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THE GERMAN MIND AND OUTLOOK

By

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With a Summary

by

L. A.
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*Issued under the auspices of
The Institute of Sociology*

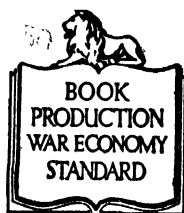


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NOTE

THE issue of these Addresses under the auspices of the Institute of Sociology does not imply that it takes responsibility for statements of fact or opinion.

FOREWORD

IN the summer of 1942 Professor Ginsberg suggested that the Institute of Sociology should organise a series of Discussion Meetings on the German Mind and Outlook. The proposal was welcomed by the Council and the lectures collected in this volume were delivered during 1942 and 1943. The Institute desires to express its thanks to the experts who agreed to take part in the symposium in spite of war-time pressure of other work. No attempt was made to cover the whole of such a vast field, and the six lecturers chose themes to which they had devoted special attention. Each is responsible for his own contribution alone, and the Institute is not committed to any of the opinions they express. A summary of the papers has been added at the suggestion of the publishers.

The object of this book is to aid in the understanding of the gifted, efficient, hard-working, disciplined, romantic, unstable, inflammable and formidable nation with which for the second time in a generation we find ourselves at war. Though Professors can forget as little as statesmen and soldiers what is at stake in the conflict, their approach is or ought to be academic, not polemical. Knowledge does not necessarily create understanding, but understanding without knowledge is impossible. No country in Europe requires more intensive and disinterested study than Germany; for despite the ties of blood and language between the various branches of the Teutonic family, the profound differences in tradition and mentality complicate the problem of interpretation. The geographical location of the German people in a portion of the Central European plain without natural frontiers pointed to a strong executive

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if a nation-state was to come into being and to survive, just as our island position enabled us to build up a system of self-determination behind our wooden walls. Broadly speaking modern Germany has thought primarily in terms of the might and majesty of the state, modern England primarily in terms of the rights and liberties of the citizen. Herder described his country as the land of obedience, a formula never applied to England or France by friend or foe.

The history of modern Germany, however, is far from being merely a record of orders issued and obeyed; for German culture is at least as interesting and important a theme as the German state. Here indeed is the central paradox which confronts every serious student at the threshold of his inquiry—the co-existence through the centuries of a community almost slavishly docile to constituted authority and of a rich, critical, creative cultural life. Potsdam and Weimar, as the phrase goes, combine to make the Germany that we know, and it is the task of scholars to trace and elucidate their interaction. The contributors to this volume have endeavoured to bear in mind the problem of the two Germanies, to resist the temptation—particularly strong in time of war—to oversimplification, and to analyse the various elements in the life of the nation *sine ira et studio*.

G. P. GOOCH

GERMAN VIEWS OF THE STATE

I. The Geographical Background

WHAT part has Germany taken in the long and difficult quest for ordered liberty, the greatest prize of civilised mankind? A smaller share assuredly than England, where political thought has tended to stress the rights of the individual rather than the power of the state, and where the citizen for the last hundred years has chosen representatives to execute his will. Is that difference of evolution to be ascribed to racial factors? Certainly not. England takes her name from the Angles, France from the Franks—Germanic intruders who brought with them wider conceptions of personal freedom and political responsibility than they found. Yet Herder, in a memorable phrase, described Germany, with a good deal of justification, as the land of obedience—a term never applied to England or France by friend or foe. If the Germans of the *Völkerwanderung* were in the van, why are their modern descendants to be found in or near the rear?

The fundamental cause of the different attitude of the average modern German to political authority must be sought in his place on the map. Geography is the mother of history. The central European plain, stretching without a break from the Bay of Biscay to the Urals, and inhabited by many different stocks, is a standing invitation to strife. Lacking well-defined frontiers of mountains and sea, Germanic tribes were continually at war with their neighbours and with one another. The Holy Roman Empire strove in vain to organise the territories inhabited by men of German race. The Reformation introduced a new source of discord between north and south. The devastation of

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the Thirty Years War was the grim penalty of external and internal disunion, and the Austro-Prussian rivalry dating from Frederick the Great postponed the creation of a nation-state to a period centuries later than in England and France, Spain and Russia. Italy alone of the Great Powers had to wait so long for the fulfilment of her dreams, and then she was able to construct her edifice of unity behind the rampart of the Alps. If Germany was ever to become a nation-state like the rest it could only be through the medium of a powerful Executive, a formidable army, and a disciplined people. A country with open frontiers, surrounded by unfriendly neighbours, was necessarily conscious of its dangers to a degree not easily envisaged by Englishmen who evolved the theory and practice of self-government in a leisurely way behind their wooden walls. National strength, not internal self-determination, was the watchword. This penetrating difference of atmosphere and historical experience must be firmly grasped if we are to understand the evolution of political ideas in Germany in the era of nationalism.

II. From Luther to Goethe

In his instructive volume *Political Liberty*, Dr. A. J. Carlyle, our greatest authority on the evolution of political ideas since the fall of the Roman Empire, reminds us that the Middle Ages knew nothing of the doctrine of unlimited sovereignty and the absolute state. All human authority, it was believed, was limited, and all political authority was derived from the community itself. In Bracton's famous formula, the King had two superiors—God and the law. The medieval order symbolised by the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, which was dying in the fifteenth century, collapsed in the sixteenth, and our familiar world of differentiated sovereign states took its place. Excessive concentration followed the paralysing division of power. A new era of political thinking was inaugurated by Machiavelli, whose

gospel of an unfettered executive has dominated the practice of large portions of the world ever since. The supreme achievement of the Reformation, as Figgis observed forty years ago, was the modern state. The community continued to be pictured as an organic whole; but while medieval thinkers tended to regard society as essentially a church, a community bound together by a common faith, modern publicists envisaged it as primarily a secular state. The craving for prosperity and social peace facilitated the transition from a loose-limbed feudalism. In Catholic as well as Protestant countries civil authority waxed and ecclesiastical authority waned. The so-called Reception of Roman law, which took place in Germany at this time, played into the hands of autocrats.

The claim of the prince to unchallengeable power put forward in most continental countries during the sixteenth century was an innovation, and, next to Machiavelli, Luther was its prophet. His aim was religious reform, not political revolution. Indeed, the further he was driven from his original moorings, the more vigorously he asserted the authority of the state as the only bulwark against anarchy. While at first sympathising with the wrongs of the down-trodden peasantry, he turned sharply against them when in their misery they took the law into their own hands. The individualist in religion was an authoritarian in secular affairs. Caring nothing for political liberty and disbelieving in human equality, he was satisfied with the rule of a virtuous prince like his friend and patron Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony. The conception of the *Respublica Christiana* was dead and the individual was only beginning to emerge. He believed in the divine origin of the state, championed it against clerical encroachments, and summoned it to reform the Church which had proved unable to reform itself. Melanchthon declared that there was nothing on earth more noble than the state, and his master would have agreed.

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Luther was a Saxon, not a Prussian, but there was a good deal of "Prussianism" in his rich, rugged, dynamic personality. The outstanding figure of the Reformation is as much the pioneer of political authoritarianism in Germany as was Calvin, *malgré lui*, of the democratic tradition of the Anglo-Saxon world. At last the prince, untrammelled by the Church, the feudal nobility or the people, could exclaim with satisfaction *L'État c'est moi*.

After the long anarchy of feudalism some strengthening of the power and prestige of governments was overdue, but the pendulum swung too far and the tyranny inherent in centralisation had to be jealously watched. Opinions on the nature and functions of the state have differed as widely in Germany as elsewhere, and there have been libertarian as well as authoritarian oracles. Indeed the former were the more numerous till the opening of the nineteenth century, when the detested Napoleonic yoke called German nationalism into life. The first of them was Althusius, whose importance was revealed to the modern world by Gierke in a classical monograph acclaimed by Lord Acton as the best book on modern political thinking. The *Politica methodice digesta*, published in 1607, reiterated the sound doctrine of the Middle Ages that political society is founded on consent. The conception of a Social Contract, which played such a vital part in the controversies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rested on what we call a legal fiction; and this useful formula, except in the paradoxical presentation by Hobbes, embodied the principles of agreement and limited power.

The task of government, argued the Helmstedt Professor, was the execution of the law; the law was made by the community; the supreme magistrate, like the people, was bound by contract embodied in solemn oaths taken by both parties on his accession or election. The notion that a ruler could do exactly what he liked, that he ruled by Divine

Right, that resistance to his commands was unlawful even if he broke the contract, was rejected with scorn. Power was a trust, not a right. No individual was wise enough to rule without supervision and advice. Althusius believed in representation as heartily as any Englishman, though no Parliament on the English model existed among his countrymen. It was the task of the Diets of the Empire to discuss and decide on the important affairs. "What concerns all should be determined by all, for the many are wiser than the few, and it is by such a form of government that the liberty of the people is protected, for they compel the officials to recognise that the people is their master." He would have approved the definition of liberty as power cut up into little bits. His unit of authority was not the individual but the group—the family, the city, the province, the Estates, culminating in a federal state. The contention that the executive power is limited not only by contract, but by the necessities of society, was reiterated by Puffendorf and Leibnitz in their refutations of the slavish doctrines of Hobbes.

Between Althusius and the era of the French Revolution no German thinker of the first rank devoted serious attention to the theory of the state. During the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth the stage was occupied by the Cameralists, who accepted the Absolute State as an axiom. In *The German Princes' State*, published in 1655, Seckendorf produced a handbook of government and administration based on the practice of his master, Duke Ernest the Pious of Gotha. Cameralism was the theory and practice of administration, and though its exponents hoped to raise the standard of autocracy, they suggested no check more effective than an appeal to the conscience of the ruler. Instead of proceeding from the needs of the community, the state, not the people, was their starting-point, its power and wealth their aim. Their teaching was brought up to

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date a century later by Justi, whose writings reflect and idealise the theory and practice of benevolent autocracy in the age of the Philosophic Despots. The common weal is presented sincerely enough as the goal of the state, and the happiness of the subject receives lip-homage, but he assumes that it is secured by the authority of the prince. He is aware that the growth of material needs and moral demands creates a rising standard for rulers, but he never suggests that the people should enforce it. He begs the ruler to respect property and law, and not to overtax his subjects, but they may not co-operate in the making of laws or punish oppressors. Like all the Cameralists, he assumes the wisdom and benevolence of the ruler, the might and majesty of the state. Such teaching was a double-edged weapon, for it prompted the suffering subject to point out that the state was not performing the duties which Justi declared that it should.

Frederick the Great was not merely the most prominent and successful practitioner of the Benevolent Despotism contemplated by the Cameralists, but the chief literary exponent of its ideology; for during his crowded life he found time to produce solid treatises on the theory and practice of government in addition to histories, poems and essays. His *Anti-Machiavel*, written in 1739, revised by Voltaire and published anonymously in 1740, the year of his accession, denounces the Florentine tempter as a monster. "I have always regarded *The Prince* as one of the most dangerous books in the world, for an ambitious young man, too immature to distinguish good from evil, may only too easily be led astray by maxims which flatter his passions. That is bad enough in a private individual; it is far worse in reigning princes, who should set an example to their subjects and by their goodness, magnanimity and mercy be the living images of Deity. The passions of kings are worse than flood, pestilence and fire, for their consequences are more lasting." Accepting the popular doctrine of the Social Contract as an

axiom, he asserts that rulers were instituted for the protection and welfare of the community. Thus the sovereign, far from being the absolute master, is merely the first servant of the peoples over whom he rules. To Machiavelli's argument that goodness in this wicked world spells discomfiture he rejoins that, on the contrary, to avoid disaster one must be good and prudent. Accepting the paramount claim of interest he gives the word a different interpretation. The good king will be well served and need have no anxieties about his throne; a cruel prince, on the other hand, is likely to be betrayed, for cruelty is insupportable. Perfidy, another instrument recommended by the oracle of tyrants, is equally unwise. At this point, however, the preacher removes his surplice and descends from the pulpit. There are painful occasions, he argues, when a ruler cannot avoid breaking treaties and alliances, and even offensive wars are justified when undertaken to ward off a threatened attack. In home affairs, in a word, he should apply the maxims of a Sunday School, but in dealing with other states he must be guided by the *raison d'état* which the Italian publicist felt it his duty to recommend.

Frederick's *Political Testaments* of 1752 and 1768, first published in full in 1920, survey the whole field of government at home and abroad—the administrative machinery, the army, finance, justice, foreign affairs. They are the testimony of a working king who asks nothing of his subjects which he has not himself performed. In a country without the traditions and institutions of representative government it was the duty of the monarch, he declared, to hold all the reins firmly in his hand—knowing everything, supervising everything, visiting every corner of his dominions, deciding everything promptly and justly. A well-conducted government must have a system as coherent as a system of philosophy, so that finance, policy and the army are co-ordinated to the same end, namely the consolidation of the state and

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the increase of its power. Such a system could only issue from a single brain, that of the sovereign, who must be the last refuge of the unhappy, a father to the orphans, the succour of widows, caring for the meanest as for the highest in the land. "He must often remind himself that he is a man like the least of his subjects, the first judge, the first general, the first financier, the first minister. He is only the first servant of the state, obliged to act with probity, wisdom and entire disinterestedness, as if at every moment he had to render an account of his administration to the citizens." It was a fine though static ideal at the time that it was formulated, and he strove unceasingly for forty-six years to carry it out. That his people should ever share in the responsibilities of government never crossed his mind or that of his subjects. The weakness of the system of Enlightened Autocracy is that its successful operation postulates an unbroken succession of supermen. Autocrats, dynastic or otherwise, are not always enlightened, as no one knew better than Frederick himself, who expressed the lowest opinion of nearly all his contemporaries. Though he bitterly complained that the idle and dissolute nephew who was to succeed him as Frederick William II threatened the work of his life, he never contemplated the possibility of another system in which the people, as in England, might be the partner of the prince. Twenty years after the death of the greatest European figure of the eighteenth century his machine state, so strong in outward appearance, proved to be as brittle as glass.

The main cause of the stagnation in political thinking during the eighteenth century was the lack of a nation-state. Germany was a geographical expression, a political curiosity shop, a soul without a body. The political education of the citizen was first seriously undertaken in the third quarter of the eighteenth century by a handful of courageous men. The first of these tribunes of the people was Friedrich Karl

Moser, whose treatise *Der Herr und der Diener* (Master and Servant) was published in the Free City of Frankfurt in 1759. This widely read political classic of the German *Aufklärung* begins by reminding princes how easy it is to make their subjects happy, and by lamenting how seldom they succeed. They are brought up to be soldiers, not statesmen, and to believe they are responsible to God alone. A capable ruler is a blessing, but even in such a case several eyes are better than a single pair. Hopes are usually entertained of the heir, who sometimes dreams of reform; and if one-tenth of these good resolutions were carried out, Germany would be living in the Golden Age. But the new pilot finds himself among men who chant the refrain, Your Highness has only to command! "The great goal of all the motley throng at Court is to win the favour of the ruler, who is like a beleaguered city and is surrounded by spies and traitors. Even in small Courts you will find a multitude of them." This outspoken book was a transcript from the author's experience as Minister of the Landgrave of Hesse Darmstadt. Some years later he was recalled to office, but, like Turgot, he was too radical to retain his post. His later experiences were embodied in *Rulers and Ministers*, published in 1784. What sinister memories lurk behind the maxim that for the success of his plans the Minister needs not only the consent of the Prince, but also of the "Night Ministry," the wife, the mistress, the confessor, the chamberlains! He denounces the glaring faults of the Proprietary State with passionate earnestness, but he does not look beyond its reform. It was not enough to denounce evil rulers: it was necessary to bring them under effective control. By refusing to call the people to his aid, he deprived himself of the only weapon by which he could strike terror into guilty hearts.

A sharper note was struck by Schlözer, the earliest political journalist of Germany and the first systematic political

instructor of his countrymen. As Professor of History at Göttingen, he helped to make the young University the national centre for political, legal and diplomatic studies. His journals became the terror of evil-doers and the delight of the oppressed. They were read throughout Central Europe, and Maria Theresa would sometimes support her opinion in Council with the words, "This will never do; what would Schlözer say?" He was far more than a critic of abuses. The Electorate of Hanover was a sort of British *enclave* in Germany. His creed was constitutional monarchy, representative institutions, and a free press. He was a student of Montesquieu and shared his admiration for British models. The happiness of a prince, he declared, lay in ruling with his people, not over them. There should be a contract, so that if it were broken he might be deposed. Rejecting Divine Right and patriarchal omnipotence, he locates sovereignty in the people, though he detested mob rule. As a champion of the *juste milieu*, the Cobbett of Germany was equally opposed to autocracy, oligarchy and democracy.

Schlözer's advice to adopt certain English forms was supported by Justus Möser. The Osnabrück lawyer, a thoughtful conservative, had visited England and liked what he saw. "He who is to act in common must deliberate in common," he declared; "that is the principal formula of German law." Unhappily, this axiom of English history had been forgotten in the land of its birth. Detesting absolutism as much as the rest of his countrymen, he sought salvation not in political experiments but in continuity and the preservation of ancient ways. Our ancestors, he observed, were not fools, an aphorism which Burke might have taken for his text in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*. He was the first German publicist to recommend the maintenance of institutions which by the mere fact of their duration had proved their worth. Distrusting political

theories and formulations of the rights of man, he preferred customs to laws. The idea of equality seemed to him ridiculous because it was contradicted by experience. The state was not the creation of a contract but the result of historical growth, every community having its unique personality of which it should be proud. The possession of land was the sole title to political rights. Landowners, large and small alike, should elect representatives to decide on taxation and other important problems. Only a state where the greater part of the population was rooted in the soil was secure against revolutionary change. The peasant was the cornerstone of the edifice, for the restless townsman was inclined to challenge the stability of social life. Möser was proud of the relatively prosperous little state whose history he wrote; and the notion of a united and centralised Germany, if it had ever entered his head, would have shocked him as a violation of historic rights. His widely read articles, collected under the title *Patriotische Phantasien*, expound the gospel of organic growth. His significance has been increasingly recognised in recent years, and he ranks with Herder among the discoverers and admirers of the Volk (folk) and the Volksseele (folk soul). They and their disciples were more interested in the group than in the individual or the state. This almost mystical cult of the folk was the main source, not only of the Romantic Movement, but of the historical school of law founded by Eichhorn and Savigny.

Few Germans asked for anything more than decent government till the challenge of the French Revolution compelled them to think. Goethe's view of the state was moulded by the lucky accident which made him the lifelong friend and colleague of one of the best princes of his time, just as the youthful Schiller's explosive dramas were inspired by the misrule of Karl Eugen, Duke of Württemberg. Karl August inherited a principality with a hundred thousand inhabitants and an infertile soil, but after sowing their wild

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oats the prince and the poet settled down to make the Duchy of Weimar a model for rulers. At this task Goethe, as President of the Council, laboured with unflagging energy for a decade, his master for half a century. He promoted the development of agriculture, industry, and mines, the reform of education and finance, the amelioration of the lot of the poor. Though he returned to literature, his experience of public life determined his political ideas. All he had done and all he wished to do had been or could be accomplished by the will of a benevolent autocrat. The elements of any political structure other than paternal government were absent. The people had a right to be well governed, not to govern themselves. He stood midway between the Legitimists, to whom dynastic authority was sacrosanct, and the democrats, to whom the voice of the people was the voice of God. He was a conservative reformer, convinced that the initiative must come from above, that changes must be gradual, that order was heaven's first law. He agreed with Frederick the Great that the ruler must be *le premier domestique de l'état*. When the storm broke over Germany in his middle years his simple political faith remained completely unchanged. "I could be no friend to the Revolution," he confessed to Eckermann, "but I am as little a friend to arbitrary rule." Since the masses could not save themselves, it was the duty and the privilege of their rulers to save them. To both parties the European earthquake brought a solemn warning. For the prince to do too little and for the people to do too much was to invite a catastrophe. Eckermann described his master in old age as a mild aristocrat, but Goethe preferred the title of "a moderate Liberal, as all rational people are and ought to be."

III. The French Revolution

The universal significance of the French Revolution was recognised both by those who took part in it and by those

who watched it from afar. Its influence on political thinking was greater in Germany than in any other country. It was as if a huge rock had been hurled into a stagnant pool. The opening scenes were watched with delight not only by the average citizen, but by the great majority of the spokesmen of opinion. The Declaration of the Rights of Man put into words the muffled aspirations of the masses and brought a new sense of human dignity in its train. The windows of the prison house seemed to fly open, and the common man felt that he had come of age. Schlözer exclaimed that the angels must be singing *Te Deums* in heaven, Gentz that mankind had awakened from its long sleep. The glittering pageant soon faded, and many voices which had swelled the chorus of thanksgiving, among them Klopstock, Schlözer, and Gentz, began to curse. Yet the leaven continued to work. At long last Germany produced treatises on the nature and functions of the state worthy to rank with the classics of other lands. The transition from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, from the Age of Rationalism to the Age of Nationalism, from the old Germany to the new, is reflected in the political writings of Humboldt, Kant, and Fichte.

Wilhelm von Humboldt's treatise, *The Limits of State Action*, was finished in 1792 and portions appeared in the reviews; but no publisher was willing to risk a conflict with the censorship, and the book was published sixty years later by the author's brother. It is the German equivalent of Mill *On Liberty*, and Mill has expressed his indebtedness to his famous predecessor. There are two questions, he begins, involved in the attempt to frame a constitution. The first is, Who shall govern? The second relates to the sphere to which the Government shall extend its operations. The former problem was being discussed on all sides, while the latter, which was far more important, was utterly neglected. Constitutions are only machinery for ministering to the needs and developing the capacities of the individual. While

France was demanding freedom for a nation, Humboldt, who cared nothing for the sovereignty of the people, pleads for freedom for himself. The most important of all political questions are those which affect the private life of the citizen. As civilisation advances there is less need of government, and the question of its form becomes of secondary importance. His demand is not for better but for less government. It is a modest request to address to a ruler, and can be granted without waiting for a revolution. "If to behold a people breaking their fetters asunder is a beautiful and ennobling spectacle, how much better is it to witness a prince himself unloosing the bonds of thralldom and granting freedom to his subjects!"

The true end of man, proceeds Humboldt, is the harmonious development of his powers, and reason demands a condition of things in which every one enjoys the most abundant opportunities of self-realisation. The unceasing effort of the state to promote the welfare of its citizens is harmful, for it creates uniformity, suppresses spontaneity, discourages energy, and thereby hinders the natural growth of the individual. What a man does under instruction or guidance fails to enter into his being and remains alien to his true nature. Legislation necessarily bears a general character, and therefore fails to meet the need of particular cases. Moreover, the greater the activity of the state the greater the army of functionaries. In a sentence which has a twentieth-century flavour he complains that every decade the number of officials increases and the liberty of the subject proportionately declines. "The state should not proceed a step further than is necessary for the protection of its citizens against foreign enemies. It should abstain from all solicitude for their positive welfare." Voluntary association is better than any arrangements that the Government can make. Civilisation has reached a point beyond which it cannot aspire to still loftier heights save through the development

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of individuals; and therefore all institutions which in any way obstruct this development are now far more hurtful than in earlier and less advanced ages. National education turns out all its scholars on the same pattern. A state Church, by encouraging certain opinions, gives a bias to the citizen and discourages freedom of thought. National supervision of morals might produce a peaceable and prosperous community, but its members would be like a flock of sheep. No serious consequences need be apprehended from the abuse of liberty. "The state is merely a means to which man, the true end, must never be sacrificed."

This earnest and eloquent work, like most other pleas for individualism, assumes that human nature is on the whole good, just as champions of autocracy assume that it is on the whole bad. "Man," declares Humboldt cheerfully, "is naturally more disposed to beneficent than to selfish actions." He believes that the world is full of men like himself, who possess sufficient virtue and wisdom to make their life a thing of beauty without the guidance of authority. Many years later, when he became Minister of Education in Prussia, he realised that the alternative to bad government was not philosophic anarchy but good government, and that wise action by the state is one of the most powerful factors in the development of a rich and harmonious personality. Despite his exaggerated individualism, which sometimes anticipates the paradoxes of Nietzsche, the youthful Humboldt remains an impressive figure; and his teaching that a state must be judged, not by its power and riches, but by the spiritual quality of its citizens, shines like a ray of light in the stagnant days of Frederick William II. The treatise was carefully studied by his friend Schiller, and the doctrine that the perfecting of the individual is a more urgent and fruitful task than the search for new institutions reappears in the *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*.

By his individualism and cosmopolitanism Kant, no less

than Humboldt, belongs to the eighteenth century; but the greatest of philosophers was also one of the boldest and most suggestive of political thinkers. His interest in affairs was aroused by the American War of Independence, which won his whole-hearted sympathy. Though nearly seventy at the outbreak of the French Revolution, he welcomed it with enthusiasm, and for the rest of his life his talk was mainly of politics. His pen was as bold as his tongue. In his study of *Religion*, published in 1793, he counters the argument that the French are not ripe for liberty with the axiom that men become ripe for liberty when they are set free. "We must be free in order to use our powers wisely in freedom. The first attempts will naturally be imperfect; but experience will show the way, for God has created mankind for freedom." In his *Philosophy of Law*, published four years later, he declares that liberty, equality and personal independence are the inalienable attributes of the citizen, and that the highest criterion of legislation is that it represents the will of the people. Since man is a rational and moral being politics must be based on reason and morality.

In the most arresting of his political works, *Perpetual Peace*, we catch the highest notes ever struck by a German publicist. If law, based on reason and morality, was the foundation of the life of the state, it should equally regulate the relations of states to one another. Humanity needed a constitution not less than France or Prussia; for so long as each state recognised no authority above itself and no duty except to itself, wars would continue. He does not waste time in proving the evil of war. Writing in 1795 he takes it for granted, and plunges at once into a discussion how it may be avoided. He first enumerates what he describes as the preliminary articles of peace: (1) No treaty shall be valid if it contains a secret reservation of materials for a future war. (2) No state shall be acquired through inheritance, exchange, or purchase; for it is not a property, but a society of human

beings. (3) Standing armies shall one day be abolished, for they are always threatening other states with war. Rivalry in armaments begins, and armed peace becomes so oppressive that war may seem a preferable alternative. (4) No national debt shall be incurred except for purely internal affairs. (5) No state shall forcibly interfere with the constitution and administration of another.

These injunctions and exhortations are merely counsels of perfection so long as the destinies of nations are in the hands of irresponsible autocrats. The second part of the little treatise, therefore, proceeds to establish the fundamental conditions of permanent peace. The first is that all states must become republican, a term in which he includes every kind of genuinely constitutional government. "The only constitution which is rooted in the idea of the original contract, on which the lawful legislation of every nation must be based, is the republican." It recognises the dependence of the state on law and on the equality of its members. It is also the only constitution which ensures peace; for if the consent of the community is needed for war, it will think twice before undertaking such a bad business. When selfish and capricious autocracies are replaced by representative institutions, a new system of relations between states will become possible. The second article therefore demands a federation of free states. By war and victory, remarks Kant, the question of right can never be decided. Anticipating a League of Nations, he declares that if some powerful and enlightened people should form a republic, that is, should become master of its own fate, it would serve as a nucleus for other states, and the federation would gradually increase in size and authority. The only absolute security for perpetual peace would be a world-republic, which he laments that the nations will not accept. "Hence, if all is not to be lost, we must obtain the negative substitute for it, a federation averting war." Even then there will be constant danger.

THE GERMAN MIND AND OUTLOOK

The third article claims what he describes as universal hospitality for individuals in whatever State they may find themselves. The idea of cosmopolitan right, or, as we say, of world-citizenship, is the complement of the unwritten code of law for the public rights of mankind.

The political ideal of this lofty and lonely figure—rationalist, moralist, cosmopolitan—was neither the benevolent autocracy of philosopher-Kings nor the fleeting triumphs of alternating majorities. It was the *Rechtsstaat*, the state based on the rule of law; and by law he meant the fusing of reason and morality. Like Rousseau and the perfectibility school, Kant believed in the instinctive goodness of mankind, and, like other optimists, he wished to impose on the citizen the minimum of constraint. The state was merely an association—and not the only one—created by the community for its needs, and its chief purpose was to secure justice. The final authority, alike for the state and the individual, was the categorical imperative of conscience, the moralised will.

While Humboldt and Kant express the loftiest ideals of the eighteenth century, Fichte represents the transition to the dominant principle of German thought in the nineteenth century. Attracted to politics by the French Revolution he made his début as a publicist in 1793 with an anonymous pamphlet entitled *A demand for freedom of thought presented to the Princes of Europe who have hitherto suppressed it*. In scathing terms he attacks the rulers of his country. "One of the sources of our misery," he cries, "is our exaggerated estimate of these folk. Their minds are warped by false teaching and superstition. I reckon as virtues all the vices they do not possess, and I thank them for all the evil acts they do not commit. Let us rid ourselves of the notion that it is for the princes to secure our happiness. We shall now dare to ask those who claim to rule us: By what right? If they reply, By inheritance, we rejoin that man cannot be

inherited like flocks and herds. He is governed by conscience alone. If he admits any other rule, he sinks to the level of the animals. The prince obtains the whole of his power from his contract with society. It is indecent for thinking men to crawl at the foot of the throne and beg leave to be the doormat of kings. The strength of our rulers lies in the ignorance of their subjects." This passionate attack on autocracy and obscurantism combines Humboldt's cult of the individual with the full-blooded doctrine of the sovereignty of the people newly imported from France.

A longer and less rhetorical treatise appeared in the same year entitled *A Contribution to the formation of a correct judgment on the French Revolution*. That great event, declares Fichte, is of importance for the whole of mankind. Now is the time to make the people acquainted with freedom, which he who seeks will surely find. "Things have become the subject of conversation of which no one had dreamed. Talk of the rights of man, of liberty and equality, of the limits of the royal power, has taken the place of fashions and adventures. We are beginning to learn." While deprecating violent change he stoutly upholds the rights of revolution. As man is or ought to be subject to the moral law alone, every citizen may terminate his share in the contract at his own discretion. As the contract was freely made, so it may be freely changed. Neither power nor privileges can be handed down. Man is born with certain inalienable rights, and he is under no obligation to a government or a social system which fails to respect them. If the individual is thus master of himself, how much more is it the right and duty of a whole people to remove all obstacles to the pursuit of a free and elevated existence.

With such unbridled individualism at work the life of the state is like the flame of a candle; and Fichte, whose mind never stood still, quickly realised that his position was untenable. In his treatise, *The Foundations of Natural Law*,

published in 1796, he begins to construct breakwaters against the tide of popular passion. Though clinging to the sovereignty of the people and the social contract, he creates a small body of Ephors with the power to veto the decisions of the government and check the tendency to revolution, which, though justifiable, often produces greater evils than it cures. He was not long in perceiving that his Ephors were men of straw, but the proposal shows that he is feeling his way towards the necessity of stable government. In his economic work, *The Closed Commercial State*, published in 1800, we note a further departure from his original standpoint. The state should monopolise trade, control wages and prices, secure work for all, and aim at complete economic autarchy within a territory large enough to supply its material needs. Since Mercantilism led to commercial wars, and the economic freedom recommended by Adam Smith would ruin Germany's backward agriculture and industry, autarchy seemed the wisest course. As the son of a Saxon weaver Fichte was particularly anxious to raise the standard of the manual worker, and he was the first German publicist to proclaim the right to work. In return for his services the state should give to each his share. This was impossible without a planned economy, which in turn necessitated the maximum approach to a self-sufficing state. Though economic security was the immediate object of the plan, the ultimate goal was intellectual and moral self-realisation in a world at peace. In all his changes he never dreamed of sacrificing the individual to an omnipotent state.

The battle of Jena turned Fichte into the most fervent and eloquent champion of the national state; and the *Addresses to the German Nation*, delivered in 1807-8 within earshot of the French garrison in Berlin, proclaim the birth of the political gospel of which his countrymen were one day to become devotees. He no longer paints his princes black and their subjects white. All, he cries, are responsible

for the great collapse, all had been slack and selfish, all must co-operate in the work of reconstruction. The nation must become self-conscious, the school system must be reformed, and the state must be strong enough to defend its citizens. It was not merely the state which he had learned to regard: he shed his cosmopolitanism like an old garment. The man who in his youth had desired to become a French citizen woke up to the fact that the Germans were a great people. Retaining his conception of the unity of mankind, he now proclaimed that it could only be served in one's own fatherland. Germans had a peculiarly important part to play, for they had retained their language untainted by alien influences, and could therefore give incomparable expression to the soul of the people. They had shown their moral earnestness by the Reformation, their enlightenment in the healthy life of the Free Cities, and were therefore best fitted to lead the regeneration of mankind. To carry out this lofty mission he recommended a federation of democratic units, not a centralised autocracy. Except in this extravagant exaltation of his race the German Mazzini has little in common with Nazi ideology.

The most imposing figure on the German political stage between Frederick the Great and Bismarck distrusted political theories. As a student of Justus Möser, Burke and Montesquieu, and an admirer of English institutions, Stein dreamed of far-reaching reforms; rejecting alike monarchical absolutism, feudal privileges and the sovereignty of the people, he wished the middle classes to have their chance. "If the nation is to be uplifted," he declared, "the submerged part must be given liberty, independence, property and the protection of the laws." His chief monument, the creation of municipal self-government and his share in the emancipation of the serfs, links him with modern conceptions of equal rights and self-determination; yet as an Imperial Knight he was rooted in the past. He wished to

revive the Empire, and envisaged the citizen rather as a member of some corporate body than as an isolated unit. These corporations, he believed, should advise the ruler in regard to legislation and give their consent to taxation. Even this shade of liberal conservatism was too bright for the princes and the Junkers, who through their mouthpiece Marwitz angrily denounced him as a Jacobin. Hardenberg, his successor, who carried forward the creation of a free peasantry, owed his inspiration not to England but to France, and may be classified as a conservative liberal. In a memorandum written in 1807 at the King's request, he advised the application to Prussia of the ideas of the French Revolution, since such was their power that any state which rejected them would collapse. "Your Majesty, we must do from above what the French have done from below." It was not his fault that Prussia had to wait for a constitution till 1848. The idea of limited monarchy on the English model was in the air, but there it remained.

IV. The Restoration Era

While Kant and Humboldt failed to grasp the full significance of the State, and Fichte only realised it when Prussia lay prostrate before the invader, Hegel made it the starting-point of his philosophy. The High Priest of the Restoration era was the first German thinker to concern himself long and deeply with its nature, and no subsequent writer of the first rank, except Nietzsche, has belittled it. As a student at Tübingen he had coquetted with the French Revolution, but the sufferings of his country during the great war taught him to seek remedies for her weakness. In his remarkable book, *The German Constitution*, written about 1802 but not published till long after his death, he bitterly bewails the helplessness of his countrymen. He surveys the Holy Roman Empire and concludes that Germany can no longer be called a state, for only that country deserves the

name which can defend its possessions. He speaks enviously of other nations which have created a state, and thereby entered upon a period of power, wealth and prosperity. Order is the first need of society. Europe, he declares, had become less sensitive to the cry of freedom since the horrors of the French Revolution. "In this bloody drama there has melted the cloud of liberty in embracing which the peoples have fallen into an abyss of misery. A settled government is necessary for freedom." He adds that the people must co-operate in the making of the laws and that representation is essential to liberty. He concludes with proposals for the reform of the constitution as the sole means of avoiding partition.

Hegel had reached the height of his influence and had been called to Berlin when he published his *Philosophy of Right* in 1821. Since the War of Liberation had rendered the German people fully self-conscious the demand for some measure of political liberty had become general, and the South German States were granted constitutions by their princes. In Prussia, on the other hand, reactionary influences combined with the King's timidity to retain autocracy unimpaired. The students' demonstrations on the Wartburg and the murder of Kotzebue had been followed by the Carlsbad decrees, which muzzled the Universities and the Press. At this moment, when Metternich was in command, the most influential philosopher in Germany issued what was in some quarters regarded as a manifesto of the reaction. A famous witticism affirmed that he had mistaken the kingdom of Prussia for the kingdom of heaven. The accusation was exaggerated, for he demanded representative institutions a generation before they were granted. He had championed the reforming king of his native Württemberg in his struggle with the feudal interests, and part of an article on the English Reform Bill, written just before his death, was suppressed by the Prussian

censor. Hegel was a philosophic conservative, not a reactionary.

The state, we read in the *Philosophy of Right*, is the realised ethical idea, the divine on earth, and therefore a law to itself. A people must embody its sense of right in a constitution, which, however, is not a mere manufactured article but the work of centuries. The best form is hereditary monarchy, which guarantees unity and continuity, and is raised above faction by ruling through ministers. Montesquieu's ideal of the separation of powers, watching and checking each other, is rejected on the ground that it threatens the strength and solidarity of the state. A Legislature is essential, but ultimate decisions must not be made by the people, which does not know what it wants. "To know what we want, and still more to know what reason wants, and what is good for the state, is the fruit of deep knowledge and insight, and is therefore not the property of the people." The right of criticism is the most valuable that the community possesses. "Public opinion deserves both to be esteemed and despised—despised in its concrete expression, esteemed in its essential basis." His notion of government is that it is a very difficult task, requiring highly skilled operators for its success. The sovereignty of numbers and the abstract Rights of Man are emphatically repudiated. He lacked that confidence in the average citizen which inspired the French Revolution and lies at the base of the democratic faith. In his political, not less than in his philosophical system, the individual tends to be engulfed in the whole.

In his doctrine of the relation of states to one another Hegel represents a sharp and deplorable reaction from Kant. While the elder philosopher proclaimed the overlordship of humanity, the younger denied the existence of moral relations between states. International law is no real contract, and no state is legally or morally bound by it. Differences can only be settled by war, which is neither good nor evil but

natural and inevitable. Indeed, it has its uses as a national scavenger and in emphasising the unimportance of material things. In deciding on war the state must consult nothing but its own interest. Yet Hegel's teaching is widely different from the militarism of a later age which glorifies aggression and thinks exclusively in terms of force. A state, he declared, is bound together, not by force, but by a deep-rooted instinct of order. It is a spiritual structure, the highest embodiment of reason, the guardian of liberty. The most influential of German political thinkers surrounded the state with a halo which it has never entirely lost.

Hegel's doctrine of the state was too rationalistic for romantic mystics of the type of Adam Müller, and too rigid for the large and growing body of men who clamoured for a constitution. South German Liberals, led by Rotteck and Welcker, looked for inspiration to France, while North Germans cast wistful glances across the North Sea. The expulsion of the Bourbons in 1830 and the passage of the English Reform Bill in 1832 increased the ferment. It was at this time that Dahlmann, from his chair at Göttingen, proclaimed the virtues of constitutional government as practised in England. His treatise on political science, published in 1835, for some years the Bible of North German Liberalism, judged ideas and institutions, not in abstraction, but in their evolution and operation. In this spirited plea for representative government the illustrations are drawn almost exclusively from English history. His nobility of character made him one of the most impressive figures of modern Germany. His ardent nationalism and his deep conviction of the rightness of the popular thirst for liberty influenced generations of University students. His manly protest against the revocation of the Hanoverian constitution in 1837, promptly followed by his expulsion from Göttingen, increased his authority with the bourgeoisie,

which he described as the kernel of the population and the centre of gravity of the state.

The substitution in 1840 of the brilliant and romantic Frederick William IV as King of Prussia for his insipid father aroused hopeful expectations, but he contented himself with summoning the eight provincial Diets to a joint meeting at Berlin in 1847. His opening address explained the limits of this cautious advance. No power on earth should persuade him to transform the natural relationship between Prince and people into a conventional and constitutional form. He would never allow a piece of paper, like a second Providence, to take the place of the old consecrated loyalty. It was the duty of the Crown to rule in accordance with the law of God and the state and his own unfettered discretion, not according to the will of majorities. He would never have summoned the United Landtag had he imagined that its members would lust after the rule of "so-called representatives of the people." Despite this admonition the Landtag, though mainly composed of the landed nobility, replied that it could not regard itself as fulfilling the promises of Frederick William III, and expressed the hope for wider powers. The King's ideal was the so-called Christo-Germanic state.

In 1848, the year of revolutions, the German people were politically more advanced than their rulers. The educated bourgeoisie looked with envy on the constitutional monarchy of Victorian England. The Professors, the most influential factor in the formation of opinion, were almost all adherents of moderate Liberalism, for the party of radical republicans who looked to France was small. Without asking or securing permission from the princes, a band of Liberals in different states summoned a preliminary Parliament to Frankfurt to prepare for the election of the National Assembly which met in the Paulskirche on May 18. Among the chief ornaments of the Frankfurt Parliament were the three veterans,

Arndt, Dahlmann and Jakob Grimm, all passionately devoted not only to Germany but to liberty. "We have to frame a Constitution for Germany," declared the elected President, Heinrich von Gagern, in opening the proceedings, "and we derive our authority for this purpose from the sovereignty of the nation." Such ringing words had never been heard in a German political assembly, but the Professors' Parliament, as it was called, was living in a fool's paradise. They drew up a constitution, but without the consent of the two leading Powers in the German Confederation, Austria and Prussia, nothing could be done. The Imperial Crown was offered to Frederick William IV, but his mystical doctrine of Divine Right forbade him to receive it from the hands of the people. It was for the princes, he declared, not for the people, to choose their ruler. The hour had come, but not the man. The failure of the Frankfurt experiment was a tragedy, for the tender plant of German liberalism never recovered from the shock. The Prussian constitution grudgingly granted in 1850, with its three-class system, open voting, and indirect election, left the power of the ruler virtually unimpaired; yet the King, enslaved by his feudal romanticism, carried on the fight against "the revolution" by a secret political testament urging his successor to revoke it. Prussia reverted to the sterile inertia which had followed the Carlsbad decrees, and the clerical conservatism of Stahl became the order of the day.

V. The Hohenzollern Empire

A new era in the life of the German people and the Prussian State opened with the accession of William I and the summoning of Bismarck to the helm in 1862. The Minister explained his standpoint in the Budget Committee in a few challenging sentences which echoed through Europe like a thunderclap. "Germany does not look to Prussia's

Liberalism but to her power. Prussia must concentrate her power till the favourable moment, which several times already has been allowed to pass, for her frontiers are unfavourable to a healthy body politic. The great questions of the time will be decided not by speeches and resolutions of majorities—but by blood and iron.” He had championed the royal prerogative in the United Diet of 1847 in a series of speeches which marked him out as the leader of the extreme Right, and the surrender of Frederick William IV to the Berlin mob in the “March days” of 1848 filled him with angry contempt. He had no sympathy with the Frankfurt Parliament, whose failure confirmed his conviction of the futility of deliberative assemblies; and within nine years from his accession to power he had founded the German Empire in three successful wars. “This year,” wrote Gustav Freytag in 1871, “Germans have regained what to many had become as unfamiliar as the *Völkerwanderung* or the Crusades—their State.” What little was left of the Liberalism of 1848 melted away, and the bourgeoisie was converted to the conviction that national power was far more important than self-determination. Not till the industrialisation of Germany created a militant socialist party in the closing years of the century was there a serious demand for democracy.

Bismarck’s attitude to the state is explained in his *Reflections and Recollections* in the chapter on the North German Bund. Absolutism, he declares, is neither desirable nor successful in Germany in the long run—the absolutism of the Crown as little as that of Parliamentary majorities. Absolutism would be the ideal form of government if the King and his officials were endowed with superhuman wisdom, insight and justice. But even the most experienced and well-meaning absolute rulers are subject to human imperfections, such as over-estimation of their own wisdom, the influence and eloquence of favourites, not to mention

petticoat influences, legitimate and illegitimate. Monarchy and the most ideal monarch, such as the Emperor Joseph II, stand in need of criticism, which sets them right when in danger of losing their way; but this function is more efficiently discharged by a wise Minister than by elected assemblies. The grant of universal suffrage in 1866, he explains, was merely a tactical manœuvre in the war against Austria and a threat to use all weapons in a struggle against possible coalitions. The principle was sound if accompanied by open voting—a condition which he had reluctantly to omit. The masses are too easily moved by greed and flashy rhetoric. Every state that lost the prudent and restraining influence of the propertied classes was bound to come to grief. Revolution would be followed by a dictatorship, because in the end even the masses realise from bitter experience the need of order, and cheerfully sacrifice that justifiable amount of freedom which ought to be maintained. Here then was the Iron Chancellor's ideal state: hereditary monarchy, an invincible army, a prudent Chancellor with security of tenure, the preponderance of property, a representative assembly to let off steam, and social legislation for the working classes. He deserved the criticism that he had made Germany great and the German citizen small.

As Fichte had reflected the change from the individualistic humanitarianism of the eighteenth century to the nationalism of the Wars of Liberation, so Treitschke spans the transition from the aspirations of 1848 to the era of blood and iron. His magnetic personality, his passionate conviction, and his incomparable eloquence, of which I was one of the last hearers at Berlin, made him an educative force of the first magnitude. In 1860, at the age of twenty-five, he struck the dominant note of his political teaching in his little book *The Science of Society*, which he bluntly asserted to have no existence. The only science was that of the state, which was society organised as a unit. The state was as necessary

as language, and no contract was needed to create or maintain it. Two years later, in an article on Liberty suggested by Mill's essay, he unfolds his ideal of a state both strong and constitutional. It has the right to dominate the individual because he cannot live a worthy life without its protection and guidance. Far from being a mechanical structure for strictly limited purposes, it is the supreme moralising agency of the world. It is bound, however, by no moral code: self-preservation, which is merely an instinct with the individual, is its supreme duty. But though the state is force, it is much more than force. "We want free men in a free state." He speaks of the rights of conscience and liberty of thought with scarcely less fervour than Mill. Moreover, the liberty of the individual can flourish only under the protection of political liberty. All that was new and fruitful in the nineteenth century was the work of Liberalism. Applying his doctrine to the problem of German politics, he contends that Prussia can only become a rallying point for all Germans as a genuinely constitutional state. This gospel, which bore the stamp of his beloved teacher Dahlmann, he continued to preach till the guns of Sadowa blew what was left of German Liberalism into thin air.

Treitschke's monumental work on the history of Germany in the nineteenth century grew under his hands to such an extent that he was unable to realise his lifelong dream of a systematic treatise on political science, but the lectures which he delivered for a generation to crowded audiences in Heidelberg and Berlin were published after his death.¹ His message is the moral and spiritual grandeur of large and powerful states. The state stands high above the individuals who compose it, and it exists in order to realise ideals far above individual happiness. This it can do only if it is strong. It is no part of its duty to inquire whether its actions are

¹ An English translation entitled *Politics* appeared in 1916, with an Introduction by Lord Balfour.

approved or disapproved by its subjects. It is the guardian of the national tradition and a trustee for the interests of unborn generations. Hereditary monarchy buttressed by a vigorous aristocracy is most conducive to national strength, and the executive must be independent of the ebb and flow of opinion. In like manner the state owes no allegiance to any external authority. International law is a mere phrase, and no tribunal can arbitrate between sovereign states. Treaties are a voluntary self-limitation, and no state can hamper its freedom of action by obligations to another. It must ever be ready for war, which, when undertaken for honour or for some supreme national interest, is wholesome and elevating. For war is not a necessary evil but an instrument of statesmanship and a school of patriotism.) Only in war for the Fatherland does a nation become spiritually united: it is indeed the only medicine for a sick people. It is idealism that demands war and materialism which rejects it. Dreams of perpetual peace are the mark of a stagnant and decadent generation, for conflict is the law of life. "The hope of banishing war is not only meaningless but immoral; for its disappearance would turn the earth into a great temple of selfishness." We catch the echo of Moltke's classical aphorism: "Perpetual peace is a dream, and not even a beautiful dream."

While Treitschke was at the height of his influence another voice was heard which sounded as strangely in Bismarckian Germany as that of Humboldt in the Prussia of Frederick William II. Both were individualists, but their message was utterly different. Humboldt, like every good Liberal, believed in the ordinary citizen and longed to give him his chance; Nietzsche was only interested in the superman. Creative activity, not renunciation, acquiescence or routine, is our duty and our right. Doctrines that stimulate vitality are good, those which discourage it are bad. Of the latter the worst is Christianity, a fiction for weaklings, a

conspiracy of the feeble against the strong. The religion of pity is the religion of slaves. The man of genius is the creator of all values and therefore a law to himself. The many must be sacrificed to the few. This gospel of anarchy makes Nietzsche as much of a rebel in political theory as in ethics. He despises democracy as the cult of numbers, socialism as the superstition of equality. He abhors standardisation and the factors that produce it—custom, religion, law, public opinion, the state—for all of them tend to fetter the superman. The bureaucratic machine encourages the citizen to crave its aid instead of forcing his way through the throng. The schools and universities teach mere erudition; the army is a great leveller, the Empire a huge machine. Zarathustra lacks the community sense, and patriotism makes no appeal. "We good Europeans" know nothing of national differences, and what are Kings to us? What, indeed, was anything to Nietzsche except the Superman? The state, the Fatherland and the army were too firmly entrenched in the generation of 1870 to be rattled by his random blows, yet he exerted an indirect political influence which cannot be ignored. The exaltation of the will to power, the emphasis on personal prowess, the contempt for compromise coloured the thought and hardened the heart of Bismarckian and post-Bismarckian Germany.

The most notable utterance during the reign of William II on the nature and duties of the state is to be found in Delbrück's *Regierung und Volkswille*—a course of lectures delivered in Berlin a few months before the first world war.¹ Democratic government, he argues, is a fraud and Germany possesses the best government in the world. Defining the ideal of democracy as the realisation of the will of the people, he points out that even with a liberal franchise the actual voters are but a small proportion of the community, and that

¹ An American translation of the second edition, entitled *Government and the Will of the People*, appeared in 1923.

many qualified voters stay at home. Thus the whole body of representatives is elected by a mere fraction of the people; and the majority, often only a little more numerous than the minority, represents a still smaller proportion of the nation. Moreover, an election is not a bona fide expression of opinion, but a campaign in which victory often falls to the party with fewest scruples and the longest purse. Even were it otherwise, what reason is there to believe that the majority is right? Again, a popularly elected Legislature in possession of supreme power falls a ready victim to corruption, though the record of England is much better than that of France and America.

This resounding attack seems to point to enlightened autocracy as the ideal, but Delbrück rejects it as decisively as democracy. The weakness of the system of Frederick the Great, he declares, was revealed at Jena. Some connection between the Government and the people is essential, and it was their co-operation which rescued Prussia in 1813. Two generations later Bismarck created not only the German Empire but a constitution to match. The Reichstag enjoys less power than other Parliaments, but it has as much as any Parliament ought to possess. What would happen to the German Empire if it were ruled by changing majorities, a Socialist Government following a Catholic, and each party proscribing its enemies? Indignantly repudiating the elder Liebknecht's description of the Reichstag as a mere fig-leaf to cover the nakedness of absolutism, he pronounces it a mighty organ of criticism and control. Its members, he contends, influence and modify legislation far more than is the case at Westminster. His only criticism is that it does not attract the best talent in the country, since its members never rise to a position of authority. The capital fault of democratic states is that power is in the hands of a single body. The shining merit of the German constitution is that it is a dualism, Princes and Reichstag playing parts of equal

importance, and between them representing the interests as well as the will of the nation.

The finality of the Bismarckian Constitution was reiterated by a more influential voice. "The German Empire," wrote Bülow in his *Imperial Germany*, published in 1913, "situated in the middle of Europe and insufficiently protected by nature on its frontiers, is, and must remain, a military state; and strong military states have always required monarchical guidance. The Crown is the corner-stone of Prussia and the keynote of the Empire. The dividing line between the rights of the Crown and of Parliament is immutably fixed." While recognising that a modern monarchy requires the co-operation of the people, he pronounces against alterations in the sphere of constitutional law. Lamenting the relative apathy of the people and the weak sentiment of responsibility shown by the members of the Reichstag, he proposes to deal with these evils, not by enlarging popular rights, but through the spread of political education. Political talent, he declares, is not among the many great qualities of the German nation, and, in particular, the parties which would benefit by the extension of Parliamentary power are lacking in political judgment and training.

Though democratic ideas were scouted by the governing classes, traces of the ideas of 1848 were still to be found among the bourgeoisie, and the demand for a more liberal theory of the state was strengthened by the growth of the Socialist movement. In his lectures on German parties, delivered in 1910,¹ Friedrich Naumann, the most eloquent spokesman of the Freisinnige or Radical Party in the Reichstag, sharply challenged Bülow's estimate of the political capacity of the nation. "The word self-government signified in the mouth of the old Liberalism, not merely a scheme of franchise, but the will of every individual in his parish, in his province, and in his nation to have his share in political

¹ *Die Politischen Parteien.*

activity. Thus arose in Germany the great idea of a political people in which each member possesses an importance of his own. We parties of the Left must hold fast to our conviction that the idea of nationality will only reach its full height if it is saturated with the conception of free, self-governing citizenship." There is an immense capacity for development in the German people which only awaits the overthrow of the parties of the Right. "We wish to enter into ennobling competition with the Englishman and the American as to which of our nations shall make the greatest contribution to the future civilisation of the world."

VI. The Weimar Experiment

The collapse of the Hohenzollern Empire encouraged the reappearance of ideas which had been submerged by the Bismarckian tide. On November 16, 1918, a week after the proclamation of the Republic, Trötsch, scholar, thinker, publicist, saluted the dawn of a new democratic age. "Militarism is ended, that is a construction of the state and society on the Prussian military system and the spirit which corresponds to it. German militarism did not consist in a powerful army or a taste for Imperialism, which were common to other states. It was rather a political institution, the deciding element in the Constitution, since it formed the essence of ruling society. The German Constitution was a dualism, for behind the civil government, consisting of the Reichstag, the Bundesrath and the Ministers, stood the military power of the King of Prussia and the General Staff. The system was rendered tolerable by general well-being and a model bureaucracy; but it had no roots in the people, and it was broken to pieces by defeat."

German democracy, which was born in the trenches, found expression in the Weimar Constitution. "The German Constitution is a Republic," runs the first of the 181 articles; "supreme power emanates from the people." The first

part creates a *Volksstaat*, the second a *Rechtsstaat*. The sovereignty of the People is supplemented and consecrated by the Rights of Man. In the clauses devoted to the *Grundrechte* are mirrored the changes of thought and feeling which produced or sprang from the Revolution, and in these philosophic axioms and categorical imperatives we are back to the generous inspiration of 1848. The spiritual worth of the individual is proclaimed, with all his obligations and his rights. If Hugo Preuss, the Professor of Constitutional Law, is its chief architect in its structural aspect, the insertion of the *Grundrechte* is mainly due to Friedrich Naumann. Unfortunately for Germany and the world, though the forms of democracy were there, they lacked the breath of life.

Rathenau, the ablest of the Weimar team, a convinced democrat and a successful industrialist, wrote pessimistically as early as June 1919, the month in which the Treaty of Versailles was signed: "There is no longer any doubt that what we call the German Revolution is a disappointment. Our chains were not broken—they fell off. There was no preparation, no revolutionary theory. Only a second revolution can save us, the revolution of sentiment." *The New Society*, published in 1921, expounded his social and political ideas. Society must be socialised and everyone must earn his living, but socialism in the economic sense was unnecessary. "The goal is not any division of property or equality of reward. It is the abolition of the proletarian condition of lifelong and hereditary servitude, of the two-fold stratification of society, of the scandalous enslavement of brother by brother which vitiates all our acts, all our creations, all our joys. Nor is this the final goal. The final object of all endeavour is the development of the human soul." The last sentence might have been copied from Humboldt. "We must achieve a genuine democratisation of the state and of education. Only then will the monopoly

of class and culture be overthrown. The cessation of unearned income will register the downfall of the last of the class-monopolies, that of the plutocracy." No one in Germany between the two world wars wrote so thoughtfully about the sociological foundations of the state as the Jewish intellectual who was murdered in 1923.

The democratic experiment was attacked, not only by Communists and adherents of the Imperial régime, but by Intellectuals who belonged to no party and had no axe to grind. The weakness of the Executive stared Germans in the face. If the Constitution could not produce a strong and stable state, ought it to be retained? The question was answered with an emphatic negative when it had existed no longer than a year. Spengler's *Decline of the West* had caught the fancy of a defeated nation, and when he passed from the morphology of history to the present discontents he found a large audience. In his incisive little book, *Prussianism and Socialism*, he urged the young to return to the ancient ways. Socialism must be rescued from the clutches of Marx, and the old Prussian spirit must be revived. "In the heart of the people the Weimar Constitution is already doomed. Its completion was received with utter indifference. They thought that Parliamentarism was on the upgrade, whereas even in England it is going downhill. This episode is assured of the profound contempt of posterity. In the Paulskirche sat honourable fools and doctrinaires: at Weimar we felt the pull of interest. We know what is at stake, not for Germany alone but for all civilisation—Shall trade rule the state? In relation to this issue Prussianism and Socialism are the same thing. They must present a common front against the philosophy which sterilises the inner life of our people, and their union means not only the fulfilment of the Hohenzollern idea but the salvation of the workers. They will be saved together or perish together. As a separate movement of the proletariat Socialism has had its day; as a system it is

beginning. The Conservatives must equally cast away selfish aims, and choose between conscious socialism and annihilation. Let no one hold back who is born to rule. I appeal to the young. Become men! We want no more ideologues, no talk of cosmopolitanism and the spiritual mission of Germany. We need hardness and socialist supermen. Socialism means Macht, Macht and again Macht. And the way to reach it is clear—the combination of the *élite* of the workers with the best representatives of the old Prussian feeling for the state, both resolved on democratisation in the Prussian sense, both linked by a common sentiment of duty and consciousness of a great task.” In an essay entitled *Pessimism?*, published a year later, he declared that a Roman hardness was beginning, and soon there would be room for nothing else. “We shall not make another Goethe, but we may make another Caesar.” Though Spengler thought in terms of civilisations rather than of races or countries, he agreed with the Nazis that Parliamentary democracy was disastrous to a country which desired and required a strong hand at the helm.

The attack on the liberal experiment was continued by Moeller van den Bruck, whose book, *Das Dritte Reich*, published in 1923, furnished the Nazis with a slogan for their campaign.¹ His voluminous writings had attracted little attention, and the disconsolate invalid committed suicide before his last book began to sell with the accession of the Nazis to power. Though Hitler’s name and movement are not mentioned, for it was written before the Munich *Putsch*, it played a notable part in the struggle for a totalitarian dictatorship. Instead of government by party he proposed the ideal of the Third Reich—the old German dream of a German age. The nation’s worst enemy was itself. The French occupation of the Ruhr had compelled it to think and restored its will. The Germans had never

¹ A translation, entitled *Germany’s Third Empire*, appeared in 1934.

had a revolution. Now was the time, and it was the last chance. The Bismarckian Empire, the Second Reich, was militarily and industrially a success, politically a failure, for William II was a liberal, not a conservative. Liberalism and the Emperor lost the war. Since the catastrophe the whole nation had lain under an evil spell, which could only be banished when the whole of the last generation had passed away. Only a spiritual renewal could save the country, the evolution of a new race. The revolution of 1918 was a liberal enterprise, and therefore it had failed. Its authors thought they had done all that was needful when they imitated the constitutional democracy of the west, where the name of liberty was only a cloak for selfish interests. Möller van den Bruck surveys and denounces all the parties, but his sharpest arrow are reserved for the so-called Liberals. "Liberalism has undermined civilisation, destroyed religions, ruined nations. Primitive peoples know no liberalism." It is defined as the gospel of selfishness, of every one for himself. The genius of the German people is not revolutionary, still less liberal; it is conservative. The Reichstag had always been despised under the Second Empire, and the new Weimar Reichstag was despised still more. Since there was no republican tradition in Germany, the Republic had no roots. Germany was perishing for lack of a leader, and none was in sight. "If once the people feel that they have found a real leader, they will joyfully accept his leadership and send to the devil all the democratic and socialist party chiefs whose impotence and selfishness they have long suspected."

VII. The Totalitarian State

The Third Reich of which Möller van den Bruck had dreamed came into being on January 30, 1933. No Nazi equivalent exists to the elaborate instruments creating the Bismarckian and the Weimar régimes, for scraps of paper are superfluous in a totalitarian state. The new system was

formally established by the Enabling Law (*Ermächtigungsgesetz*) approved by the Reichstag on March 24, 1933, for a period of four years. When Hindenburg died no successor in the Presidency was appointed, and since 1934 Hitler has been head of the state, head of the Government, and head of the army. "His will is my law," declared Göring in 1933. "Our Constitution is the will of the Führer," echoed Dr. Frank in 1936. The Reichstag survives, not as an assembly elected by and responsible to the people, but as a gathering of party nominees who ratify the Führer's decisions without debate. The chief novelty in Nazi political ideology is the Führerprinzip, which, if it is to work, assumes an uninterrupted succession of supermen.

In a thousand speeches Hitler has defined himself as the representative, the champion, the embodiment, of the nation, so assured of its confidence and so instinctively loyal to its permanent interests that opposition to his will is unthinkable. "Cromwell saved England in a crisis similar to ours," he declared to an American journalist in 1933, "and he saved it by obliterating Parliament and uniting the nation." That Cromwell never united the nation and commanded less and less support every year of his dictatorship he appears to have been unaware. When asked if he foresaw the resumption of Parliamentary Government after four years or twenty years, he replied, after a pause, Yes, but with a Parliament of a better type, something like the Italian Corporative State. "The principle of a single centralised authority must first be established and then at all costs preserved. I myself assume absolute responsibility." Here is the core of his teaching—an omnipotent executive under a dynamic leader, able to make rapid decisions and to carry them out because everything is settled, not by coalitions and compromise, but by his unchallengeable will. The weakness of the Parliamentary system with its competing parties, he explained, was that no one knew how long one would be at the helm.

With the creation of the totalitarian state the period of class and sectional struggles, of hesitation, of uncertainty, of divided responsibility was over, and Germany had at last found real leadership. So long as the German nation in every walk of life subjected itself to a single will, all problems could be solved.

The totalitarian doctrine may be conveniently studied in a little book by the distinguished jurist, Professor Carl Schmitt, editor of a series of monographs entitled *Der deutsche Staat der Gegenwart*. His own contribution, *Staat, Bewegung, Volk* (State, Movement, People), published in 1935, contrasts the Nazi system with the Weimar Constitution. That creation of the liberal-democratic school of thought, with its multiplicity of parties, its neutrality between friends and foes of the state, between genuine nationals and alien racial elements, was incompatible with the Nazi régime. The essential change was the creation of the one-party state: the danger of national disintegration as the result of the multiplicity of parties, which he calls the pluralistic system, was thus overcome. Hitherto, in Germany and most other countries, there had been only two factors, the state and the people, often in conflict with one another. This latent rivalry was smoothed out by the introduction of a third element—the party, or, as he calls it, the movement, which represented the people and provided the government. Thus the political unity of the state and the source of its strength is to be found in the combination of state, movement, people.

Though resembling Italian Fascism in certain particulars, the Nazi system, declares Carl Schmitt, could appeal to German precedents and publicists, particularly to Hegel. While the liberal nineteenth century believed in principles of general applicability, the Nazi emphasises the uniqueness of the individual community. All law (*Recht*) is the law of a particular people. The liberal-democratic state had always

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tried to clip the wings of the executive and to secure the citizen against its "interference." With the Nazi ideology this is a needless alarm, for the Leader shares the blood, understands the interests, and fulfils the wishes of the people. It is not a dictatorship of the usual pattern but a specifically German concept. Tyranny is prevented by the fact that the Leader and the people come from the same mould. Equally the Nazi judge is no longer bound to the automatic application of the law, but must bear in mind the fundamental principles of the régime and the practical needs of the community. The whole object and result of the Nazi revolution is to substitute a strong and homogeneous for a weak and divided state. The virtual unanimity of the German people in desiring this political and ideological revolution is assumed throughout. In any case Nazi publicists, like the Berlin Professor, have no use for minorities. Among the lessons taught by the Nazi régime is that such an evil interlude is only rendered possible by the weakness of the government which it destroys. When Hitler is overthrown the problem of combining a strong executive with popular rights will remain to be solved.

GERMAN VIEWS OF THE GERMAN MIND

THE Germans, Nietzsche tells us, escape definition, and in this are the despair of the French. He adds that it is one of their characteristics that they are for ever asking what is German? The explanation suggested is that this is due to the great diversity and rich complexity of the German mind. Since there is hardly a writer on the psychology of peoples who does not claim that his own nation is more complex and varied than any other, it may be doubted whether the explanation hits the mark. It is perhaps nearer the truth to say that the excessive preoccupation with the question, What constitutes a German? is a sign of inward doubt and betrays an anxiety to bring about a unity which as yet does not exist.

In this discussion we are not concerned so much with what the Germans are or are coming to be as with what the Germans themselves think of their mental make-up. It is important at the outset to explain what is implied in the term mind or mentality as applied to a group like a people or nation. Every group is constituted of minds in a network of relations. Within this web of relations certain psychological characters may be discerned; for example, certain habits of thought, certain ways of behaviour and modes of feeling widely diffused among the members, affecting the mutual relations of the members and also the relations between the group as a whole and the outside world. The sum of these prevalent modes of action, thought, and feeling constitutes the group mentality. It is not a mind, in the sense in which this term is used when applied to an organism possessed of a unitary centre of consciousness, but rather a mental condition widely dominating thought and action.

If this view be adopted, it would follow that the comparative study of the mentality of nations might be approached in two ways. Firstly, the attempt might be made to ascertain differences in the distribution of traits, or perhaps of types of personality or temperament in different populations, as when it is said, for example, that Germans are more docile than the English or that the Irish are temperamentally averse from regimentation. Secondly, the mentality of groups might be studied by observing the behaviour patterns of the group as a whole, that is, the nature of its organisation as embodied in its institutions, its collective achievements in art, science and religion, its public policy. Clearly the two approaches are inter-connected. Already Kant¹ noted that the German love of titles and carefully graded hierarchical distinctions might perhaps be due to the forms of government favoured by the German peoples, but, on the other hand, these forms of government themselves might be the result of certain inborn tendencies or inclinations (*dem natürlichen Hange der Deutschen*). We come up here against a difficulty inherent in the whole inquiry, namely, the difficulty of disentangling what is to be ascribed to innate equipment and what to the way in which the innate propensities are shaped by historical circumstances. If German life is characterised by a certain lack of stability and cohesion, as so many German writers maintain, is this to be ascribed to inborn traits of temperament or character or to the peculiar situation of the German people? Is the *furor teutonicus* rooted in inborn constitution or is it historically conditioned? Clearly there must be an intimate relation between the collective achievements of a people and the character of its components. The institutions of a people must reflect the character of the individuals composing it, but this in turn is moulded by the institutions. Men make their institutions,

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie*, Zweiter Teil. Der Charakter des Volks, 1800.

but also the institutions make the men. Perhaps, however, the relation thus indicated does not affect all segments of social life in the same degree, so that changes in some of the forms of social life may leave the deeper layers of individual character relatively unaffected.

Leaving these and other difficulties unsolved, as I think we must in the present stage of the psychology of peoples, I turn now to what German writers have to say of the mentality of their people. On the intellectual side German, as well as foreign, commentators stress the tendency of the German mind to think in abstractions. V. Clausewitz,¹ writing in 1807, ascribes this tendency to the desire of the Germans to follow up a decision once made with great steadiness and not to be satisfied with the superficial confirmation of ideas provided by observation of facts. The German becomes abstract because he wishes to dig deeply and to exhaust the subject under investigation. Clausewitz notes that this tendency has its dangers, especially in dealing with the problems of political life. Here the further one gets away from the realities of experience the greater is the liability to error and confusion. Here profundity is apt to lead to one-sidedness. Such one-sidedness, he thinks, is really characteristic of the German in dealing with practical or political problems. Hence the multiplicity of systems of thought moving within a very narrow circle and limiting truth from above. It is this which leads not only philosophers but also lesser folk to endless mutual criticism and distrust, with the result that no common stock of beliefs is built up and no one has any confidence in others or in the nation as a whole.

The connection here adumbrated between the abstract nature of German thought and certain qualities of character is developed in other ways by other German writers. Thus,

¹ Carl v. Clausewitz, "Aus dem Reisejournal von 1807," *Die Deutschen und die Franzosen*.

Müller-Freienfels¹ thinks that by its innate constitution the German mind is inclined to turn away from concrete facts and to set itself vague and indefinite ends. The German does not seek confirmation for his ideas in the world of perceptual fact; the world of ideas seems to him to constitute a higher reality. The abstractions used by the German are not derived from an exact analysis of sensory experience, but are due rather to a sweep of imagination or fantasy. In this it differs from the French form of abstract thinking which is always controlled by *bon sens*. This lack of concreteness and the indulgence in fanciful abstractions Müller-Freienfels ascribes to the fact that the Germans are less controlled and regulated by rational norms than other peoples. The German lacks the sense of measure or proportion of the Greeks, the feeling for reality of the English, or the socially moulded *sens commun* of the French. He is guided by inner or subjective norms rather than by the trans-subjective norms which peoples of a steadier social tradition have elaborated. This means that he can occasionally rise to great heights and explore the deeper layers of thought. But it also has its dangers, especially in the field of social and political thought. Here there is a strange combination of vagueness and obscurity with profundity and comprehensiveness and a predilection for grandiose systems.

A rather more favourable account of the relations between the rational and non-rational elements in German thought is given by Pfeiderer,² who approaches the problem from the point of view of religious experience. The German's reflection, he says, "is not so much that of abstract formal reason as of the *whole man*; his feelings, his moral qualities, his aesthetic intuitions, take part in it by putting questions to him, directing him in his course, and setting

¹ R. Müller-Freienfels, *Psychologie des deutschen Menschen*, 1937.

² O. Pfeiderer, "The National Traits of Germans as seen in their Religion," *International Journal of Ethics*, iii, 1892-3, p. 367.

bounds to his conclusions." A similar view, somewhat obscurely expressed, is that of Hegel,¹ who attributes to the Germans the sense of natural totality (*die Empfindung der natürlichen Totalität*), which he calls *Gemüth*. This, he says, is an undeveloped, indeterminate striving for general satisfaction, not directed at any particular aim, but rather concerned with the entire condition of the soul.

In the realm of feeling German writers lay stress on what they call depth, inwardness, inner warmth, indefinite but intense yearning or longing (*Innerlichkeit, Innigkeit, Wärme, Tiefe, Fernweh, Sehnsucht*). The feelings of the Germans, they say, are less lively and aroused with greater difficulty than those of other peoples (*mehr Glut als Flamme*), but are not lacking in intensity. The indefiniteness which characterises German thought is also said to mark their feelings. They frequently use the word "*Stimmung*" in this context, a word difficult to translate, but which seems to convey a mood in which many feelings are fused, and in which the ideational components need not be very clear.² As to the quality of the feelings German writers note the tendency to depressive, uneasy, morose moods which stands in contrast with the *gaieté* of the French or the vigorous optimism of the American.³ Some writers even speak of a profound pessimism and defeatism as characterising German mentality throughout its history, though this is occasionally submerged in a glare of bombast and self-stimulation.

The temperament of the German is usually depicted as slow and heavy, phlegmatic. Schopenhauer (1851) says: "The true national character of the Germans is ponderousness or heaviness (*Schwerfälligkeit*). This is seen in their gait, in everything they do, their language, speech, and

¹ W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen ueber die Philosophie der Geschichte*, 1822-3.

² R. Müller-Freienfels, *Psychologie des deutschen Menschen*, p. 82, 1937.

³ W. Sombart, *Deutscher Sozialismus*, ch. ix; R. Müller-Freienfels, *Psychologie des deutschen Menschen*, p. 83, 1937.

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thought, especially in their style of writing, in the pleasure they take in long, ponderous, complicated periods, in which the memory has a heavy task, till at last the understanding grasps the sense and solves the riddle.”¹

With this slow tempo are perhaps connected the thoroughness or Gründlichkeit usually claimed for Germans, the steadiness or persistence, the *vis durans*, already noted by Tacitus, and the *laboriositas*, which is seen in all spheres of German life and which Leibnitz regarded as the distinctive characteristic of the Germans.

Of the more general qualities of personality, the one on which perhaps the greatest stress is laid is what the German writers call individualism or subjectivism. By this appears to be meant the power of the individual to make himself independent of the outer world, to concentrate on the inner life of emotion and imagination and in its extreme form to become entirely absorbed in his own existence and to follow his own peculiar opinions and inclinations, regardless of rules and regulations. It may seem odd to us now that we hear so much of German docility and submissiveness to be reminded of the claim to subjectivity or individualism, generally interpreted as involving a spirit of independence verging on anarchy or at least repudiation of authority imposed from without. But there can be no question that until the end of the nineteenth century it is the quality of individualism thus understood, that at once attracted and troubled German observers of their national life. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was interpreted as an expression of the principle of the autonomy of the personality, and it was pointed out that during the later progress of the movement, the obverse side of this virtue came to view, namely, a one-sided individualism, an aversion from any subordination of individuals to a common whole. “To

¹ A. Schopenhauer, quoted in *Deutsches Wesen im Spiegel der Zeiten*, by Hanns Floerke.

this defect," says Pfeiderer, "can be traced the political weakness of the Germans . . . and the ecclesiastical weakness of the German Protestants, split up as they were into sects and creeds, in contrast to the close unity of the Roman theocracy."¹ The theme is repeated by innumerable writers, and as a recent example, I will cite a passage from Müller-Freienfels: "In politics German individualism appears in the form of particularism. Apart from the few glorious periods in which great leaders managed to attract an enthusiastic following, German history is a painful tragedy-comedy of egoism and disunion. The first act is presented to us by the Roman historians: for it was only through discord that the German tribes were overcome. The whole middle age, indeed the whole history of the old empire, is full of a like discordance shown now by the princes, now by the estates, now by other groups. In more recent times parliaments have become the home for the odd and the singular. Naturally there are and must be conflicts between parties in every country, but in Germany these take on a peculiar colouring. The German brings the whole of his emotional make-up into politics and instead of being guided by definite purposes he indulges in fanciful ideas and moods, without considering the needs of the whole community. The Englishman is first an Englishman and then a party-man; the German is first a party-man, and the whole is subordinated to the part. Hence he sees in political opposition not merely a difference of opinion, but moral perversity. Every difference of conviction is regarded as a personal matter. In hardly any country in the world do political opponents regard each other as moral scoundrels, hardly anywhere else is political opposition so saturated with hatred. . . . In this emotional individualism, not regulated by purposes nor by the needs of social adjustment is to be found the ground

¹ O. Pfeiderer, "The National Traits of Germans as seen in their Religion," *International Journal of Ethics*, III, p. 36, 1892-3.

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for the 'unpolitical' nature of the Germans for which they have so often been blamed."¹ The historian Kurt Breysig,² striking a more favourable note, says: "Certainly at present, the stereotyped and almost mechanical conformity of the French, the more natural, mature conformity of the English, and the dull, herd-like conformity of the Russians, form a distinct circle about Germany, as the country dedicated to the individual . . . at least among all those whose character and work determine the contour of German life. . . . The endeavour to make out of the meditative and reflective, self-willed and self-absorbed German, drilled to the 'goose-step,' the recruit for a mental army, is foreign to our nature." Sombart, who quotes this passage with approval, adds that what Breysig says is true not only of the eminent, but also of the broad masses of the people. The German does not readily accept external compulsion. He does indeed demand regulation and order, but these must be freely accepted and self-imposed.³

It will be seen that under the term individualism are brought together a number of traits or qualities such as a tendency to turn inwards, a desire for independence, for freedom from external constraint, distinctiveness in self-expression passing into self-will and self-absorption. The accounts which German writers give of this quality betray a lack of assurance. The professors protest too much. Occasionally among the older writers who are anxious to encourage the development of the German spirit, individualism is preached as an ideal and not asserted as a fact. Germans are exhorted to be "true to themselves," not to be so ready to imitate others, and to over-value everything that is foreign.⁴ More recent writers are evidently concerned to dispel the impression which German life makes upon

¹ R. Müller-Freienfels, *Psychologie des deutschen Menschen*, p. 143-4, 1937.

² K. Breysig, *Vom deutschen Geist und seiner Wesensart*, p. 268, 1932.

³ W. Sombart, *Deutscher Sozialismus*, Ch. 11.

⁴ *Rembrandt als Erzieher*.

foreign observers of excessive submissiveness, longing for rules and regulations, docility verging on servility. Some say that this longing for regulation, so far from being incompatible with the qualities of individualism, is necessitated by them. The German, the author of *Rembrandt als Erzieher* tells us, feels the need for rules just because he is by nature lawless; Vielleicht neigt der Deutsche so sehr zur Regel, weil sein Charakter von Haus aus ein regelloser ist.¹ A modern version of this theory, making use of the psycho-analytic notion of "compensation," is given by Müller-Freienfels. According to him the features in German life which strike the foreign observer, namely, militarism, method, and minute regulation, are not an immediate or direct expression of German character, but an over-compensation, the result of an age-long struggle with his own nature, which often leads the German to behave in a way which is the very opposite of his true self. This, he thinks, is the source of his lack of unity, the reason why the German is so dissatisfied with himself, why he is for ever worrying about his own nature, why he tries one course of action after another to allay his restlessness, and why at last he seeks refuge in submission to authority. The German solves his problem, it is maintained, by freely accepting constraint, and the philosophers help him in this by their doctrine that freedom consists in deliberate acceptance of constraint. If this fails to carry conviction to the outside observer, the answer is that the process is not intended to be taken as rational. It is a supra-rational reconciliation of opposites, a procedure which Germans like to regard as congenial to the German mind and indeed as inherent in its nature.

Other writers, more candid, do not pretend to say that the Germans live in political freedom. But, they say, Germans find their freedom in the inner life, in the full play of thought and imagination. The German, says Professor

¹ *ibid.*, p. 10.

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Richard Meyer, disregards political liberty "because he knew his liberty of thought to be safe from attack."¹ Whether this division of life into separate zones could be sustained under modern conditions may well be doubted, but the claim that the private zone can remain free despite the minute regulation accepted in the public zone, no doubt affords many Germans a convenient way of escaping from a situation which in their hearts they must feel to be humiliating. Certainly the energy devoted to proving that the authority which Germans obey is self-imposed and that freedom consists in the deliberate acceptance of constraint points to the persistence of an uneasy feeling that all is not well in the best of all possible countries.

The lack of inner assurance is indeed a quality which German writers have long complained of as characteristic of the German people. The older writers speak of *Masslosigkeit*, a lack of the sense of proportion or measure. "This lack of measure," says the literary historian, Scherer, "is the curse of our intellectual life. We rise very high in order to sink back to greater depths. We are like the Teuton who, having lost all he had in a game of dice, stakes his liberty and, losing this also, permits himself to be sold into slavery . . . so great," says Tacitus, who cites this trait, "is the German obstinacy in evil things. They call this *Treue*."² Writing in 1917, E. Krieck, now a leading Nazi philosopher, says: "The German lacks the gift of measure or proportion. His world has only one centre of gravity, his own self, which his impulses drive in all directions. There is a lack of inner equilibrium, of every power that gives measure and form. To this mental endowment the German owes his strength and his weakness; a wealth and even excess of energy and spirit and a lack of firm and plastic form."³ Eugen

¹ R. M. Meyer, "German Character as reflected in National Life and Literature," *International Journal of Ethics*, iii, p. 241, 1892-3.

² W. W. Scherer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*.

³ E. Krieck, *Die deutsche Staatsidee*, p. 15, 1917.

Diesel speaks of a lack of inner poise and security. It is a peculiarity of the German, he says, to be readily moved to hope and enthusiasm, to be easily flattered and equally easily insulted, characteristics which do not indicate any great inner stability. While Germans are patient in their work and in submitting to orders, they show little patience in dealing with their fellow-men or the trials of circumstance. The inner insecurity is covered by a professional veneer of self-assurance.¹

The lack of inner stability is in part also reflected in the love of rank and outward distinctions which peoples with a more firm tradition do not need to emphasise. The absence of inner poise, Diesel adds, "has prevented the nation from pursuing a steady course of development through the centuries. It has led it to give up too lightly movements that seemed to promise well and to plunge with feverish enthusiasm into every sort of new craze."² Richard v. Kuhlmann, who thinks Diesel's strictures somewhat severe, nevertheless concedes that the Germans lack balance and calm, so "that a foolish brusqueness too often alternates with excessive affability, thus arousing the impression of a want of inner assurance, and therewith a suspicion of untrustworthiness." He attributes this lack of poise to historical conditions, particularly the heterogeneity of the elements of which the nation is composed, the absence of a steady and continuous tradition making possible a conscious, clear, and confident method of life. He urges that continuity of historical experience can hardly be said to exist in Germany. "The individual epochs are sharply severed from each other, without intermediary stages or transitions, like ice-blocks in

¹ With this may be compared Bismarck's remarks: The German nation is a race of non-commissioned officers. Everyone is eager to get the stripes. On an average everyone in public life has only that degree of self-reliance which corresponds to his official hall-mark, to the conditions of his official life and to his orders. Exceptions to this are praiseworthy but rare.

² Eugen Diesel, *Germany and the Germans*, p. 151.

a broken floe. . . . Every generation that emerges after these great cleavages begins an entirely new life; the threads of common feeling with the previous epoch are very thin."¹

The descriptions of the German character that I have so far discussed are based on observation and interpretation of everyday behaviour. They can hardly claim to be more than rough empirical generalisations. More exact study would have to allow for local or regional differences and attempts would have to be made to estimate the pervasiveness and permanence of the traits of character or temperament in question. The submissive type may be more common in old Prussia than in Bavaria; the hypercritical, phlegmatic, and reflective person more frequent on the Frisian waterfront than in the cheerful Moselle valley, and so forth.² Yet even when allowance has been made for regional, class and temporal differences, widely held generalisations, such as I have quoted above, may retain their value at least as a starting-point for further inquiry.

A far more promising approach to the study of German character is to be found in the analysis of the structure of German society and the changes which it has undergone. It is to be assumed that the structure and the forces which make for its changes reflect the character of the people while at the same time shaping it. For the national character, there is a good reason for believing, is not something fixed and unalterable, but always in the making, moulding and being moulded by historical circumstances, and this applies to the Germans as to other nations. From this point of view we may try to see what German writers have to tell us of the main characteristics of German society. The following points, I think, are widely emphasised. Firstly, there is the fact that the unification of Germany has only been recently

¹ Richard v. Kuhlmann, *Thoughts on Germany*, pp. 174-5.

² For a very interesting study of regional differences cf. Georg Grupp, *Der deutsche Volks-und Stammes-Charakter*, 1906.

achieved, that the elements out of which it was composed were themselves without a firm tradition, and that the unification was imposed at a pace far outstripping the pace of inner development. The comparatively late growth of Germany, its "youthfulness" or immaturity has affected not only its political but also its cultural development. It has been a tragedy for Germany, says Müller-Freienfels, that before it had time to develop a culture of its own it had been subjected successively to the influence of foreign cultures. Both as individuals and as a people, he thinks, the Germans mature very slowly. This is seen politically in the tardy manner in which it becomes democratised and in the persistence of non-rational elements in their thought. This slow growth is due, in his opinion, not merely to historical circumstances but to an inner insecurity bound up with the inherently slower tempo of the German mind. Whether this particular explanation be accepted or not the facts are not in dispute. The influence of Rome and of Christianity reached Germany much later than, say, France, and what is even more important, the south-west was affected much earlier and more deeply than the north-east. Later there came the influences from the Romanised peoples of the south-west. It is only towards the end of the seventeenth century that the Germans begin to be conscious of themselves as some sort of unity. In 1767 Lessing is very doubtful whether the Germans are a nation, either politically or as regards moral character. One might almost say, he says, that the German character consists in having no character!¹

The late growth of the German nation is connected with another feature of German life which German writers call particularism, the tendency to break up into small units and

¹ G. E. Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, 1767-8.

Oddly enough, a similar assertion is made by Hume of the English: "The English of any people in the world have the least of a national character: unless this very singularity may pass for such." David Hume, *Essays, Political and Literary*, vol. i, p. 252.

for these units to persist and to resist absorption into a larger whole. Many writers trace this tendency to a deeply rooted and inborn propensity akin to what has been described above as individualism. But in the main the explanation is to be sought in geographical and historical conditions. The disruptive forces can be traced back to the earliest days. The German emperors who dissipated their energies in the struggle with the Papacy and in the pursuit of an empire outside Germany were never able to control their unruly vassals, and the measures which they took in this direction only resulted in the multiplication of petty despotisms. The relations between the crown, the feudal nobility and the people were for various reasons here different from those which prevailed either in France or England. The people were never strong enough to induce the crown to seek their support in the struggle with the feudal nobility. With the triumph of the territorial princes in the late Middle Ages the bourgeoisie lost whatever power they had retained in the cities. "There began," says Fritz Rörig, "those fateful centuries in which the stratum of the population which in the Middle Ages had achieved such splendour—the bourgeois-merchant upper stratum of the cities—was deprived of political experience and was made politically impotent."¹ Religious strife added to the forces making for disruption. According to Schnabel,² the Reich contained even at the end of the eighteenth century 1,789 independent powers. The significance of this fragmentation is that it made a movement of liberation difficult and kept the people in a state of political impotence and apathy. While in France the nobility had been weakened by the crown and the crown itself was exposed to attack by nation-wide forces, in Germany the crown was weak, there was no bourgeoisie sufficiently strong to counter-balance the dynastic ambitions of the

¹ F. Rörig, "Die europäische Stadt," *Propyläen Weltgeschichte*, iv, 1932.

² F. Schnabel, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 1929.

feudal princes and the people was broken up into too many fragments to offer effective resistance. When unity came it was relatively external in character, imposed by force and not in keeping with the inner development of the people. "When Bismarck coined his famous phrase that Germany needed only to be put on to the saddle and she would ride, behind his words there was a true and uncomfortable feeling that the continuity of history had been broken. The German people had been placed in the saddle, and it had always dreamt of riding, but it had not reached that saddle by its own strength and resolution. Many stages of development had been passed over, and much time would be needed to make good the deficiency."¹

Connected with the features of social structure here briefly indicated is another feature which is also stressed by German observers. This is what they call *Ständische Zerrissenheit* or the tendency of German society to be torn asunder by sharp class divisions. "Nowhere," says Müller-Freienfels, "are nobles and bourgeoisie so *schröff geschieden*; nowhere is the whole of culture so caste-ridden."² This again is rooted in historical conditions. Reference was made above to the special form which the relations between the feudal nobility, the kings and the people took in Germany. Here the gap that separated the nobles from the people was wider than it ever was in England or in France. In the bourgeoisie the system of education that grew out of the Reformation resulted in the creation of an aristocracy of education sharply separated from the mass of the uneducated. Owing to this separation, Schnabel tells us, the bourgeoisie tended to become isolated and narrow. "To this is due the lack of moral courage which it shows, despite a certain outward manliness and zeal of enterprise, the attitude of submissiveness and mistrust of all above them and the rigid shutting

¹ Richard v. Kuhlmann, *Thoughts on Germany*, p. 172.

² *op. cit.*, p. 40.

out of all below them.”¹ Of the greatest importance in this connection is, of course, the influence exerted on the social structure of Germany by the triumph of Prussia. Its effect was to militarise and bureaucratised the whole of society. In the Prussian army the ancient relationship of landowner and peasant was carried over into the relation between officer and soldier—a mixture of tribal loyalty and autocratic authority. This spirit persisted even when the officers began to be recruited from the bourgeoisie and increasingly pervaded also the sphere of civil life, which throughout came to be dominated by the relationship of inferior to superior.

When these features of the social structure are taken into consideration the characteristics attributed to Germans by themselves and by outside observers become intelligible. Their docility and submissiveness cease to be so surprising when it is remembered that for many generations Germans were accustomed to the rule of feudal lords, who exacted tribal loyalty from their subjects, but were themselves uncontrolled by a higher authority, that the bourgeoisie have for various causes been deprived of political experience and that the fragmentation of German society hindered the growth of a collective popular will. The lack of balance or poise again is no doubt connected with the absence of a steady or continuous tradition, and the fact that neither culturally nor politically can Germany be said to have achieved any unity. The south-west with a more ancient culture has not been brought into harmony with the north-east. The capital has no ancient tradition nor deep roots in the life of the people. The aristocracy has never managed to adjust itself to the other social strata and so has contributed little towards the creation of a unified social system.² This lack of social and cultural unity generates tensions

¹ Schnabel, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

² For a very interesting discussion of these cultural divisions see J. Nadler, *Literaturgeschichte der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften*; *Berliner Romantik*, and E. R. Curtius, *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr*, 1933.

which may to some extent account for the internal distraction and disharmony that German writers attribute to the German mind.

There is yet another set of circumstances which must be noted in dealing with the mentality of the German in recent times. These are connected with the fact that the changes which have occurred in German society came largely from without and were imposed at a rate for which the people were psychologically unprepared. The triumph of Prussia turned Germany in a very short time into a world-power, and this coming after centuries of obscurity and strife, generated a mood of romantic intoxication, a belief that there was no limit to what Germany could achieve by the sheer exercise of its power. The astonishing rise of military and political power coincided with an equally rapid expansion in the sphere of industry and commerce. The cities grew by leaps and bounds. The urbanisation of the population proceeded rapidly. While in 1871 only 4·8 per cent of the population lived in large towns, this rose to 30·2 per cent in the present century. The spirit of nationalism and industrialism were here fused. Germany turned itself into a sort of "America in uniform,"¹ drunk with political power, but lacking in all the elements making for moderation and stability. A "parvenu" mentality was produced, showing itself in strident boastfulness and display, but at the bottom unsure of itself, fearful and resentful. Those who believe in the continuity of German character through the ages see in these phenomena yet another example of the "Masslosigkeit," the lack of measure or proportion of the German. Müller-Freienfels even finds in the changes which occurred in German mentality in this century an illustration of over compensation, the erection of a merely external façade behind which the more fundamental character of the German remains. The "Realpolitik" and the "Machtpolitik"

¹ L. Reynaud, *L'âme allemande*.

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embody on this view the old romantic and vaguely imaginative element of the German mind, the brusqueness and arrogance, the cold efficiency are mere masks hiding the old "Masslosigkeit" and metaphysic. It is difficult to see how views of this sort are to be tested. The facts perhaps are more easily explained when it is remembered that the Germans who were unified largely against their will and industrialised and urbanised with too great rapidity were trying to play a role for which they were not prepared by their history and did not have the wisdom or restraint to allow themselves the time needed for the people to adjust itself to the new situation.

Bearing these considerations in mind, it becomes very doubtful whether we can speak with any accuracy of "a" German mentality or "a" German national character. Such terms imply a unity and continuity in the social structure which cannot in this case be asserted with any confidence. It must be remembered that we know very little of the mentality of tribal Germany. The evidence derived from the Roman writers will not impress anyone familiar with anthropological literature. The traits they depict can be paralleled from the descriptions given by anthropologists of many peoples at a similar level of development. Much, for example, is made of the ancient German love of freedom. But this is based mainly on the fact that the powers of their chiefs were limited and that decisions on important matters rested with an assembly of freemen. But there is nothing very unusual in this in the societies of the simpler peoples. There are innumerable cases of peoples whose chiefs owe their power to their personal qualities and their authority to their persuasive gifts and prestige. No one would think of ascribing to them a special love of freedom. The later social structure of the German peoples was shaped by the peculiar form which feudalism took in German countries and especially by the relations between crown, nobles and people

which were here different from those that prevailed in other European countries. As we have seen particularist tendencies were thus encouraged with the result that the feudal nobility was able to hold in check both the kings or emperors and the emergent middle classes. Culturally the different regions came under the influence of western civilisation at very different times. Everywhere the people were "*entpolitisiert*," deprived of the opportunity of exercising political power. The separation of the zones of life of which German writers make so much encouraged this "*Entpolitisierung*." People became accustomed to the idea that political freedom did not matter so long as they had what was called "spiritual" freedom. They did not realise that this separation is, in the long run, illusory and that those whose outward life is shaped by others lose the capacity of ordering even their inward lives for themselves. Yet for a time this separation of the zones of life really did work at least in Southern and Western Germany. Here under enlightened princes in the period between 1650 and 1870 thinkers and poets could live in detachment from political life and freely satisfy their spiritual needs. The triumph of Prussia made this separation very unreal and regimentation penetrated all zones of life. The statements so frequently made by German writers that their obedience is really freedom and their submission to rule is self-imposed can only be understood as the effect of cumulative suggestion. Those whose beliefs are fashioned habitually by suggestion from without become at last incapable of realising that their thoughts are not their own. The docility of the Germans is perhaps not, as a recent writer has suggested, a myth. But neither is it a mystery. It becomes intelligible in the light of the history of the German peoples and is especially linked with the conditions under which the Prussian army and bureaucracy grew up and the causes which made it possible for its spirit gradually to pervade the whole of German life. The influence of the

Lutheran tradition must not be forgotten in this connection. The stress laid by Lutheranism on faith, on the inward life, tended to break up the unity of thought and deed and thus to discourage the effort to translate thought into action. In teaching that matters of conscience were affairs of the inner will it accustomed men to accept calmly whatever befell them and to regard obedience and acquiescence as ordained by God. The Lutheran preachers often came from families accustomed to obedience and many of the bureaucracy, too, came from clerical homes.¹ A good deal of light on the mentality of middle-class Germans can be obtained from an analysis of the social origins of the *Beamtentum* and especially of the habits and training of the schoolmasters. The middle classes in Germany have no continuous liberal tradition. They become of importance with the development of industry and commerce in recent times. But the circumstances of their growth did not make for effective or united political action. The upper levels made common cause with the landed nobility and this gave rise to what many German writers have called the "feudalisation" of the bourgeoisie. For the rest, it would seem, the middle classes tended to concentrate attention exclusively on economic and industrial aims. In this the state aided them without, however, eliciting from them any active interest in politics or developing in them a sense of political responsibility. Political power was in fact concentrated in the hands of the Prussian nobility in association with the big industrialists and financiers. The working classes, despite the increasing weight of their votes, were prevented by various constitutional devices from exercising effective political power. There was, to the outside observer at any rate, a curious unreality in the situation. In 1912 four million electors voted for the Social Democratic party, a party whose programme was strictly revolutionary. It is extremely unlikely that there really existed in Germany

¹ Cf. Schnabel, *op. cit.*, II. 306.

at that time such a large number of people seriously bent on a radical reconstruction of the economic system by revolutionary methods. The probability is that under the banner of Marxism the Social Democrats were able to bring together discontented people of all sorts. The determinist elements in Marxist theory, the view that socialism must inevitably be realised as a result of the inner development of the capitalist system, made it possible for the socialists to preach a doctrine of revolution as an event bound to come about in the fullness of time but which it would be dangerous and even absurd to expect before that time had come. In the meantime people were to be patient and hopeful, prepare for the revolution to come rather than seek to bring it about immediately.¹ Here, too, there was a separation of thought and deed which we have seen exemplified in other spheres of German life, but again the separation was rooted in the historical conditions and is hardly to be explained by invoking a permanent lack of realism and a tendency to abstraction as characteristic of the German mind as such. It remains, however, that in Germany the distance between social theory and practice is perhaps greater than in other European countries and that theorising provides a method of escape from realities more frequently in Germany than elsewhere. Fichte had no difficulty in persuading himself that the Germans were the only nation fit to realise the ideal of a republican constitution.² The theory of the state as an organic growth was stressed by German thinkers in relation to Prussia, a state which no one could maintain was the natural expression of the soul of a people. So again the theory of the Volk as a racial unity is applied in Germany to a people whose racial heterogeneity is patent and whose cultural unity is as yet in the making. No wonder Nietzsche was impelled to chastise what he called the "idealistic

¹ E. Halévy, *L'Ère des Tyrannies*, 1938.

² Cf. Adamson, *Fichte*, p. 56, note.

self-deception and colour-blindness that the Germans love and almost worship as a virtue."

The contrast drawn by many German writers between German thought and the thought of Western Civilisation is in part an illustration of the same tendency. It serves to counterbalance by an uneasy assurance of uniqueness and distinctiveness, the views of other German writers who stress the imitative side of the German mind and its readiness to absorb and assimilate everything that comes from without. The contrast is sometimes drawn in the most exaggerated manner. I will cite an example from a work written by Sombart during the last war, entitled *Händler und Helden*: "German thought and feeling expresses itself in the first place in the complete rejection of everything which even approaches English or West-European thought or feeling. With complete repulsion, with deepest disgust, the German spirit rises against the ideas of the eighteenth century which were of English origin. German thinkers have at all times rejected all forms of utilitarianism and eudaimonism. The German 'heroic' concept lays emphasis on duty; it looks on the state not as a contrivance for happiness but as an organism, a spiritual whole. Its growth does not consist in mere expansion for commercial purposes. It does not stand in dead equilibrium with other states. The struggle between states is a true expression of their vitality. The contrast between shopkeepers and heroes resolves itself into the contrast between *Krämer* and *Krieger* between whom we have to choose."¹ In this form the contrast between German and Western thought need not be taken seriously; the account given of both is ludicrously distorted by the passions engendered by war. But it is interesting to note that even a serious thinker like Trötsch² finds some meaning in the

¹ W. Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, p. 81, 1915.

² E. Trötsch, "The ideas of natural law and humanity in world politics," transl. by E. Barker. App. I, Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society*.

contrast, though he does try to show that the two systems of thought are not as mutually exclusive as they appear to be at first sight. Western social theory is supposed to uphold the view of society as consisting of atomic individuals equal to one another, and brought together purposively for the sake of utility. The law of reason in the form of natural law is supposed to be binding on all and the final ideal is that of a union of all human beings in a rationally organised community of mankind. The German theory in the form which it has taken since the Romantic movement teaches on the contrary that societies are super-personal, spiritual forces and that humanity is a hierarchy of qualitatively different national minds, developing their powers through struggle and "lifted above the world of utility and material welfare." Tröltzsch shows how this romantic idealism was combined with a stern realism during the Bismarckian period, with the result that the notion of a wealth of unique national minds contributing their share to the collective achievements of mankind turns into a feeling of contempt for the idea of universal humanity, supra-rational morality results in moral scepticism and the movement towards German unity takes on the form of a strident imperialism. "Henceforth the political thought of Germany is marked by a curious dualism, which cannot but impress every foreign observer. Look at one of its sides and you will see an abundance of remnants of Romanticism and lofty idealism: look at the other, and you will see a realism which goes to the verge of cynicism and of utter indifference to all ideals and all morality; but what you will see above all is an inclination to make an astonishing combination of the two elements—in a word to brutalise romance and to romanticise cynicism." Tröltzsch himself bids German thought return to the doctrine of the autonomy of personality, which was inherent in the teaching of the Romantic movement but which later tended to be neglected. He finds value also in the theory of the Rights

of Man and protests against that interpretation of the organic theory of the state which pays insufficient attention to the relations between states. In short he wants to restore a "new contact with the thought of Western Europe at a number of points at which there was once a large measure of agreement between it and our own classico-romantic age (1770-1800)."

It will be seen that the contrast between Western thought and German thought, in so far as it is real, only relates to one strain in German thought, namely that which Tröltzsch himself calls the "later transformations and political perversions of the spirit of Romanticism." There can be no question, however, that this strain has been increasingly dominant in Germany since 1870, and its kinship with National Socialism is plain. As a set of ideas it has very little unity or coherence. The glorification of the non-rational, for example, is by no means whole-hearted. It bears all the marks of an underlying fear of the power of reason and is an unconscious tribute to its power. The rejection of natural law again is far from being consistently carried through. A study of the literature relating to the philosophy of international law will show that German writers can make use of this notion quite cheerfully when they have to defend the rights of Germany against other nations.¹ Even the concept of race is so elastically used as to deprive it of any consistent meaning. What is far more important than the theorising is the mood of morbid romanticism which openly glorifies violence and inculcates harshness and cruelty as ends desirable in themselves. Croce has shown² that this mood, which he designates "activism," gained ground everywhere in Europe and outside towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The recrudescence of violence, the rejection of

¹ E. Bristler, *Die Völkerrechtslehre des National-sozialismus*, 1938.

² B. Croce, *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*.

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humanitarian ideals, was by no means confined to Germany. It is, however, characteristic of the German tradition that in conformity with their stress on race they claim activism too as specially "German," and it is undoubtedly the case that it is in Germany that "activism" has received its most powerful and terrible expression. The particular form which it has taken in Germany requires explanation, of course. But it would be falling into the error of the racialists to seek this explanation in the ethnic constitution of the Germans.

This very summary account of a very large subject suggests certain tentative conclusions. We have seen that statements about German mentality are broadly of two kinds. They are based either on observation of the behaviour of individual Germans and then they assert that a certain kind of behaviour is found widely among Germans. Or they are inferences from the collective behaviour of Germans as represented in their public policy, their philosophy, science or social institutions. The first type of statements being rough, empirical generalisations are obviously subject to important qualifications. When we are told that Germans are heavy or phlegmatic, thorough and industrious, capable of warm feelings but slow in response, and the like, allowance has of course to be made for regional differences and these may be so great as rather to shake our confidence in the generalisations. Nevertheless, some of the generalisations I have quoted above are attested by so many observers for a sufficiently long period of time that they may be taken to hit something fairly widespread and constant in German behaviour. Assertions regarding more complex constellations of qualities such as are expressed by words like "individualism," "tendencies to romanticism," lack of poise or inner security, are based on observation both of individual and collective behaviour and require careful analysis in relation to changes in the social structure and social conditions. The tendency, for example, towards excessive

abstraction, which is noted in the German handling of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, may be connected with the fact that so many German social thinkers live a life remote from the realities of life and are cut off from direct political experience. As already List noted: He who cannot find his way about the world, launches into a world of speculation. Their aversion to the more "positivist" side of social investigation may also be connected with the fact that many German social thinkers and philosophers came from clerical families and though not themselves adherents of the faith of their fathers have retained something of the religious outlook which inclines them to lay stress on feeling or other non-rational elements in experience. Hence the emphasis on "spirit," "totality," and the like. Too much must not be made of this line of approach. In any case it would be a mistake to lump all the German work on the social sciences together and to stigmatise them all as suffering from excessive abstraction. One has only to think of philosophers like Lotze, sociologists like Max Weber, historians like Tröltzsch, to see how absurd this would be.

The term individualism as ascribed to the Germans is, as we have seen, very ambiguous. In so far as it connotes a tendency to turn inwards it is fair perhaps to regard it as underlying certain phases of religion in Germany. In so far as it connotes the desire for freedom and independence and self-expression it seems to me to be very doubtful whether the Germans can be said to be endowed with it in greater measure than other peoples. The tendency to particularism with which this is said to be connected is not due so much to the positive desire for self-expression as to the failure of the unifying forces which elsewhere in Europe led to an earlier creation of larger units. There is thus no problem of reconciling this trait with the allegedly opposite quality of docility. That quality too is, as we have seen, rooted in the historical conditions of the German peoples. The lack

of poise and inner security is intelligible if we remember firstly, the lack of a steady social tradition, and secondly, the fact that Germany has been subjected to drastic changes from without and that these have been brought about at a rate not conducive to stability or inward security. The brutality and glorification of violence which strike the foreign observers and which the German writers frequently boast of themselves, are connected with the special conditions of the rise of Prussia, the Prussianisation of the rest of Germany, and the general conditions which brought about the recrudescence of violence and the weakening of humanitarian sentiment not only in Germany but in the rest of the world towards the end of the nineteenth century. Many of the assertions which the Germans make regarding their own mentality are not statements of fact but of ideals. They like to persuade themselves that they are what they would like to be. This applies clearly to their claims to uniqueness, unity and continuity of racial character. In this respect they show a capacity for self-intoxication and self-deception truly remarkable. Perhaps the really important question about the Germans is not so much what they think of themselves as why they think so much of and about themselves.

GOETHE AND THE MODERN WORLD¹

"HUMAN beings," Goethe makes his Werther say, "are all turned out of one mould. Most of them work away the greater part of their time simply in order to live, and the little scrap of freedom they have left frightens them so much that they seek every means of getting rid of it. Such is human destiny."² What Werther describes is a condition in which man is embarrassed by a freedom to which, spiritually, he is not equal. But it was no transient condition peculiar to the men of his own age that he was describing. In a book published only last year Erich Fromm³ analysed the sickness of our own time as this same fear of freedom. The growth of freedom since the breakdown of the medieval form of society has resulted for the individual only in a sense of isolation and helplessness. The causes seem to be twofold: partly economic, but mainly spiritual. Economically man is no longer able to feel himself a free member of a truly co-operative society, and his sense of the insignificance and powerlessness of the individual drives him to various forms of escape. What leisure is left to him when he has finished the task of earning his living he is not able to use to recreate himself. Re-creation has become recreation, a form of escape. In a world which offers him no absolute spiritual values he is thrown on his own resources. He is imaginatively bankrupt and sensuously out of touch with the world, he is at the mercy of wireless and cinema, slogans and advertisements,

¹ I am obliged to Messrs. George Allen & Unwin for kind permission to quote extensively from Emil Ludwig's stimulating anthology, *The Practical Wisdom of Goethe*, in the felicitous renderings of F. Melian Stawell and Nora Purtscher-Wydenbruck.

² *Werther* (1st Part), May 17.

³ *The Fear of Freedom*.

and so, his spontaneity suppressed in early childhood, his intellect swamped in a flood of unco-ordinated and only half-believed facts, he is unable to evolve spiritual values of his own. He has become a lonely unit in a soulless world.

This fear of freedom has sought escape more obviously and violently in submission to an authoritarian state; but it is not absent from the democracies where it expresses itself in the attempt to lose individuality in a dead-level of social conformity. It is a condition which must happen whenever man's spiritual development does not keep pace with his economic and technical progress. Some sixty years after Goethe had given voice to these opinions in *Werther* he repeated them to Eckermann:¹ "Most people are without sufficient character to stand alone; they throw themselves into the arms of a party and so gain the self-confidence which enables them to cut a figure." "They find there too," he says elsewhere,² "if not peace, at least calm and security."

When we speak of the German mind we have no right to ignore its greatest exponents, Goethe and Schiller (for in pointing the way to fuller living, Schiller, too, in his *Letters on Aesthetic Education* offers a solution to many of our difficulties). No one denies that they *are* Germany's greatest minds, but the objections usually raised against them at the present time is that the idealistic humanism of Weimar can afford no guide to practical living. But this is only true if we think that all solutions for practical living are to be sought in the material sphere of economics or politics. Nor were the solutions they offered as unrelated to real life as their modern detractors would have us believe. On the contrary, as I hope to show in the course of this essay, they can afford very present help and guidance in our troubles. For it is surely reasonable to assume that, if Goethe can make so accurate a diagnosis of a sickness which has become acute

¹ *Conversations with Eckermann*, May 2, 1831.

² *Zur Naturwissenschaft*, 1823. *Jubiläumsausgabe*, xxxix, 62.

in our time, he may be able to offer some remedy for its cure; that he may perhaps show us how to win through to a freedom of which we are not afraid, may teach us as individuals and as a community to live a life which is freedom, because there is in it no place for fear of any kind. The absence of fear can never be a negative state. It is only positively, by a fullness of living, that we can ensure its exclusion; and fullness of living, living as an end in itself, is just what Goethe does offer. Whereas Schiller tended to linger on the contemplative plane, Goethe deserves particular consideration because of his stress on the necessity for action. "Gedenke zu leben!" are the supreme words of wisdom with which he dismisses his Wilhelm Meister at the end of his long apprenticeship:¹ "Gedenke zu leben!" with the stress equally divided, be it noted, between the two parts of the injunction. Living is not enough in itself, it must be conscious living.

There is in Goethe's *Theory of Colour*² a suggestive passage which touches the very heart of our problem. He deplores the separateness of mind and body, spirit and nature. In depriving nature of intelligent purpose, he says, man unfortunately also deprived her of spirit and had henceforth only a technical and mechanical relationship with her. This meant the loss of a great source of spiritual power. This is still one of our chief difficulties to-day. For harmony with the essence of the universe and control of nature through oneness with nature is at the heart of both religion and science. "If at some period in the course of civilisation," Havelock Ellis declares,³ "we seriously find that our science and our religion are antagonistic, then there must be something wrong either with our science or our religion . . . or with both." This inability of modern man to apprehend the universe as a direct experience, to feel at one with the vital forces of nature, is due to exclusive attention to the

¹ *J.A.*, xviii, 312. ² *J.A.*, xl, 221. ³ *The Dance of Life*, p. 182.

development of the intelligence in our western civilisation. Our neglect of the senses, the imagination and the emotions, has resulted in a lack of harmony within the personality and, unable to find satisfactory contact either with the universe or with his fellows, man is left imprisoned within the narrow bounds of his own individuality. But though unformed and immature, feeling has remained none the less strong and has taken its revenge by invading spheres (science, economics, and politics) where it is wholly out of place. And this with no more disastrous effects than in modern Germany.

It is easier to appeal to the masses through emotional suggestion than to persuade them through reason, and the Nazis have made use of this knowledge to the full. Reason, they know, tends to separate human beings into individuals; instinct to unite them, not, indeed, into a living community which is an association of individuals, but into a herd of irrational sheep. It is on this irrational part of man that the Nazis have worked, using all our increased knowledge of the subconscious to further their ends. But our horror at their excesses should not lead us to react violently in the other direction, and so fall once more into the trap of over-rating the power of the intellect. In the hands of the reactionary forces of to-day, and harnessed in the service of the totalitarian state, the unconscious has threatened to assume a tyranny formerly wielded by the mind. Either to deny the mind entirely, or to exalt it above its proper function, is to make an equally unhuman evaluation of body and mind. When submitted to the direction of reason the modern exploration of the unconscious reveals itself as what it is, the final stage in the process of *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment). What is required is not reaction, but synthesis. It is only by recognising the reality of the unconscious, on which so much of our waking life depends, and, by becoming aware of it, mastering it for our own purposes, that the values of each aspect of our existence can be realised and a harmony effected.

All his life Goethe was concerned with the central problem of mind versus body and with the means of fusing them into that supreme harmony which constitutes the soul. It runs through all his works, whether he is discussing the formation of human personality through education, art, and religion, or the relation of this individual personality to others in his social and economic life as a member of a community. Goethe recognises every aspect of the human personality and, long before the unconscious had become the specialist study of the modern psychologist, he had discovered its importance, not only for his artistic creation but for his living. "Man cannot persist for long in a state of full consciousness," he declared to Riemer in 1810,¹ "he must take refuge in unconsciousness, for his roots lie there." "The unconscious is older than the conscious," Jung² echoes Goethe more than a hundred years later. It is the "primal datum" out of which consciousness ever afresh arises. But for Goethe that does not imply, any more than it does for Freud or Jung, surrender to these dark mysterious forces: they supply, indeed, the vitality and driving power for human behaviour, but it is only by shedding the light of reason on these dark places of the psyche that they can be made fruitful. Nothing will be gained by fearfully ignoring them, as did the Victorians, or by blindly relying upon them, as do the Nazis. No one was more aware of this than Goethe, and his whole striving was, to use two favourite words of his, from "Dumpfheit" to "Klarheit"; or, as Riemer puts it so well: "to develop from an unconscious state of nature into a highly aware state of individual consciousness, thus fulfilling the task and duty of life."³ To show how the clear, directing forces of the conscious must take charge and guide man past the dæmonic hazards lying in wait for him on

¹ August 5.

² *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*, by J. Jacobi, p. 8.

³ Quoted by Thos. Mann in *Goethe und Tolstoi*, p. 27.

all sides Goethe has recourse to one of those primordial images which themselves well up from the dark to become through the process of artistic creation a symbol of humanity. This was the Platonic image of the "charioteer" controlling and guiding his pair of plunging horses, the dark horse representing the unconscious, the white horse the conscious element of the soul. There are some images which seem fundamental to every great thinker and poet, and the charioteer haunted Goethe all his life. Significantly enough, it was with this tell-tale image that he closed the last book of his autobiography as it brought him to the threshold of his new existence in Weimar. It had become for him a symbol of the new harmony of soul and sense which had descended upon him after the storm and stress of his early life.

(The only way for a man to thus integrate his personality is through contact with the outside world and with other people; that is, through activity. The goal will always be totality, the maintenance of the proper balance between thought and feeling, sensation and intuition. This integration of personality must begin in childhood. Our chief problem to-day is to teach the child to be free, and yet unafraid of its freedom. To achieve this it must realise that freedom is not opposed to order, but has to be created within self-discipline. Goethe believes that this can best be achieved by sending the child away from home where it will be exempt from the cramping influence of a "despotic" father¹ or "devoted" mother.² It must learn "to stand on its own feet, see with its own eyes, rely on itself."³ The pedagogue must, above all, beware of taming its spirit and robbing it of its originality. Goethe's system of education is remarkably modern in its concern for the breeding of

¹ *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, J.A., xix, 162.

² To G. F. Wiggers, October 11, 1828.

³ To Frau Brun, 1795.

differentiated individuals. "I prefer a lad who goes wrong in his own way," he makes the Abbé declare in the *Lehrjahre*,¹ "to many who go right in another's. Once the boy himself . . . finds the right path—and the right path is the one that really suits his nature—he will never lose it again, whereas the others are every moment in danger of flinging aside the foreign yoke and plunging into sheer license.") Goethe is here in accord with some of our most advanced education-alists and in marked opposition to the methods employed in Nazi Germany.

Equally modern are Goethe's suggestions for the instruction of the child. The modern educationalist advocates a method of teaching which rests on the direct apprehension of the concrete world through the senses. By depending on their fingers and on their arms and legs rather than on their slates and pencils, their reasoning and memory, children will inevitably make mistakes; but mistakes which they can see and rectify for themselves. The eye of the body and the touch of the hand will convict in a way that a correction on an exercise can never do. In this way they will gradually learn the "No" which life so often opposes to our human efforts, but they will learn it, not through stupid, meaningless denial, but through surrender which is yet satisfaction. So, too, Goethe! "Doing a thing, not hearing about it, is the right way." "Writing," he says in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*,² "is a misuse of language and reading silently to oneself a sorry substitute for speech"; thus anticipating that distinguished phonetician, the late Professor Lloyd James, who held that broadcasting was an agency which might break down the tyranny of print and teach people the art of real speaking. "The very best thing we can do for children," Goethe continues in the *Wanderjahre*,³ "is to keep their minds on the present and to teach them what the things round them are called. They will ask for reasons soon

¹ *J.A.*, xviii, 289.² *J.A.*, xxiii, 279.³ *J.A.*, xix, 33.

enough." And then, on the basis of a general awareness of nature, the teacher must respect the individual differences between one child and another, must help him to develop each one his particular bent until he becomes expert in it. "For this," says Goethe, "is the age of specialisation, and it is well to realise that and act accordingly, both for ourselves and others. . . . If you make yourself an excellent violinist," is his example, "the conductor will be delighted to give you a good place in the orchestra."¹ Hence the Pedagogic Province is divided into districts reserved exclusively for horse-breaking, or agriculture, or artists, or musicians. "To take some definite craft is best. For the dullards it will be a handicraft, for the others one of the arts, and the ablest, in practising one art, practises them all, or, to be less paradoxical, in the one thing he does well he sees a symbol of all good work."² But lest the pupils in each district should become one-sided, each must learn another discipline in order to preserve his mental and physical balance. Thus those who are occupied with horse-training take up modern languages as a make-weight, in this way combining technical skill and mastery of natural difficulties³ (it will be remembered how the charioteer was a favourite symbol of Goethe for the mastery of life) with a practical aspect of the humanities. It is for this reason that Wilhelm himself, having tried his hand at so many arts and crafts in his long apprenticeship, eventually takes up surgery, that ideal combination of head and hand (*kheir-ourgia*, i.e. handiwork) which Goethe (and the modern pedagogue too) prescribes as the ideal of education.⁴

In still another recommendation does Goethe anticipate the modern theorist: a boy must realise his limitations as well as his abilities and learn by wise restraint to find his

¹ *J.A.*, xix, 39.

² *J.A.*, xix, 39.

³ *J.A.*, xx, 5.

⁴ An imaginative scientist like Einstein would make of education "a living process, with no drilling of the memory and no examinations, mainly a process of appeal to the senses in order to draw out delicate reactions." Quoted by Havelock Ellis in *The Dance of Life*, p. 126.

proper level. This implies that he must be able to do so without feeling discouraged or inferior. He must be made to feel that whatever talents have been granted to him are valuable in themselves. The mistake has been to think of intellectual ability as the sole criterion of value; but nowhere is inequality between individuals more marked than on the intellectual plane. The more we develop the sensuous and imaginative activity of the child, the more we shall find that he fills his proper niche contentedly instead of being condemned to think of himself as wearing a dunce's cap. Clearly the way to develop his sensuous capacity and preserve the spontaneity of his imagination is through art and artistic activity. And this is just what Goethe advocates. "We escape the world through art," he says in the *Elective Affinities*,¹ "and art is also our link with it." This is also one of the main themes of the Pedagogic Province. He thinks of art not as a mere frill, but as a necessity which satisfies a profound impulse. It balances the inner life, broadens and refines individuality, and gives scope for its expression. For Goethe consequently, the cultivation of the arts is not just contemplation, but doing. The child will be taught to practise the arts from his earliest years, not only as a means of expressing his individuality, but because through the manipulation of a medium and the mastery of a technique he will learn the importance of form and discipline. The children in the Pedagogic Province do not just look at a picture or listen to a tune, but wield the brush and sing and play an instrument. Goethe lays particular stress on music as the art which has the most immediate appeal for the greatest number and exerts a definitely civilising effect. Not only do the children sing at their work and play, but they practise community singing, for this breaks down the barrier of individuality and makes them feel at one with the other members of their fellowship.

¹ *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, J.A., xxi, 191.

Remembering the prominent place accorded to the theatre as a means of education in *Wilhelm Meisters Theatrical Mission*, it might appear strange at first sight that Goethe, in its sequel and conclusion, the *Wanderjahre*, should reject out of hand the art of acting. It is well known that miming is the art in which the young child takes the earliest and most natural delight. This complete reversal of his former beliefs would indeed be incomprehensible if we did not remember that in Goethe's view the whole of life is itself self-expression. In the Pedagogic Province the children are taught that each of their looks and gestures, their very dress and demeanour, are outward symbols of the inner urge to act. Acting has become for them a ritual, and the gestures with which they accompany the feeling of reverence, the visible expression of their religious emotions. In contrast the theatre, as an artificial institution, is devoid of both ethical and spiritual values; it is a parasite dependent for its very existence upon the other arts, and its make-believe community a mere perversion of the genuine association of living individuals. Nevertheless Goethe's educational Utopia is the poorer for his categorical rejection of acting; for thereby he loses that medium of emotional release which it affords for young children. By playing a part other than himself a child can be made aware of his own nature and of his relation with others.

Not children alone, but we all ought to talk less and paint more, Goethe declares¹ in keeping with his conviction that activity is the best thing in man. For it is through art that man can best come out of himself and penetrate into the object. "A painter," he writes to Maler Müller,² "can see the inmost being through the outer shell . . . no matter what the subject be, the poorest will delight us if it is rendered with this power." And again: "The lowliest work of nature

¹ To Falk, the "bavard," according to Mme de Staël, June 14, 1809.

² June 21, 1781.

holds in itself the circle of its own perfection; all I need is a pair of eyes and then I can discover the proportion and convince myself that a whole and true existence is enclosed in that little ring."¹ How close is this to the conclusion of a modern philosopher like John Macmurray, who writes:² "The artistic attitude alone enables us to come into contact with the reality of things, to realise the individuality, the value of actual objects, actual people." In the stress that he lays on craftsmanship Goethe anticipates our modern feeling that it is through devotion to his craft that the artist can claim his place in the community. Genius, Goethe would agree, is a gift of God, but in itself it is not enough. The artist who is not also a craftsman is no good, he maintains.³ "Only the heathen believe that there is art without craftsmanship," Menander writes in *The Times Literary Supplement* for December 26, 1942, and Miss Dorothy Sayers echoes the thought: "The element of pure craftsmanship is more important than most of us are willing to admit."⁴ Craftsmanship is for Goethe even more: it is the very basis of art and life. "To know one thing thoroughly imparts higher culture," he declares in the *Wanderjahre*,⁵ "than any superficial knowledge of a hundred." "Your general culture is all nonsense," he says later in the book,⁶ "the important thing is for a man to understand one thing completely."

The interfusion of art with life is expressed very vividly by Goethe's theory of Wiederspiegelung, or Reflection, which seems to have dominated his later thought. The mirror, which at first had been for Goethe a symbol of art, becomes in his later years the symbol of the relation between art and life itself. The inner eye of the artist sees visions which are projected into the reality of his work; but once

¹ To the Duchess Luise, December 23, 1786.

² *Reason and the Emotions*, p. 155.

³ To J. G. Röderer, September 21, 1772.

⁴ *The Mind of the Maker*, p. 53. ⁵ *J.A.*, xix, 171. ⁶ *J.A.*, xx, 47.

in the work, these visions begin a new, an eternal life, as they are ever and again reflected into the lives of the artist's readers. As an arrangement of mirrors enhances the vividness of a reflected object, so the potency of the artist's vision is increased as it is reflected back and forth in the lives of human beings. Only through this close interaction of art and life can we hope either to produce an art which is vital or to live more imaginatively, and how strong is the need for these things to-day is evident from the number of new writings which urge it. The striking phrase recently coined by Sir Richard Livingstone,¹ "the cross-fertilisation of literature and life," admirably describes what we want, and Goethe himself gives a perfect example in the story of St. Joseph the Second, which he tells in the *Wanderjahre*:² The frescoes on the wall of his local chapel instil in a boy's mind from earliest years the beauty and holiness of the carpenter's craft. He decides to follow in his hero's footsteps and reflect both the trade and the life of St. Joseph in his own living. Or again: in the *West-östlicher Divan* the fate of Timur, the Mogol conqueror, in the grip of winter,³ is reflected for Goethe in the defeat of Napoleon before Moscow. To carry on the tale from our own experience: the popularity of Tolstoi's *War and Peace* in recent months is similarly due to its focusing our attention on the like events happening in Russia to-day.

To this theory of *Wiederholte Spiegelungen*,⁴ of reflections thrown back to be reflected again, Goethe ascribes paramount importance, for it explains most of the events of existence. Just as in the above examples art is fertilised by history and this fertilisation reflected back into life, so too do art and religion act and react upon each other, that is to say, in ritual. An event of profound meaning, by constant re-enactment, assumes the artistic form of a symbol; it becomes art without losing its practical bearing on life.

¹ *The Future of Education*. ² In Book I. ³ *J.A.*, v, 63. ⁴ *J.A.*, xxv, 221.

A particularly interesting example of this "cross fertilisation" of life through art is afforded by *The Elective Affinities*, where Goethe suggests that our ideas of love and marriage have been profoundly affected by the theatre. When the curtain goes down in the fifth act, to the sound of wedding bells, the play is not over, Goethe maintains,¹ but just beginning! And no doubt it is for this reason, that he thinks it a mistake to celebrate a wedding ceremony with such circumstance, and so introduce an erroneous feeling of finality. A wedding should, on the contrary, be kept "quietly, humbly, and hopefully," and the exuberance reserved for its happy fulfilment.² Goethe realises well enough the dangers besetting wedlock: "Marriage," he told Kanzler von Müller, with perhaps a side-reflection on his own, "is a synthesis of impossibilities."³ But this is not to deny it either as a necessity or as an ideal to be maintained. Indeed, according to *The Elective Affinities*⁴ again, "marriage is the beginning and the summit of all civilisation." It is perhaps not necessary to take Goethe's suggestion for trial marriages for five years, with the option of renewal, as seriously as did George Meredith. But if *The Elective Affinities* have a thesis at all, it is that love at first sight is a positive danger, and that before entering upon marriage, a man should know both himself and his partner. "Love can be born in a moment, and every true affection must once have flared up like a flash of lightning. But why marry the minute one falls in love?" Goethe asks. "Love is something ideal, marriage a reality, and ideals and realities are never confused with impunity."⁵ Marriage (and love, too, for that matter), Goethe would have admitted, is an art and must be practised and worked at like any other. It must achieve a true balance between tenderness and bodily delight. If our aim for human beings is an integrated personality for whom living

¹ *J.A.*, xxi, 83.² *Lehrjahre, J.A.*, xviii, 59.³ October 19, 1823.⁴ *J.A.*, xxi, 80.⁵ To Kanzler von Müller, September 14, 1823.

is an end in itself, then our education must not fail to impart a conception of marriage which is stripped of false romanticism without losing its ideal character. Charlotte and Eduard, in *The Elective Affinities*, had neither of them attained to complete self-knowledge nor to the capability of incorporation into each other. The result is a clash of opposites. If, then, *The Elective Affinities* are to have application to real life it is surely not that marriages should be lightly dissolved—the disaster which overtakes both Eduard and Ottilie is proof enough of that—but that they should be entered into with greater circumspection.

The impression prevails in English-speaking countries, not only that Goethe wore his heart upon his sleeve, but that he held sexual morality in light esteem. But we should be going very far astray if we allowed this superficial view derived from the *Sturm und Drang* exuberance of *Stella* to blind us to his real attitude to love and women. "The social intercourse with women is the element of moral behaviour," he writes in *The Elective Affinities*.¹ And no one who appealed to the tenderness and motherliness of a woman in love, as Goethe appealed to Frau von Stein, can have felt anything but the deepest reverence for them. "Make me really good," he writes,² "for you can." She became associated in his mind, not merely with the happiness of intimate companionship, but even assumed the characteristics of the Madonna herself when he paid her in the final lines of his greatest poem the highest compliment that a poet ever paid to woman: "Das ewig Weibliche zieht uns hinan!"³

Thus did Goethe associate his greatest human love with the divine love represented by the Virgin Mary, "this lovely invention of the Catholic Church."⁴ It is typical of him that he should have assumed this connection between

¹ *J.A.*, xxi, 189.

² March 12, 1781.

³ Cf. his letter to Fr. v. Stein of October 7, 1776, where he likens her to the Madonna.

⁴ *Tagebuch*, October 8, 1786.

reverence and human love as he did between reverence and nature; thus extending an attitude of mind from the exclusively religious sphere until it pervades the whole of human life. Religion is for Goethe not dogma, of which he was always impatient, but a state of being, and it rests on the conviction that the boundaries of the human and the divine are not rigidly established, but pass imperceptibly from one into the other. Indeed, not only man but nature, of which man is a part, has its origin in the spirit, and it is man's supreme task and privilege to realise this communion of the two. "The highest to which man can attain," Goethe told Eckermann in 1829,¹ "ist das Erstaunen," is awe and reverence, thus giving a cue a hundred years later to one of the more profound of our English writers: "Man is not lost," says Mr. Charles Morgan in his preface to *The Flashing Stream*, "while there remains in him to wonder. To safeguard and renew this power is the supreme purpose of existence."

"That man is a clod," Goethe told Voss in 1804,² "who cannot lose himself in wonder, whose soul has never known the light of that longing which can only be assuaged by penetrating the nature of the objects before us and winning a real communion with them." "I have spent the whole day in conversation with things," he wrote to Frau von Stein from Italy,³ anticipating Rilke's attempt in his *Dinggedichte* to reveal objects through their inmost and essential qualities. And so the reverence for God manifested in nature ("Der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid") leads to the culmination of Goethe's ethical and religious teaching in the three reverences of the *Wanderjahre*,⁴ by which he reinterprets the central doctrine of the Christian Trinity. There is the reverence for what is above us in confessing a God the Father, whose children we are; there is the reverence for our equals by which we believe in the mediation of the

¹ February 18. ² February 15. ³ September 10, 1786. ⁴ *J.A.*, xix, 183.

Holy Ghost and recognise in all our fellow-creatures the spiritual values which we prize in ourselves, thus leading to a communion of saints; and there is the reverence for the things beneath us, for lowliness and poverty and shame and misery, for suffering and death, "yes, and to see even in sin and crime not hindrances, but helps to holiness, and therefore objects of love and respect!" "This," Goethe continues, "is the Christian faith, speaking for those who struggle with suffering and are glorified in suffering." But here again, Goethe would not have man revert to any one religion. Like life, religion too must go forward: taking up the dynamic thought of Lessing from *The Education of the Human Race*, he looks upon Christianity, not as the final revelation of the truth, but only as the preliminary step of the perfect religion to come, of that religion to which the sage Jew, Nathan, also looked forward with such complete confidence. This fourth reverence shall be a supreme reverence, the reverence for oneself; it is made up of all the other three "so that man attains to the highest he can reach and dare count himself the greatest work of God and Nature, and maintain himself on those heights without being dragged down again by conceit and selfishness." As Wilhelm in the *Wanderjahre*¹ gazes through the telescope at the starry heavens he is filled with awe at their immensity and with wonder at the regularity of the movement of the heavenly bodies; until he remembers that man, too, is similarly a little microcosm equally deserving of wonder: "How could we face the Infinite," he asks, "without drawing together in the depths of our soul all the powers we are apt to scatter abroad, without asking ourselves how we could even imagine that we are set in the midst of this living and eternal order unless in us too a glorious movement circles round one single, inviolate centre?" This "Ehrfurcht vor sich selbst" is no mere self-love or self-complacency, for, as Goethe writes in 1786:²

¹ *J.A.*, xix, 137.

² To Jacobi, March 5.

"Those who respect themselves, renounce the right to undervalue their fellows." This reverence for oneself implies, on the contrary, the greatest self-discipline and resignation, the deepest sense of obligation to God and man: "If . . . we can believe it possible," he writes in the *Lehrjahre*,² "that the Creator of the world took upon Himself the form of what He made and for a time lived with men on earth as they live, then, surely we must think of the Creature as something infinitely perfect, seeing that it could be united so closely with the Creator. There can be nothing in the conception of Man that contradicts the conception of God. And though we feel our distance and our difference, it is our duty all the more not, like a devil's advocate, to insist on the faults and weaknesses of our nature, but to seek for all the greatneses which confirm man's claim to be made in the image of God."

Goethe's views of religion are essentially practical. Not religious instruction is what is needed, but the creation of a disposition to revere both God and His highest work, man. Thus gradually, out of a religion of words and beliefs, we shall emerge more and more into a religion based on disposition (*Gesinnung*) and activity. Activity, "die Tat," that is for Goethe "the sum of all wisdom," not the blind, aimless activity due to mere restlessness, but activity inspired by thought, and thought in its turn, making way for action: "Both must pulse through life unceasingly as we breathe out and breathe in . . . he who tests action by thought and thought by action can never go wrong," he maintains in the *Wanderjahre*,² "and if he does, he will soon find the path again." It is the remedy for all our ills; even those of the soul: "Spiritual sorrows," he continues,³ "whether incurred through our misfortune or our own fault, can expect no alleviation from reason, little from understanding, much from time, but all from activity." It is only through activity

¹ *J.A.*, xviii, 149.² *J.A.*, xx, 25.³ *J.A.*, xx, 46.

that man can achieve unity and communion with his fellows: "Whatever activity a man may pursue," he says again in that epitome of his worldly wisdom, the *Wanderjahre*,¹ "the individual is not sufficient to himself; the highest need of every honest man is comradeship. All useful men need all others, just as the landlord needs an architect and the architect builders and carpenters." It is as an indispensable craftsman that a man will find his place in the community, and Goethe draws a lovely picture in the *Wanderjahre* of a little mountain village devoted to the craft of weaving and spinning, the "oldest and most glorious craft in the world, and the one which primarily distinguishes men from beasts."² It is fascinating to the student of his poetry to see how the romantic figure of Gretchen at the spinning-wheel has developed, in the conscious reflection of his maturity, into a picture of domestic and social happiness. Even that word "weben" which in his youth was a favourite symbol to designate the ceaseless activities of creative nature is now divested of its metaphysical meaning and applied to the more immediate and practical needs of man. He is describing a weaver's cottage: "In general I had from the conditions prevailing in such a weaver's apartment an impression of activity, of indescribable animation, domesticity and peace. Many looms were in operation; in addition spinning- and spooling-wheels were in motion, and round the stove there sat the old folk gossiping with visiting neighbours. From time to time voices would be heard in song; mostly they sang Lobwasser's hymns in four parts, more rarely secular melodies. And there might be heard now and then from the girls bursts of merry laughter as Cousin James told a funny story."³ But in drawing an ideal picture of cottage industry Goethe was haunted by the fear of the coming mechanisation which he recognised as inevitable. "It torments and frightens me," he admits,⁴ "as it rolls up like a

¹ *J.A.*, xx, 145. ² *J.A.*, xx, 93. ³ *J.A.*, xx, 96. ⁴ *J.A.*, xx, 190.

storm cloud." The danger, however, must be squarely faced, and to compensate the industrial worker for the loss of his economic independence, the community must afford him all the leisure and every opportunity he needs for developing his spiritual interests in any sphere he desires. Far from being despised in Goethe's Utopia the labourer is extolled in the lovely symbol of St. Christopher, of the common journeyman who was privileged to bear the Saviour of the World on his strong shoulders and carry him to safety over the rushing river. And here Goethe has paid as loving a tribute to the holiness of manual labour as he does in St. Joseph to the whole race of craftsmen. With the psychological insight of the artist, Goethe renders St. Christopher particularly lovable by the homely and very human trait of making him snore so loudly that he has to sleep in a building apart from his fellows!¹

Man cannot stand alone; it is, Goethe maintains in his autobiography,² "a blessed feeling that all mankind taken together makes the true man, and that the individual can only be happy and at rest when he has the courage to feel himself a part of the whole." This innate urge of man for company is to be welcomed and encouraged where it leads him to take his place as an integral part of the community. But it must be corrected by education where it threatens to degenerate into the mere herd instinct. It is so often, Goethe says, the easy way out to abdicate one's responsibility: "human beings are only too ready to submit to authority."³ But such escapism is false security, for they are at the mercy of mob rule, and thus invite the tyranny of a dictator who is alone able to restore order out of chaos by force. It is a dreadful and prophetic portrait that Goethe draws in his playlet, *The Rebels*, of "those men who trample everything underfoot, who treat their fellows no better than beasts, who live their lives recklessly, without love, pity, or

¹ *J.A.*, xx, 90. ² *J.A.*, xxiii, 208. ³ *Zur Farbenlehre*, *J.A.*, xl, 302.

fear, while they have to do with men they do not respect, while they speak of a God they do not know.”¹

That was in the main Goethe's objection to the French Revolution. He was hostile, not so much to its principles but to the violence with which they were introduced, convinced as he was that terrorism and dictatorship result only in the perpetuation of violence and in the negation of evolutionary progress. “The more violence, the less revolution” is the dictum of a modern publicist (Barthélemy de Ligt). No revolution can be regarded as successful which does not lead to progress; and the only real progress, to quote Dr. R. R. Marett, is progress in charity.² What then, we ask, is, for Goethe, the solution of government? And he answers: a government by experts. “I would have young men. But they would have to know their job, be clear-sighted and determined fellows, as well as men of goodwill and fine character.”³ Not the form of government it is that matters—all three forms, aristocracy, democracy, monarchy, suffer from the same instability, he told Niebuhr in 1812⁴—but the principles on which it is run: “Men are united by principles, divided by opinions.”⁵ That state will have justified itself which leaves every man free to do his proper work. For Goethe's state is characterised by a complete absence of force; it is based on religious and intellectual tolerance and a common moral standard, on the belief in the value of the individual and the greatness of mankind.

Goethe was not insensible to the merits of English methods of government; but it must be a liberalism not of outward forms but of the inner spirit. “The true Liberal,” and he acknowledged himself as one, “the true Liberal,” he told Soret in 1830,⁶ “endeavours to do as much good as he can with the means he has, but he is careful to go step by step

¹ *Die Aufgeregten*, iv, 2. *J.A.*, xv, 105.

² Quoted by Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, p. 6.

³ To Eckermann, March 11, 1828.

⁴ November 23. ⁵ To Jacobi, January 6, 1813. ⁶ February 3.

in his reforms of inevitable abuses, so as not to spoil what good there is by the use of force. He is content in this imperfect world with the good, till time and circumstance allow him to attain to the better." He thought we English had gone some way to realising this ideal: whether through our parliamentary system or by reason of our early upbringing, he did not commit himself. But he was struck, as he told Eckermann,¹ by the self-confidence and easy bearing, by the zest for living and, above all, by "the completeness of their personality" of those young Englishmen who came to Weimar in ever greater numbers after the Napoleonic wars. His Germans, on the other hand, he laments in this same passage, "are weighed under by their theoretical knowledge and, before they enter upon life, are exhausted both physically and mentally. Let us hope for the best (he was speaking in 1828!) and wait and see what we Germans shall be like a hundred years hence, and whether we shall succeed in becoming human beings instead of scholars, scientists, and abstract philosophers."

Goethe would, no doubt, have been as horrified as we are by the bankruptcy of these high hopes, by the disintegration of "the admirable culture² and individuality"³ of his people into a false and tyrannical unity. But behind a nation is an idea, and we must not allow the idea of what Germany is, to blind us through our passions to what Germany was and will be again. Goethe himself taught us the folly of hasty judgments when in 1813, when Napoleon's star was at the zenith, he refused to hate the French because of their great civilisation. And if we have loved Germany in the past now is our opportunity of proclaiming our faith in her ultimate regeneration when she has passed through the purifying waters of tribulation and suffering, that good may come of

¹ March 12, 1828. Cf. the paragraph "Anglomanie," *J.A.*, xl, 278.

² To Eckermann, October 23, 1828.

³ To Riemer, March 15, 1808.

evil, and freedom be born of order of which it is an integral part.

It is a noble testament which Goethe has left to mankind inspired by love of God and of humanity. Far from shutting himself up in an ivory tower he both walks and talks with men and shares in their most practical needs. Only through selfless activity on behalf of the whole—it is the lesson of Goethe's two greatest works, *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*—can a human being attain to happiness in this world and salvation in the world to come. Unlike so many modern creeds, Goethe's faith rests on reason and persuasion, rather than on dogma and compulsion. If a man's human needs are satisfied and his sense of spiritual values are affirmed, and he feels a man among men, a useful member of the community, then he will have no need of *-isms*. Then living becomes an end in itself. The question is not, as it is for the Nazis, "What is worth dying for?" but "what is worth living for?" And in the words of Faust we must "every day create our life anew." "There is no past that we need long for, there is only a life eternally new, fashioned out of its growth, and the true longing must always be productive, creating something ever finer."¹ "Man has always the urge to do better. Only later when the results appear, when he can see how his fellow-workers have taken up his own hopes, realised them, carried them further, only then can he feel himself a whole together with others, and so at last a real human being with a real life."²

¹ To F. von Müller, November 9, 1823.

² To Count Suvarow, March 28, 1817.

ROMANTIC *GERMANENTUM*

Never be blinded again by the side-shows of German literature, medicine, music, philosophy. Like "the flowers that bloom in the spring," these attributes "have nothing to do with the case."¹

All the German crimes—and especially these executions of the death-sentence on millions—would never have been possible without the active help or the passive consent not only of the Nazis, but also of those non-Nazis and even anti-Nazis, the so-called "decent Germans." . . . I implore the Government . . . that this name of disgrace shall be taken from us, this stigma. . . .²

No one who represents or contributes to German studies in this country to-day, but has been forced to ponder countless such indictments and to survey the past history, philosophy, and poetry of that race in an endeavour to account for the fearful, prolonged, and disastrous victory of evil over good, which we have witnessed and are witnessing in our times. Sweeping generalisations and statements such as the above fulfil a cathartic function; and they also point beyond the present state of affairs to the vital task of the future: the spiritual regeneration of Germany, if possible by Germany herself. But the evil must be diagnosed, if the evil is to be cured; and although a complete diagnosis is beyond my powers, the following analysis of the growth and development of that ill-omened conception, romantic *Germanentum* from the cradle to what I hope may be its grave, will perhaps shed some light on the German mind and outlook. My aim, in fact, is to show how it has come about that the "so-called decent Germans" have not prevailed, nor yet those giants of the past who stand like colossal milestones along an

¹ Lord Vansittart, *Black Record*, London, 1941, p. 55.

² J. S. Netter, *Daily Telegraph*, December 21, 1942.

upward mounting road whose gradient proved too steep for posterity. For to put first things first: it is obviously and tragically true that "the flowers that bloomed in the spring" of modern German civilisation have "nothing to do with the case" of war-lust, aggression, and inhuman cruelty of the Nazi creed. Klopstock, the devoutly ecstatic poet of the *Messias*, has no part or lot in Nazi paganism. Lessing, probably the greatest champion of religious toleration the world has ever seen—Lessing, who wrote *Nathan der Weise*—would weep bitter tears of blood if he could witness the atrocities in Poland. Herder, who lived to further universal *Humanität*, who responded like a Welsh harp to the poetical beauties of all the races under the sun, and published them under the title of *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*; what would Herder have said to the subjugation, exploitation, and attempted extermination of the conquered peoples of Europe? As for Goethe, truth, wisdom, and sanity incarnate, one hardly cares to mention him in the same breath with the Nazis. But, remembering his political indifference and his calm strictures on the low level of German civilisation compared with the rest of Europe, one can at least absolve him of any part in latter-day Teutonic megalomania. And Schiller, that great-hearted, humane cosmopolitan whose watchword was liberty, could not have existed in a world of hymns of hate and concentration camps. No, in this restricted sense Vansittart is right. The great teachers of the German race in its modern springtime have had no deterrent influence, no discernible effect for good on the minds of the active and passive adherents of the Nazi régime. Yet even so something (perhaps it is common sense?) rebels at consigning them with Vansittart to the category of "bright ineffectual angels." They seem much more like fixed stars, shining steadily above the darkness and chaos below. And their light will exert its uplifting power over the Germans again, when they cease their frantic grubblings among

blood-stained astrological charts and consult the guiding stars of their race.

How such a violent and complete break with a tradition firmly fixed in the minds of the "decent Germans" of yore could ever have occurred is a long and complicated story, which is being told in this very volume by more competent judges than I. Historical, political, geographical, social, and economic conditions have all played a part; but the lion's share, as everyone knows, is the gradual complete domination of Germany by Prussianism, blighting, wherever it spread, the spiritual potentialities of the race. There is, however, another factor (first revealed in all its dangers by Santayana in his illuminating monograph on *Egotism in German Philosophy*) which is responsible for much.

It seems a far cry from the lofty idealism of Kant to that ugly thing called by the ugly name of Nazi ideology; and yet, all unwittingly, he was preparing the ground for it. For he started the ball of truth rolling towards a bottomless abyss; in which, after Fichte and the romantic poets had done with it, it disappeared for ever from their indifferent gaze. The men of genius who invented, developed, and perfected the new *technique* of thought and the new attitude towards life were without exception men of noble and indeed of soaring minds. But their last great infirmity was to deny the validity and indeed the existence of facts: to make of things, persons, and events, of the universe and the world, whatever suited the individual, capricious, "creative" will; in a word, to call (or to believe) their inventions discoveries. And these so-called discoveries were then foisted on an uncritical and easily dazzled public, who took them at their face value and proceeded to act on them. For the Germans as a whole, avid for culture and subservient of mind, are credulous to a degree which to the English at least seems almost incomprehensible; and the distance between them and their thinkers (always great in any country) is exaggerated

by the extreme eminence of the latter who rank with, and often above, the highest anywhere. Towering into the upper strata of human consciousness, the German idealist philosophers were not unlike lightning-conductors, flashing sublime and perilous thoughts from one great mind to the next, utterly regardless and reckless of the mere clods of earth thousands and thousands of feet below. But the lightning struck down and in. The contempt for reality which so much fascinated those glamorous minds has led straight to that passion for perverting truth which is so cynically preached and practised by the Nazis, a mania now insidiously spreading beyond the frontiers of the plague-spot which generated it far and wide over Europe and the world.

Yet it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the initial jugglers with facts and fancies were far removed indeed from sinister intentions, however fatally in love they might be with the phantom unreality. Radiant visions, strange imaginings, inspiring idealism, these are the descriptive terms which rise to the mind when one thinks of Hölderlin, of the romantic poets, and of Fichte, who between them presided at the birth of that romantic conception of *Germanentum* which has become the bane of modern life. And that it became a bane instead of a boon to Europe was due in the first instance to an unconscious or deliberate disregard of hard and sober facts.

Among the plentiful animadversions of Germans against their own country (from which a very revealing anthology, and a very bulky one, might be compiled as one of the textbooks for the future education of that country), Hölderlin's famous invective at the end of *Hyperion* stands out, not only as extremely damning in itself, but also because it proceeds from so gentle and so conciliatory a writer, one so little given in his public or private utterances to the comminatory vein:

Barbarians from of old, and grown more barbarous still
by their industry, their science and even by their religion;

utterly incapable of any godly feeling, corrupt to the very core so that they are beyond the reach of the blessed Graces, insulting every noble mind by the degree of their exaggeration and meanness, dull and discordant like the fragments of a discarded bowl. . . . It is a hard word, and yet I say it because it is the truth: I cannot conceive of any people more divided and torn than the Germans. There are artisans, but no human beings; thinkers but no human beings; priests but no human beings; masters and men, young people and old, but no human beings—it is like a battle-field where hands and arms and limbs lie scattered in fragments, whilst the life-blood which has been shed trickles away into the sand. . . . And it is heart-breaking too to see your poets and artists, and all who still respect genius and love and care for what is beautiful. Poor creatures! They live in the world like strangers in their own house; they are just like the suffering Ulysses, when he sat on his own threshold like a beggar, whilst the insolent suitors clamoured and asked, who has brought us this vagabond? . . . The Germans are for ever complaining, that everything on earth is so imperfect. If only someone would tell this god-forsaken people that things are so imperfect with them because they corrupt and defile everything pure and sacred with their coarse hands; that nothing flourishes under them because they do not heed divine nature, the root of all growth; that life is empty for them, and full of care, and overfull of cold, dumb discord, because they scorn genius which infuses vigour and nobility into human activity and brings into the cities and dwelling-places brotherhood and love.¹

No nation would like to stand or fall by the impassioned judgment of such an extreme idealist as Hölderlin. Almost any country in any age would provide material for some such outburst of despair, scorn, and grief, once the eyes of the idealist had been opened to the inglorious character of

¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Hellmuth, Berlin, 1923, II, pp. 282–6, c. 1799.

what Byron apostrophised in the words: "Alas, our poor human nature!" Nevertheless, the ring of truth and desperate sincerity demands that this passage be taken seriously as Hölderlin's own bitter experience among the "barbarians from of old." It is therefore profoundly disconcerting to find that, fired a year or two later by the noble dream of his mission as a German poet, Hölderlin invented a fictitious Germany, and endowed her with a past, present, and future history in accord with the part he now wished her to play:

The priestess pure, that quietest child of God,
 She, ever fain in deep simplicity
 Silence to guard . . .
 She who with widely open eyes did gaze
 As if quite unaware, when late a storm,
 Death-omened, roared and raged above her head,
 Because the child presaged some better thing.
 Until at last throughout wide heaven there grew
 Amazement, that one was full of faith, and greatly so,
 Like to the blessed power of might divine.

Since days of yore, when hidden midst the woods
 And nodding poppies, full of sweetest sleep . . .
 So now thy breast is full of grief and love,
 And full of happiness and full of peace . . .
 Germania, priestess thou of future rites,
 At which, unarmed, thou wilt deal out advice
 To all the kings and people round about!¹

Now, there is happily no law binding poets or anyone else to stand for ever and aye by what they have once said or written. A change of heart is often as necessary and as salutary as a change of linen; and it can only redound to Hölderlin's credit that he had the courage to cherish such hopes of his mother-country in the teeth of his own evidence. For, if both these passages about the spirit of Germany bear in common the hall-mark of extreme idealism, the one

¹ Hölderlin, *Werke*, ed. cit., IV, pp. 182 ff., 1801.

scourges reality, and the other denies it. It is the *technique* with which I am concerned, not the opinions. And *Germanien* is an outstanding example of the new method which Fichte was preaching and the romantic poets were practising.

This poem, by its title as well as by its whole tone and tenor, claims to be a mythological interpretation of the history of Germany, past, present, and to come. However poetical the language and the symbols employed, both should therefore have an organic connection with reality; but no such relationship exists. The glory of the remoter past of the Germans lay, as everyone was passionately reasserting then, in their superlative courage, their stubborn military ardour culminating in the famous victory of Arminius over Varus in the *Teutoburger Wald*. The word "wood" is the only thing which that ancient heroic barbarous race shares in common with Hölderlin's gentle maiden, dreaming sweetly in the forest glades among the nodding poppies. It is not a matter of opinion here or poetical interpretation: it is a matter of truth, and the truth has been spoken once and for all by a great, dispassionate and candid observer:

The German mind cannot brook repose. The field of danger is the field of glory. . . . War and depredation are the ways and means of the chieftain. To cultivate the earth, and wait the regular produce of the seasons, is not the maxim of a German: you will more easily persuade him to attack the enemy, and provoke honourable wounds in a field of battle. In a word, to earn by the sweat of your brow what you might gain by the price of your blood is, in the opinion of a German, a sluggish principle, unworthy of a soldier.¹

I am not quoting Tacitus again in the wake of Vansittart and many others in order to draw any inferences about the nature of present-day Germans; but in order to illustrate Hölderlin's attitude towards reality. It was something which,

¹ Tacitus, *Manners of the Germans*, tr. Murphy, London, 1831, v, p. 85.

in this poem, he simply ignored, creating instead an ideal *Germanien* which never had existed. But perhaps this priest-like spirit (Hölderlin's own soul) had been dreaming throughout history and knew nothing of the *Hermannsschlacht*, nor of Charles the Great, nor of the glories of the Hohenstaufen Emperors, nor of the horrors of the Thirty Years War, nor of the aggressions and conquests of Frederick the Great? Perhaps this Sleeping Beauty had only just opened her eyes to find the French Revolution raging above her head, which she withstood in her innocence and purity until the very heavens were amazed? But this poem was written in 1801 during the Napoleonic Wars, in which Germany lived through the most humiliating and inglorious period of her whole history. The truth is not in this extraordinary fabrication at all; and the prophecy of a pure and unarmed Germany giving wise counsel to the kings and the nations around her has therefore not been fulfilled.

Here, combined with the noblest thoughts, is an example of that utter and incurable disregard of facts, which made it possible for great numbers of Germans to believe that they actually won the Great War and were merely cheated of their victory; or that they were the innocent and defenceless victims of wicked aggressor states. It is the first disturbing appearance of the belief that somehow Germany is holy and always in the right, now so disastrously prevalent in that country. And it made its dangerous presence known in the work of a truly inspired and visionary poet who, towards the end of his conscious life, was no longer able to distinguish between events occurring in his creative mind and events occurring in the world outside. It was the vision of a doomed man. It was to become the vision of a doomed race.

Not that there is anything sinister or aggressive in the actual conception of *Germanien*. The extracts I have quoted are proof of that. On the contrary, the ideal represented

is not only apparently innocuous, but might have been extremely potent for good, had it ever exercised that inspirational force which makes some prophecies come true. It was too much divorced from reality, however, to have any such compelling power. Yet an insidious danger lurked in Hölderlin's belief that Germany had a mission to Europe. Hybris reared its hydra head in that notion. Hölderlin conceived it as a mission of peace, blinded, shortly before the gods destroyed him, to the real character of his own people and the real facts of their past history. But to insinuate the idea of a destiny or a mission to a war-like race is to suggest notions of conquest by arms and military domination. And this is precisely what was unwittingly done in a far more effective, inspiring, and indeed intoxicating way by Fichte in his *Addresses to the German Nation*.

The humiliating peace of Lunéville in 1801, which the guileless Hölderlin greeted with the most touching happiness and hope in a peculiarly beautiful poem, and by which Germany lost large tracts of territory to France, had been succeeded by the far more disastrous peace of Tilsit, following on the defeats of Jena, Auerstädt, and Friedland. Prussia, reaping the bitter benefits of her previous short-sighted and self-seeking foreign policy, was now compelled to cede half her kingdom to Napoleon. French troops were occupying Berlin and French spies were everywhere, when the great German idealist philosopher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, delivered during the winter of 1807-8, in one of the halls of the university, those fourteen inflammatory and epoch-making speeches, which marked the real beginning of German megalomania. It was a noble, and even an heroic, emotion which inspired him to rouse his conquered, humiliated, despairing, or apathetic fellow-countrymen from the spiritual depression and the moral morass resulting from their military defeats. And his message in broad outlines was also as high-minded and uplifting as his intentions were pure.

The Germans (he proclaimed to his audience, and through the medium of the Press to the whole country) were hopelessly and finally beaten in the field. Their military might was broken for good, largely owing to their own inertia, materialism, selfishness, and general moral corruption. In them, and in their fate, the iron age of brute force, egotism, and materialism had been rung to its grave, and a new age was at hand, which must be ushered in by them. They could not hope, and they ought not to wish, to retrieve their position by the force of arms. What was urgent, vital, and alone could save them from utter racial extinction, was complete moral regeneration, a totally new outlook on life, and an entirely new way of life: a passionate desire for the things of the spirit, and the living determination to found the kingdom of the spirit here and now on earth. Selflessness, altruism, a higher form of patriotism, a fervent zeal for the common weal: these were the virtues to be inculcated in the new Germany by a nation-wide education, based on the same ideals which Pestalozzi was even then realising in Switzerland. By this means a new, vigorous, vital, and noble generation would be raised up to save and regenerate Germany, Europe, and the whole world.

Omit the reference to Pestalozzi; cut out the last five words; and is this not the very kind of speech which all men of good faith would welcome if it were made by some idealistic German at the end of the present war? But those who have read *Mein Kampf* would shudder; for a passionate plea for a regeneration of the Fatherland is the soul of that mad, bad book. To appeal to the very best in the German people in order to arouse the very worst that is in them was a lesson Fichte was unconsciously teaching as he spoke. Yet nothing could be more astringent than his realistic acceptance of utter defeat; and if, in his unsparing diagnosis of the mental and moral causes which made the defeat not only possible but inevitable, the voice of the extreme idealist is heard, as it

was heard in Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, that is not the kind of idealism which we are fighting to-day. The hopes Fichte placed in the Pestalozzian type of education were obviously too high; and the ways and means he proposed to establish the system were not really practicable; but the belief in the incalculable potentialities for good inherent in education was no vain dream; and the aim he set before the German people: to purify themselves spiritually and thus to become a force for good in Europe and the world, was a great and noble aim. But the means which he advocated to ensure success, and the means he adopted to heighten the effect of his *Addresses* were fraught with the most pernicious possibilities.

It is just in this acknowledgment of and in this reckoning with the free will of the pupil that lies the prime error of the education that has prevailed hitherto, and the clear confession of its impotence and futility [he stated categorically in the second Address]. . . . The new education on the other hand would have to consist solely in this, that, in whatever soil it undertook to till, it would totally exterminate the freedom of will. . . . If you really wish to have any influence over your pupil, then you must do more than merely admonish him: you must remake him, and make him in such a fashion, that it will be quite impossible for him to will anything but what you wish him to will.

This fearful sin against the human spirit has been committed and is being committed as part of a national plan in Germany to-day. It would have remained a sin even if (which is impossible) a host of fanatical idealists in the good sense had ever agreed to put Fichte's theory into practice. The virtuous and public-spirited robots thus produced would have been more harmless certainly, but not a whit more human and probably not very much more prepossessing than the dull and brutal young Nazis who have been broken in almost from the cradle (as Fichte advised), and

who have no will, no judgment, and no opinions of their own. This lack of respect for the individual human soul, instanced here in a recipe for the mass-production of virtue, is an integral part of Prussianism and found its perfect expression in the cynical term "cannon-fodder." Fichte's theory could never be accepted by humane, enlightened, and intelligent men, who alone are fit to educate the young. The brutal breaking of spirits is left to such pedagogues as Creakle and Squeers. So that the age of mass-produced angels remains a Utopian nightmare. Whereas the age of ruthless mechanised automata is with us now. Clever, unscrupulous, inhuman men have seen the full force of Fichte's contention, that if you want power over other human beings, you must catch them young and break them and remake them anew.

Fichte therefore proposed to regenerate Germany by violating the human souls of the future. It was a counsel of despair, arising from that intense and uncompromising idealism of his which saw in contemporary Germany the sight Hölderlin had seen in *Hyperion*: such a depth of moral depravity and turpitude, that only desperate remedies could avail. And here he was faced with a supreme difficulty: how was he to give to a people fallen so low and in such despair sufficient moral enthusiasm and confidence in the future of Germany actively to support the new education, and in particular to offer up their children on this altar as soon as they were born, the parents themselves being totally unfit, according to Fichte, to guide the infant footsteps of the rising generation? It could only be done by harking back to the more glorious past, and by proving that (despite the present proofs to the contrary) there was something particularly great and glorious about the Germans as a whole. Another difficulty now had to be met. There were no "Germans as a whole"; there was as yet no German nation, although Fichte boldly addressed his speeches to this ideal

entity. There was equally no united German people; only a loose confederation of individual states, differing strongly from each other in customs, tastes, and creeds. Their shadowy political unity under the Holy Roman Empire had been dissolved by Napoleon in 1806 when it rejoined its long-lost substance Christendom in the limbo of the vanished past. But idealist philosophers such as Fichte are nothing if not inventive. In the name of something that still remained to be created, he assumed that it already existed by virtue of the mother-tongue which was, in fact, almost the only thing all the heterogeneous elements composing the conglomerate called Germany had in common. It was the obvious thing to do; for the importance of language as a bond of union can hardly be exaggerated; and as a firm foundation on which to build national unity it clearly has no equal. Yet it had existed since time immemorial, and had not welded Germany into a nation. Fichte set about the congenial task of making the dry bones of nationality live, and of inspiring the millions of inert and indifferent individual minds which composed the "nation" he was addressing with the same ardent patriotism which animated him.

To do this he created round the German language (which Max Beerbohm once called a resistant medium) a truly remarkable myth, whose first inception was due to the romantic writer, A. W. Schlegel; although Hölderlin had spoken in *Germanien* of the gift of the "flower of speech" to his mythological maiden, as marking her out in a peculiarly sacred way. Schlegel, in his *Lectures on Literature and Art*, 1803-4, was more definite and explicit. He emphasised the indisputable fact that, in comparison with the composite neo-Latin and English tongues, German was a signally pure and primitive language, even allowing for its by no means negligible debt to Greek and Latin. He further insisted on the inadequacy and the limitations of derived languages with

respect to the creation of new words and on the marked superiority of German in this field. He also maintained the native inferiority of Latin as a philosophical and poetical tongue, giving it as his opinion that the neo-Latin languages had inherited this disability; whereas German, closely akin in structure to Greek, had the same advantages, was capable of indefinite rejuvenation, and was, as far as there ever can be such a thing, a truly living language.

These certainly biased views, crystallised round the central fact that German is a relatively pure and primitive tongue, are, of course, open to argument; they are also provocative of those sweeping deductions and generalisations which are the native element of the German idealist mind. Fichte drew from them conclusions so extreme, so all-embracing on the one hand, so all-exclusive on the other, that the mind reels as it follows him through the maze of argument, eloquence, and so-called proof, woven round the sorry syllogism: that

1. A people speaking their own original language from the birth of the race onwards have immeasurable spiritual, mental, and ethical advantages over a people who, at any stage in their history, adopt a foreign tongue.
2. For all practical purposes, the Germans alone in Europe belong to the first category.

And that therefore

3. The Germans are inestimably superior to all other European nations.

The first statement, highly controversial, would need a great deal of irrefutable evidence to be at all convincing; and five of the fourteen Addresses were devoted to the task of proving the peculiar greatness and glory of Germany and of attributing this to her language, by means of a highly selective and biased use of historical and other material. The second

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statement is so palpably untrue that Fichte was forced to modify it in a rather disingenuous way: by stating the exceptions before the rule and ignoring them in his subsequent considerations:

It is sufficient [he said airily at the beginning of the fourth Address] to characterise the Germans as such only by contrast with the other Germanic races which came into being at the same time; since other modern European nations, for example those of Slavonic descent, do not yet seem to have developed clearly enough in the rest of Europe for a definite characterisation to be possible; and others again of the same Germanic descent to whom the principle criterion of difference I am about to make [the original and adopted language] does not apply, the Scandinavians, for instance, are regarded here as being Germans beyond a doubt, and are therefore included in all the general conclusions of our argument.

High-handed, ingenious, and brilliantly clever. If all the non-German speaking peoples who possess an original language are not to count; and if all Germanic races speaking their primitive tongue are to count as Germans, this really swept the board of everyone but the Germans and those Germanic races who speak a romance language: that is to say, for all practical purposes (to take a leaf out of Fichte's copy-book) the seemingly so superior French. No one can blame Fichte for not naming the French by name, with Napoleon's spies in the audience, and Napoleon's troops marching past to the sound of drums outside. No one can blame him either for making the very most of any possible advantage the Germans might possess over their conquerors, especially in view of the fact that the conquest extended beyond mere military domination to the kingdom of the mind. The admiration for Napoleon which Goethe felt so strongly was shared by many more amongst the cultivated German classes; the gallantry of the French troops had

impressed the populace; and for well over a hundred years Germany had been wont to look to France as the leading light in all matters literary, artistic, and polite. So that when Fichte used the term *Ausland*, he really meant France; and when he belittled all the achievements of a nation speaking an adopted tongue, his target was the French. Or at least so it seems at first; but long before the end of the magnificent peroration it becomes clear that he was in fact using the myth of the prepotent virtues inherent in a mother-tongue to establish the essential superiority of the Germans to all other European races and indeed to all the races in the world.

In view of the innumerable peoples scattered all over the globe speaking their primitive non-Germanic tongues, Fichte had chosen the building site of the new Germany ill; even if one allows his extravagant claim that (because the symbolism in original languages flows from a living source) peoples talking primitive tongues are the only ones capable of true poetry, true philosophy, and a truly ethical outlook on life. Even accepting this fantasy, there would be sadly little *Lebensraum* for any one chosen people on that particular ground, quite apart from all the magnificent poetry, all the inspiring thought, and all the admirable political institutions such an arbitrary choice would exclude. Fichte calmly denied that they existed, maintaining that the slight, superficial but stimulating contributions to civilisation made by peoples speaking a derived language, have for their sole function the honour and glory of supplying Germany with ideas, which she then develops, deepens, and perfects for the benefit of all humanity, amongst them the benighted foreigners too. This carried him triumphantly over the extremely inconvenient fact that Germany had actually always taken her tone from abroad, and been a recipient rather than a centre of culture. The Renaissance, for instance, spreading out from Italy and fertilising all Europe, was merely, according to Fichte, yet another manifestation of

Latin frivolity, which took a serious, creative, regenerating form in Germany, and in Germany alone, where it produced Luther and the Reformation. The freedom of thought resulting from this liberating act then gave birth in France to the sceptical and materialistic philosophy of Descartes. This, in its turn, coming back to the motherland, brought forth the supreme achievement of the human spirit, modern German philosophy. And now, fully launched on his eloquent theme, Fichte proceeded to give a sketch of European history in which the free German cities occupied the foreground (the Italian city-states, huddled together in the background, and dark of hue, were merely indicated as unimportant); in which the Thirty Years War was interpreted as a dastardly foreign scheme for disuniting the guileless Germans; in which her failure to join in the exploration and colonisation of the world was attributed to her purity of heart; and the balance of power in Europe was discovered to be yet another sinister plot against the unity of Germany and her predestined function to serve as a bulwark of peace in the centre of Europe separating aggressor states. Not a word, need one underline the fact, about the famous Frederick the Great. For Fichte, stooping reverently to awaken Hölderlin's *Germanien* with a solemn salute, was by no means anxious to arouse other and more martial memories in his hearers. He was, with all the dangerous blindness of an idealist, and with all the very remarkable eloquence and persuasiveness at his command, above all things anxious to convince them that their mission to the rest of Europe was one of enlightenment and peace. He was not aiming at anything so uninspiring as historical truth; he was aiming at realising an ideal which he had first invented, and then "discovered" in the past; very much as the Nazis invent damaging political documents, and then discover them in trains. The method is precisely similar, the aims are poles and poles apart.

Fichte was obliged, in the interests of his message to the German nation, to draw a misleading veil over most of the real facts of their history; but he would have been more than human, he would have been a second Hölderlin, if, at this terrible crisis in the national life he had passed over in silence that other crisis, hundreds of years ago, when the Germanic race had repelled and finally beaten back the Romans. In fact it inspired him more than once in the Addresses to lofty rhetorical flights. For that war was a holy war in his eyes, and the only kind of martial undertaking that he regarded as legitimate: a war in defence of German freedom and of German racial survival. And yet, even here, his genuine preference for spiritual victories was apparent. It became even clearer in 1813, when his heart-burnings, his scruples, his lack of enthusiasm for the War of Liberation against Napoleon prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that, if he was the apostle of *Germanentum*, he was also quite as truly the apostle of peace.

In the last Address, a peroration magnificent beyond compare, Fichte implored individually, one after another, all ages and classes in Germany: old and young, men of affairs and business-men, thinkers, scholars, writers, princes, and potentates, to join with all the power they possessed in a great national effort of regeneration. Their remote and nearer ancestors, he declared, their yet unborn posterity, all foreign countries, all ages, all the wise and good who had ever lived on earth; even providence and the divine planner of the universe, were all uniting their voices to his in making this impassioned prayer. And he put the following words into the mouth of Arminius's contemporaries:

Stand in our stead and pass on our memory to posterity as it came down to you, honoured and immaculate. . . . Until now our act of resistance seemed noble and great and wise; we seemed to be the ordained and inspired initiates of the divine world-order. If our race dies out

with you, our honour will be turned to shame, and our wisdom to folly. For, if the German race was destined to go under and become a part of Latin civilisation, then it would have been far better to succumb to the old than to the new. We withstood the old and conquered it. You have been scattered like chaff before the new. And now, as things stand, your duty is not to conquer them with bodily arms; it is your spirit that must rise up erect against them. The greater destiny has been allotted to you: to found the absolute empire of the spirit and of reason, and to destroy brutal material might altogether as a sovereign power in the world. If you do this, then you are worthy to be descended from us.

It would be doing Fichte a grave injustice to believe that he was speaking with his tongue in his cheek in an endeavour to mislead Napoleon's spies as to his real purpose. The whole power of his mind and will was directed towards the establishment of a world-wide *pax Germanica*. But he who wills the end wills the means; and in order to nerve the Germans to this supreme effort, he presented them with the headiest potion any people has ever been encouraged to drink:

If there is any truth in what has been set forth in these Addresses, then you, amongst all modern races, are the one race in whom the germ of human perfectibility is most decisively present, and to whom the progress of its development has been entrusted. If your race becomes extinct, then too all hopes of the salvation of humanity from the depths of its evils will be extinguished with you. . . . Therefore there is no other way out: if you go under, the whole of humanity will perish, without hope of a future rebirth.

Fichte avoided the word *Kultur*, not then in any case the red rag to German nationalism which it was to become later. It was awkward enough as it was, with his views on language,

to be obliged to use the foreign words *Nation* and *Philosophie* for those two declared monopolies of German genius. The ice, artificially manufactured by him over the deep well of truth, was thin enough in all conscience without making it more treacherous still. But the idea we have learned to deprecate and to dread, inherent in that word, was given its first fiery baptism in these Addresses, which also contain the first full-dress statement of the disastrous notion that the Germans are a chosen race, sealed and set apart to dominate the whole world. The myth to which Hölderlin had given birth, and which had seemed hardly more than a radiant *Ersatz-Germanien* for an intolerable reality, now began to show those megalomaniacal features and that menacing stare which have made of *Germanentum* in its later developments the least likeable legend the world has ever known.

Did the ordinary decent German, whose very existence to-day is doubted, swallow that legend whole? Oddly enough, there were few signs of such a response at first. Fichte's contemporary effect was hardly more than one of the many intangible influences which, with others more easily assessed, contributed to bring about the enthusiasm for fatherland and liberty which culminated in 1813. On the contrary, more than one voice was raised to protest against his extremer views, among them Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, a humorist (rather a rare bird in Germany, but not absolutely unknown), who had therefore a sense of proportion and also some common sense:

People therefore [he said in his review of the *Addresses* in the *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* for 1809] who, like the Arabs, the Chinese, the Wends and the Jews, go on speaking their original language, without, on the other hand, revealing this particular foursome of German advantages and so on, are dumb as far as Fichte is concerned. And so are the modern Greeks and Romans, who continue to

speak their primitive tongues with modifications, like we do ours. On the other hand, the British are against him too; for, though they have taken all their symbolical terms for abstract conceptions from the Romans and the French, they possess all the famous German advantages, and many of them much more richly. . . . Fichte attributes to our still living ancestral language the religious earnestness of Protestantism. To what then does he attribute Catholicism and the religious wars of South Germany? And to what, on the other hand, both Catholics and Protestants in France as well as the Huguenots? . . . He makes the German virtues the sole props and pillars of the civilisation [*Kultur*] of the world, as if every people in every age did not possess different ones. It would be just as bad for the world if it contained nothing but Germans, as if it contained none at all; and no people can supply the place of another.

Nor was this one solitary voice crying in the wilderness. The liberal writer, Immermann, expressed very similar views in his *Memorabilien*, views which were roughly those of the 'thirties among ordinary, intelligent, decent men:

At no period of antiquity in which there was any hope of regeneration would an orator, in order to bring this regeneration about, have glorified one means above all others, have turned history topsy-turvy, and have rejected the generation to which he was addressing himself. Fichte does all three. By glorifying the living or original language as the only guarantee of the continually renewed life of a people, he forgets, or does not wish to remember, that the English, a nation speaking the most hybrid of all idioms, have for three hundred years maintained themselves in superlative strength. . . . He does not desire any solid ground beneath his feet, for every ground is contaminated. He assigns to the winds of the future the mission of wafting a new fatherland into being. . . .

So spoke the unromantic 'thirties through the mouth of the

man who created in Baron Münchhausen perhaps the most notorious liar in literature, something which could only be done by an author with a keen sense for truth. And how refreshing, too, this absence of swell-headedness on the one side, or of racial hatred on the other; an absence still comfortably felt in the monograph written by Bona Meyer on the *Addresses* for the centenary of Fichte's birth in 1862. This typical product of the *Biedermeierzeit* radiates universal benevolence, a positive affection for the golden mean, a modest belief in progress and security and a certain shrewd critical sense. So that, whilst giving all due honour to Fichte's zeal, patriotism, and the magnanimity of his ideas, Meyer more than once felt it incumbent on him to protest against the exaggeration of some of them, remarking, for instance, with artless candour:

One can't help thinking of Shakespeare and feeling surprised that only the German mother-tongue should be capable of producing a work of poetry. . . . One can't help thinking of British seriousness, and realising that the speaker took as his contrast to the German only the volatile, versatile French; and one can't help realising, too, that he was unjust to them as well.

One would like to pause for a moment in this lull between two "idealistic" brainstorm and go on listening quietly to that decent, ordinary, and sensible voice; but the "head-hunter," as Vansittart so aptly described Treitschke, the historian "who perverted a whole generation," had also something to say on the occasion of this centenary; among other things, stern praise of that very hybris Meyer gently deprecated, whilst Treitschke stridently quoted Fichte to the effect that "No people can ever dispense with arrogance." And by the time Treitschke had impressed his version of history in the nineteenth century on his fellow-countrymen, a grim and ghastly expression of hatred for other races was becoming fixed on the visage of *Germanentum*.

Nevertheless, I sometimes think that Treitschke, and even Bismarck, the one with his violently stated views, the other with his clearly defined and successful policy, count for a good deal less in the German mind and outlook as we know it to-day than that other great idealist philosopher who, like Fichte, has been ultimately a force for evil, though his aim was to be a force for good, the ill-starred Friedrich Nietzsche. And here we come up against a tragedy of the most sombre hue, a tragedy which possibly could only have occurred in Germany. Say the word "superman" anywhere else, and you will say it with impunity. Not with total impunity, perhaps, but certainly with racial immunity. Yet Germany is not the only country which has had romantic dreamers, inflammatory orators, root and branch idealists and jugglers with facts; nor did Germany invent jingoism. But the history of the superman in that country is a symbol of the dire confusion existing in German minds between ideas and reality, a confusion worse confounded by the idealist philosophers who declared them to be identical. And that way madness lies. Hölderlin just before the end could not discriminate between "his" *Germanien* and the *Hurra, Germania!* reality. Fichte was equally unable to draw the line between "ideal" and "real" Germans. Nietzsche, perfectly clear-sighted on that score after the disillusionment about Wagner and German music, did not see until the day his sight was gone for good, that his radiant dream for the future of mankind was a present-day ugly reality; that the will to power was there, asserting itself among the very people who by that time (deny it who will) he had relegated to the lowest rung of the ladder of civilisation—and wished to de-Germanise at all costs. What is more, Nietzsche actually saw through idealist philosophy itself; not to mention German *Kultur* and national aspirations:

The Germans have all the great crimes against civilisation performed during the last four hundred years on

their conscience. . . . And always for the same reason, because of their fundamental cowardice in face of reality, which is also cowardice about truth, because of that untruthfulness which has become an instinct with them, because of their "idealism." . . . [And he refers to the idealist philosophers, Fichte amongst them, as unconscious false coiners.] They have the present-day phenomenon on their conscience, the most uncivilised disease and insanity in the world, nationalism, that *névrose nationale*. . .

Wherever Germany has penetrated, it has degraded civilisation.¹

Hitherto there has actually been no German civilisation: there have only been hermits who, with the most amazing skill, have managed to keep hidden in the midst of the most crass barbarianism.²

You pay very dear for coming to power; power stultifies you. . . . The Germans—they were once called a people of thinkers: do they still think at all to-day? The Germans of to-day are bored with the things of the spirit, they are suspicious of the spirit: politics swallow up all seriousness about really serious things. "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*," I fear that that was the end of German philosophy. . . . It is not only quite obvious that German civilisation is on the wane, there is also no lack of good and sufficient reasons for it. No one can in the last resort give out more than he has—this is true of individuals and true of peoples. If one expends oneself for power, for high politics, for economic conditions, world commerce, parliamentarism, war-aims—if one expends one's allotted portion of common sense, seriousness, will-power and self-sacrifice on this side of life, then there will be a lack of it on the other. Civilisation and the state—make no mistake about this—are antagonists.³

It would certainly seem, in the light of these and similar outbursts, that Nietzsche held no brief for Germany as the future *Herrenvolk*. But the very word was enough. Fichte

¹ *Ecce Homo*, 1888. ² *Posthumous*. ³ *Götzendämmerung*, 1888.

had persuaded the Germans that they were the chosen people; Nietzsche preached a gospel of power; add those two things together; subtract Fichte's will to peace and Nietzsche's scorn of the German race, multiply by brutality and vulgarity and the sum of Nazi ideology comes out. And somehow Nietzsche's responsibility seems to loom large. That he is a very deep and difficult thinker; that he has probably never been completely understood, and certainly crassly misinterpreted, both by his friends and his foes; that his vivid phraseology and his genius for coining words have bent themselves to parrot-cries and slogans for everything that he would most have loathed—all this is true and can and should be urged in extenuation of the evil wrought by a great and noble and tormented mind, a mind so incommensurably greater than my own that it seems absurd to sit in judgment on it. Anyone who has ever grappled with Nietzsche's powerful, dazzling, ever-shifting thought-processes, will be enriched for the rest of his life; and the debt which all those who value poetry, tragedy, and Greek literature owe to Nietzsche is not measurable in words. Hence his effect, not only on the unenlightened majority (who, after all, were only illustrating the popular saying that we needs must love the highest when we see it, by falling for the superman); but also on the educated and indeed highly intellectual generation of thinkers, writers, and poets who came after him, and who owed their breadth and depth of outlook very largely to him, not only in Germany, but in all Europe and in America too. For he has been the great inspirational force of our own times, and the greatest writer with the sole exception of Goethe the Germans have produced. And the terrible tragedy lies in this, that whereas his whole soul was bent on helping forward the upward evolution of man, he has in actual fact precipitated the catastrophe of rationalised, decadent barbarism which has overtaken his race. Nor can he be held entirely blameless

for this. The idea that man might in future æons evolve into a higher type of being, and that his present conscious aim should be to further that evolution is not in itself either preposterous or mischievous; and some such planning for the future seems almost imperative now, unless man is to go under and become the slave of machines. It was the type of ideal which Nietzsche advocated that has done all the harm: his allegiance to the spirit of life, which meant jeopardising those humane and civilised virtues which man as a spiritual being has developed in the teeth of life itself. It was a species of highly aristocratic and even austere jungle-law which, he announced, would be followed by the supermen of the future, leaving the gentler virtues to the herd, who (according to him) had only practised them hitherto from motives of selfishness and fear. It was an ideal created as a smoke-screen to the sickening spectacle of feebleness, hypocrisy, cowardice, and pettiness which he saw all around him. It was the reaction to reality of an extreme idealist; who, having invented a compensating myth, exhorted his contemporaries to realise it. And much as Hölderlin had dreamed of a fair maiden called *Germanien* to oust from his sight the Germany that he knew; so Nietzsche dreamed of a blond beast ravaging his complacent herd-like countrymen, little recking that they would cast themselves for the part of the super-race, whom he envisaged as good Europeans one and all. And this was because, again like Hölderlin before him, he did not face reality steadily with all its implications: the reality of a Germany already flown with conquest, already politically practising the jungle-law, and much the most likely of all the races in Europe to take his doctrine of the superman to heart. He owed his conception of herd-morality and slave-instincts to the docile, gullible, biddable, tractable "so-called decent Germans"; the Prussian martinetts who bullied them were to owe their code of ethics to him, a code which had been intended for a higher race of

beings than any then existing upon earth. It was Nietzsche's fundamental error to believe that he could be both a prophet of, and a law-giver to, those who were to come after him. But, like all the other idealist philosophers, he did not distinguish between the creations of the spirit of life and those of his own mind. By the time Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alfred Rosenberg, and Hermann Wirth had invented and discovered the "Aryan" race, Nietzsche's mythological superman had found a local habitation and a name.

A certain irresponsibility is the besetting sin of prophets who do not reckon on living to see the fulfilment of their predictions; and both Fichte and Nietzsche, the latter especially, show many signs of the flightiness which accompanies flights of fancy. And it is this fundamental irresponsibility allied with solemn prophetic claims which, since the age of romantic idealism, has made their thinkers and poet-prophets so dangerous. Far from being "bright, ineffectual angels," indeed, they seem to me much more like terrible agents of destruction let loose upon the world, innocent of any evil intent; but arrogating to themselves superhuman wisdom and insight, and imposing themselves in this guise. Nietzsche's irresponsibility, however, did not go as far as to carry him heedlessly over the spectacle of a Prussianised Germany posturing as a super-race. Besides the extracts I have quoted, it is a noteworthy fact that he began to soft-pedal the superman after *Zarathustra*, and to concentrate on the "good European" instead. There is no doubt whatever in my mind that he would have been as horrified as Fichte, if not quite so much shattered as Hölderlin, could he have seen to what a yawning, evil abyss hybris and megalomania can lead.

But the last great writer to put the finishing touches to romantic *Germanentum*, that monster of unreality now masquerading under an Aryan or Nordic guise, cannot be absolved so completely. He gave another powerful dose of

the virus working in German blood ever since the days of Hölderlin; and, unlike Hölderlin, Fichte, and Nietzsche, he knew what he was about. Stefan George, in the last collection of his poems, published in 1928 and called *Das neue Reich*, certainly gave the Nazis every cause to greet him as the prophet of the *Führer*, an honour which he tacitly declined by removing himself to Switzerland when Hitler came to power, in which same fateful year the poet-prophet died.

He had actually prophesied the rise of National Socialism and acclaimed his vision of it; which, if he really believed the welfare of his country to lie in that direction was at worst an error of judgment, which many well-intentioned Germans committed then and later. And there was something hard, dictatorial, and supercilious about George, with his contempt for the mob ("their number alone constitutes a crime"), which would make him favourably disposed to certain aspects of National Socialism; especially if, idealistically blind to real facts and personalities, he were dreaming of himself or of some soul-double as the future leader of Germany. Bithell, in his fascinating analysis of Stefan George and his circle, in *Modern German Literature*, 1939, describes the passage in question (the concluding lines of a poem "Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren," 1921) in the following words:

Here by a miracle of history such as the prophecy of the coming of Christ by Virgil a passionate crescendo of prophecy would seem to have foretold the task and victory of quite another Führer than the poet.¹

But to me it appears rather as a wish-dream, another piece of self-revelation by a poet who had been assuming the airs of spiritual dictator, first to the young men who composed his immediate circle, and later to a wider public, almost ever since he began to write. He now summoned to the task of regeneration (that fateful word):

¹ op. cit., p. 172.

THE GERMAN MIND AND OUTLOOK

A race of youths, measuring again at last
Both men and things with just and rightful rod;
Comely and resolute, exultant too
In their uniqueness; and, with strangers proud,
Steering a middle course between the rocks
Of insolent conceit and shallow swamps
Of fabled brotherhood among all men.
A race of youths spewing far, far away
All that is soft and rotten, tepid and base.
A race that from their consecrated dreams,
Actions and sufferings will at length bring forth
The only saviour who can help: the Man . . .
He'll burst the bonds—make a clean sweep
Of order amidst ruins piled amain;
Scourging the fugitives back to eternal right,
Where great is great, and lord is lord again,
Where breed and discipline once more prevail.
He'll fasten the true symbol to the flag
Of this our people; and leading on through storms
And fearful signals of the early dawn
His band of faithful followers to the task
Of broad daylight, he'll found the *Reich* anew.¹

It is certainly uncannily like what Hitler was about to do; but it is also exactly like what George, in a poetical, idealistic, romantic way, would like to have done himself, if it had not entailed descending from the ivory tower of art and mingling with the mob. For his eyes, so long turned inwards to contemplate his own subtle, fascinating, and self-intoxicating dreams, were now focusing outwards to what was happening in the world. What he saw, repelled him quite as violently as it had repelled Hölderlin, Fichte, and Nietzsche. Both in this poem and in "Der Krieg," 1917, he scourged his countrymen mercilessly with the scorpions of his tongue. Nevertheless that strange dual vision, which had led Hölderlin and Fichte to believe that the Germans they despised so much were the hope and salvation of the whole world, caused George, too, not only to prophesy their rebirth in

¹ Stefan George, *Gesamt-Ausgabe*, Berlin, 1928, ix, p. 39.

this poem, but also to conclude "Der Krieg" with a beautiful description of Germany which derived straight from Hölderlin:

Oh land,
Too fair to be laid waste by foreign foes,
Where flutes are heard from willows, and the groves
With Aeolian harps are murmurous; Vision still
Dreams scatheless on through sometimes recreant heirs.
Land where the Generatrix of the white race,
To savagery relapsed and torn by war,
Did first unveil the features of her face,
Land, still instinct with promise, you'll not fall.

.
Awhile the night will last; but light will come,
A light not this time breaking in the East.¹

So that once more the Germans, scorned and vilified for their sins, were again prophetically assured of their innate greatness and their future supremacy. As a tonic in war-time the mixture was both salutary and grateful; it would be churlish to quarrel with it. And that no one need do so, I have purposely omitted the synthetic paganism preached before the concluding lines, in which Hölderlin's quasi-identification of Dionysus with Christ was further enriched by a *rapprochement* between Apollo and Baldur. No, my quarrel with George is a different one and centres on a different poem, published in the same collection, *Das neue Reich*, 1928, and called "The Burning of the Temple." In this poem George represented more clearly than in "The Poet in Troublous Times" his ideal of a future leader and regenerator of the world. It was one of those Promethean barbarians who, according to Nietzsche, might force their way into civilisation and destroy it for the good of mankind. A super-barbarian, coming from above and not from below. And George chose as such a saviour, Attila the Hun. There

¹ Stefan George, op. cit., ix, pp. 33 f.

was a time, and it recurred at the beginning of the present war, when Englishmen felt thoroughly ashamed of themselves for calling the Germans by such a hard name. It is, of course, a term of abuse in our mouths; but need we have been so squeamish, since it was the German Emperor himself who in 1900 exhorted his soldiers to imitate the Huns, to be as fierce, as savage and as terrible as they? The exhortation probably did not fall upon deaf ears; but what soldiers do in war-time is a very different thing from what great idealist poets write in peace. George solemnly raised barbarity to the level of an ideal in "The Burning of the Temple," and being the great poet he was, he did it in an almost irresistible way. Through the mouth of his enemies, the priests of the temple about to be burnt down by the orders of the Scourge of God, such a magnificent portrait of the fierce Hun conqueror emerges as to make civilisation seem a poor, weak, spineless thing in comparison. The temple, the centre of an outworn faith and the store-house of age-old poetry and art, must go, because, Attila said to the priests:

You cannot heal the murrain on your land.
Who are the gods who render now no aid?
And what the books and statues that have failed
Now to uplift you? You should therefore thank
Him who would liberate you from such trash.¹

And here I join issue with George, not for romantic day-dreaming, and not for writing a poem; but for passing it off as oracular wisdom. It is as if Coleridge, intoxicated by the vision of *Kubla Khan*, had exhorted his fellow-countrymen to discover the river Alph, and to heed the ancestral voices prophesying war. And Coleridge, if he had lost the faculty of distinguishing dreams from reality, would at least have been the first to join the voyage of discovery and face its perils. Whereas George, to whom all art, and especially his

¹ Stefan George, op. cit., ix, p. 85.

own, was the very breath of life, never seriously desired the monuments of ancient poetry, religion, and art to go up in smoke. He left Germany when the possibility seemed imminent. But in the name of an "ideal" new order, the high priest and prophet of art consigned the past and its "trash" to the flames. It was of course an "ideal" barbarian invader, an "ideal" temple, and an "ideal" fire. It has since become a reality. To play with reality in this irresponsible way is to play with fire. That is the sobering lesson the German idealists teach. And when will they ever be badly burnt enough to learn to dread it? Or must there be a permanent band of fire-watchers in Germany ever on the alert for such incendiarism?

Vain questions. If Napoleon's spies could detect nothing more dangerous in Fichte's *Addresses* than theories of education; and if Fichte himself was so utterly innocent of sinister intentions, how can future evils of the sort ever be discovered and arrested in time? One can only hope that truth, factual truth, so long disregarded and denied by the German idealists, will come into her own again, when the people as a whole realise at last whither its neglect has led them. But looking back to the subjects of this paper: to those who invented and elaborated the romantic idea of *Germanentum*, with such high hopes, such fervent zeal, such noble aims and aspirations; and then turning to the present, to the Inferno raging in that idealised motherland of theirs, one of the saddest and most cynical proverbs in the world, which has been haunting me ever since I began to write this paper, insists at last upon utterance.

The way to Hell, that proverb says, is paved with good intentions.

MYTHS, TYPES, AND PROPAGANDA, 1919-39

I. Introductory

FIRST of all, my thesis and main conclusions, briefly formulated: Two outstanding features of the development of the German mind and outlook from 1919 to 1933 were the search for certain myths and the search for certain types. These myths and types reached the height of their strength and influence after 1933, but they were then subordinated to the all-pervasive forces of Nazi propaganda, which eagerly exploited them as weapons and allies. The key to the development of the German mind and outlook from 1933 to 1939 must be sought in propaganda.

Before 1933 these myths and types had been propagated by individuals and groups, who although powerful were nevertheless a minority and non-official; but one of the main results of propaganda after 1933 was that these myths and types rapidly became official and national and all-exclusive. Very few Germans were left uninfluenced and untainted by them; and very few Germans had the opportunity—and fewer still the insight and courage—to oppose them.

Many students of the German problem may find this approach strange and the choice of material arbitrary. But how is one to tackle such a tremendous and vital theme—in a lecture of one hour, and in an essay of 10,000 words? I also wish to point out (in self-defence) that much of the preliminary research and spade-work has still to be done, that it is difficult and in some cases impossible to get the necessary books, and finally that we are in the midst of a war which clouds the issue and affects scientific judgment.

Admittedly, much of what I have to say is subjective, but I have tried to be as objective as possible.

It will immediately become evident that I have preferred to concentrate on the period before 1933 rather than on the Nazis. We all know a great deal about the Nazis, and most of us know very little about Germany and ordinary Germans. Besides, I have always said that Hitler was a much over-rated person, and that this over-estimation was indeed part of the successful propaganda which brought him to power and has kept him in power so far. Proof of Hitler's comparatively limited influence before 1933 may be found in the fact that up to and including 1932, only 25,000 copies of *Mein Kampf* had been sold, i.e. just over 3,000 a year since it was first published. When I first went to Germany, in 1930, Moeller van den Bruck's *Das Dritte Reich* was much better known and much more read and discussed than Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

One final word of explanation: *I have concentrated on the disease, rather than on the normal and healthy aspects of the German mind and outlook.* But this is surely justified, in view of the Second World War, to which this disease inevitably and inexorably led.

II. Two General Negations

Before I begin to discuss myths and types, I wish to deal briefly with two general negations which go right through the whole period. (a) The negation of the idea of progress, and (b) The negation of the bourgeois.

(a) *The Negation of the Idea of Progress*

It is a tremendous platitude, but a starting-point of fundamental importance that Germany lost the First World War. Germany's unification, and her rise to the rank of a first-class power in the nineteenth century, particularly after 1871, had been sudden and in a sense meteoric. Individual

Germans benefited economically: they were well off and proud. But the descent into the abyss came far more suddenly than the rise to power and prosperity. In 1918, Germans were suddenly faced with defeat; they were thrown off their balance, they lost their grip on life and any true perspective of things they may have had. Hence the wave of pessimism, cynicism, and even immorality which swept over Germany. Being Germans, they probably took things more tragically and went to greater extremes than is usually the case in a defeated country. But it is worth while speculating for a moment on what would happen in England—if she ever lost a war. English people would certainly not take defeat lying down! There would be plots and revolts and revolutions until England had once again won her place in the sun. This speculation should, therefore, help us to look a little more kindly and objectively on the spirit of defiance, the desire for another fight and for revenge, which went along with the pessimism in Germany immediately after the First World War.

The best expression of this German pessimism-plus-defiance is undoubtedly to be found in the writings of Oswald Spengler. Not so much in his *Untergang des Abendlandes*, which was general and abstract rather than specifically concerned with the German present and future; but in works like *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (1920), *Neubau des Reiches* (1924), *Jahre der Entscheidung* (1933), and *Der Mensch und die Technik* (1931). It is an interesting study, and very revealing of the differences between the German and English mind and outlook in the early 20's, to compare this latter work with Dean Inge's essay on "The Idea of Progress" in the second series of *Outspoken Essays*. Dean Inge pointed out that the belief in progress, not as an ideal but as indisputable fact, not as a task for humanity but as a law of Nature, had been the working faith of the West for a hundred years. He rejected this belief. "The Greeks prided themselves on being the degenerate descendants of

the Gods, we on being the very creditable descendants of monkeys." But even the Gloomy Dean praised "the climbing instincts of humanity, and our discontent with things as they are." He admitted that as individuals "we all desire to make progress, and our ambitions are not limited to our own lives or our lifetimes. It is part of our nature to aspire and hope." Spengler's attack on the idea of progress was much more devastating and bitter. In *Der Mensch und die Technik*, he wrote that progress had been the great catchword of the last century. Men saw history before them like a street on which, bravely and ever advancing, marched "mankind," meaning by that term the white races, or more exactly, the "educated" among them. But whither? For how long? And what then? Spengler also denied individual hopes and aspirations. He declared that man was, and is, too shallow and cowardly to face up to the fact of his mortality and impermanence. It is in this work that Spengler gives his celebrated definition of man as a beast of prey, who lives by attacking and killing and destroying. History is war-history, and politics are only a temporary substitute for war, a substitute which makes use of more intellectual weapons. Spengler concludes by declaring that the white peoples have made a great mistake in giving their technical knowledge to the coloured peoples. The coloured peoples will one day destroy the "Faustian" civilization. Faced as we are with this destiny, there is only one world-outlook that is worthy of us. It is the choice made by Achilles in the Greek legend: when his mother asked him to choose between a long life and a short life full of deeds and fame, he chose the latter. Optimism is cowardice, says Spengler. Our duty is to hold on to the forlorn position, like that Roman soldier who died at his post during the eruption of Vesuvius. That is greatness!

Many other writers echoed or joined Spengler in his biting denunciations of the idea of progress. Ernst Jünger

wrote in his book *Der Arbeiter* (1932) that the World War had destroyed the real people's church of the nineteenth century (die eigentliche Volkskirche des 19. Jahrhunderts), namely, the worship of progress. Gundolf, in his book on Stefan George (1920), described all ideas of progress as "vulgar hunger for good luck" (gemeiner Glückshunger).

(b) *The Negation of the Bourgeois*

Another general negation which goes right through the period, is the negation of everything bourgeois (das Bürgerliche, das Bürgertum, etc.).¹ Hitler repeatedly attacked and ridiculed the bourgeois in *Mein Kampf*. He accused him of a lack of national pride (Mangel an Nationalstolz), of inadequate national feeling (unzulängliche nationale Gesinnung), of being pacifist to the extent of self-abnegation (pazifistisch bis zur förmlichen Selbstverleugnung). He was convinced that the German bourgeois was at the end of his mission, and incapable of further tasks. He spoke bitterly of the pitiful weakness (jämmerliches Versagen) or the cowardly weakness (feiges Versagen) of the bourgeois parties in 1919 and 1920. Bourgeois became, therefore, another of those Nazi terms of abuse—like Jewish, Marxist, Liberal, and Democratic. But Hitler was by no means alone in his contempt for the bourgeois. It was expressed by many other writers—some of whom went much deeper and deserve to be taken much more seriously.

In his book *Der Arbeiter*, Ernst Jünger complains that the bourgeois never seeks danger of his own free will. He is to be understood as the man who regards security as one of the highest values, and shapes his life accordingly. The bourgeois has always been dependent on defence; he has always hidden behind the walls of a castle (Burg) or a town. That is why the large towns seemed to be at the turn of the

¹ I am translating these words by bourgeois, because it has a deprecating note, and in order to avoid using such words as "middle class" or "middle classes."

century the ideal centres of security (Hochburgen der Sicherheit). The bourgeois negotiates, he does not fight; which explains why the lawyer has always played such an important part in bourgeois society, and why people argue as to who was the aggressor when war breaks out between the national democracies. The bourgeois tries to regard the state as society (Gesellschaft), whose fundamental principle is equality and whose foundation was created by an act of reason. In typical fashion the bourgeois had built up a comprehensive system of insurance to cover risks—an effort to overcome fate by calculations of probability. On a more philosophical plane, Jünger is always accusing the bourgeois of avoiding the elemental powers (das Elementare); the bourgeois regards these powers as unreasonable and immoral—whether it is the elementary power of love or death, or the primary elements of fire, water, earth, and air. One of the most horrible aspects of bourgeois life is the way he lets himself be buried: a walk through a cemetery proves this. “Bourgeois clothing—particularly on special occasions—is beginning to be somehow ridiculous.” (So beginnt die bürgerliche Kleidung, vor allem die bürgerliche Festtracht, irgendwie lächerlich zu werden.) Incidentally, Wilhelm Stapel made a very similar remark in his *Preussen muss sein* (also 1932): “Civilian clothes are of course always a little ridiculous, but they too are necessary.” (Zivil ist freilich immer ein bisschen komisch, aber es muss das auch geben.) The outbreak of the World War, says Jünger, drew a broad red line across the bourgeois period (setzt einen breiten, roten Schlusstrich unter diese Zeit.) A new, a more dangerous life was revealed to the volunteers who welcomed the war with such jubilation. The elemental had come into its own again.

In 1934 a book appeared by Bogislav von Selchow, entitled *Der bürgerliche und der heldische Mensch*, which may be regarded as the exaggerated and Nazi form of Jünger's anti-bourgeois polemics. Selchow was a naval officer in the

war and took part in the battle of Jutland. Later, he studied history, and wrote several pseudo-historical works. But his main claim to fame—and to Nazi approval—was his poem which ran: "I was born to feel as a German,/ My nature is entirely Germanic./ My own people comes first, and then the many other peoples,/ First my homeland, and then the world." (Ich bin geboren deutsch zu fühlen,/ Bin ganz auf deutsches Wesen eingestellt,/ Erst kommt mein Volk und dann die andern vielen,/ Erst meine Heimat, und dann die Welt.) On the dust-cover of the book one reads: "Selchow contrasts the bourgeois, the type of the last few decades, with heroic man, the type demanded by the present. Industry instead of courage, cleverness instead of blood, respectability instead of honour were formerly decisive; property and education were the things by which personality was assessed (wurden zum Wertmesser der Persönlichkeit). This book will indicate how to overcome the final remnants of the bourgeois view of life."

In view of the contempt poured on them by the nationalists and Nazis, it is indeed a strange paradox that the bourgeois should have rallied to Hitler's banner, and should have played such a vital part in the revolution which spelt his own doom. Incidentally, the destruction of the German middle classes and the small men seems to have reached a very advanced phase in the total mobilization and closing of small enterprises proclaimed by Goebbels after the Stalin-grad disaster, in February 1942. The two wars, the inflation, and political ineptitude seem to have destroyed irrevocably the once proud German "Bürgertum"—thus creating a gap in Germany's social structure which will be hard to fill, but which will be a constant source of danger if it is left unfilled.

III. The Search for the Myth

• In their depression and despair at the lost war Germans turned more than ever before to myths. A kind of mythical

madness seemed at times to come over them. As a rule it was latent or only smouldering; but suddenly it would break out. Many English people will recall discussions with Germans which were rudely interrupted and ruined by this mysterious power of the myth: particularly since 1933. The German with whom one was talking would go off at a tangent; his eyes would shine and take on a far-away look; and in superior and often chiding tones he would utter such words and phrases as "Aber, der Führer!", or "Der Hitler weiss am besten!"; or he would rave about "deutsche Nibelungentreue," or "das Reich der Deutschen," or "die Stimme des Blutes," or "Blut und Boden."

The very idea of the myth is difficult for English people to understand, partly because our word "myth" is really quite different from the German word "Mythos" (or "Mythus"). According to Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, "the meaning popularly attached to the (English) word is little more than a tale devoid of truth or a non-existent person or theory or event." Compare this with the definition given in quite an ordinary German dictionary—*Der Sprach-Brockhaus*: "a symbolic idea with life-renewing force." Or compare it with the excellent definition given by Gundolf in his *Stefan George* (1920): "Myth is the word and the vision which tells about the Volk and God, about what has really happened." (Mythus ist Wort und Schau von Volk und Gott, von wirklichem Geschehen.) Gundolf denies emphatically that "Mythus" has anything to do with the fantasy and dreams of individuals.

Perhaps an even better way of making clear this fundamental divergence in German and English thought is to say that Germans delight in myths, whereas we only go as far as legends. The last war produced in this country the Kitchener legend, and the legend of the Russian soldiers—with snow on their boots—who had come to help in the West. The nearest approach to a myth was probably the

"Angel of Mons," and the personality and achievements of Lawrence of Arabia. But although these two legends had a great effect on certain individuals, they hardly assumed national proportions, and neither of them could be described as a "life-renewing force," or as "the word and the vision which tells about the Volk and God."

Now it is of special significance that three of the foremost spiritual leaders of the post-war period in Germany—Wagner, Nietzsche, and George—were leading exponents of mythical thought and life. It has often struck me that National Socialism in its spiritual aspect seems to have achieved a union of the worst elements in each, and to have thrown the good in each of them overboard. Nietzsche and George were definitely not anti-Semitic, but Wagner was. Nietzsche had no use for race and blood, whereas Wagner and George regarded them as fundamental and decisive. Wagner was Christian, at any rate in his opera *Parsifal*; and George stood at least for the cultural values of Roman Catholicism; but Nietzsche's hatred was concentrated on Christianity more than anything else. Nietzsche denounced nationalism and imperialism, whereas Wagner provided the mythical background for Bismarck's Reich, and George propagated the rise of a "New" Empire.

But in many ways their ideas were similar, particularly in what they attacked. All three were opposed to the philosophy and social life of the nineteenth century. All three protested against the mechanisation and commercialisation of contemporary life. But more than anything else, they were united in the "revolt against reason," and in the search for the myth. They stood for irrationalism instead of rationalism, for symbols instead of ideas, for a return to the elemental and primitive impulses in man.

Nietzsche saw in Wagner's operas the rebirth of the German myth. In his essay on *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, 4. Stück, 1876) he declared

that Wagner had recreated the myth, that he had recognised the people's great need, and that the German Volk must rise again if there were many Wagners. To complete this mythical circle, all I need do is to point out that the book which Ernst Bertram, a leading member of the George Circle, wrote about Nietzsche in 1918, bore the sub-title: *Attempt at a Mythology* (Versuch einer Mythologie).

In his book *Geist und Reich* (1933), Richard Benz wrote: "If to-day there is any talk about myths, it is the Wagner myths or the George myths which are meant—above all the Wagner myths. Wagnerism, which up to a few years ago was regarded by youth as finished for ever has risen again, in our day—strange as this may seem. It is not Wagner's music which to-day attracts people, but the Germanic material (Stoff) behind that music—which is used by the Nordic nationalism of blood and race as its spiritual backing." Later, Benz pointed out that myths, legends, and sagas had won vital importance for the present time, and that they had suddenly become the reading-matter of wide circles instead of popular novels.

Without an exact and painstaking inquiry, it is difficult to assess the extent to which these three spiritual leaders made their influence felt during the Weimar period. But on the basis of my own experience and contacts in Germany, I feel that the following estimate does not go far wrong. George's influence was limited to his circle and through its members to university teachers and students. Nietzsche's influence went further and included the middle classes. But Wagner's influence went much further still, and reached down to the masses. Wagner was *par excellence* the spiritual guide of the elementary school-teacher. As Benz pointed out, it was the Wagner myths which were to the fore, even before 1933. And after 1933 Wagner's influence became greater still. The Nazis tried to make use of Nietzsche and George at the start, but (for reasons into which I cannot go

here) they soon desisted; only Wagner remained, as the mentor and inspiration of Hitler himself, and as the unchallenged spiritual leader of the Third Reich.

(a) *The Myth of Langemarck*

The official High Command Communiqué on November 11, 1914, said simply: "West of Langemarck young regiments threw themselves against enemy positions singing 'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,' and took them." On the basis of this laconic statement an extensive literature grew up, and the mightiest myth of the First World War was created. I noticed during the years when I was Lecturer in English at the University of Breslau that the 11th November—Armistice Day—was always completely ignored in Germany, because it was felt to be a "day of shame" (Tag der Schande). But students celebrated the 9th November, the Day of Langemarck; there were the inevitable parades and patriotic speeches, and wreaths were laid at the University War Memorial. A third-rate dramatist, Heinrich Zerkau, pestered me at one time with letters asking me to translate his play *Jugend von Langemarck* into English, in the hope that it would be performed in this country. He said he wanted to create understanding between the Front-line Soldiers of both nations; but no doubt he secretly hoped that his play might achieve in England some of the success which *Die andere Seite* (the German translation of Sherriff's *Journey's End*) achieved in Germany.

This is what Josef Magnus Wehner, a nationalist and Nazi writer, makes out of Langemarck. It is a typical expression of the Langemarck myth. "They fell in rows, wearing no decorations or simply their student colours. Rushing forward and dying, they become the bearers of the Reich (Träger des Reiches). All those who sang at Langemarck fell there or later in the war. But they have risen again a thousand times with the song with which they died,

and they will rise again a thousand times to the end of the Reich, and that is to the end of our world. . . . The song did not die with those who died at Langemarck. It became a sign (Zeichen) for the Germans, for the heroes of death." Selchow, of course, cannot avoid discussing Langemarck in his book *Der bürgerliche und der heldische Mensch*. "There lies an eternal brightness (ein ewiger Glanz) over the Day of Langemarck. It marked the birth of a new age." (An ihm schlug die Geburtsstunde einer neuen Zeit.) Jünger gives a highly philosophical account in *Der Arbeiter*, declaring that Langemarck was one of those cosmic clashes (kosmische Gegensätze) which always occur when the world order is shaken to its foundations. In this case the clash was expressed in the symbols of the technical age. Langemarck was the struggle between those who sang on the hill of sacrifice (die Sänger am Opferhügel) and those who had forged the weapons. "The representatives of an idea are thrown to the ground by matter; but this contact with the ground endowed them with new strength in accordance with mythical laws."

It is significant that even Thomas Mann did not escape from the toils of the Langemarck myth. Although he does not mention Langemarck by name, it seems fairly certain that he had it in mind when he wrote the conclusion of his novel *Der Zauberberg*. The hero, Hans Castorp, is torn by the thunder of war (Donnerschlag des Krieges) out of the timeless existence on the magic mountain: in other words, after spending seven weird years in the sanatorium, he joined the army. And finally, he is one of 3,000 youths in a volunteer regiment, who sing as they rush forward to the attack and to death.

Unkind critics tell a different story about Langemarck. They say that, due to the mistake of some commanding officer, thousands of young German students, fresh from the recruiting depots, were sent virtually unarmed to certain death in front of the enemy's artillery and machine-guns.

Or that they came under their own artillery fire, and shouted and sang in order to attract attention. But such criticism was unable to kill the myth. Langemarck contained far too many of the elements required for a really typical and first-rate German myth: war and sacrifice, blood and thunder, colours and songs, and, above all, the element of heroic youth.

(b) *The Prussian Myths*

Another of the outstanding effects of the lost war was that many Germans turned instinctively to Prussia—to the glories and sufferings of the Prussian past, and to the Prussianism in their own souls and way of life. Moeller van den Bruck began his book *Der preussische Stil* with the words "Prussia is without a myth" (Preussen ist ohne Mythos), and then went on to disprove this statement by dealing at length with the myths of Frederick the Great, Frederick William I, the Teutonic Knights, and so forth. All I propose to do here is to illustrate briefly the part played by the greatest of all these Prussian myths—the myth of Frederick the Great. For example, it is surely significant that Walter von Molo's trashy novel *Fridericus* (copyright 1918) soon proved to be a best-seller in the years just after the war, and that it was even praised by the democratic and left-wing press. A nationalist periodical, *Die Wartburg*, wrote: "How beneficial it is to read this book in these hard times for our people. It appeared at the right moment, and had a most salutary effect." In 1924 a certain Paul Friedrich wrote a poem entitled "Come, King Frederick!"—which began: "Fridericus Rex, our king and hero,/Arise and lead us once again into the field of battle./We will march with you through thick and thin,/To Rossbach, to Leuthen, and even to Kolin." (Kolin was one of Frederick's worst defeats.) It ended: "To-day we want to wash our honour clean./Arise and lead us to victory into France."¹ In one of the essays

¹ *Fridericus Rex, unser König und Held,/Auf, führ' uns noch einma*

in Ernst Jünger's symposium, entitled "*Krieg und Krieger*" (1930), Gerhard Günther wrote about the way in which the German people have made a myth of the Great King (Mythologisierung des Grossen Königs), and of the seven mythical years of struggle (die sieben mythischen Prüfungsjahre), meaning of course the Seven Years War. No wonder Werner Hegemann declared in his *Fridericus* (1924)—that lengthy, learned and desperate attack on the myth of Frederick the Great: "False political legends are dangerous, and it seems to me that the legend of Frederick the Great is one of the most dangerous." But the efforts of Hegemann and others were in vain. Germans felt they needed their Frederick the Great myth, and would on no account regard him objectively, let alone reject him as a curse and an unfortunate historical mistake.

(c) *The Myth of the Reich*

For the myth of the Reich it is convenient to start with Stefan George, who as early as 1907—in *Der Siebente Ring*—was writing about the rise of a new empire. In 1921 he published a collection of poems entitled *Das neue Reich*, which included "Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren"—the poem which prophesied that out of the new youth the new leader would appear and set up the new empire. It must be stressed that Stefan George's ideas about the new empire were very different from those of Moeller van den Bruck and other precursors of the Nazis. He hoped, for example, that the new empire would take its rise from the Rhineland; that it would be imbued with the spirit of Roman Catholicism as opposed to Protestantism; and that it would fulfil what George regarded as the German mission of mediating between North and South. But what is so important here

ins Feld, ja ins Feld! / Wir wollen durch dick und dünn mit dir ziehn, / Nach Rossbach, nach Leuthen, und sei's selbst Kolin. . . . Die Ehre, die wollen heut waschen wir rein, / Auf, führ' uns zum Siege nach Frankreich hinein!

is that George prepared and influenced the minds of thousands of educated Germans, who might otherwise have regarded the myth of the Reich with suspicion when it ceased to be a vague ideal and became a programme and a tool in party politics. The man who gave the myth of the Reich this political and immediate aspect was, of course, Moeller van den Bruck, whose book *Das Dritte Reich* appeared in 1923. But as early as 1919 Spengler wrote in his *Untergang des Abendlandes*: "The Third Empire is the Germanic ideal, an eternal new dawn, to which all great men from Dante to Nietzsche and Ibsen linked their lives."¹ It is clear, therefore, that the "Third Reich" was, so to speak, in the German air after the war. Bismarck's Second Reich had disappeared ingloriously; so Germans at once began yearning for a mighty Third Reich to take its place. What Moeller van den Bruck did, was to harness the idea of the Third Reich to the chariot of the right wing and strongly nationalist political group, the so-called "revolutionary conservatives." He attacked Versailles, the November Revolution, Marxist Socialism, Liberalism, Democracy, Communism; and in the final section of his book he pleaded eloquently for unity, for the community of the German "Volk," for "Grossdeutschland." Moeller van den Bruck's *Das Dritte Reich* was a best-seller long before *Mein Kampf*, and had a greater influence during the Weimar period than any other work on politics.

A good illustration of the disastrous effects of the myth of the Reich is provided by Professor Petersen's *Die Sehnsucht nach dem Dritten Reich in deutscher Sage und Dichtung* (1934). Professor Petersen, who was for many years Professor of German Literature at the University of Berlin, began his book with a reference to the revival of the idea of the Third

¹ Das dritte Reich ist das germanische Ideal, ein ewiges Morgen, an das alle grossen Menschen von Dante bis Nietzsche und Ibsen—Pfeile der Sehnsucht nach dem andern Ufer, wie es in Zarathustra heisst—ihr Leben knüpfen. 1,509.

Reich by Moeller van den Bruck; and in the second paragraph he gave ecstatic expression to his great joy at the National Socialist revolution. "And now to-morrow has become to-day; the doomsday mood has changed into an eager desire to start life anew; the final goal can be discerned by the eyes of the present. . . . In the depths of the Volk all the forces of an ancient longing are awake, and the dream-pictures, with which the past lulled itself to sleep, are again brought to the light of day."¹ The chapters which followed dealt in turn with the six main conceptions of earthly bliss—the Golden Age, the Kingdom of God (Theocracy), World Monarchy (Imperialism), the Kingdom of the Spirit (Humanism), a League of Nations (the federative conception), the Communist idea of a state based on common ownership: all of which simply led up to the final and more glorious conception of the Volksreich, the Empire of the (German) people! The book ended with a graceful reference to Hitler: "This new Empire has been set up. The leader, whose coming has been prophesied and longed for, has appeared."² Petersen thereby showed that he knew his Stefan George—as one would only expect from such an authority on German literature. For this can only refer to the end of George's poem, "Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren."

The obvious conclusion is, that if the professors and flower of German learning and culture allowed themselves to be carried away on such waves of Romantic Imperialism in 1933, then it is not to be wondered at if the rank and file, the "men and women in the street," the gullible and unthinking German masses, were overwhelmed by them.

¹ Nun ist das Morgen zum Heute geworden; Weltuntergangsstimmung hat sich in Aufbruch verwandelt; das Endziel tritt ins Blickfeld der Gegenwart. . . . In der Tiefe des Volkstums sind alle Kräfte einstiger Sehnsucht lebendig, und die Traumbilder, in denen die Vergangenheit sich wiegte, werden neu an den Tag gezogen.

² Das neue Reich ist gepflanzt. Der ersehnte und geweissagte Führer ist erschienen.

(d) The Myth of the Blood

For the best expression of this myth I turn to Rosenberg's *Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts*. The following quotations speak for themselves. "To-day a new faith is awakening, the myth of the blood; the belief, based on clearest knowledge, that Nordic Blood represents that mystery which has replaced and overcome the old sacraments."¹ Rosenberg bases his belief above all on the blood of those who fell in the war: they are "the martyrs of a new dawn, of a new faith" (die Märtyrer eines neuen Tages, eines neuen Glaubens). "The blood that perished is coming to life again. In its mystical sign, the soul of the German people is renewing its life-cells. Past and present suddenly appear in a new light and for the future there is a new mission. The meaning of history and the tasks of the future no longer lie in the fight of one class against the other, or of one church dogma against another, but in the settlement between blood and blood, race and race, nation and nation. And this means: the fight for spiritual values."²

The myth of the blood is, from an English standpoint, the worst of all the myths, and the most difficult to understand. It is therefore just as well to attack and expose it with the help of a German writer, to call in a German crown-witness. In his book, *Geist und Reich* (1933), Richard Benz discusses the myth of the blood in some detail. He points out—quite justifiably—that the growing consciousness of the blood

¹ Heute erwacht aber ein neuer Glaube: der Mythus des Blutes, der mit hellstem Wissen verkörperte Glaube, dass das nordische Blut jenes Mysterium darstellt, welches die alten Sakramente ersetzt und überwunden hat. p. 114.

² Das Blut, welches starb, beginnt lebendig zu werden. In seinem mystischen Zeichen geht ein neuer Zellenbau der deutschen Volksseele vor sich. Gegenwart und Vergangenheit erscheinen plötzlich in einem neuen Licht und für die Zukunft ergibt sich eine neue Sendung. Geschichte und Zukunftsaufgabe bedeuten nicht mehr Kampf von Klasse gegen Klasse, nicht mehr Ringen zwischen Kirchendogma und Dogma, sondern die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Blut und Blut, Rasse und Rasse, Volk und Volk. Und das bedeutet: Ringen von Seelenwert gegen Seelenwert. p. 1.

(Bewusstwerden des Blutes) is a specifically German reaction against rationalisation and mechanisation, against pure reason, abstract calculation, and utilitarian motives, all of which Germans regard as hostile and alien to themselves. But he goes on to complain that the myth of the blood arises ultimately from feelings of resentment (Ressentiment). It puts the blame for the national defeat on alien blood, on another race. Benz declares that what he recognises as the genuine and necessary reaction of the blood is being falsified (verfälscht) by the race myth and diverted into other channels; and that the new race myth is simply the positive exploitation of the negative instincts of anti-Semitism. Moreover, the founders of the myth were not Germans, but foreigners like Gobineau and Chamberlain; and it is significant that the only great German who believed in the racial myth—Richard Wagner—was at bottom un-German (undeutsch). Benz points out that in order to realise how un-German he is, one only needs to compare his language with that of two other contemporary geniuses—Bismarck and Nietzsche. Wagner's music had a definitely Oriental and ecstatic character (orientalisch-ekstatischen Einschlag). "And unfortunately, the National Socialist movement, in so far as it concerns itself with the spirit and art, has given Wagner's ideals and Wagner as an ideal first place." It is worth while documenting this interesting German explanation and criticism of the myth of the blood. But it must, of course, be admitted that Benz was a voice crying in the wilderness, and that after 1933 such a voice was almost completely overwhelmed by the sonorous and vulgar tones of Adolf Hitler, for whom blood and race has always been an *idée fixe*, the mainspring of his thought and action, a madman's obsession. The myth of the blood had won the day.

Associated with the myth of the blood is the myth of the "Volk" and of the "Volksgemeinschaft" (community of the people). Everybody is familiar with the outpourings of Nazi

propaganda on this major and favourite theme; so that all I need do here is to give a few particularly crass illustrations, taken from Selchow's *Der bürgerliche und der heldische Mensch*. Selchow divides European history into three parts: the age of the "All" (Allzeit), down to the close of the Middle Ages; the age of the "Ego" (Ichzeit), which was dominated by the bourgeois and has just come to an end; and the age of the "We" (Wirzeit) which began in the First World War. He coins such weird words as "Hochichzeit" and "Spätichzeit" (impossible to translate—cf. Hochgotik and Spätgotik). He makes "Wir" into a neuter noun (das Wir); and he talks about "We-bearing" (Wirhaltung), "I-men" and "We-men" (Ichmenschen and Wirmenschen), and the "We-State" (Wirstaat). The German language has certainly a wonderful power of creating compound words; but this is carrying it to absurd lengths! Finally, I wish to suggest that the best answer to all the Nazi propaganda about the wonderful new German "Volksgemeinschaft" is to be found in Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916), which is still one of the most illuminating books on the German problem, from the standpoint of sociology and of social psychology. Trotter distinguished between the "aggressive gregariousness" of the wolf, the "protective gregariousness" of the sheep, and the more complex social structure of the bee and the ant, which he called "social gregariousness." Germany had developed the first, and England the third type of gregariousness; and the war was ultimately a struggle between these two types of community. Trotter admitted that the German type was strong, above all in attack; but he prophesied that the English type would prove to be the stronger in the long run, because its members are really more closely united with each other and have the better morale. The prophesy made by Trotter in 1916 turned out to be true in 1918. And personally, I believe that in spite of all the loud talk and jubilation about the new German

"Volksgemeinschaft," nothing has happened between the two wars or in the present war which is likely to discount or disprove Trotter's arguments.

IV. The Search for the Type

When people here say: "He's a type," or even more: "She's a type," it is usually not meant in a very complimentary sense. In this country, we still prefer individuals to types, and try to avoid being types ourselves. Not so in Germany between the two wars, where the word "Typus" took on a special meaning, and where all sorts of people, both great and small, joined eagerly in the search for the type which would wipe out the disgrace of the lost war and would once again restore Germany's might and wealth. An interesting sidelight on this search for the type is that physiognomy and graphology were popular as never before, and certainly much more popular than in England. I was often struck by the numerous collections of photos of leading men on sale in the bookshops—even before 1933; and after 1933 the innumerable photos and busts of Hitler and the other Nazi leaders helped to make Germany ugly and untidy by appearing all over the place. One of the most successful exhibitions organised by the Nazis was a collection of portraits of "Great Germans": it was opened in Berlin in 1936 and later shown in many other towns. Graphology also found a great many adherents, both among the learned and the less learned. The philosopher Klages was a leading authority on graphology. Many business firms, particularly the large concerns, employed graphologists to help with appointments.

Before I pass on to a brief discussion of certain dominating types, there is just another general point I wish to make. The typically German conception of history as dependent on great men, which found its best expression in our literature in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*, remained a strong

force throughout the period between the two wars. Germans were still invited to worship heroes and great men, but in addition they were encouraged to worship certain heroic types. It is difficult to decide which kind of worship had the more disastrous effects. But in any case, both represented a wonderful preparation and confirmation for Hitler and National Socialism.

The types I have chosen for discussion are: the type of the hero (*der heldische Mensch*), the Prussian type, the type of the Front-line Soldier (*der Frontsoldat*), and Ernst Jünger's "Worker." All these types merge into each other. They are all essentially masculine and virile; they are all "fighters" and warriors; they are all anti-bourgeois; they all arose out of the First World War, and found their natural fulfilment in the Second.

(a) *The Type of the Hero*

For the type of the hero, it is necessary to go back to the book published by the economist Werner Sombart in 1915, with the title *Händler und Helden—Patriotische Besinnungen*, dedicated to "You young heroes out there facing the enemy" (*Euch jungen Helden draussen vor dem Feinde*). Sombart compared "englisches Händlertum" with "deutsches Heldentum," and declared that the war in its essentials was a war between the merchant and the hero. He rails against the English desire for comfort (*Komfort*), and greed for money. The English attitude rejects war, or at any rate regards it as a necessary evil; in the English view, only a defensive war is justified, and if possible it should be fought with the help of mercenaries. English virtues are negative—moderation, frugality, industry, honesty, justice, abstinence, humility, patience. Sombart quotes a great deal of Nietzsche to show that the German spirit is quite different, e.g.: "O ye higher men, overcome for me this ant-like pettiness, this miserable idea of comfort, this happiness of the greatest

number!"¹ "To be German means to be a hero." Sombart declares that the so-called German militarism is the revelation of the heroic German spirit (die Sichtbarwerdung des deutschen Heldentums), which only reaches its finest form in war. Germans regard war as something holy, as the most holy thing on earth (das Heiligste auf Erden). "The heroic view of life finds its highest sanctification in heroic death" (Im Heldentod findet die heldische Lebensauffassung ihre höchste Weihe). Sombart therefore feels justified in declaring: "The chosen people of this century is the German people." I was once told by an intimate friend of Sombart that after the war he regretted having written this patriotic rubbish. But there can be no doubt that it had a strong influence on a certain type of youthful mind in the Weimar period.

Now for a more recent exposition of the qualities of heroic man. In 1934, Ernst Bergmann, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Leipzig, published his 25 *Thesen der Deutschreligion, ein Katechismus*, obviously modelled on the twenty-five points of the Party programme. The twentieth thesis runs: "The ethics of the German religion are heroic. (Bergmann uses both "heldisch" and "heroisch"—just to make quite sure.) They rest on the Old German virtues of bravery, chivalry, and faithfulness, which all rise out of honour." He then goes on to ask: "What is heroic?" And his reply runs: "Heroic is God. . . . Heroic was the Yule God, the Light God of the ancient north (der göttliche Lichtmensch des Urnordens). Heroic is Odin, the Germanic God of Knowledge (der germanische Erkenntnisgott)." Coming near to modern times: "And heroic is the man of Kant and Fichte." Getting nearer still: "Heroic is the man, who sacrifices himself for his Volk in war or peace. . . . And heroic is the mother who bears children for

¹ Ueberwindet mir, ihr höheren Menschen, . . . den Ameisen-Kribbelkram, das erbärmliche Behagen, das Glück der Meisten!

her Volk (die Volksmutter)." Getting quite warm!: "Heroic is the Führer, who believes in his Volk and its heroic greatness!" He concludes: "Heroism is the natural form of German-Nordic man" (Heldentum ist die natürliche Form des deutschnordischen Menschen).

(b) *The Prussian Type*

As regards the Prussian type, I propose to deal here only with Spengler's essay on "Staatsdienst und Persönlichkeit," which appeared in his *Neubau des Reiches* (1924). Spengler declared that the fate of a people (Volk) depended not on theories but on the men (die Persönlichkeiten) "who do what needs to be done." "A leading type is necessary, a type of man who embodies and develops the creative qualities of the people with regard to its historical position." (Ein leitender Typus ist notwendig, der die schöpferischen Eigenschaften des Volkes im Hinblick auf seine geschichtliche Lage zusammenfasst und herausbildet.) The successes achieved by England since Cromwell's day were due not so much to the appearance of really great statesmen (Spengler dryly observes that this was rather rare!), but to the fact that since the destruction of "old merry England" [*sic*] by Puritanism there arose a permanent layer (eine dauerhafte Schicht) of men, all with the same kind of attitude to life and with qualities of a practical and effective kind rather than of particular brilliance (von sehr gleichförmiger Lebensauffassung und weniger glänzenden als praktisch wirksamen Eigenschaften). Puritanism gave each one of them that glorious self-confidence (grossartiges Sicherheitsgefühl)—the feeling that whatever they did must be right, otherwise God would not have given them the will to do it. Secondly, they possessed the outlook of merchants and business men (die kaufmännische Wirtschaftsgesinnung), and the idea of free competition and devil-take-the-hindmost. Last but not least, says Spengler, comes the English idea of sport, which

in contrast to the impersonal ideals of Jahn's gymnastics (Turnen) makes victory dependent on the personal energy of the individual, and which has bred a type of man whose toughness (Zähigkeit)—at any rate up till now—has been equal to all dangers.

So far two attempts had been made in Germany to create a really effective type—firstly, Frederick William I's creation of the Prussian official, and secondly, Moltke's creation of the Prussian-German officer. "We owe it to these two men, and to them alone, that we have any idea at all as to what is really important." Spengler then refers to his *Preussentum und Sozialismus*, in which he had dealt at greater length with the Prussian type: with its unshakable sense of honour and duty, its conscientiousness and discipline; regarding selfless, hard, and thorough work as a matter of course; neither expecting nor receiving praise and reward. In 1871, when the German Reich was created and Germany became a great power, a new type was urgently needed. Bismarck neglected his duty in this respect, but Moltke proved equal to the task: he created the General Staff and the new officer type—on the basis of Prussian military tradition, careful selection, and most thorough training. Spengler found this type almost ideal.

(c) *The Type of the Front-line Soldier*

A passage from Rosenberg's *Mythus* and a passage from Jünger's *Arbeiter*, describing the physiognomy of the Front-line Soldier, will suffice to illustrate this type. The striking similarity between the two descriptions is at once evident, but it would be possible to quote many other descriptions of this kind from other writers. Rosenberg wrote in his *Mythus*: "The faces under the steel helmets in the War Memorials have almost all a similarity which one can only call mystical. A high, furrowed brow, a straight, clear-cut nose, the lips tightly closed, the wide-open eyes staring straight ahead—

into the distance and into eternity. This resolute manliness of the front-line soldier is markedly different from the ideals of beauty of earlier times. But this new beauty is also to be seen among German workers; it is the type of all those Germans who are struggling to-day.”¹ Now the passage from Jünger’s *Der Arbeiter*: “The face which looks out from underneath the steel helmet or the crash helmet has changed. It has lost in variety and therefore in individuality, but it has gained in the clearness and definition of the separate features. It has become more metallic, its surface has been somehow galvanised, the bones stand out clearly, the features are spare and tense. The gaze is calm and fixed, trained to observe things moving at high speed. It is the face of a race developing under new conditions—it is the face not of a person or an individual but of a type. We see here a kind of *élite*, the new backbone of the organisations of fighters, an *élite* which can also be described as an Order. It is the new type of the twentieth century.”²

The Front-line Soldier had been shaped by the War, and

¹ Die Gesichter, die unterm Stahlhelm auf den Kriegerdenkmälern hervorschauen, sie haben fast überall eine mystisch zu nennende Ähnlichkeit. Eine steile durchfurchte Stirn, eine starke gerade Nase mit kantigem Gerüst, ein festgeschlossener schmaler Mund. . . . Die weitgeöffneten Augen blicken geradeaus vor sich hin. Bewusst in die Ferne, in die Ewigkeit. Diese willenhafte Männlichkeit des Frontsoldaten unterscheidet sich merklich vom Schönheitsideal früherer Zeiten . . . Diese neue Schönheit ist aber auch ein arteigenes Schönheitsbild des deutschen Arbeiters, des heutigen ringenden Deutschen schlechtweg.

² Verändert hat sich auch das Gesicht, das dem Beobachter unter dem Stahlhelm oder der Sturzkappe entgegenblickt. Es hat an Mannigfaltigkeit und damit an Individualität verloren, während es an Schärfe und Bestimmtheit der Einzelausprägung gewonnen hat. Es ist metallischer geworden, auf seiner Oberfläche gleichsam galvanisiert, der Knochen tritt deutlich hervor, die Züge sind ausgespart und angespannt. Der Blick ist ruhig und fixiert, geschult an der Betrachtung von Gegenständen, die in Zuständen hoher Geschwindigkeit zu erfassen sind. Es ist das Gesicht einer Rasse, die sich unter den eigenartigen Anforderungen einer neuen Landschaft zu entwickeln beginnt, und die der Einzelne nicht als Person oder als Individuum, sondern als Typus repräsentiert. . . . Wir sehen hier eine Art von Garde, ein neues Rückgrat der kämpfenden Organisationen entstehen,—eine Auslese, die man auch als Order bezeichnen kann. Es ist der neue Typus, der Schlag des 20. Jahrhunderts.

had not been broken by it. He continued to be a soldier in time of peace. From the nationalist standpoint he had the duty and the right to play a leading part in politics, and in the shaping of the new and more glorious Reich.

(d) *Jünger's "Worker" Type*

I have already pointed out that Jünger has nothing but contempt for the bourgeois. In his book *Der Arbeiter* he declares that the type of the bourgeois is being replaced by the type of the Worker. The Worker is not afraid of the elemental; he has no exaggerated opinion of the powers of reason; and he has none of the bourgeois craving for security. The bourgeois depended on individuality, but this had now been replaced by the type. Jünger says: "It is not by chance that the Prussian philosophy is to be found everywhere in the world where new efforts (*neue Anstrengungen*) can be observed." He enthuses over the Prussian conception of duty, Prussian marches, the glorious Prussian battles, and concludes: "But the only possible heir of Prussianism is the Worker type." Like the other types I have dealt with, Jünger's Worker arose out of the war. Jünger declares: "One of the first representatives of the new type was the nameless soldier of the World War." It is clear that the type of man he has in mind is essentially a soldier as well as a worker: ready to take up arms if he is no longer required to play his part in the total mobilisation of industry for war purposes. Another point: "The Worker has not and cannot have any relations with Christianity." Finally, Jünger frequently uses such phrases as "the will to create a new race" (*Wille zur Rassenbildung*), and "the will to create a new type" (*Wille zur Erzeugung eines bestimmten Typus*). But he issues the warning that this has nothing to do with race in the biological sense. And this no doubt was from the start one of the main points of difference between Jünger and the Nazis.

V. Rosenberg Links Myths and Types Together

Finally, before leaving myths and types, I wish to point out that Rosenberg in his *Mythus* constantly links myths and types together. The following quotations speak for themselves: "The task of our century is to create a new type of man out of a new myth of life."¹ Or: "To experience the type means to begin to understand the myth of our entire history. It means the birth of the Nordic racial soul and the sincere adoption of its highest values as the guiding star of our whole existence."² And again: "The new myth and the new type-creating power, which in our lives to-day are striving to find expression, cannot in any way be refuted."³ Lastly: "Millions suddenly realise that it is their task to experience a myth and to create a type. And out of this type to build the State and to shape their lives."⁴

VI. The Spiritual Situation in the Early 30's

Before I pass on to Nazi propaganda, I wish to illustrate briefly the spiritual situation in the early 30's, with the help of a treatise on philosophy and a popular novel.

In 1931 a book appeared by Karl Jaspers, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg, entitled *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*. It was eagerly read and discussed by students and others. What had it to offer?

Professor Jaspers spoke of Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes* as one of the most popular "mirrors of our

¹ Das ist die Aufgabe unseres Jahrhunderts: aus einem neuen Lebens-Mythus einen neuen Menschentypus schaffen. p. 2.

² Das Erleben des Typus aber, das ist die Geburt der Erkenntnis des Mythus unserer ganzen Geschichte: die Geburt der nordischen Rassen-seele und das innerliche Anerkennen ihrer Höchstwerte als des Leitsterns unseres gesamten Daseins. p. 531.

³ Der neue Mythus und die neue typenschaffende Kraft, die heute bei uns nach Ausdruck ringen, können überhaupt nicht "widerlegt" werden. p. 700.

⁴ Als Aufgabe wird plötzlich von Millionen erfasst, . . . einen Mythus zu erleben und einen Typus zu schaffen. Und aus diesem Typus heraus Staat und Leben zu bauen. p. 481.

world," and declared that Spengler's ideas had spread to widest circles. But he was of the opinion that the influence of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche had been greater still, and that they were undoubtedly the "leading thinkers" since 1919. It was not so much that their ideas were slavishly adopted and copied, as the fact that all three led men to the conclusion that they were "faced with nothingness" (*vor dem Nichts stehen*)—a conclusion which was far more common after the war than ever before. "People are coming to believe that everything is breaking down; there is nothing which is not questionable; nothing that is real stands the test; it is an endless tumult which consists in cheating others and oneself by means of ideologies. The consciousness of the age loosens itself from all being and is only concerned with itself. He who thinks like this, feels all the time that he is nothing. His consciousness of the end is at the same time consciousness of the nothingness of his own being."¹

Jaspers also described the increase in fear of life (*Lebensangst*), and the constant feeling of crisis. Formerly, a favourite phrase was that we were living in an age of transition; thirty years ago everybody was talking about "fin de siècle"; nowadays every newspaper is talking about a crisis.

Finally, I wish to quote the fine warnings which Jaspers uttered in passages like the following: "It is easy to understand the seductive cry which has been heard for some time now: away from consciousness, and back to the unconsciousness of the blood, of faith, of the soil; of the soul, of history, of the unquestionable. . . . This cry is deceiving. A human being, in order to remain a human being, must live through

¹ Es ist wohl ein Bewusstsein verbreitet: alles versagt; es gibt nichts, das nicht fragwürdig wäre; nichts Eigentliches bewährt sich; es ist ein endloser Wirbel, der in gegenseitigem Betrügen und Sichselbstbetrügen durch Ideologien seinen Bestand hat. Das Bewusstsein des Zeitalters löst sich von jedem Sein und beschäftigt sich mit sich selbst. Wer so denkt, fühlt sich zugleich selbst als nichts. Sein Bewusstsein des Endes ist zugleich Nichtigkeitsbewusstsein seines eigenen Wesens. p. 14.

consciousness.”¹ Unhappily, such warnings were in vain. Irrationalism and the myths were soon to triumph, swept along by the mighty wave of Nazi propaganda.

So much for one of the leading philosophers of the day. Now let us glance at a novel called *Fabian—Die Geschichte eines Moralisten*, by Erich Kästner. Almost every English schoolboy—at a school where German is taught—knows Kästner’s *Emil und die Detektive*; and this lively story of the adventures of some Berlin boys has also found favour with many English adults. *Fabian* was first published in October 1931, and quickly became a best-seller. Again, I can recall reading it, because it was so much talked about by students and others in Breslau early in 1932.

It is the story of a young man who could not integrate himself, and could not come to terms with life. At the age of seventeen he had left school in Potsdam, and had gone straight into the army. The war left him with a weak heart; but more than that, it had unsettled him completely. After the war he studied, and took his doctorate; but like so many other “Akademiker” in the Weimar period he was unable to find a suitable job. When the story opens, he is working on the advertisement staff of a cigarette firm in Berlin. He is thirty-two. The novel describes his thoughts, what he did in his spare time, his love affairs. (Incidentally, parts of the novel can only be described as indecent, according to English standards; but it is nevertheless a first-rate “Zeitdokument.”) “He did his job, although he did not know for what purpose.” Sometimes he asked himself why he did not leave Berlin and go back to Potsdam to live with his mother, who kept a little shop. “What was he doing in this city, in this box of bricks which had gone mad (in diesem

¹ Daher ist begreiflich der verführende Ruf, der seit langem gehört wird: zurück aus der Bewusstheit zur Unbewusstheit des Blutes, des Glaubens, der Erde; der Seele, des Geschichtlichen und des Fraglosen. . . . Dieser Ruf täuscht. Der Mensch muss, um Mensch zu bleiben, durch die Bewusstheit hindurch. p. 128.

verrücktgewordenen Steinbaukasten)? He might just as well await the collapse (Untergang) of Europe at home." Why should he work hard, and try to get on? He was not interested in either money or in power. "I am not unhappier than our time." (Ich bin nicht unglücklicher als unsere Zeit.) "I play about, and I wait, just as in the war when we knew we would soon be called up. . . . We had a dangerous hunger for life, because we believed it might be the last meal before execution (Henkersmahlzeit)." He compares the waiting then with his present life. "I was sitting in a big waiting-room, called Europe. . . . And now we are once again sitting in the waiting-room, called Europe! And once again we don't know what is going to happen. We are living provisionally: the crisis never comes to an end!" (Wir leben provisorisch, die Krise nimmt kein Ende.)

He falls in love; and just when he feels like making the most of life and of himself, he is sacked, and finds himself one of the army of 5,000,000 unemployed. His girl leaves him for a wealthy old film director. His friend commits suicide. So he goes home to Potsdam, where his observant mother sums up his state of mind with the words: "He doesn't believe in God. He lacks a point of rest."

The end comes quite suddenly; it begins on page 332, and by the middle of page 333 all is over. Fabian jumps in the river, to try to save a small boy who has fallen in. "The small boy swam howling to the bank. Fabian was drowned. Unfortunately he could not swim." (Der kleine Junge schwamm heulend ans Ufer. Fabian ertrank. Er konnte leider nicht schwimmen.) It has often struck me that these last words of Kästner's novel sum up the fate of the Weimar Republic better than many pages of political and sociological explanation. The Weimar Republic was drowned, because it could not swim. Or at any rate, there were many worthy people in the Weimar Republic ("Moralisten" like Fabian), whom the war had left unsettled, if not broken. Although

in a great majority, they were unable to make up their minds, and to oppose successfully the loud-voiced and ruthless minority who propagated the myths and the heroes. It was difficult for a Fabian not to be attracted by the myths, because they seemed to offer a short cut to peace of mind and an easy way of overcoming one's feelings of gnawing uncertainty and brooding apprehension; and it was difficult for a Fabian not to feel a kind of inferiority complex when he compared his own miserable existence with that of the "Front-line Soldier" or of a Brown Shirt. And when finally the myths and the heroes triumphed in 1933, many of the Fabians—and much of the "Fabianism" in the hearts and minds of millions of Germans—simply capitulated.

It is significant that both Jaspers and Kästner stressed the feeling of crisis—the crisis which never came to an end. I can confirm this from my own contacts with many Germans of all classes and types in the early 30's. I always felt that the much-discussed revolution might break any day, and that I should have to leave Germany quite suddenly. "Things can't go on like this!" (So geht das nicht weiter!), or "There must be a change!" (Es muss anders werden!): such were the slogans on everybody's lips. Although, as Fabian pointed out to his friend in the Steel-Helmets (Stahlhelmer), most of the people who talked like this had very little idea as to what sort of change they wanted. But Hitler and the Nazis knew; and making skilful use of the general unrest, their propaganda easily won the day.

VII. Propaganda

The National Socialist revolution was primarily a revolution of propaganda. The Nazis came to power on a wave of propaganda, and they have kept their power largely by propaganda ever since. Propaganda—in the Nazi sense—represents a new and terrible factor in human society. Thanks to the development in the organs of publicity—

wireless, press, and films—it was possible as never before in human history, for a small group of men to shape the mind and outlook of a whole people in accordance with their will, and for the achievement of their own nefarious purposes. Just as in the nineteenth century it was often convenient to use the conception of the Economic Man, so in the twentieth century it may become increasingly convenient to talk about the Propaganda Man. The great majority of Germans were sufficiently educated to be affected easily by the organs of publicity. (The Propaganda Man must be able to understand and appreciate what he hears and reads and sees; otherwise most of the propaganda is in vain.) At the same time, the effects of the war and the inflation, the loss of Christian and civilised values and principles, and above all the search for myths in conscious or unconscious rejection of the powers of reason and common sense, made Germans incapable of healthy criticism and an easy prey for Nazi propaganda. This is not an attempt to whitewash or exculpate the German people as a whole. But it goes a long way towards explaining the great riddle as to why so many Germans—as individuals normal, decent, and cultured—were unable as a mass and a nation to withstand the Hitler disease, and to prevent the tragedy which developed after 1933. Only those who have lived in the atmosphere and under the strain of Nazi propaganda can understand how in some mysterious way the development was inevitable and inexorable. “Propaganda was in the saddle and rode mankind!”

What then, in a few short sentences, is the nature of this new force of Nazi propaganda? The Nazis themselves have been most frank about it—above all Hitler in *Mein Kampf*. Propaganda is first of all a weapon. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*: “Propaganda is a truly terrible weapon in the hands of the expert.” Secondly, propaganda and force—or the threat of force—always go closely together. The Propaganda

Ministry is unthinkable without the concentration camp. Thirdly, propaganda is total—a total weapon: it monopolises all the organs of publicity—wireless, press, and films; it organises them as they have never been organised before; it covers every utterance, and the most private thoughts and feelings of everybody. Opposing views and influences from outside are almost completely excluded. Fourthly, this propaganda is aimed primarily at the masses; it unscrupulously provides for the lower levels of intelligence, and the more coarse and brutal tendencies in human nature. It is even prepared to admit that it cynically exploits the gullibility of the masses, and that it depends largely on the really big lie and the lie monotonously repeated. It deliberately keeps the masses in a state of tension (*Spannung*), by providing ever new sensations and propaganda campaigns and slogans. It feeds the masses with symbols, and pageants, and parades: it keeps them eternally marching—always in groups; always as cogs in a machine, as privates in a vast army—never allowing them to live as individuals. Finally, one may say that the main purpose of Nazi propaganda is to prevent people from thinking for themselves. It allows no expression of opinion beyond the parrot-like repetition of thoughts and ideas specially presented from above.

But what about the famous Nazi attitude towards life (*Weltanschauung*)? My reply is that this is only part of propaganda, and that it is only to be understood as propaganda. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*: "It is obvious that the new movement could only hope to gain the importance and strength necessary for the gigantic struggle, if from the very first it succeeded in rousing in the hearts of its adherents the sacred belief that no new election slogan was being forced upon political life, but a new *Weltanschauung* of fundamental importance." Hitler and the other Nazis have been boasting about their wonderful "*Weltanschauung*" ever since. For example, Otto Dietrich, the Reich Press Chief, declared in

a speech in 1938 that the Nazi revolution represented a "revolution in thought"—a "Copernicus turn" in spiritual and intellectual life. But if one examines this *Weltanschauung*, one finds that it is by no means new, or unique, or consistent. It is a medley and hotch-potch of the worst elements of German thought in the past, with special prominence to the myths and the types which we have already discussed. To be impressed by the Nazi "*Weltanschauung*," to take it too seriously, is to fall victim to Nazi propaganda. Most Germans were only too eager to take Nazi propaganda at its face value and to come to terms with it. But they were suffering from the disadvantage of being Germans, and were left with little or no choice. I have already pointed out that immediately before 1933, the dominating idea in the minds of millions of Germans was: "There must be a change!" (*Es muss anders werden!*) After 1933, the prevailing mood was expressed by such phrases as: "What can *I* do about it?" (*Was kann ich dafür?*). This was just what the Nazis intended, and it represents more than anything else the triumph of Nazi propaganda. They succeeded in making Germans believe that there was no alternative to Hitler. Even the minority of intelligent and determined anti-Nazis were inclined to regard war as the only way out, as the only possible end to the régime. They were no doubt right.

One of the chief slogans used by the Social Democrats in the early 30's was: "Hitler means war!" (*Hitler bedeutet Krieg!*) But in all fairness to the devil and in the interests of science, it must not be forgotten that certain prominent and influential writers had been assiduously preparing the German people for war long before Hitler came to power. In other words, Hitler and the Nazis were simply the scum brought to the surface by powerful currents deep down in German waters. Once scum appears, it is difficult for the waters beneath to remove it—unless there is a real flood.

It is hardly necessary to point out that war was of the very essence and the most natural consequences of the myths and types to which I have drawn attention. What Hitler and the Nazis did was to see that these war-like ideas were drummed into the German people with the help of all the organs and devices of a masterly, relentless propaganda. They saw to it that what before 1933 had been a minority of war-mongers now became the spiritual leaders of the German people, and that their ideas were recognised and propagated as the official and exclusive national creed. Yet at the same time Nazi propaganda never for a moment dropped the mask of peace. The slogan "Hitler wants peace!" (Hitler will den Frieden!) was continually heard, and Germans were reminded repeatedly of "Hitler's outstretched hand of peace." Many Germans believed this propaganda; or they pretended to believe it, because they dreaded war. If one pointed to the millions of bayonets which after 1933 rose up in serried array from German soil, the reply from one's German friends was as often as not: But the bayonets are necessary so that Germany's enemies can no longer sit on her, and in any case they are festooned with olive branches. Many Germans maintained to the last that there would be no war: the Führer had always managed to get what he wanted and yet to avoid war in the past; he would no doubt pull it off again. The way to the hell of war was never better paved than with the good intentions of the misguided German people.

VIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, a few words about the future. Nazi propaganda will disappear with Hitler, the man who invented and inspired it, who made it such a powerful instrument for evil, and who at the same time represented its focal point and main pillar. The terrible experiences of the "total" war which Germans theorised so much about in

times of peace, and above all the fact that for the first time since Napoleon war has been brought (by bombing) to Germany's own soil, may produce a far more radical change in the national as well as the individual attitude towards war than was the case after 1918. But the myths—or at any rate the tendency to search for and believe in them—will probably remain. One constant fear in my mind is that Hitler's end will be staged in such a way as to provide the coping stone for what already promises to be a first-rate German myth. Perhaps he will fade out mysteriously in some glorious action; or disappear into his fantastic eyrie and burial-place on the top of the mountain near Berchtesgaden, there to sit waiting like his neighbour Frederick Barbarossa, with his Charlie Chaplin moustache growing into a marble table—until the ravens (in the form of Messerschmitt 109's) shall give him the signal to descend with his SS Guards, and to restore the Reich.

Secondly, one may assume that the glorification of the heroic warrior type will also remain—at any rate in the hearts and minds of a large number of Germans. And it is certain that the Front-line Soldiers of this war—many of them brutalised, sadistic, entirely unfit for a settled existence in a civilised society—will prove to be an even greater problem than the Front-line Soldiers of the last. The gap created by the almost complete destruction of the German middle class will also have to be borne constantly in mind. The spiritual and social situation in Germany after the Second World War will demand, therefore, the most conscientious study and the most careful handling—if we in this country are to help Germany to cure herself of her tragic disease, and to ensure peace in Europe and the world.

NATIONALISM AND THE GERMAN INTELLECTUALS

A SURVEY of the history of German nationalism leads to certain conclusions which it is well to state at the beginning, since they in turn determine the approach and scope of this paper. They are, firstly: The meaning of nationalism is subject to a deep change during the nineteenth century. Nothing is more untrue than that the Germans "have always been the same." No great nation has undergone such profound modifications as the German, between say 1800 and 1900. In 1800 Germany was no nation but an agglomeration of smaller and larger states; a predominantly peasant country ruled by the nobility, where industrial production was carried on by petty artisans and controlled by guilds. The outlook of her leading thinkers was individualistic, humanitarian, idealistic; that of the masses parochial, homely, sentimental. The military caste in Prussia was then, too, no doubt, militaristic and authoritarian in its outlook, though even the Junkers, as in the first half of the nineteenth century, were not at that time ambitious and aggressive in their conservative militarism. For the great mass of the people what Lessing wrote was true: "A state is far too abstract a concept for our feelings."¹

Secondly: The meaning of nationalistic ideas at any time can only be understood within the social circumstances to which they refer. It is therefore necessary to outline the social and political context of such notions and slogans as German culture, the German state, etc., if we are to find what was their real, practical meaning.

¹ *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, 1767, xiv.

This is, of course, true of the history of ideas in general. Ideas are elusive and deceptive spirits, which we can understand and exorcise only if we understand their sphere of activity.

Thirdly: In concentrating on a single, particular theme of German history, it may easily seem that this is the only historical trend. In the time of the Weimar Republic it was possible to write German history as the development of German democracy. The standpoint the historian takes necessarily imposes a pattern on the landscape of the past and establishes links and a perspective which are broken if a different standpoint is chosen. Without being able completely to overcome this limitation, I shall try to bear in mind the diverse political tendencies in modern Germany, just as I bear in mind that National Socialism is not the only nor the final political outlook in the Germany of to-day.

The Emergence of German Nationalism

The first widespread expression of German nationalism occurred as a result of the impact of the French Revolution on Germany.¹ This impact exerted pressure in two directions. It inspired Germans with admiration for a people which had asserted itself against an oppressive ruling class and had found new national strength in a new social order; and with hatred for a nation which successively defeated and humiliated the German states, even proud Prussia.

It is from this time, after the Peace of Campo Formio 1797, or at any rate after the Peace of Lunéville 1801, that date the views that German culture, German character, German language are superior to all others. These views

¹ The fullest account of German nationalist thought is R. D'O. Butler's *The Roots of National Socialism*, 1941. I am in debt to Mr. Butler's careful labour and insight, but consider his interpretation of National Socialism as a national German tradition is erroneous. See Julius Braunthal, *Need Germany Survive?* for an able refutation of some of Mr. Butler's statements.

are shared by such different personalities as Friedrich Schlegel, Fichte, Jahn, Wilhelm von Humboldt. From a draft of a poem, *German Greatness*, by Schiller, we get an idea of the genesis of this tendency of thought:

"It is the destiny of the German to perfect in himself general humanity, to wreath the lovely blossoms of other peoples into a crown. The centre of Europe's peoples, he is the kernel of mankind, as they are the flower and leaf. . . .

He has kept and preserved the treasures of the centuries, all the precious things that arose and declined in other times and peoples.

It is not the task of the German to shine for the moment and play out his part, but to achieve the great fulfilment of time. Every people has its day in the history of the world; but the day of the German is the harvest of all time. . . .

Domination must in the end belong to him who is formed and ruled by the spirit; for finally, at the goal of time, if the world has any plan, if the life of man has any meaning, finally morality and reason must conquer, crude violence must submit to form—and the slowest people will overtake the rapid and fleeting peoples. The other peoples would then appear as the flower that fadeth. When the flower has faded, the golden fruit is left, it grows and swells toward the harvest.

This precious possession of ours, the German language, expresses everything, all that is deepest and most fleeting, the spirit, the meaningful soul. . . .

At this moment (1797), when the German ingloriously abandons a sorrowful war, when two arrogant peoples (France and Britain) place their feet on his neck and the victor decides his fate, can he feel his own worth, and glory and rejoice in his name? can he raise his head and step with dignity in the ranks of the peoples?

Yes, he can! He was unsuccessful in battle, but he has not lost what constitutes his true worth. The German Reich and the German nation are two different things.

The majesty of the Germans never rested on the heads of their princes. The German has founded his specific value elsewhere than in the political sphere; and even if the imperium collapsed, the dignity of the Germans would remain unassailed.

Theirs is a moral greatness, it dwells in the culture and character of the nation, which are independent of its political fortunes. This Reich flourishes in Germany, it is in full growth, and in the midst of the Gothic ruins of an ancient barbaric constitution the living forces are taking shape."¹

Such overweening self-praise strikes a familiar and sinister note in our minds; we have heard it so often as the accompaniment of aggressive German imperialism. But it must be emphasised that in this early period it was not the expression of German aggression. Schiller was no nationalist in the political sense. For all these writers the concept of Germany as the "nation of humanity" (Jahn), the "nation of culture" (Schlegel, Schiller, Humboldt, etc.) is a defence-mechanism. Germany, they stated and believed, was not and could not become a political entity like France and Britain. Germany had no pretensions, in their view, to political greatness and foreign conquest.

Peace and national self-limitation are, paradoxically enough, the principles underlying this early German nationalism. Herder had earlier repudiated with indignation the commercial imperialism of Britain.² Fichte and the others do the same.³ The intention behind Fichte's imaginary autarchic state is indeed, as he says, the preservation of peace through the abolition of commercial competition and of the exploitation of foreign peoples—and there is as much to be said for this view as for Adam Smith's contention that

¹ Schiller, *Deutsche Grösse, Werke* ed. Bellermann, Leipzig, vol. xi.

² Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, 1775, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Suphan, v.

³ Fichte, *Der geschlossene Handelsstaat*, *Werke*, Berlin, 1845, iii. 447, 462, 482.

international trade brings peaceful relations in its train.¹ If Fichte moved from the abstract cosmopolitanism of his early writings to patriotism, he always sees (and with reason) patriotism as a means to international harmony and to the state of Reason and Law. He exalts Germany by saying that only the Germans are capable of a universal culture, and he believes that a true culture is impossible without a free nation (it was not so long since German literature had only with a great effort freed itself from the bondage of foreign forms and fashions). But with all this Fichte is determinedly opposed to Germany's sharing in the booty of the world. And even in the *Reden an die deutsche Nation* he is so unpolitical as to say that it is of no significance whether Germany is one or many separate states. The depth of German culture arises, he writes, from Germany's advantage in not forming a precise state; French culture is shallow and precise just because France is a clear-cut political entity.

¹ The significance of theories of autarchy is easily misjudged, and I think Mr. Butler makes a double mistake in saying, of Fichte's *Closed Commercial State*, "this embryonic German socialism is national-socialism" (op. cit., 44); a double mistake since, in my opinion, this view wrongly estimates the intention behind Fichte's theories, and also fails to appreciate the relationship of modern autarchism to National-Socialism.

In Fichte's abstract argument, autarchy is a means of avoiding commercial competition, exploitation of weaker peoples, war; it is a means of creating a contented and self-limiting national feeling; it can apply equally to all states and is the very reverse of a theory of national superiority and conquest. In these respects the Fichtean construction is the very reverse of National-Socialism.

In our own time, though the Hitler movement was accompanied by a flock of autarchists who elaborated plans to restore German prosperity, Hitler and his associates have repudiated in theory and practice any idea of making Germany self-sufficient and contented. In the first years of Hitler-Germany the leaders insisted on the need to export, and sought commercial expansion abroad. Their policy during the war shows that export of capital, control of foreign markets, world-domination is a fundamental principle of National-Socialism. The autarchy of the *Tat* circle, etc., must be ranked with the dreams of the small artisans and traders that trusts would be socialised and department stores broken up. The development of the substitute-industry in Hitler-Germany, especially since 1936 in the Four Year Plan, cannot be identified with theoretical autarchy, for it came into being as an inexorable part of the preparation for war in view of Germany's shortage of certain raw materials.

With a like intention Humboldt, the father of German liberalism, who contributed so much to the regeneration of the Prussian state, wrote: "Germany must be strong for the sake of peace, and because only a strong nation can have the necessary confidence in itself (Selbstgefühl) for a serene and undisturbed self-development." No genuine German, he believes, wants Germany to become a conquering state; she has great intellectual and scientific advantages because she has no political tendencies outwards.

In the period of deepest humiliation, when Prussia was being reorganised for battle, and when for the first time the notion of a united Germany transcending the barriers of the separate states inspired many minds, the leaders of the resurgence struggled only for national independence. So rabid a patriot as Turnvater Jahn, who grouped Germans with Greeks as the two "holy peoples" of humanity, considered that the essential characteristic of the Germans was their cosmopolitanism. And how can citizens of another powerful state disagree with his thesis that "a people without a state is a bodiless airy phantom"?¹

Extravagances of thought and expression occurred, but need careful examination before they are condemned as aggressive nationalism. One of the most notable examples is Heinrich von Kleist's play, *Die Hermannsschlacht*, the first nationalistic propaganda play, which remained, however, unproduced and almost unknown at the time. The theme is the ancient victory of the German Arminius over the Roman legions under Varus. With scarcely veiled allusions to contemporary Germany, Kleist recommends the subordination of everything to the cause of national liberation. The conqueror is to be lulled by deceitful promises and negotiations, to be ensnared by amorous enticement, the German people is to be infuriated by acts of provocation and false atrocity stories engineered by the German patriots; any

¹ F. L. Jahn, *Deutsches Volkstum*, 1810.

cruelty and faithlessness is justified. When a noble Roman prisoner appeals for mercy in the name of human rights, Arminius shouts: "What do you know of right, you cursed knave, when you came to Germany to oppress us? Take a club of double weight and beat him to death!"

The play, like Kleist's political verse, shows what fierce fanaticism could seize even a cultured Junker in Prussia's and Germany's humiliation. But his "immoralism" is entirely defensive, directed against the foreign aggressor, and is in no sense aggressive.

This early German nationalism is, then, fundamentally different from German imperialism or National-Socialism. In itself, and for its time, it was a noble and justifiable principle, in no way incompatible with reason and right. No one will charge Goethe with one-sided nationalistic feeling. He stood apart from the War of Liberation¹ and has often been charged with political indifferentism. All the more significant are the words he uttered in a conversation of 1813: "Do not believe that I am indifferent to the great ideas of freedom, people, fatherland. No; these ideas are within us; they are a part of our being, and no one can throw them off. And Germany lies close to my heart. I have often felt bitter sorrow at the thought of the German people, which is so estimable in its individual members but so wretched as a whole. A comparison of the German people with other peoples rouses painful feelings in us, which I strive to overcome in some way or other; and in science and art I have found the wings to carry me beyond such thoughts . . . but the solace that science and art bring is only a poor consolation, and is no substitute for the proud consciousness of belonging to a great, strong, esteemed and feared people."²

¹ Goethe made amends in his *Des Epimenides Erwachen*, 1814-15, in which he addresses those who fought for Germany's liberty: "Yet I am ashamed of my hours of repose; it was a gain to suffer with you; and because of the pains you have undergone you are greater than I am."

² In H. Luden, *Rückblicke auf mein Leben*, 1847.

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Heine somewhat later expresses the same thought in his sardonic fashion:¹

The land belongs to the Russians and French,
The English own the sea,
But we in the airy realms of dreams
Hold sovereign mastery.

Our unity is perfect here,
Our power beyond dispute;
The other folk in solid earth
Have meanwhile taken root.

Liberalism and Nationalism

From 1821 onwards, the date of his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel is generally considered as expressing German nationalistic philosophy in its predominant form. Hegel's apotheosis of the state, though applied later in the century to imperial Germany, was, however, severely restricted within the existing state frontiers; he even criticised uncontrolled capitalism because of its inevitable urge towards foreign expansion. Hegel was as derisive towards the movement for German unity as towards the democratic movement of his time in Germany. His contribution to German nationalism lies above all in his conception of the state as the highest reality, from which all other moral values (personal, domestic, social and even religious) are derived; and equally in his insistence on the sovereignty of the state in its relations with other states, with its corollary that war is a natural form of intercourse between states.

Most German thinkers of the nineteenth century concurred in this view of war; very few outside the socialist movement attempted to define the difference between a just and an unjust war, so courageously discussed by Fichte in his lectures of 1813. But it is important to recognise the historical, factual basis of this militancy. Hegel's praise of

¹ H. Heine, *Deutschland ein Wintermärchen*, 1844, caput vii.

war, as that of Kant before him, is based on an appreciation of the value of war in the past in extending the sphere of culture, in overthrowing effete civilisations. Easily as such a conception may be abused, Hegel was himself witness of the introduction of advanced social principles into Germany by means of Napoleon's wars, and of the liberation and awakening of Prussia through the war against the French tyranny.

For the generation which was endangered by the tyrannical clerical absolutism of the reactionaries round the Prussian King, of the engineers of the Holy Alliance, Hegel's lectures were a rallying-point of the progressive movement. For in Hegel's philosophy many of the ideals of liberalism were asserted as absolute principles—equality of civil rights for all classes, including the Jews, free choice of occupation, inviolability of the law.

It was only during the 1830's that the balance of classes pre-supposed by the Hegelian philosophy was disturbed; and from that time the youth of the middle class became increasingly impatient with all views which would imprison them within the existing political framework of Germany.

Two deep longings permeated the middle classes, particularly those whose education or vocation gave them an acquaintance with the more advanced conditions in England and France: the longing for self-government, in one form or another, and the longing for a united German state. Both were frustrated by the same opponent, the princes and the landed aristocracy, whose power was immensely stronger because of the division of the country into so many small states. Thus the theme of the "national state," the state whose limits are defined by nationality and not by dynastic or traditional interests, is as Meinecke says a middle-class principle.¹ It is more: it is in this period a liberal, democratic principle.

¹ F. Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*, 6th ed., Munich and Berlin, 1922, p. 245.

It need not be stressed here how much the unification of Germany was, from an economic point of view, a middle-class interest. The development of industry and trade, of railways and water transport, cut to shreds the barriers between the German states; and the Prussian Customs Union found no more ardent supporters than the budding German industrialists and financiers.

A phrase of Hebbel's sums up the general consciousness of change and impending change: "We live in the times of the Last Judgment, but one which is mute, when things are breaking down of themselves" (1841).¹ The theme of social and ethical change provides the fundamental problem of Hebbel's tragedies.

The significant feature of the progressive movement in Germany was that it grew strong in circumstances which imposed nationalistic aspirations on it. It was thus liberals who called for German resistance to French threats in 1839, liberals who called for the formation of a German navy in the 1840's, liberals who composed the national songs like *Deutschland über alles*, liberals who called for the extension of the Customs Union to the Low Countries, Switzerland, and Holland, liberals who advocated a strong policy towards Denmark in 1848.

This nationalism was not considered to be incompatible with good internationalism—in fact, these liberals were often slandered by being called the French Party, or the Jewish Party, etc. It was accompanied by much speculation on the nature of the nation. What was in fact to be the area and composition of the future German state? Was it to be based on a common German ancestry?—hence so much loving research into the historic past of the Germans. Was it to be based on language? Were the Low German populations to be included?—The Parliament of 1848 had a language atlas prepared showing the areas in which German was

¹ F. Hebbel, *Tagebücher*, ed. Bamberg, Berlin, 1885, p. 237.

spoken, and necessarily including the Low Countries.¹ Thus German nationalism easily acquired, in the minds of such democratic and peaceful men as the professors Uhland or Grimm, that immoderateness which, in later writers, became an excuse for aggressive claims.

Up to 1848 nationalism was the natural expression of the German democratic movement. The Revolution was a turning-point. Circumstances forced democrats to decide for or against aggressive nationalism; and the decision spelt the doom of democracy.

The revolutionary Parliament was from beginning to end occupied with the problem of the non-German territories ruled by Austria and Prussia. The extreme Left, the radical democrats, supported the application of the democratic principle of self-government to the subject peoples. But the vast majority decided otherwise. The Italian revolt was called a declaration of war by the Parliament. A close associate of Robert Blum, the leader of the Lefts, remonstrated against the "untimely humanity" with which the Czech rising was suppressed by the Austrian general Windischgrätz (the general who in a few months was to destroy the Austrian democrats, and Blum with them). And the whole Parliament covered with its authority the integration of Prussian-Poland into the German Federation.

The problem of German nationalism was posed in all its sharpness by the Junker Bismarck in an article in the *Magdeburger Zeitung* of April 30. How is it possible, he asked, to reconcile the movement for German unity with the disruption of German power on the Eastern borders? and provocatively he said that he would understand a German attack on Alsace and Lorraine. In the main, democrats then as later agreed with him; and ceased to be democrats.

In this weakening of democratic opinion we must take into account another factor. The radicals in the Parliament

¹ Karl Bernhardi, *Sprachkarte von Deutschland*, 2nd ed., 1849.

demanded a thoroughly democratic constitution, asserting the sovereignty of the people. But the majority on principle renounced Jacobinism, fearing the power of the mob. It was not for nothing that Germany's development was posterior to that of France and England. The memory of 1793 was ever-present.¹ Through Heine and other writers the Germans knew of the socialist and communist movements abroad. They watched with scared eyes the trend of things in 1848 France. This German democracy did not have the confident self-trust of 1789, but was guarded, cautious, timid. The majority never departed from the old established powers too far. Only too easily were they frightened by the phantom of the "mob" (the counterpart of the modern Bolshevik bogey) into the arms of the old traditional powers, the Austrian and Prussian monarchies with their armies, where they were soon stifled.

If democrats were affected in this way, it is not surprising that a traditionalist like Grillparzer who, though he suffered under the Metternich régime, was an opponent of liberalism, should pass to a jubilant nationalism. His famous hymn to the victories of Radetzky over the Italian insurgents was a greeting to the return of the old régime, although Grillparzer knew that the old rottenness and humiliations were returning too. And Hebbel, who earlier had written: "When a revolution collapses, a whole century collapses,"² now was mournfully relieved that the old order was maintained.

In 1848 the contradiction between democracy and

¹ The revolutionary "mob" enters into German literature in the early 1830's in the plays of Grabbe (*Napoleon oder die Hundert Tage*) and Büchner (*Dantons Tod*). Both recognise the mob as the source of power, and insist on its significance in the history of the Revolution. But both point out its waywardness, its susceptibility to demagoguery, its senseless cruelty and purposelessness. We can see from the memoirs of so characteristic a figure as Heinrich Laube how present was the consciousness of the mob in the minds of the democrats of the 1840's, and how determined they were to avoid "Jacobinism," the use of the mob as a political force (cf., for example, the policy of the liberal Prussian Governments under Camphausen and Hansemann during 1848).

² Hebbel, *Tagebücher*, 1838, p. 61.

nationalism began to reveal itself in Germany. The German middle classes had to decide whether their nationalism would be one of defence, an international principle, or whether it would be one of power and conquest. Their decision was fundamental for their whole future history. In Jacob Grimm we see an epitome of this development. In 1837 Grimm, along with six other Göttingen professors, had suffered exile because of his protest against the abrogation of the Hanoverian constitution. In June 1848 he writes bitterly: "Now we have a surfeit of politics, and while the birds on the roofs are twittering about the people's freedom, which nothing can hold up any longer, we have scarcely the shadow of the longed-for unity which alone can give us power."¹ It was only too true that, for the middle classes of the following generations, anything which stood in the way of the unity and power of Germany was to be considered a "surfeit of politics" and a "twittering of birds." In *Germany, Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (1851-2) Friedrich Engels submitted the events of 1848 to a severe and penetrating analysis; and with astonishing prescience he summed up: "Political liberalism, the rule of the bourgeoisie, be it under a monarchical or republican form of government, is for ever impossible in Germany."

Bismarck and German Unity

German unity was achieved by Bismarck, who established a German Reich under the hegemony of Prussia, with an authoritarian régime decked out in frills of democracy. He offered the Germans unity without self-government, a strong state without democracy, and in so doing struck at the weak spot in the liberal outlook. Thus he split the liberal movement, winning over not only moderate liberals like Treitschke, but even old radicals like Ruge. For a time he governed in alliance with the new National-Liberal party;

¹ J. Grimm, Dedication to Gervinus of his *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*, 1848.

but when he threw it over in 1878 liberalism ceased to be a significant factor in German life. The nationalistic elements of middle-class thought swamped all others.

This post-1871 nationalism is very different from that of the early nineteenth century. It is no longer a nationalism of defence, but one of aggression, accompanying active economic and political competition with foreign nations. It is the ideological concomitant of that vast and rapid transformation of German economic life which took place during the second half of the nineteenth century, by means of which German industry was concentrated and organised to win foreign trade and foreign fields of investment, sheltered after 1878 behind an ever-mounting tariff wall.

Two main conditions govern the development of the extreme nationalism which became characteristic of German thought in this period. The first is Germany's position with regard to foreign nations. Since the Reich had attained political unity so much later than other nations, and since Germany's economic development was a generation or two behind that of France or Britain, her imperial possessions were and remained relatively small. As Treitschke says: "We realise now what we have missed. The results of the last half-century have been appalling; during this period England has conquered the world." Germany found a world already for the most part apportioned out among the great powers. If she was to be their equal, she had to conquer territory from some other great power; to be as powerful as England she had to be more powerful. It is the vicious spiral of modern imperialism. Hence German nationalism had to be a nationalism of conquest and aggression.

The second main condition lies in the internal situation within Germany. From the late 1860's dates the growth of the Social-Democratic movement, with its claim to extend democracy both in political and economic directions. Just as the fear of the "mob" had scared the democrats of 1848,

so now the fear of socialism weakened the democratic will of the middle classes—perhaps all the more since, between 1878 and 1890, the socialist movement was driven underground by Bismarck's legislation. This old mole worked so fast that in 1893 the Social-Democratic Party had 44 representatives in the Reichstag, and ten years later, with 81, was the second largest party. The socialist movement not only attacked capitalism, but was also, in its internationalism, a threat to German expansion. The nationalism in German thought became all the more strident in order to drown the socialist doctrine. Here, in the conflict between imperialisms and the struggle between classes, lie, I believe, the sources of the violent nationalism which even then slipped over into racialism, and which finds its modern form in National-Socialism. That the German state was a belated foundation, dominated by militaristic Prussia and without any tradition or experience of democratic government, gave to German nationalism its specific, extravagant and ruthless character in a period in which immoderate nationalism flourished in all countries.

As far as Germany goes, we may speak of the crisis of modern thought since the time when this double social tension became taut. As Dr. Gooch has pointed out, two figures express the essential forms of this crisis: Treitschke and Nietzsche. Of all thinkers, apart from Marx, these two have had the widest and deepest influence on the modern German outlook.

Treitschke

Treitschke is not a deep or subtle thinker; his strength lies in the forcefulness, eloquence, and the naïve self-confidence of his views. Precisely because of this he was the teacher of the average man of the middle classes, of the ordinary educated German.¹

¹ H. W. C. Davis, *The Political Thought of H. von Treitschke*, 1914, gives a good account of Treitschke's views, though paying perhaps too

He began as a liberal, impatient with the reactionary rule of Junkers in Prussia and Ultramontanes in South Germany, but impatient too with the tyranny of pettiness in all the small states which, as he pointed out, was not ennobled by the constitutionalism of some of these states. Unity, he saw, could be achieved only by Prussian hegemony asserted by force; and he advocated and supported Prussia's march to conquest in the belief that the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership would be the decisive step towards a more liberal, constitutional régime.

But Prussia's advance meant the overriding of treaties, of established law, even the forcible absorption of small states. Ruthlessly logical in this matter, Treitschke maintained the principle that international agreements and law are subject to the interests of state. And he proceeded to that apotheosis of state which is characteristic of modern German thought. There is and can be no absolute right. The state establishes law and right, and is the supreme authority. Thus every nation has its own code of morality. The concordance of these codes is due to the fact that men in civilised states are moderately alike, but this is only a fortunate accident. The codes of "uncivilised" backward peoples have no validity, just as these peoples have no right to independence.

Treitschke cannot completely shake off the traditional belief that religion provides a universal morality, and he admits in theory the independence of conscience. But his Lutheran background stands him in good stead, for he insists that the Church must do as the state demands.

The state is thus morally autonomous as well as politically sovereign. Its natural form of existence is one of antagonism to all other states (a view which often found support in a political form of Darwinism, as with Bernhardi). But

little attention to the socialist question. There is a good short account in R. D'O. Butler, *op. cit.*

Treitschke does not merely assert this fact; he glories in it. "In the eternal conflict of separate states lies the beauty of history." He agrees with Clausewitz that war is merely politics continued by other means; but he goes further to worship war as the supreme judge. War is "the only form of lawsuit by which the claims of states can be asserted." Hence the decisions of war are just; military victory is the victory of morality.

During the 1870's Treitschke's thought became more and more anti-democratic as it became more imperialistic and aggressive. The masses are there to work, so that the few may live for culture. The social aristocracy must be a hereditary class. He abuses the claim of the masses to share in government and well-being by calling it a product of "the materialism and intellectual conceit of the age." Treitschke even made use of anti-Semitism to abuse democratic newspapers, and for this incurred the wrath of Mommsen on the Senate of Berlin University. Thus violent nationalism went hand in hand with reactionary social views.

But even liberally minded men were spell-bound by the Leviathan. Mommsen, the great historian of Rome, is an instructive case. A fearless radical, he had championed progressive policies during 1848, urging particularly the energetic pursuit of the war against Denmark. Later, in the Prussian Diet, he had struggled for parliamentary control over the Prussian government, in particular over Bismarck, Won over by Bismarck's great successes to an uneasy alliance with the Chancellor, he (now a member of the Reichstag) went into opposition at the end of the 1870's, and from that time onwards spoke and wrote most vigorously against the authoritarian trends in the German government. In his old age he was so alarmed at the growing reaction that he overcame his dislike for Social-Democracy and advocated in 1902 a united front of liberals and socialists against Junkers and Court camarilla. His *Roman*

History is inspired by his perception that "all that is good and great" in the history of Rome is "the work of civil equality." But even for this independent-minded man, history is essentially the history of the state, and finds its meaning in the creation of the sovereign state. Right he considered is created by power; and he was exalted by the spectacle of rise of nations. The civil wars of Rome he considered tedious, but the national wars sublime. It is entirely in his spirit that the liberal historian Meinecke criticised the Freiherr vom Stein and W. Von Humboldt for believing that permanent inter-state associations could be established: "Struggle, anxiety, and friction are the fate of the true national state."¹

Treitschke distinguished himself by the most narrow-minded attacks on the French and British character. It is at this time that the belief in the superiority of German "culture" became axiomatic in German middle-class circles (ironically enough at a time of real vulgarisation of German culture, when her best writers, a George, Rilke, Hauptmann, etc., turned to foreign lands for their inspiration). In Treitschke and contemporary writers the modern meaning of the word "Kultur" takes shape, in contrast to civilisation; the former creative, good and German, the latter the effete expression of weary and outworn peoples. The old and innocent claim of Schiller and the Romantics now becomes the battle-cry of aggressive imperialism.²

These views, of which Treitschke was the protagonist, were extremely widespread. They permeated teaching in universities and schools. The whole interpretation of history was dominated by them. In his *Ancient Law* (16th ed., 1897), H. S. Maine felt it necessary to protest against "that pride of nationality which has led German writers to exaggerate

¹ F. Meinecke, *op. cit.*, 213.

² See the study by Sir Philip Hartog, "Kultur" as a Symbol in Peace and in War, *Sociological Review*, xxx, October 1938.

the completeness of the social fabric which their forefathers had built up before their appearance in the Roman world." During the last war J. M. Robertson gave an account of the work of these nationalistic historians, including their extreme outcome, the racialism of Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Since that time the tradition has maintained itself, for instance, in the work of R. Much and A. Dopsch, to mention two of the most distinguished of German historians.¹ In Thomas Mann's war-essays, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, this "unpolitical" novelist, newly awakened to politics, made the most savage and scathing attacks on foreign "civilisation" in the name of German "culture."

Thomas Mann is, of course, one of those German intellectuals who, by a great moral effort, came to recognise the deeper social and international causes of nationalistic ambition.² It must be stressed, however, that the Treitschke type of nationalism is still vigorous in Hitler-Germany, and not only amongst the older generation. It is at the root of Hans Grimm's famous novel, *A People without Space* (*Volk ohne Raum*), which was chosen by the Hitler Government to be sent as the sole German book exhibit to the Chicago World Exhibition in 1936.

The hero of this novel belongs to the generation born about 1870. He comes from a poor peasant family, and is driven into industrial work by lack of land. His elemental feelings of justice make him a socialist, for which he suffers victimisation. He emigrates to South Africa, where, as a

¹ For instance, Much emends "frugiferarum arborum impatiens" in Tacitus *Germania* 5, to "patiens," because he insists that Germany had its fruit-trees then. Dopsch's *Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilisation* gives an extravagantly favourable account of the culture of the Ancient Germans, which has been too uncritically accepted in England.

² T. Mann, *Die Stellung Freuds in der modernen Geistesgeschichte*: "The Great War—this gigantic explosion of unreason, in which the positive cosmopolitan forces, the Church as well as Socialism, were defeated by the negative cosmopolitan power, imperialistic capital and international capitalism," *Die Forderungen des Tages*, 1930.

German, he is exploited by the dominant British, and he makes the discovery that, as Moeller van den Bruck puts it, there is a proletarian nation, the German, which is at the same time the most efficient and deserving. He finds that English fairness to and tolerance of coloured peoples is due to the desire to replace European workers by cheap labour. He discovers, too, that the English are pleased that the German workers are socialist and internationalist, because this weakens the German challenge to imperial Britain. When he gets to German South-West Africa and begins to build up a prosperous homestead, the war comes, the colony is lost and with it his farm. From the hardships of past and present he realises that a new ruling caste is needed in Germany, which will determinedly plan and carry through Germany's expansion, not content with minor satisfactions and temporary settlements; authoritarian and aggressive together.

The argument in this post-1918 Treitschkeanism is cogently and vividly put. It can be reduced to the following abstractions: the world is such that different nations battle for possession and power; the right to power is won by industry and military success; Germany is historically in an inferior position, and therefore must win what the others already possess; all strivings on the part of Germans for a just international order are illusory and merely weaken Germany's power, since the other nations will not voluntarily loosen their hold; the only solution to Germany's problems is to assert her needs by force.

The argument is very powerful so long as the other imperialist nations maintain the old notions of sovereignty and power. The "immoralism" of Treitschke's nationalism claims to be no less moral, and even more truthful, than the moralising of the privileged powers.

Nietzsche

It is not easy to sum up Nietzsche's thought. His influence was very complex. He protested against the vulgar money-making of the middle class of the late nineteenth century, against the smug self-satisfaction of conventional thought, against that intellectual specialisation which refuses to consider the social bearing of its activity. He saw through the pretence and self-indulgence of the Treitschke type of nationalism. Nietzsche was no narrow nationalist. But more than any contemporary does he strike at the roots of rational humanism, of internationalism, of democracy.¹

Nietzsche does not set out from nationalism. He prides himself on being a "good European." His starting-point is his hatred of democracy, of all movements which assert that classes or nations have equal rights, that men should co-operate peaceably together, that they should so govern their relations that war, crime, disease and poverty can be mitigated. Thus he brackets Christianity and socialism with democracy. He hates and despises the masses, and considers that Europe is sinking into semi-barbarism because of the "democratic mingling of classes and races."

In place of the "Sklavenmoral" of democracy Nietzsche proposes a "Herrenmoral." Force and discipline are necessary if anything great is to be achieved, in politics as in art. Europe needs a ruling caste which shall guide it for long and oppressively, if she is to go forward on the path of civilisation. Leaders are needed who will not timorously deduce their rights from the people, from God, from their ancestry, but boldly rule in their own right, because they are the stronger. Cruelty and war are their expression; they are frankly exploiters; for cruelty, war, exploitation are ineradicable forms of life.

¹ I refer particularly to the later works of Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, *The Twilight of the Idols*, *The Case of Wagner*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Zarathustra* and *The Will to Power*.

Nietzsche conceived it his calling not only to destroy the democratic or socialistic political ideals. He aimed at the heart of the democratic, humanistic way of thinking. Like Görres or any other reactionary of the early nineteenth century, he considered reason to be the father of the Revolution; and he led the onslaught on reason which has culminated in the Nazi ideology.

He starts from what he calls the "nihilism" of modern thought, that is, the perception that no values are absolute, that truth is only relative, whether in nature or morals, and must change with different times and circumstances. "All truths are results of particular perspectives of utility for the preservation and intensification of human dreams of domination, and are falsely projected into the nature of things." With such a problem Pascal had vainly struggled when he saw that "truth on this side of the Pyrenees is error on the other side." Marx too started from this empirical fact, but also took into account the fact that, at the same time there is in history a development of knowledge and truth, as men's control over nature improves, and therefore he strove to create conditions in which truth could be developed more and more fully. But Nietzsche would destroy the very belief in the possibility of truth.

The value of beliefs does not lie in their truth, he cries; it may lie equally in their falsehood. They are valuable simply as expressions of our will to power. Our "will to truth" is an instinct, like our "will to illusion." The only question we have to ask is: "Does a judgment further and preserve life, does it preserve, does it breed our kind?" All our concepts are relevant only to our needs. They do not interpret the objective world. They are "logical fictions," by which we constantly falsify life in order to master it. Nietzsche does not make these assertions regretfully; there is no nostalgia in his nihilism. He glories in this subjectivism and relativism, he turns our attention to what is for him the

only reality, our will to power, our instincts, desires, passions. Self-consciousness, moralising, is, he cries, a product of decadence: "strong periods and peoples do not reflect over their rights, over principles of action, over instinct and reason." The great men are men of instinct. We are not far here from "thinking with the blood."

Nietzsche does not give German nationalists the right to take possession of his doctrine as sole heirs. Any rapacious group was bound to do so, however, and to find in Nietzsche a philosophy which justified any and every violence, deceit, and outrage. No other writer of his time expresses the joy in oppression and destruction so brutally as this hermit, drunk with his solitariness.

Anyone with the least acquaintance with modern philosophy will know how far Nietzsche's relativism has penetrated intellectual circles in all lands. In Germany itself it found systematic expression in apparently harmless philosophers such as Vaihinger, the author of *The Philosophy of "As if."* Like Nietzsche, whom he quotes at length, Vaihinger considers all our concepts, such as truth, number, cause and effect, etc., to be fictions, and believes that we can know the world only through intuition, feeling, and action. He applauds Kant for having considered it permissible to hold certain religious beliefs, however untrue they might be, because they are practically and morally expedient. There is no conscious political intention behind Vaihinger's thought. But it is clear that this type of thinking provokes the conclusion that ideas do not and need not have any relationship to truth and facts, but are fully justified if they promote the interests of those who hold them. Thus the Nazi intellectuals can justify racialism as being "true" since it is the expression of the interests of the *Herrenvolk*.¹ The great popularity of such thinkers as Vaihinger after 1918

¹ This argument is found already in H. S. Chamberlain. Spengler, likewise, states that the "men of race" who will be the new conquerors of the world are not men who belong biologically to a particular race, but

must be considered as an essential part of the breakdown of political morality and of the growth of aggressive and ruthless nationalism. They are nearer to the cynical immoralism of the Nazis, to the policy of the extermination of national rights and populations, than to the old-fashioned nationalism of Bülow and Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Nietzsche's thought is scintillating and in many respects extremely seductive. Against the mechanistic materialism of pseudo-scientific philosophers like Büchner, Moleschott, Haeckel, who would imprison men in an inevitable automatic "progress," he asserted the power of the individual to carve out his own way. He challenged the conventional values of the middle class of his times. Nearly all serious German writers passed under his spell, amongst them George, Hauptmann, Thomas Mann. What he meant for the normal cultured person is well expressed by Hermann Hesse in his novel *Demian*, which describes the revulsion of the hero from the vulgar life and vulgar thinking of the average university. Withdrawing from student life, the author writes: "I was free, I had my whole day to myself, dwelt quietly and pleasantly in an old house outside the town, and had a few volumes of Nietzsche lying on my table. I lived with him, felt the loneliness of his soul, sensed the fate that drove him irresistibly on, suffered with him and was overjoyed that a man like this had lived and gone his way so inexorably."

In peace-time, in a time when social conflicts were not too acute, Nietzsche could inspire an aristocratic seclusion and devotion to the personal life. The brutality of his doctrine could remain as an undercurrent. In times of stress it became an all-powerful swirling torrent. Thomas Mann wrote, in his essays of the last war: "What could be more German than the colossal maleness of his soul, his anti-feminism, his anti-democratism? He speaks of the 'crazy

men who "feel themselves born and called to be masters." (*Hour of Decision*, p. 59).

folly and rowdy ranting of the democratic bourgeois—not without that ‘profound disgust’ which has caused the German spirit to rise up against the Anglo-French world of ideas. . . . Here it is, the origin of this war, of this German war against Western ‘civilisation’!—if Nietzsche’s ‘great master’ Schopenhauer was anti-revolutionary out of pessimism, out of hatred for the indecent optimism of the demagogues of progress, Nietzsche himself was anti-radical to an unimaginable degree. It was in this attitude and intention that his German character appeared in its most elemental irruption. For anti-radicalism—let it be said without praise or blame—is the specific and distinctive characteristic of the German spirit. . . . Germany is the country of life. . . . Is not Georg Simmel (a contemporary philosopher) right in asserting that since Nietzsche ‘life’ has become the key-concept of all modern philosophy?”¹ This contrast of “life,” irrationalism, to reason is indeed the philosophical expression of German reactionary nationalism. And Mann himself, in the period when his great struggle against National-Socialism began, stated clearly that there was no aspect of modern brutal reaction that did not draw sustenance from the “irrational sympathies” of the modern outlook of which Simmel wrote, which enabled “crude reaction to appear in a revolutionary light.”²

The Transition to National-Socialism: Spengler

The foundations of humanism and rationalism were shaking in Germany before 1914. Liberal and enlightened men like Harnack and Windelband were unable to restore equilibrium. But before the old edifice was shattered by the Nazis we can trace a further stage in the undermining process in the work of Spengler. Spengler’s thought, very popular

¹ *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, p. 51.

² *Die Stellung Freuds in der modernen Geistesgeschichte*.

among the educated German middle class after 1918, leads up to the very brink of the Nazis abyss.¹

In German society after 1918 none of the old conflicts were solved; all were present in a more acute form. Germany's imperial possessions were lost. Her imperialists were more intensely conscious of her inferiority to other imperial powers in this respect, and suffered too from the gnawing shame of defeat after the most ambitious effort and hope. She was treated, they felt with some justice, like those colonial peoples whom dominant German thought had already consigned to permanent tutelage and slavery. At the same time, the strength of the socialist movement and the partial victory of democracy constituted a threat to imperialism itself. Whipped up by humiliation and fear, nationalism now became reckless and violent. It is Spengler who most forcibly expresses the bitter pessimism and desperate hope of the time.

Spengler owes much to Nietzsche. He dazzles like Nietzsche with his superior scepticism, his display of culture and knowledge. He is openly and scathingly a "Herren-mensch," lashing the pretensions and idealism of the common people. He loves to insist that man is a "beast of prey," and that democracy is merely the outlook of beasts who have had their teeth broken. Like Nietzsche, too, he is not a narrow racist and he admits that there have been other cultures before the Germanic.

For Spengler as for Nietzsche there is no absolute truth or morality, and no progress in history towards a more accurate knowledge or a more universal morality. He puts the argument in a pseudo-historical form which is a link between Nietzsche's individualism and racialism. Each of the great cultures of the world has its own specific way of looking at life, its own specific notion of truth, just as each

¹ I refer to Spengler's *Decline of the West* (first published 1918); *Preussentum und Sozialismus*, 1920; and *The Hour of Decision* (*Jahre der Entscheidung*, 1933).

has its own art-forms; in each case this attitude is part of its history, of its self-expression and self-assertion. The law of cause and effect, for instance, is a form of the Western soul, not a law of nature. There is no more validity for Western science than for the Hindoo cosmogony; each is valid within its context. Our Western appreciation of historical change is no truer than the unhistorical and naïve conception of the past that he attributes to the Greeks. With these dazzling half-truths, this "Copernican revolution" (Spengler would agree with Goethe that only rogues are modest), Spengler elaborates that relativism and immoralism which is the instrument of power politics.

The conclusions of Spengler's historical thought gather together all the violent and aggressive elements of Nietzsche and direct them massively in the service of German dictatorship. He gives a grandiose picture of the history of the world, fulfilling itself through the birth and death of successive cultures, each following the same pattern of modifications as it passes from youth to age. In all cases the period of decline and decay is marked, he argues, by a futile longing among the masses for rationalism and democracy—futile because the organic forces of society drive in the "late" period towards tyranny, conquest, imperialism. Rationalism and democracy are doomed because they are the expression of the will of petty men to avoid, not to fulfil, their destiny.

The "Caesarism" for which Nietzsche pined appears here not as a passionate, subjective protest; it has put on the garb of a scientific soothsayer. It appears as the biologically necessary expression of our age, which can achieve greatness only in the form of conquest, tyranny, perpetual domination. The ghoulish boast is made that "our age is greater and by far more terrible" than the ages of Caesar or Napoleon. Caesarism is "at bottom the instinctive revolt of the blood, of the reserve of race-instinct, of the primitive will-to-power." It is our fate, from which there is no escape except

into pettiness. It is our fate, as a social organism, to be born into an era of war and devastation. We must choose our lot, either to be hard, ruthless, imperialist, or else to be nothing: the "To be or not to be" which since *Mein Kampf* has so often been on the lips of the Nazi leaders.

Spengler thus glorifies imperialism with the halo of an organic inescapable destiny. He inflates militarism and death with the sense of a tragic fate. From his grandiose constructions rises that cloying, stifling exaltation of death that surges in Wagner's music.

Unlike Nietzsche, however, Spengler identifies Caesarism with German imperialism. The other nations are corrupt, belong to the past. It is a convenient result of his historical scheme that, while full admiration is paid to China, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, they are summed up as completed cultures, dead and done with; the only living culture is the "Germanic" (for Slav culture, and in particular for the Soviet Union, Spengler relies on the normal vituperation). His conclusion is then the same as that of the most narrow-minded racialist: that the only culture with the right to exist is the Germanic. And by "Germanic" is meant German. Of the large family of Western nations, France and Britain have succumbed, after their great achievements of the past, to money-making (plutocracy) and to the corruption of Christianity and democracy (socialism). Only the young German state is now capable of giving birth to the new Caesarism. Only Prussia has built up that tradition of blind service to the state which will inspire the meaningless and monstrous conquests of the new tyrant. And in 1933 Spengler could hail the first step towards his ideal, the victory over German democracy which was, in his view, only the prelude to the real victory, the victory over the world.

In Spengler we see all the achievements of the great German culture of the past, of its philosophy, its range of

knowledge and depth of insight, put to the service of blind instinct, of brutal domination. Reason leads to "thinking with the blood"; contemplation of the wealth of human achievement leads to utter cynicism concerning man: appreciation of foreign cultures leads to the narrowest and most destructive German nationalism. The betrayal of human endeavour could scarcely go further; the thinkers, the humanists, are already given up a prey into the hands of the men of blood and war.

But Spengler is not a National-Socialist. One more stage had to be accomplished: the actual creation of the instruments by which Caesarism could be established, that is, the creation of the National-Socialist Party. This meant above all the creation of a mass following, ready to adore and sacrifice itself for the new Caesar. At this point tradition-nationalism fails. It could lead to the frontier, but it of itself before the Promised Land; just as, in practical politics, conservatives could induct Hitler to power, but were thenceforth at his mercy.

Spengler does indeed broach the subject of demagogy. He ruminates with pleasure the thought of the Caesar's power over uncultivated minds, and speaks cynically of the need for lies and propaganda. Demagogy he calls the diplomacy of modern times. But his thought, like Nietzsche's, is essentially aristocratic. When he actually sees Hitler's victory, while he hails it with joy, at the same time he castigates in it those elements which pay tribute to the masses, which promise a harmonious, happy, a "social service" state. He admires his own image of Mussolini as a sovereign cynic who values only power, but finds that Fascists in general (and he means Nazis) lack "that Caesarian scepticism and contempt for humanity" which is the burden of his own philosophy. That is to say, he recoils contemptuously from that violent rule of illusions which from his study he had tried to conjure up; and his contempt is the

expression of his fear of the Nazi masses. For thought, knowledge, and culture were really being submerged in the torrent, and the refined intellectualism which he had derided and which was his cradle was being swept from the face of Germany.

German intellectual nationalism comes to an end here. The general conditions governing thinking changed. Henceforward there is no place in Germany for the thinker. The needs of Nazi fanaticism, credulity, hatred, and enthusiasm govern all thought and research. Thought is no longer a means to knowledge, but a means to national aggression and internal tyranny.

This great transition was not the result of a mere development of ideas. Popular as were Spengler, Grimm, Moeller van den Bruck and their like in certain circles, it was democratic thought and literature that best reflected the German outlook between 1918 and 1930. As against the success of Grimm's novel one could place the immense popularity of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, or Arnold Zweig's *Sergeant Grischa*, the biting satire of Heinrich Mann or Lion Feuchtwanger; as against Spengler, Thomas Mann's *Forderung des Tages*. But for the Germany of 1930 the democratic tradition was not forceful enough; it lacked hopefulness, it lacked the lure of gigantic projects.

Its decline was due in the main to the specific conditions of the post-1918 period: the loss of the war, the Treaty of Versailles, Reparations, the economic crisis. But the tradition of nationalism played its part, undermining belief in the possibility of a rational democratic order, feeding on disaster, creating that bitter scepticism and recklessness which was the spiritual basis of Hitler's illusionism.

But apart from the specific conditions which enabled Nazism to triumph, there were two real factors on which reactionary nationalism was built, which apply in all countries and constitute a threat to democracy everywhere. On

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the one hand, the weakness of German democracy in that it remained a class-society, in which the masses were at the mercy of malignant economic forces; on the other hand, the poison of an international system in which it seemed reasonable that a nation without foreign possessions must strive to take the place of those with empires. Only the elimination of these two factors can provide a guarantee that German nationalism in its terrible modern form will cease to exist.

SUMMARY

[This summary is not an attempt to present the agreed views of all the contributors, and cannot constitute a complete treatment of so vast a subject. While no effort has been made to follow exactly the language and phrasing of the originals, it is hoped that their meaning has not been misinterpreted. Nothing substantial has been added, save where a connecting link or slight expansion seemed necessary, or an obvious conclusion could be drawn. Scattered thickly throughout the papers are found extracts from German writers and outlines of their ideas. In general, the name of the German writer has been associated with any part of such materials used here. Where, however, a quotation from a German writer is included merely to give neat expression to a view held or approved by the author, it has seemed unnecessary to quote the source.]

IN what sense is it correct to speak or write of a German Mind? A network of relations between minds is found in every human group, including each people and nation. A study of such relations reveals certain habits of thought, modes of feeling, and ways of behaviour, widely diffused among the members of any group, and therefore affecting its relations with the world outside. The sum of these modes of action, feeling and thought constitutes the group mind, which has no unitary centre of consciousness, but is a dominating mental condition in the members of the group. The German mind may, therefore, be understood as the sum of the habits of thought, modes of feeling, and ways of behaviour commonly found in Germans, giving a distinct character or style to the relations of individual Germans to each other, and to the relations of the German people to the non-German world.

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Outlook, appearing as a separate element in the title of this book, embodies a distinct idea. It points to the content of the psyche as well as to its mode of operation; it implies a view or prospect of life, of the world, of nature, and of man. It will scarcely be questioned that each people or nation has developed such a view or prospect, different from those of others, and that such diverse views have great influence on the relations between peoples and nations.

The methods open to the sociologist or psychologist who desires to obtain an insight into the German Mind and Outlook may be indicated thus:¹

I. Study of the behaviour of individual Germans, in order to ascertain the distribution of traits, temperaments, and so on among them.

II. Study of the collective behaviour (including the public policy) of Germans (*a*) in their present-day social institutions (including economic, political, cultural and religious institutions,) and (*b*) in the historic development of these.

III. Study of the ideas, emotions, attitudes and purposes of Germans, as represented in their science, philosophy, literature and art.

Obviously there is here no question of first-hand observation under heads I and II; all that can be attempted in a course of lectures is to assemble and summarise records of observations noted by others. Under III the position is different: Germans have themselves used their utmost skill

¹ It is well to point out that two important assumptions are here made: (i) that social institutions as they are, and in their historic development, afford a reliable index of national mind and outlook, i.e. of ideas, emotions, attitudes and purposes; and (ii) that science, philosophy, literature and art provide a further reliable index of the same things. These assumptions are implied but not fully discussed in the papers; they are, however, basic to any sociological treatment, and their validity is now generally admitted, if the complexity of the relations involved be fully recognised.

SUMMARY

in recording in appropriate forms their ideas, emotions, attitudes and purposes; and the records are available for study.

While this outline of methods of study provides a convenient skeleton for this summary, it will be obvious that the six papers do not cover all the ground indicated.

I. The Behaviour of Individual Germans

Among rough empirical generalisations on German character, by Germans, are the following:¹

Individualism may be suggested as the governing feature of German intellectual activity. "The German's reflection is not so much that of abstract formal reason as of the whole man; his feelings, his moral qualities, his aesthetic intuitions take part . . ." Such intellectual activity, without formal rational guides, can show forth only the "whole man"—the individual, with his mixture of good, bad and indifferent. A saving grace would be a firm grasp of fact, a sense of or feeling for reality in all spheres; but this the German does not possess, and cannot acquire while his individualism is intact. Hence the norms of his intellectual life are subjective; he has not developed social norms in his intellectual activity such as dominated Greek thought and still dominate French and English thinking. It seems probable that the German tendency to think in abstractions is closely linked with this; for the maintenance of thought at abstract levels renders it unnecessary to take account of facts. Indeed it is stated that German abstractions arise from imagination or fantasy, not from an analysis of experience. Germans themselves have in the past noted the evil results of these tendencies in their political and social thinking; one-sidedness, multiplicity of systems of thought, mutual criticism and distrust, absence of a common stock of beliefs. A recent German writer holds that by its innate constitution

¹ Such generalisations by non-Germans are not dealt with.

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the German mind is inclined to turn away from concrete facts and set itself vague and indefinite ends.

Stress is laid by German writers on depth, inwardness, inner warmth, intensity of feeling. German feelings are less lively but not less intense than those of other peoples. "Stimmung," a word often used, seems to indicate a fusing of many feelings without clear ideas. Further, there is in the German a tendency to depressive, morose moods; there may even be a profound pessimism and defeatism alternating with bombast. In such statements we may again perhaps see evidence of the individualism already noted; clear socially recognised categories or shades of feeling are unidentified or at least not emphasised; and, therefore, full conscious responsibility to society for feelings and the result of their expression does not exist.

In temperament the German is slow, heavy and phlegmatic; with this temperament have been linked the ponderous difficulties of German writing, and German thoroughness, persistence and hard work.

In weighing such assertions there is a need to allow for local and regional differences; and the pervasiveness and permanence of each trait ought to be estimated.

In dealing with the more general qualities of personality, German thinkers tend to attribute to the German five outstanding traits. The German is (1) individualist, subjective, egoist; (2) docile, submissive; (3) imitative; (4) lacking in inner assurance; (5) lacking in proportion and measure. It is clear, however, that Germans themselves are in doubt about the ultimate value of these traits, and that much of what they say about them may be defensive. Further, such assertions require careful analysis. Individualism, so far as it implies concentration on the inner life, and absorption in the self, seems scarcely distinguishable from egoism. With this a lack of proportion or measure is closely linked; "(the German's) world has only one centre of gravity, his own

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self. . . ." Lack of inner assurance again is correlated with egoism; it implies the absence or weakness of the deeper social bonds. Docility fits sufficiently well with such lack of assurance, for which external authority becomes a substitute. Imitativeness—a readiness to assimilate everything that comes from without—is not far removed from docility. It is possible, however, that the last generations have been marked by the weakening of a type of individualism that repudiated external authority, and pushed independence to the verge of anarchy. There seems a consensus of testimony to this among German observers.

II. Study of German Collective Behaviour

(a) *Collective Behaviour Revealed in Contemporary Social Institutions*

These papers inevitably select only a small portion of the material available on this wide subject. The writers are aware that little of that material conforms to any reasonable standard of scientific impartiality and accuracy; mere opinion, one-sided views, prejudice, and animus are all too common. Further, to state the results of a sifting of such material in general terms, without examples in confirmation, and without distinction between different periods, courts criticism on the score of lack of clear definition. The following bare summary should be read with these points in mind.

In Germany there is a tendency to sharp class divisions. "The whole of (German) culture is caste ridden." Particularism rules in Germany, i.e. the urge to break up into small units and for these to persist and to resist absorption. The German is first and foremost a party man; political opposition is saturated with hatred; party feeling absorbs him to the exclusion of the sense of national unity. Civil life in

Germany is dominated by the relationship of superior and inferior; with this goes the brusqueness and arrogance so often remarked. Political immaturity is obvious in the German people; they have an arrivist parvenu mentality. There is an unreality in German political situations; thought and deed are separate in politics, and more generally there is a wide gap between social theory and practice. Brutality and the glorification of violence are typical of German policy.

Another way of expressing some of these points is that German life is characterised by a certain lack of stability and cohesion. This seems to be confirmed by the remark on a widespread feeling in the early 'thirties, "There must be a change," "Things can't go on like this"—without any idea of the change required. Or again, there is an underlying consciousness of a lack of unity in German life—whence the universal preoccupation with the question, "What constitutes a German?"

(b) Collective Behaviour as revealed in the Historical Development of Social Institutions

It may be assumed that collective behaviour is conditioned by the development of social institutions as well as revealed in it, and that these processes are inseparable.

Thinkers have not been wanting, however, who have attributed the course of German history to the inherent qualities of the German mind. The German absence of poise has been given as the obstacle to a steady course of development in German history; inner insecurity, bound up with the inherently slower tempo of the German mind, has been suggested as the cause of the slow maturation of the Germans in politics as in other fields; particularism has been asserted to be an inherited tendency in the Germans; a love of freedom has been proclaimed as inborn. While something must be attributed to the operation of inheritance, the

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course of German history goes far to explain these and other features. The inheritance of the Germanic invaders of England and France after the downfall of Rome did not stand in the way of very different courses of development in these countries.

Judged anthropologically, the "love of freedom" ascribed to the Germans by Roman writers is of small account. Of more importance is the heterogeneous composition of the German nation, and the fact that Western culture influenced different regions at different times—the south-west early, the north-east much later. Unity and continuity in the social structure cannot be assumed in Germany; on the contrary, it has been asserted that German history is a story of egoism and disunion from the Roman conquest of the discordant tribes throughout the whole history of the old empire.

It can, however, be asserted with confidence that German thought throughout history has been conditioned by its geographical background. Germany has no well defined mountain or sea frontiers. The open plain of Central Europe invites invasion and strife. If the Germans were to count in history they needed a strong executive authority, military power and a disciplined people.

In the medieval period feudalism took a characteristic shape in Germany. Then occurred the dissipation of the imperial power, and the triumph of the territorial magnates, who were able to hold in check both the Emperor and the middle class of the cities. The latter was deprived of political influence; German territory was fragmented into an incredible number of independent units, governed under traditional systems; indolence and apathy in public affairs were the rule among the people as they had no opportunity of gaining political influence.

The Reformation brought characteristic changes. It did not make for political development; rather, it increased the

authority of the princes and political fragmentation through its stress on the autonomy of the personality. The Lutheran emphasis on the inward life tended to develop a disunity between thought and deed. The Reformation system of education created an *élite*, sharply separated from the uneducated. Clerical families supplied many docile members of the bureaucracy, nurtured on the Lutheran doctrine of state supremacy. The middle classes failed to develop a liberal tradition. A separation of the zones of life appeared; it was thought that political freedom did not matter if spiritual freedom existed. Germany was a soul without a body; the lack of a nation-state discouraged all political thinking. In Germany at the end of the eighteenth century society was still organised largely on traditional lines, although a group of idealistic thinkers was exerting a wide influence, and in Prussia a military caste and a well-trained bureaucracy had appeared. On this society the French Revolution made a deep impression. The Declaration of the Rights of Man roused the aspirations of the masses. Later the Napoleonic invasions brought hatred of the French, but gave life to the notion of a united Germany. The German nationalism of this period is fundamentally different from the later imperialistic nationalism. The leaders of the resurgence desired only national independence and resistance to aggression.

In the eighteen-thirties and 'forties the growing middle class had two desires—self-government on the English model and a strong united German state. In these they were frustrated by the princes and landed aristocracy. Nationalistic aspirations were thus combined for a time with liberal democratic principles. Those democratic principles, however, were comparatively local and were abandoned by the middle class after 1866. Bismarck's policy offered Germany unity without self-government and a strong state without democracy. After 1871 German

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nationalism and developing economics moved together towards active economic and political competition with other nations. Lack of imperial possessions and fear of the rapidly rising social democracy led on to more extreme forms of nationalist sentiment and expression.

In this period falls the gradual complete domination of Germany by Prussianism, Prussian brutality and efficiency becoming a model for the whole nation. Traces remained of romanticism and a lofty idealism, but a realism which went to the verge of cynicism and indifference to all ideals and all morality was widely accepted. The idea of universal humanity fell into contempt.

These tendencies were in part intensified, in part turned into new channels, by the war of 1914-18, and the way was then prepared for the Nazi revolution of 1933. In this the anti-democratic, sceptical and reckless tradition of nationalism played its part, fitting in with a world-wide tendency to "activism," the glorification of violence and inculcation of harshness and cruelty as ends desirable in themselves.

The derivation of leading features in the German mind from this course of historical development is clear. The late appearance of unifying forms in national life led to particularism. When unity came the change was rapid and drastic and, therefore, unfavourable to inner poise and stability. Feudalism and its carry-over into modern conditions made for docility. Prussian hegemony made Prussianism a model for all Germany. Other derivations will suggest themselves.

III. The German Mind in Science, Philosophy, Literature and Art

In these papers attention is given mainly to German literature and German political writings; other fields are only lightly touched on. It is convenient to treat the

material under six section headings: (a) Some General Features; (b) Political Ideas; (c) Myths, Types and Symbols; (d) Kultur; (e) Anti-Rationalism and Anti-Humanism; (f) Goethe as Guide?

(a) Some General Features

It is said that German thinkers show a tendency to excessive abstraction in their handling of the human sciences, and an aversion to the more positivist side of social investigation. Examples to the contrary, e.g. Max Weber and Trölsch must, however, be noted. Still, it is possible that the distance between social theory and practice has been greater in Germany than elsewhere.

These features may be connected with the fact that German thinkers lived remote from the realities of life and were cut off from direct political experience. The origin in clerical families of many German intellectuals may have had the same result, giving them a tendency to stress non-rational elements in experience. Further, theorising may have proved a means of escape from realities.

Escape from reality in the form of a complete disregard of hard facts has done radical injury to the work of some great imaginative German writers. Sweeping deductions and generalisations are the native element of the German idealist mind. The radiant visions and inspiring idealism of Hölderlin, Fichte and other romantic writers had no basis in reality and operated with intoxicating effect on less imaginative minds. Nietzsche has the same defect. It is suggested that this contempt for reality in the great minds has led to the perversion of truth which is practised by the Nazis.

These imaginative unreal visions are complemented by the baseless theories that from time to time have taken possession of the German mind. Such are the theory that represented the Prussian state as an organic growth; the

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theory that the German Volk possesses racial unity, and the "Aryan" and "Nordic" variations on that theme.

Again, it has been contended that German thinkers reject all forms of utilitarianism and eudaimonism. The German heroic concept lays emphasis on duty: it looks on the state not as a contrivance for happiness but as a spiritual whole. Tröltzsch says that Western social theory views society as consisting of atomic individuals equal to one another and brought together for the sake of utility with the law of reason as binding force. The German theory, on the other hand, is that societies are super-personal spiritual forces and that humanity is a hierarchy of qualitatively different national minds.

This contrast, however, between German and Western thought refers only to one late strain in German thought which is a political perversion of the spirit of romanticism and shows no unity or coherence in its ideas. It is, in effect, an attempt to gain an assurance of uniqueness and distinction which Germans are unwilling to acknowledge that they do not possess.

(b) Political Ideas

In dealing with German political ideas two difficulties, not confined to Germany, must be kept in mind. One of these is the varying meaning or implication of political terms, e.g. Democracy does not mean the same thing in the eighteenth as in the twentieth century. The other arises because political ideas are not simple and purely intellectual concepts: they are to a varying extent symbols charged with emotion and implying fixed habitual attitudes and modes of action. It is hardly necessary to add the further point that political ideas cannot be rigidly separated from the wider currents of thought that fill the national mind at any period.

Any classification of political ideas for the present purpose

will seem rough and arbitrary. Internal political organisation is treated here under: (i) Autocracy; (ii) Democracy; and (iii) The Middle Way. A short section (iv) Inter-State Relations, is added. Nationalism in its political aspect has already been dealt with.

(i) *Autocracy*

In the Middle Ages Germany, along with the rest of Western Christendom, accepted the doctrine that all human power is limited and all political authority is derived from the community. With the Renaissance and the Reformation the concept of the secular character of the state gained acceptance and Machiavelli's doctrine of an unfettered executive made headway. In Luther Germany produced a leading advocate of autocratic power. Individualist in religion, he was authoritarian in secular affairs, caring nothing for political liberty and not believing in human equality. The rule of a virtuous prince was his ideal: he thought that the state had a divine origin and gave it the right to reform the Church.

In the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century the Cameralists accepted the absolute state and dealt with the theory and practice of administration. An appeal to the conscience of the ruler was their only resource for raising the standard of autocratic government. Their starting-point was the state, not the people; their aim, power and wealth of the state. Later Justi carried on their teaching. He assumes the might and majesty of the state and the wisdom and benevolence of the ruler. For him the happiness of the subject is secured by the authority of the Prince: subjects may not co-operate in the making of laws, nor may they resist oppressors.

Frederick the Great was both a practitioner and a theorist of Benevolent Despotism. He accepted the popular doctrine of the Social Contract and asserted that rulers were instituted

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for the protection and welfare of the community. The sovereign is merely the first servant of his state. He is obliged to act with probity, wisdom, and entire disinterestedness. He must hold all the reins firmly in his hands, for a well-conducted government must co-ordinate finance, policy, and the army to the same end—the consolidation of the state and the increase of its power. It never occurred to him that his people should share in the responsibilities of government.

After him these views remained dominant in Prussia. Frederick William IV refused to transform the 'natural relationship' between prince and people into a constitutional form. The Prussian constitution granted in 1849 left the power of the ruler virtually unimpaired. Bismarck, although he made modifications in absolutism, favoured a form of government that was, in effect, autocratic.

Treitschke, beginning as a constitutionalist, later altered his views radically. For him the state stands high above the individuals who compose it and exists in order to realise ideals far above individual happiness. There is no absolute right; the state establishes law and right, and is the supreme authority. Hereditary monarchy, supported by a vigorous hereditary aristocracy, is best for national strength, and the executive must be independent of public opinion.

Nietzsche is a rebel in political theory: he puts forward no consistent scheme. No doubt, however, his contempt for democracy as the cult of numbers and for socialism as the superstition of equality counted for something in the drift of opinion towards autocracy. Similarly Spengler moved opinion in the same sense by his criticisms of the Weimar régime, and by his advocacy of a combination of the *élite* of the workers with the representatives of the old Prussian feeling for the state. Parliamentary democracy is disastrous to a country that needs a strong hand at the helm. Möller van den Bruck's thought was an influence in the same

direction. For him Republicanism had no roots in Germany: a leader was required. These thinkers are much more important for their anti-rational attitude which is treated later.

The Nazi system did not establish a new constitution. It established an omnipotent executive under a dynamic leader. The whole object and result of the Nazi revolution is to substitute a strong and homogeneous for a weak and divided state. The latent conflict between state and the people was smoothed out by the introduction of a third element—the Party—which claimed to speak for the people and provided the government. In this combination of State, Party and People is to be found the political unity of the state and the source of its strength.

(ii) *Democracy*

In a German land was nurtured one of the first modern exponents of democratic ideas. Althusius held that political society is founded on consent. Supreme magistrate and people are bound by a contract which embodies the principles of agreement and limited power. Power is a trust, not a right. No individual is wise enough to rule without supervision and advice. What concerns all should be determined by all.

Puffendorf and Leibnitz contended that the executive power is limited not only by contract but by the necessities of society. Kant declared that liberty, equality and personal independence are the inalienable attributes of the citizen and that the criterion of legislation is whether it represents the will of the people or not. His ideal was the state based on the rule of law and he thought that all states must become republican, a term which for him included every kind of genuinely constitutional government.

After Kant there was a gradual and widespread growth of democratic ideas. This did not produce any outstanding

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German thinkers: the ideas were borrowed and were mixed with other interests and specially with nationalism.

Friedrich Naumann, in 1910, expressed the conviction that there was an immense capacity for political development in the German people, and that the idea of nationality required completion by the conception of free self-governing citizenship.

The Weimar Constitution expressed German Democracy. In it the Sovereignty of the People is supplemented and consecrated by the Rights of Man. The spiritual worth of the individual is proclaimed with all his obligations and rights.

From his more radical standpoint Rathenau early expressed disappointment with the results of the Weimar régime. He urged a genuine democratisation of the state and of education; only then will the monopoly of class and culture be overthrown.

(iii) *The Middle Way*

From the middle of the eighteenth century Germany has not lacked political thinkers who urged and attempted the steering of a middle way between autocracy and democracy.

In 1759 Friedrich Karl Moser published his bold criticism of the German princes of his time, showing the degree to which they were subject to evil influences in their courts and their personal relations, but making no suggestions for bringing their power under control. Schlözer advocated democratic ideas through his journals and his teaching at the University of Göttingen. He stood for constitutional monarchy, representative institutions and a free press. He rejected Divine Right and patriarchal omnipotence and located sovereignty in the people. He was equally opposed to autocracy, oligarchy and democracy.

Justus Möser supported the adoption of English forms of government, but believed in continuity and the preservation

of ancient ways. He thought the idea of equality ridiculous. For him the state was not the creation of a contract but the result of historical growth. The possession of land was the sole title to political rights. Landowners should elect representatives to decide on taxation and other important matters.

Goethe also occupies a middle position. He was a conservative reformer, convinced that initiative must come from above, that changes must be gradual, that order was heaven's first law. Since the masses could not save themselves it was the duty and the privilege of their rulers to save them.

Wilhelm von Humboldt examined the limits of state action. For him Constitutions are only machinery for ministering to the needs and developing the capacity of the individual. He cared nothing for the sovereignty of the people, but pleaded for freedom for himself. He asked rulers not for better but for less government. Everyone should enjoy the most abundant opportunities of self-realisation. The state should abstain from all solicitude for the welfare of its citizens. The state is merely the means to which man, the true end, must never be sacrificed. These were really arguments for philosophic anarchy. Humboldt altered his views later when he became Minister of Education in Prussia and realised that wise action of the state is one of the most powerful factors in the development of a rich and harmonious personality.

In Prussia during the Napoleonic period, Stein worked for the recognition of the middle classes, helped the emancipation of the serfs and created municipal self-government. Hardenberg, his successor, advised the application to Prussia of the ideas of the French Revolution. Hegel stressed the necessity for an independent executive but thought that the people must co-operate in the making of the laws and that representation is essential to liberty. He looked on hereditary monarchy as the best form of government and, while giving the people the right of criticism, would not place initiative or ultimate decisions in their hands.

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In 1835 Dahlmann proclaimed the virtues of constitutional government as practised in England. He was followed by Treitschke in his earlier phase, who upholds the rights of conscience and liberty of thought, advocates political liberty, and contends that Prussia must become genuinely constitutional if she is to be an effective rallying-point for all Germans.

A few months before the First World War Delbrück was teaching in Berlin that democratic government was a fraud and that Germany possessed the best government in the world. He rejected Autocracy as decisively as Democracy, and regarded the Reichstag as an effective organ of criticism and control of the government, while the constitution also allowed the princes to play an effective part. A similar line was taken by Bülow in his *Imperial Germany*.

(iv) *Inter-State Relations*

The Reformation doctrine of the state could not fail to raise the question of the basis of inter-state relations. On this Frederick the Great argued that in dealing with other states the sovereign must be guided by *raison d'état*, although he wrote against some of Machiavelli's doctrines.

In his great work, *Perpetual Peace*, Kant asserted that law, based on reason and morality, should regulate the relations of states to one another. Humanity needed a constitution; the destiny of states must not remain in the hands of irresponsible autocrats. He suggested a federation of states to avert war; his ideal would have been a world republic.

In advocating a closed economy for Germany (autarchy) Fichte aimed at peace through absence of commercial competition and exploitation of foreign peoples. Although he abandoned his early cosmopolitan views, he thought of patriotism as a means towards international harmony and the rule of law.

Hegel denied the existence of moral relations between

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states. For him no state is legally bound by international law. War is the natural way of settling differences.

Wilhelm von Humboldt was responsible for the pregnant statement: "Germany must be strong for the sake of peace; only a strong nation has the faith in itself necessary for a serene and undisturbed self-development."

Treitschke did not hesitate to assert that the state owes no allegiance to external authority: international law is a mere phrase; no tribunal can arbitrate between sovereign states. War is an instrument of statesmanship and a school of patriotism; dreams of perpetual peace show stagnation and decadence; conflict is a law of life.

Finally, Nietzsche, although he takes pride in being a "good European," is opposed to all suggestions of peaceful co-operation to mitigate war, crime, disease and poverty.

(c) Myths, Types and Symbols

There are good reasons for the contention that the Germans are peculiarly under the influence of myths, types and symbols, and show great energy and resource in developing fresh examples of these to fit new political and social situations. In these papers this feature of the German mind is set out at some length. Incidental mention is made of striking examples in earlier times, and development in the period between the wars under the influence of misfortune and despair is fully treated. It will be obvious that myth, type and symbol are not separated by rigid divisions. Symbols, on which little specific comment is made, are not treated separately here.

I. Myths

The German word "Mythus" has a different meaning from our word "Myth" which denotes something untrue or non-existent. A German Mythus "embodies a symbolic idea with life-renewing force."

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The historical Arminius has been transformed into a mythical figure used by Fichte and others to inspire to national unity and effort. Germania, represented by Hölderlin as "the priestess pure, that quietest child of God," is another mythical figure to be contrasted with the same author's view of individual Germans given in his famous invective. Stefan George also dwelt on the mythical figure of Germania—the hope and salvation of the world—while despising the Germans that he knew in person. Perhaps most powerful of all myths in the years before and after 1933 were those presented in the Wagnerian dramas. Nietzsche said that the German myth had been reborn in these operas in recognition of the people's great need. Wagner was adopted by the Nazis so that in 1933 it could be said that Wagnerism had risen again—not the music but the Germanic material behind it.

An engagement early in the Great War in which many young Germans fresh from the recruiting depot were killed gave rise to the myth of Langemarck which produced an extensive literature. The event was elevated to a "cosmic clash" and was said to mark the birth of a new age. Even Thomas Mann seems to have adopted it.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that the Prussian myth should have had a vogue after 1918. The memories of the glories and sufferings of the Prussian past, the triumphs of Frederick the Great, the deeds of the Teutonic Knights, and so forth, were crowned by a summons to Frederick to come to the aid of the German people. Scholarly criticism could do nothing to check the movement.

Still more insidious was the myth of the Reich—the old German dream of a glorious German Age. Of this Stefan George was a chief exponent. He looked forward to the rise of a new Reich in the Rhineland inspired by a Catholic spirit. Spengler in 1919 was writing of the Third Empire as a Germanic ideal to which all great men have linked their

lives, while Möller van den Bruck reshaped the myth to an immediate political purpose.

Also powerful, if scarcely intelligible, was the myth of the blood—"the belief based on direct knowledge that Nordic blood represents the mystery that has replaced the old Sacraments." With this was associated the mythical idea of the Volk as Volksgemeinschaft. It was a specifically German reaction against rationalisation and mechanisation, pure reason, abstract calculation and utilitarian motives.

Greatest of all myths was the Hitler myth—the intoxicating belief in the Führer and his mission. It is suggested that after this war myths, or the tendency to search for them, will probably keep their hold in Germany, and that Hitler's end may itself provide the finishing touch to a first-rate myth.

II. Types

Nietzsche's Superman was a type that had a widespread influence before 1914. The types studied here, however, are those in vogue in the period between the wars. The search for a type was connected with the desire to wipe out the disgrace of the last war and to see Germany's might and wealth restored. This was linked with the conception of history as dependent on great men; but heroic types seem to have been regarded as more important than individuals. Such types were the hero, the Prussian type, the front-line soldier and the worker. All these are essentially masculine and virile—fighters and warriors; all are anti-bourgeois.

There are links between these types and the myths already treated. Such links were sometimes emphasised, e.g. by Rosenberg. Types, however, represent the working ideals of the present rather than great figures of the past.

The "negation of the bourgeois" in the period 1919-39 no doubt represents the denigration and dethronement of a type that had held widespread influence for a long period. In this operation Hitler himself took an active part, accusing

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the bourgeois of lack of national pride, pacifism, cowardly weakness in politics and the exhaustion of his mission. Other critics accuse the bourgeois of avoiding the elemental powers and basing the state on reason with equality as fundamental principle. Security was said to be the highest bourgeois value and insurance against risks a typical bourgeois effort.

The hero type may be referred to Sombart's book, *Händler und Helden* (1915) which declares that the Germans are the chosen people of the twentieth century because the heroic German spirit finds itself in war. The glorification of war and of heroic death was the essence of this type, with which Sombart contrasted the negative English virtues.

The type of the front-line soldier had something in common with the hero. To this type were said to belong the faces under the steel helmets on the war memorials with their resolute manliness in marked contrast to earlier ideals of manly beauty.

The Prussian type was expounded by Spengler who stresses the Prussian sense of honour and duty, discipline and hard work. He regards Frederick William I's creation of the Prussian official and Moltke's of the Prussian junior officer as two successful examples of the development of a special German type.

The type of the worker as represented by Ernst Jünger is the opposite to the outworn bourgeois. He is not afraid of the elemental, has no exaggerated opinion of reason and no craving for security. He is essentially soldier as well as worker and owes nothing to Christianity. There are links between this and the Prussian type with its conception of duty and hard living.

(d) *Kultur*

The word *Kultur* is rare in these papers; some attention is, however, given to the Germanic idea that the Germans are superior to any and every other people and nation. While

this is a development of the nineteenth century, the foundations were laid at the time of the Napoleonic wars.

Schiller declared that Germany, though unsuccessful in battle, had a moral greatness which would lead to the spiritual domination of the world. With A. W. Schlegel arose the idea of the superiority of the German language. German, he said, is a pure and primitive tongue with great facility in creating new words; and he suggested that the peoples speaking Latin languages were inferior in philosophy and poetry. Fichte made the first full-dress statement of the notion that the Germans are a chosen race set apart to dominate the whole world. He felt it urgent to prove that there was something glorious about the Germans as a whole. He took the mother tongue as the common link of the German people and completed the theory of its supremacy. He used this to establish the essential superiority of the Germans to all other European races and, indeed, to all races in the world. This thesis led him to the most blatant misreadings of history. Yet, on the other hand, he was anxious to convince the Germans of his time that their mission to the rest of Europe was one of enlightenment and peace. It is suggested that he had a genuine preference for spiritual victories and lacked enthusiasm for the war of liberation. Unfortunately his presentation of the great mission entrusted to the Germans for the salvation of humanity was to bear evil fruit.

Other Germans—Jean Paul Richter and Bona Meyer are examples—protested against Fichte's theory, urging that each nation makes its special contribution to civilisation. With Treitschke, however, the theory of German superiority became fixed and was accepted by the whole of the German middle class; it was a corollary of this theory that Germany is always in the right. Treitschke was distinguished for his attacks on French and British character; in him and his contemporaries the modern meaning of *Kultur* took shape and its association with aggressive imperialism appears.

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Spengler carries on the tradition; for him other nations are corrupt, and belong to the past; Germanic is the only living culture.

(e) *Anti-Rationalism and Anti-Humanism*

The central idea of the whole body of literature which prepares the way for the Nazi revolution is the negation of reason and the superiority and primacy of instinct. With this, in many cases, goes the advocacy of Caesarism, i.e. power, not merely autocratic and centred in an individual, but ruthless and cruel. Further, the negation of the idea of progress, closely linked, as that was, with a rational outlook, is also prominent.

When Fichte called for the regeneration of Germany and foreshadowed the rise of a new generation that would save the world, he suggested a type of education that was pernicious and offered opportunities to unscrupulous and inhuman men. The complete domination of the will—not the cultivation of a power of choice—was Fichte's ideal, to which he may have been driven as a desperate remedy for the state in which he saw the Germany of his time.

The doctrine of the creative will worked to the same effect. The individual and capricious elements in the universe were placed above the ever present and eternally valid facts.

Wagner, Nietzsche and Stefan George are linked in their opposition to reason and humanism. All three were opposed to the philosophy and life of the nineteenth century and protested against mechanisation and commercialisation. They stood for irrationalism instead of rationalism, for symbols instead of ideas, for the return to the primitive impulses in man. During the Weimar period Wagner's influence surpassed that of the other two, and after 1933 it became greater still.

Nietzsche's criticism of the Germany he knew was

trenchant and unceasing. He opposed the intellectual specialisation of the time: he was against Treitschke's nationalism and was also against internationalism, democracy, Christianity and socialism. He advocated a Herrenmoral to replace Sklavenmoral: called for a ruling class that would express itself in cruelty and war, and declared that no values are absolute. Beliefs are good only as an expression of a will to power and moralising is a product of decadence. Though Nietzsche prided himself on being a good European his ideas were open to adoption by any German group which wished to justify violence, deceit and outrage. His thought led direct to the concept of the Aryan race.

Stefan George, in presenting his ideal of a future leader and regenerator of the world, chooses Attila the Hun as a saviour. He represents him as triumphantly sweeping away outworn faith and age-old poetry and indeed the whole inheritance of civilisation. Though completely irresponsible, for George would have been the last to abandon ancient religion, poetry and art, the poem indicated the rising tide.

Spengler denied spiritual progress in history, regarded man as a beast of prey, and flouted democracy. He looked on the drive to tyranny, conquest and imperialism as inevitable; rationalism and democracy were a vain attempt to escape destiny; Caesarism was a biological need of the age. Men must be hard, ruthless, imperialistic, or nothing.

Thomas Mann is among the writers who express the contrast between life and reason. Later, in a chastened mood, he shows that "crude reaction" may use this disguise to appear in a revolutionary light.

Kästner, in his novel *Fabian* (1931), pictured a young man who could not come to terms with life and integrate himself. In the same year Jaspers issued a warning against the cry: "Away from consciousness! Back to blood, faith, soil, history!" A human being must live through consciousness.

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After the Nazis came to power their propaganda was ruthlessly used to maintain this body of ideas and present the related myths and types. Recent developments in organs of publicity—wireless, press and films—were turned to full account, and symbols, pageants and parades helped to prevent people from thinking for themselves. Such propaganda was aimed at the lower levels of intelligence and roused the coarser and more brutal tendencies in human nature. It was closely linked with force, and war was an inevitable result.

(f) *Goethe as Guide?*

Readers of these papers will scarcely be able to resist the conclusion that the German mind is a mind diseased; they may indeed be appalled by the evidence that the disease is deep-seated and of long standing, and has affected many of the greatest German thinkers and poets.

Can any summary definition of this disease—its symptoms and consequences—be attempted? Intellectually it includes a radical misunderstanding of the unconscious forces in man—their nature, their functions, and their relation to the growth and progress of civilisation. Emotionally it involves abandonment to these forces, with the gross but over-mastering immediate satisfactions that such abandonment brings. Spiritually it implies a confusion of values, a failure to distinguish between external and internal authority, a lack of vision—of the power to see and reverence spiritual truth, good and beauty in their bud, their flowering and their fruits.

The treatment and cure of this German disease are mentioned in several papers in passing and dealt with at length in that on Goethe. There it is pointed out that all his life Goethe was concerned with the problem of mind versus body and with the means of fusing them into harmony. He had discovered the importance of the unconscious not only for artistic creation, but for living. Man must draw on its

forces, for his roots lie there. But this does not imply surrender to dark mysterious forces; these can be made fruitful only by the light of reason. They must be neither ignored nor blindly relied upon. Goethe's striving was from *Dumpfheit* to *Klarheit*: from an unconscious state of nature into a highly aware state of individual consciousness. This idea he embodied in the symbol or image of the charioteer, with a dark horse representing the unconscious and a white horse the conscious.

Of the lack of this individual consciousness in the modern world of his time, and of the fear of freedom that arose from it, Goethe was acutely aware. In our day these defects have led on the one hand to submission to an authoritarian state, on the other to the attempt in democracies to lose individuality in a dead level of social conformity. Goethe sees the problem in individual terms, and deplors the separateness of mind and body, spirit and nature. Man has lost spiritual power because he has only a technical and mechanical relationship with nature.

It is pointed out that harmony or one-ness with nature and control of nature through such one-ness is at the heart of religion and science. The inability of modern man to feel at one with the vital forces of nature is due to excessive attention to the development of the intelligence, which has seemed essential for economic and technical progress in our Western civilisation. Neglect of the sense, the imagination and the emotions has produced a disharmonious personality. Man is imprisoned within himself, and unformed and immature feeling has taken its revenge by invading spheres where it is wholly out of place. This has been one of the tendencies on which the Nazis have built; they have understood how instinct tends to unite people into a herd of irrational sheep (while reason tends to separate them into individuals) and have used our increased knowledge of the subconscious to further this.

SUMMARY

For such a disease the cure cannot be intellectual; a reintegration of personality is required. The reality of the unconscious should be recognised and it must be mastered for human purposes. Sensuous and imaginative activity are needed side by side with intellectual development. Integration of personality will take place through active contact with the outside world and with other people—with nature and with human society. In this contact receiving should be blended with giving; it must not be the imposition of an individual will on people and things, but a relation to those in which mind, heart, and imagination are always ready to accept and enjoy their natures and gifts.

In this integral development Goethe assigned a function of high importance to art and artistic activity, using the words in a wide sense to include music and also craftsmanship. Art is a necessity which satisfies a profound impulse. It balances the inner life, broadens individuality, and gives scope for its expression. Again, Goethe had thought deeply on the relations between art and symbolism, and looked to art to present or reflect symbolic forms that would exercise a widespread or universal influence on outlook and conduct.

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It would be easy to dismiss these ideas as belonging to the "idealistic humanism" of Weimar and now quite out of date. Such a judgment would tend to confine Goethe's influence to the aesthetic field, and deny that he had anything practical to communicate. To accept this view would be to neglect or wilfully misinterpret all that Goethe himself ever said on the subject. "Gedenke zu leben" summed up his message: "Let all your thought be for practice."

Another criticism might be that Goethe's scheme takes account only of the individual and individual development, and fails to envisage social needs, influences and compulsions. To some Goethe's own life and growth seem to partake of this defect. It is certain that any general development in

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accordance with his vision would require social readjustments at once radical, peaceful, and fine; these adjustments might be difficult or impracticable in Germany to-day.

In such matters, however, there is need for both the individual and the social approach. Whatever may be the coming shape of German society it is impossible to envisage a condition that shall be stable, pacific, and humane, unless it embodies the master ideas of Goethe: faith in individual development, sympathy and unity with nature, vision and imagination unceasingly transforming the mundane and commonplace into symbol, drama, and poetry.

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