fly forth like birds from a magician's basket; but he is at no great pains to order them aright in firm irresistible phalanx; he lets them loose to our delight and amazement, but he lets them wander as they will if only their general direction seems not away from the lines of his thought. Spengler hardly suggests that climatic or other external influences have moulded in any measure the cultures of which he speaks.<sup>2</sup> Of these there are two, the Nordic or Faustian and the Antique, classic, or Apollinian (a borrowed Nietzschean term) that interest him most as polar opposites; in less degree the Early Arabic or Magic (which includes the Hebrew and early Christian) and the Egyptian com-

<sup>2</sup> See note, p. 7.

mand his attention, while the Indian and the Chinese receive only occasional mention. The Renaissance is elaborately treated but not as a single original impulse, rather as a hybrid resultant of Antique and Magic and Nordic confusion. Such is the group of Cultures whose birth, growth, consummation and final mummification constitute the history of the circum-mediterranean world from Thebes to London, from Poland to Spain. Each of these Cultures is the Striving of a Soul for the most part unconscious, that incorporates itself in countless individuals simultaneously and successively and bodies itself forth in Symbols on Symbols in every art, every science, every institution, every activity of man. What a shallow philosophy is prone to regard as the deepest realities of the outer world, the invariable verities of the universe, are only the elaborate symbols of this age-long spiritual unrest and life-urge shaping the symbols of itself into forms of various beauty and terror and awe. But these Cultures realize themselves independently. It is false and misleading to speak of ancient and middle and modern age. The last is not a continuation of the second nor the second of the first. The torch falls and is quenched; it is not handed on. The antique completed itself and filled its span and ossified in death. The early Arabic (or Magic) irrupted as early Christianity upon the stage but in a measure was hemmed by the antique that lingered superfluous; then in the seventh century its high-mounting wave suddenly overflowed and surged with unparalleled speed even to the walls of Paris, where it dashed into foam; the Nordic or Faustian, Belgian-born, has flowered from the Vistula to the Tagus and now having reached its climacteric in Shakespeare, Napoleon, Bach, Gauss and their kin, it nods to its end in the men of machines, in Cecil Rhodes, Journalism, Socialism, skyscrapers and all the dead or dying Civilization of the World-City of today.

What reason has Spengler for this last diagnosis? If you observe the development of one organism, as a lily, from its sprouting to its fading and its fall, and of another very similar, and of still another, and then if a fourth one be watched carefully through various stages, you would doubtless declare with confidence at a certain point: *The sprouting, the budding, the blossoming have come and gone; the time of seeding and decline and death is near.* Such is the movement of our author's thought. From the examples of Greek, Egyptian, and Arab he discovers the life-process of a Culture; he then turns to the Faustian or Nordic and finds all the signs

that point to a sad senescence. After all, then, it is only history teaching by example. A very impressive and yet it would seem a rather unprofitable method of instruction, if, as Hegel tells us, the great lesson that history teaches is this: that we never learn what history teaches. How, indeed, should we, if the analogy of the plant must really hold good? In that case the scheme is all made out beforehand, it is all enshrined in the primal germ of the Culture-Soul, in what Spengler calls *Schicksal*,<sup>3</sup> and Crile the hereditary "pattern." Circumstances (he would seem to concede) may indeed modify slightly but not significantly. France instead of Spain might have fitted out Columbus and have initiated the grand colonization. But are we quite sure the modification would have been slight? Who knows what might have happened? We cannot appeal to the plant-analogy to prove more than it really proves. Analogies are valuable—stimulating and highly suggestive—but their logical worth is not great; from resemblance between some relations we may suspect but cannot infer a resemblance between others. Besides, the inductive base in Spengler's reasoning is very narrow. The plants and other organisms whose life-careers have been observed are countless; not so the cultures; even a crow can count three. Moreover, the conditions have undergone profound variation. The Greek and Egyptian developed comparatively freely, in almost complete isolation; the Arabic was balked at the start, but finally burst forth with prodigious urgency, only to meet with restraint and repression; the Nordic alone has gone on conquering and to conquer, absorbing energy from without while expending it from within, striking ever wider and deeper roots into the mold of centuries, populating new continents and assimilating old-world forms outworn. If the elder cultures were annual plants, is it not barely possible that the Nordic may prove to be a perennial,

. . . . . ein starker Baum  
 Der ein Sommertausend lebt,  
 Nach verträumten Wintertraum  
 Neue Lenzgedichte webt?

This would not offend against our author's just and central idea that a Culture is a growth, a realization of Soul-possibility. But it would recognize another idea that he has unduly neglected, the idea of the Communal Soul. He indeed tells us clearly enough, though it will bear exceeding emphasis and repetition, that each individual

<sup>3</sup> Compare the similar pronouncement of Raymond Pearl in *Harper's* for May, 1921, p. 713: "Whatever the ultimate destiny of the universe it will unswervingly be carried out."

spirit makes its own world of Space and Time, that it builds up its own universe about it, which titanic Symbol has no existence independent of the Self that constructs it. Such indeed is the sure result of psychologic analysis and philosophic thinking, if there be any sure result at all. But it is not the whole story. It leaves quite unexplained the Time-and-Space uniformities of the symbolic world, which we call the Laws of Nature, a rock on which all crafts of pure Solipsism seem to wreck. The fact is that the great Symbol is social as well as Individual. The Constructive Souls are fundamentally one both at any given moment of time and through the long stretches of human and even planetary history. Each is a wavelet of the One universal wave. The individual human consciousness is not the final form to which Consciousness may attain. The Communal Consciousness Divine lies far ahead on the path that we are all stumbling along. It is the goal of history, if there be any goal, if we are not whirled on forever in an endless, unmeaning circle. It seems hard to look abroad upon the world of Mathematics and Painting and Music,—upon which Spengler has fixed such a penetrating gaze, discerning more clearly than any before him the all-pervasive urge to the Infinite,—or even upon the humbler worlds of Commerce, Industry, Politics and Society, and not behold how “the thousand-folded vault of Being with might combines itself in one.” Is not such indeed the sense of Goethe’s impressive lines, which form the motto to Spengler’s book?

Wenn im Unendlichen dasselbe  
 Sich wiederholend ewig fiesst,  
 Das tausendfältige Gewölbe  
 Sich kräftig in einander schliesst;  
 Strömt Lebenslust aus allen Dingen,  
 Dem kleinsten wie dem grössten Stern,  
 Und alles Drängen, alles Ringen  
 Ist ewige Ruh in Gott dem Herrn.

Only in this Communal Consciousness, germinal as yet, lies the eternity even of mathematical truth, the meaning of morality and sympathy and love, as well as the promise and potency of “the parliament of man, the federation of the world.”

Undoubtedly the undulation of history, the rise and fall of the wave of life throughout the world, is the most solemn and awful of all spectacles. Well may it fill the beholder with dismay if not with despair. If there is any refuge, any “asylum from age unto age,” it must be found in this concept (which is also the logical

necessity) of the Eternal Unity, so wonderfully shadowed forth in Goethe's verses:

And all the wide world's wild commotion  
Is endless rest in God the Lord.

It cannot be that Spengler disclaims or discredits this notion, without which indeed all history would seem to remain forever unintelligible, but he has certainly not weighted it properly in the *Untergang*, else the general outlook of the work would have been quite another. It may be that we have reached or passed a crest of the great Nordic wave of Culture, but it does not follow that there will never be another great mathematician, or painter, or musician, or poet, or even sculptor. A trough may follow the crest, but another and even a higher crest may follow the trough. There is nothing in Spengler's masterly work to certify that the Nordic Soul has been exhausted.

The "world-city" is not the world. Capitalism, and Imperialism, and Socialism, may all be very unpromising, but they do not embody the sum total of the efforts, tendencies, and aspirations of the modern Soul. There may be, there are many others, many that we do not now recognize and cannot even name, germinal impulses that will gather strength from the years and effloresce at last in forms of truth and beauty as alien from Gauss and Bach and Shakespeare as they are from Archimedes and Phidias and Homer. "The world is deep, and deeper than the day can sound." Not even the thought of Spengler has plumbed its depths. Even if ennui or slumber overtake and overpower our present mathematics and philosophy, who knows when some new interest shall suddenly awake and arouse them like strong men to run a race? Though poetry and plastic and music may fall into triviality, who knows where the gods shall again pour out the sacred oil upon the altar, and lo! it shall leap into flame? The variety of Nature still surpasses the imagination of man. Nay, not even the all-dreaded Entropy, not even the "heat-death" of Clausius, need rob us of our trust and peace. If the steady degeneration of energy were doomed to end the world in uniformly distributed heat some day, why has it not done so already? Surely it has had time enough, it has had eternity—*ab ante*. Can it accomplish in eternity from now forward what it has failed to accomplish in eternity from now backward? Such chilling vaticinations as Spengler's,—perhaps not quite so chilling, but at least proclaiming *non plus ultra*, with awful solemnity,—have sounded forth at every sharp turn in the ascending path of human-

ity; but all the alleged demonstrations of the impossibility of further progress have been disproved by one and the same argument—by progressing further.

It is interesting and important to compare our author's notions with those of Flinders Petrie as set forth in his *Revolutions of Civilization*, published in 1912, the year in which the "Untergang" was begun. Petrie is, of course, far less ambitious; he is chiefly concerned with constating and arranging the facts in the case; of the great body of Spengler—interpretations Petrie has never dreamed. Yet he agrees in the main idea of a natural life of a "Civilization," and in the further contention that we are approaching the last stages of such a life. Petrie's profound historic-archeologic investigations have revealed to him eight successive waves of civilization (culture) that have swept over the circum-mediterranean world. Of these the first two were prehistoric, and perhaps the less said of them, in our present ignorance, the better. The next two rose and subsided in the great Nile valley, but the second (the pyramid-building culture) overflowed into Crete, giving us the early Cretan civilization of the fifth millenium B. C. The fifth wave swelled up high in Egyptian and mid-Cretan culture, then sank in sudden ruin, all in the fourth prechristian millennium. In the sixth Great Year the Egyptian wave again lifted its crest, in the third and second millennia, while the Late Cretan shot up to towering heights, not surpassed if indeed since matched, at least in sculpture, and overflowed to Mycene on the continent of Europe until its dazzling splendor was totally eclipsed in the Dorian Invasion. The seventh wave rose feebly if at all in Egypt, but towered in broad, unexampled and many-crested glory over Greece and in less degree over Italy and other circum-mediterranean lands, as the well-known classic civilization culminating in Athens, 450 B. C. Thence, it sank by slow degrees for six hundred and fifty years, thence more swiftly to its deepest trough, A. D. 800. The eighth (or modern) wave rose slowly from the dark profound and broke into a number of successive crests, the first of which (in the Bamberg sculptures and the Salisbury Cathedral) it reached about 1250; the others have followed at unequal pace. Petrie finds that these successive crests of the same wave observe a soldierly order and multiply as the ages revolve. This order he finds to be Sculpture, Painting, Literature, Mechanics, Science, Wealth, and the lag (or hysteresis, as the mechanician would say) may reach nearly a thousand years. Thus of the classic wave the successive partial crests were reached

after lags, from the sculpture-crest, of 100, 200, 450, 600, 650 years, while the corresponding tops of the modern wave were attained about 1240, 1400, 1600, 1790, 1890, 1920—? But surely in no proper sense can Mechanics be said to have culminated in 1790 or even yet—as witness the airplane and wireless telegraphy and what not; neither will Planck or Einstein or Michelson admit that Science has ceased to mount since 1890. And as to Wealth, in spite of the vast destruction of recent years, it seems likely that in another decade the losses may all be made good and the average of human comforts be steadily increasing. While then there may be much that is just and illuminating in the Classification of Petrie and Evans, it is none the less clear that the facts of the modern wave will not fit into the scheme without violence and distortion. Petrie's work has many other very interesting *aperçus*, and it is distinctly cheering that he recognizes "the widening of the outlook in the summer of each period, and the amelioration of the collapse in the winter," whether or no "this is the real nature of human progress."

Spengler has also the notion of the "Great Year," with its Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, but not of a succession of such years wrapped in a spiral continuously round the axis of Time, in Petrie's striking but fantastic fashion; his scheme of history is arranged in "parallel series" of four chief cultures: Indian (since 1500 B. C.), Antique (since 1100 B. C.), Arabic (since A. D. 0), Occidental (since 900 A. D.). These four begin respectively with the Veda-Myth, the Olympic Myth.

Protochristianity (elsewhere called the Early-Arabic Myth), and Germanic Catholicism each reaching through three hundred years:—a period of splendid energy, of new-born sense of God, expressing itself in majestic myth and symbol, of *Weltangst* and World-longing, the age of the Aryan Hero—Saga, of Homer, of the Gospels and Apocalypse, of the Edda and the Nibelungen. A bold and impressive correlation, but it is certainly bewildering to find the "Gnostics" in the second half, between the "Neo-Platonists" and "Church fathers," when the "Gnosis" is now well known to have been proto-and even pre-christian; Spengler is considering only its degenerate and excommunicated forms, he has forgotten the Naassenes. The Summer is the glorious season of "Ripening Consciousness"; it begins everywhere with "Reformation" in Religion, with popular insurrection against the great forms of the earlier time; it passes over into the philosophic form of the World-feeling, into the Upanishads, the Pre-Socratics, the nameless heroes of

Syrian, Coptic, Neo-Persian thought (of sixth and seventh centuries), whose greatness only the Twentieth Century has begun to teach us, into Galilei, Descartes, Bruno, Bacon, Boehme, Leibniz; it is continued in the "New Mathematics" (*spurlos versenkt* in India!), in the brilliant Geometry of the Greeks, realizing the notion of limited magnitude and number as its measure in the Arabic conception of Algebra and unlimited (unknown) number, in the Occidental conception of number as Function, issuing in the Infinitesimal Analysis; it closes in "Puritanism," a rationalistic—Mystic impoverishment of Religion, an intellectual fanaticism traceable in the Upanishads, in the Pythagorean League, in Muhammad, in the Puritans and Jansenists. The faint suggestion is in the air, of Approaching Autumn, the season of "Metropolitan Intelligence," attaining the apex of "purely spiritual formative power," opening in "Illumination," with Faith in the Omnipotence of Reason, with the worship of Nature, with "National Religion,"—the era of the Sutras (Sankhya), of the Sophist, and Socrates and Demokritos, of Nazzam, Alkindi, Alkabi, of Locke and Rousseau and Voltaire (and why not Diderot and D'Alembert?), marking then the culmination of mathematical thought in the Indian conception of zero and place-value and angular functions, in Plato and his mates, in unexplored Arabic researches in number-theory and spherical trigonometry, in Euler, Lagrange, Laplace; and closing in the great definitive philosophic systems of India, of Plato and Aristotle, of Alkarabi, Allaf, Avicenna, of Goethe, Kant and their continuators. Herewith Culture passes over into Civilization, centering its life in overgrown "world-cities," quenching the formative power of the Soul, turning life into a problem, exalting the practical-ethical tendencies of an unreligious and unmetaphysical cosmopolitanism. It is veritably a polar winter that settles down upon Spengler's world, and we shall not pursue it through its dreary stages of "materialistic world-view" and "philosophy without mathematics" (!) and "inner completion of the mathematical world of forms" (in Gauss, Cauchy, Riemann), and declining philosophy reclining in "chairs" logical and psychological, and of "ethical Socialism" spreading itself from 1900 on like ice and snow descending from the pole. Such, we are told, is "the End; Expansion of the final cosmic mood"—Buddhism in India (since 500 B. C.), Stoicism in the classic world (since 200 B. C.), Fatalism in Islam (since 1000 A. D.), Socialism in the Occident (since 1900). The spiritual moods that agree in their distinctive features are classified as "contemporary," though thousands of

years apart in time, as the youth and prime and age of Bach might correspond to those of Phidias.

In equally ingenious and impressive fashion has Spengler arranged his second table, of "contemporary" epochs in art, but the Twentieth Century brings the Occidental column only to the "end of music" (Wagner), the "Episode of Impressionism" (Constable, Corot to Manet and Leibl) and the Pre-Raphaelites. Spengler spares us any but a general forecast of the two ages of decrepitude to come.

A Third Table ranges "contemporary" political epochs also side by side in parallel vertical rows. Here we find ourselves again in the first Stadium of "Civilization," the dissolution of nations into the great Fourth Estate, the People, into anorganic cosmopolitical international masses interested in bread-and-butter, under Parliamentarism, from 1800 to 1900, under Socialism and Imperialism from 1900 to 2000, the Stadium of Money, during which economic complexes absorb the form of the State. We are now "isochronous" with Scipio and Marius in Rome (200 to 100 B. C.); what awaits us from 2000 to 2200 will be something akin to the Golden Age of Rome (200 B. C. to 100 A. D., Sulla, Caesar, Tiberius), and in the third Stadium (2200—) something like the Silver Age from Trajan to Aurelius (100 to 300 A. D.), a deepening twilight, brightened by the Evening Star of Marcus Aurelius. For us then, in the present and approaching stages there is little to hope.

It can hardly be denied that these Tables of Isochronism present an imposing aspect and furnish much food for thought. In many cases it is not easy to deny the parallelism claimed, and the interpretations of Religion, Art, Science, Philosophy, in less degree of Politics, are often profound and plausible to a degree. In discussing Number, Space and Time, the significance of the third dimension, in refuting the favorite dogma sanctioned by Kant, and even by Sir William Rowan Hamilton, that number-theory is rooted in the intuition of time, that Algebra is the science of pure time, Spengler appears at his best and his book is an excellent tonic. Hardly less arousing his contrast so often enforced between the ancient and the modern mathematics in relation to the notions of the Infinite and the Irrational. The grave objection seems to be that Spengler hold his parallel but asynchronous cultures in unnatural isolation so that each shall develop independently unaffected by any other, though it seems out of question that the cross-currents of influence have been numerous and important and especially the

classic culture has propagated itself in the occidental and even in the Arabic along countless and interminable lines. It seems strange that such a broad-browed intelligence as Spengler should allow himself, in the interest of a theory, to do the Greek spirit such a sad injustice.

But the most serious fault in the schemes of both Petrie and Spengler is the overweighting of the artistic and intellectual and the underweighting or almost total omission of the moral elements of Culture or Civilization. "Forms of government are left to the last, as the regulation of daily affairs, and the repression of wrong, is of little meaning in civilization, when compared with the great formative interests of man's mind whose phases we have studied." We may agree with Petrie as to the rest, but not as to "the repression of wrong," if this be extended to denote the gradual evolution of the idea of Justice and its realization in the organization of Society and the conduct of Life. We may even contend that this is a matter of supreme "import" as well as "concern." As almost the very last in its appearance in man's history, it seems almost like the sixth day's work of Creation in comparison with its forerunners, whether these be Art or Science or Wealth. That Justice should prevail throughout the land, that Right should reign over all men and over all the world, seems quite as important as that temples and statues should be beautiful, epics majestic, oratorios entrancing, eclipse calculations accurate, and mathematical-philosophic theories profound. Moreover, the metaphysical freightage of the idea of the Just is not inferior to any other; for it implies a single most highly organized consciousness of Each in its identity with All, a Communal Consciousness Divine. If now we try our present day civilization by this standard, we shall find it indeed very far from approvable but very far from hopeless or decadent. In spite of the mounting wave of crime, in spite of numberless wrongs unredressed and injuries unavenged, in spite of inequity everywhere rampant and misery widespread and appalling, in spite of an horizon temporarily lowering all around, it is nevertheless true that the Dignity and Rights of Man are now affirmed more widely and effectively than ever before. From sea to sea, from pole to pole, the urgent and persistent demand for the rectification of age-long inequity is heard, and it awakens echoes in millions on millions of hearts. The "lamentation and the ancient tale of wrong" "steams up" no longer unavailing. We are beholding in fact the travail of humanity in bringing to light the prodigious birth of Socio-economic Justice. To be

sure, the old Dragon waits to devour it—but we do not fear, it will be saved in the Wilderness. Not for an instant would we undervalue or disparage the great formative powers and interests of mind that Petrie and Spengler have glorified in their tabulations. They are much, they are very much, but they are not all. The Himalayan peaks are not the whole mountain range, even the table land and the lowest valleys count in the total, and they must be regarded if we are to understand the whole formation aright. It is easy to deride Democracy and to present a strong case against it; but what better have you to substitute therefor? It is only Man that can save Man, and his salvation is a process of Growth. This growth is slow and often whimsical and even disappointing, but nevertheless it actually takes place, as the schemes of Petrie and especially Spengler abundantly show. Our present civilization has yet two or perhaps four hundred years in which to die. Perhaps in that time America may make herself heard in the choir of cultures. Neither Petrie nor Spengler has yet caught the tone of her voice, for them she has no spiritual significance as yet. Be it so. But Petrie thinks that every culture-wave swells up from a blend of bloods, a mixture eight centuries old, and then rejoices in its energy for five hundred years. Here then we have this alleged primal condition of the culture-producing urge, but clearly we have yet long to wait before the blend is quite complete and yields its maximum of power. However, the process of amalgamation may not wait on precedent, but may quicken its pace in an age of speed, and long before the year 2400 the crest of a culture whose slogan is Justice and whose flying goal is a Communal Consciousness Divine may lift itself on high over all America of the North.

There are many collateral matters in the *Untergang* that deserve and even call for mention, but one seems to be of special importance. It is the attitude of the author with respect to the historical fact of Christianity and its general cultural significance. Of course, we do not look in a History of Civilization for any discussion of critical questions, but we might expect some indication of the place assigned to such a dominant historical phenomenon in the general list of culture-factors, or at least culture-products. Petrie disappoints any such a natural expectation; he has nothing to say on the subject in his small but exceedingly compact and pithy volume. H. G. Wells in his ambitious *Outline* gives a chapter on the "Beginnings of Christianity." His treatment of the Origins is feeble, flighty, sketchy,

without critical warrant, a hotch-pot of errors. For him the Proto-christian movement was a social revolt, its "seed rather than founder" was an unparalleled preacher of righteousness, whose followers believed he had been raised from the dead after judicial crucifixion! To them the scholarly Paul supplied a theology, and they proceeded to convert the world to their semi-communistic doctrine of universal Brotherhood! Of the many impossibilities that confront such an easy-going Naturalism Wells seems to have no inkling. His only answer to objections would seem to be simply to ignore them. Nevertheless, in discussing the Deutero-christianity of the following centuries, he does emphasize with truth and justice the cultural significance of the church in supplying the connective tissue of society, a spiritual center and a moral authority, a guiding thought—the unity of Man—a code of conduct and a theory, however imperfect, of history and the government and destiny of the universe—all matters (as Petrie might say) "of great concern, but little import." One may ask of "little import" to what or whom? And the answer would show that Art and Science and Literature are themselves only Symbols of Man's activity, of his soul-struggle towards realizing his possibilities, and that the age-long will to Justice and the perfect socio-economic organization of humanity is not second in importance to the will to Beauty and even to Truth. In recognizing this cultural service of the medieval church, Mr. Wells has done altogether well.

On turning to Spengler we find that his attitude is highly enlightened on this as on almost all other questions. His classification is indeed different from any other we have examined, but it seems to disclose a far clearer apprehension and profounder penetration of the historical-cultural situation itself. Spengler coördinates the Christian or monotheistic movement (under the name "Arabic") with and between the classic and occidental Cultures, and traces it through all its "contemporary" epochs side by side with the other two. It may be startling to many to find "Urchristentum" in the same column with "Muhammad" and the like, still more to find the Edda, Dante, Thomas Aquinas, Galilei, Luther, Rousseau, Voltaire, Marx, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and many other such—all in one happy family, dwelling together like brethren in unity in the great occidental column. But there is the severest logical method in his madness. Spengler has done well to recognize fully the Arabic Culture and its world-significance (as Petrie also in less measure).

He might have done still better to call it Semitic and to assign the Jew his fitting place of honor amid the Makers of the Present as well as the Past. But one sadly suspects even Spengler, magnanimous as he is, of being infected with the anti-Semitism that has scattered its germs from Moscow to Dearborn and beyond. He awards ample credit to the Arab, but the Hebrew and the Jew he rarely mentions and never in terms of just appreciation. Proto-christianity (*Urchristentum*) he dates from the year 0 B. C., not unnaturally but yet erroneously, for the movement was in reality prechristian. Simon Magus, the patristic father of heresy, had been preaching the "Great Power of God" in Samaria a "long time" before the death of Stephen in the early dawn of the Christian day, and Hippolytus shows that even he was several steps down in the list of Gnostic heresies. Spengler treats the matter with considerable reserve, in utterances where more is meant than meets the ear. Apparently he regards this "Urchristentum" as the symbol of the early mythopoetic soul, as the "birth of a Myth of the Grand Style, as an expression of a new Sense-of-God" (*Geburt eines Mythus grossen Stils als Ausdruck eines neuen Gottgeföhls*),—at least, as such he classifies it side by side with the *Mythologie des Veda* and *Olympischer Mythus*.

The reader may be interested in this paragraph (p. 576): "In the world-historical word, 'Render unto Ceasar what are Ceasar's and unto God what is God's,' which is laid on the lips of the Christ of the Gospels, the classic and the Arabic God-consciousness appear in the sharpest antagonism and necessarily in mutual misunderstanding. Any reconciliation of the strictly Euclidean almost posthumous "Divus-cult" (of the deified Ceasar) with the primitive (*ganz jungem*) magic-monotheistic Christianity was made impossible by the culture-stadia that both pre-supposed, the first an end, the second a beginning." It seems doubtful whether the term "magic" be justified, but there can be no question about "monotheistic." Only as such a monotheistic crusade is "Urchristentum" intelligible—not at all in Wellsian fashion as a socialistic insurrection—and only as such has it the unsurpassable significance that Spengler's classification with justice assigns it.

Profound and exact in scholarship as our author is, he is not quite inerrant. On page 48 the "Jew-king Herod" should perhaps be Herod Atticus, who built the Odeon at Athens and otherwise beautified the city. In spite of an inflated Josephine question, and

a vague uncertain inscription (No. 550), we do not know of anything King Herod did for Athens. Again, the Law of Least Action was first proposed by Maupertuis, exactly formulated by LaGrange. On page 588 the honor is assigned to D'Alembert, who does not need it, to whom it does not belong. But it is an ungrateful and ungracious task to pick out spots on the sun.

In conclusion, this volume of Spengler's takes a long step forward in the interpretation of human history. Not all his individual judgments will approve themselves, and his final result may have gone far astray. But his whole work is grandly conceived and his philosophic postulates and method, in spite of the most prevalent and passionate contradiction, must win their way to wider and wider and more unreserved acceptance. Spengler has not attained the goal,—by no means! but he has blazed a path that will surely be followed by such as cannot accept a fortuitous concourse of atoms as the ultimate content and meaning of the history of the World.

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