

A STUDY

ARNOLD TOYNBEE OF HISTORY

a new edition revised and abridged
by the author and Jane Caplan
507 illustrations 90 in colour
23 maps and charts

THAMES AND HUDSON

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I The relativity of historical thought

The Aethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black-skinned and the Thracians that theirs are blue-eyed and red-haired. If only oxen and horses had hands and wanted to draw with their hands or to make the works of art that men make, then horses would draw the figures of their gods like horses, and oxen like oxen, and would make their bodies on the model of their own.¹ XENOPHANES.

IN ANY AGE of any society the study of history, like other social activities, is governed by the dominant tendencies of the time and the place. The Western World in our age has been living under the dominion of two institutions: the industrial system of economy and a hardly less complicated system of politics which we call 'Democracy' as a short title for responsible parliamentary representative government in a sovereign independent national state. These two institutions, the one economic and the other political, attained a general supremacy in the Western World at the close of the age preceding our own² because they offered provisional solutions for the chief problems with which that age had been confronted. Their enthronement signified the completion of the age which had sought and found salvation in them; their survival bears witness to the creative power of our predecessors; and we, who did not create them, have grown up under their shadow. In the industrial system and the parliamentary national state we still live and move and have our being; and the power of these two inherited institutions over our lives is reflected in the hold which they possess over our imaginations. Their prestige is apparent at almost every point in the work of our historians.

The industrial system has a human aspect in the division of labour and a non-human aspect in the application of modern Western scientific thought to the physical environment of human life. Its method of operation is to maintain, up to the maximum of its productive capacity, an incessant output of such articles as can be manufactured from raw materials by the mechanically co-ordinated work of a number of human beings. These features of the industrial system have been reproduced in the theory and even in the practice of Western thought in the twentieth century.

When I was a child I used to stay from time to time in the house of a distinguished professor of one of the physical sciences. There was a study lined with bookshelves, and I remember how, between one visit and another, the books used to change. When first I knew the room, many shelves were filled with general literature, with general scientific works, and with general works on that branch of science in which my host was an expert. As the years passed, these shelves were invaded, one after another, by the relentless advance of half a dozen specialized periodicals – gaunt volumes in grim bindings, each containing many monographs by different hands. These volumes were not books in the literary sense of the word, for there was no unity in their contents and indeed no relation whatever between one monograph and another beyond the very feeble link of their all having something to do with the branch of science

in question. The books retreated as the periodicals advanced. I afterwards rediscovered them in the attics, where the *Poems* of Shelley and *The Origin of Species*, thrown together in a common exile, shared shelves of a rougher workmanship with microbes kept in glass bottles. Each time I found the study a less agreeable room to look at and to live in than before.

These periodicals were the industrial system 'in book form', with its division of labour and its sustained maximum output of articles manufactured from raw materials mechanically. In my dislike of those rows of volumes I used to regard them as the abomination of desolation standing in the place where it ought not, but I am now ready to believe that they may not have been out of place in a physical scientist's work-room in the early years of the twentieth century of our era. Since the industrial system, in its non-human aspect, is based on physical science, there may well be some kind of 'pre-established harmony' between the two; and so it is possible that no violence is done to the nature of scientific thought through its being conducted on industrial lines. At any rate, this may well be the right way of handling any branch of physical science in its early stages – and all our modern Western science is still very young, even compared with the age of the Western Society – since discursive thought of any kind needs an initial supply of 'data' on which to work. The same method, however, has latterly been applied in many realms of thought beyond the bounds of physical science – to thought which is concerned with life and not with inanimate Nature, and even to thought which is concerned with human activities.³ Historical thought is among these foreign realms in which the prestige of the industrial system has asserted itself; and here – in a mental domain which has had a far longer history than our Western Society and which is concerned not with things but with people – there is no assurance that the modern Western industrial system is the best régime under which to live and to labour.⁴

The subjugation of this ancient kingdom of historical thought by the modern industrialism of Western life is illustrated in the career of Theodor Mommsen. In his younger days Mommsen wrote a great book, which certainly will always be reckoned among the masterpieces of Western historical literature. This book was *The History of the Roman Republic*, published in 1854–56; but Mommsen had hardly written it before he became almost ashamed of it and turned his magnificent energy and ability into other channels. Mommsen made it his life work to organize the exhaustive publication of Latin inscriptions and the encyclopaedic presentation of Roman Constitutional Law. *Das Römische Staatsrecht* and the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* were the monuments by which, in later life, he would have preferred to be remembered; and the volumes of his collected works – a congeries of unrelated monographs and articles – are like so many volumes of a learned periodical which happens to have had only one contributor. In all this, Mommsen was representative of the



GOD IN MEN'S IMAGE

1, 2, 3 Christian iconography seen through Islamic, Congolese, and Chinese eyes. Despite the common theme, the objects each mirror the artist's own particular cultural and racial environment.

Western historians of his generation – a generation in which the prestige of the industrial system imposed itself upon the ‘intellectual workers’ of the Western World. Since the days of Mommsen and Ranke, historians have given their best energies to the ‘assemblage’ of raw materials – inscriptions, documents, and the like – in ‘corpus’es and periodicals; and, when they have attempted to ‘work’ these materials ‘up’ into ‘manufactured’ or ‘semi-manufactured’ articles, they have had recourse, once again, to the division of labour and have produced synthetic histories like the several series of volumes published in successive versions by the Cambridge University Press. Such series are monuments of the laboriousness, the ‘factual’ knowledge, the mechanical skill, and the organizing power of our society. They will take their rank with our stupendous tunnels and bridges and dams and high-rise buildings and giant jet-planes and spacecraft, and their editors will be remembered among the famous Western engineers. In invading the realm of historical thought, the industrial system has given scope to great strategists and has set up marvellous trophies of victory. Yet, in a detached onlooker’s mind, the doubt arises whether this conquest may not, after all, be a *tour de force* and the confidence of victory the delusion of a false analogy.

Some historical teachers of our day deliberately describe their ‘seminars’ as ‘laboratories’ and, perhaps less consciously but no less decidedly, restrict the term ‘original work’ to denote the discovery or verification of some fact or facts not previously established.⁵ At the furthest, the term is extended to cover the interim reports upon such work which are contributed to learned journals or to synthetic histories. There is a strong tendency to depreciate works of historical literature which are created by single minds, and the depreciation becomes the more emphatic the nearer such works approximate to being ‘Universal Histories’. For example, H. G. Wells’s *The Outline of History* was received with unmistakable hostility by a number of historical specialists. They criticized severely the errors which they discovered at the points where the writer, in his long journey through time and space, happened to traverse their tiny allotments. They seemed not to realize that, in reliving the entire life of Mankind as a single imaginative experience, Wells was achieving something which they themselves would hardly have dared to attempt – something, perhaps, of which they had never conceived the possibility. In fact, the purpose and value of Wells’s book seem to have been better appreciated by the general public than by the professional historians of the day.

The industrialization of historical thought has proceeded so far that it has even reproduced the pathological exaggerations of the industrial spirit. It is well known that individuals or communities whose energies are concentrated upon turning raw materials into light, heat, locomotion, or manufactured articles are inclined to feel that the discovery and exploitation of natural resources is a valuable activity in itself, apart from the value for Mankind of any results produced by the process. They are even tempted to feel it reprehensible in other people when they neglect to develop all the natural resources at their disposal; and they themselves readily become slaves to their fetish if they happen to live in a region where natural resources, and

opportunities for developing them, abound. This state of mind appears to European observers to be characteristic of a certain type of American businessman; but this type is simply an extreme product of a tendency which is characteristic of our Western World as a whole; and our contemporary European historians sometimes ignore the fact that in our time the same morbidity, resulting in the same loss of proportion, is also discernible in their own frame of mind.

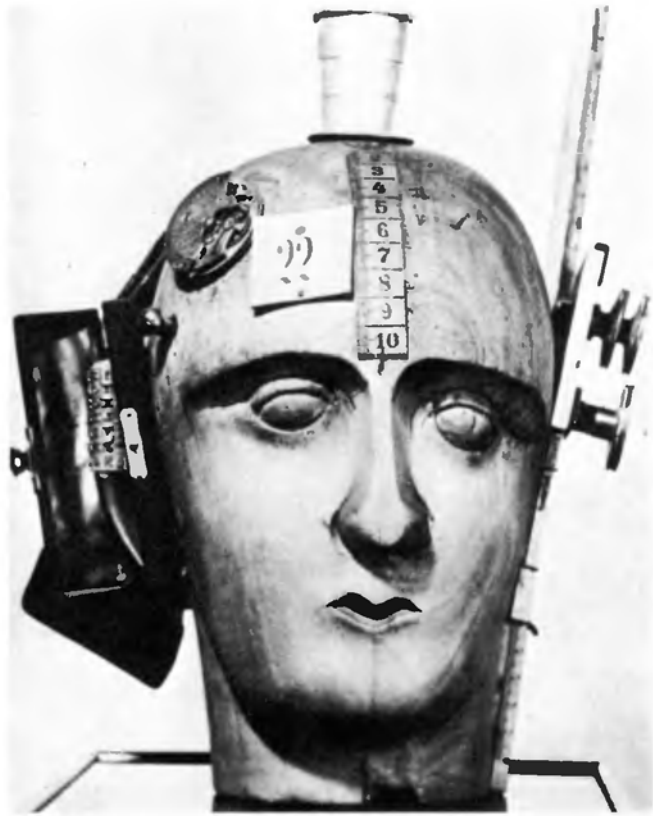
The point may be brought home by an illustration. After Alexander the Great had broken up the Achaemenian Empire, the dynasty of the Ptolemies built some of the fragments into a Great Power based on Egypt, while the Seleucids built up another Great Power out of the former provinces of the Empire in Asia. No one who studies these two Great Powers in their historical perspective can doubt which of them is the more interesting and important. The Seleucid Monarchy was the bridal chamber in which the Hellenic and Syriac Civilizations were married, and their union there produced titanic offspring: to begin with, a divine kingship as a principle of association between city-states which was the prototype of the Roman Empire, and then a whole series of syncretistic religions: Mithraism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam. For nearly two centuries the Seleucid Monarchy was the greatest field of creative human activity that existed in the world; and long after it had fallen the movements generated during its comparatively brief span of existence continued to mould the destinies of Mankind. Compared with this, the marriage of Hellenism with the Egyptian Civilization in the Ptolemaic Empire was unfruitful. The introduction into the Roman Empire of the worship of Isis and of certain forms of economic and social organization is really all that can be placed to its account. Owing, however, to a climatic accident, the amount of raw information regarding these two monarchies which happens to be accessible to us is in inverse ratio to their intrinsic importance in history. The dry-as-dust soil of Upper Egypt yields the scientific Western excavator a wealth of papyri, beyond the dreams of the scholars of the Renaissance, and these papyri afford minute information regarding local methods of agriculture, manufacture, trade, and public administration, whereas the history of the Seleucid Monarchy has to be pieced together mainly from scattered coins and inscriptions and from fragments of literary records. The only new source of information here that is comparable to the Ptolemaic-Age papyri from Upper Egypt is the Seleucid-Age clay tablets from Babylonia. The significant point is that the Ptolemaic papyri have attracted almost all the spare energies of Western scholarship in the field of ancient history, and that the comparatively large number of scholars who have been devoting themselves to elucidating the minutiae of papyrus texts have tended to measure the historical importance of the Ptolemaic Monarchy by the amount of raw material accessible for the reconstruction of its history and by the intensity of the labour which they themselves have devoted to this reconstructive work.

An outside observer is tempted to regret that part of this energy was not reserved for equally intensive work upon the relatively meagre quantity of materials that is at our disposal for the reconstruction of Seleucid history. One additional gleam of light thrown upon the darkness of this

page might add more to our understanding of the history of Mankind than floods of light thrown upon the social and economic organization of Ptolemaic Egypt. And, beyond this, the observer is moved to a psychological reflexion. He suspects that the scholar who has become a Ptolemaic papyrologist has seldom asked himself the prior question: 'Is Ptolemaic Egypt the most interesting and important phenomenon to study in the particular age of the particular society to which it belonged?' More probably he has asked himself instead: 'What is the richest mine of unworked raw material in this field?' And, finding that the answer is 'Ptolemaic papyri', he has become a papyrologist for the rest of his working life without thinking twice about it. Thus in modern Western historical research, as in modern Western industry, the quantity and location of raw materials threaten to govern the activities and the lives of human beings. Yet there is little doubt that our imaginary papyrologist has made a wrong choice by all humane standards. Intrinsically, the Seleucid Monarchy and not the Ptolemaic Monarchy is the field in which the pearl of great price awaits the historical explorer. For this judgment it is sufficient to quote the authority of Eduard Meyer⁶ – a scholar who was not without honour in his own generation, though he used his mastery of modern scientific equipment and technique in order to write 'Universal History' in the great tradition of the *Essai sur les Mœurs* or *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, like some son of Anak born out of due time.

This tendency for the potter to become the slave of his clay is so evident an aberration that a corrective may be found for it without abandoning the fashionable analogy between the processes of historical thought and the processes of industry. In industry, after all, to be hypnotized by the raw material does not pay. The successful industrialist is the man who first perceives that there is a strong economic demand for some particular commodity or service, and then lays hands upon just those raw materials and that manpower with which, at a profit to himself, he can manufacture that object or perform that service efficiently. Raw materials and manpower which do not happen to serve the purpose have no interest for him. In other words, he is a master of natural resources, and not their slave, and so he becomes a captain of industry and makes his fortune.

But historical thought is not, in truth, analogous to industrial production. In the world of action, we know that it is disastrous to treat animals or human beings as if they were stocks and stones. Why should we suppose this treatment to be any less mistaken in the world of ideas? Why should we suppose that the scientific method of thought – a method which has been devised for thinking about inanimate Nature – should be applicable to historical thought, which is a study of living creatures and indeed of human beings? When a professor of history calls his 'seminar' a 'laboratory', is he not wilfully expatriating himself from his natural environment? Both names are metaphors, and either metaphor is apt in its own sphere. The historian's *seminarium* is a nursery-garden in which living ideas about living creatures are taught to shoot. The physical scientist's *laboratorium* is – or was till the other day⁷ – a workshop in which manufactured or semi-manufactured articles are



4, 5 INDUSTRIALISM AND NATIONALISM, the twin obsessions of modern Western Man. *The Spirit of our Time*, above, depicts the mechanization of the human intellect. Below, images of militant nationalism superimposed on a jubilee post-card portrait of Kaiser William II.





MAN AND HIS MASTER

6 A mural commissioned by the Ford Motor Works, Detroit, solemnly celebrates Man's subordinate place in the industrial process.

produced mechanically out of inanimate raw materials. No practical man, however, would think of conducting a nursery-garden on the principles of a factory or a factory on the principles of a nursery-garden; and, in the world of ideas, the corresponding misapplications of method ought to be avoided by scholars. We are sufficiently on our guard against the so-called 'pathetic fallacy' of imaginatively endowing inanimate objects with life. We now fall victims to the inverse 'apathetic fallacy' of treating living creatures as if they were inanimate.

If the industrial system had been the sole dominant institution in contemporary Western life, the influence of its prestige over Western historical thought might have broken down under its own weight; for the industrial system can be applied to historical thought only by a very drastic division of labour. In industry, the division of labour is readily (perhaps too readily) accepted by Mankind as a price which has to be paid for material well-being; and there appears – or appeared till recently – to be little repugnance to it in that realm of thought which is concerned with the physical Universe. It is conceivable that, as Bergson suggests, the mechanism of our intellect is specifically constructed so as to isolate our apprehension of physical Nature in a form which enables us to take action upon it.⁸ Yet, even if this is the original structure of the human mind, and if other methods of thinking are in some sense unnatural, there also exists a human faculty, as Bergson goes on to point out, which insists, not upon looking at inanimate Nature, but upon feeling life and feeling it as a whole.⁹ This deep impulse to envisage and comprehend the whole of life is certainly immanent in the mind of the historian; and such violence is done to it by the division of labour which the analogy of the industrial system imposes on historical thought, that our historians would almost certainly have revolted against this tyranny if there had not been a second dominant institution in contemporary Western life which has appeared to make unity of vision still compatible with

Industrialization of historical thought. This second institution, which has peacefully divided with the industrial system the allegiance of modern Western historians, is the sovereign state, which is inspired in our 'democratic' age by the spirit of nationality.

Here, again, an institution dominating a particular age of a particular society has influenced the outlook and activity of historians who happen to have been brought up under its shadow. The spirit of nationality is a sour ferment of the new wine of democracy in the old bottles of tribalism. The ideal of our modern Western democracy has been to apply in practical politics the Christian intuition of the fraternity of all Mankind; but the practical politics which this new democratic ideal found in operation in the Western World were not ecumenical and humanitarian but were tribal and militant. The modern Western democratic ideal is thus an attempt to reconcile two spirits and to resolve two forces which are in almost diametrical opposition; the spirit of nationality is the psychic product of this political *tour de force*; and the spirit of nationality may be defined (negatively but not inaccurately) as a spirit which makes people feel and act and think about a part of any given society as if it were the whole of that society. This strange compromise between democracy and tribalism has been far more potent in the practical politics of our modern Western World than democracy itself. Industrialism and nationalism, rather than industrialism and democracy, are the two forces which have exercised dominion *de facto* over our Western Society in our age; and, during the century that ended about AD 1875, the Industrial Revolution and the contemporary emergence of nationalism in the Western World were working together to build up 'Great Powers', each of which claimed to be a universe in itself.

Of course this claim was false. The simple fact that there were more Great Powers than one proved that no single one of them was coextensive with the sum total of that society which embraced them all. Every Great Power,

however, did succeed in exerting a continual effect upon the general life of society, so that in some sense it could regard itself as a pivot round which the whole of society revolved; and every Great Power also aspired to be a substitute for society in the sense of being self-contained and self-sufficient, not only in politics and economics but even in spiritual culture. The state of mind thus engendered among the people of communities which constituted Great Powers spread to communities of lesser calibre. In that age in the history of our Western Society, all national states, from the greatest down to the least, put forward the same claim to be enduring entities, each sufficient unto itself and independent of the rest of the world. The claim was so insistently advanced and so widely accepted that the true duration and true unity of the Western Society itself were temporarily obscured; and the deep human impulse to feel life as a whole, which is perpetually seeking to find satisfaction in the changing circumstances of life as it passes, attached itself to particular nations rather than to the larger society of which those nations were members. Such fixations of social emotion upon national groups became almost universal, and historians have been no more immune from them than other people. Indeed, the spirit of nationality has appealed to historians with special force, because it has offered them some prospect of reconciling the common human desire for unity of vision with the division of labour imposed upon them by the application of the industrial system to their work. To grapple with 'Universal History' on industrial principles is so evidently beyond the compass even of the most gifted and the most vigorous individual that, for a scientific historian, the admission that unity could not be found in anything short of 'Universal History' would be tantamount to renouncing unity of vision altogether – a renunciation which would take the light out of any historian's landscape. If, however, he could seize upon a unit of historical thought which was of more manageable proportions yet was still in some sense a universe too, the psychological problem of reconciling his intellect with his emotions might be solved; and such a solution appeared to be offered by the principle of nationality.

On this account the national standpoint has proved specially attractive to modern Western historians, and it has been commended to their minds through more than one channel. They have been led to it not only because it has been prevalent in the communities in which they have grown up, but also because their raw material has presented itself to a large extent in the form of separate national deposits. The richest mines which they have worked have been the public archives of Western governments. Indeed, the abundance of this particular natural resource is what chiefly accounts for their astonishing success in increasing their volume of production. Thus our historians have been drawn partly by professional experience, partly by a psychological conflict, and partly by the general spirit of their age, in one and the same direction.

The lengths to which this tendency may go can be observed in the work of a distinguished historian belonging to one of the greatest nations of the modern Western World. Camille Jullian was one of the most eminent authorities on the 'prehistory' of that portion of continental Europe which at the present time constitutes the territory



7 By contrast, a scene from the Chaplin film *Modern Times* lampoons the dwarfing of Man by the machines he has created.



THE APOTHEOSIS
OF NATIONALISM

8 Arc de Triomphe, Paris, 1806–36

of 'France', and in 1922 he published a book called *De la Gaule à la France: Nos Origines Historiques*.¹⁰ This book is a first-rate piece of historical writing; yet, in reading it, it is difficult to keep the attention fixed upon the matters with which Jullian intends to deal, because the reader is continually being made aware that the writer is not only an historian but a Frenchman, and a Frenchman who has lived through the First World War. The sub-title – *Nos Origines Historiques* – gives the key. All the time, Jullian is projecting back into the past his own burning consciousness of France as she exists for him – a spiritual France which furnishes him with the experience of human life so exhaustively that, if the rest of the world were to be annihilated and France left solitary but intact, Jullian would perhaps hardly have been sensible of any spiritual impoverishment; and a material France with clear-cut frontiers which have been constantly overrun by invaders and constantly re-established by the patriotism of the French nation. The self-sufficiency of France and her separateness from the rest of the world are ideas which dominate Jullian's imagination even when he is dealing with the history of this piece of territory at dates hundreds or thousands of years before such a concept as 'France' existed. Into however distant a past he travels back, he carries France with him – contented if he can do so with ease, embarrassed if he cannot do so without difficulty, but ever incapable of leaving France behind him. For example, he is gravely embarrassed when he has to deal with the incorporation of the several dozen independent states of Gaul in the Roman Empire, and he does his best to make credible the thesis that, even during the five centuries that



9 Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, 1789

intervened between the generation of Julius Caesar and the generation of Sidonius Apollinaris, the local individuality of Gaul was a more important fact in the life of its inhabitants than their membership in an Empire which embraced the whole *orbis terrarum* of the Mediterranean basin. On the other hand, Jullian cannot contain his delight when he discerns the lineaments of France upon the face of Europe in the Neolithic Age. Here is a passage¹¹ which occurs at the end of a brilliant reconstruction of certain aspects of Neolithic life through an examination of the trails along which the Neolithic people did their travelling:

We can now speak of these essential routes by means of which, to a large extent, France was created. Equally, this traffic did not go beyond the boundaries which will later become those of Gaul, as if the value of these boundaries were already recognized in the human consensus.

Here, in the twinkling of an eye, the scientific Western historian of the Neolithic Age has been transfigured into the French patriot in AD 1918, crying: 'Ils ne passeront pas!'

This is perhaps an extreme case of the emotional and intellectual substitution of a nation for Mankind. At the same time, when the nation thus magnified happens to be France, the degree in which history is thrown out of perspective is the least possible in the circumstances. After all, some entity corresponding to the name 'France' actually has maintained its individuality within the universe of our Western Society for a millennium and, though a thousand years is not a long time in the history of Mankind, it covers almost the whole lifetime of our own Western Society,



10 Dewey Victory Arch, New York, 1899



11 '1000 Years of Russia' monument, Novgorod, 1862

which began to emerge from the ruins of the Roman Empire only about 250 years before France herself began to emerge as a distinct element in this new Western World. Moreover, France, since her emergence, has continuously played a central and a leading part in Western history; and thus, while Jullian's attempt to present the Roman Empire or the Neolithic Age in terms of France is a palpable *tour de force*, the distortion is not so apparent to the eye when modern Western history is focused from the French standpoint, with France in the centre and everything else on the periphery. France perhaps approaches nearer than any other national state to being co-central and coextensive with the whole of our Western Society. If, however, instead of France, we were to take Norway or Portugal, or even Holland or Switzerland, and attempt to write the history of Western Society round any one of these countries, we can see at once that the attempt would break down. As a *reductio ad absurdum*, let us try to imagine ourselves writing the history of the Western Society round one of those national states which did not attain their statehood till after the termination of the First World War. That would involve writing the history of a society which has been in existence for more than twelve centuries round a nation whose existence is not yet securely established. Whether a Czechoslovak or a Yugoslav national consciousness yet exists has hardly ceased to be a debatable question. Certainly such consciousnesses were non-existent as recently as three quarters of a century ago; and even if we attempted to present the history of the West in terms of the constituent parts of these nascent nationalities – in terms, that is, of Czechs or Slovaks or Croats or Serbs, whose

history as distinct groups goes back further – the absurdity, while less great in terms of relative age, would be greater in terms of relative population and territorial extension. Western history cannot be comprehended in terms of nationalities of this calibre. Indeed, far from being able to write a Slovak- or Croato-centric history of the West, we should find it impossible to write even a Slovak-centric history of Slovakia or a Croato-centric history of Croatia. In contrast to France, Slovakia and Croatia fall so far short of constituting historical universes in themselves that, when isolated, they cease to be intelligible. It would be impossible to write intelligible histories of Slovakia or Croatia in which those territories, or their peoples, were given the role of protagonists, even in their own small corners of the broad Western stage. It would be impossible, in their case, to distinguish from their external relations an internal history which was something specifically their own. It would be found that every experience which they underwent and every activity into which they entered had been shared by them with other communities whose share had been greater than theirs, and in attempting to make their history intelligible we should find ourselves extending our field of vision to include one after another of these other peoples. Possibly we should have to extend it until we had included the whole of our Western Society. In any case, the intelligible field, when we found it, would certainly prove to be some field of which Slovakia or Croatia itself was a small and comparatively unimportant fraction.¹²

The emergence of national states which have no history that is intelligible in isolation signifies the arrival of a new age and indicates what its character is to be. The general

conditions of our Western Society have already become profoundly different from those which were in the ascendant during the century ending about AD 1875 and which have stamped the minds of Western historians with an impress which they still retain. Down to about 1875, the two dominant institutions of industrialism and nationalism were working together to build up Great Powers. After 1875 they began to work in opposite directions – industrialism increasing the scale of its operations beyond the compass of the greatest of the Great Powers and feeling its way towards a worldwide range, while nationalism, percolating downwards, began to implant a separate consciousness in peoples of so small a calibre that they were incapable not only of forming Great Powers but even of forming minor states possessed of full political, economic, and cultural independence in the established sense of those terms.

The cumulative effect of the two world wars has brought to the surface a tendency which had been at work for nearly half a century before 1914. In 1918 Austria-Hungary, one of the eight Great Powers which had been on the map in 1914, broke up. At the same date the break-up of the Ottoman Empire was completed. The Second World War was followed by the break-up of the British, French, and Dutch colonial Empires, and the number of Great Powers was reduced to two, while the total number of juridically sovereign independent states was increased, in the course of the next quarter of a century, to about 140. The greater the number of nominally sovereign states, the smaller their average area, population, wealth, and economic and military capacity are bound to be. Today the two surviving Great Powers still overshadow the rest of the world, but the characteristic states of the new age are not units that can be thought of as being universes in themselves; they are states whose nominal independence is manifestly limited on the military or economic or cultural plane or on all these planes alike. Even the two surviving Great Powers are being dwarfed in the economic sphere by the worldwide scale on which industrialism has now come to conduct its operations. Some states are still kicking violently against the pricks. They are attempting to salvage their dwindling independence by pursuing militant monetary and tariff and quota and migration policies. Some states, however, are also confessing, by deeds that are more eloquent than words, that they cannot stand alone. The 'developing' countries are seeking financial and technological aid from the 'developed' countries, and the states of Western Europe – which, for four and a half centuries, ending in 1945, fought round after round of wars with each other to prevent any one of them from dominating the rest – are now trying to unite voluntarily, on a footing of equality with each other, in a European economic community.

These multiple tendencies can be summed up in a single formula: in the new age, the dominant note in the corporate consciousness of communities is a sense of being parts of some larger universe, whereas, in the age which is now over, the dominant note in their consciousness was an aspiration to be universes in themselves. This change of note indicates an unmistakable turn in a tide which, when it reached high-water mark about the year 1875, had been flowing steadily in one direction for four centuries. It may

portend a return, in this respect, to the conditions of the preceding phase (the so-called 'medieval' phase) of Western history, when the consciousness of the Western Society was dominated by institutions like the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire which incorporated some aspects of its life as a whole, while kingdoms and city-states and fiefs and other local institutions were felt to be something parochial and subordinate. At any rate, that is the direction in which the tide seems to be flowing now – as far as it is possible to discern its direction so short a time after it has turned.

If this observation is correct, and if it is also true that historians cannot abstract their thoughts and feelings from the influence of the environment in which they live, then we may expect to witness in the near future a change in the outlook and activities of Western historians corresponding to the recent change in the general conditions of the Western Society. Just as, at the close of the age which we have left behind, the historians' work was brought into conformity with the industrial system and their vision was caught and bounded by the idea of nationality, so, in the new age upon which we have entered, they will probably find their intelligible field of study in some landscape where the horizon is not restricted to the boundaries of a single nationality, and will adapt their present method of work to mental operations on a larger scale.

This raises two questions, one of immediate interest: 'What is the intelligible field of study which Western historians will discover for themselves in this new age?', and another of permanent importance: 'Is there some intelligible field of historical study which is absolute and not merely relative to the particular social environment of particular historians?' So far, our inquiry seems to have brought out the fact that historical thought takes a deep impress from the dominant institutions of the transient social environment in which the thinker happens to live. If this impress proved to be so profound and so pervasive as actually to constitute the *a priori* categories in the historian's mind, that conclusion would bring our inquiry to an end. It would mean that the relativity of historical thought to the social environment was absolute; and in that case it would be useless to gaze any longer at the moving film of historical literature in the hope of discerning in it the lineaments of some abiding form. The historian would have to admit that, while it might be possible for him to work out a morphology of his own mind by analysing the influences exerted upon it by the particular society in which he lived, it was not possible for him to discover the structure of that society itself, or of the other societies in which other historians and other human beings had lived in different times and places. That conclusion, however, does not yet confront us. So far, we have simply found that in the foreground of historical thought there is a shimmer of relativity, and it is not impossible that the ascertainment of this fact may prove to be the first step towards ascertaining the presence of some constant and absolute object of historical thought in the background. Our next step, therefore, is to take up the search for an intelligible field of historical study independent of the local and temporary standpoints and activities of historians upon which we have focused our attention hitherto.

2 The field of historical study

IN SETTING OUT to look for some objective 'intelligible field of historical study', it seems best to start with what is the usual field of vision of contemporary Western historians, that is, with some national state. Let us pick out, from among the national states of the West, whichever one seems most likely, at first sight, to correspond to our contemporary historians' ideal of what their field should be, and then let us test their outlook in this instance in the light of the 'historical facts' (taking 'historical facts' in the popularly accepted sense and begging provisionally the prior philosophical question as to the meaning of the word 'fact' in this term).¹

Great Britain seems as good a choice as any. She is a national state that has been a Great Power. Her principal constituent, England, who merged herself in Great Britain about 250 years ago without any breach of continuity or change of identity, is as old a figure in Western history as France, and on the whole as important a figure, though she has performed quite a different historical function. Her peculiar merit for our purpose is that, to an exceptional degree, she has been kept in isolation – first by certain permanent features of physical geography, and secondly by a certain policy on the part of her statesmen in the age during which she has been most creative and most powerful. As regards her geographical isolation, the shores of an island provide frontiers which are incomparably more clear-cut than the land-frontiers of France, however precise and eternal Jullian may have felt those land-frontiers to be. For instance, we should not smile at Jullian if he had made the discovery that the Neolithic trails in Britain broke off along the same line at which the roads and railways of Britain break off today, or if he quoted *et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos*² in describing the position of Britain in the Roman Empire. As regards her political isolation, Britain has been something of an *alter orbis*.³

We shall not easily discover a Western nation which has been more isolated than she has been and which yet has played so prominent a part over so long a span of Western history. In fact, if Great Britain (as the heir and assign of England) is not found to constitute in herself an 'intelligible field of historical study', we may confidently infer that no other modern Western national state will pass muster.

Is English history, then, intelligible when taken by itself? Can we abstract an internal history of England from her external relations? If we can, shall we find that these residual external relations are of secondary importance? And in analysing these, again, shall we find that the foreign influences upon England are slight in comparison with the English influences upon other parts of the world? If all these questions receive affirmative answers, we may be justified in concluding that, while it may not be possible to understand other histories without reference to England, it is possible, more or less, to understand English history without reference to other parts of the world. The best way to approach these questions is to direct our thought back-

wards over the course of English history and recall the principal chapters.

In this inverse order, we may take those chapters to be:

(a) the establishment of the industrial system of economy (since the last quarter of the eighteenth century of our era);

(b) the establishment of responsible parliamentary government (since the last quarter of the seventeenth century);

(c) the expansion overseas (beginning in the third quarter of the sixteenth century with piracy and developing gradually into a worldwide foreign trade, the acquisition of tropical dependencies and the foundation of new English-speaking communities in overseas countries with temperate climates);

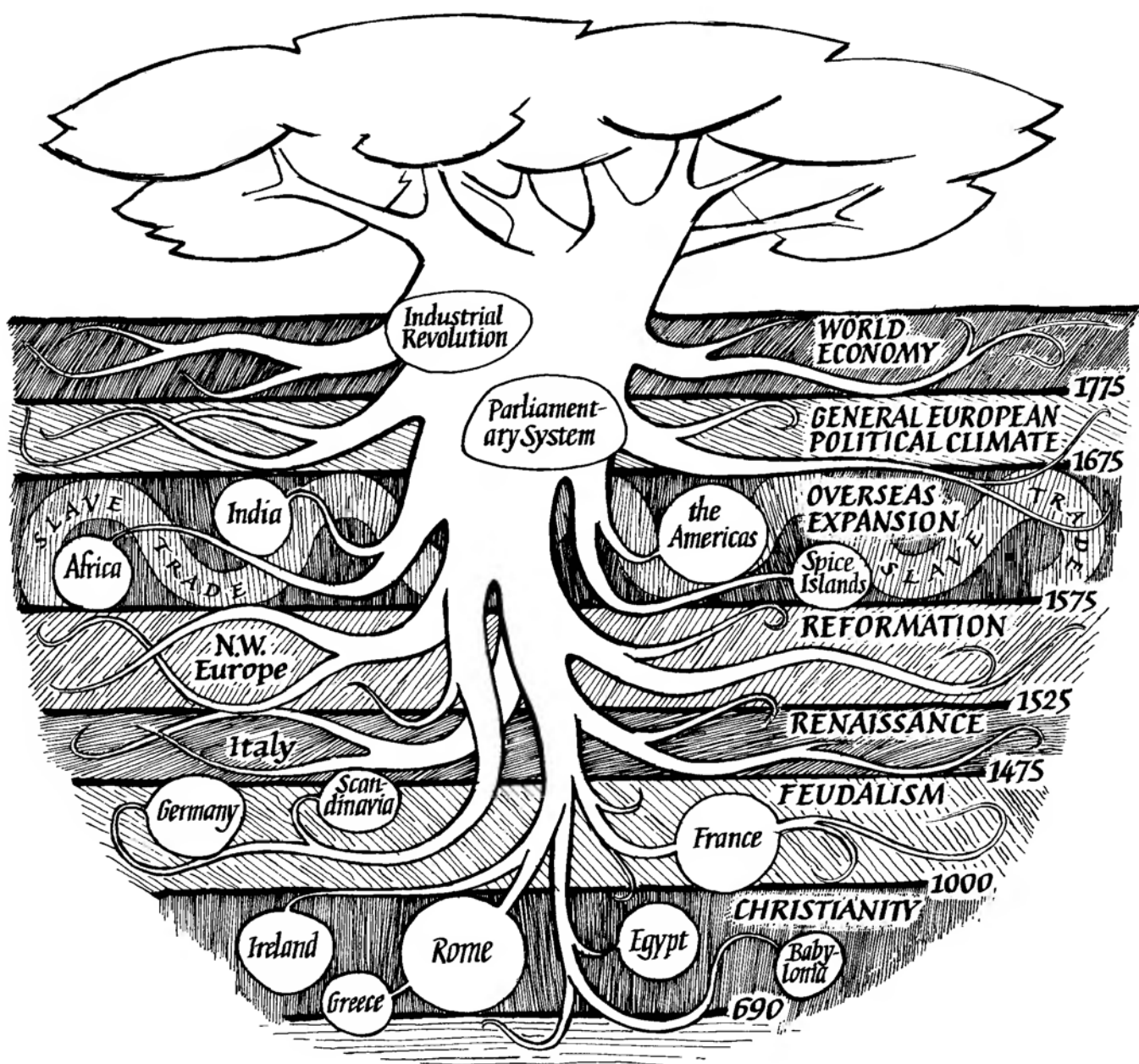
(d) the Reformation (since the second quarter of the sixteenth century);

(e) the Renaissance, including the political and economic as well as the artistic and intellectual aspects of this movement (since the last quarter of the fifteenth century);

(f) the completion of the feudal system (since the eleventh century);

(g) the conversion of the English from the religion of the so-called 'Heroic Age' to Western Christianity (since the last years of the sixth century).

This summary glance backwards from the present date over the general course of English history would appear to show that the further back we look the less evidence do we find of self-sufficiency or isolation. The conversion, which was really the beginning of all things in English history, was the direct antithesis of that: it was an act which merged half a dozen isolated communities of barbarians in the common weal of a nascent Western Society. As for the feudal system, Marc Bloch⁴ has shown that a system of protective relationships had been developing in England since the seventh century, and that the furtherance of this development in the ninth century was largely the result of an external stimulus, the Danish invasions. After the Conquest, the imported Norman institutions and administrative practices penetrated virtually the whole of society. Thus it may fairly be said that any account of the establishment of the feudal system in England would not be intelligible unless France and Scandinavia, at least, were also brought into the picture. As for the Renaissance, in both its cultural and its political aspects it is universally admitted to have been a breath of life from Northern Italy. If, in Northern Italy, humanism, absolutism, and the balance of power had not been cultivated in miniature, like seedlings in a sheltered nursery-garden, during two centuries that fall approximately between AD 1275 and AD 1475, they could never have been bedded out north of the Alps from about 1475 onwards. The Reformation, again, was not a specifically English phenomenon, but a general movement in the Promethean North of Western Europe (where the Baltic, the North Sea, and the Atlantic all beckoned towards new



12 Britain's roots in the cultures of the world.

worlds) for emancipation from the Epimethean South (where the western Mediterranean held the eye fixed upon worlds that were dead and gone). In the Reformation, England did not take the initiative, nor did she take it even in the competition between the European nations of the Atlantic sea-board for the prize of the new worlds overseas. She won that prize as a comparatively late comer, in a series of struggles, which lasted for several centuries, with Powers which were before her in the field. In order to understand the history of English expansion overseas, it is necessary to appreciate the consequences of all the general European wars, and indeed to take into account all the vicissitudes of the European balance of power, from about

the last quarter of the fifteenth century onwards – in fact, to extend the field of vision across the whole horizon of modern Western history.

It remains to consider the two latest chapters: the geneses of the parliamentary system and of the industrial system – institutions which are commonly regarded as having been first evolved locally on English soil and afterwards propagated from England into other parts of the world. For our purpose, these are the crucial chapters in English history. Are these two chapters intelligible in insular terms? No, they are not, in the judgment of recognized authorities. 'General History', Lord Acton holds,⁵ 'naturally depends on the action of forces which are not national, but proceed

from wider causes. . . . Bourbons and Stuarts obeyed the same law, though with a different result.' In other words, the parliamentary system, which was the local result in England, was the product of a force which was not peculiar to England, but was operative in England and in France simultaneously. As for the Industrial Revolution, it 'cannot be explained in purely British terms, for this country formed part of a wider economy, which we may call the "European economy" or the "world economy of European maritime states"'.⁶

Thus British national history is not, never has been, and almost certainly never will be an 'intelligible field of study' in isolation; and if that is true of Great Britain, it must surely be true *a fortiori* of any other national state. Therefore, if we are to pursue our quest, it is clear that we must take some larger entity than the nation as our field.

A society is confronted in the course of its life by a succession of problems, which every member has to solve for himself as best he may. The presentation of each problem is a challenge to undergo an ordeal, and through this series of ordeals the members of the society progressively differentiate themselves from each other. On each occasion some fail, while others succeed in finding a solution; and, again, some of the solutions found are imperfect or commonplace or inimical to success in solving subsequent problems, while others are exact or original or fertile in possibilities of further progress. As ordeal follows ordeal, some members of the society at some moment fail to adjust themselves, and fall by the way; others struggle on, strained or warped or stunted; others grow in wisdom and stature, and in making their own way discover new avenues for a general advance of the society to which they belong. Throughout, it is impossible to grasp the significance of a particular member's behaviour under a particular ordeal without noting the similar or dissimilar behaviour of his fellows and without viewing the successive ordeals as a series of events in the life of the whole society.

Thus English history does not become intelligible until we view it as the history of a wider society of which Great Britain is a member in company with other national states, each of which reacts, though each in its own way, to the common experiences of the society as a whole. Similarly, Venetian history has to be viewed as the history of a temporary sub-society including Milan, Genoa, Florence, and the other 'medieval' city-states in Northern Italy; Athenian history as the history of a society including Thebes, Corinth, Sparta, and the other city-states of Greece in the Hellenic Age. In each case we have to think in terms of the whole and not of the parts; to see the chapters of the story as events in the life of the society and not of some particular member; and to follow the fortunes of the members, not separately but concurrently, as variations on a single theme or as contributions to an orchestra which are significant as a harmony but have no meaning as so many separate series of notes. In so far as we succeed in studying history from this point of view, we find that order arises out of chaos in our minds and that we begin to understand what was not intelligible before.

This method of interpreting 'historical facts' will perhaps be made clearer by a concrete example, which may be taken from the history of the city-states of the Hellenic World

during the four centuries falling approximately between 725 and 325 B.C.

Soon after the beginning of that age, the society of which these numerous states were all members was confronted with the problem of the pressure of population upon the means of subsistence – means which the Hellenic people at that time were apparently obtaining almost entirely by raising a varied agricultural produce in their home territories for home consumption. When the crisis came, different states contended with it in different ways. Some, like Corinth and Chalcis, disposed of their surplus population by seizing and colonizing agricultural territories overseas – in Sicily, Southern Italy, Thrace, and elsewhere – where the native population was either too sparse or too incompetent to resist invasion. The Greek colonies thus founded simply extended the geographical area of the Hellenic Society without altering its character. The agriculture which they practised and the institutions under which they lived were substantially reproductions of the conditions which they had left behind them in their home countries.

On the other hand, certain states sought solutions which entailed a variation in their way of life. Sparta, for instance, satisfied the land-hunger of her citizens not by colonizing overseas territories outside the previous geographical limits of the Hellenic World⁷ but by attacking and conquering her nearest Greek neighbours in Messene. The consequences were that Sparta obtained her necessary additional lands only at the cost of obstinate and repeated wars with neighbouring peoples of her own calibre; that, even when the conquest was completed, the retention of the conquered territories required a permanent military effort; and that this permanent strain bore upon Sparta herself and not upon some independent daughter-state overseas who would have been responsible for her own security. In order to meet this situation, Spartan statesmen were compelled to militarize Spartan life from top to bottom – which they did by reinvigorating and adapting certain primitive social institutions, common to a number of Greek communities, at a moment when, in Sparta as elsewhere, these institutions were on the point of disappearing.⁸

Athens reacted to the population problem in a different way again. At first she neglected it – neither planting colonies overseas nor conquering the territory of her Greek neighbours – until the pressure threatened to find vent in a social revolution. At that point, when the solutions sought by other states were no longer open to her, she discovered an original solution of her own by specializing her agricultural production for export, starting manufactures also for export, and then developing her political institutions so as to give a fair share of political power to the new classes which had been called into being by these economic innovations. In other words, Athenian statesmen averted a social revolution; and, discovering this solution for the common problem as far as it affected themselves, they incidentally opened up a new avenue of advance for the whole of the Hellenic Society. This was what Pericles meant when, in the crisis of his country's material fortunes, he claimed that she was 'the education of Hellas'.⁹ In so far as she lived unto herself, as a city-state, Athens came to grief before that age of Hellenic history had reached its close. In so far as she lived for Hellas, Pericles' claim was justified by the

event; for in the next age of Hellenic history, which began about 325 BC, the new ideas and institutions which had been worked out by Athens in order to discover a particular solution for the general problem of the preceding age were adopted by the rest of the Hellenic Society (which by then had expanded far beyond the narrow domain of the Greek-speaking peoples) as their common social heritage. This phase of Hellenic history is commonly called 'the Hellenistic Age', but 'the Atticistic Age' is the proper name for it.¹⁰

From this angle of vision, which takes not Athens or Sparta or Corinth or Chalcis but the whole of the Hellenic Society as its field, we are able to understand both the significance of the histories of these several communities during the period 725–325 BC and the significance of the transition from this period to that which followed. Questions are answered to which no answer could be found so long as we looked for an intelligible field of study in Chalcidian history or Corinthian history or Spartan history or Athenian history examined in isolation. From this point of view it was merely possible to observe that Chalcidian or Corinthian history was in some sense normal, whereas Spartan and Athenian history departed from the norm in different directions. It was not possible to explain the way in which this departure took place; and historians were reduced to suggesting that the Spartans and Athenians were already differentiated from other Greeks by the possession of special innate qualities at the dawn of Hellenic history. This was equivalent to explaining Spartan and Athenian development by postulating that there had been no development at all, and that these two particular Greek peoples were as peculiar at the beginning of the story as at the end of it. That hypothesis, however, is in contradiction with established historical facts. In regard to Sparta, for example, the excavations conducted by the British Archaeological School at Athens have produced striking evidence that, down to about the middle of the sixth century BC, Spartan life was not abnormal in the ways which thereafter were to differentiate it so sharply from life in other Hellenic communities. After the middle of that century there was a revolutionary change which has to be explained, and an explanation can be found only through looking at Spartan history in this period as a special local response to an ordeal which confronted the whole of the Hellenic Society. The special characteristics of Athens, which she communicated to the whole Hellenic World in the so-called 'Hellenistic' Age (in contrast to Sparta, whose peculiar turning proved to be a blind alley), were likewise acquired characteristics, the genesis of which can only be apprehended from a general standpoint. It is the same with the differentiation between Venice, Milan, Genoa, Florence, and the other city-states in Northern Italy in the so-called 'Middle Ages' of our Western history, and with the differentiation between France, Spain, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and the other national states of the West in more recent times. In order to understand the parts, we must first focus our attention upon the whole, because this whole is the field of study which is intelligible in itself.

In this progressive differentiation of the components of a society, Hellenic history, during the four centuries 725–325 BC, displays the same configuration as 'medieval' North Italian history and as modern Western history as a

whole; but, though this episode of Hellenic history is comparable to these two other episodes, it is not contemporary with them. Chronologically, it is anterior. The origins of the Western Society can be traced back to the last phase of Hellenic history – to its Graeco-Roman phase – but not further back than that; and this chronological relation of Western history to Hellenic history reveals the limits of the backward extension of our Western Society in time. The spatial extension of this 'intelligible field', while wider than that of any single nation belonging to it, is narrower, even in its most extensive spatial cross-section, than the entire surface of the Earth and than the whole living generation of Mankind; and we now find that its backward extension in time, while somewhat longer than that of any single nation belonging to it, is not so long, even when we take into account the length of its roots underground, as the span of time during which the species of society of which it is a representative has been in existence.

Our provisional conclusions can be stated as follows:

(a) The 'intelligible fields of historical study', whose limits we have roughly established by working outwards and backwards from the standpoint of our own country in our own day, are societies which have a greater extension, in both space and time, than national states or city-states, or any other political communities.

(b) Such political communities (national states, city-states, and the like) are not only narrower in their spatial extension and shorter-lived in their time-extension than the respective societies to which they belong, but their relation to these societies is that of inseparable parts to indivisible wholes. They are simply articulations of the true social entities and are not independent entities in themselves. Societies, not states, are 'the social atoms' with which students of history have to deal.

(c) The societies of which national states like Great Britain or city-states like Athens are parts, while they are (unlike their parts) independent entities in the sense that each of them constitutes, by itself, an 'intelligible field of historical study', are at the same time related to one another in the sense that they are all representatives of a single species of society.

(d) No one of the particular societies which we have been studying embraces the whole of Mankind or extends spatially over the whole habitable and traversable surface of the planet or is coeval with the species of which it is one representative. Our Western Society, for example, which is still alive, was not conceived until the Hellenic Society had passed its maturity, while the Hellenic Society – even if (as is not the case) it proved, on being traced back, to be one of the original representatives of the species – has been extinct for thirteen and a half centuries, so that in any case its complete life-span would fall short of the still uncompleted life-span of the species by that much already.

(e) While the continuity between the histories of one society and another is very much slighter in degree than the continuity between different chapters in the history of any single society (indeed, so much slighter as virtually to differ in kind), yet in the time-relation between two particular societies of different age – namely, the Western and the Hellenic – we have observed features indicating a nexus which we may describe metaphorically as 'affiliation'.



13 SOCIETY AS AN ORGANISM Leviathan, 'King of the Proud', from Hobbes's treatise. The image here reproduces the fallacious belief that societies consist of crowds, not relationships.

3 Some definitions of terms

1 SOCIETY

SOCIETY is the total network of relations between human beings. The components of society are thus not human beings but relations between them. In a social structure 'individuals are merely the *foci* in the network of relationships'.¹ The famous frontispiece of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, displaying society as a gigantic human figure composed of a multitude of life-sized human figures, is an anthropomorphic misrepresentation of reality; and so is the practice² of speaking of human beings as 'members' of society or of one or other of its component institutions (e.g. a club, a church, a class, a family, a 'corporation'). A visible and palpable collection of people is not a society; it is a crowd. A crowd, unlike a society, can be assembled, dispersed, photographed, or massacred.

2 CULTURE

I agree with, and adopt, P. Bagby's definition of culture as being 'regularities in the behaviour, internal and external, of the members of a society, excluding those regularities which are clearly hereditary in origin'.³ Bagby adds⁴ that, in virtue of being 'the patterned or repetitive element in

history', 'culture is history's intelligible aspect'. A. L. Kroeber proposes⁵ a definition in four points, of which the first three agree with Bagby's definition. Kroeber's fourth point is that culture embodies values. I agree with, and adopt, this point too.

3 CIVILIZATION

This pseudo-Latin word is a modern French coinage, and Dr Johnson refused to include the English counterpart of it in his dictionary of the English language. Since then, it has become current in all modern languages in the meaning of a particular kind or phase of culture that has been in existence during a particular age. In the present state of knowledge the Age of Civilization appears to have begun approximately five thousand years ago.

Bagby proposes⁶ that we should take our cue from the etymology of the word 'civilization' and should define civilization as 'the kind of culture found in cities'. And he proposes to define 'cities' as being 'agglomerations of dwellings many (or, to be more precise, a majority) of whose inhabitants are not engaged in producing food'.

THE PROFESSIONAL ÉLITES OF CIVILIZATIONS:
SOLDIERS, ADMINISTRATORS, PRIESTS

In a society which produces an economic surplus, a division of labour is possible. Specialist minorities, freed from the work of food production, can monopolize social tasks which were formerly the responsibility of all participants in the society.



14 Warriors from Benin, sixteenth or seventeenth century AD

Bagby's definition comes near to hitting the mark. Yet it will not quite serve. Nor will V. G. Childe's coinage of the phrase 'the Urban Revolution' (on the analogy of 'the Industrial Revolution') as a synonym for the emergence of the species of culture known as 'civilization'.⁷ There have been city-less societies that have nevertheless been in process of civilization. But we have, I believe, to go further, and to equate civilization with a state of society in which there is a minority of the population, however small, that is free from the task, not merely of producing food, but of engaging in any other of the economic activities – e.g. industry and trade – that have to be carried on to keep the life of the society going on the material plane at the civilizational level. These non-economic specialists – professional soldiers, administrators, and perhaps, above all, priests – have certainly been city-dwellers in the cases of most of the civilizations known to us.⁸

I agree with H. Frankfort⁹ in rejecting the view that 'such changes as an increase in food-production or technological advances (both, truly enough, coincidental with the rise of civilization) . . . explain how civilization became possible'. A. N. Whitehead surely hits the truth in a passage, quoted by Frankfort in this context, in which he declares that 'in each age of the world distinguished by high activity, there will be found at its culmination, and among the agencies leading to that culmination, some profound cosmological outlook, implicitly accepted, impressing its own type on the current springs of action'.¹⁰

Christopher Dawson is making the same point when he says that 'behind every civilization there is a vision'.¹¹ On this view, to which I adhere, the presence in a society of a minority liberated from economic activities is an identification-mark of civilization rather than a definition of it. Following Whitehead's lead, I should define civilization in spiritual terms. Perhaps it might be defined as an endeavour to create a state of society in which the whole of Mankind will be able to live together in harmony, as members of a single all-inclusive family. This is, I believe, the goal at which all civilizations so far known have been aiming unconsciously, if not consciously.

4 SOCIETIES

I use the words 'societies' in the plural and 'a society' in the singular to mean particular historical exemplifications of the abstract idea 'society' which has been examined above. The relation of 'societies' or 'a society' to 'society' is the relation of one or more representatives of a class of phenomena to the class that it represents.

Since I use the word society to mean the total network of relations between human beings, I use the words 'societies' and 'a society' to denote particular networks that can be analysed as being combinations of a number of institutions that are their components, but which cannot be identified as being, themselves, components of any more comprehensive network. If one defines societies in these terms, one finds that there are several kinds of them. In other words, one finds that the genus 'society' consists of several species. There are, for instance, pre-civilizational societies, societies in process of civilization, and societies that are embodiments of higher religions. The pre-civilizational societies again fall into a number of different sub-classes: Lower

Palaeolithic, Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic. The last three of these sub-classes, or at any rate the last two, have more in common with civilizations than they have with their Palaeolithic predecessors.

Though, according to my definition, societies are systems of relations that are not components of other societies, they are not, in my view, Leibnizian monads. All societies exert a constant reciprocal influence on each other. The extant representatives of the species are being influenced, in different degrees, not only by all their surviving contemporaries but also by the legacies of all societies that have come and gone up to date.

Every social network is the carrier of a culture, and it is impossible in practice to study a society and its culture apart from each other.

5 CIVILIZATIONS

I use the word 'civilizations' in the plural and 'civilization' in the singular to mean particular historical exemplifications of the abstract idea 'civilization' which has been examined above. The relation of 'civilizations' or 'a civilization' to 'civilization' is the relation of one or more representatives of a class of phenomena to the class that it represents. The class represented by civilizations is one species of the genus 'culture'. Every civilization is carried on the network of a society, and it is impossible in practice to study a civilization and its society apart from each other.

A civilization can be defined as being 'an intelligible field of study'; as being the common ground between the respective individual fields of action of a number of different people; and as being a representative of a particular species of society. These definitions are compatible with each other, and something essential would be missing if any one of them were left out. The first of these definitions is, of course, put in subjective terms. Its approach to the definition of a civilization is epistemological. The other two definitions are objective. They are attempts to describe the reality that the inquirer's mind believes (and believes correctly, in my view) that it has apprehended in the phenomena. Ideally, any definition that we make of anything whatsoever ought to be made in this dual form, considering that the duality of subject and object, and the problem of what the true relation between them is, are inherent in all thinking.

A civilization is an intelligible field by comparison with its component communities – nations, city-states, millets, castes, or whatever else these components may happen to be. In general, a larger unit of study is likely to be more intelligible than a smaller one, considering that nothing can be completely intelligible short of the sum total of reality. This, however, cannot be intelligible either, because things are intelligible only to minds, and, *ex hypothesi*, there would be no mind, outside the sum total of reality, to be the subject of this object. Accordingly, the intelligibility of phenomena, on whatever scale, can never be more than partial and imperfect. This indicates that a civilization is 'an intelligible field of study' in a relative sense only.

The common ground between a number of different people's individual fields of action is an alternative phrase for describing what, in this chapter, I have called a network of relations between a number of human beings. A network



15 Egyptian scribe, Fifth Dynasty



16 Buddhist priest, Japan, ninth century AD

of relations, being a phenomenon in the time-dimension as well as in the space-dimension, will have phases. The civilizations whose histories are on record so far are objective realities that have all had geneses; most of them have also grown, over various periods of time, to various extents; some of them have had breakdowns; and some of them have then gone through a process of disintegration ending in dissolution. In crediting civilizations with histories in a pattern of phases, I am not personifying them or conceiving of them in anthropomorphic terms. A non-human intelligible field of study – for instance, a crystal – can also be an objective reality that changes in a regular pattern of phases.

Civilizations are invisible, just as constitutions, states, and churches are, and this for just the same reasons. But civilizations, too, have manifestations that are visible, like the Prussian state's gold-crowned eagles and spiked helmets, and like the Christian Church's crosses and surplices. Set side by side an Egyptian, an Hellenic, and a pre-Renaissance¹² Western statue. It will be impossible to mistake which of these is the product of which school of sculptors. The distinctiveness of each of the three artistic styles is not only visible; it is definite – more definite than any of the visible products or emblems of any church or state. By exploring the range, in space and time, of a civilization's distinctive artistic style, one can ascertain the spatial and temporal bounds of the civilization that this style expresses. As Kroeber points out,¹³ an artistic style is a sensitive indicator of historical connexions. Within the

ambit of any one civilization the various styles 'tend towards a certain consistency among themselves',¹⁴ and 'styles are the very incarnation of the dynamic forms taken by the history of civilization'.¹⁵ Our ability, Kroeber adds, to locate an unassigned work of art to its place in a style sequence implies that the development of a style follows a one-way course. 'A style is a strand in a culture. . . . It is also a selective way. . . . Where compulsion or physical or physiological necessity reign, there is no room for style.' In being selective, a style, as well as a state, is an expression of will.¹⁶ Bagby, too, observes¹⁷ that 'the art-historians have shown that the styles of works of art are not absolutely indefinable', and that 'something of the same kind is done by the anthropologist and the culture historian. He too feels a common flavour in the diverse features of a culture or a period; he too tries to point out the observable qualities which give rise to this feeling.'¹⁸ Frankfort points out¹⁹ that 'we recognize it [the character of a civilization] in a certain coherence among its various manifestations, a certain consistency in its orientation, a certain cultural "style" which shapes its political and its judicial institutions, its art as well as its literature, its religion as well as its morals'.

The visible works of art that reveal so much about their civilization are merely expressions of it. They are not the civilization itself. That remains invisible, like a church or a state. When the anthropologist or the cultural historian tries to analyse the observable qualities that have been his clues to the diagnosis of a culture, he analyses them, as Bagby notices,²⁰ in terms of ideas and values.

4 The need for a comprehensive study of human affairs

THE DEMAND for a comprehensive study of human affairs is inspired by several motives. Some of these are permanent and some temporary; some are disinterested, some self-regarding. The strongest and most estimable of these is curiosity. This is one of the distinctive traits of human nature. No human being seems to be altogether without it, though the degree of its strength varies enormously as between different individuals. In the field of human affairs, curiosity prompts us to seek a panoramic view in order to gain a vision of reality that will make it as intelligible as is possible for a human mind. 'History certainly justifies a dictum of Einstein, that no great discovery was ever made in science except by one who lifted his nose above the grindstone of details and ventured on a more comprehensive vision.'²¹ A panoramic view will at any rate be a less misleading reflexion of reality than a partial view. And, while it is true that in the search for knowledge and understanding, as in all human activities, human achievements are never complete, it is one of Man's virtues that he has the intelligence to be aware of this and has the spirit to go on striving, with undiminished zest, to come as near to his goal as his endowment of ability will carry him.

Another motive for the quest for a panoramic view of

human affairs, and indeed of the whole of the phenomenal Universe, is more self-regarding. The phenomena appear to be innumerable, and the Universe infinite, to the diffracting human mind; and this experience of being adrift in a boundless sea, without chart or compass, is terrifying for a being whose powers are finite. In this disconcerting human situation our first recourse is to make believe that the ocean is not as big as it looks; we try to play on it the tricks of partition and omission; but, in playing them we see through them, and then the only recourse left is the formidable one of trying to fling our mental net over the Universe as a whole. Needham points out²² that 'one of the greatest stimulatory factors of primitive science' was 'the need for at least *classing* phenomena, and placing them in some sort of relation with one another, in order to conquer the ever-recurring fear and dread which must have weighed so terribly on early men'.

This anxiety in the face of the phenomena spurs human minds, always and everywhere, into 'fixing' the phenomena by finding a pattern in them; but it has been accentuated in the present-day world as a result of the world's sudden unification by means of modern science and technology. The same unprecedented scientific and technological

most difficult of the primary feats of civilization – the creation of the land of Sumer out of the marshes of the Lower Tigris-Euphrates basin – was also the earliest. Sumer was about the size of Denmark, and by about 2500 BC the yield from the crops grown on these ex-marshes was eighty-six-fold.²² The limited enterprise of creating Upper Egypt out of the Lower Nile valley seems to have been achieved later – possibly to some extent under the stimulus of what the Sumerians had already accomplished. The reclamation of the Nile delta – a task on the scale of the creation of Sumer – may have been completed only in the Early Dynastic Age of Egypt. If so, it will have been earlier than the reclamation of the Indus valley. The reclamation of the marshlands in the basins of the East Asian rivers seems to have come decidedly later.

Thus the reclamation of the river valleys of Afrasia for agriculture was in truth a response to the challenge of the progressive desiccation of Afrasia in the present Post-glacial or Inter-glacial Age. The cultivation of the minor oases, which had been the first response to this challenge, had turned out not to be enough in itself to make Afrasia permanently habitable by Man under post-pluvial conditions. In the end he was confronted with a choice between emigrating, as was done by the pioneers who carried agriculture from Afrasia to the ends of the Old World, and

reclaiming the Afrasian swamps, as was done eventually by the makers of the earliest Old-World civilizations. The reclamation of the swamps was a permanent solution, because the new fields thus brought under cultivation were irrigated perennially by rivers whose sources rose outside the arid zone, and whose waters continually refertilized the soil with silt drawn by erosion from a virtually inexhaustible supply. In the reclaimed river valleys Man could be sure of making a livelihood so long as he continued to do organized and disciplined hard labour. Desiccation was the challenge; the lands of Sumer and Egypt were the response. But this bare statement would be a misleading simplification of the story. It does not become intelligible until we have also taken account of the primitive agricultural societies that made the transition to the earliest of the civilizations from the latest of the Upper Palaeolithic food-gathering and hunting societies. Even Upper Palaeolithic Man lacked the technology, as well as the organization, for coping with the jungle-swamps. Man had to put himself through a transitional apprenticeship before he could venture on the enterprise of civilization.

The intervention of this transitional stage between the primitive level of culture and the higher level that we call 'civilization' is not peculiar to the Old World; we find the same phenomenon in the history of the Americas.

6 The comparative study of civilizations

IN SETTING OUT to make a comprehensive survey of human affairs, I have started by questioning the recent Western practice of making all human history culminate in the Western inquirer's own country in his own time. Since I happen to be an Englishman, I have asked myself whether it is credible that the England of my time is the culmination of history, and I have concluded that this view would be a nationalistic hallucination. (This hallucination is considerably less credible for an Englishman in 1972 than it was in 1927, the year in which I started to make my notes for this book.) I have recognized that England, taken by itself, is not, in fact, an 'intelligible field of study', either in my time or at any earlier date since the time when such a thing as England first became discernible on the political map. I have therefore looked for a minimum unit, of which England is a part, which might be found intelligible if treated as being self-contained, and I have found this in the Western Civilization. In the act of thus identifying my native specimen of a species of society that is not only larger than a nation-state but is also more intelligible, in virtue of approaching nearer to being self-contained, I have found myself confronted by two pertinent facts. First, the West is not all the world; the world is divided between the

West and a number of other living civilizations. In the second place, the fact that the West and its contemporaries are still going concerns signifies that their histories are not yet finished; and at least one complete specimen of the history of a civilization is a necessary first piece of material evidence for a study of the species.

I have therefore probed backwards in time, towards the origins of my own native Western Civilization, till I struck the latter end of an earlier one, the Graeco-Roman (alias the Hellenic), to which the Western Civilization is affiliated through the Christian Church. The history of this Hellenic Civilization is a complete specimen of its kind. It has certainly come to an end, for in my day there is no longer any Hellenic Civilization in existence. It has long ago been superseded by two successors: the Western Civilization and the West's sister and contemporary, the Byzantine Civilization. The history of the Hellenic Civilization also certainly does not extend backwards in time beyond our ken, for it is known to have had, not only successors, but also a predecessor, the Minoan-Helladic-Mycenaean (alias Aegean) Civilization. Here, then, in the history of the Hellenic Civilization, is the specimen history of a civilization for which I have been looking. It has one general merit and two

special merits for a Western inquirer. Its general merit is its completeness. It has an identifiable beginning and end, and the whole story, in between, is on record, at least in outline. Its special merits are its link with Western history and its familiarity to a Westerner. Even if he has not been educated in the Greek and Latin classics, he will be likely to know more about Hellenic history than about the history of any other civilization outside his own.

Now that I have found my complete specimen of the history of a civilization, how am I to use it for my purpose? This purpose is to explore ways and means of organizing a comprehensive study of human affairs; and, from the start of my inquiry, I have rejected the customary presentation of history that leads the whole of it up to the inquirer's own time and place. This means rejecting a single-track chart of history; for it is only by making it all lead up to oneself that one can persuade oneself that history runs along a single line, and single-track charts of history will not work. Multiple-track charts are the only kind that will fit the phenomena as we find them.

A multiple-track chart, however, presents an intellectual problem that a single-track chart does not raise: the problem of organizing the data. So long as one is following a single track, no such problem arises. The observer has merely to take events as he finds them; he finds them in a sequence, and a sequence can be reproduced in a narrative. But as soon as he refuses to keep to a single track any longer, the observer finds himself with a number of simultaneous phenomena on his hands. These cannot be dealt with in a single narrative, because they do not constitute a single sequence. A number of different narratives have now to be brought into some kind of relation with each other, and *ex hypothesi* this relation cannot be the narrational one, since it is not possible to be telling more than one story at a time. When we have to establish a relation between two or more series of concurrent events, this requires us to take a synoptic view of them, and that in turn requires us to study them comparatively.

A comparative study of a number of specimens means noting their likenesses and differences with a view to discovering whether or not there is a standard type to which they conform, notwithstanding their individual peculiarities. But in order to make our comparison with any assurance we have also to satisfy ourselves that the specimens we are proposing to compare are properly comparable.¹ Here are two intellectual operations that are required as soon as we adopt a multiple-track chart of the phenomena in place of the self-regarding and misleading single-track one; and this is where the construction of a model can, I believe, serve us in good stead.

A 'model', in the sense in which this word has come to be used apropos of scientific investigation, is a symbol that is being used as an instrument.

A symbol is not identical or coextensive with the object that it symbolizes. If it were this, it would be, not a symbol of the thing, but the thing itself. It would be an error to suppose that a symbol is intended to be a reproduction of the thing that it is really intended, not to reproduce, but to illuminate. The test by which a symbol stands or falls is not whether it does or does not faithfully reproduce the object to which it points; the test is whether it throws light on that

object, or obscures our understanding of it. The effective symbol is the illuminating one, and effective symbols are an indispensable part of our intellectual apparatus. If a symbol is to work effectively as an instrument for intellectual action – that is to say, as a 'model' – it has to be simplified and sharpened to a degree that reduces it to something like a sketch-map of the piece of reality to which it is intended to serve as a guide – a sketch-map, not a photograph taken from a U-2 aeroplane.

Whether a model resembles anything in the outside world can be discovered only by verification. When we verify a model by testing how far it does or does not correspond to the phenomena, this is, of course, not an end in itself but only a means to an end. Our ulterior purpose is not to learn whether the model is or is not valid; it is to get new insight into the structure and nature of reality by applying a model that is valid and is therefore an effective tool. How far the model is or is not valid is not a matter of any intrinsic interest in itself.

The operation of constructing a model is different from the operation of testing whether it fits the phenomena.² But, so far from its being proper to dissociate the two operations from each other, it would seem to be impossible to obtain sure results from either of them if they are not carried out in conjunction. The model has to be constructed out of only a fraction of the total body of data, or we should never be able to mount it for use in investigating the remainder. But, just on this account, the structure will remain tentative and provisional until it has been tested by application to all the rest of the data within our knowledge.³ Conversely, our picture of the data as a whole will remain chaotic until we have found a model that brings out in them a pattern of specimens of a species.

Unless we bring these two operations into conjunction with each other by conducting them simultaneously and interdependently, we cannot tell whether or not our provisional model provides a genuine clue to some principle of order in the apparent chaos, or whether this particular model must be modified or supplemented or discarded in favour of another. Nor can we tell whether the items in a particular conglomeration of data that we have picked out of the chaos, like a child picking spillikins out of a heap, have any significant common features, or whether they merely happen to have hung together accidentally. In performing each of the two operations, we have provisionally to anticipate the results of the other operation. The untested results of each provide a test – and this the only test at our disposal – of the other operation's validity.

The test of the 'model' that I have found in the history of the Hellenic Civilization is whether or not this 'model' proves to fit the history of other societies of the same species. In order to apply this test I have to take for granted, provisionally, the list of civilizations that I present, and seek to justify, in chapter nine. The testing of my 'model' by applying it to this still untested list is going to lead me to modify the 'model' itself by combining it with a second 'model' offered by the history of the Sinic Civilization. It is also going to lead me to the conclusion that a single 'model', even a composite one, will not suffice for organizing all the data in the form of a comparative study.

subsequent Byzantine history well, the history of the Tigris-Euphrates basin and Iran passably, the history of India barely. But it does not fit Western, Middle American, or Andean history at all. And, in a pattern that presents history as an alternation of universal states and lapses from them, and ignores both local states and diasporas, there is no place for the Jews. The Jews lost their local state, never managed (as most other peoples have never managed) to become empire-builders, but have managed (unlike most other peoples) to preserve their national identity without having a state or even a national home. In world history seen through Chinese spectacles, the Jews would pass unnoticed both in the age of the Prophets and in the age of the Pharisees.

It will be seen that the shortcomings of the traditional Chinese model are at least as great as those of the Hellenic one. Yet the Chinese model, like the Hellenic, is illuminating as far as it goes, and the two models, looked at in relation to each other, are more than twice as illuminating as each of them is by itself. The Hellenic model is as widely applicable to the earlier phase in the histories of civilizations as the Chinese model is to the later phase; and an improved model can be constructed by combining the later phase according to the Sinic model with the earlier phase according to the Hellenic.⁴ This composite model for the histories of civilizations shows these societies starting as unities on the cultural plane without being united on the political plane. This régime is favourable to social and cultural progress; but its price is chronic warfare between the local states; this warfare becomes more intense and more devastating as the society grows in strength; and sooner or later it produces a social breakdown which, after a long-drawn-out 'time of troubles', is belatedly retrieved by the establishment of a universal state. This universal state is subject to recurrent lapses into anarchy; but, whether these intermediate periods are short or long, they are apt to be surmounted by the restoration of political unity. There must be some strong force making for the maintenance and, after lapses, for the restoration of unity, when once the original achievement of unity has come to pass; for the phenomenon of restoration occurs again and again, and this even after 'intermediate periods' that have been so long and so anarchic that they might have been expected to have made an irreparable break in the tradition.

This new model fits a great majority of the indisputable specimens of the species of society that we have called 'civilizations'. The Egyptian Civilization is unique in having achieved political unity at the opening of its history; but, as we have observed, there was an antecedent age of political disunity here too, if we take into account the pre-civilizational stage of history in Egypt. The Middle American, Andean, and Hellenic Civilizations are exceptional in having experienced only a single spell of the universal state stage instead of the normal experience of an initial spell followed by a series of restorations. But, in the Hellenic Civilization's case, this is true of the sequel only in the westernmost section of its domain. Western historians are apt to be preoccupied by what happened in these backward outlying territories, because this is the history of their own civilization. But the sequel to the fall of the Roman Empire in its central and eastern provinces is at least as significant;

and in this area the sequel conformed to the Chinese pattern: there was a series of revivals of the universal state, beginning in AD 717 and not coming to a final close till 1922.

The composite Hellenic-Sinic model, which is evidently the standard pattern, is explicable in human terms in all its stages. For example, when we examine a civilization's age of growth, we shall not be surprised to find that a period in which a society is articulated into a number of politically separate local communities, all sharing one common culture, should be a time of creativity and progress. The stimulus that comes from direct personal intercourse works more powerfully in a small community than in a large one; life in a small community that is in active and competitive intercourse with neighbours of its own size and kind is more stimulating still, since this is a social structure that combines the stimulus of intimacy with the stimulus of a wider horizon. A classic exposition of the cultural advantages of a régime of political disunity within a unitary economic and cultural field has been given by Hume in his essay *Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences*. But these blessings have their price in the currency of inter-state warfare; and a point may come when the toll taken by this is greater than any benefit that the stimuli of variety and competition can confer. If the balance becomes decidedly adverse, the society breaks down. It might be asked why a society does not forestall its breakdown, or at any rate retrieve it, by promptly applying the remedy of political unification to which it does eventually have recourse. Why do people put up with a long-drawn-out 'time of troubles' before bringing themselves to get rid of warfare by submitting to a universal state? The answer is that human beings are creatures of habit, and that the régime of local sovereignties has won such a hold on people's hearts in the age when it was producing a balance of advantage that it takes a long experience of its subsequent disastrous effects to induce its former beneficiaries to abandon their allegiance to it when they have become its victims.

When once, however, a universal state has been established, it is not surprising that this régime should win a hold on people's hearts in its turn. The peace and order that the achievement of political unity brings with it are appreciated by contrast with a foregoing 'time of troubles' that had become intolerable before it was transcended; and the loss of stimulus now seems a cheap price to pay for the inestimably precious boon of being rescued from the jaws of destruction and guaranteed against a recurrence of this fearful threat so long as the universal state lasts.⁵ With the passage of time, a universal state's hold over its subjects' hearts is apt to increase, unless the empire-builders have been aliens who have persistently made themselves odious.⁶ It is easy to understand why a universal state, once established, should be restored again and again when it has broken down. But we still have to ask ourselves why, when once it has been established, there should be any 'intermediate periods' at all, considering that normally the maintenance of the universal state is desired by at least a majority of its subjects.

The declines and falls of universal states can be interpreted as being the after-effects of mortal wounds that have been inflicted by society on itself during the foregoing



UNITY AND DISUNITY IN SINIC HISTORY

41 The upper register of this stone engraving represents anarchy, showing an attempt to assassinate the Ch'in founder of the Sinic universal state; the lower register symbolizes order: two legendary sovereigns wield geometrical instruments, and the symmetrical patterns below represent 'Good Government'. (Second century A.D.)

'times of troubles'; and this lassitude, if not exhaustion, would explain the lapse in the maintenance of a universal state; but it would not explain how a society that has lacked the vitality to maintain its universal state can subsequently summon up enough vitality to re-establish it. In seeking to account for the alternating rhythm that seems normally to prevail in the history of a civilization from the date of the first establishment of its universal state, we need not rest content with the Chinese account of this rhythm as being a manifestation, in human affairs, of a fundamental cosmic rhythm of Yin and Yang that is itself inexplicable and axiomatic. The rhythm does run through the histories of universal states, but there is a human explanation of it. It is an explanation in economic terms.

A universal state is a heavy charge on the economy of a civilization. It requires, for its maintenance, a well-paid

professional civil service and professional defence force; and the cost of these services will rise if it is one of the laws of the history of a universal state that, with the passage of time, the administrative and military personnel is apt to become more numerous as the institutions of local self-government decay and as the pressure of the trans-frontier barbarians increases. If the universal state – and, with it, the society incapsulated in it – is to be able to meet these rising costs without being crushed by them, it must be able to draw upon a commensurately rising productivity; but, in the Age of the Civilizations to date, the economy has been more or less static most of the time in the greater part of the *Oikoumene*.

The deliberate application of science to technology in the West is something recent and unprecedented. Even today, when the Industrial Revolution has been in progress for

some two hundred years and has spread from Britain, where it originated, to the ends of the Earth, the greater part of the human race is still in the pre-industrial stage. The last economic revolution before this was the enhancement of the productivity of agriculture through water-control, some time before the close of the fourth millennium BC, which transformed inhospitable swamps and jungles into the cradles of the Sumero-Akkadian and Egyptian Civilizations.⁷ But only a fraction of the cultivable part of the Earth's surface is capable of being made to give a comparable yield. Moreover, even in the most favourable environments, the technique of agriculture remained virtually static until the beginning of the present application of science to the improvement of crops and livestock; and this, like the present Industrial Revolution, dates back only to eighteenth-century Britain. Thus the normal economic basis of civilization, till a very recent date, has been a static agriculture at a level of productivity that in most places has been not much higher than that attained in Neolithic societies in the Pre-civilizational Age. But a civilization is a much more costly social structure than a Neolithic society is, and its costs are perhaps at their maximum when the civilization is organized politically in a universal state, and when this universal state has been in existence for some time. The inability of a pre-scientific agricultural economy to bear this economic load is evidently one of the causes of the unwished-for collapses by which so many universal states have been overtaken so many times in succession.

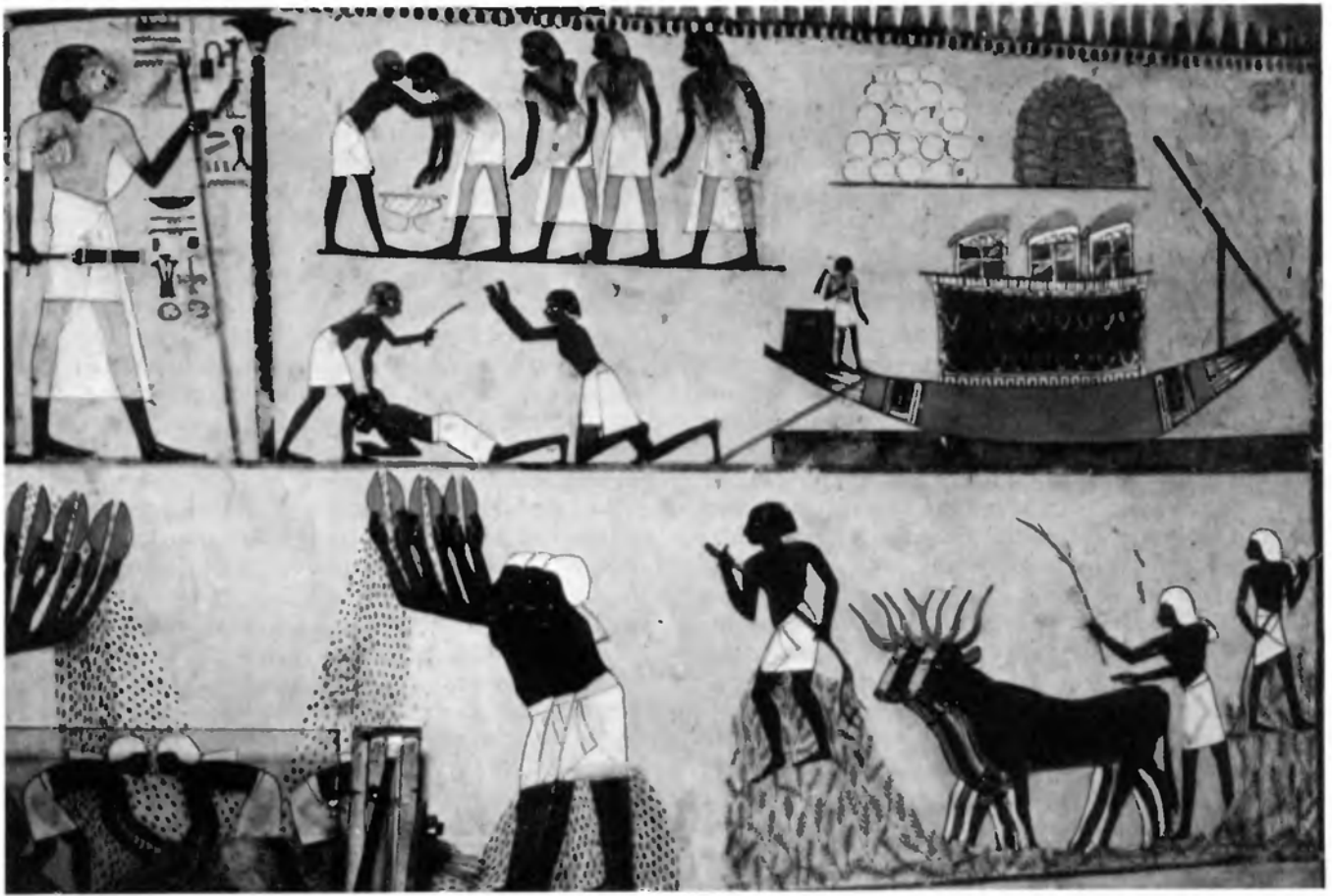
The importance of the part played by the economic factor in determining whether a universal state is to collapse or is to survive can be gauged by comparing the respective fortunes of the Roman Empire in its different sections. The western provinces, in which the Empire collapsed in the fifth century of the Christian Era, were relatively backward economically; the central and eastern provinces, in which, in the same century, the Empire survived, were the principal seats of the Hellenic World's industry and trade; and their relative economic strength more than counterbalanced the relative unfavourableness of their strategic position. Though the centre and the east were more directly exposed than the west was to assaults from the Eurasian Nomads of the Great Western Bay of the steppe, and from the Sasanian power in Iran and 'Iraq, the Empire managed here to hold its own; and, though it did collapse, here too, in the seventh century, it might have continued to survive in these economically stronger sections if, in the sixth century, the Emperor Justinian had not taxed their strength too severely in attempting to reconquer the derelict west. Thereafter, when, in the eighth century, the Hellenic universal state was re-established in the two rival shapes of the East Roman Empire in Anatolia and the Carolingian Roman Empire in Gaul, history repeated itself through the operation of the same economic causes. The Carolingian Empire swiftly collapsed; the East Roman Empire survived, without any further collapse, for three and a half centuries (AD 717-1071). The reason for this diversity of fortunes, this time once again, was that Anatolia in this age was economically capable of carrying the load of a universal state, whereas contemporary Transalpine Western Europe was not. It is significant that in the East Roman Empire, during the century immediately preceding the disaster of AD 1071,

there had been increasing symptoms of social and economic ill-health in the Empire's heart-land, Anatolia.

These are dramatic illustrations of the survival value of economic productivity for a universal state. Yet, hitherto, the rulers of universal states have seldom been alive to this. More often they have been either indifferent to possibilities of technological advance or positively hostile to these, on the reckoning that any technological change is a menace to economic equilibrium and hence also to the social and political stability that the founders of the universal state have established with such difficulty. Certainly the Roman imperial government did not ever realize, at any stage of its history, that technology, as exemplified in Hero of Alexandria's invention of a turbine engine, could have solved the Hellenic universal state's intertwined problems of finance and defence. And in the western provinces in the fourth century of the Christian Era, when the Empire was fighting for survival there, no attention was paid to possibilities of dealing with manpower shortage and with defence logistics by mechanization, though a set of projects for this was published in an anonymous memorandum *De Rebus Bellicis*.⁸ In universal states at both ends of the Old World the public authorities seem normally to have confined their action to collecting the land-tax and turning the screw harder on the taxable cultivators or their landlords when agricultural production has declined or public expenses have mounted.

It is significant that, in China, the local state of Ch'in (Ts'in), which eventually established a universal state for the first time by overthrowing the last of its competitors in 221 BC, was also the state which, in the fourth century BC, had distinguished itself among its competitors by systematically revolutionizing its social and economic structure with a view to increasing the population's productivity and putting the increased product at the government's disposal. But it is also significant that, when this régime was extended to the whole of China by the founder of the universal state, Ch'in Shih Hwang-ti, it provoked vehement opposition. After Shih Hwang-ti's death his régime was quickly overthrown; and both he and the 'Legist' school of philosophers, whose theories had been the inspiration of the Ch'in government's practice, were execrated in the subsequently established Chinese tradition. The school of philosophy that was officially established by the Han Emperor Wu-ti (*imperabat* 140-87 BC), and that maintained its monopoly, off and on, from that time till AD 1911, was not the 'Legist' school, but the Confucian. And Confucianism has not been sympathetic towards non-agricultural economic enterprise, though it has understood the value of water-control for agriculture and for communications.

The inadequacy of the economic substructure goes far towards explaining the successive collapses of universal states, not only in China, but in other regions where they have been erected on the same economic and social basis. It explains, for instance, the collapse of the Old Kingdom of Egypt, the fifth-century collapse of the Roman Empire in its western provinces, the ninth-century collapse of the Carolingian avatar of the Roman Empire in the same region, and also the eleventh-century collapse of the Byzantine avatar of the Roman Empire in Anatolia. In all these four cases occurring at the opposite end of the Old World to



PEASANT PRODUCTION

42 The estate owner, Menna, watches the activities of his peasants. A fellah is being punished and other officials make their reports, while underneath, cattle are driven across the harvested grain to thresh it before it is winnowed. (Egyptian, Eighteenth Dynasty.)

China, the economic basis of the universal state was almost exclusively agricultural, and the burden on the peasantry of maintaining a universal state – a burden that is heavy even under the best régime – became intolerable when landlords armed with official authority shook off governmental control and added their private exactions to the government's demands.

If the cause of the recurrent collapse of those universal states that have come and gone so far is, in truth, economic, the recent change in Mankind's economic situation, thanks to the modern Western Industrial Revolution, promises better prospects for a future universal state on a literally worldwide scale. Modern technology accompanied by a deliberate reduction in the birth-rate as well as in the death-rate would give an unheard-of buoyancy to a future world-state's finances. Instead of being constrained to take an intolerable toll from a poor and static peasant economy, a future world-state could afford to subsidize a revolution in the peasantry's traditional Neolithic way of life through a worldwide application of science and technology to peasant agriculture.

If this is indeed the outlook for a future world-state, that is fortunate for the human race. For the same unprecedented scientific and technological progress that has opened up

these prospects of higher production has already produced weapons that would turn war into genocide if they were ever to be used. And the possibility that they may be used will remain open so long as our present-day world remains divided on the political plane, as it now is, among a number of sovereign independent states. In our present situation we can no more afford than our predecessors could, in their 'times of troubles', to let this perilous political disunity continue. But we also cannot afford, in the age of atomic weapons, to let the now imperative political unification of all Mankind come about, in the traditional way, through war *à outrance* ending in the destruction of all the competing Powers but one. Mankind will have to reach political unity through agreement; and, if and when this unity has once been attained, we shall not be able to afford to see the old alternating rhythm of lapses and recoveries reassert itself. For, in the Atomic Age, any lapse into disunity and disorder would be a threat to the existence of the human race. This is an unprecedentedly difficult problem for statesmanship. But we may take heart if it is true that the technological revolution which has presented this problem to the future architects of a world-state is also going to ease for them the economic problem that has repeatedly worsted their predecessors.

9 A survey of civilizations

IN CHAPTER SEVEN I have tried to construct an Helleno-Sinic 'model' for the normal configuration of the societies of the species 'civilizations', and, in order to do this, I have had to make two postulates. I have not only had to recognize the existence of other societies of the species of which the Hellenic and the Sinic are two representatives; I have also had provisionally to give names to some of those other civilizations and to assign limits to them in both space and time. The present chapter is an attempt to draw up a definitive list of civilizations with the aid of the Helleno-Sinic model that I have proposed in chapter seven. The criterion for the inclusion of a society in this list is its conformity to the Helleno-Sinic model.

In the drawing up of any list of civilizations that is intended to be 'canonical', the application of a model as a test of eligibility cannot be completely objective, and therefore cannot be indisputable. There is bound to be an element of subjectivity, and therefore of arbitrariness, which it will be impossible to eliminate.

For instance, the Western, Hellenic, and Sinic Civilizations have each had contemporaries of the same species. Each of these has, of course, claimed to be coextensive with Civilization itself; but palpable facts prove that this claim is illusory, like the Jews' claim that the Jews themselves are the unique 'Chosen People' and that the rest of Mankind are 'Gentiles'. The coexistence of a number of contemporary civilizations, each of which is an authentic representative of the species, is demonstrable, but this matter of incontrovertible fact raises the question whether, in a set of contemporary civilizations, the components of this set are completely independent of each other. If we conclude that some of them have an affinity with others, we then have to examine the character of this affinity, and also its degree.

In the set of civilizations that are still 'going concerns', the Western Civilization and the Sinic can be pronounced to be independent of each other. The Western Civilization is 'affiliated' to the Hellenic, and is also affiliated to the Syriac in virtue of its religion, since Christianity has its roots in what we may call an Helleno-Syriac 'culture-compost'. By contrast, the Sinic Civilization is not 'affiliated' to any antecedent society of its own species, and, though in the course of its history it did adopt Buddhism, which was a religion of alien origin, the source of Buddhism was different from the source of Christianity.

Thus the relation between the Western and the Sinic Civilization is one of complete independence of each other. By contrast, the Western Civilization has an affinity with the Eastern Orthodox Christian Civilization and with the Islamic, since Islam, as well as Eastern Christianity, has its roots in an identical Helleno-Syriac 'culture-compost'. There is a still closer affinity between the Sinic Civilization on the one hand and the Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese Civilizations on the other hand. These three civilizations have been inspired by the Sinic, but they have developed their loans from the Sinic Civilization on lines of their own

that are distinctive enough to entitle them to rank as separate civilizations of a sub-class that we may label 'satellites', in contrast to 'independent' civilizations such as the Sinic, the Western, and the Hellenic and Syriac, to both of which the Western Civilization is 'affiliated'.

We have, however, to distinguish between 'satellite' civilizations, which are separate representatives of the species, though their link with one of the 'independent' civilizations (or with two or more of these in succession) is very close, and the provinces of a 'full-blown' civilization. Some of these provinces may have so distinctive a provincial style that they might almost equally well be classified as being separate civilizations of the 'satellite' class. How, for instance, are we to classify the culture of Italy in the last millennium BC and the first five centuries of the Christian Era? Is this Italic culture merely a strongly pronounced provincial version of the Hellenic Civilization, or is it a separate civilization, though one that is a 'satellite' of the Hellenic? In such cases as this, the classification will inevitably be subjective and arbitrary, and therefore opinions will differ and there will be no objective criterion to validate one of the conflicting opinions and to invalidate the others.

We are confronted with a similar residuum of uncertainty when we pass from relations in the space-dimension to relations in the time-dimension. The history of the Western Civilization cannot be regarded as being a mere epilogue to the history of the Hellenic Civilization. The Western 'Roman Empire of the German People' ('The Holy Roman Empire') has been too feeble an avatar of the Roman Empire, and its role in Western history has been too slight, to allow us, on the strength of this ghost of the Roman Empire, to regard Western history as being a mere prolongation of Hellenic history. Moreover, through Christianity, the Western Civilization is related to the Syriac Civilization as well as to the Hellenic. Therefore we have to classify the Western culture not only as an independent one, in the sub-class of 'affiliated' civilizations, but, having once conceded this status to the Western Civilization, we have to concede the same status to the Eastern Orthodox Christian Civilization and to the Islamic, since these two cultures are rooted in the same Helleno-Syriac 'culture-compost' as the Western Civilization.

The concession to Eastern Orthodox Christian history of an identity of its own, instead of regarding it as an epilogue to Hellenic history, is, however, questionable. In contrast to the Roman Empire's shadowy avatars in the West, its avatars in Eastern Orthodox Christendom have been, as has already been noted, as substantial as the avatars of the Ch'in-Han Empire in China. On the strength of this phenomenon in China, I have interpreted the whole of Chinese history, from the Shang Age down to the fall of the Ch'ing dynasty in AD 1911, as being the continuous history of one and the same civilization, which I have labelled the 'Sinic'. Having conceded this, am I justified in not also conceding that the Hellenic Civilization survived in the

Levant until the liquidation of the Ottoman Roman Empire in AD 1922? Conversely, I have conceded that the adoption of Christianity and Islam brought with it a break of cultural continuity that requires us to classify the Western, Eastern Orthodox Christian, and Islamic cultures as separate civilizations. Am I then justified in having refused to classify as a separate civilization, merely 'affiliated' to the Sinic, the phase of Chinese culture that is subsequent to the adoption, in China, of Buddhism?

Thus the assignment of a particular culture to one class or another would still be debatable in some borderline cases, even if there were agreement about the classification itself. It might be agreed that there is a breach of continuity between Hellenic history and Western history. It might also be agreed that the history of Pharaonic Egypt is continuous from the date of the union of the two crowns, soon after the beginning of the third millennium BC, to the second century of the Christian Era; but these two cases are at opposite extremities of the gamut, and, in between, there is a series of gradations, within which it is impossible to affix labels with the same precision. Again, it might be agreed that, among the civilizations that are still 'going concerns', the Western and the Sinic Civilizations are completely independent of each other; but the Russian Civilization's relation with the Eastern Orthodox and the Western would be subject to dispute.

The inclusion of the African Civilizations should be clarified.¹ The term is here taken to include the politically organized pre-Islamic and pre-Christian societies of the Western Sudan and of Central and Eastern Africa, but not those fragmentary African communities whose economic and political institutions were rudimentary. It can hardly be denied that Africa south of the Sahara was 'on the move' long before the arrival of the modern Westerners who put Africa 'on the map' in contemporary Western eyes. The rise of indigenous civilizations in sub-Saharan Africa was stimulated by the spread of metallurgy from Egypt in the last millennium BC² and by still obscure influences from Kush and Meroe³ – countries in the Nile valley, south of Egypt, whose culture had been partly derived from Egypt but was also partly an original creation of their own.

The kingdoms in the Nile valley to the south of the First Cataract and to the north of the White Nile swamps were Monophysite Christian for about eight centuries before they were conquered and converted by Muslim Arabs in the fourteenth century of the Christian Era. Moreover, the major exotic influence on the indigenous African Civilizations to the south of the Sahara in the Western as well as in the Eastern Sudan came from the Islamic Society, which has been in contact with sub-Saharan Africa since the Muslim Arab conquest of Egypt and North-West Africa in the seventh century of the Christian Era.⁴ Indeed, the outstanding achievements of indigenous civilizations in Africa are to be found in those areas in which the penetration of Islamic influences has been the most thorough – e.g. the belt of open country to the south of the Sahara and to the north of the Nilotic swamps.⁵ But the indigenous African cultures were already long since established before the arrival of Islam, and in the Congo basin and at the southern end of the Rift Valley there were African cultures

that were not affected by either Islam or the modern West before the nineteenth century.⁶

Although the non-Islamic communities were for the most part non-literate, and hence subject to crucial limitations on their economic and political expansion,⁷ the existence of cities, which is Bagby's and Childe's criterion for civilization,⁸ is attested in Islamic and non-Islamic Africa alike. The needs and rewards of trade called into existence both cities and the organized and centralized administration that an urbanized society requires.⁹ The development of intensive agriculture and the profits of commercial enterprise permitted the rise of non-productive élites – kings, administrators, scholars, priests – who were supported out of the economic surplus.¹⁰ My own definition of civilization in ethical terms¹¹ is also applicable to Africa, now that the richness of Africa's religious and philosophical heritage is at last being revealed to Western eyes.¹²

A Western observer must be struck, however, by a crucial deficiency in the world-explaining cosmologies which have been evolved, in fascinating diversity, among the indigenous African communities. These highly integrated systems for establishing Man's relationship with the human and non-human world do certainly permit a highly practical classification of the complex data of his material and spiritual experience, as these would appear to a pre-scientific society. Yet this very self-sufficiency, which is an advantage in so far as it is a solution for the problem of coming to terms with a hostile but more or less predictable environment, becomes a positive bane when once the stable equilibrium which it establishes so successfully is disturbed by factors for which no explanation is forthcoming from traditional experience.¹³ In this situation, the equilibrium ossifies into conservatism, or else is so utterly disrupted and devalued that a community dissolves into uncertainty. In the former case, unprecedented problems or stimuli will have been neutralized by being absorbed somehow into the existing patterns of social and mental organization; in other words, the system shows little capacity for positive and fruitful responses to challenges.¹⁴ These fates of being 'arrested'¹⁵ on the threshold of growth, or being doomed to a premature death, await any society which lacks an internal capacity for innovation and initiative; and we may infer both from the evidence of Africa's history and from what we know today of African philosophies that at crucial points in the development of Africa the crippling limitations of mental rigidity took their toll.¹⁶

All the same, the temporary Western domination of Africa during the 'colonial' period has led Westerners to underestimate the African achievement. The values of the aggressive Western Society of the nineteenth century were largely determined by the recently adopted Western objective of technological innovation, and alien societies that did not come up to this arbitrarily imposed technological standard were classified in Western minds as barbaric, primitive, savage. Today, however, the perpetuation of these views convicts those who hold them of obstinate prejudice. An unbiased observer will credit Africa with achievements comparable to those in other societies – and such societies have been the normal type, so far – in which an obsessive concern with technology has not been allowed to overshadow everything else. It will be

recognized that Africa has made a special – perhaps not yet adequately recognized – contribution to Mankind's cultural achievements in the spheres of social relations and of Man's relations with non-human Nature.

The list of civilizations cannot be conclusive and is subject to the various reservations discussed above. The chart shows the time-spans of all the civilizations except for those possible satellite civilizations whose claim to rank as separate seems dubious.¹⁷

54 The civilizations of the world, 3500 BC to AD 2000 illustrating the successive phases of their growth.

I FULL-BLOWN CIVILIZATIONS

A INDEPENDENT CIVILIZATIONS

Unrelated to others

Middle American
Andean¹⁸

Unaffiliated to others

Sumero-Akkadian¹⁸

Egyptiac

Aegean²⁰

Indus

Sinic

Affiliated to others

Syriac to Sumero-Akkadian, Egyptiac, Aegean,
and Hittite

Hellenic to Aegean

Indic to Indus

African first to Egyptiac, then to Islamic, then to
Western²¹

Orthodox Christian
Western
Islamic } to both Syriac and Hellenic

B SATELLITE CIVILIZATIONS

Mississippian
'South-Western'²² } of Middle American

North Andean²³ } of Andean

South Andean²⁴ }

?Elamite²⁵ of Sumero-Akkadian

Hittite²⁶ of Sumero-Akkadian

?Urtian²⁷ of Sumero-Akkadian

Iranian first of Sumero-Akkadian, then of Syriac

?Meroitic²⁸ of Egyptiac

Korean

Japanese } of Sinic

Vietnamese }

?Italic²⁹

South-East Asian first of Indic, then, in Indonesia
and Malaya only, of Islamic

Tibetan³⁰

Russian first of Orthodox Christian, then of Western

Nomadic of sedentary civilizations adjacent to
Eurasian and Afrasian steppes

II ABORTIVE CIVILIZATIONS³¹

First Syriac, eclipsed by Egyptiac

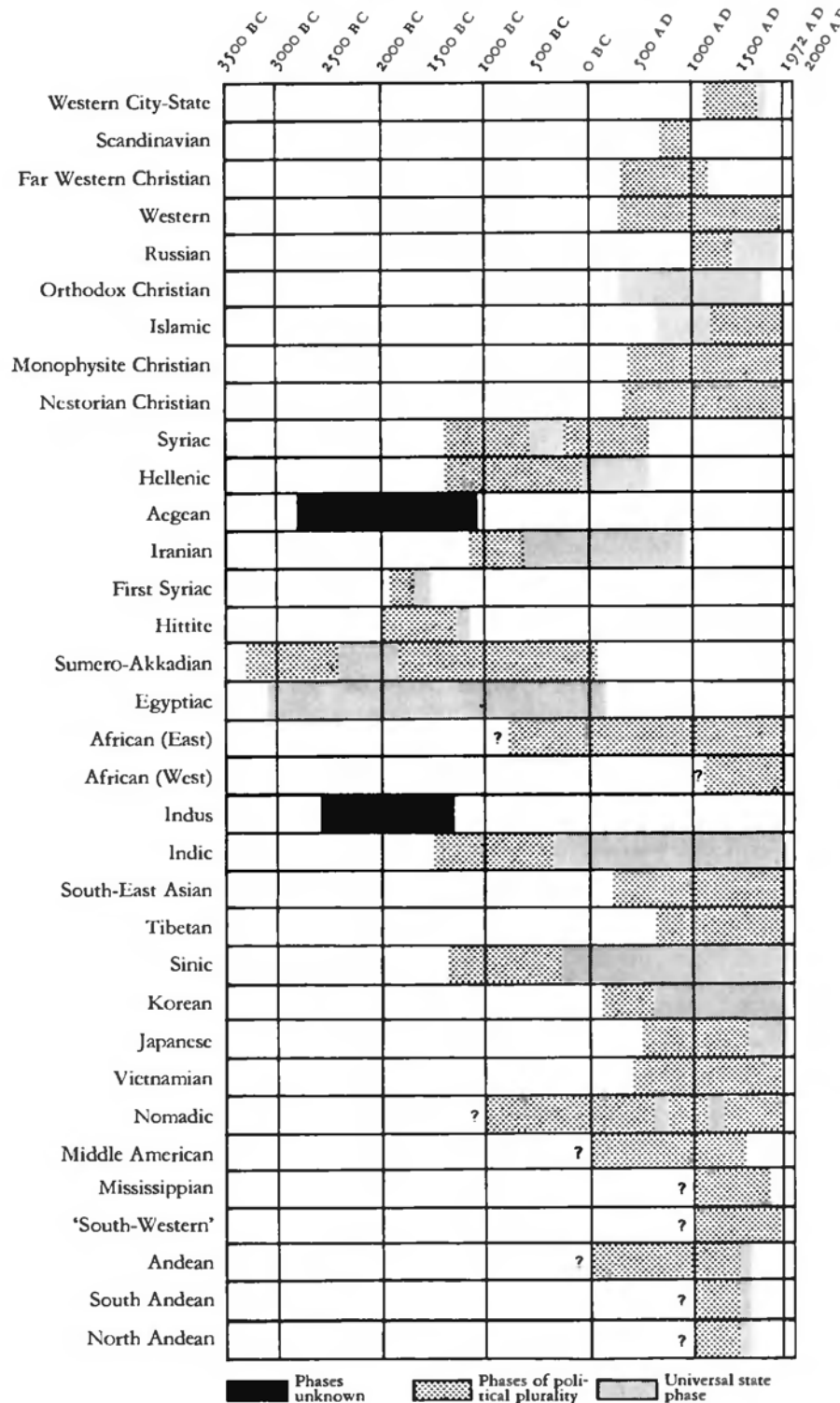
Nestorian Christian, eclipsed by Islamic

Monophysite Christian, eclipsed by Islamic

Far Western Christian, eclipsed by Western

Scandinavian, eclipsed by Western

Medieval Western City-State Cosmos, eclipsed by
modern Western



10 The nature of the geneses of civilizations

IN MAKING my list of civilizations, I have grouped these in sets, and my labels for these sets show that there are more ways than one in which a civilization can come into existence. A civilization may emerge through the spontaneous mutation of some pre-civilizational society. This is the mode of genesis of the civilizations that I have labelled 'unrelated to others' and 'unaffiliated to others'. Alternatively, a pre-civilizational society may be stimulated into changing into a civilization by the influence of some civilization that is already in existence. This is the class of civilizations that I have called 'satellites'. This label is simply a mark of this particular kind of origin; it does not imply that the 'satellite' civilization is necessarily inferior either in cultural quality or in historical importance to the pre-existing civilization that has given it its initial stimulus. For instance, the Russian Civilization is, in origin, a 'satellite' of the Eastern Orthodox Christian Civilization of the East Roman Empire and Bulgaria; it has latterly become a 'satellite' of the Western Civilization; but it has produced distinctive achievements of its own, and, in some of these, it has surpassed the Eastern Orthodox Christian Civilization, under whose influence the Russian Society raised its culture above its previous pre-civilizational level. A civilization can also come into existence, not through the mutation of a pre-civilizational society, but through the disintegration of one or more civilizations of an older generation and the transformation of some of their elements into a new configuration. This is the social and cultural process that I have labelled 'affiliation'. The Eastern Orthodox and Western Christian Civilizations and the Islamic Civilization are 'affiliated', in this usage of the word, to the Hellenic and Syriac Civilizations.

In this third form of genesis, older civilizations are followed and replaced by younger representatives of the same species of society. In the two other forms of genesis, there is a change of species. A civilization comes into existence through a mutation of a society that has previously been a pre-civilizational one. When we find one species of society changing into another, we have to look for the features in which the differences between the two species reside.

The difference between civilizations and pre-civilizational societies does not consist in the presence or absence of institutions; for we find that institutions, being the vehicles of the impersonal relations in which all societies have their existence, are attributes of the whole genus and therefore common properties of the two species. Pre-civilizational societies have their own characteristic institutions – the spirit of the year, with his dramatic cycle of seasonal experiences; totemism and exogamy; tabus, initiations, and age-classes; segregations of the sexes, at certain stages of life, in separate communal establishments – and some of these institutions are certainly as elaborate and perhaps as subtle as those which are characteristic of civilizations.

Nor are civilizations distinguished from pre-civilizational societies by the division of labour; for though in general this plays a more important part in their lives, and its importance tends to increase as they grow, we can discern at least the rudiments of the division of labour in the lives of pre-civilizational societies also. For instance, primitive kings, who seem like undifferentiated 'all-round men' by contrast with the executive heads of political communities in societies which are in process of civilization, can be seen to be specialists when we observe them in their own social environment and compare them with the rank-and-file of their tribesmen. Primitive magicians and smiths and minstrels are specialists in the same degree.

Indeed, the division of labour may be a necessary condition of the existence of institutions and therefore a generic feature in the lives of societies, since it is difficult to imagine how institutions could exist without in some way being embodied in the persons of particular human beings who are thus invested with special social functions.

The complement and antidote to the division of labour is social imitation or mimesis,¹ which may be defined as the acquisition, through imitation, of social 'assets' – aptitudes or emotions or ideas – which the acquirers have not originated for themselves, and which they might never have come to possess if they had not encountered and imitated other people in whose possession these assets were already to be found. Mimesis, too, is a generic feature of social life.² Its operation can be observed both in pre-civilizational societies and in civilizations. It operates, however, in different directions in the two species. In pre-civilizational societies, as we know them, mimesis is directed towards the older generation of the living members and towards the dead ancestors who stand, unseen but not unfelt, at the back of the living elders, reinforcing their power and enhancing their prestige. In a society where mimesis is thus directed backward towards the past, custom rules and the society remains static. On the other hand, in societies in process of civilization, mimesis is directed towards creative personalities which command a following because they are pioneers on the road towards the common goal of human endeavours. In a society where mimesis is thus directed forward towards the future, 'the cake of custom'³ is broken and the society is in dynamic motion along a course of change and growth.

In this contrast between a dynamic movement and a static condition, we have come at last upon a point of difference between civilizations and primitive societies; but when we ask ourselves whether the difference thus empirically observed is permanent and fundamental, we find that the answer is in the negative.

If we only know of pre-civilizational societies in a static condition, this is merely an accidental consequence of the fragmentariness of our knowledge. All our 'data' for the study of societies of this kind happens to come from representatives of the species which are in the last phases of

their histories; but, where direct observation fails us, a train of reasoning informs us that there must have been earlier phases in the histories of the pre-civilizational societies in which these were moving more dynamically than any civilizations have ever moved yet, as far as our knowledge goes. Pre-civilizational societies must be prior to humanity, since Mankind could not have become human except in a social environment; and this mutation of our pre-human ancestors into human beings, which was accomplished, in circumstances of which we have no record, under the aegis of pre-civilizational societies, was a more profound change, a greater step in growth, than any progress which Man has yet achieved under the aegis of civilizations.

Pre-civilizational societies, as we know them by direct observation, may be likened to people lying torpid upon a ledge on a mountain-side, with a precipice below and a precipice above; civilizations may be likened to companions of these 'Sleepers of Ephesus' who have just risen to their feet and have started to climb on up the face of the cliff; while we, for our part, may liken ourselves to observers whose field of vision is limited to the ledge and to the foot of the upper precipice and who have come upon the scene at the moment when the different members of the party happen to be in these respective postures and positions. At first sight we may be inclined to draw an absolute distinction between the two groups, acclaiming the climbers as athletes and dismissing the recumbent figures as paralytics; but on second thoughts we shall find it more prudent to suspend judgment.

After all, the recumbent figures cannot be paralytics in reality; for they cannot have been born on the ledge, and no human muscles but their own can have hoisted them to this halting-place up the face of the precipice below. So far from being paralytics, they must be seasoned athletes who have successfully scaled the 'pitch' below and are still taking a well-earned rest from their recent labours.⁴ On the other hand, their companions who are climbing at this moment have only just left this same ledge and started to climb the face of the precipice above; and, since the next ledge is out of sight, we do not know how high or how arduous this next 'pitch' may be. We only know that it is impossible to halt and rest before the next ledge, wherever that may lie, is reached. Thus, even if we could estimate each present climber's strength and skill and nerve and courage, we could not judge whether any of them have any prospect of gaining the unseen ledge above, which is the goal of their present endeavours. We can, however, be sure that some of them will never attain it.

We can see many of our climbers already falling – some to their death and others to an ignominious life-in-death on the ledge below. These others lie side by side with the decomposing corpses of their companions who – *felices opportunitate mortis*⁵ – have escaped the pains of failure through annihilation, and also side by side with the recumbent forms of those apparent paralytics who have not yet essayed the 'pitch' by which these unfortunates have already been defeated. Disqualified from essaying the 'pitch' again and denied the *coup de grâce* of annihilation, they would lie 'fast bound in misery and iron',⁶ enduring the torments of Prometheus with the vulture devouring his

liver, if the gods did not take pity on them and grant them insensibility by turning them into stone, to weather away, with the lapse of centuries, like Niobe on the flank of Mount Sipylus. By the time when we have come on the scene, a majority of the climbers on the precipice above our ledge have fallen to meet one or other of the penalties of defeat – petrification or annihilation – and there are only a few to be seen still working their way upward. If we could look down the face of the precipice below our ledge to the next ledge beneath, and translate ourselves back into the age when this lower 'pitch' was the scene of action, we should almost certainly discover that the mountaineers who have attained our ledge, to rest from their labours before essaying the 'pitch' next above, are in a still smaller minority by comparison with the unnumbered and unremembered casualties which the scaling of that 'pitch' likewise cost in its time.

We have now followed out our simile far enough to have ascertained that the contrast between the static condition of pre-civilizational societies, as we know them, and the dynamic motion of societies in process of civilization is not a permanent and fundamental point of difference, but an accident of the time and place of observation. All the pre-civilizational societies which we now observe at rest must once have been in motion; and all societies which have entered upon the process of civilization may come to rest sooner or later in one way or another. Some have come to rest already by relapsing, long before the goal has been attained, to the level of primitive humanity from which they have started. The condition of these *ci-devant* civilizations which have failed in their endeavours is static like the condition of those pre-civilizational societies which are extant today because they have succeeded in theirs. In every other respect, there is all the difference between them; and this difference – the difference between failure and success – is wholly in the pre-civilizational societies' favour. These societies, as we see them today, are static because they are recuperating from the strain of a successful effort to attain the state in which they now persist. Their stillness is the stillness not of death but of sleep; and, even if they may be destined never to awake, they are at least still alive. The *ci-devant* civilizations are static because they have lost their lives in an unsuccessful attempt to transcend the state into which they have now relapsed. Their stillness is the stillness of dead things in decay; and they are dead equally beyond doubt and beyond recall, whether they happen to be disintegrating as rapidly as a putrefying corpse or as slowly as a rotting tree-trunk or a weathering rock.

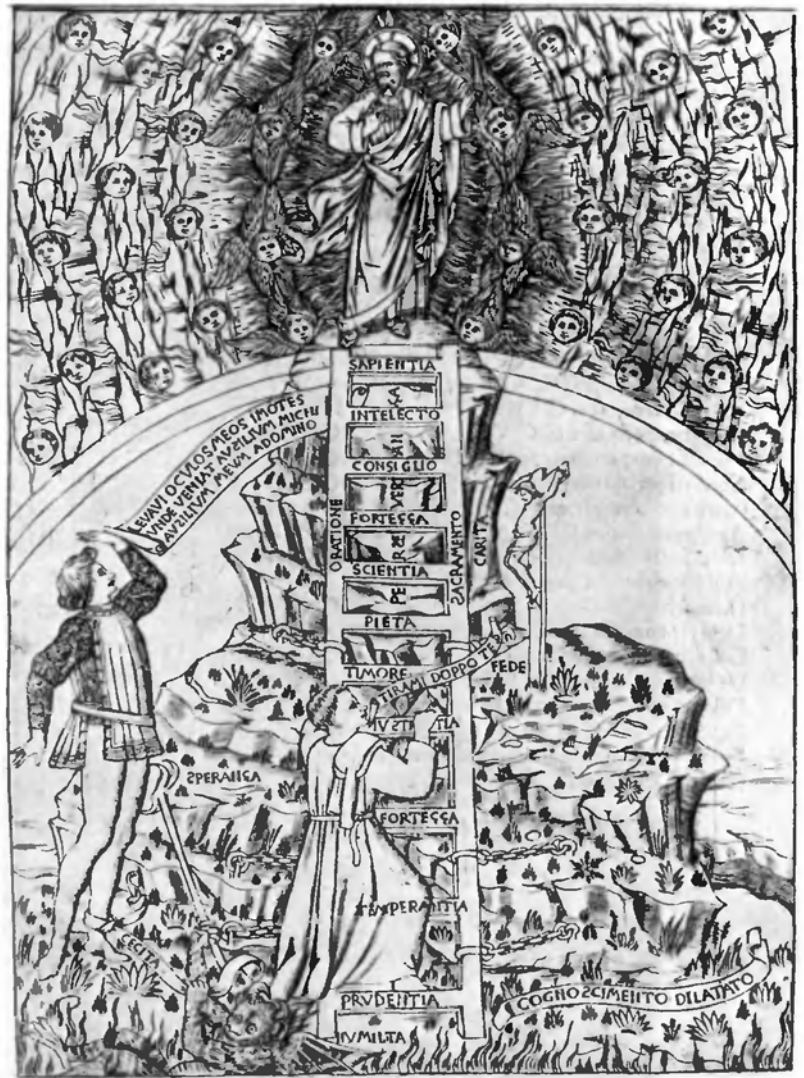
We have failed to find the immediate object of our search, a permanent and fundamental point of difference between pre-civilizational societies and civilizations; but incidentally we have obtained some light on the ultimate objective of our present inquiry: the nature of the genesis of civilizations. Starting with the mutation of pre-civilizational societies into civilizations, we have found that this consists in a transition from a static condition to a dynamic activity; and we shall find that the same formula holds good for the alternative mode of emergence of civilizations through the secession of proletariats from the dominant minorities of pre-existent civilizations which have lost their creative power. Such dominant minorities are static by

definition; for to say that the creative minority of a civilization in growth has degenerated or atrophied into the dominant minority of a civilization in disintegration is only another way of saying that the society in question has relapsed from a dynamic activity into a static condition. Against this static condition, the secession of a proletariat is a dynamic reaction; and in this light we can see that, in the secession of a proletariat from a dominant minority, a new civilization is generated through the transition of a society from a static condition to a dynamic activity, just as it is in the mutation which produces a civilization out of a primitive society. The geneses of all civilizations – the unrelated and the related class alike – could be described in a sentence written by a Western philosopher-statesman of our age one month after the close of the First World War:

There is no doubt that mankind is once more on the move. The very foundations have been shaken and loosened, and things are again fluid. The tents have been struck, and the great caravan of Humanity is once more on the march.⁷

Can we yet say anything more about the transition from a static condition to a dynamic activity in which the genesis of every civilization consists? We know this much more already: this instance of the transition is not unique. When we were studying it in our simile of the mountain-side, we realized that the ledge on which we saw the pre-civilizational societies lying dormant and the *ci-devant* civilizations lying dead, while the societies in process of civilization were scaling the face of the precipice above, was only one ledge in a series, the other terms of which were outside our field of vision. All extant pre-civilizational societies must have reached our ledge from an unseen ledge below, and all societies in process of civilization are endeavouring to reach an unseen ledge above; and, for all we know, the number of other ledges above this and below that may be infinite in both directions.

The height of the cliff-face that towers above us is beyond our powers of estimation, but we do know what is the goal that we are seeking in the perilous climb in which some human societies are now engaged. Within less than 2500 years after the emergence of the earliest of the civilizations, the earliest of the higher religions and philosophies appeared, and each of these post-civilizational societies has pointed out Mankind's goal and has given us prescriptions for attaining it. Thus, though the goal of Mankind's continuous and increasing endeavours is still out of sight, we know, nevertheless, what it is. We can discern it, without having to divine the future, by looking inwards; for Mankind's goal is written large in the constitution of human nature. What changed our pre-human ancestors into human beings like ourselves was the acquisition of consciousness and will. These two spiritual faculties are human nature's distinguishing marks; and their character is ambivalent. They are both a treasure that gives us hope and a burden that puts us in peril. Their emergence in Man has split the unity of the Universe, and broken its harmony, for every conscious, wilful, human soul. The price of human knowledge and freedom is an intellectual and a moral relativity. Each of us sees the Universe divided between himself and all the rest of it; and each of us seeks to make



57 The goal of human endeavours. The soul arduously climbs towards God by a ladder, its rungs marked with the virtues that lead to transcendent understanding. Engraving from *Il Monte Sancto di Dio*, 1477.



THE DARK AND THE LIGHT

58 According to Chinese art theory, the central peak in a landscape must be surrounded by lower hills 'which cluster around it, their Yin and Yang sides (dark and light) clearly distinguished' – from a treatise by the court painter T'ang-Tai.

himself the centre round which all the rest shall revolve. This constitution of human nature sets human nature's goal. Its goal is to transcend the intellectual and moral limitations that its relativity imposes on it. In terms of Judaic theism, human nature's intellectual goal is to see the Universe as it is in the sight of God, instead of seeing it with the distorted vision of one of God's self-centred creatures. Human nature's moral goal is to make the self's will coincide with God's will, instead of pursuing self-regarding purposes of its own. The Indian philosophies and religions set the same goal for us in terms of their supra-personal vision of ultimate reality.

Few, if any, human souls have been entirely unaware of this goal or entirely indifferent to it. The saints have dedicated themselves to the pursuit of it, and some saints have come within a hair's breadth of attaining it – as it has seemed to spectators of ordinary spiritual stature, though never to the spiritual athletes themselves. A human soul's – even a saint's soul's – fight with self-centredness is unceasing. The saints testify to the truth of this from their own spiritual experience; and this means that the next ledge, if some of the present climbers do succeed in reaching it, will not be a permanent abode for human souls. Like the ledge below it, that is within our field of vision, it will be only a temporary camping-ground. Even if some future generation of Mankind were to make, unanimously, a spiritual effort that would transfigure human society into a communion of saints, rest would not be one of the rewards of this spiritual achievement. Even in a saintly society the victory over self-centredness, collective and individual, would never be complete, and the effort would therefore have to be unrelenting. This means that the next ledge will be the scene of a spiritual struggle that will not be less intense than the struggle to climb, from ledge to ledge, up the face of the cliff.

Nor will the next ledge be the last. For all we know, the heights above us, that are still waiting to be scaled, may be far higher than those that we have scaled already, and the depths of these, which are now below us, are unfathomable. The pre-civilizational societies that are extant today are far above the level of Primitive Man. Most of them are representatives of Neolithic Man – the inventor of agriculture and the tamer of most of our domesticated animals. A very few of them are representatives of Upper Palaeolithic Man, and this able and enterprising hunter and food-gatherer was already on the move. He had left behind him the more rudimentary technology and economy of his Lower Palaeolithic predecessor. Lower Palaeolithic Man may have lain dormant on his ledge for half a million years; and this is all but a fraction of the time-span of Mankind's human existence so far. Lower Palaeolithic Man had to recuperate from his pre-human ancestors' *tour de force* of becoming human; for this was not only the earliest of Mankind's achievements; it was also a greater and a harder feat than any that Mankind has performed since then. We should have to descend below the ledge from which sub-man rose to Man in order to find the level of the common ancestor of Mankind and the anthropoids. And how many hundreds and thousands of lower ledges should we have to leave behind us in our descent if we sought to trace the rise of mammals from the lowest vertebrates and of vertebrates

from the rudimentary forms in which life itself first emerged out of the abyss?

Without venturing down that dark descent or even allowing ourselves to speculate whether the alternating series of ledge and precipice, precipice and ledge, is infinite or finite, we can observe that the alternation between horizontal and perpendicular surfaces on the mountain-side repeats itself in a kind of pattern, and that the corresponding alternation between a static condition and a dynamic activity in the energies of the living creatures that are seeking to scale the mountain similarly recurs in a kind of rhythm. This rhythm has been pointed out by a number of observers, living in different ages of different societies, who all agree in regarding it as something fundamental in the nature of the Universe.

Herbert Spencer sees the Universe moving from 'an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity' through a series of 'integrations' and 'differentiations'.⁸ Hegel sees the history of Mankind as a spiral development, a series of movements from one form of unity through a phase of disunity and on to reintegration on a higher plane.⁹ Saint-Simon sees the histories of civilizations as a series of alternating 'organic' and 'critical' periods.¹⁰ Twenty-three centuries before the appearance of these eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Western philosophers, an Hellenic man of science, Empedocles, attributed the changes in the face of the Universe, of which we are empirically aware, to the alternate ebb and flow of two forces which are complementary to one another and at the same time antithetical: an integrating force which he calls 'love' and a disintegrating force which he calls 'hate'. 'Without contraries there is no progression.'¹¹

The two alternating forces or phases in the rhythm of the Universe which Empedocles calls 'love' and 'hate' have also been detected – quite independently of the movement of Hellenic thought – by observers in the Sinic World, who have named them 'Yin' and 'Yang'.¹² The nucleus of the Sinic character which stands for Yin seems to represent dark coiling clouds overshadowing the Sun, while the nucleus of the character which stands for Yang seems to represent the unclouded Sun-disk emitting its rays. In the original everyday usage, Yin appears to have signified the side of a mountain or a valley which is in the shadow, and Yang the side which is in the sunshine. Sinic philosophers pictured Yin and Yang as two different kinds of matter. As substances, Yin symbolized water and Yang fire. As phases of the Universe, they symbolized the seasons; and the regular annual alternation of the seasons suggested the Sinic conception of how Yin and Yang are related to one another. Each in turn comes into the ascendant at the other's expense; yet even at the high tide of its expansion it never quite submerges the other, so that, when its tide ebbs, as it always does after reaching high-water mark, there is still a nucleus of the other element left free to expand, as its perpetual rival and partner contracts, until it arrives in due course at the opposite turning-point where the whole movement begins all over again.

Of the various symbols in which different observers in different societies have expressed the alternation between a static condition and a dynamic activity in the rhythm of the Universe, Yin and Yang are the most apt, because they

convey the measure of the rhythm direct and not through some metaphor derived from psychology or mechanics or mathematics. We will therefore use these Sinic symbols in this Study henceforward; and we shall find that this notation lends itself readily to the music of other civilizations. In the *Magnificat* we shall hear Yin's song of joy at passing over into Yang:

My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced
in God my Saviour;

For he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.

In the Chorus Mysticus which is the culmination of the Second Part of *Faust* we shall hear Yang's song of joy at passing back again, when his race is run, into Yin:

Alles vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichnis;
Das Unzulängliche,
Hier wird's Ereignis;
Das Unbeschreibliche,
Hier ist's getan;
Das ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan.¹³

In the self-revelation of the Spirit of the Earth to the scholar who evokes this mighty power by the vehemence of his mental strife, we shall hear the very beat of the alternating rhythm itself:

In Lebensfluten, im Tatensturm
Wall' ich auf und ab,
Webe hin und her!
Geburt und Grab
Ein ewiges Meer,
Ein wechselnd Weben,
Ein glühend Leben,
So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.¹⁴



59 Yin-Yang symbol.

13 Challenge-and-response

I HAVE been searching for the positive factor which, within the last five thousand years, has shaken part of Mankind out of the 'integration of custom' into the 'differentiation of civilization'. The dawn of civilization was not the first occasion on which the rhythm of human history underwent this change. This had happened already when some human societies on the fringes of the Fertile Crescent had invented agriculture. It had happened, before that, when some earlier societies had broken away from the routine – perhaps, by then, half a million years old – of making Lower Palaeolithic tools, and had invented the much more competent Upper Palaeolithic technique. The most radical of all new departures in human history had been the original one in which Man's pre-human ancestors had turned into human beings. Thus the search for the explanation of such new departures is a search for the origin, not only of civilization, but of humanity itself.

In my search up to the present point, I have been experimenting with the play of soulless forces – *vis inertiae* and race and environment – and I have been thinking in the deterministic terms of cause-and-effect. Now that these manoeuvres have ended, one after another, in my drawing blank, I am led to consider whether my successive failures may not point to some mistake in method. Perhaps I have fallen a victim to 'the apathetic fallacy' against which I sought to put myself on guard at the outset of my inquiry.¹ Have I not erred in applying to historical thought, which is a study of living creatures, a scientific method of thought which has been devised for thinking about inanimate Nature? And have I not also erred further in treating the outcomes of encounters between persons as cases of the operation of cause-and-effect? The effect of a cause is inevitable, invariable, and predictable. But the initiative that is taken by one or other of the live parties to an encounter is not a cause; it is a challenge. Its consequence is not an effect; it is a response. Challenge-and-response² resembles cause-and-effect only in standing for a sequence of events. The character of the sequence is not the same. Unlike the effect of a cause, the response to a challenge is not predetermined, is not necessarily uniform in all cases, and is therefore intrinsically unpredictable. I will now look at my problem with new eyes. I will see 'persons' where, so far, I have been seeing 'forces'. I will picture the relations between persons as being challenges that evoke responses, instead of causes that produce effects. I will follow Plato's lead: I will turn away from the formulae of science in order to hearken to the language of mythology.

So far, by the process of exhaustion, we have made one discovery: the cause of the genesis of civilizations is not simple but multiple; it is not an entity but a relation. We have the choice of conceiving this relation either as an interaction between two inhuman forces – like the petrol and the air which interact in the engine of a motor-car – or as an encounter between two personalities. Let us yield our minds to the second of these two conceptions. Perhaps it will lead us towards the light.

An encounter between two superhuman personalities is the plot of some of the greatest stories and dramas that the human imagination has conceived. An encounter between Yahweh and the Serpent is the plot of the story of the Fall of Man in the Book of Genesis; a second encounter between the same antagonists (transfigured by a progressive enlightenment of Syriac souls) is the plot of the New Testament which tells the story of the Redemption; an encounter between the Lord and Satan is the plot of the Book of Job; an encounter between the Lord and Mephistopheles is the plot of Goethe's *Faust*; an encounter between Gods and Demons is the plot of the Scandinavian *Voluspá*; an encounter between Artemis and Aphrodite is the plot of Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

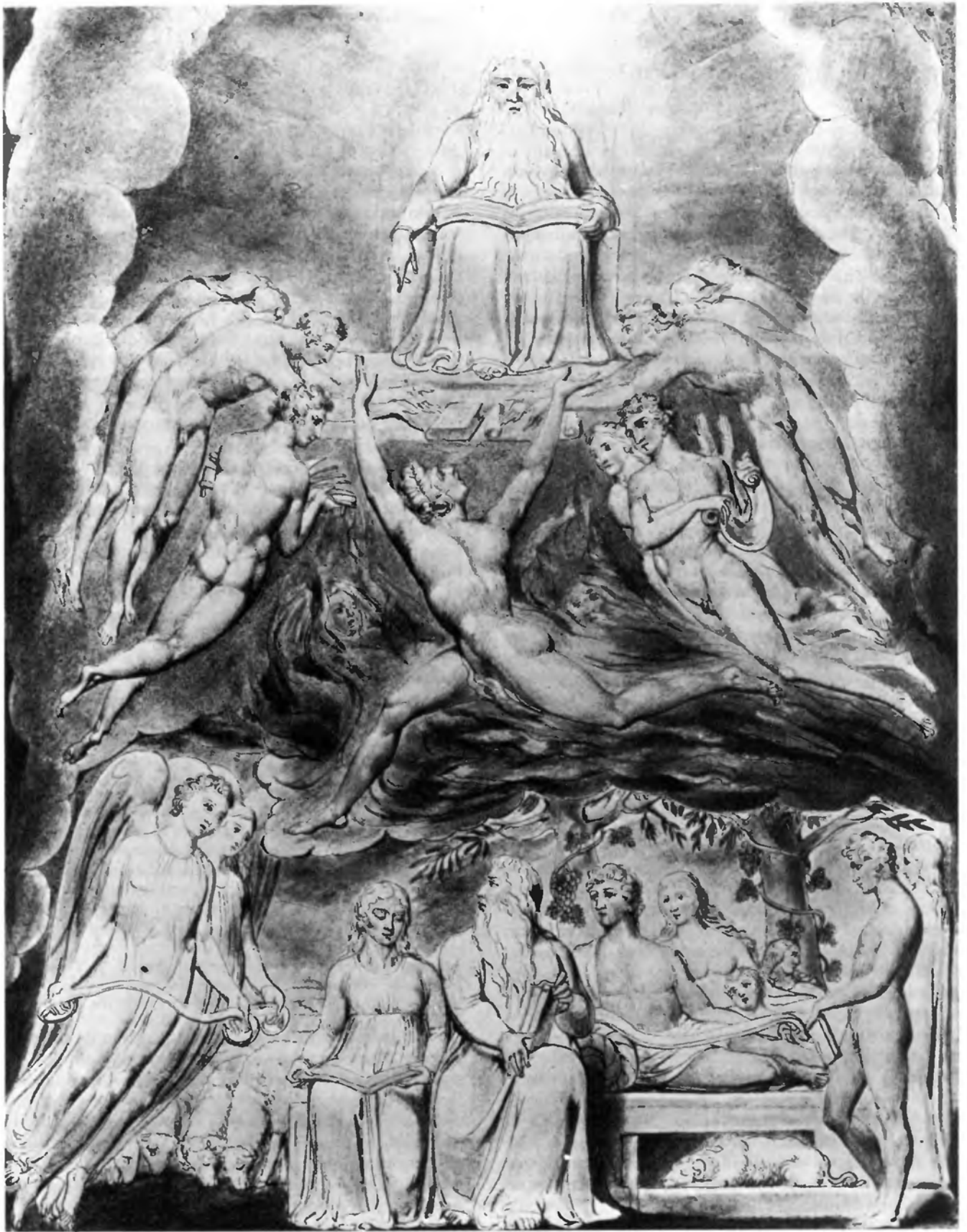
We find another version of the same plot in that ubiquitous and ever-recurring myth – a 'primordial image', if ever there was one – of the encounter between the Virgin and the Father of her Child. The characters of this myth have played their allotted parts on a thousand different stages under an infinite variety of names: Danae and the Shower of Gold; Europa and the Bull; Semele the stricken Earth and Zeus the Sky that launches the thunderbolt; Creusa and Apollo in Euripides' *Ion*; Psyche and Cupid; Gretchen and Faust. The theme recurs, transfigured, in the Annunciation. This protean myth even found favour for a time with those Western cosmogonists of our own day who propounded the theory that the planetary system was the issue of a close conjunction between the Sun and another passing star.

Their hypothesis was that in the remote past our sun was an ordinary star without planets. Then, about twenty million years [*sic*] ago, another star on its journey through space passed very close to the sun. The gravitational attraction between the two bodies swung them about one another and eventually the other star passed on. But in this close encounter great tides of gaseous matter would have been torn from the sun; some of this would fall back, some might have followed the passing star into space, but a certain amount would remain under the gravitational field of the sun, circling around it. These gases eventually condensed into smaller fragments, which finally accreted into larger and larger bodies to form the planets.³

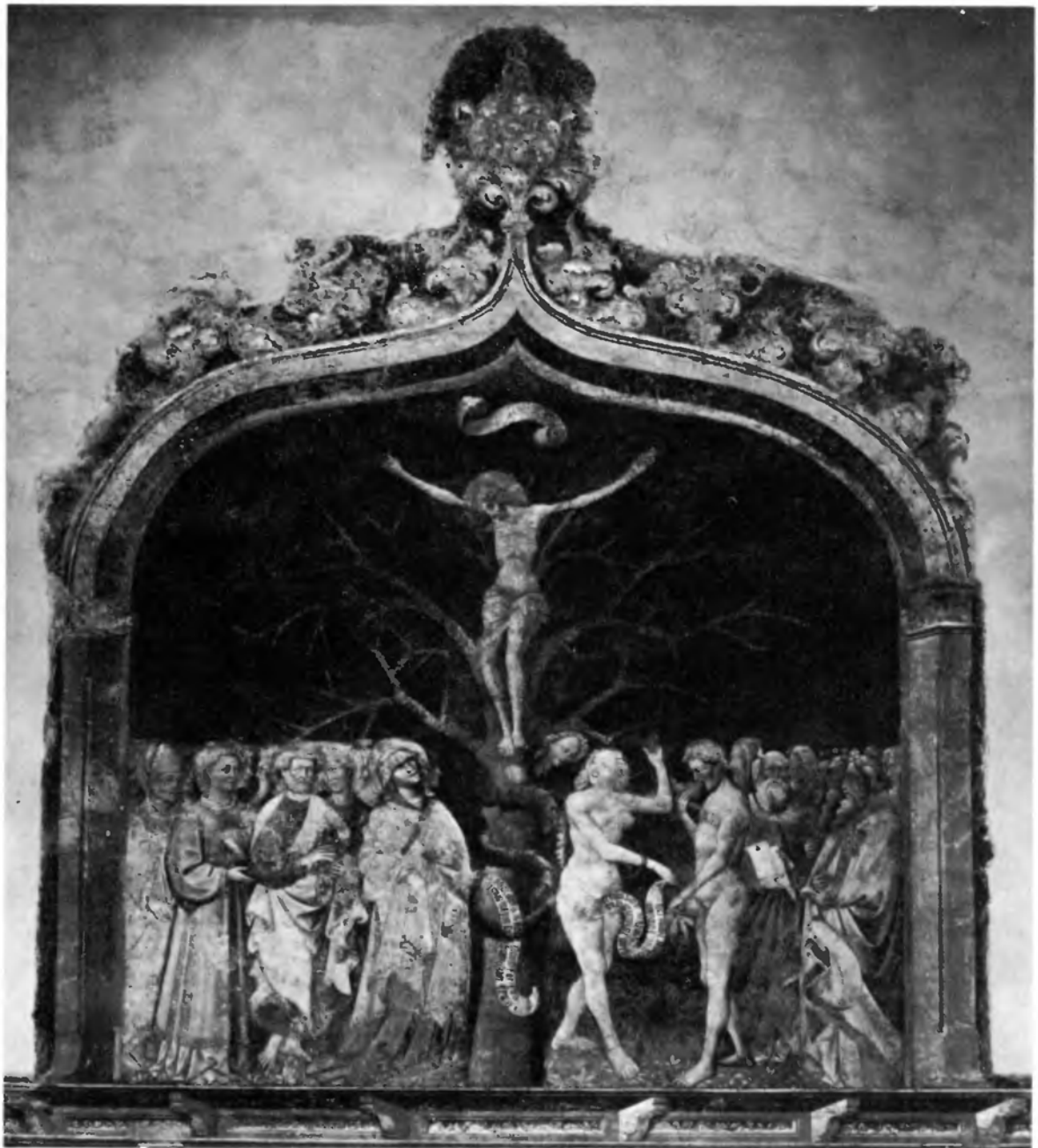
This is no more than a restatement, in the incongruous accents of modern astronomy, of the mythological encounter between the Sun goddess and her ravisher that is so familiar a tale in the mouths of the untutored children of Nature.

Let us try to analyse the plot of this story or drama which repeats itself in such different contexts and in such various forms. We may begin with two general features: the encounter is thought of as being a rare or even a unique event; and it has consequences which are vast in proportion to the vastness of the breach which it makes in the customary course of Nature.

Even in the easy-going world of the Hellenic mythology, where the gods saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and had their way with so many of them that their victims



66 SATAN'S CHALLENGE, GOD'S RESPONSE The Devil's intrusion into God's Universe provokes a renewal of divine creativity. Blake's watercolour dramatically emphasizes Satan's vigorous movement, in contrast to God's majestic immobility. Beneath them, Job, 'perfect and upright'.



68 FALL AND REDEMPTION Without Man's Fall, God would be unable to reveal his self-sacrificing love: the temptation of Eve and Christ's Crucifixion are linked in the common medieval symbol of a Tree of Death and Life.

In the New Testament, the uniqueness of the divine event is of the essence of the story; and this has been a stumbling-block to the Western intellect ever since the geocentric conception of the material universe was first impugned by the discoveries of modern Western astronomy.

Yet this modern astronomical conception of immensity, which appeared, only yesterday, to confute the ageless myth of the unique divine event, may appear to rehabilitate it tomorrow: for the immensity of the reputed extent of empty space is out of all proportion to the immensity of the reputed number of the stars; and it follows from this that any encounter between two stars would be an almost inconceivably rare event. Thus, in the portrayal of a conjunction of our Sun and another star, which was supposed

to have led on to the appearance of life on Earth, the rarity and momentousness of the event turn out to be almost as much of the essence of the story as they are in the Book of Genesis and in the New Testament, where the encounters are between God and the Devil and the consequences are the Fall and the Redemption of Man. The traditional plot of the play has a way of reasserting itself in exotic settings.

The play opens with a perfect state of Yin. In the Universe, Balder keeps all things bright and beautiful through keeping himself alive. In Heaven,

Die unbegreiflich hohen Werke
Sind herrlich, wie am ersten Tag.⁶

On Earth, Faust is perfect in knowledge; Job is perfect in

goodness and prosperity;⁷ Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, are perfect in innocence and ease; the virgins – Gretchen, Danae, Hippolytus – are perfect in purity and beauty. In the astronomer's universe, the Sun, a perfect orb of incandescent matter, is travelling on an unimpeded course through Space. In the biologist's universe, the species is in perfect adaptation to its environment.

When Yin is thus complete, it is ready to pass over into Yang. But what is to make it pass? A change in a state which, by definition, is perfect after its kind can be started only by an impulse or motive which comes from outside. If we think of the state as being one of physical equilibrium, we must bring another star to raise a tide on the spherical surface of the Sun, or another gas to evoke an explosion from the inert air in the combustion-chamber of the motor-engine. If we think of the state as being one of psychic beatitude or *nirvana*, we must bring another actor on to the stage: a critic to set the mind thinking again by suggesting doubts; an adversary to set the heart feeling again by instilling distress or discontent or fear or antipathy; in fact, an enemy to sow tares in the field;⁸ an access of desire to generate *karma*. This is the role of the Serpent in the Book of Genesis, of Satan in the Book of Job, of Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*, of Loki in the Scandinavian mythology, of Aphrodite in Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Apollo in his *Ion*, of the passing star in modern Western cosmogony, of the environment in the Darwinian theory of evolution. In the language of a modern Western philosopher, 'To jolt the individual . . . and also . . . to break up the collective frameworks in which he is imprisoned, it is indispensable that he should be shaken and prodded from outside. What would we do without our enemies?'⁹

The role is interpreted most clearly when it is played by Mephistopheles. First, the Lord propounds it in the Prologue in Heaven:

Des Menschen Tätigkeit kann allzuleicht erschaffen,
Er liebt sich bald die unbedingte Ruh';
Drum geb' ich gern ihm den Gesellen zu,
Der reizt und wirkt und muss als Teufel schaffen.¹⁰

Afterwards, Mephistopheles gives the same account of his role in introducing himself, on Earth, to Faust:

Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!
Und das mit Recht; denn alles, was entsteht,
Ist wert, dass es zugrunde geht;
Drum besser wär's, dass nichts entstünde.
So ist denn alles, was ihr Sünde,
Zerstörung, kurz das Böse nennt,
Mein eigentliches Element.¹¹

Finally, Faust explains the adversary's role, by implication, from his own experience, in his dying speech:

Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben
Der täglich sie erobern muss.¹²

The impulse or motive which makes a perfect Yin-state pass over into a new Yang-activity comes from an intrusion of the Devil into the universe of God. The event can best be described in these mythological images because they are not embarrassed by the contradiction that arises when the statement is translated into logical terms. In logic, if God's universe is perfect, there cannot be a Devil outside

it, while, if the Devil exists, the perfection which he comes to spoil must have been incomplete already through the very fact of his existence. This logical contradiction, which cannot be resolved logically, is transcended intuitively in the imagery of the poet and the prophet, who give glory to an omnipotent God yet take it for granted that He is subject to two crucial limitations.

The first limitation is that, in the perfection of what He has created already, He cannot find an opportunity for further creative activity. If God is pictured as transcendent, then

Die unbegreiflich hohen Werke
Sind herrlich, wie am ersten Tag;¹³

the works of creation are as glorious as ever they were but they are not 'changed from glory to glory'.¹⁴ At this point, the principle that 'where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'¹⁵ fails; and, if God is pictured as immanent, the same limitation still holds:

Der Gott, der mir im Busen wohnt
Kann tief mein Innerstes erregen,
Der über allen meinen Kräften thronet
Er kann nach aussen nichts bewegen.¹⁶

The second limitation upon God's power is that when the opportunity for fresh creation is offered to Him from outside, He is bound to take it. When the Devil challenges Him, He cannot refuse to take the challenge up. 'Live dangerously', which is the Nietzschean Zarathustra's ideal, is God's necessity. This limitation is illustrated in the Parable of the Tares:

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him: 'Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence, then, hath it tares?' He said unto them: 'An enemy hath done this.' The servants said unto him: 'Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?' But he said: 'Nay; lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.'¹⁷

God is bound to accept the embarrassment that is thrust upon Him by the Devil because He can refuse only at the price of renouncing His own purposes and undoing His own work – in fact, at the price of denying His own nature and ceasing to be God, which is either an impossibility or another story.

If God is thus not omnipotent in logical terms, is He still mythologically invincible? If He is bound to take up the Devil's challenge, is He equally bound to win the ensuing battle? In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where God's part is played by Artemis and the Devil's by Aphrodite, Artemis is not only unable to decline combat but is doomed to defeat. The relation between the Olympians – all peers of one another in a barbarian war-lord's war-band – is anarchic:

'Twas the will
Of Cypris that these evil things should be,
Sating her wrath. And this immutably
Hath Zeus ordained in heaven: no God may
thwart

A God's fixed will; we grieve but stand apart.¹⁸

And Artemis can only console herself by making up her mind that one day she will play the Devil's role herself to Aphrodite's hurt:

My hand shall win its vengeance, through and through
Piercing with flawless shaft what heart soe'er
Of all men living is most dear to Her.¹⁹

Thus, in Euripides' version of the plot, the victory in the battle falls to the Power which assumes the Devil's role, and the outcome is not creation but destruction. In the Scandinavian version, destruction is likewise the outcome of Ragnarök – when 'gods and demons slay and are slain'²⁰ – though the unique genius of the author of *Voluspá* makes his Sibyl's vision pierce the gloom to behold the light of a new dawn beyond it. On the other hand, in another version of the plot, the combat which follows the unavoidable acceptance of the challenge takes the form, not of an exchange of fire in which the Devil has the first shot and cannot fail to kill his man, but of a wager which the Devil is apparently bound to lose. The classic works of art in which this wager-motif is worked out are, of course, the Book of Job and Goethe's *Faust*; and it is in *Faust*, again, that the points are made most clear.

After the Lord has accepted the wager with Mephistopheles²¹ in the Prologue in Heaven, the terms are agreed on Earth, between Mephistopheles and Faust, as follows:

Faust. Werd ich beruhigt je mich auf ein Faubett legen,
So sei es gleich um mich getan!
Kannst du mich schmeichelnd je belügen
Dass ich mir selbst gefallen mag,
Kannst du mich mit Genuss betrügen,
Das sei für mich der letzte Tag!
Die Wette biet' ich!

Mephistopheles. Topp!

Faust. Und Schlag auf Schlag!
Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:
'Verweile doch! Du bist so schön!'
Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen,
Dann will ich gern zugrunde gehn!
Dann mag die Totenglocke schallen,
Dann bist du meines Dienstes frei,
Die Uhr mag stehn, der Zeiger fallen,
Es sei die Zeit für mich vorbei! ²²

The bearing of this mythical compact upon our problem of accounting for new departures can be brought out by identifying Faust, at the moment when he makes his bet, with one of those 'awakened sleepers' who have risen from the ledge on which they had been lying torpid, and have started to climb on up the face of the cliff, in our simile of the climbers' 'pitch'.²³ In the language of our simile, Faust is saying: 'I have made up my mind to leave this ledge and climb this precipice in search of the next ledge above. In attempting this, I am aware that I am courting danger and deliberately leaving safety behind me. I am aware that if once I pause I shall fall, and that if once I fall I shall fall to destruction. Yet, for the sake of the possible achievement, I am ready to take the inevitable risk.'

In the story as told in this version of the plot, the intrepid climber, after an ordeal of mortal dangers and desperate reverses, succeeds in the end in scaling the cliff triumphantly. In both Job and *Faust*, the wager is won by God; and again, in the New Testament, the same ending is given, through the revelation of a second encounter between the same pair of antagonists, to the combat between Yahweh and the Serpent which, in the original version in the Book of Genesis, had ended rather in the manner of the combat between Artemis and Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus*.²⁴

Moreover, in Job and *Faust* and the New Testament alike, it is suggested, or even declared outright, that the wager cannot be won by the Devil; that the Devil, in meddling with God's work, cannot frustrate but can only serve the purpose of God, who remains master of the situation all the time and gives the Devil rope for the Devil to hang himself. This seems to be implied in Jesus's words to the chief priests and captains of the Temple and the elders: 'This is your hour and the power of darkness',²⁵ and in his words to Pilate: 'Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.'²⁶ And the implication is worked out in the following passage from the pen of a modern Christian theologian:

Not through pain and defeat and death does Christ come to victory – and after Him all we who are Christ's because of Him – but . . . these things *are* the victory. . . . It is . . . in the Risen Christ that we can see how evil, against which we yet must strive, runs its course and is found at the end to be the good which it seemed to be resisting and destroying: how God must abandon us in order that He may be the more sure of us.²⁷

So, in Goethe's *Faust*, in the Prologue in Heaven, after the wager has been offered and taken, the Lord declares to Mephistopheles,

Du darfst auch da nur frei erscheinen,²⁸

and announces that He gladly gives Mephistopheles to Man as a companion, because he

reizt und wirkt und *muß*, als Teufel, *schaffen*.²⁹

Stranger still, Mephistopheles, when he opens his attack upon Faust, introduces himself to his intended victim as

Ein Teil von jener Kraft
Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.³⁰

In fact, Mephistopheles, notwithstanding the fearful wickedness and suffering which he manages to produce, is treated throughout the play as a buffoon who is destined to be a dupe. This note is struck by the Lord Himself in the passage just quoted from the Prologue in Heaven, where He proceeds:

Ich habe deinesgleichen nie gehasst.
Von allen Geistern die verneinen
Ist mir der Schalk am wenigsten zur Last.³¹

The same note persists throughout the first part of the play and is intensified in the second, until, in the scene of his final discomfiture,³² which is written in a deliberately comic vein, Mephistopheles is turned into a positive figure of fun. Faust repeats, in his dying speech, the very words

Verweile doch, du bist so schön

on which his wager with Mephistopheles turns; and Mephistopheles gloats over the corpse in the belief that he is the winner; but he has congratulated himself too soon; for Faust has recited the crucial formula not affirmatively apropos the present, but only conditionally apropos the future:

Zum Augenblicke *dürft'* ich sagen
'Verweile doch, du bist so schön!' . . .
Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
Genieß' ich *jetzt* den höchsten Augenblick.³³

Mephistopheles has not won the wager after all; and he is ignominiously pelted off the stage with volleys of roses strewn by a chorus of *putti*, who distract him with their sensuous charms while they spirit away the dead Faust's immortal part from under his nose. In his mingled self-pity and self-contempt for so much labour lost, Mephistopheles cuts a poorer figure than the discomfited Shylock in the dénouement of *The Merchant of Venice*.

These ludicrously discomfited villains who have been created by our two great modern Western dramatists have their prototype in the Scandinavian Loki: a figure who played his part in a traditional and anonymous drama which was performed as a religious rite before it crystallized into a myth. In this ritual drama, Loki

was the sacril actor whose business was to draw out the demon, to bring the antagonism to a head and thus to prepare for victory, – hence the duplicity of his nature. . . . Such a figure has to bear the blame of the tricks and feints necessary to provoke the conquest of life, he becomes a comic figure, the trickster who is predestined to be overreached.³⁴

Has the Devil really been cheated? Did God accept a wager which He knew all the time that He could not lose? That would be a hard saying; for, if that were true, the whole transaction would have been a sham. God would have been risking nothing. He would not have been 'living dangerously', after all; and, surely, 'Nothing venture, nothing win.' An encounter that was no encounter could not produce the consequence of an encounter – the vast cosmic consequence of causing Yin to pass over into Yang.

The truth is that, when one of God's creatures is tempted by the Devil, God Himself is thereby given the opportunity to recreate the world. By the stroke of the adversary's trident, all the fountains of the great deep are broken up. The Devil's intervention has accomplished that transition from Yin to Yang, from static to dynamic, for which God had been yearning ever since the moment when His Yin-state became complete, but which it was impossible for God to accomplish by Himself, out of His own perfection. And the Devil has done more for God than this; for, when once Yin has passed over into Yang, not the Devil himself can prevent God from completing His fresh act of creation by passing over again from Yang to Yin on a higher level. When once the divine equilibrium has been upset by the Satanic instability, the Devil has shot his bolt; and the restoration of equilibrium on a new plan, in which God's purpose is fulfilled, lies wholly within God's power.

Thus the Devil is bound to lose the wager, not because he has been cheated by God, but because he has overreached himself.³⁵ He has played into God's hands because he would not or could not deny himself the malicious satisfaction of forcing God's hand. Knowing that God would not or could not refuse the wager if it were offered, the Devil did not observe that God was hoping, silently but eagerly, that the offer would be made. In his jubilation at obtaining an opportunity to ruin one of God's choicest creatures, the Devil did not foresee that he would be giving God Himself an opportunity to renew the whole work of creation. And so God's purpose is fulfilled through the Devil's instrumentality and in the Devil's despite.³⁶

It will be seen that this dénouement of the plot turns upon the role of God's creature who is the object of the wager;

Two engravings from nineteenth-century editions of Goethe, illustrating the beginning and the end of the drama, have something of the directness of the earlier popular Faust legend.

69 Satan challenges God.



70 The Devil and Heaven fight for Faust's soul.





71, 72 KNOWLEDGE THROUGH SUFFERING The anguish suffered by Job and by Christ on the Cross culminates in an otherwise unattainable power of understanding.



and here again we find ourselves beset by logical contradictions on all sides. A Job or a Faust is at once a chosen vessel and a vessel of destruction; and, in the fact of being subjected to his ordeal, he has already fulfilled his function, so that it makes no difference to the drama in Heaven whether he, on Earth, is blasted by the fire or whether he emerges more finely tempered. Even if the Devil has his way with him – even if his destruction is complete – God's purpose is nevertheless fulfilled and the Devil's purpose frustrated; for, in spite of the sacrifice of the creature, the Creator lives, while, through the sacrifice of the creature, the work of creation proceeds:

Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the work of Thy hands.

They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure. Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed.

But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end.³⁷

Again, this chosen vessel of destruction which is the object of the wager between God and the Devil is their common field of action, the arena in which they do battle, the stage on which they play; but he is also the combatants as well as the arena and the dramatis personae as well as the stage. Created by God and abandoned to the Devil, he is seen, in the prophet's vision, to be an incarnation of both his Maker and his Tempter, while, in the psychologist's analysis, God and the Devil alike are reduced to conflicting psychic forces in his soul – forces which have no independent existence apart from the symbolic language of mythology.

The conception that the object of the wager between God and the Devil is an incarnation of God is familiar. It is the central theme of the New Testament. The conception that the object of the wager is at the same time an incarnation of the Devil is less familiar but perhaps not less profound. It is expressed in the encounter between Faust and the Earth Spirit, who prostrates Faust by proclaiming Faust's likeness to the spirit whom he understands – the still unmanifested Mephistopheles:

Faust. Der du die weite Welt umschweifst,
Geschäftiger Geist, wie nah fühl' ich mich dir!

Geist. Du gleichst dem Geist den du begreifst,
Nicht mir! (*Verschwindet*).

Faust (*zusammenstürzend*). Nicht dir?
Wem denn?
Ich Ebenbild der Gottheit!
Und nicht einmal dir!³⁸

It remains to consider the role of this 'Devil-God', this part and whole, this creature and incarnation, this arena and combatant, this stage and player; for, in the wager version of the plot, the encounter between the Powers of Hell and Heaven is only the prologue, while the passion of a human figure on Earth is the substance of the play.

In every presentation of this drama, suffering is the keynote of the human protagonist's part, whether the part is played by Jesus of Nazareth, or by Job, or by Faust and Gretchen, or by Adam and Eve, or by Hippolytus and Phaedra, or by Hoder and Balder. 'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.'³⁹ 'He will be scourged, racked, shackled, blinded with

hot irons and be put to every other torment, ending with being impaled.⁴⁰ Faust makes his entry in a state of utter disillusionment with his mastery of human knowledge;⁴¹ turns to magic only to receive a shattering rebuff from the Earth Spirit;⁴² and then accepts from Mephistopheles an initiation into the life of sense and sex which leads him to the tragic moment in Margaret's prison, at the dawn of her dying day, when he cries, like Job,⁴³ in his agony: 'O, would that I had never been born.'⁴⁴ Gretchen, entering carefree,⁴⁵ is made to pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death:

Mein Ruh' ist hin,
Mein Herz ist schwer;
Ich finde sie nimmer
Und nimmermehr.⁴⁶

The subjective experience of the human being who is cast for this part is conveyed with unusual vividness and poignancy in the following dream of a woman undergoing an operation under insufficient ether, which is cited by William James:

A great Being or Power was traveling through the sky, his foot was on a kind of lightning as a wheel is on a rail, it was his pathway. The lightning was made entirely of the spirits of innumerable people close to one another, and I was one of them. He moved in a straight line, and each part of the streak or flash came into its short conscious existence only that he might travel. I seemed to be directly under the foot of God, and I thought he was grinding his own life up out of my pain. Then I saw that what he had been trying with all his might to do was to *change his course*, to bend the lightning to which he was tied, in the direction in which he wanted to go. I felt my flexibility and helplessness and knew that he would succeed. He bended me, turning his corner by means of my hurt, hurting me more than I had ever been hurt in my life, and at the acutest point of this, as he passed, I *saw*. I understood for a moment things that I have now forgotten, things that no one could remember while retaining sanity. The angle was an obtuse angle, and I remember thinking as I woke that had he made it a right or acute angle, I should have both suffered and 'seen' still more, and should probably have died. . . .

If I had to formulate a few of the things I then caught a glimpse of, they would run somewhat as follows:—

The eternal necessity of suffering and its eternal vicariousness. The veiled and incommunicable nature of the worst sufferings; — the passivity of genius, how it is essentially instrumental and defenceless, moved, not moving, it must do what it does; — the impossibility of discovery without its price; — finally, the excess of what the suffering 'seer' or genius pays over what his generation gains. (He seems like one who sweats his life out to earn enough to save a district from famine, and just as he staggers back, dying and satisfied, bringing a lac of rupees to buy grain with, God lifts the lac away, dropping *one* rupee, and says, 'That you may give them. That you have earned for them. The rest is for ME.') I perceived also, in a way never to be forgotten, the excess of what we see over what we can demonstrate.⁴⁷

Objectively, the ordeal consists of a series of stages which the sufferer has to pass through in order to serve God's purpose.

In the first stage, the human protagonist in the drama takes action — in reaction to an assault from the tempter — which sets up a change from passivity to activity, from rest to motion, from calm to storm, from harmony to discord, in fact from Yin to Yang. The action may be either dyna-

mically base, as when the Ancient Mariner shoots the Albatross or Loki shoots Balder with the blind God Hoder's hand and the mistletoe shaft; or dynamically sublime, as when Jesus, in the temptation in the wilderness which immediately follows his baptism in Jordan, rejects the traditional Jewish role of the militant Messiah who was to raise the Chosen People to dominion in this world by the sword.⁴⁸ The essence of the act is not its moral character but its dynamic effect. The Ancient Mariner's act changes the fortunes of the ship and her crew; Jesus's act gives the conception of the Messiah a new turn and therewith a power which had not resided in it before.⁴⁹ The corresponding act in the ordeal of Job is his cursing of the day of his birth⁵⁰ — a protest which raises the whole issue of Job's deserts and God's justice. In the ordeal of Faust, the point is elaborated and brought out more clearly.

Before Mephistopheles intervenes, Faust is already making efforts on his own account to break out of his Yin-state — his unsatisfyingly perfect mastery of human knowledge. He seeks escape from his spiritual prison through the arts of magic and is repelled by the Earth Spirit;⁵¹ he seeks escape through suicide and is checked by the song of the choir of angels;⁵² he is driven back from action to meditation; yet his mind still runs upon action and transposes 'Im Anfang war das Wort' into 'Im Anfang war die Tat'.⁵³ At that moment, already, Mephistopheles is present in a theriomorphic disguise; but it is not till the tempter stands before him in human form that Faust performs his dynamic act by cursing the whole moral and material universe.⁵⁴ Therewith, the foundations of the great deep are loosed; and an invisible choir of spirits laments and exults that the old creation is shattered and a new creation begun.

Weh! Weh!
Du hast sie zerstört,
Die schöne Welt
Mit mächtiger Faust;
Sie stürzt, sie zerfällt!
Ein Halbgott hat sie zerschlagen!
Wir tragen
Die Trümmern ins Nichts hinüber,
Und klagen
Über die verlorne Schöne.
Mächtiger
Der Erdensöhne,
Prächtiger
Bau sie wieder,
In deinem Busen bau sie auf!
Neuen Lebenslauf
Beginne
Mit hellem Sinne,
Und neue Lieder
Tönen darauf.⁵⁵

In the song of these spirits, whom Mephistopheles claims as his own,⁵⁶ the first note of Yang resounds. The hymn of the Archangels —

Die unbegreiflich hohen Werke
Sind herrlich, wie am ersten Tag —

is now transcended.

So, too, in the Scandinavian universe, when, at Loki's prompting, blind Hoder performs his unwittingly dynamic act and Balder is slain,

Life is blighted and the curse spreads from the gods to the dwelling-place of human beings. The thoughts of men are darkened and confused by the upheaval in nature and the tumult of their own minds, and in their distraction men violate the very principles of life. The bonds of kinship give way to blind passion: brothers fight with one another, kinsmen shed their own blood, no one trusts his fellow; a new age dawns: the age of swords, the age of axes; the ears of men are filled with the din of shields being splintered and of wolves howling over the bodies of the slain.⁵⁷

In the story of the Fall of Man in the Book of Genesis, the dynamic act is Eve's eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge at the Serpent's prompting; and here the application of the myth to new departures in history is direct. The picture of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is a reminiscence of the Yin-state to which pre-civilizational Man attained in 'the food-gathering phase' of economy, after he had established his ascendancy over all the rest of the flora and fauna of the Earth – the state which is remembered in the Hellenic mythology as 'the times of Cronos'.⁵⁸ The Fall, in response to the temptation to taste the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, symbolizes the acceptance of a challenge to abandon the achieved integration and to venture upon a fresh differentiation out of which another integration may – or may not – arise. The expulsion from the Garden into an unfriendly outer world in which the Woman must bring forth children in sorrow and the Man must eat bread in the sweat of his face, is the ordeal which the acceptance of the Serpent's challenge has entailed. The sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve, which follows, is an act of social creation. It bears fruit in the birth of two sons who impersonate two nascent civilizations: Abel the keeper of sheep and Cain the tiller of the ground.⁵⁹

The equation of civilization with agriculture, and progress with toil, is also to be found in Hellenic literature in the famous line of Hesiod

The price of achievement is toil; and the gods have ruled that you must pay in advance,⁶⁰

which is echoed in Virgil's

It was father Jupiter's will that the farmer's path should not be easy. He gave the lead in the laborious task of turning the sod. He sharpened our human wits with anxiety. He did not tolerate the sloth that would have let his realm decay.⁶¹

In more general terms and with less poetic imagery, the same story is retold by Origen – a thinker who, in the second century of our era, became one of the fathers of the Christian Church without ceasing to be an Hellenic philosopher:

God, wishing Man's intelligence to be exercised everywhere, in order that it might not remain idle and without a conception of the arts, created Man with needs, in order that sheer need might force him to invent arts for providing himself with food and providing himself with shelter. It was better for those who would not have used their intelligence in seeking after a philosophic knowledge of God that they should be badly enough off to use it in the invention of arts, rather than that they should be well enough off to leave their intelligence altogether uncultivated.⁶²

The first stage, then, in the human protagonist's ordeal is a transition from Yin to Yang through a dynamic act – performed by God's creature under temptation from the adversary – which enables God Himself to resume His creative activity. But this progress has to be paid for; and it is not God – a hard master, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed⁶³ – but God's servant, the human sower, who pays the price.

The second stage in the human protagonist's ordeal is the crisis. He realizes that his dynamic act, which has reliberated the creative power of his Master and Maker, has set his own feet on a course which is leading him to suffering and death. In an agony of disillusionment and horror, he rebels against the fate which, by his own act, he has brought upon himself for God's gain. The crisis is resolved when he resigns himself consciously to be the instrument of God's will, the tool in God's hands; and this activity through passivity, this victory through defeat, brings on another cosmic change. Just as the dynamic act in the first phase of the ordeal shook the Universe out of Yin into Yang, so the act of resignation in the second phase reverses the rhythm of the Universe – guiding it now from motion towards rest, from storm towards calm, from discord towards harmony, from Yang towards Yin again.

In the cry of an Hellenic poet, we hear the note of agony without a note of resignation to follow:

Would that my lot had not been cast
Among the race that's fifth and last!
Would that I'd died before their day
Or lived when they had passed away!⁶⁴

The tragedy rises to a higher level in the Scandinavian vision of Odin, on the eve of Ragnarök, mentally striving to wrest the secret of Fate from the powers that hold it – not in order to save himself alive but for the sake of the Universe of gods and men who look to him, the All Father, to preserve them. In the passion of Jesus, we are initiated into the whole psychological experience.

When Jesus first realizes his destiny, in the course of his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, he is master of the situation; and it is his disciples, to whom he communicates his intuition immediately before,⁶⁵ and again immediately after,⁶⁶ his transfiguration, who are perplexed and dismayed. The agony comes upon him, on the eve of his passion, in the Garden of Gethsemane,⁶⁷ and is resolved in the prayer: 'O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done.'⁶⁸ Yet the agony recurs when the sufferer is hanging on the Cross, where the final cry of despair – 'My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?'⁶⁹ – precedes the final words of resignation: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit',⁷⁰ and 'It is finished'.⁷¹

The same experience of agony and resignation is presented – here in purely psychological terms – in the Epistle to the Romans, where the cry – 'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' – is followed by the antiphony: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.'⁷²

The same experience, again, is narrated to the Wedding-Guest by the Ancient Mariner, who has brought upon

himself the ordeal of 'life-in-death' by his criminal yet none the less dynamic act of shooting the Albatross:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone, on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.
The many men, so beautiful
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

In this ordeal, the curse is lifted when the sufferer resigns himself to the consequences of his act and has a vision of beauty where he had only perceived hideousness so long as his heart had remained hard:

O happy living things! No tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

This is the turning-point in the romantic odyssey. The divine powers which had becalmed the ship now magically waft her to port and bring the villain – or the hero – of the ballad home to his own country.

So, too, Job humbles himself to God at the end of his colloquy with his friends, when Elihu has shown how God is just in His ways and is to be feared because of His great words in which His wisdom is unsearchable, and when the Lord Himself, addressing Job out of the whirlwind, has challenged the sufferer to continue the debate with Him.

Then Job answered the Lord and said:

'Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer thee! I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

'Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further. . . .

'I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee. . . .

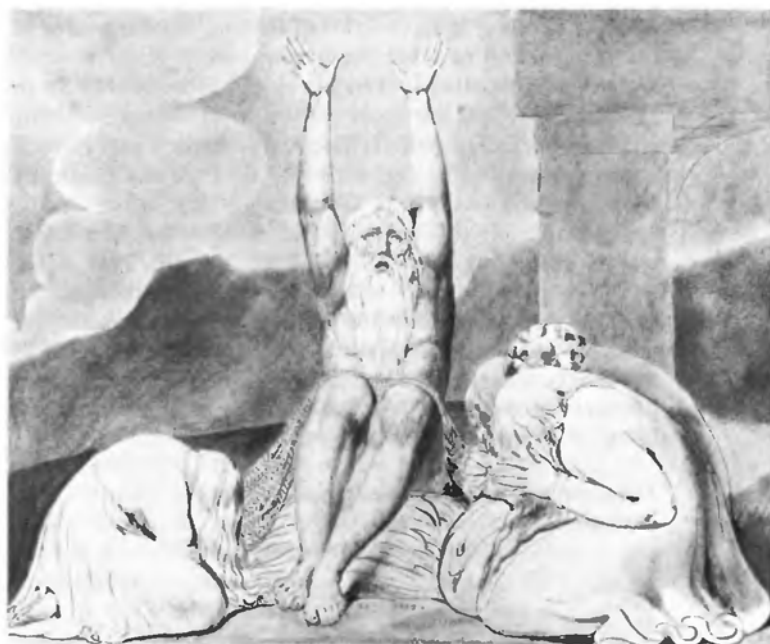
'Therefore have I uttered that I understood not – things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. . . .

'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee.

'Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'⁷³

In this Syriac poem, the psychology is crude. The resignation comes, not through a spiritual intuition in the soul, but through a physical manifestation to the eye of God's irresistible force. In Goethe's version of the drama, the sequence of agony and resignation holds its place as the crisis and the culmination of the plot – Gretchen passes through it in the last scene of Part I⁷⁴ and Faust, in his turn, at the climax of Part II⁷⁵ – but the ethos is transformed beyond recognition.

In the scene in Gretchen's prison, in the grey dawn of her last day, Mephistopheles seeks to take advantage of Gretchen's agony in order to induce her to forgo her salvation by escaping her doom. It seems the easiest enterprise that



REBELLION TO RESIGNATION

73 'Let the day perish wherein I was born.' Job's inability to understand God's purpose in his ordeal moves him to deny his faith in God's goodness.

74 'He that reproveth God, let him answer it.' God answers Job out of the whirlwind. Watercolours by William Blake.



he has yet essayed. His victim is distraught with horror at the imagination of what lies before her; it is the hour at which human vitality is at its lowest ebb; the pains of death are imminent; the prospect of escape is offered suddenly and unexpectedly; and it is Gretchen's lover Faust himself who implores her to flee with him through the magically opened prison doors. Yet Gretchen, raving in her agony, seems insensible to Faust's appeal, until at last Mephistopheles, in his impatience, intervenes himself. That is the moment of the tempter's defeat; for Gretchen, recognizing him for what he is, awakes from her frenzied trance and takes refuge in the judgment of God – no longer rooted to the spot in a nightmare like the Aeschylean Cassandra, but deliberately rejecting, like the Platonic Socrates, a possibility of escape of which she is fully aware:

Margarete. Was steigt aus dem Boden herauf?
Der! Der! Schick' ihn fort!
Was will er an dem heiligen Ort?
Er will mich!

Faust. Du sollst leben!

Margarete. Gericht Gottes! Dir hab' ich mich übergeben!

Mephistopheles (zu Faust). Komm! Komm! Ich lasse dich mit ihr im Stich.

Margarete. Dein bin ich, Vater! Rette mich!
Ihr Engel! Ihr heiligen Scharen,
Lagert euch umher, mich zu bewahren!
Heinrich! Mir graut's vor dir.

Mephistopheles. Sie ist gerichtet!

Stimme (von oben). Ist gerettet!

Mephistopheles (zu Faust). Her zu mir!

(*Verschwindet mit Faust.*)

Stimme (von innen, verhallend). Heinrich! Heinrich! ⁷⁶

In the third stage, the reversal of the cosmic rhythm from Yang towards Yin, which was initiated in the second stage, is carried to completion. At the climax of Ragnarök, when Thor has met the Dragon and Odin the Wolf,

'The sun is darkened, the earth sinks back into the waves, stars rain down, and the flames leap up and lick the heavens.' But then 'the barking' of the Wolf 'is heard for the last time as the world-fire flickers down.' And 'when the roar and the voices are stilled, the earth once more rises out of the sea in evergreen freshness; brooks leap down the hills; . . . The Gods meet among self-sown fields, they call to mind the tale of deeds and former wisdom, and in the grass before their feet the golden tables are found lying. A new hall rises golden-roofed and fairer than the Sun. Here a race of true-hearted men will dwell and rejoice in their hearts' desire. Then from above descends the mighty one, all powerful. The dusky dragon flies past, brushing the ground with his wings weighted down by dead bodies; he sinks into the abyss and disappears.' ⁷⁷

In this new creation, which the ordeal of one of God's creatures has enabled God to achieve, the sufferer himself returns to a state of peace and harmony and bliss on a higher level than the state which he left behind when he responded to the tempter's challenge. In the Book of Job, the achievement is startlingly crude – the Lord convinces Job that He is answerable for His acts to no man – and the restoration is naïvely material: 'the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning' by giving him fairer daughters than those that he had lost and twice as many

sheep and camels and oxen and asses. ⁷⁸ In the New Testament, the agony and resignation and passion of Jesus achieve the Redemption of Man and are followed by the Redeemer's resurrection and ascension. In the Scandinavian mythology, Odin returns to life after hanging upon a tree, and has keener vision in his one eye than he had before he plucked out his other eye and cast it from him as the purchase-price of wisdom. ⁷⁹ In Goethe's *Faust*, the last scene of the second part, in which the Virgin Goddess, with her train of penitents, grants an epiphany to the pilgrims who have scaled the rugged mountain to its summit, is the counterpart of the Prologue in Heaven with which the first part of the play opens. The two scenes correspond, as, in the Christian version of the myth, Man's state of blessedness after the Redemption corresponds to his state of innocence before the Fall. The cosmic rhythm has come round, full circle, from Yin through Yang to Yin; but the latter Yin-state differs from the former with the difference of spring from autumn. The works of creation, which the Archangels hymned ⁸⁰ and which Faust's curse shattered, ⁸¹ arise in splendour again, to be hymned by the Pater Profundus; ⁸² but this time they are in the tender shoot instead of being ripe for the sickle. Through Faust's dynamic act and Gretchen's act of resignation, the Lord has been enabled to make all things new; and, in this new creation, the human protagonists in the divine drama have their part. Gretchen, whose salvation had been proclaimed by the voice from Heaven at the dawn of her last day on Earth, appears,



75 CONSUMMATION Angels raise Faust's soul to Heaven. A twentieth-century interpretation by Max Beckmann.

transfigured as Una Poenitentium, in Mary's train, and the *visio beatifica* is vouchsafed to Faust, who rises to join her, transfigured as Doctor Marianus.

Das Unzulängliche,
Hier wird's Ereignis;
Das Unbeschreibliche,
Hier ist's getan.⁸³

Thus the manifestation of God as a hard master proves not to have been the ultimate truth. The ordeal of God's creature appears in retrospect as a revelation, not of God's callousness or cruelty, but of His love.

So ist es die allmächtige Liebe
Die alles bildet, alles hegt.⁸⁴

'For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' – '*Pathei mathos*'.⁸⁵

Finally, the sufferer triumphant serves as a pioneer. 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.'⁸⁶ The human protagonist in the divine drama not only serves God by enabling Him to renew His creation, but also serves his fellow-men by pointing a way for others to follow.⁸⁷ Job's intercession averts the Lord's wrath from Job's friends.⁸⁸ Gretchen's intercession wins for Faust the *visio beatifica*.⁸⁹ When Jesus first foreshadows his ordeal to his disciples, he proclaims, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me',⁹⁰ and on the eve of his passion he adds, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men unto me.'⁹¹

By the light of mythology, we have gained some insight into the nature of challenges and responses. We have come to see that creation is the outcome of an encounter, or – to retranslate the imagery of myths into the terminology of science – that genesis is a function of interaction. We shall now regard race and environment in a new light and shall place a different interpretation upon the phenomena. We shall no longer be on the look-out for some simple cause of the geneses of civilizations which can be demonstrated always and everywhere to produce an identical effect. We shall no longer be surprised if, in the production of civilizations, the same race, or the same environment, appears to be fruitful in one instance and sterile in another. Indeed, we shall not be surprised to find this phenomenon of inconstancy and variability in the responses produced, on different occasions, by one and the same challenge, even when that challenge is an interaction between the same race and the same environment under the same conditions. However scientifically exact the identity between two or more situations may be, we shall not expect the respective outcomes of these situations to conform with one another in the same degree of exactitude, or even in any degree at all. In fact, we shall no longer make the scientific postulate of the uniformity of Nature, which we rightly made so long as we were thinking of our problem in scientific terms as a function of the play of inanimate forces. We shall be prepared now to recognize, *a priori*, that, even if we were exactly acquainted with all the racial, environmental, or other data that are capable of being formulated scientifically, we should not be able to predict the outcome of the interaction between the forces which these data represent. We

should be unable because, on this plane of action, the 'forces' are persons.

The unpredictability of the outcomes of encounters between persons is a familiar datum of experience. A military expert cannot predict the outcome of a battle or a campaign from an 'inside knowledge' of the dispositions and resources of both the opposing general staffs, or a bridge expert the outcome of a game or a rubber from a similar knowledge of all the cards in every hand. In both these analogies, 'inside knowledge' is not sufficient to enable its possessor to predict results with any exactness or assurance, because it is not the same thing as complete knowledge. There is one thing which must remain an unknown quantity to the best-informed onlooker, because it is beyond the knowledge of the combatants, or the players, themselves; and their ignorance of this quantity makes calculation impossible, because it is the most important term in the equation which the would-be calculator has to solve. This unknown quantity is the reaction of the actors to the ordeal when it actually comes. 'Physical causes only operate through the hidden principles which play a part in forming our spirit and our character.'⁹² A general may have an accurate knowledge of his own manpower and munition-power and almost as good a knowledge of his opponent's; he may also have a shrewd idea of his opponent's plans; and, in the light of all this knowledge, he may have laid his own plans to his own best advantage. He cannot, however, foreknow how his opponent, or any of the other men who compose the force under his opponent's command, will behave, in action, when the campaign is opened and the battle joined; he cannot foreknow how his own men will behave; he cannot foreknow how he will behave himself. Yet these psychological momenta, which are inherently impossible to weigh and measure and therefore to estimate scientifically in advance, are the very forces which actually decide the issue when the encounter takes place. The military genius is the general who repeatedly succeeds in divining the unpredictable by guesswork or intuition; and most of the historic military geniuses – commanders of such diverse temperament and outlook as Cromwell and Napoleon – have recognized clearly that manpower and munition-power and intelligence and strategy are not the talismans that have brought them their victories. After estimating all the measurable and manageable factors at their full value – insisting that 'God is on the side of the big battalions', that 'God helps those who help themselves', that you should 'trust in God and keep your powder dry' – they have admitted frankly that, when all is said and done, victory cannot be predicted by thought or commanded by will because it comes in the end from a source to which neither thought nor will have access. If they have been religious-minded, they have cried 'Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory';⁹³ if they have been sceptical-minded, they have ascribed their victories – in superstitious terms – to the operations of Fortune or to the ascendancy of their personal star; but, whatever language they have used, they have testified to the reality of the same experience: the experience that the outcome of an encounter cannot be predicted and has no appearance of being predetermined, but arises, in the likeness of a new creation, out of the encounter itself.



MAN'S VICTORY

76 The abrupt transition from irrigated fields to arid desert, in the Northern Sudan, indicates the supreme effort required to wrest cultivation from wasteland.

20 Is determinism convincing?

ONE OF THE perennial infirmities of human beings is to ascribe their own failures to the operation of forces which are entirely beyond their control and immeasurably wider in range than the compass of human action. This mental manoeuvre, which promises to convert an importunate sense of humiliation into a new assurance of self-importance – by setting the great engine of the Universe in motion in order to break one human career – is among the most insidious of ‘the Consolations of Philosophy’. It is particularly attractive to sensitive minds in periods of decline and fall; and in the decline and fall of the Hellenic Civilization it was a commonplace of different schools of philosophers to explain the social decay which they deplored but could not arrest as the incidental and inevitable effect of an all-pervasive ‘cosmic senescence’. This was the philosophy of the Epicurean Lucretius in the last generation of the Hellenic time of troubles before the Hellenic Society obtained the temporary relief of the *Pax Augusta*.

The Universe itself is not exempt.
Its ramparts will be stormed; and this dread breach
Will make of it a foul putrescent ruin.
The mischief has begun. Why, our own age
Is broken-backed already. Mother Earth
Has lost her strength. Today she finds it hard
To bring forth pygmies – she who once brought forth
The life of all the ages; hers the feat
Of bearing the huge frames of monstrous beasts. . . .
Our bright crops and our smiling vineyards too
Are Earth's gift, her spontaneous gift, to men.
Hers the sweet younglings, hers the smiling pastures.
Alas! Today, these hardly reach full growth,
Though human work now comes to Nature's aid.
We work our teams, and teamsters too, to death,
Wear out our tools, yet hardly match Earth's needs.
Our fields demand more work, yet grudge work's fruits.
Shaking his head, the aging ploughman sighs.
His work has gone for nothing, he laments.
The present? A sad contrast to the past.
He envies the good fortune of his sire.
The ancients, he laments, were godly men.
They made a living, made it with great ease,
From holdings that are dwarfed by ours today.
The wizened grape-vine's woeful husbandman
Arraigns time's ruthless rush and pesters Heaven,
Blind to the Universe's slow decay,
Worn down by aeons, destined for the grave.¹

The theme recurs in a work of controversy which was written by one of the Fathers of the Western Christian Church some three hundred years later, under the impression of the stricken Hellenic Society's next relapse into a time of tribulation which had found Cyprian a pagan scholar and which saw him a Christian martyr before the crisis passed:

You ought to be aware that the age is now senile. It has not now the stamina that used to make it upstanding, nor the vigour and robustness that used to make it strong. This truth is proclaimed, even if we keep silence . . . by the world itself, which testifies to

its own decline by giving manifold concrete evidence of the process of decay. There is a diminution in the winter rains that give nourishment to the seeds in the earth, and in the summer heats that ripen the harvests. The springs have less freshness and the autumns less fecundity. The mountains, disembowelled and worn out, yield a lower output of marble; the mines, exhausted, furnish a smaller stock of the precious metals; the veins are impoverished, and they shrink daily. There is a decrease and deficiency of farmers in the fields, of sailors on the sea, of soldiers in the barracks, of honesty in the market-place, of justice in court, of concord in friendship, of skill in technique, of strictness in morals. When a thing is growing old, do you suppose that it can still retain, unimpaired, the exuberance of its fresh and lusty youth? Anything that is near its end and is verging towards its decline and fall is bound to dwindle. The Sun, for instance, radiates his beams with a less brilliant and fiery splendour when he is setting, and the Moon grows thin, with her horns all eaten away, when she is on the wane. The tree which was once so green and so luxuriant turns sterile later on, as its branches wither up, and grows ugly with old age; and old age likewise stops the flow of the spring, until the bounteous outpouring of its welling source dwindles into a bare trickle. This is the sentence that has been passed upon the world; this is the law of God: that what has been born must die, and what has grown up must grow old, and what has been strong must lose its strength, and what has been great must be diminished; and that this loss of strength and loss of stature must end, at last, in annihilation.²

We can perhaps hear an echo of Cyprian's pessimism in the concern voiced in our own generation at the allegedly imminent exhaustion of our Earth's store of natural resources; and we are even familiar with the idea of a cosmic sentence of death, since it has been repeated by those Western physical scientists who have postulated the ultimate disintegration of all matter in accordance with the Second Law of Thermodynamics.³ But even if we were to accept this now disputed proposition, this sentence upon the material cosmos would bear with it none of that promise of spiritual liberation – through the extinction of our consciousness or else through its etherealization⁴ – which it bore for Lucretius and for Cyprian; for our Western cosmologists present a time-chart on which human history and cosmic history are plotted on such utterly different scales that, from the practical standpoint, they can be regarded as quite out of relation with each other.

Mankind is young. . . . Our civilization is still in its infancy, and the Earth itself is not half-way through its career; it is more than 4,000 million years old, but in 4,000 million years from now it will probably still exist.⁵

Accordingly, the latter-day Western advocates of a predestinarian or deterministic explanation of the breakdowns of civilizations appeal instead to a law of senescence and death with a shorter wave-length, for which they claim jurisdiction over the whole kingdom of life on this planet. One of the most celebrated members of this school, Oswald Spengler, argued that a civilization is comparable with an organism, and that it is subject to the same process of

childhood, youth, maturity, and old age as a human being or any other living organism.⁶ But we have already noted in an earlier chapter⁷ that societies are not in fact living organisms in any sense. In subjective terms they are the intelligible fields of study; and in objective terms they are the common ground between the respective fields of activity of a number of individual human beings, whose individual energies are the vital forces which operate to work out the history of a society, including its time-span.

Who can decree or forecast what the characters and the interactions of all these actors are to be, or how many of them are to appear upon a particular stage from first to last? To declare dogmatically, with Spengler, that every society has a predestined time-span is as foolish as it would be to declare that every play that is written is bound to consist of an equal number of acts.

Spengler does not strengthen the determinist case when he abandons the simile of an individual organism for the simile of a species of organisms or a genus:

The *habitus* of any group of organisms includes, among other things, a definite life-span and a definite *tempo* of development; and no morphology of history can dispense with these concepts. . . . The span of a generation – whatever creature may be in question – is a numerical value of almost mystical significance. And these relations are also valid for all civilizations – and this in a way that has never before been dreamt of. Every civilization, every archaic age, every rise and every downfall, and every inevitable phase of each of these movements, has a definite time-span which is always the same and which always recurs with symbolic emphasis. What is the significance of the fifty-year period in the rhythm of political, intellectual, and artistic life which is prevalent in all civilizations? . . . What is the significance of the millennium which is the ideal life-span of all civilizations, considered in proportion to the individual human being's 'three-score years and ten'?⁸

The conclusive answer to these questionings is that a society is not a species or genus, any more than it is an organism. It is itself an individual representative of some species of the genus 'societies', and the individual human beings who are the 'members' of a society are representatives of a species or genus likewise. But the genus of which we human beings are the individuals is neither the Western Society (or the Hellenic Society or any other society) in particular nor the genus of societies in general, but the genus *Homo*; and this simple truth absolves us from any obligation to examine here the Spenglerian dogma that genera and species have preordained life-spans on the analogy of the individual organisms in which the biological genera and species are represented. Even if we suppose for a moment that the genus *Homo* has a limited mandate for existence on the face of this planet, a brief consideration of the actual historical duration of biological genera and species to date shows at once that it is as impossible to link up the breakdown of any civilization with this hypothetical expiry of the mandate of the genus *Homo* as it is to link it up with the dissolution of the material Universe into radiation. The genus *Homo* is believed to have been in existence, in a recognizably human form, for between 300,000 and 500,000 years already,⁹ as against the 5000 or so years that have elapsed since the first emergence of the societies called 'civilizations'. What warrant is there for

assuming that the mandate of this genus (if it really is subject to any mandate) is not good for another 500,000 years at least? And, to come to grips again with our immediate problem of the breakdowns of civilizations, what ground is there for suggesting that these breakdowns are accompanied by any symptoms of physical or psychic degeneration in the individual human beings who happen to be alive in a society at the time of its dissolution? Were the Athenians of the generation of Socrates and Euripides and Thucydides and Pheidias and Pericles, who were overtaken by the catastrophe of 431 B.C., intrinsically poorer creatures in soul or body than the generation of Marathon, who shone in retrospect in the illu-sively intensified light of an age which appeared more glorious than it actually had been in contrast with the age that followed?

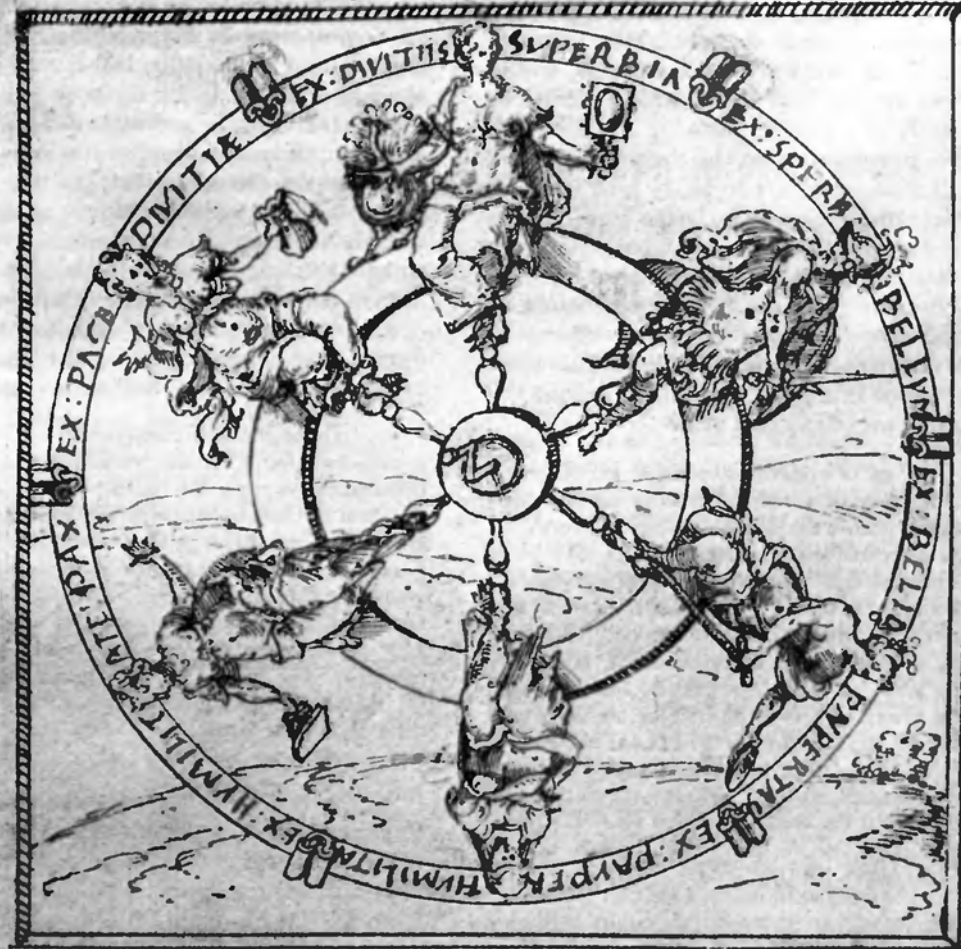
An explanation of the breakdowns of civilizations in terms of the supposed science of eugenics perhaps appears to be suggested by Plato in a famous passage of *The Republic*:

A society with the ideal constitution is not easily thrown out of equilibrium; but, after all, everything that has a genesis is foredoomed to eventual disintegration, and even the ideal constitution will not endure in perpetuity, but will break down in the end. The breakdown is connected with the periodic rhythm (with a short wave-length for short-lived creatures and a long wave-length for those at the other end of the scale) which is the rhythm of life in the animal as well as in the vegetable kingdom, and which is the determinant of both physical and psychic fecundity. The specific laws of human eugenics will baffle both the reason and the intuition of our trained ruling minority, in spite of all their intellectual power. These laws will elude them; and one day they will beget children inopportunistly. . . .¹⁰

Plato contrived a fantastically intricate numerical formula to express the wave-length of human life, and postulated that social disintegration would follow upon the neglect of this mathematical law of eugenics by a society's leaders. Even so, it is plain that Plato does not represent the racial degeneration, to which he attributes the social breakdown, as being an automatic or predetermined event, but rather as being an intellectual mistake, a failure of technique: a lapse in the sphere of human action.

There is, in any case, no warrant for following Plato in accepting racial degeneration as even a secondary link in the chain of causation through which a social breakdown leads on to a decline. For although, in times of social decline, the members of the declining society may seem to dwindle into pygmies or to stiffen into cripples, by contrast with the kingly stature and magnificent activity of their forbears in the age of social growth, to ascribe this malady to degeneration is a false diagnosis. The biological heritage of the epigoni is the same as that of the pioneers, and all the pioneers' endeavours and achievements are potentially within their descendants' reach. The malady which holds the children of decadence fast bound in misery and iron¹¹ is no paralysis of their natural faculties as human beings but a breakdown and disintegration of their social heritage, which debars them from finding scope for their unimpaired faculties in effective and creative social action. The dwarfing of the epigoni is the effect of social breakdown and not its cause.

We have now discarded three predestinarian explanations of the breakdowns of civilizations: the theory that



Altera sortis adest rota: quam tu firmiter, oro
 cernas: fortune iura nefanda videns:
 Atque vires casus miseri, quodque oia verget
 Hec rota fatalis, res hominumque rotet.

THE WHEEL, original simile and permanent symbol of the cyclic philosophy.

105 Rota fortunae: this version of the wheel of fortune interprets the idea in terms of a sequence of moral responses: from peace wealth, from wealth pride, from pride war, from war poverty, from poverty humility, from humility peace.

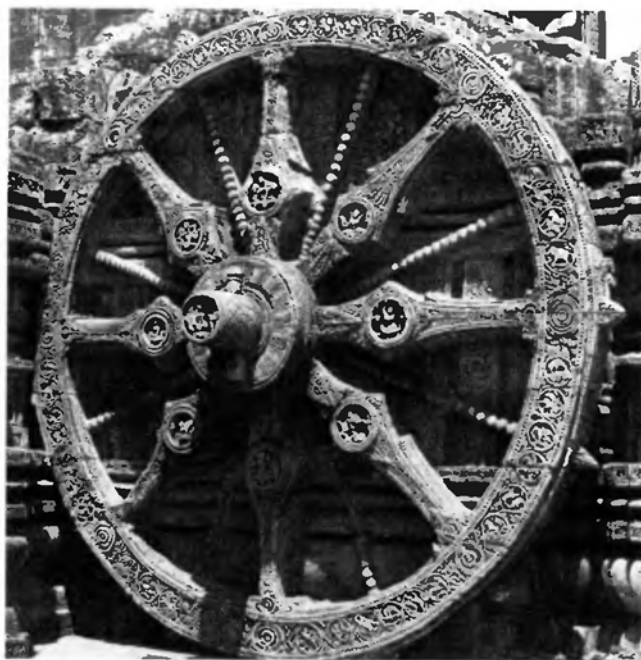


106 *Rota fatalis*: Western wheel of fate, using the same imagery of predetermined cycles.

they are the incidental consequence of a running-down of the clockwork of the physical Universe; the theory that a civilization, like a living organism, has its own inherent life-span and life-curve; and the theory that the breakdown of any civilization at any given date is due to the racial degeneration of its human components. We still have to consider one further predestinarian hypothesis, which assumes that civilizations succeed one another by a law of their nature which is the common law of the cosmos, in a perpetually recurrent cycle of alternating birth and death.¹²

The application of this theory of cycles to the history of Mankind was a natural corollary to the sensational astronomical discovery, which appears to have been made in the Babylonian World by the end of the third millennium BC¹³ and which was popularized by Greek astronomers after the fourth century BC, that the three conspicuous and familiar astronomical cycles – the terrestrial cycle of day-and-night and the lunar cycle of the month and the solar cycle of the year – were not the only instances of periodic recurrence in the movements of the heavenly bodies; that there was also a larger co-ordination of stellar movements which embraced all the planets as well as the Earth and Moon and Sun; and that 'the music of the spheres', which was made by the harmony of this heavenly chorus, came round full circle, chord for chord, in a cycle of great cosmic months and years which dwarfed the solar year into insignificance. The inference was that the annual birth and death of the terrestrial vegetation, which was manifestly governed by the solar year-cycle, had its counterpart in a recurrent birth and death of all things on the time-scale of the cosmic year-cycle; and minds which came under the spell of this idea were apt to project this pattern of periodicity into every object of their thought.¹⁴

Hellenic literature abounds in references to this cyclic philosophy. Plato was evidently fascinated by it, for the theme recurs throughout his writings.



107 *Rota vitalis*: Indic wheel of life, symbolic of the eternal round of procreation.

Athenian Stranger. Do you feel that the ancient legends have any truth in them?

Cleinias of Crete. Which legends?

Stranger. The legends of repeated destructions of the human race by floods and plagues and many other catastrophes, in which only a tiny remnant of Mankind survived.

Cleinias. Why, certainly, the whole of that body of legend carries conviction with everybody.¹⁵

Elsewhere Plato develops this brief exposition of the cyclic hypothesis, applying it to the history of the Hellenes¹⁶ and to the pattern of the cosmos as a whole, which he represents as a perpetual alternation of catastrophe and rehabilitation.¹⁷ The same doctrine reappears in Virgil's poetry:

The last age of the Sibyl's song is here.
The sequence of the ages starts again.
The past returns – the Virgin, Saturn's Realm –
A new race from High Heaven descends to Earth. . . .
Another Tiphys steers another Argo,
Laden with heroes; yes, and other wars
Bring great Achilles once again to Troy.¹⁸

But where Virgil sees a triumphant renewal of an heroic age, Marcus Aurelius, writing some two hundred years later under the shadow of a melancholy age, feels only the desolation of endless repetition:

There is a deadly monotony about the cyclic motion of the cosmos – up and down, world without end. . . . Soon we shall be buried under the Earth, and next the Earth herself will be transformed, and then whatever has arisen out of her transmutation will undergo the same process again and again to infinity.¹⁹

This philosophy of sheer recurrence, which intrigued, without ever quite captivating, the Hellenic genius, came to dominate contemporary Indic minds.

Hindu thinkers had evolved a cyclic theory of time. The cycle was called a *kalpa* and was equivalent to 4,320 million earthly years. The *kalpa* is divided into 14 periods and at the end of each of these the universe is recreated and once again Manu (primeval man) gives birth to the human race. At the moment we are in the seventh of the 14 periods of the present *kalpa*. Each of these is divided into 71 Great Intervals and each of these is divided respectively in 4 *yugas* or periods of time. The *yugas* contain respectively 4,800, 3,600, 2,400, 1,200 god-years (one god-year being 360 human years), and there is a progressive decline in the quality of civilization. We are now in the fourth of these *yugas*, the *kaliyuga* when the world is full of evil and wickedness, and thus the end of the world is by comparison imminent, though there are several millennia yet before the end!²⁰

Are these 'vain repetitions'²¹ of the Gentiles really the law of the Universe and, therefore, incidentally the law of the histories of civilizations? If we find that the answer is in the affirmative, we can hardly escape the conclusion that we are the perpetual victims of an everlasting cosmic practical joke, which condemns us to endure our sufferings and to overcome our difficulties and to purify ourselves of our sins – only to know in advance that the automatic and inevitable lapse of a certain meaningless measure of time cannot fail to stultify all our human exertions by reproducing the same situation again and again *ad infinitum*, just as if we had never exerted ourselves at all.

This conclusion may be tolerable to an unusually robust intellect in an unusually sanguine mood. A modern Western philosopher has even succeeded in making the 'law of eternal recurrence' a matter for rejoicing:

Sing and bubble over, O Zarathustra, heal your soul with new songs, so that you may bear your great destiny, that was never yet the destiny of any man! For your animals well know, O Zarathustra, who you are and must become: behold, *you are the teacher of eternal recurrence*, that is now *your* destiny! . . . Behold, we know what you teach: that all things recur eternally, and we ourselves with them, and that we have already existed an infinite number of times before, and all things with us. . . .²²

Aristotle, too, shows no signs of distress when he pricks the bubble of his own philosophy by making the casual observation, in the middle of a treatise on meteorology, that in human history the recurrence of identical scientific views does not happen just once or twice or a small number of times; it happens *ad infinitum*.²³

In another passage, Aristotle deals with the problem of periodicity in human affairs, through the concrete example of the implications of a recurrence of the Trojan War, as if these implications were nothing more than an intellectual conundrum.²⁴ He contemplates with a dispassionate calm the proposition that 'human life is a vicious circle' of repetitive genesis and decay, and feels no pang. Virgil, too, in the passage that we have already quoted, dismisses the recurrent Trojan War as a slight and momentary recrudescence of the Old Adam, which simply serves as a foil to the swiftly and securely redawning golden age. Yet, when the poet returns from his day-dream of an earthly paradise regained to resume the spiritual burden of his own tormented generation, he confesses that the heroic warfare of the Achaeans in the pre-Hellenic interregnum has led on, through a continuous chain of *karma*, to the internecine warfare of the Roman war-lords.

In full, long since, with Roman blood,
We have atoned for Trojan breach of faith. . . .
A world where right spells wrong, and wrong spells right!
So many wars! So many shapes of crime!
The plough despised! The ploughman reft away!
The widowed fields unkempt! The sickle's curve
Melted to mould a sword-blade's stiff straight edge. . . .
Neighbours break bonds of friendship, take up arms;
The wicked war-god rages everywhere.
The pace is quickening like the chariots' pace
When they burst out to speed along the course.
No use, poor charioteer, to draw thy reins.
Thy chariot's masters are thy racing steeds.²⁵

Is the Trojan War to recur innumerable times over, when it is fated each time to precipitate an age-long avalanche of wickedness and woe? This question, which Virgil dares not face, is answered by Shelley in a chorus which begins as a Virgilian reminiscence and ends on a note which is altogether Shelley's own:

The World's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The Earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream. . . .

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies;
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh! write no more the Tale of Troy,
If Earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free,
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew. . . .

Oh cease! Must Hate and Death return?
Cease! Must men kill and die?
Cease! Drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The World is weary of the Past:
Oh might it die or rest at last!

If the law of the Universe is really the sardonic law *plus ça change plus c'est la même chose*,²⁶ no wonder that the poet cries for the Buddhist release from a wheel of existence which may be a thing of beauty so long as it is merely guiding the stars in their courses, but which is an intolerable tread-mill for our human feet.

Does reason constrain us to believe that the cyclic movement of the stars is also the movement of human history? What, 'in the last analysis', are those movements of Yin-and-Yang and challenge-and-response which we have taken some intellectual pleasure in discerning and bringing to light? Certainly, in these movements of the forces that weave the web of human history, an element of sheer recurrence can be detected; indeed, it stares us in the face. Yet the shuttle which shoots backwards and forwards across the loom of time in a perpetual to-and-fro is all this time bringing into existence a tapestry in which there is

manifestly a progress towards an end and not just an 'endless repetition' in the likeness of the shuttle's own action. The transition from Yin to Yang, in any given case, is no doubt one repetition of a repetitive action; yet this repetition is neither vain nor stale, since it is the necessary condition for an act of creation which is new and spontaneous and unique.²⁷ Similarly, the response to a challenge which provokes a further challenge and thereby evokes a further response which is likewise provocative in its turn no doubt sets up a cyclic movement. Yet we have seen that it is precisely this kind of response – the response which inaugurates a cyclic movement by providing for its own successor – that releases the Promethean *élan* of social growth.²⁸

The simple truth is that, in any analysis of rhythm, we have to distinguish between the movements of the part and those of the whole, and between the natures of the means and of the ends. There is no law of pre-established harmony which decrees that the end must have the same nature as the means, or the whole the same movement as the part; and this is immediately obvious in the case of the wheel, which is the original simile and permanent symbol of the whole cyclic philosophy. The movement of the wheel is admittedly repetitive in relation to the wheel's own axle; but the wheel has been manufactured and fitted to its axle only in order to become a part of a vehicle; and the fact that the vehicle can move only in virtue of the wheel's circular movement round the axle does not compel the vehicle itself to travel like a merry-go-round in a circular track. The wheel is indispensable to the vehicle as a means of locomotion, but it is incapable of dictating the course on which the vehicle is to move. The course depends upon the manipulation of the reins or the steering-gear by the driver. Indeed, if the relations between the wheel and the vehicle – or part and whole, or means and end – are governed by any law at all, it is not a law of identity but a law of diversity, under which a repetitive movement of the wheel (or the part or the means) brings about a non-repetitive movement of the vehicle (or the whole or the end); conversely, the end attains its unique realization, and the whole its unique individuality, and the vehicle its unique goal, through the repetitive employment of similar means and the repetitive juxtaposition of standard parts and the repetitive revolutions of the wheel round its axle.

This harmony of two movements – a major irreversible movement which is borne on the wings of a minor repetitive movement – is perhaps the essence of what we mean by rhythm; and we can discern this play of forces not only in the mechanized rhythm of our man-made machinery but likewise in the organic rhythm of life. The annual procession of the seasons, which brings with it the annual blossom and decay of vegetation, has made possible the secular evolution of the vegetable kingdom. The sombre cycle of birth and reproduction and death has made possible the evolution of all higher animals up to Man himself. The pumping-action of the lungs and heart enables the human being to live out his life; the bars of music, and the feet, lines, stanzas, and cantos of poetry enable the composer and the poet to expound their themes; the cyclic rotation of the praying-wheel carries the Buddhist towards the goal of *nirvana*; and even the wheel of

existence, from which the Buddhist discipline promises release, produces the abiding burden of *karma* which is handed on, to be aggravated or mitigated, from one incarnation-cycle to the next and thereby transforms a trivial round into a tragic history. The repetitive 'music of the spheres' dies down to an undertone in an expanding Universe of nebulae and star-clusters which are apparently receding from one another with incredible velocity, while the relativity of the space-time framework gives to each successive position of the vast astral arrays the irrevocable historic uniqueness of a dramatic 'situation' in some play in which the actors are human personalities.

Thus the detection of periodic repetitive movements in our analysis of the process of civilization does not by any means imply that the process itself, to which these contributory movements minister, is of the same cyclic order as they are. On the contrary, if any inference can be drawn legitimately from the periodicity of these minor movements, we may rather infer that the major movement which they bear along on their monotonously rising and falling wings is of the diverse order, or, in other words, that it is not recurrent but progressive. This interpretation of the movement of life in terms of two modes of rhythm has been precisely expressed in the philosophies of the African Civilizations, and perhaps at its most sophisticated in the cosmogony of the Dogon people of the Western Sudan.

Their conception of the universe is based, on the one hand, on a principle of the vibrations of matter, and on the other, on a general movement of the universe as a whole. The original germ of life is symbolized by the smallest cultivated seed. . . . This seed, quickened by an internal vibration, bursts the enveloping sheath, and emerges to reach the uttermost confines of the universe. At the same time this unfolding matter moves along a path which forms a spiral or helix. . . . Two fundamental notions are thus expressed: on the one hand the perpetual helical movement signifies the conservation of matter; further, this movement . . . is held to represent the perpetual alternation of opposites – right and left, high and low, odd and even, male and female – reflecting a principle of twin-ness, which ideally should direct the proliferation of life. These pairs of opposites support each other in an equilibrium which the individual being conserves within itself. On the other hand, the infinite extension of the universe is expressed by the continual progression of matter along this spiral path.²⁹

This tentative conclusion is sufficient for our purpose at the moment. We are not condemned to believe in the cyclic version of predestinarianism as the supreme law of our human history; and this was the last form of the necessitarian doctrine with which we had to contend. The goddess with whom we have to do battle is not *Saeva Necessitas*³⁰ with her lethal armoury, but, on the evidence of the fates of civilizations in past history, only probability, whom mortal valour wielding mortal weapons may one day drive ignominiously off the field. The civilizations which have already died are not 'dead by fate'; and therefore a living civilization such as the Western Civilization is not doomed inexorably in advance *migrare ad plures*: to join the majority of its kind that have already suffered shipwreck. The divine spark of creative power is instinct in ourselves; and, if we have the grace to kindle it into flame, then 'the stars in their courses'³¹ cannot defeat our efforts to attain the goal of human endeavours.

32 Universal states: ends or means?



PRIDE AND PRESTIGE

200, 201 Above, the eagle, a symbol of Roman imperial power also adopted by later empires. Below, the imperial cult: emperor becomes god in a triumphal scene, his defeated foes beneath him.



THE STARTING-POINT of this book was a search for fields of historical study which would be intelligible in themselves within their own limits in space and time, without reference to extraneous historical events; and our first investigations¹ led us to the conclusion that the species of society called civilizations would provide us with a self-contained unit of this nature. Up to the present point we have pursued our inquiries on the assumption that a comparative study of these separate units would give us the perspective that we need for an attempt to chart and to understand the processes of human history. At the same time, however, we have met certain indications of the limitations inherent in our chosen methodology – as, for example, when we noted the intimate link between two civilizations which we described as ‘affiliation’,² or again when we observed that the component classes of society in a disintegrating civilization enter into social and political combinations with alien elements from other contemporary communities.³ This receptivity of theirs is revealed in the institutions that are their products. Some universal states have been the handiwork of alien empire-builders; some higher religions have been animated by alien inspirations; and some barbarian war-bands have absorbed the rudiments of an alien culture.

Universal states, universal churches, and heroic ages thus link together contemporary as well as non-contemporary civilizations, and this fact raises the question whether it is justifiable to treat these historical phenomena, as we have so far done, as mere by-products of disintegrating civilizations, and to assume that the civilizations themselves are the sole objects of historical study which must be taken into account. If, as seems to be the truth, these three institutions cannot in fact be studied intelligibly within the framework that a single civilization provides, then we ought to inquire whether they themselves form more acceptable units of study; or whether they are each a part of some larger whole which embraces them and the civilizations alike.

We can begin by investigating the claims of universal states to be independently intelligible fields of study. The name that we have attached to them implies that these claims are valid, for universality excludes the notion of anything ‘outside’ itself. Objectively, no universal state has ever been literally universal in the sense of having covered the entire surface of the globe; but in a significant subjective sense these states have indeed been universal, for they have looked and felt worldwide to the people living under their régime. The Romans and the Chinese, as we have seen,⁴ thought of their respective empires as embracing all the peoples in the world that were of any account; and the East Roman Empire, in common with these and others, laid claim to a notional sovereignty over the whole world.⁵ This subjective belief in universality has always been an illusion; but we cannot for this reason ignore either its subjective actuality in the eyes of the people who held this belief, or the potency of the substantial effects that even an illusion can evoke. Some empires, as we shall see, have

seen through the illusion and have deliberately refrained from claiming an unrealized and unreal universal sovereignty; but such empires seem to have been in the minority. We shall also see that this illusion of universality is not the only chimera to have captivated the imaginations of the inhabitants of universal states. We can test even these subjective beliefs by asking whether universal states, irrespective of their geographical extent, are ends in themselves or whether they are means towards something beyond and more profound than themselves.

Universal states are, let us remind ourselves, essentially negative institutions. In the first place, they arise after, and not before, the breakdowns of the civilizations to which they bring political unity. They are not summers but Indian summers, masking autumn and presaging winter. In the second place, they are the products of dominant minorities: that is, of once-creative minorities that have lost their creative power. There is, however, an element of ambiguity in them, for, while universal states are thus symptoms of social disintegration, they are at the same time attempts to check this disintegration and defy it. The histories of universal states suggest that they are possessed by an almost demonic craving for life, against all odds, and that their citizens are apt not only to desire but to believe very passionately in the immortality of the institution. But to outside observers it seems equally clear that universal states, as a class of polity, are the by-products of a process of social decline, and as such are stamped by their certificate of origin as unmistakably uncreative and ephemeral. From this point of view, the belief in the immortality of a universal state is an astonishing hallucination which mistakes a mundane institution for the Promised Land, the *Civitas Dei* itself; and yet there is no doubt that this illusion can be both widespread and long-lasting.

The deification of the Roman Empire – the Hellenic universal state – by its subjects is notorious, and we can trace this confident belief in Rome's immortality from the date of the establishment of the Empire right through till the eve of its dissolution. Tibullus (*vivebat* c. 54–18 BC) sings of the 'walls of the eternal City',⁶ while Virgil (*vivebat* 70–19 BC) makes his Iuppiter, speaking of the future Roman scions of Aeneas' race, proclaim: 'For these I set no bounds in space or time; I have given them empire without end.'⁷ The same expectation was expressed in the form, not of a divine communiqué, but of a human hope, by the soldier-historian Velleius (*vivebat* c. 19 BC–AD 31) who, in recording the adoption of Tiberius by Augustus, speaks of 'a hope conceived of the perpetual security and eternity of the Roman Empire'.⁸ An historian-propagandist can perhaps afford to be less circumspect, and Livy (*vivebat* 59 BC–AD 17) writes with the assurance of Tibullus: 'the city founded to endure for ever';⁹ 'the city . . . founded to endure for ever at the instance of the gods'.¹⁰

During the century and a quarter that elapsed between the death of Augustus in AD 14 and the accession of Pius in AD 138, the concept of the eternity of Rome and the Roman Empire was cherished by two bad emperors who met their deserts by coming to untimely personal ends. Nero instituted the games 'dedicated to the eternity of the Empire and called "the greatest" [games] by the Emperor's express command'.¹¹ The *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* record

'votive offering for the eternity of the Empire: a cow'¹² among the proceedings of AD 66, and 'thank-offerings vowed if thou shalt preserve the eternity of the Empire which [the Emperor Domitian] has enlarged in virtue of having undertaken these vows'¹³ under the years AD 86, 87, and 90.

In the Age of the Antonines we find a Greek man of letters expressing the Augustan belief in the more delicate form of a prayer, without a suspicion that he was living in an Indian summer and was praying that a fugitive October might be miraculously transformed into a perpetual June.

Let us invoke all the gods and all the children of the gods, and let us pray them to grant this Empire and this city life and prosperity world without end. May they endure until ingots learn to float on the sea and until trees forget to blossom in the spring. And long live the supreme magistrate and his children likewise. Long may they be with us to carry on their work of dispensing happiness to all their subjects.¹⁴

Thereafter, when a touch of winter begins to make itself felt, its victims defy a change of season which they have not foreseen and cannot face, by insisting more and more emphatically that they have been privileged to enjoy an everlasting midsummer's day. In the Severan Age and its bleaker sequel the contrast between the official eternity of the emperors and the ephemerality that was their actual lot makes a painfully strong impression. Even after the truth of the Empire's mortality has been proclaimed by Alaric's capture and sack of Rome itself, we can hear above the reverberations of this resounding blow the high voice of a Gallic poet reasserting the immortality of Rome as he travels back from the no longer inviolate imperial city to his own war-ravaged native province.

Rome, raise high the laurels round thy hair and transfigure the hoariness of thy holy head into youthful locks. . . . The flaming stars renew their rises by their settings. You see the moon end, only to begin again. Brennus's victory at Allia did not avert his penalty. The Samnite atoned by subjection for his cruel terms of peace. After suffering many disasters at Pyrrhus's hands, thou didst rout this conqueror of thine. Hannibal lived to bewail his successes. Bodies that cannot be submerged re-emerge with an irresistible *élan*; they spring back from the depths, borne up all the higher. Slant a torch and it will regain its strength; sink, and you will rise aloft all the grander. Promulgate laws to live for Roman aeons; thou, Rome, alone needst have no fear of the Fates' fell distaffs. . . . Thou wilt live out the ages that await thee as thine own mistress – ages that will last as long as the Earth stands and as the firmament bears the stars. Thou wilt be restored by the blows that dissolve other empires. The recipe for rebirth is the capacity to thrive on calamities. So into battle! At last the sacrilegious tribe must fall as thy sacrificial victims. The Goths must tremble and must bow their perfidious necks. Thy dominions, brought back to peace, must yield rich revenues. The spoils of the barbarians must fill the folds of thy majestic robes. To all eternity, Rhine must plough for thee and Nile inundate for thee. The fertile globe must nourish thee, her nurse.¹⁵

Perhaps the strangest testimony of all to Rome's power of fascination is Saint Jerome's description of the shock that he suffered when the news of the city's fall reached him in his remote retreat in Jerusalem.

While this [theological war] was being waged in Jerusalem, terrible news arrived from the West. We learnt how Rome had

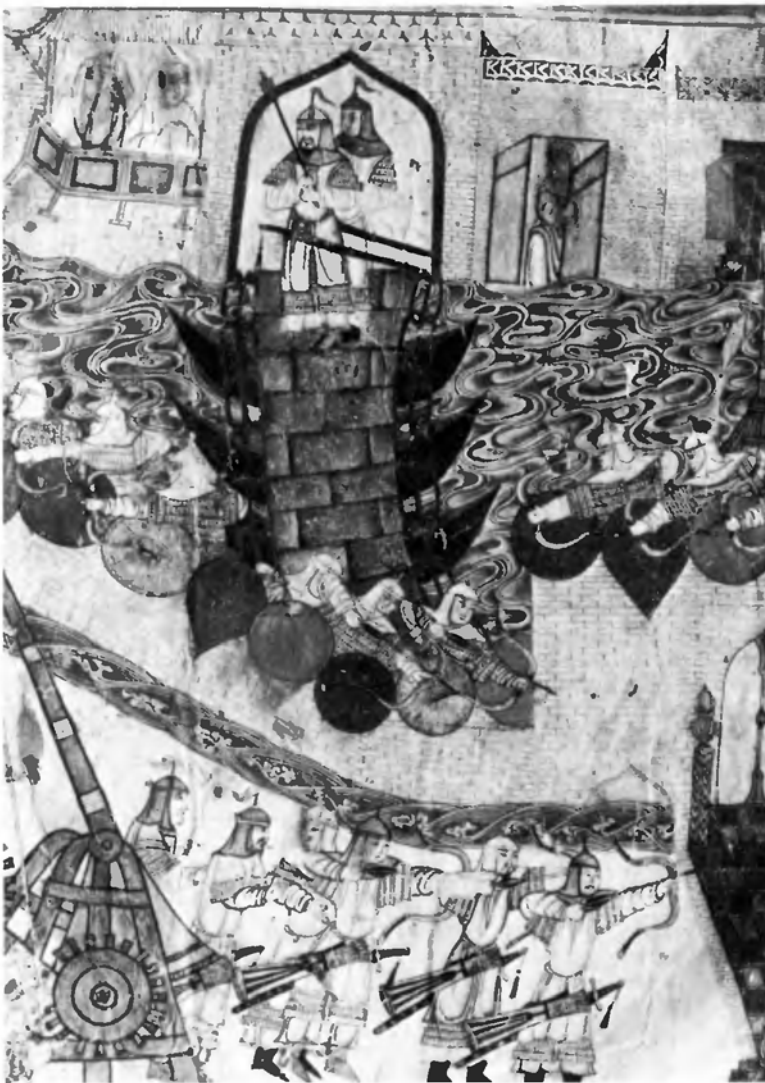
been besieged, how her citizens had purchased immunity by paying a ransom, and how then, after they had thus been despoiled, they had been beleaguered again, to forfeit their lives after having already forfeited their property. At the news my speech failed me, and sobs choked the words that I was dictating. She had been captured – the City by whom the whole world had once been taken captive.¹⁶

The Saint was devoted to the service of a Church that avowedly placed its hopes in the Commonwealth of God, and not in any earthly polity; yet this news, mundane though it might be, affected Jerome so profoundly that for the moment he found himself incapable of proceeding with his literary labours of theological controversy and Scriptural exegesis.

A similar shock was administered to the Arab World by the fall of the 'Abbasid Caliphate in AD 1258. The intense psychological effect that this produced is perhaps even more remarkable than in the Roman case, for, by the time when the Mongol Hulagu sacked Baghdad and gave the 'Abbasid Caliphate its *coup de grâce*, it had long since ceased to exercise more than a nominal sovereignty over the greater part of its original dominions.

It is perhaps comprehensible that a shadow could continue half deliberately to be mistaken for the substance by a dominant minority for whom the moribund universal state represented their own latest achievement and last hope; but it is an extraordinary testimony to the attractive power of the institution that it could also be an object of awe and devotion to the internal and external proletariats who had had little part in its construction. On the strength of this fact, both the legitimate holders and the alien usurpers of the sovereign authority in a universal state may, by stressing a genuine or pretended historic right to that authority, retain a considerable status as the sole dispensers of legitimacy long after they have lost all real power over their nominal empire. Indeed, this monopoly of an imponderable political commodity usually counts for so much that it is rare to find a barbarian conqueror of an imperial province boasting simply that he has seized his prize by force and is holding it by right of conquest alone. There are, to be sure, examples of barbarian conquerors who did permit themselves this indulgence – the Arian Vandals who made themselves masters of Roman Africa, or the Shi'i Kutama Berber conquerors of 'Abbasid Ifriqiyah and Egypt; but both these paid the penalty of being liquidated for their presumption. By contrast, the Amalung leaders of the Arian Ostrogoths and the Buwayhid leaders of the Shi'i Daylamis were wise enough to seek a title for their conquests by ruling them, in official theory, as viceregents of the Emperor at Constantinople and of the Caliph at Baghdad respectively. It was the heretical religion of these Arians and Buwayhids that eventually proved their undoing, for each was later supplanted by a barbarian successor who had taken the extra precaution of matching his claim to political legitimacy with a claim to religious orthodoxy. Even as late as the end of the thirteenth century the 'slave kings' at Delhi felt themselves obliged to legitimize their authority by reaffirming at each succession that it issued from the 'Abbasid Caliphate.

The same exertion of influence unsupported by real power is illustrated in the histories of the Ottoman,



SHADOWS OF POWER

202 The Mongols besiege Baghdad, capital of the 'Abbasid Caliphate. By the time the city fell in 1258, the Baghdad Caliphs had lost most of their real power, but their symbolic prestige for Islam was still enormous. The Islamic World had had a caliph at its head since 632; the death of the last is still lamented in special prayers.

Manchu, and Mughal Empires. The Manchu revival of the Sinic universal state affected to believe that all sovereigns in any part of the world with whom the Celestial Empire might be drawn into diplomatic relations derived their title from the same unique source of legitimacy as did China's own tributary states round about her borders. In the decline of the Ottoman Empire between the disastrous end of the Turco-Russian War of AD 1768-74 and the ignominious outcome of its final trial of strength with Mehmet 'Ali in 1839-40, the ambitious war-lords who were carving out successor-states for themselves in Egypt and Syria and the Balkans were meticulous in claiming to be acting in the Padishah's name while they were actually usurping his power.

The success of both these empires in still retaining, in their decline, a monopoly of the prerogative of serving as the fount of legitimacy was not, however, quite as remarkable as the Mughal Empire's performance of the same diplomatico-psychological *tour de force*. The Timurid Mughal dynasty continued to assert this prerogative in its dealings with alien Powers who held the shadow of a *ci-devant* Mughal Empire at their mercy after it had sunk to a degree of impotence that neither the Ottoman nor the Manchu Empire ever quite reached. Within half a century of the great Emperor Awrangzib's death in AD 1707, an empire which had once exercised an effective sovereignty over the greater part of the Indian sub-continent had been whittled down to a torso of some few thousand square miles, and within a hundred years of the same date this truncated dominion had been reduced to the circuit of the walls of the Red Fort at Delhi. Yet in 1857 - 150 years after the effective dissolution of the Empire - the puppet Emperor who was still seated on the throne once occupied by Akbar and Awrangzib saw his fantastic pretensions to the legal title of his mighty ancestors' imperial domain vindicated by the mutinous sepoys of the British East India Company's army. The mutineers inaugurated in the Emperor's name the government of a revolutionary counter-raj which they were seeking to substitute by force of arms for the unconsecrated dominion of their British employers; and, in thus exploiting the prestige of a now-impotent Great Mogul, they were only taking account of a persistent state of Indian public opinion with which the British had already been obliged to reckon.

This was the consideration that had led the British East India Company, in 1764 and 1765, to acknowledge the Emperor's suzerainty as the *quid pro quo* for his formal conferment upon them of the right to conduct the administration and collect the revenue in the imperial provinces of Bihar and Bengal. Subsequent British experience confirmed that this imponderable remnant of Mughal imperial power did in fact possess a genuine specific gravity that could not be ignored with impunity. Although, as early as 1773, the British had revoked their recognition of the Mughal Emperor's continuing suzerainty over Bihar and Bengal, they were confronted as late as 1811 with a reassertion of the Emperor's title to a formal sovereignty in these long-since-ceded provinces which they did not find altogether easy to quash; and in the Emperor's last stronghold at Delhi within the walls of the Red Fort the controversy over the question whether he was the suzerain or a pensionary of the



203 Durbar of an Indian maharajah, by an English artist. In Mughal government, the durbar, or public audience, in which subjects performed a formal act of homage to emperor or prince, was a solemn ceremony. Even after the sovereignty of India had passed effectively into British hands, both durbar and homage retained something of their ritual aura.

British East India Company remained unsettled throughout the fifty-five years' interval between the British military occupation of Delhi in 1803 and the suppression of the Indian Mutiny in 1858. The British East India Company's explicit public declaration in 1811 that it was 'unnecessary to derive from the King of Delhi any additional title to the Allegiance of our Indian subjects'¹⁷ was a form of words that, to Indian minds, was less significant than the British Resident's continued performance of a subject's customary visible acts of homage when he attended the Emperor's *darbar*. The importance still attached in Indian eyes to this symbolic act was given tangible expression by the Mutiny of 1857.

The tenacity of the belief in the immortality of universal states is demonstrated even more forcibly in the paradoxical practice of evoking their ghosts after they have actually proved themselves mortal by expiring. The 'Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad was thus resuscitated in the shape of the 'Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo, the Roman Empire in the two shapes of the Holy Roman Empire of the West and the East Roman Empire of Orthodox Christendom; the Empire of the Ch'in (Ts'in) and Han dynasties in the shape of the Sui and T'ang Empire of the Sinic Society. Each of these ghosts managed to acquire and retain the status which their originals had once enjoyed, before their passing, as founts of legitimacy.

The Mamluks had been quick to install a refugee 'Abbasid at Cairo in AD 1261 because, being themselves usurpers of their Ayyubid masters' heritage and being faced with the problem of handing it down thereafter from slave to slave, they had the same urgent and recurring need of legitimization as their contemporaries and counterparts the 'slave kings' of Delhi. The Mamluk Sultans and their subjects appear to have treated their 'Abbasid puppets with contempt from first to last, but the more distant Muslim rulers in Hindustan continued to defer to the Cairene 'Abbasid Caliphs as their predecessors had deferred to the last Baghdadi 'Abbasid Caliph Musta'sim. A diploma of investiture was sought and obtained from the Cairene Caliph of the day not only by the parricide and tyrant Muhammad b. Taghlaq (*dominabatur* AD 1324-51) but by his estimable successor Firuz Shah (*dominabatur* AD 1351-88), who did not have his predecessor's incentive for seeking external sanction for his régime. Even Timur Lenk's grandson Pir Muhammad seems to have thought of taking the same step as a *manœuvre* in the contest for Timur's heritage, and the Ottoman Padishah Bayezid I (*imperabat* AD 1389-1402) seems actually to have applied to the reigning Cairene 'Abbasid in AD 1394 for a grant of the title of Sultan. However, Bayezid's descendant Selim I (*imperabat* AD 1512-20) felt no need of such legitimization, and did not covet a title borne by a puppet of the last Mamluk Sultan whom he had defeated and executed. The new generation of *de facto* rulers of a nascent Islamic World preferred to claim affinity with the Nomad war-lord Chingis Khan rather than with a Meccan Holy Family. In these circumstances the Cairene 'Abbasid Caliphate lost its power of attraction; the title of 'Caliph' forfeited its specific application to ecumenical sovereignty and was debased to the level of a polite honorific for any ruler. The history of the Caliphate might thus have been expected to come to an

end with the death, in obscurity, of the last Cairene 'Abbasid in 1543. Yet this was not, after all, the end of the story. After having thought nothing of the Caliphate for little less than four hundred years, the 'Osmanlis discovered belatedly, in the days of their decline, that this long-despised institution was not quite as worthless as they had thought.

During the hundred years after the negotiation of the Russo-Turkish peace treaty of Küçük Kainarca in 1774 the Ottoman Caliphate became for the first time an active participant in Western international politics; and at the same time it was able to derive great advantage from a misunderstanding among the Western Powers as to the nature of an office which had been obsolete, in all but name, for many centuries. In the West it was widely assumed that the Caliphate was a spiritual office with an authority more or less equivalent to that of the Papacy, while the Sultanate was regarded as being the organ of temporal power; the Ottoman Padishah was thus supposed to be combining in one person two distinct types of authority which might otherwise have been divided between different persons. In truth this assumed analogy between the Papacy and the Caliphate was quite false; and in at least three peace treaties between 1774 and 1913 the Ottoman Power was able to exploit – quite consciously and deliberately – the foreign Powers' error, by retaining in the Caliph's name the temporal authority over territories which it had been compelled to surrender in the Padishah's.

As it turned out, the foreign Powers eventually detected and corrected their error, and thus the deception could not stave off for ever the loss of Ottoman political control over the Empire's former territories. At the same time, however, the refurbishment of the Caliphate as a 'spiritual' office did have an imponderable but appreciable psychological effect upon international politics. It gave pause to the aggressive Western or Westernizing Powers which had taken the measure of the Ottoman Empire's political weakness but still remained in awe of the explosive religious force of Islam. Conversely, it made the Ottoman Empire, shrunken though it was, a moral rallying-point for the Muslim diaspora, not only in the ex-Ottoman territories, but also in distant regions such as India and China which had never been under the rule of any Caliph. These psychological uses of the Ottoman Caliphate, as realized by the Sultan 'Abd-al-Hamid II (*imperabat* AD 1876-1909), were such obviously valuable assets for the Ottoman state that the Sultan's 'New 'Osmanli' liberal opponents sought, not to abolish the Caliphate, but to preserve it for manipulation as an instrument of their own Turkish national policy. The Caliphate thus survived the abolition of the Sultanate in 1922, though only until 1924, by which time the impossibility of drawing any real distinction between the spiritual and the secular title had become clear. The office has now been non-existent for practically half a century, but, in view of the fact that the Caliphate previously managed to retain for more than a thousand years the prestige generated by a power that it had actually possessed for no more than two centuries, it might be wiser even now to regard the office as being merely in abeyance rather than finally extinct.

The Ottoman Padishahs, who treated their heritage of the 'Abbasid Caliphate at first so cavalierly and latterly so

astutely, took their heritage of the Roman Empire more seriously. The East Roman Emperors, like the Chinese Emperors, claimed that they had a unique title to a world-wide sovereignty. Rulers of states on the fringes of the world, who were beyond the world-ruler's control *de facto*, were under his suzerainty *de jure* according to this East Roman and this Chinese pretension. The East Roman Emperors based their overweening claim on the fact that their seat of government was 'the New Rome', Constantinople; and this doctrine led the East Roman Empire's neighbours to covet the possession of a city that was held to confer the title to world-dominion on its occupant. In 913, Khan Symeon of Bulgaria came within an ace of installing himself in Constantinople as Emperor of the Romans and the Bulgars,¹⁸ and in the fourteenth century, when the East Roman Empire was already *in extremis*, the prize that had eluded the Bulgar Khan Symeon's grasp might have been seized by the Nemanyid Serb empire-builder Stephen Dushan, but for the accident of his premature death.

A century later, in 1453, Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Padishah, Mehmet II 'the Conqueror'. By that date, East Roman Constantinople was only a tiny unengulfed enclave in the vast Empire, stretching to the Danube and to the Taurus, that Mehmet II's predecessors had conquered; yet Mehmet II has been styled 'the Conqueror' *par excellence* because he and his fellow 'Osmanlis accepted the East Roman doctrine that an emperor who ruled from Constantinople was juridically the sovereign of the whole world, and therefore the acquisition of Constantinople counted for more, in their estimation, than the subjugation of the city's broad European and Asian hinterlands.¹⁹ Thenceforward, non-Ottoman Muslims called the Ottoman Padishah the *Qaysar-i-Rum*, among other titles, and they called the 'Osmanlis 'Rumis'. The survival of the Roman Empire in its East Roman avatar – an Orthodox Christian Greek Roman Empire – has been touched upon in an earlier chapter,²⁰ and we have also seen²¹ how the Phanariot Greek subjects of the Ottoman Empire were betrayed by the 'great idea' of a resuscitated Greek Roman Empire into forfeiting their prospects of becoming partners of the Ottoman Turks in the government of the Turkish Roman Empire. This Turkish Roman Empire survived for a century after the fiasco of the Phanariot Greek Prince Alexander Ypsilandes's invasion of Moldavia in 1821. The last Ottoman Turkish Roman Emperor was deposed in 1922 by the Turks themselves, 116 years after the demise, in the West, of the Roman Empire that had been resuscitated here by Charlemagne.

The East Roman Emperors' claim to worldwide sovereignty had been linked with their fidelity to Christian Orthodoxy, and both of these East Roman pretensions were taken up in Russia – an Orthodox Christian country in which the local church was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople till 1589, when an autocephalous Patriarchate of Moscow was created with the blessing of the four older and senior Orthodox Patriarchates. The Grand Duke of Moscow and his subjects repudiated the Greek Metropolitan of Moscow Isidore's signature, at Florence in 1439, of the Act of Union, recognizing the Pope's supremacy (not merely



204 THE CONQUEROR, Sultan Mehmet II. Though his predecessors had already overrun most of the Christian East Roman Empire before Constantinople fell in 1453, it was Mehmet who was remembered by his fellow 'Osmanlis and fellow Muslims as the 'Conqueror' for capturing the Empire's seat of sovereignty, carrying with it the title to world dominion.

primacy) over the whole Church, which had also been signed by the East Roman Emperor John VIII Palaeologus and by the Ecumenical Patriarch, who was the Metropolitan of Moscow's ecclesiastical superior.²² In 1460 the Metropolitan of Moscow – now a Russian, and no longer a Greek – declared that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 had been God's punishment of the Greeks' betrayal of Orthodoxy at Florence.²³

The Union of Florence had also been repudiated by the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, and by some eminent clerical subjects of the East Roman Empire itself, including George Scholarius, who, as Gennadius I, became the first of the Ecumenical Patriarchs of Constantinople under the Ottoman régime. However, the Russians' rejection of the Union of Florence was far more important, because from 1439 to 1484, when the Union of Florence was repudiated at an ecumenical council held in Constantinople, at which all four Eastern Patriarchs were represented,²⁴ the Grand Duchy of Moscow was the only politically independent Orthodox Christian state of any importance²⁵ that had not compromised itself with Rome, and Muscovy continued to be the only independent Orthodox Christian state until the achievement of independence by the South-East European Orthodox Christian successor-states of the Ottoman Empire in the course of the nineteenth century.

In rejecting the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Papacy and proclaiming the Russian Church's unwavering fidelity to Orthodoxy, the Muscovite government, the Russian ecclesiastical authorities, and the Russian people were unanimous. But the government demurred to the findings of a Russian ecclesiastical synod, convened in 1551, which declared that the Russians were more orthodox than the Greeks,²⁶ and the government also did not endorse the thesis, propounded by some Orthodox clerics, that Muscovy was the defunct East Roman Empire's heir and that consequently Muscovy had inherited the Empire's title to universal dominion.²⁷

In 1492 the Metropolitan of Moscow, Zosimus, called the Grand Duke Ivan III (*imperabat* AD 1462–1505) 'the new Constantine', and Moscow 'the new Constantinople'. This belief was given its classic formulation by an elder of a monastery in Pskov, Philotheus, in an epistle addressed to the Grand Duke Basil III (*imperabat* AD 1505–33).

The Church of old Rome fell [because of] its heresy; the gates of the second Rome, Constantinople, were hewn down by the axes of the infidel Turks; but the Church of Moscow, the Church of the new Rome, shines brighter than the sun in the whole universe. Thou art the one universal sovereign of all Christian folk, thou shouldst hold the reins in awe of God; fear him who hath committed them to thee. Two Romes are fallen, but the third stands fast; a fourth there cannot be. Thy Christian kingdom shall not be given to another.²⁸

Two generations later, a paraphrase of this famous passage was written into the installation charter of the first Patriarch of Moscow over the signature of his creator the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah:

Because the old Rome has collapsed on account of the heresy of Apollinarius, and because the second Rome, which is Constantinople, is now in [the] possession of the godless Turks, thy great kingdom, O pious Tsar, is the third Rome. It surpasses in

devotion every other, and all Christian kingdoms are now merged in thy realm. Thou art the only Christian sovereign in the World, the master of all faithful Christians.²⁹

The Orthodox Christian clerics who made these declarations were trying, officiously, to drape round the shoulders of the political sovereign of the Muscovite state the mantle that, in 1453, had fallen from the shoulders of the last East Roman Emperor; but the Muscovite sovereign shrugged off this piece of finery as if it were a shirt of Nessus; and, indeed, if he had allowed himself to be invested with it, this would have impeded him in the pursuit of his own political objective. It was not the Muscovite government's political ambition to contest the accomplished fact of the 'Osmanlis' conquest of Constantinople; Muscovy's ambition was to reunify Russia politically in a Russian universal state under Muscovite rule.

In the eleventh century the original Russian principality of Kiev had broken up into a number of fragments. In the thirteenth century the westernmost appanage of the Mongol Empire, the Golden Horde, had subjected most of these fragments of Russia to its suzerainty. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, vast tracts of Western Russia, including Kiev itself, had been annexed by Poland and Lithuania. Muscovy's objective was to unite all other surviving Russian states under its own rule, to shake off the suzerainty of the Golden Horde, and to recover the Russian territories that had been annexed by Russia's Western neighbours.

The decisive step in Muscovy's reunification of Russia was its annexation, between 1471 and 1479, of the Republic of Novgorod – a Russian state that had maintained its independence as against both the Golden Horde and Lithuania, and that had expanded its dominions to the shores of the White Sea and to the far side of the Ural mountains. Ivan III, the Grand Duke of Moscow who had succeeded in annexing Novgorod, went on, in 1480, to repudiate the Golden Horde's suzerainty and to proclaim his own independence under the title of autocrat. Ivan III's second successor, Ivan IV the Terrible (*imperabat* AD 1533–84), had himself crowned Emperor in 1547. The recovery of the Russian territories that had been annexed by Poland and Lithuania did not begin till 1667 and was not completed till 1945, twenty-eight years after the Russian Tsardom had been liquidated. In 1945, the Soviet Union reannexed the White Russian and Ukrainian territories that had been held by Poland between the two World Wars, as well as Carpatho-Ruthenia, a strip of ex-Hungarian territory, south-west of the Carpathians, whose inhabitants are Ukrainians.

This Muscovite objective of reunifying 'all the Russias' – Great Russia, White Russia, the Ukraine – was pursued persistently from the fifteenth century onwards. As Obolensky puts it,³⁰ 'Moscow the Second Kiev', not 'Moscow the Third Rome', was the hallmark of the Muscovite government's foreign policy.

The Muscovite government did seek to establish a Russian universal state that would reunite 'all the Russias' under Muscovite rule, and eventually it attained this objective; but the Muscovite government did not allow the Orthodox Church to saddle it with the defunct East Roman Empire's pretensions to worldwide dominion.

Indeed, the Muscovite government went out of its way to assure its Western neighbours that it did not entertain any such ambition. In 1576, Tsar Ivan IV instructed his ambassadors to the court of the Habsburg Western 'Roman Emperor' to explain that his claim to the title 'Tsar' was based on the fact that he had conquered the 'tsardoms' of Kazan and Astrakhan,³¹ which were successor-states of the Golden Horde in the Volga basin. In 1582 Ivan IV declared to the Papal Envoy: 'We do not want the realm of the whole Universe.'³² This was an explicit repudiation of the role that had been pressed upon the Muscovite government by the Orthodox Church. Ivan IV was declaring that he was not reviving, for his own Empire, the defunct East Roman government's claim to world-dominion on the score of being the Roman Empire's sole legitimate heir – a claim that, in the Middle Ages, had led repeatedly to altercations between the Constantinopolitan Emperors and the predecessors of the Habsburg *Caesarea Majestas*.

Modern Russia did not head towards Constantinople till the reign of Peter the Great, and Peter, when he took Azov and then lost it through his disastrous invasion of Moldavia, was not seeking to replace the Ottoman by a Russian Roman Empire. Peter's objective was not ideological; it was practical. He was seeking to open windows on the sea for his land-locked dominions. At Peter's accession, the Black Sea was an Ottoman lake and the Baltic was a Swedish lake, in consequence of Ivan IV's loss, in the disastrous war of 1558–83, of the narrow sea-board, at the head of the Gulf of Finland, that Muscovy had inherited from the Republic of Novgorod. Peter's motive, like Ivan IV's – and also like Alexander II's, when he annexed the site of Vladivostok in 1858 – was to acquire an ice-free port.

Whether or not we may question the verdict that Eastern Orthodox Christianity is a spent force in modern Russian life, it seems to be indisputable that the Russians were not deceived by the mirage of a Roman world-empire; but it also looks as if this Russian clear-sightedness has been exceptional. The Roman mirage did beguile the Byzantine and Phanariot Greeks, the Bulgar and Serb Slavs, and the Ottoman Turks, and we have seen that the Roman Empire is not the only universal state that has had this posthumous hypnotic effect. On the whole, the evidence that we have mustered would seem to support our original contention that the belief in the immortality of universal states survives for centuries and millennia after it has been decisively confuted by plain hard facts. What are the causes of this strange phenomenon?

One obvious cause is the potency of the personal impression made by the founders of universal states and by their immediate successors – an impression that tends to be exaggerated to legendary proportions with the passage of time. Nowhere is this truth better illustrated than in the official worship of the founder of the *Pax Augusta*, and in the veneration and posthumous deification of his successors. To Augustus were addressed eulogies couched in outright religious language:

[The Most Divine Caesar] has re-established a Universe that had everywhere been in disintegration and had degenerated into a lamentable state. He has put a new face on the whole cosmos – a cosmos that would have been only too happy to pass out of



205 Deified empire-builder: Augustus, the first Emperor of Rome. The feat of bringing peace to a war-torn society confers legendary fame on the founder of a universal state; in retrospect the achievement seems godlike, and the emperor divine.



206 Darius of Persia, appointed 'lord of all men from sunrise to sunset' by the god Ahura-mazda, receives his vizier in audience; the incense-burners before him indicate the divine protection he was believed to enjoy: relief from Persepolis.

existence if, at the critical moment, Caesar had not been born to be the Universe's universal blessing. . . . The providence that has organized every detail of human life has exerted and surpassed itself in order to bring life to perfection in producing Augustus – whom it has filled with virtue to be the benefactor of Mankind, sending him to us and to posterity as a saviour whose mission has been to put an end to war and to set the Universe in order.³³

Within a century the logic of divinization had been accepted.

[Gaius Caligula] was audacious enough to act on assumptions that were everywhere current about his literal 'God-head'. This was too much for Roman stomachs at such an early date. But they were soon to become accustomed to the idea. With Domitian, only forty years later, it had become a convention of polite speech to hail the emperor as *dominus et deus*, 'my Lord and God'. In the following century, even constitutionally minded princes like Trajan had no hesitation in accepting these forms of address.³⁴

Another cause of the persistence of the belief in the immortality of universal states is the impressiveness of the institution itself, as distinct from the prestige of the successive rulers who are its living incarnation. A universal state captivates hearts and minds because it symbolizes a recovery from the long-lasting misery of a time of troubles. It was this aspect of the Roman Empire that eventually won the respect of originally hostile Greek writers.

There is no salvation in the exercise of a dominion divorced from power. To find oneself under the dominion of one's superiors is a 'second best' alternative; but this 'second best'

proved to be the best of all in our present experience of a Roman Empire. This happy experience has moved the whole world to cleave to Rome with might and main. The world would no more think of seceding from Rome than a ship's crew would think of parting company with the pilot. You must have seen bats in a cave clinging tight to one another and to the rocks; and this is an apt image of the whole world's dependence on Rome. In every heart today the focus of anxiety is the fear of becoming detached from the cluster. The thought of being abandoned by Rome is so appalling that it precludes any thought of wantonly abandoning her.

There is an end of those disputes over sovereignty and prestige which were the causes of the outbreak of all the wars of the past; and, while some of the nations, like noiselessly flowing water, are delightfully quiet – rejoicing in their release from toil and trouble, and aware at last that all their old struggles were to no purpose – there are other nations which do not even know or remember whether they once sat in the seat of power. In fact we are witnessing a new version of the Pamphylian's myth (or is it Plato's own?). At a moment when the states of the world were already laid out on the funeral-pyre as the victims of their own fratricidal strife and turmoil, they were all at once presented with the [Roman] dominion and straightway came to life again. How they arrived at this condition, they are unable to say. They know nothing about it, and can only marvel at their present well-being. They are like sleepers awakened who have come to themselves and now dismiss from their thoughts the dreams that obsessed them only a moment ago. They no longer find it credible that there were ever such things as wars; and, when the word 'war' is mentioned today, it has a mythical sound in most people's ears. . . .

The entire inhabited world now keeps perpetual holiday. It has laid aside the steel which it used to wear of old and has

turned, care-free, to festivities and enjoyment of all kinds. All other rivalries have died out, and one form of competition alone now preoccupies all the cities – a competition in making the finest show of beauty and amenity. The whole world is now full of gymnasiums, fountains, gateways, temples, workshops, academies; and it is now possible to say with scientific certainty that a world which was in its death-agonies has made a recovery and gained a new lease of life. . . . The whole Earth has been laid out like a pleasure-park. The smoke of burning villages and the watch-fires (lit by friend or foe) have vanished beyond the horizon, as though some mighty wind had winnowed them away, and their place has been taken by an innumerable multitude and variety of enchanting shows and sports. . . . So that the only people who still need pity for the good things that they are missing are those outside your Empire – if there are any such people left. . . .³⁶

If there are any, they are hardly worth speaking of in the estimation of those inside, and this is another reason why the belief in their immortality that universal states inspire is so blindly persistent. Universal states are the supreme expression, on the political plane, of a sense of unity which is one of the psychological products of the process of disintegration.³⁶ During the time of troubles which disintegrating civilizations undergo, the yearning for unity grows ever stronger as the reality of it vanishes; and when, at the lowest ebb of hope, the long-pursued goal is at last unexpectedly attained, the psychological effect is overwhelming.

Ahuramazda, the creator of Heaven and Earth, has made the King of the Persians 'ruler, far and wide, over this great Earth' – made 'him, the one [lord], to be ruler over many'; made him 'king over many lands and tongues', 'over the mountains and plains this side of the Sea and beyond it' [Babylonian Inscription H]. He can style himself 'the lord of all men from sunrise to sunset' [Aeschines, iii. 132]. All the peoples whose representatives are portrayed on the seat of his throne render him obedience, bring him tribute and serve in his armed forces.³⁷

The sense of unity and universality that is here applied to the Achaemenian Empire is also taken up by the Greek Aelius Aristeides in his eulogy of Rome, in which he makes a point of the universality of her rule as well as of the new lease of life which she has brought to a lacerated Hellenic Society.

Of this city of Rome you could not say either that it was left unfortified with a Lacedaemonian bravado or that it was enclosed in fortifications of a Babylonian magnificence. . . . You have not, however, you Romans, neglected to build walls; only you have run them round your Empire and not round your city. You have placed them in the uttermost parts of the Earth; yet they are magnificent walls which are worthy of you and are a sight for the eyes of all who live within their shelter – though it would take an intending sightseer months or even years to reach them if Rome itself were the starting-point of his journey; for you have pushed your way beyond the outermost circuit of the inhabited world and there, in no-man's-land, you have drawn a second circuit with a more convenient *tracé* which is easier to defend – for all the world as if you were simply fortifying a city. . . . This circuit is utterly impregnable and indestructible at every point; it outshines all others; and no system of fortifications that was ever constructed before bears any resemblance to it.³⁸

In this passage, a literary contemporary of Marcus Aurelius, in whose anxious reign Rome's magnificent

world-wall was beginning to crack, was re-expounding the theme of a writer of the previous generation, in whose day the world's defences did indeed look impregnablely secure. During the last two centuries, says Appian of Alexandria (*vivebat* c. AD 90–160) in the preface to his *Studies in Roman History*,

the [Roman] state has reached its highest point of organization and the public revenue its highest figure, while a long and stable peace has raised the whole world to a level of secure prosperity. A few more subject nations have been added by the emperors to those already under the Roman dominion, and others which have revolted have been reduced to obedience; but, since the Romans already possess the choicest portions of the land and water surface of the globe, they are wise enough to aim at retaining what they hold rather than at extending their Empire to infinity over the poverty-stricken and unremunerative territories of uncivilized nations. I myself have seen representatives of such nations attending at Rome on diplomatic missions and offering to become her subjects, and the Emperor refusing to accept the allegiance of peoples who would be of no value to his government. There are other nations innumerable whose kings the Romans appoint themselves, since they feel no necessity to incorporate them in their Empire. There are also certain subject nations to whom they make grants from their treasury, because they are too proud to repudiate them in spite of their being a financial burden. They have garrisoned the frontiers of their Empire with a ring of powerful armies, and keep guard over this vast extent of land and sea as easily as if it were a modest farm.³⁹

In the view of Appian and Aelius Aristeides, the Roman Empire was eternal

just as the sum total of things is eternal, because there is no room, outside it, for its components to fly apart, and there are no extraneous bodies that can collide with it and disintegrate it with a mighty blow.⁴⁰

In these lines of the Roman poet Lucretius, his teacher Democritus's argument looks as impregnable as the Roman *limes* itself.

Nor is there any force that can modify the sum of things. There is no space outside into which any kind of matter can escape out of the totality. Nor is there any space outside from which some new force can arise, break in, transform the whole nature of things, and deflect its motions.⁴¹

A universal state has indeed as little to fear from outer barbarians as the Universe has from stray star clusters that are *ex hypothesi* non-existent; yet the argument is a fallacy nevertheless, for, as we have seen in an earlier context, 'things rot through evils native to their selves'.⁴² In physical Nature there are elements whose atoms disintegrate by spontaneous radioactivity without requiring any bombardment from extraneous particles; and, in human social life, universal states 'are betray'd by what is false within'⁴³ into revealing, for those who have eyes to see through their specious appearance of impregnability, that, so far from being immortal, these are spontaneously fissile polities.

However long the life of a universal state may be drawn out, it always proves to have been the last phase of a society before its extinction. Its goal is the achievement of immortality, but the attempt to secure immortality in this world is a vain effort, whether blind or deliberate, to thwart the economy of Nature.



207 Britain



208 Argentorate



209 Pannonia

210 Dalmatia



211 Scythia



212 Thebaid



THE WALLS OF EMPIRE

Maps of some of Rome's principal frontier provinces make a composite picture of the vast extent of the Empire. The originals of these fifteenth-century versions came from a lost series of documents, once owned by a fourth- or fifth-century Roman official in Gaul.

There is always innovation to which the old order gives way, and one thing always has to be repaired at other things' cost. There is a perpetual need for raw material to provide for the growth of later ages. These in turn will all follow you when they too have run their course of life. As surely as you, the ages have perished in the past and will continue to perish in the future. This is the law of the Universe. One thing will always be arising out of another. Life is given to none of us in freehold; we all hold it only in usufruct.⁴⁴

How can an institution which is thus dedicated to the pursuit of a mirage be the ultimate goal of human endeavours, even though its citizens persistently mistake the illusion of Gilead for the reality of the Promised Land? On this showing, we must reject the notion that universal states are ends in themselves. On the other hand, we have yet to discover whether they may have some significance as a means for the performance of services in spite of themselves. Certainly the dominant minorities whose handiwork

the universal states are do not enter upon this labour as altruists; on the contrary, their conscious motive is a selfish desire to preserve themselves by conserving the wasting energies of a society with whose fortunes their own are bound up, and their deliberate intention in establishing a universal state is to use it as a means to this self-regarding end. But, although this intention can never be realized, the work devoted to it may yet redound to the benefit of a third party, and thus a universal state may have at least the opportunity of sharing indirectly in a fresh act of creation. The beneficiaries must be one or other of the three groups with which a universal state's establishment comes into contact, namely the internal proletariat or external proletariat of the moribund society itself, or the members of some alien civilization which is its contemporary. Let us now turn to the services which are offered involuntarily by universal states, and look at the uses which may be made of these facilities by each of the potential beneficiaries.

38 Have universal states a future?

IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS of this Part, which have dealt with some of the institutional and other features of universal states in the past, we have drawn illustrations from a number of examples of this species of polity. A few of these empires, of which the Russian is the principal example,¹ have been universal in the sense of having realized a limited ambition to unite under a single régime all the parochial polities of one civilization, i.e. of one cultural 'world'; but we have seen that most empires – the Sinic, the Roman, and the East Roman Empires, for example – which have been universal only in this limited sense have also laid claim to a literally worldwide dominion and have been felt by their subjects to have lived up to this pretension.

However, none of the historic universal states has ever been literally universal, whatever the subjective feeling of their inhabitants may have been. Out of all the specimens of universal states of both types that we have cited, only two – China and Russia – are still in existence today. Of these two, only China has ever laid claim to literal universality; and even China has found herself compelled, by the present political structure of the world, to abate her traditional claim to universality. China has had to accommodate herself to living in a society that has become literally worldwide at the technological level while, at the political level, it has been divided up into an ever larger number of officially sovereign independent fragments of territory. (The number of officially sovereign states on the surface of this planet has doubled since the close of the Second World War.) In strictly political terms, China has now altered her claim to universality to the indirect form of claiming – as the Soviet Union also claims – to be the leading political vehicle of an ideology that, according to the doctrine of the present rulers of both the Chinese and the Russian regional Empires, is the sole true faith for all the world.

This recent Chinese experience might seem, on first thoughts, to suggest that the universal state has no future, however large it may loom in the history of the last five thousand years. One of the greatest reverses that has ever overtaken a polity of this species was the never-retrieved disintegration of the Roman Empire, in the western part of its domain, in the fifth century of the Christian Era. Since then, Western Christendom has never been reunited politically. The Westernization of the world within the last five hundred years has been the work of a number of separate rival local Western states. Their competition with each other has been one of the major driving forces behind the West's expansion, and political divisiveness has been one of the salient features that the process of Westernization has imposed on the political landscape of the globe.

The post-Roman political fragmentation of Western Christendom has now become the political dispensation of the whole world, and in our time the parochial sovereign state is enjoying its heyday. The international anarchy that, on a regional scale, was characteristic of the Sumero-Akkadian World in the early centuries of the third millennium BC, and of the Hellenic World in the last millennium

BC, prevails today all round the globe. Have the universal states of past ages any relevance to Mankind's future? Are the two survivors of this species of polity anything more than 'museum pieces'? Can we not write off the universal states as one of the obsolete curiosities of history? This first thought of ours may be judged, on second thoughts, to be premature.

Let us remind ourselves that one of the two surviving specimens of the species is China, a polity which, for most of the time since the year 221 BC, has held together a steadily expanding area and population that, till as recently as the Opium War of AD 1839–42, was the cultural as well as the political focus of half the world. The traditional Chinese *Weltanschauung* has now been tested by more than three millennia of Chinese experience, and one of its key concepts is the dialectic alternation of a dynamic activity, Yang, with a passive state, Yin. When either Yang or Yin is carried to extremes, it automatically restores the balance of Nature by lopping over into its opposite – which eventually reverts to the alternative mode when it, in its turn, has been carried to the furthest length that Nature can tolerate.

Since the break-up of the Roman Empire in the West, the new civilization that has sprung up among the ruins of this outlying part of the Empire's domain has been in a Yang-phase that contrasts sharply with the Yin-condition that is characteristic of universal states; and the West's post-Roman Yang-activity has been accentuated in the course of time. It asserted itself earliest, and most persistently, on the political plane – first in the Roman Empire's barbarian successor-states, then in the medieval Western city-states, and most recently in the modern Western nation-states that have overwhelmed the former city-states in the Western Civilization's original domain, and that have now become the worldwide standard type of polity as a result of the Western Society's global expansion. Even the original ecclesiastical unity of Western Christendom was disrupted in the sixteenth century, and, since the seventeenth century, the sundered fragments of the Western Christian Church have each dwindled in size with the progressive loss of Christianity's hold over Western souls. The worldwide expansion of the Western Civilization in its post-Christian form has spread the West's heritage of disunity and chaos to the ends of the Earth.

This spectacle would lead an observer who had been bred in the Chinese tradition to see in the present worldwide paroxysm of Yang an indication that Yang is going, in the near future, to lop over into a proportionately emphatic reversion to Yin. The traditional-minded Chinese observer would make this forecast *a priori*, but he would also be able to support his prediction by pointing to facts. He could point out that civilizations whose original political structure has been pluralistic have ended as political unities. This has been the course, not only of Chinese history, but of Sumero-Akkadian, Hellenic, and Andean history as well. Our Chinese observer could also point out three contemporary facts that are making stabilization imperative. These three facts are the invention

of the nuclear weapon, the population explosion, and the consumption and pollution of the irreplaceable natural resources on which Mankind depends for its survival.

The first steps in the exploration of outer space – modest though these steps are when measured by the apparent scale of the physical cosmos – have taught us already that the resources of our native planet will be all that we shall have at our command for as far as we can see into the future. The harnessing of the forces of inanimate Nature has now given Man the power to use up his limited material patrimony. The reduction of the death-rate thanks to the progress of medicine has removed the former ruthless natural check on the increase in Mankind's numbers. The annihilation of distance by mechanized technology has given Man the power to use the nuclear weapon for committing global genocide. These three facts, in combination, seem to demand the establishment of an effective worldwide government with a mandate for imposing peace, for conserving resources, and for inducing its subjects to limit the number of their children.

A literally worldwide future universal state would be likely to reproduce many of the features of the would-be universal states that have come and gone in the course of the last five thousand years. Like these, it would be a means to ends other than its own perpetuation; but, unlike its predecessors, it would not be foredoomed to be impermanent. There would be no barbarians and no alien civilizations to impinge upon it from outside; and the internal decay that has been the main cause of the disintegrations of previous universal states would be inhibited by the permanence, and the permanent direness, of the need to prevent genocide, to limit population, and to conserve resources. Thus, in the field of human affairs, the rhythm of the Universe may well be arrested. The Yin-state that seems likely to follow the present Yang-phase may not give way to a recrudescence of Yang. A political and human disaster on the scale of the disintegration of the Roman Empire seems unlikely to happen again – though for different reasons than those that seemed convincing to Gibbon.

If there is any truth in these speculations, it should move us to study the characteristics of past universal states with close attention; for, in the histories of the polities of this species, we have a preview of the stable state in which it looks as if Mankind is going to have to live on this planet for so long as the planet remains habitable for human life. The empires that have most significance as pointers to the possible destiny of Mankind are not those established by local states within the body social of some single civilization, such as the recent colonial empires of the modern Western nations, or the similar empires carved out of the carcass of the Achaemenian Empire by the successors of Alexander the Great. They are those that, like the Roman Empire in the Hellenic World, or the Maurya Empire in India, or the Ch'in-Han Empire in China, have given political unity to the whole, or almost the whole, of the domain of an entire civilization at a stage when this civilization has been brought within sight of dissolution by a series of wars and revolutions on a progressively increasing scale of spiritual and material destruction. If we want to avoid finding ourselves living under a perpetual tyranny as the only alternative to the destruction of Mankind, we shall



258 The new society? Athletic display in modern China: Westerners tend to see in China a repulsive modern Leviathan, but behind the ceremonial lies an ideal of mutual solidarity and co-operation from which a fragmented world may learn.

be well advised to study both the positive and the negative sides of the historic universal states.

A future universal state will have to be literally worldwide, but this indicates that it will not necessarily be the creation of one civilization alone, as has been the rule in the past. Westerners should not automatically assume, as they are prone to do, that the values and goals of their own civilization will be permanently dominant. On the contrary, the likelihood is that the world-state of the future will begin by being a voluntary political association in which all the cultural elements of a number of living civilizations will continue to assert themselves. It is true that the West has maintained a cultural assault on the other living civilizations of the world for the past five hundred years, but we still cannot be sure that new civilizations will not emerge in the future or that civilizations which at present seem to be submerged will not be revived. In any case, a number of civilizations or cultural traditions are likely to have to learn how to live together under a single political dispensation; and thus one of the most instructive lessons that we can learn from the historic universal states is how competing cultures can coexist and can fructify one another.

Most of the universal states that have united a civilization politically have also included portions of the domain of one or more other civilizations, and also portions of their own society's barbarian hinterlands. In the course of time their originally heterogeneous subjects have tended to acquire a sense of solidarity with each other as children of a common human family whose unity has been symbolized for them politically by the world-state in which they have lived. Persecuted minorities and culturally oppressed subject-peoples cannot achieve this feeling of solidarity, and this is a practical consideration that has led the founders of universal states to recognize and tolerate cultural diversity in their domains. One aspect of this characteristic tolerance that has already come to our notice in our review of universal states is the toleration of linguistic variety.² Equally, now that a man's religion has become a matter of free personal choice, it would be a profoundly retrograde step if political uniformity were to lead to the imposition of a single religious or ideological orthodoxy, as it has led too often in the past. The Achaemenian Empire's policy of religious toleration is here a promising and inspiring precedent.

One feature of universal states that has come to our notice time and again is the disjunction between their

professed aims and their actual effects. If empire-builders have, in general terms, had a purely secular end in view, events have shown that it is not the essentially ephemeral and changing secular world, but Mankind's perennial pursuit of spiritual objectives, that has profited from the empire-builders' labours. We have already³ considered the religious ends that may be served by the creation of a worldwide system of communications; and it should come as no surprise to us to realize that, while a world-state will probably be instituted initially in response to the mundane challenges which we have identified above, its life thereafter will be likely to minister to a spiritual purpose. This is to be expected, for, although human beings in the mass are seldom moved by other than practical considerations, the very act of creating a political union on an ecumenical scale will confirm the moral truth that life is only practicable in so far as it is grasped as a whole. In this respect, a future world-state seems likely to differ radically from its historical predecessors. So far from being the doomed secular monument to a civilization on the verge of disintegration, it may contain in itself from the start the seeds of a spiritual movement that has already been revealed in the higher religions, and may deliberately and consciously foster their germination and growth.

Here, then, is one possible projection of the future of Mankind's life on Earth. The histories of past universal states allow us to make some general postulates about our own future, and can even offer us some positive lessons; but perhaps the single greatest lesson that we can learn from them is a negative one. Mankind longs today for a world united in peace and freedom, but in the past only the bitter experience of prolonged disunity and war, culminating in intolerable anarchy and distress, has moved men to attempt the salvation of their hard-pressed societies by the forcible unification of rival parochial polities. Even if this has not invariably resulted in the imposition of a tyranny, it has always presaged the eventual downfall of a society. Today we cannot afford the luxury of waiting to learn this lesson by a repetition, at first hand, of our predecessors' experience; for, if we do wait, the choices open to us will be reduced to the alternatives of a world tyranny or the end of life itself. Our knowledge of the past histories of other societies than our own must move us to forestall disaster by taking the future into our hands. If we sit back, we shall find ourselves overtaken by events that have passed beyond our control.

53 The nature of historical thought

WE HAVE now brought to a close the plan of operations that we set ourselves in the first Part of this Study. We have surveyed the lives of civilizations, the relations between them, and the emergence of the higher religions as societies of a distinctive species. The object of these intellectual labours has been to make our human history comprehensible as a whole, by examining the evidence that is available to us as twentieth-century men. We have so far assumed that this object must be attainable, but we have not yet asked ourselves whether this assumption is legitimate, nor have we made any critical appraisal of the mental tools that we have employed in this self-imposed task of explanation. All study, whether of human affairs or of non-human Nature, is subject to the limitations of human thought; and the first and greatest of these is that thought cannot help doing violence to reality in the act of trying to apprehend it.

For all we know, reality is the undifferentiated unity of the mystical experience. We cannot know whether it is or not, because we cannot be conscious without our mental image of reality – or reality's image of itself, mirrored in a human mind¹ – being diffracted or articulated into subject and object. This is the first link in a chain of articulations that we forge as fast as we go on thinking.

Our human consciousness, after its self-generating – or reality's generating – articulative act, goes on to dissect reality further into the conscious and the subconscious, soul and body, mind and matter, life and environment, freedom and necessity, creator and creatures, god and devil, good and bad, right and wrong, love and power, old and new, cause and effect. Such binary structures are indispensable categories of thought; they are our means of apprehending reality, as far as this is within our power. At the same time they are so many boundary-marks indicating the limits of human understanding, since they misrepresent reality by breaking up its unity in our apprehension of it. They are as baffling as they are enlightening. We cannot do without them, yet cannot do with them either. We cannot afford either to discount them completely or to take them at their full face value.

We cannot think about the Universe without assuming that it is articulated; and, at the same time, we cannot defend the articulations that we find, or make, in it against the charge that these are artificial and arbitrary. It can always be shown that they break up something that is indivisible and let slip something that is essential. Yet, without mentally articulating the Universe, we cannot ourselves be articulate – cannot, that is, either think or will. And we cannot go on thinking or willing if we regain the unity of the mystical experience. So we have to dissect – and, in dissecting, misrepresent – reality in order to apprehend reality sufficiently to be able to act and live in the light of the truth as far as we can discern it. Our inability to apprehend reality completely is, of course, not surprising. It is a paradox that one part of a whole should be able to distinguish itself from the rest and should then be able to achieve even a partial apprehension of the whole,

including itself. This feat is miraculous, however imperfect. How far it does fall short of attaining a true mental image of reality it is impossible for a human mind to tell.

Thought has no sooner set itself going by mentally breaking reality up than it gets to work to put reality together again. After having analysed, thought operates by classifying: that is, by identifying a number of different objects as being specimens of one and the same kind.² These objects between which the mind finds sufficient resemblance to allow it to bring them together mentally under some single head are no more than particular facets of phenomena. The facets of any phenomenon are innumerable, as is demonstrated by our ability to classify one and the same phenomenon in innumerable different ways, each corresponding to some different facet that it displays. So any one classification apprehends no more than a fraction of each of the phenomena that it brings together; and, when we have classified the same phenomenon under as many different heads as it displays facets whose like we can detect in other phenomena, we are still left with an unidentifiable residue that has eluded all classification. This is what we mean when we say that in every phenomenon there is something 'unique'. This word 'unique' is a negative term signifying what is mentally inapprehensible. The absolutely unique is, by definition, indescribable.

A high valuation of this element of uniqueness within the realm of human nature is evidently what has made its status a burning question in the study of human affairs, while it is not one in the natural sciences. This also perhaps explains why it is that among the various schools of students of human affairs – philosophers, theologians, logicians, psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians – it is the historians who have made it their business to be not only the exponents of the element of uniqueness, but also its champions. The most obvious definition of history is that it is the study of human phenomena as we see them on the move through time and space; but a different definition has been proposed by A.L. Kroeber. The essence of the historian's approach, he suggests, is not the vision of human affairs as temporal events; it is 'the endeavour to achieve a conceptual integration of phenomena while preserving the integrity of the phenomena'.³ This is the antithesis to the analytical and classificatory procedure, but these two alternative definitions of history do not conflict with each other. History must aim at preserving the complexity of individual events 'while also constructing them into a design which possesses a certain coherence of meaning'.⁴ The truth is that 'no description of any individual object or event can dispense with predicates or abstract repeatable traits',⁵ and that therefore 'no statement about the past can avoid some element of generality'.

If . . . there is genuine novelty in the Universe, and if events occur that have never occurred before, history must be an incomplete explanation of the present. In order to learn from the past there must be recurrences and similarities both throughout

the past and between it and the present. There are enough recurrences and similarities to enable history to give us some account of the past and some explanation of the present. Thus our choices are at least partially illuminated and enlightened.⁶

Change, novelty, and creation in human affairs are manifestations of the element of uniqueness in them, and one of the most cherished aims of historians is to catch change, novelty, and creation in their mental grasp; but they have to employ an instrument of thought which can analyse and classify points of likeness, but cannot cope with elements in phenomena that display no relations with any others. In seeking to apprehend what is unique, historians are, in fact, trying to swim against the current of the operational movement of the intellect.

The starting-point of historical interpretation, as of any intellectual enterprise, is the assumption that reality has some meaning for us which is accessible to us by the mental process of explanation. We assume that reality makes sense, even if perhaps not completely. That is to say, we assume that there is at least a certain amount of order and regularity in the relations between the myriad phenomena into which our image of reality is dissected in our human consciousness. 'All induction assumes the existence of *connexions* in nature, and . . . its only object is to determine between what elements these connexions hold.'⁷ Two expressions of this assumption are the beliefs in the uniformity of Nature and in causation. Since this is true of all thought, it is true of thought about human affairs. 'The historian employs concepts and hypotheses because of the general assumption that underlies all social science: *History is not exclusively chaos or chance: a degree of observable order and pattern, of partially predictable regularity, exists in human behavior.*'⁸ If we ask what justification we have for making these assumptions, all we can say is that to deny the uniformity of Nature and the category of causality is to resolve the Universe into items that have no intelligible connexion with each other.

In this sense determinism is the epistemological basis of the human search for knowledge. Man cannot even conceive the image of an undetermined universe. In such a world there could not be any awareness of material things and their changes. It would appear a senseless chaos. Nothing could be identified and distinguished from anything else. Nothing could be expected and predicted. In the midst of such an environment man would be as helpless as if spoken to in an unknown language. No action could be designed, still less put into execution. Man is what he is because he lives in a world of regularity and has the mental power to conceive the relation of cause and effect.⁹

The truth of this proposition has not, however, prevented the defence of the unique from becoming and remaining the primary concern of the historian; but 'history is concerned with the relation between the unique and the general. As a historian, you can no more separate them, or give precedence to one over the other, than you can separate fact and interpretation.'¹⁰ The juxtaposition of these two pairs of concepts is by no means arbitrary, for they are clearly related to each other in a way that reaches beyond the confines of epistemology.

The historian's common assumption that 'the facts are there to be used'¹¹ is surely mistaken. Facts are not really

like boulders that have been detached and shaped and deposited exclusively by the play of the forces of non-human Nature, waiting – ready-made though not man-made – to be picked up and used by the historian; nor does the historian find facts strewn along his way as he strolls through the past. They are like flaked and chopped flints, hewn stones, or bricks. Human action has had a hand in making them what they are, and they would not be what they are if this action had not been taken. The facts of history are not 'brute things or events outside the mind, for they have been filtered through minds before I have word of them'¹² – and, one might add, before my own mind apprehends them. Facts are, in truth, exactly what is meant by the Latin word *facta* from which the English word is derived. They are 'things that have been made' – that is to say 'fictitious' things rather than 'factual' things – and this truth about them cannot be evaded by calling them 'data' ('gifts') instead. Gifts imply the existence of a giver, as inescapably as manufactures imply the existence of a maker. Whether we call the phenomena 'data' or call them 'facts', we are admitting that they have been given or have been made by somebody. We may attribute the maximum amount of credit for them to non-human Nature or to God, but we shall not be able to clear ourselves of the charge that we, too, have had a hand in the transaction, and that our contribution, however small we may reckon it to have been, has nevertheless been an indispensable one.

This is true both of the facts themselves and of our reception of them. 'Facts do not "speak for themselves"'. Concepts do not "emerge" from the evidence.'¹³ 'The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context. . . . The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy.'¹⁴ For this reason, it is quite inappropriate to regard history as being a sequence of facts, and the historian's job as being merely to accumulate as great a number of facts as he can muster. Not only do facts not 'speak for themselves', but 'those who tried to create theory out of facts never understood that it was only theory that could constitute them as facts in the first place'.¹⁵ That is to say, 'there is no abstract thing called "History" which bestows significance upon events in time'.¹⁶ History is the framing of questions by a particular human being in a particular space-time context; he asks questions, and he adduces evidence to support his answers, and in both these acts he makes use of hypothesis before ever he 'finds' a fact. This is true even of the barest narrative form of history, which makes no other claim than 'to show how things really were'.¹⁷ The simplicity of this pretension is nothing but an illusion: it merely leaves unspoken the historian's working hypotheses – the criteria by which he has articulated his questions and his answers. Otherwise, the historian would be convicting himself of an absurd belief that 'all facts are equal, but some are more equal than others'.

Facts cannot, then, come into existence without the good offices of an hypothesis. If it is true that every fact is – as the etymology of the word implies – something that has been constructed, and, if it is also true that part, at least, of the indispensable work of construction has been done by

the apprehending human mind, it seems hazardous to try to classify some so-called 'facts' as genuine on the illusory ground that they are objective, while rejecting other so-called 'facts' as spurious on the solid ground that they are constructions of a human mind. If it is true that all facts are partly constructions of human minds, the presence or absence of this man-made element in them cannot be an effective criterion for distinguishing the spurious from the genuine.

Does this conclusion commit us to an inescapable relativism? There cannot be observation without interaction between the observer and the object under his observation, and in interacting they are bound to affect each other reciprocally. If historical study is one instance of such interaction – in this case, between the historian and his facts – what prevents us from seeing in the histories written by historians merely so many alternative acts of imagination, each competing on equal terms for our allegiance? In every case the historian's view of the past will be conditioned by the ever-changing position of his own present observation-point; and in this sense relativity is a limitation that is imposed upon human studies in all fields by the very nature of the situation in which the conscious human mind has to operate. But it follows from this that

objectivity in history . . . cannot be an objectivity of fact, but only of relation, of the relation between fact and interpretation, between past, present and future. . . . The historian . . . in his task of interpretation needs his standard of significance, which is also his standard of objectivity, in order to distinguish between the significant and the accidental; and he . . . can find it only in relevance to the end in view. But this is necessarily an evolving end, since the evolving interpretation of the past is a necessary function of history. The traditional assumption that change has always to be explained in terms of something fixed and unchangeable is contrary to the experience of the historian.¹⁸

What are the objectives which historians have had in view in their studies of history? To begin with, we can take it as axiomatic that the study of human affairs has some meaning, and that the historian undertakes to explain this meaning or to 'make sense of' history. As soon as he posits a causal connexion between two events, he is beginning to make sense of the past; that is, to marshal it in some sort of orderly system and so make it accessible to human understanding. All historians are committed to this purpose; but for many this is not the end of the story. They have felt impelled to strike out further along the road towards a systematic formulation and interpretation of history as a whole, and not just of parts of it. Perhaps we can distinguish between these two approaches by calling them respectively 'history' and 'metahistory'. 'Metahistory is concerned with the nature of history, the meaning of history and the cause and significance of historical change.'¹⁹ It arises out of the study of history, and is akin to metaphysics and theology. The metahistorian seeks to integrate his study of reality in some higher dimension than that of human affairs as these present themselves to him phenomenally.

A classic work of metahistory, in this sense, is Saint Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, as contrasted, for example, with the histories written by Thucydides or by Livy. Thucydides and Livy each set out to describe and explain

a particular series of events that seemed important to them (and that seem important still to a modern student of history). Thucydides's subject was the origin and course of the great war that convulsed the Hellenic Society in 431–404 BC; Livy's was the majestic rise and culmination of the Empire in which he lived and which he felt to be in decay in his own time. But Saint Augustine 'give[s] us a synthesis of universal history in the light of Christian principles'.²⁰

Ideally, perhaps, every historian needs to be a meta-historian in some degree, since 'history properly so-called can be written only by those who find and accept a sense of direction in history itself'.²¹ In practice, though, there has usually been a disagreement about the nature of the historian's craft between historians who have committed themselves to the metahistorical viewpoint, and those who have seen their own chief merit in their resolute refusal, on principle, to indulge in large-scale synthetical writing. The attempt to discover some central principle of order or regularity in the historical process – by analogy with the world of physical Nature – is, in truth, an enterprise that bristles with difficulties for the human intelligence; yet this in itself is no reason to condemn the attempt as futile. The historian who seeks to understand the broad connexions of past, present, and future has embarked on at least the first stages of a search for the ultimate cause, but he does not expect to reach his goal any more than the natural scientist believes he will discover the ultimate nature of matter.

The principal pitfall for the metahistorian is perhaps the temptation to emphasize the deterministic aspect of causation and thereby to deny at least implicitly the possibility of free will. We have already seen in this chapter that a belief in determinism is an epistemological precondition for human knowledge and action, but it does not follow from this that Man's action are unfree in the sense of being pre-ordained by some non-human or suprahuman force, for 'the notion of contingency . . . refers to a limitation of the human search for knowledge, not to a condition of the universe or of some of its parts'.²² None the less, the belief has proved irresistibly attractive to many human minds; in an earlier chapter,²³ we saw how its attractions tend to be greatest in times of profound social upheaval, when men's actions seem impotent to arrest the process of social decay. In that context, we concluded that determinism and fatalism are the refuge of minds that are too defeatist or too vain to face the humiliating but liberating truth that 'we are betray'd by what is false within'.²⁴

Determinism derives its force from the observation of 'laws of Nature' which manifestly affect human lives – for instance, the unalterable succession of the seasons, or of day and night, or, in the realm of animate Nature, the succession of generations of creatures that are predestined to die. The same observation must also have suggested the cyclical interpretation of human history, a doctrine that, as we have seen,²⁵ dominated Indic minds and was entertained by Hellenic minds too. The application of the 'theory of eternal recurrence' to human affairs is a counsel of despair for humanity, since this doctrine denies that Man has any power ever to effect a permanent change in his condition, and teaches him that he is condemned to suffer the meaningless revolutions of the wheel of existence.

It is true that, when we survey the surviving records of Mankind's past acts and experiences, both personal and corporate, we do observe recurrences that have been not only numerous but also, in some cases, momentous. The evidence for this is manifest and massive. It cannot be explained away, and this makes it probable that, in some departments of human life, there will continue to be recurrences in the future. But it is a fallacy to interpret these observations as being proofs that the theory of inevitable, and therefore eternal, recurrence holds good for human history. The fact that such and such an event has recurred, perhaps many times over, does not prove that it was ever bound to recur; and, *a fortiori*, this does not prove that it is bound to recur again in the future. In the inner lives and in the social relations of human beings, the patterns that we discern in the record do not have any built-in capacity or impulse to reproduce themselves. To credit acts and experiences and relations with this capacity is to misunderstand their nature. A patterned set of acts or experiences or relations is something quite different from an organism. The recurrences of historical events and situations are consequences, not of physical heredity, but of moral *karma* (in the Buddhist usage of the word).

Although a commitment to determinism is implicit in the cyclical view of human history, the alternative 'linear' or one-way view of it is also not immune from this fallacy. The belief in a progressive historical process inevitably begs the question whether the process has or does not have a goal, and the assumption that it does have a goal leads in turn to the question whether human beings are impelled or compelled to head for this goal either deliberately or involuntarily. A tension between the belief in the pre-determination of the goal and a belief in the genuineness of some degree of freedom in moving towards this inevitable goal is evident in Christian historical philosophy: Saint Augustine released the late Hellenic World from the belief in Man's enslavement to a wholly arbitrary fate or fortune, but he accomplished this at the apparent price of re-subjecting Man to the tyranny of an unknowable Divine Will. The same paradoxical relapse into determinism is implicit in Islam, the religion whose name means 'submission' to God. In the secularized modern Western World determinism was given new force by the revolutionary progress of scientific discovery in the sphere of physical Nature, and it reappeared in the materialist dialectic of Marxism.

However, neither Western Christian philosophy nor the post-Christian Western philosophy of Marxism involves a belief that Man is helplessly at the mercy of necessity. Man's freedom from this servitude is vindicated when the nature of the dialectical process is properly understood. Man is not condemned to be the plaything of fortune or the tool of an enigmatic and perhaps arbitrary Deity. Under the law of God or the laws of Nature, Man is free to make choices and to pursue objectives in so far as he knows the laws and takes care to act in accordance with them. Engels described the dialectical process as 'an ascent from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom';²⁶ a Christian might describe it as the process by which Man freely embraces God's law of love. What does this mean in practice? In Engels's words:

Freedom is the appreciation of necessity. 'Necessity is *blind* only in so far as it is not understood.' Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends. . . . Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with real knowledge of the subject. . . . Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development.²⁷

In Christian terms, the 'glorious freedom of the sons of God', which they enjoy under the law of love, is the perfect freedom possessed by God Himself, which an all-loving Creator has exercised at the sacrificial price of emptying himself²⁸ of almighty power for the sake of coming to the rescue of his creature, Man. Under a law of love which is the law of God's own Being, God's self-sacrifice challenges Man by setting before him an ideal of spiritual perfection; and Man has perfect freedom to accept or reject this. The law of love leaves Man as free to be a sinner as to be a saint; it leaves him free to choose whether his personal and his social life shall be a progress towards the Kingdom of God or towards the kingdom of night.

In neither of these formulations is there any externally applied coercion; yet, when Man does voluntarily comply with – in Christian terms – God's law, or – in Marxist terms – the laws of Nature, he becomes progressively more self-aware and thus more self-determining, in the sense of being more free to make choices that, besides being free, are effective.



392 'The peace of immortal man with immortal God is an orderly obedience unto His eternal law. . . . The devil transgressed the peaceful law of order, yet could not avoid the powerful hand of the Orderer': miniature from a fourteenth-century edition of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*.