The Origin and Goal of History

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Routledge
Foreword

Man’s history has largely disappeared from memory. Only through investigation and research does it become accessible—and then only to a small extent.

The long obscurity of prehistory, the foundation of all that follows, is scarcely broken by such dim light as we can cast upon it. The remains of the historical period proper—the period of which we possess written evidence—are fortuitous and full of gaps; history is richly documented only since the sixteenth century A.D. The future is undecided, a boundless realm of possibilities.

Between a prehistory hundreds of times as long and an immeasurable future lie the five thousand years of history visible to us, a minute fraction of the unpredictable duration of man’s life on earth. This history is open towards prehistory as well as towards the future. It cannot be limited in either direction, cannot be conceived of as a rounded form, a self-contained and completed structure.

We and the present in which we live are situated in the midst of history. This present of ours becomes null and void if it loses itself within the narrow horizon of the day and degenerates into a mere present. The aim of this book is to assist in heightening our awareness of the present.

The present reaches fulfilment through the historical ground which we bring to effective activity within ourselves. The first part of this book deals with world history up to the present.

On the other hand, the present reaches fulfilment through the future latent within it, whose tendencies we make into our own, either by rejecting or accepting them. The second part of this book is devoted to the present and the future.

A present that has attained fulfilment allows us to cast anchor in the eternal origin. Guided by history to pass beyond all history into the Comprehensive—that is the ultimate goal which, though thought can never reach it, it can nevertheless approach. In the third part of this book the meaning of history is discussed.

KARL JASPERS
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PART ONE

WORLD HISTORY
INTRODUCTION

The Structure of World History

By virtue of the extent and depth to which it has transformed human life, our age is of the most incisive significance. It requires the whole history of mankind to furnish us with standards by which to measure the meaning of what is happening at the present time.

A glance at the history of mankind leads us, however, into the mystery of our humanity. The fact that we possess a history at all, that history has made us what we are and that the duration of this history up to now has been comparatively short prompts us to ask: Where does it come from? Where does it lead? What does it mean?

Since the earliest times man has attempted to picture the whole to himself: first in mythical images (in theogonies and cosmogonies, in which man had his appointed place), then in the image of divine activity operating through the decisive events of world politics (the historical vision of the prophets), then as a process of revelation running through the whole course of history, from the creation of the world and the fall of man to the end of the world and the last judgement (St. Augustine).

The historical consciousness is fundamentally altered when it bases itself on empirical foundations and on these alone. The accounts of a natural genesis of civilisation, such as were devised everywhere, from China to the West, though still in fact legendary, were already empirical in intent. Today the real horizon has become immensely wider. Temporal limitations—such, for example, as the Biblical belief in a world 6,000 years old—have been broken through. Something endless opens up into the past and into the future. Within it research adheres to historical remains, documents and monuments of the past.

Confronted by limitless multiplicity, this empirical conception of history must either restrict itself to the demonstration of single regularities and never ending descriptions of the manifold: the same happenings repeat themselves; the analogous recurs within the diverse; there are orders of power-politics in typical series of forms, and there are chaos and confusion; there are regular
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sequences of styles in the realm of the spirit, and there is levelling-down into that which endures without any regular pattern.

Or the endeavour is made to achieve a unified and integrating overall view of the history of mankind: the factual cycles of civilisation are seen in their development and decline—first in isolation and then in mutual interaction; the common element underlying the problems of meaning and mutual comprehensibility is apprehended and leads finally to the concept of a single meaningful pattern, in which all diversities have their appointed place (Hegel).

Whoever turns to history involuntarily adopts one of these universal viewpoints, which reduce the whole of history to a unity. These viewpoints may be accepted uncritically, may even remain unconscious and therefore unquestioned. In the modes of historical thought they are usually taken as self-evident presuppositions.

Thus in the nineteenth century world history was regarded as that which, after its preliminary stages in Egypt and Mesopotamia, really began in Greece and Palestine and led up to ourselves. Everything else came under the heading of ethnology and lay outside the province of history proper. World history was the history of the West (Ranke).

As against this view nineteenth-century positivism aimed at according equal rights to all men. Where there are men there is history. World history embraces, in time and space, the entire globe. It is arranged geographically on the basis of its distribution in space (Helmolt). It took place everywhere on earth. Battles between negroes in the Sudan were on the same historical plane as Marathon and Salamis—or were even, by virtue of the greater numbers involved, of superior importance.

Hierarchy and structure seemed once more to be perceptible in history as a result of the conception of integral cultures. From the undifferentiated mass of mere primitive existence, cultures—so it was thought—develop like organisms, as independent life-forms having a beginning and an end, being of no concern to one another but capable of meeting and interfering with each other. Spengler recognises eight such historical organisms, Toynbee twenty-one. Spengler ascribes to them a life-span of one thousand years, Toynbee an indefinite one. Spengler sees the necessity for a mysterious total process to be accomplished by any given culture-organism: a metamorphosis governed by natural laws which he claims to perceive morphologically, from analogies between the phases of the various organisms. In his physiognomic conception everything assumes the character of a symbol. Toynbee under-

takes a multiple causal analysis from sociological points of view. Beyond that he finds room for the free decisions of individuals, but in such a way that, in his view too, the whole appears in the guise of a currently necessary process. Both, therefore, make predictions for the future on the basis of their overall conceptions.

In our time, apart from Spengler and Toynbee, Alfred Weber has evolved a great independent conception of history. In spite of his disposition to make the totalities of cultures the object of knowledge, his universal conception of history—his sociology of civilisation—remains, in fact, remarkably open. Guided by his clear-sighted historical intuition and gifted with an unerring feeling for the status of spiritual creations, he adumbrates the historical process in such a manner that neither dispersals into unrelated culture-organisms nor the unity of human history as such becomes a principle. In fact, however, he finds himself confronted by the shape of a universal historical process, which divides itself up into primary civilisations, secondary cultures at the first and second stage, and so on down to the history of the expanding West after 1500.

I shall not devote any further time to the discussion of these conceptions, but shall attempt, in my turn, to outline the schema of a total conception.

My outline is based on an article of faith: that mankind has one single origin and one goal. Origin and goal are unknown to us, utterly unknown by any kind of knowledge. They can only be felt in the glimmer of ambiguous symbols. Our actual existence moves between these two poles; in philosophical reflection we may endeavour to draw closer to both origin and goal.

All men are related in Adam, originate from the hand of God and are created after His image.

In the beginning was the manifestation of Being in a present without consciousness. The fall set us on the path leading through knowledge and finite practical activity with temporal objectives, to the lucidity of the consciously manifest.

With the consummation of the end we shall attain concord of souls, shall view one another in a loving present and in boundless understanding, members of a single realm of everlasting spirits.

All these are symbols, not realities. The meaning of universal history, so far as it is empirically accessible—whether it possesses such a meaning, or whether human beings only attribute one to it—we can only grasp when guided by the idea of the unity of the whole of history. We shall examine empirical facts in order to see to what extent they are in accordance with such an idea of unity, or how far they absolutely contradict it.
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In so doing we shall evolve a conception of history which ascribes historical significance to that which, firstly, stands unmistakably in its place within one single overall process of human history, as a unique event, and which, secondly, possesses the qualities of reality and indispensability in the communication or continuity of humanity.

We shall now proceed, by an analysis of the structure of world history, to adumbrate our schema, whose aim is the greatest inclusiveness and the most categoric unity of human history.

CHAPTER ONE

The Axial Period

In the Western World the philosophy of history was founded in the Christian faith. In a grandiose sequence of works ranging from St. Augustine to Hegel this faith visualised the movement of God through history. God's acts of revelation represent the decisive dividing lines. Thus Hegel could still say: All history goes toward and comes from Christ. The appearance of the Son of God is the axis of world history. Our chronology bears daily witness to this Christian structure of history.

But the Christian faith is only one faith, not the faith of mankind. This view of universal history therefore suffers from the defect that it can only be valid for believing Christians. But even in the West, Christians have not tied their empirical conceptions of history to their faith. An article of faith is not an article of empirical insight into the real course of history. For Christians sacred history was separated from profane history, as being different in its meaning. Even the believing Christian was able to examine the Christian tradition itself in the same way as other empirical objects of research.

An axis of world history, if such a thing exists, would have to be discovered empirically, as a fact capable of being accepted as such by all men, Christians included. This axis would be situated at the point in history which gave birth to everything which, since then, man has been able to be, the point most overwhelmingly fruitful in fashioning humanity; its character would have to be, if not empirically cogent and evident, yet so convincing to empirical insight as to give rise to a common frame of historical self-comprehension for all peoples—for the West, for Asia, and for all men on earth, without regard to particular articles of faith. It would seem that this axis of history is to be found in the period around 500 B.C., in the spiritual process that occurred between 800 and 200 B.C. It is there that we meet with the most deepcut dividing line in history. Man, as we know him today, came into being. For short we may style this the 'Axial Period'.
A. CHARACTERISATION OF THE AXIAL PERIOD

The most extraordinary events are concentrated in this period. Confucius and Lao-tse were living in China, all the schools of Chinese philosophy came into being, including those of Mo-ti, Chuang-tse, Lieh-tse and a host of others; India produced the Upanishads and Buddha and, like China, ran the whole gamut of philosophical possibilities down to scepticism, to materialism, sophism and nihilism; in Iran Zarathustra taught a challenging view of the world as a struggle between good and evil; in Palestine the prophets made their appearance, from Elijah, by way of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Deutero-Isaiah; Greece witnessed the appearance of Homer, of the philosophers—Parmenides, Heraclitus and Plato—of the tragedians, Thucydides and Archimedes. Everything implied by these names developed during these few centuries almost simultaneously in China, India, and the West, without any one of these regions knowing of the others.

What is new about this age, in all three areas of the world, is that man becomes conscious of Being as a whole, of himself and his limitations. He experiences the terror of the world and his own powerlessness. He asks radical questions. Face to face with the void he strives for liberation and redemption. By consciously recognising his limits he sets himself the highest goals. He experiences absoluteness in the depths of selfhood and in the lucidity of transcendence.

All this took place in reflection. Consciousness became once more conscious of itself, thinking became its own object. Spiritual conflicts arose, accompanied by attempts to convince others through the communication of thoughts, reasons and experiences. The most contradictory possibilities were essayed. Discussion, the formation of parties and the division of the spiritual realm into opposites which nonetheless remained related to one another, created unrest and movement to the very brink of spiritual chaos.

In this age were born the fundamental categories within which we still think today, and the beginnings of the world religions, by which human beings still live, were created. The step into universality was taken in every sense.

As a result of this process, hitherto unconsciously accepted ideas, customs and conditions were subjected to examination, questioned and liquidated. Everything was swept into the vortex. In so far as the traditional substance still possessed vitality and reality, its manifestations were clarified and thereby transmuted.

The Mythical Age, with its tranquillity and self-evidence, was at an end. The Greek, Indian and Chinese philosophers were unmythical in their decisive insights, as were the prophets in their ideas of God. Rationality and rationally clarified experience launched a struggle against the myth (logos against myths); a further struggle developed for the transcendence of the One God against non-existent demons, and finally an ethical rebellion took place against the unreal figures of the gods. Religion was rendered ethical, and the majesty of the deity thereby increased. The myth, on the other hand, became the material of a language which expressed by it something very different from what it had originally signified: it was turned into parable. Myths were remodelled, were understood at a new depth during this transition, which was myth-creating after a new fashion, at the very moment when the myth as a whole was destroyed. The old mythical world slowly sank into oblivion, but remained as a background to the whole through the continued belief of the mass of the people (and was subsequently able to gain the upper hand over wide areas).

This overall modification of humanity may be termed spiritualisation. The unquestioned grasp on life is loosened, the calm of polarities becomes the disquiet of opposites and antinomies. Man is no longer enclosed within himself. He becomes uncertain of himself and thereby open to new and boundless possibilities. He can hear and understand what no one had hitherto asked or proclaimed. The unheard-of becomes manifest. Together with his world and his own self, Being becomes sensible to man, but not with finality: the question remains.

For the first time philosophers appeared. Human beings dared to rely on themselves as individuals. Hermits and wandering thinkers in China, ascetics in India, philosophers in Greece and prophets in Israel all belong together, however much they may differ from each other in their beliefs, the contents of their thought and their inner dispositions. Man proved capable of contrasting himself inwardly with the entire universe. He discovered within himself the origin from which to raise himself above his own self and the world.

In speculative thought he lifts himself up towards Being itself, which is apprehended without duality in the disappearance of subject and object, in the coincidence of opposites. That which is experienced in the loftiest flights of the spirit as a coming-to-one-self within Being, or as unio mystica, as becoming one with the Godhead, or as becoming a tool for the will of God is expressed in an ambiguous and easily misunderstood form in objectifying speculative thought.

It is the specifically human in man which, bound to and concealed
within the body, fettered by instincts and only dimly aware of himself, longs for liberation and redemption and is able to attain to them already in this world—in soaring toward the idea, in the resignation of ataraxia, in the absorption of meditation, in the knowledge of his self and the world as atman, in the experience of nirvana, in concord with the tao, or in surrender to the will of God. These paths are widely divergent in their conviction and dogma, but common to all of them is man’s reaching out beyond himself by growing aware of himself within the whole of Being and the fact that he can tread them only as an individual on his own. He may renounce all worldly goods, may withdraw into the desert, into the forest or the mountains, may discover as a hermit the creative power of solitude, and may then return into the world as the possessor of knowledge, as a sage or as a prophet. What was later called reason and personality was revealed for the first time during the Axial Period.

What the individual achieves is by no means passed on to all. The gap between the peaks of human potentiality and the crowd became exceptionally great at that time. Nonetheless, what the individual becomes indirectly changes all. The whole of humanity took a forward leap.

Corresponding to this new spiritual world, we find a sociological situation showing analogies in all three regions. There was a multitude of small States and cities, a struggle of all against all, which to begin with nevertheless permitted an astonishing prosperity, an unfolding of vigour and wealth. In China the small States and cities had achieved sovereign life under the powerless imperial rulers of the Chou dynasty; the political process consisted of the enlargement of small units through the subjection of other small units. In Hellas and the Near East small territorial units—even, to some extent, those subjected by Persia—enjoyed an independent existence. In India there were many States and free cities.

Reciprocal intercourse set a spiritual movement circulating within each of these three regions. The Chinese philosophers—Confucius, Mo-ti and others—wandered about the country and met in places of renown favourable to the spiritual life, founding schools which are termed academies by sinologists: the sophists and philosophers of Hellas travelled about in similar fashion and Buddha passed his entire life in wandering from place to place.

In the past, spiritual conditions had been comparatively enduring; despite catastrophes everything had repeated itself, confined within the horizons of a still, very slow spiritual movement that did not enter consciousness and was therefore not apprehended. Now, on the contrary, tension increases and causes a movement of torrential swiftness.

This movement reaches consciousness. Human existence becomes the object of meditation, as history. Men feel and know that something extraordinary is beginning in their own present. But this very realisation also makes men aware of the fact that this present was preceded by an infinite past. At the very commencement of this awakening of the specifically human spirit, man is sustained by memory and is conscious of belonging to a late or even a decadent age.

Men see themselves faced by catastrophe and feel the desire to help through insight, education and reform. The endeavour is made to dominate the course of events by planning, right conditions are to be re-established or brought about for the first time. History as a whole is seen as a sequence of shapes assumed by the world, either as a process of continual decline, or as a circular motion, or as an ascent. Thought is devoted to the manner in which human beings may best live together, may best be governed and administered. Practical activity is dominated by ideas of reform. Philosophers travel from State to State, become advisers and teachers, are scorned or sought after, enter into discussions and compete with one another. A sociological parallel can be drawn between Confucius’ failure at the court of Wei and Plato’s failure at Syracuse, between the school of Confucius, which trained future statesmen, and the academy of Plato, which served the same purpose.

The age that saw all these developments, which spanned several centuries, cannot be regarded as a simple upward movement. It was an age of simultaneous destruction and creation. No final consummation was attained. The highest potentialities of thought and practical expression realised in individuals did not become common property, because the majority of men were unable to follow in their footsteps. What began as freedom of motion finally became anarchy. When the age lost its creativeness, a process of dogmatic fixation and levelling-down took place in all three cultural realms. Out of a disorder that was growing intolerable arose a striving after new ties, through the re-establishment of enduring conditions.

The conclusion is at first of a political character. Mighty empires, made great by conquest, arose almost simultaneously in China (Tsin Shi hwang-ti), in India (Mauyra dynasty) and in the West (the Hellenistic empires and the Imperium Romanum). Everywhere the first outcome of the collapse was an order of technological and organisational planning.
But the relation to the spirit of what had gone before remained everywhere. It became a model and an object of veneration. Its achievements and great personalities stood clearly in view and provided the content of schooling and education (Confucianism was evolved under the Han dynasty, Buddhism by Asoka, and the age of Augustus consciously established Greco-Roman cultural education).

The universal empires which came into being at the end of the Axial Period considered themselves founded for eternity. But their stability was only apparent. Even though these empires lasted for a long time by comparison with the State-pressions of the Axial Period, in the end they all decayed and fell to pieces. Subsequent millennia produced an extraordinary amount of change. From one point of view the disintegration and re-establishment of great empires has constituted history ever since the end of the Axial Period, as it had constituted it through the millennia during which the ancient civilisations were flourishing. During these millennia, however, it had possessed a different significance: it had lacked that spiritual tension which was first felt during the Axial Period and has been at work ever since, questioning all human activity and conforming upon it a new meaning.

B. THE STRUCTURE OF WORLD HISTORY SINCE THE AXIAL PERIOD

Reference to a few facts, such as I have made, does not suffice in itself to bring about complete conviction as to the truth of a particular view of history. Portrayal of the full wealth of historical material can alone cause the thesis either to appear in ever greater clarity or to be rejected. Such a portrayal is beyond the scope of a short book. The facts to which I have referred should be looked upon as a question and a challenge to put the thesis to the test.

Assuming this view of the Axial Period to be correct, it would seem to throw a light upon the entire history of the world, in such a way as to reveal something like a structure of world history. Let me endeavour to adumbrate this structure:

1. The thousands of years old ancient civilisations are everywhere brought to an end by the Axial Period, which melts them down, assimilates them or causes them to sink from view, irrespective of whether it was the same peoples or others that became the bearers of the new cultural forms. Pre-Axial cultures, like those of Babylon, Egypt, the Indus valley and the aboriginal culture of China, may have been magnificent in their own way, but they appear in some manner unawakened. The ancient cultures only persist in those elements which enter into the Axial Period and become part of the new beginning. Measured against the lucid humanity of the Axial Period, a strange veil seems to lie over the most ancient cultures preceding it, as though man had not yet really come to himself. This fact is not obscured by isolated beginnings, moving in themselves, but without effect on the whole or on what followed (such as the Egyptian discourse of a man tired of life with his soul, the Babylonian psalms of repentance and the Gilgamesh). The monumental element in religion and religious art, and the extensive State-formations and juridical creations corresponding to it, are objects of awe and admiration to the consciousness of the Axial Period; they are even taken as models (by Confucius and Plato, for instance), but they are seen in a new light that transmutes their meaning.

Thus the imperial idea, which gains new force toward the end of the Axial Period and terminates this era in the political domain, was a heritage from the ancient civilisations. But whereas it originally constituted a culture-creating principle, it now becomes the means by which a declining culture is stabilised by being laid in its coffin. It is as though the principle that once bore mankind upward, despite its factually despotic nature, had broken through afresh in the form of conscious despotism, but this time merely to preserve a culture in icy rigidity.

2. Until today mankind has lived by what happened during the Axial Period, by what was thought and created during that period. In each new upward flight it returns in recollection to this period and is fired anew by it. Ever since then it has been the case that recollections and reawakenings of the potentialities of the Axial Period—renaissances—afford a spiritual impetus. Return to this beginning is the ever-recurrent event in China, India and the West.

3. The Axial Period commenced within spatial limitations, but it became historically all-embracing. Any people that attained no part in the Axial Period remained 'primitive', continued to live that unhistorical life which had been going on for tens or even hundreds of thousands of years. Men living outside the three regions of the Axial Period either remained apart or came into contact with one of these three centres of spiritual radiation. In the latter event they were drawn into history. In the West this happened, for example, to the Germanic and Slav peoples, in the East to the Japanese, Malays and Siamese. For many primitive peoples this contact resulted in their extinction. All human beings living after the Axial Period either remained in a primitive state or took part in the new course of events, now the only one of fundamental sig-
nificance. Once history had come into being, the primitive peoples represented the residue of prehistory, which occupied a continuously shrinking space and has only now reached its final end.

(4) Between these three realms a profound mutual comprehension was possible from the moment they met. At the first encounter they recognised that they were concerned with the same problems. Despite the distance that separated them they at once became involved in one another. To be sure, they were not bound by the common possession of a single, objective truth (such a truth is only to be found in science which, methodologically conscious and compelling general assent to its propitiosities, is capable of spreading over the entire globe without undergoing any metamorphosis as a result and has a claim on the collaboration of all); but the authentically and absolutely true, which is lived by mankind historically from diverse origins, was seen and heard reciprocally in this encounter.

To sum up: The conception of the Axial Period furnishes the questions and standards with which to approach all preceding and subsequent developments. The outlines of the preceding civilisations dissolve. The peoples that bore them vanish from sight as they join in the movement of the Axial Period. The prehistoric peoples remain prehistoric until they merge into the historical movement that proceeds from the Axial Period, or die out. The Axial Period assimilates everything that remains. From it world history receives the only structure and unity that has endured—at least until our own time.

C. EXAMINATION OF THE AXIAL PERIOD THESIS

1. Does it exist as a fact?

The earliest discussion of the facts of the Axial Period known to me is to be found in the works of Lasaulx and Viktor von Strauss.

Lasaulx (Neuer Versuch einer Philosophie der Geschichte, Munich, 1856, p. 115) writes: 'It cannot possibly be an accident that, six hundred years before Christ, Zarathustra in Persia, Gautama Buddha in India, Confucius in China, the prophets in Israel, King Numa in Rome and the first philosophers—Ionians, Dorian and Eleatics—in Hellas, all made their appearance pretty welle simultaneously as reformers of the national religion.'

Viktor von Strauss, in his wonderful Lao-tse commentary, p. lxiv (1870), says: 'During the centuries when Lao-tse and Confucius were living in China, a strange movement of the spirit passed through all civilised peoples. In Israel, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel were prophesying and in a renewed generation

(521–516) the second temple was erected in Jerusalem. Among the Greeks Thales was still living, Anaximander, Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Xenophanes appeared and Parmenides was born. In Persia an important reformation of Zarathustra's ancient teaching seems to have been carried through, and India produced Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism.'

Since then these facts have now and then been noted, but only marginally. As far as I am aware, they have never been grasped as a whole, with the aim of demonstrating the universal parallels obtaining for the entire spiritual being of the humanity of that time. Let us consider possible objections to this view.

(1) One objection might be that the common element is only apparent. The differences—differences of language and race, differences as to the types of empire and in the mode of historical recollection—are so great that, by comparison, the common element strikes us as no more than a series of coincidences. Every clear-cut formulation of the common element as a whole is refuted by the facts. Or, it is argued, it amounts to no more than the trivial maxim that fundamentally everything can be found everywhere amongst men, either as a beginning or as a potentiality. In the realisation of common human possibilities it is the differences which are essential, distinctive and historical; the whole can never be apprehended as a unity, except in the unhistorical, universal characteristics of human existence.

The answer to this is: What is involved in the Axial Period is precisely the common element in an overall historical picture, the break-through to the principles which, right up to our own time, have been operative for humanity in borderline situations. The essential thing here is this common element, which does not stem from all over the earth, wherever man as such exists, but historically speaking solely from these three origins and the narrow area they occupy. The question is whether increasing knowledge will prove this common element to go even deeper than appeared at first, despite the differences that still remain. In that event, the temporal coincidence would become a fact, all the more astonishing the more clearly it is visualised. To demonstrate it thus convincingly would, however, demand a broader canvas.

(2) A further possible objection would be: The Axial Period is not a fact at all, but the product of a judgement of value. It is on the basis of a preconceived opinion that the achievements of this period are appraised so inordinately highly.

The answer to this is: In matters of the spirit, a fact can only be apprehended through the understanding of meaning. Understanding, however, is by its nature valuation. Though it rests
total universal parallelism on the plane of world history, and not merely the chance concurrence of particular phenomena. Single phenomena or series of phenomena do not suffice to establish the kind of parallelism with which we are dealing in the Axial Period.

Secondly, the three parallel movements are close to each other only during those centuries. The attempt to prolong the parallels beyond the Axial Period—in synchronistic tables spanning millennia—becomes increasingly artificial. The lines of subsequent development do not run parallel, but rather diverge. Though originally they appeared like three roads directed toward the same goal, they finally became deeply estranged from one another. But the farther back we go toward the Axial Period, the closer our relationship becomes, the closer we feel to one another.

It seems to me continually more unlikely that this overall aspect of the Axial Period should be no more than an illusion created by historical coincidence. It seems rather to be the manifestation of some profound common element, the one primal source of humanity. What followed later in the course of increasing divergence produces occasional analogies, marks of a common origin, but never again in toto that real, original community of meaning.

The only comparable world historical parallelism occurs at the commencement of the ancient civilisations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus valley and China.

Within this temporal coincidence, however, there are differences of millennia. The beginnings stretch from 5000 to 3000 B.C. (Mesopotamia and Egypt; the earliest discoveries on Crete and at Troy date from the same period). The beginnings of the Chinese and Indus civilisations fall within the third millennium B.C.

Comparable to these ancient civilisations are those of Mexico and Peru, which are conjectured to have arisen during the first millennium A.D.

Their common properties are highly developed organisation and a high level of technical achievement. In Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus valley and in China along the banks of the Hwang-ho, analogous civilisations sprung up in the river valleys characterised by the central administration of a highly evolved mechanism for satisfying the needs of the community.

They also have in common a magical religion destitute of philosophical enlightenment, devoid of any quest for salvation and lacking any break-through into liberty in the face of extreme situations, as well as a singular apathy accompanying extraordinary stylistic achievements in art; especially, in the case of some of these civilisations, in architecture and sculpture.

However, this parallelism does not exhibit the same synchronism as does that of the Axial Period. Moreover it consists only of the similarity of an established type, not of a spiritual movement. It involves strangely stable conditions which, after destructive catastrophe, tend to reconstitute themselves in their old form. It is a world between prehistory, which is almost a closed book to us, and history proper which no longer permits things to remain constant in the realm of the spirit. It is a world which furnished the basis for the Axial Period, but was submerged in and by the latter.

3. What caused the facts of the Axial Period?

If the facts of the Axial Period are beyond dispute, we must now ask ourselves what caused them. Why did the same thing happen at three mutually independent points? The fact that these three regions were originally unknown to each other seems, at first, to be entirely extraneous—but it is an historical mystery which progressive research into the facts of the situation renders increasingly great. The Axial Period, with its overwhelming plenitude of spiritual creations, which has determined all human history down to the present day, is accompanied by the enigma of the occurrence, in these three mutually independent regions, of an analogous and inseparably connected process.

Apart from the Axial Period, the mystery of simultaneity applies, as we have shown, to perhaps only one other situation in the whole of world history: the genesis of the ancient civilisations. The question is, why did the development from the general condition of prehistoric peoples to the ancient civilisations take place more or less simultaneously—despite intervals of up to two millennia—in the river valleys of the Nile, of Mesopotamia, the Indus, and the Hwang-ho?

The usual answer is that analogous tasks (provision of irrigation and the fight against floods) had similar consequences. But in that case, why simultaneously? Why only in respect of these particular rivers? Why much later and under different conditions in America?

Commercial and cultural exchanges might have had a releasing effect. At all times civilising achievements of a craft character have slowly made their way across the earth, or at least the entire Eurasian continent. The invention of writing may possibly have taken place at a single spot and spread from there; without it the tasks of administration, and especially of river-control, would have been insuperable. But these are only possibilities. Such exchanges can be proved to have occurred in the third millennium between the Sumerian culture of Mesopotamia and the culture of
the Indus valley; they existed between Egypt and Babylonia in early times, being very active during the second millennium.

But the multiple developments leading up to the ancient civilisations of the early millennia cannot be explained in terms of diffusion from a single source. E. Meyer (Geschichte des Altertums, I, 2, p. 935) therefore remarks: 'We must assume that around 5000 B.C. the genus homo had reached a stage in his evolution that opened up to all human groups or peoples, whose inherent aptitudes (i.e. the spiritual forces latent with them) rendered them capable of rising above this level at all, in their way toward the noesis of a culture which would thereafter continue to advance.' The parallel phenomena would, in that event, have to be regarded as simultaneous developments in the biological evolution of human beings who are members of a similarly endowed humanity. That which, by virtue of a common origin, is dormant in all of them, manifests itself simultaneously and independently—as happens during the life-span of identical twins who have been separated from one another.

But this idea is a mere figure of speech which explains nothing. It is empty because it provides no basis for further research. The 'evolution of the genus homo' is not a reality that can be apprehended as such or serve as an explanation of anything. And, above all, this 'biological evolution' would only have been accomplished by a small, scattered section of mankind, not by mankind as a whole.

The mystery of the simultaneous inception of the Axial Period appears to me to be situated at a much deeper level than the problem of the birth of the ancient civilisations. In the first place, the simultaneity is much more exact and, in the second, it relates to spiritual-historical developments in the whole conscious, thinking aspect of humanity. The three regions which, from the beginnings of the ancient civilisations onward, were possessed of a unique character, brought forth creations during the millennium before Christ upon which the entire history of the human spirit has rested ever since.

These developments were originally independent of one another. Real communications and stimuli must be ruled out. Only after the penetration of Buddhism into China, which took place at the end of the Axial Period, did a profound spiritual communication between India and China come into being. Though there had always been relations between India and the Alcest, these only became extensive during Roman times, via Alexandria. But the origin of these developments is not affected at all by the relations between India and the West, their further course not visibly so.

Let us see how this mystery has been explained:

Lasaulx writes: 'This strange concurrence can only be founded on the inner unity of substance in the life of mankind and the life of peoples, on a vibration of the total life of humanity which passed through all peoples, and not on the particular efflorescence of the spirit of any one people.' But that is not an explanation, it is merely a paraphrase of the mystery.

V. von Strauss talks of a hidden law: 'This phenomenon, for which there is no lack of parallels in history, and from which very mysterious laws may be inferred, probably has its roots, on the one hand, in the total organism of mankind, by virtue of its homogeneous origin, while on the other it presupposes the influence of a higher spiritual power, in the same way that the urge to florescence in nature only arrives at the unfolding of its magnificence through the vivifying rays of the returning sun.' But, as with Lasaulx, such figures of speech only paraphrase the mystery. In addition they make the mistake of levelling down the uniqueness of the historical fact of the parallels of the Axial Period in the name of supposedly similar instances of shared development throughout history.

Keyserling says (Buch vom Ursprung, p. 151): 'From generation to generation men seem to change in the same fashion and in the same direction, and at turning-points of history a similar change embraces enormous areas and peoples who are complete strangers to one another.' But this again is simply a paraphrase of the mystery, and a bad one at that, because it sinks down completely into the realm of biology without there being the slightest basis for approaching the problem from a biological standpoint.

All these explanations overlook the clear fact that it was not mankind, not all men, who by that time had occupied the entire planet, but only a few, relatively very few, who took this step forward at three points. As in the case of the ancient civilisations not mankind as such, but only a small section was involved.

Instead, therefore, of taking as a basis a biology of mankind, something falsely supposed to be held in common and valid for the whole of humanity, the attempt has been made to trace back the few peoples amongst whom this revolution occurred to a common historical origin within mankind. This origin is admittedly unknown to us. It would have to be assumed to lie in prehistoric Central Asia. With their source in such a common origin the parallel developments could perhaps be considered related. But this hypothesis has so far eluded all possibility of verification. It is
improbable because it would have to prove a common origin for such disparate racial groups as the Chinese, the Indo-Europeans and the Semites; furthermore, this common origin would have to be taken as only a few millennia prior to the period at which the inception of these peoples' history becomes visible to us—biologically speaking a very short space of time and hardly sufficient to allow profound racial differentiations to take place.

In response to the question, why this simultaneity? only one methodologically arguable hypothesis has so far been advanced, that put forward by Alfred Weber. The penetration of the nations of charioteers and horsemen from Central Asia—which did, in fact, reach China, India and the West and introduced the horse to the ancient civilisations—had, so he argues, analogous consequences in all three regions. The men of these equestrian peoples came to experience, thanks to the horse, the limitless vastness of the world. They took over the ancient civilisations by conquest. In hazards and disasters they experienced the problematic character of existence, as master-peoples they developed an heroico-tragic consciousness that found expression in the epic.

This turning-point of history was brought about by the Indo-European nations of horsemen. By the end of the third millennium they had reached Europe and the Mediterranean. A great new thrust carried them as far as Iran and India round about 1200. In the same way, other nations of horsemen reached China by the end of the second millennium.

Before, from Europe to China, there had been the ancient civilisations reaching back into the depths of the past and characterised variously as matriarchal, as civilisations of settled cattle-breeder or simply as the population masses flourishing in closed self-sufficiency in the fertile regions of the belt of civilisation extending from China to Europe.

History became a conflict between these two forces: the old, stable, unawakened matriarchal powers against the new, mobile, liberating tendencies of the equestrian peoples which were rising into consciousness.

Alfred Weber's thesis demonstrates the existence of a real uniformity within the Eurasian bloc; how far the appearance of the equestrian peoples was decisive is difficult to determine, however. Geographical situations and historical constellations may have given rise to the preconditions; but what set the work of creation in motion remains the great enigma.

Weber's thesis possesses a singular power of illumination arising out of its simple, causal explanation based on the human character of the life of the horseman. But it still applies at most to a precondition. The contents of the Axial Period are so remarkable and all-embracing that one hesitates to derive them from such a cause, even if it be regarded as only a necessary precondition. Counter-evidence is afforded, for example, by China, which produced the rich contents of the Axial Period, but neither the tragic consciousness nor the epic (in China nothing comparable to the epic appears until the centuries after Christ, during the period of long-drawn-out struggles against new peoples, corresponding to our migration of the peoples). A further contradictory instance is Palestine, whose population experienced no mingling with equestrian peoples and yet, through the prophets, produced an essential factor in the spiritual creation of the Axial Period.

The credibility of the hypothesis is further impaired by the fact that movements, migrations and conquests had been precipitating themselves upon the ancient civilisations for millennia; to this is added the further fact that the period of incubation between the Indo-European invasions—themselves distributed over a period of more than a thousand years—and the inception of the spiritual development of the Axial Period was very long, while this inception, when it took place, did so with such astonishingly exact simultaneity.

That it is necessary to enquire after the historical reason for the events of the Axial Period is due to the fact that it is a question of a new departure within mankind—involving small areas only—and not of a development shared by the whole of humanity. The Axial Period does not represent a universal stage in human evolution, but a singular ramified historical process.

Whereas Alfred Weber has given an ingenious and clearcut reply to this question, that can be put to the test and rendered fruitful by further discussion, the mystery of the lack of contact between the three independent origins has usually been veiled by the vague assertion of a general Eurasian interrelationship. Perhaps, so it is meaninglessly said, influences no longer apparent to us were at work. The unity of the history of the whole Eurasian bloc, determined by constantly renewed advances, migrations and conquests from Central Asia, is pointed to, as well as the demonstrable parallels that can be observed in archaeological finds of a technological and ornamental character. These finds go back to early prehistory and permit a perpetual cultural exchange over the entire major continent to be inferred. Against this, however, it must be said that the spiritual movement of the Axial Period, in its simultaneity and the sublimity of its content, cannot be accounted for in terms of such migrations and exchanges.

In the end, the simplest explanation of the phenomena of the
Axial Period seems to lie in common sociological preconditions favourable to spiritual creativeness: many small States and small towns: a politically divided age engaged in incessant conflicts; the misery caused by wars and revolutions accompanied by simultaneous prosperity elsewhere, since destruction was neither universal nor radical; questioning of previously existing conditions. These are sociological considerations which are meaningful and lead to methodical investigation, but ultimately they merely illuminate the facts and do not provide a causal explanation of them. For these conditions form part of the total spiritual phenomenon of the Axial Period. They are preconditions of which the creative result is not a necessary sequel; as part of the overall pattern their own origin remains in question.

No one can adequately comprehend what occurred here and became the axis of world history! The facts of this break-through must be seen from all sides, their many aspects must be fixed in the mind and their meaning interpreted, in order to gain a provisional conception of the Axial Period, which grows more mysterious the more closely we examine it.

It might seem as though I were out to prove direct intervention on the part of the deity, without saying so openly. By no means. For that would not only be a salto mortale of cognition into pseudo-knowledge, but also an importunity against the deity. I want rather to prevent the comfortable and empty conception of history as a comprehensible and necessary movement of humanity; I should like to maintain awareness of the dependence of our cognition upon current standpoints, methods and facts and, thereby, of the particularity of all cognition; I should like to hold the question open and leave room for possible new starting-points in the search for knowledge, which we cannot imagine in advance at all.

Wonder at the mystery is itself a fruitful act of understanding, in that it affords a point of departure for further research. It may even be the very goal of all understanding, since it means penetrating through the greatest possible amount of knowledge to authentic nescience, instead of allowing Being to disappear by absolutising it away into a self-enclosed object of cognition.

4. The meaning of the Axial Period

The problem of the meaning of the Axial Period is something quite different from that of its cause.

The fact of the threefold manifestation of the Axial Period is in the nature of a miracle, in so far as no really adequate explanation is possible within the limits of our present knowledge. The hidden meaning of this fact, however, cannot be discovered empirically at all, as a meaning somewhere intended by someone. In enquiring after it we are really only putting our own interpretation on the facts and causing something to grow out of them for us. If, in the process, we make use of terms which seem to indicate that we have in mind some plan of providence, these are only metaphors.

(a) Really to visualise the facts of the Axial Period and to make them the basis of our universal conception of history is to gain possession of something common to all mankind, beyond all differences of creed. It is one thing to see the unity of history from one's own ground and in the light of one's own faith, another to think of it in communication with every other human ground, linking one's own consciousness to the alien consciousness. In this sense, it can be said of the centuries between 80 and 200 B.C. that they are the empirically evident axis of world history for all men.

The transcendental history of the revealed Christian faith is made up out of the creation, the fall, stages of revelation, prophecies, the appearance of the Son of God, redemption and the last judgement. As the contents of the faith of an historical human group it remains untouched. That which binds all men together, however, cannot be revelation but must be experience. Revelation is the form taken by particular historical creeds, experience is accessible to man as man. We—all men—can share the knowledge of the reality of this universal transformation of mankind during the Axial Period. Although confined to China, India and the West, and though there was to begin with no contact between these three worlds, the Axial Period nonetheless founded universal history and, spiritually, drew all men into itself.

(b) The fact of the threefold historical modification effected by the step we call the Axial Period acts as a challenge to boundless communication. To see and understand other helps in the achievement of clarity about oneself, in overcoming the potential narrowness of all self-enclosed historicity, and in taking the leap into expanding reality. This venture into boundless communication is once again the secret of becoming-human, not as it occurred in the inaccessible prehistoric past, but as it takes place within ourselves.

This demand for communication—made by the historical fact of the threefold origin—is the best remedy against the erroneous claim to exclusive possession of truth by any one creed. For a creed can only be absolute in its historical existence, not universally valid for all in its predications, like scientific truth. The claim to exclusive possession of truth, that tool of fanaticism, of human arrogance and self-deception through the will to power,
that disaster for the West—most intensely so in its secularised forms, such as the dogmatic philosophies and the so-called scientific ideologies—can be vanquished by the very fact that God has manifested himself historically in several fashions and has opened up many ways toward Himself. It is as though the deity were issuing a warning, through the language of universal history, against the claim to exclusiveness in the possession of truth.

(c) If the Axial Period gained in importance with the degree to which we immerse ourselves in it, the question arises: Is this period, are its creations, the yardstick for all that follows? If we do not consider the quantitative aspect of its effect, nor the extent of the areas involved in its political processes, nor the pre-eminence accorded to spiritual phenomena throughout the centuries, is it still true that the austere grandeur, the creative lucidity, the depth of meaning and the extent of the leap toward new spiritual worlds contained in the phenomena of the Axial Period are to be regarded as the spiritual peak of all history up to the present? Do later manifestations, in spite of the heights to which they attained and in spite of having become irreplaceable in their turn, pale before the earlier—Virgil before Homer, Augustus before Solon, Jesus before Jeremiah?

It would certainly be wrong to answer this question with a mechanical affirmative. The later manifestation invariably possesses a value of its own, which was not present in the earlier one: a maturity of its own, a sublime costliness, a depth of soul, especially in the case of the ‘exception’. It is quite impossible to arrange history in a hierarchy of values following automatically from one universally applicable conception. But the manner in which this question is formulated—and also, perhaps, a prejudice against the later—does result from an understanding of the Axial Period. This in turn illumines what is specifically new and great after a different fashion and does not belong to the Axial Period. For example: Anyone studying philosophy is likely to find that after months with the Greek philosophers, St. Augustine affects him like a liberation from coldness and impersonality into questions of conscience, which have remained with us ever since the time of St. Augustine but were alien to the Greeks. Conversely, however, after spending some time on St. Augustine, he will experience an increasing desire to return to the Greeks and cleanse himself of the feeling of impurity that seems to grow with the pursuit of this type of thinking, to regain his health by immersion in the lucid waters of Greek thought. Nowhere on earth can we find final truth, authentic salvation.

The Axial Period too ended in failure. History went on.
and mingling of peoples—and the continual re-establishment of the old culture, which catastrophes merely interrupted.
Hence the account of the history of these millennia is eventful in the extreme, and yet its events do not bear the character of historical decisions vital to humanity.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Axial Period and its Consequences

We began this book by anticipating the characterisation of the Axial Period, because an understanding of this period seems to us of central importance for the whole conception of universal history.
If we are concerned with the history of philosophy, the Axial Period affords the most rewarding field of study and the one most fruitful in respect of our own thought.
It may be called an interregnum between two ages of great empires, a pause for liberty, a deep breath bringing the most lucid consciousness.

A. THE STRUCTURING OF WORLD HISTORY BY THE AXIAL PERIOD

The Axial Period becomes a ferment that draws humanity into the single context of world history. It becomes, for us, a yardstick with whose aid we measure the historical significance of the various peoples to mankind as a whole.
A deep division falls between the peoples according to the manner in which they react to the break-through. We can distinguish:

(1) *The Axial peoples.*—These are the peoples which accomplished the leap as a direct continuation of their own pasts. To them it was a second birth, so to speak, and through it they laid the foundations of man's spiritual being and his history properly so called. The axial peoples are the Chinese, Indians, Iranians, Jews and Greeks.

(2) *The peoples without the break-through.*—Although the break-through was decisive for universal history, it was not a universal occurrence. There were the great peoples of the ancient civilisations, who lived before and even concurrently with the break-through, but had no part in it and, despite their temporal concurrence, remained inwardly unaffected by it.
During the Axial Period the Egyptian and Babylonian cultures were still flourishing, although in a palpably later shape. Both of 
them were destitute of that quality of reflection which transformed mankind; they underwent no metamorphoses under the influence of the axial peoples; they no longer reacted to the breakthrough that had taken place outside their orbit. To begin with they remained what they had been earlier, as the predecessors of the Axial Period: magnificent in the organisation of public and social life, in architecture, in sculpture and painting, in the fashioning of their magical religion. But now they came slowly to an end. Outwardly subjected by the new powers, they also lost inwardly their old culture, which flowed out into Persian, afterwards Sasanian culture and Islam (in Mesopotamia) or into the Roman world and Christendom (which in Egypt subsequently became part of Islam).

Both of them are of significance to universal history, because the Jews and Greeks, who created the basis of the Western World, grew up in sight of them, learning from them, drawing away from them and striving to outdo them. Then these ancient cultures were almost forgotten, until they were rediscovered in our own time.

We are gripped by their magnificence but feel somehow remote from them, in consequence of the gulf created by their lack of everything that went with the breakthrough. We are infinitely closer to the Chinese and the Indians than to the Egyptians and the Babylonians. The grandeur of the Egyptian and Babylonian world is unique. But that which is familiar to us only starts with the new age of the breakthrough. In evanescent beginnings we see an anticipation of what comes later that excites our wonder; it is as though the breakthrough were about to commence and then came to nothing, particularly in Egypt.

There is one fundamental question that is crucial for our conception of human history: Are China and India to be set alongside Egypt and Babylonia and really only distinguished from them by the fact that they have survived until today—or did India and China, through their share in the creation of the Axial Period itself, take that great step which carries them right past those ancient civilisations? I will repeat what I have already said: Egypt and Babylonia may be set alongside early China and alongside the Indus Culture of the third millennium, but not alongside China and India in their entirety. China and India occupy a position beside the West, not only because they lived on, but also because they accomplished the breakthrough. We will look briefly at the pros and cons of this view:

It is an old thesis that, compared with the West, China and India had no proper history. For history implies movement, changes of inner nature, new beginnings. In the West there are a succession of totally diverse cultures; first the ancient culture of Hither Asia, then the Graeco-Roman, then the Teuto-Romance. There is a constant change of geographical centres, areas and peoples. In Asia, on the other hand, a constant situation persists; it modifies its manifestations, it founders in catastrophes and re-establishes itself on the one and only basis that is constantly the same. This view gives rise to a conception that pictures unhistorical stability east of the Indus and the Hindu-Kush, to the west of them historical movement. Accordingly the deepest division between the great provinces of culture lies between Persia and India. The European might believe himself still in Europe till he reaches the Indus, said Lord Elphinstone (who is quoted by Hegel).

This view seems to me to have its origins in the historical situation of China and India in the eighteenth century. Lord Elphinstone saw the circumstances of his own time and failed altogether to discern China and India in their overall import. At that time they had both reached an advanced stage in their downward path.

Is not the recession that has taken place in India and China since the seventeenth century like a great symbol of what may happen to the whole of mankind? Is not the problem of our destiny to avoid sinking back into the Asiatic matrix from which China and India had also raised themselves up?

(3) The peoples that came after.—All the peoples were divided into those which had their foundations in the world of the breakthrough and those which remained apart. The former were the historical peoples, the latter the primitives.

The peoples responsible for the political construction of the new great empires were the Macedonians and the Romans. Their spiritual poverty consisted in the fact that the experiences of the breakthrough failed to touch the inner core of their souls. For this reason they were able, in the historical world, to conquer, to govern, to organise, to acquire and preserve the forms of civilisation, to safeguard the continuity of the cultural heritage, but not to carry forward or deepen experience.

It was different with the Nordics. To be sure, the great spiritual revolution no more took place in the North than it did in Babylonia or Egypt. The Nordic peoples lay in the slumber of primitivity, but when the Axial Period reached them they had attained, with the essence of their psychic attitude which it is so difficult for us to apprehend objectively (Hegel calls it the Northern soul), to an autonomous substance.
birth to one dominant human type, but to many opposed types. No man is everything, everyone has his place and is of necessity not only bound up with others, but also separated from them. Hence no one can desire the whole.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Orient and Occident
The Eastern and the Western World

In placing the three historical movements in China, India and the West side by side, we have disregarded the pre-eminence which Europeans are accustomed to abrogate to themselves. In the foregoing section we gave an interpretive outline of the European self-consciousness, which no European can throw off.

The fact that the European line of development alone led on to the Age of Technology, which today gives the whole world a European countenance, and that, in addition, a rational mode of thought has become omnipresent, seems to confirm this pre-eminence. To be sure, Chinese and Indians have also felt themselves to be the truly human peoples and have asserted the self-evidence of their pre-eminence with no less conviction than the Europeans. But it does not seem to be quite the same thing if every culture considers itself the centre of the world. For Europe alone appears to have confirmed its pre-eminence by practical achievement.

From the outset, that is since the time of the Greeks, the West was built up out of an inner polarity of Orient and Occident. Ever since Herodotus, men have been aware of the antithesis of West and East as an eternal antithesis that is for ever reappearing in fresh shapes. It was only with this awareness that the antithesis became truly real at all, for not until a thing is known does it become a reality in a spiritual sense. The Greeks founded the West, but in such a manner that it only continues to exist as long as it keeps its eyes steadily on the East, faces up to it, comprehends it and withdraws from it, takes over cultural elements from it and works over them till they become its own, and engages in a struggle with it in which now the West and now the East gains the upper hand.

It is not simply the antithesis between Greeks and Barbarians. This situation is pictured in an essentially analogous fashion by the Chinese, Egyptians and Indians vis-à-vis the other peoples. In the divorce of the Occident from the Orient, the Orient remains both politically and spiritually an equal and admired power, a force
from which the West can learn and which exercises a seductive attraction over it.

We can interpret the antithesis as a form of the self-division to which every spiritual phenomenon is subject. The spirit only comes to life, is set in motion, becomes fruitful and surges upward, when it becomes cognizant of itself in antithesis and finds itself in conflict. But the antithesis that confronts us here is an historical one; its inner implications cannot be reduced to a universal form nor can its contents be exhaustively defined in finite terms. It is like a profound historical enigma running through the ages. In multifarious modifications the original polarity has kept alive throughout the centuries.

The Greeks and the Persians, the division of the Imperium Romanum into the Western and the Eastern Empires, Western and Eastern Christendom, the Western World and Islam, Europe and Asia, which was in turn split up into the Near, Middle and Far East, are the successive shapes taken by the antithesis, in which cultures and peoples simultaneously attract and repel one another. This antithesis has at all times been an element in the make-up of Europe, whereas the Orient merely took it over from Europe and understood it in a European sense.

Now although objective historical analysis reveals that the West has played a paramount role in shaping the world, it also discloses an incompleteness and deficiency in the West which render it perennially apposite and fruitful to ask of the Orient: What shall we find there that is supplementary to ourselves? What became real there and what became truth, that we have let slip? What is the cost of our paramountcy?

It is true that the West possesses reliable historical records stretching farthest back into the depths of time. No place on earth has an earlier history than Mesopotamia and Egypt. During the last few centuries the West has given its imprint to the whole world. The West has the richest and most clearly marked articulation in its history and in its creations, the most sublime struggles of the spirit, the greatest plenteity of graphically visible great men.

Looking at things from this point of view, we ask the ubiquitous question: What rudimentary beginnings can we find in the Orient of the various achievements of the West; of science, rational methodology, personal selfhood, the life of the State, or of an economic order bearing the imprint of capitalism, etc.? We then look for that which is identical with the West and ask why it never unfolded fully in the Orient.

We fall under the suggestion that there is really nothing new to be found in Asia. Everything we meet is already known to us with no other differences than those of emphasis. No doubt it is the typical self-sufficiency of the European that leads us to regard this alien world as a mere curiosity. We either take the view that the same conceptions have arisen there as arose in a more lucid form in the West, or we resign ourselves to the opinion that we are only able to understand what the East took over from us and not what had its origins there.

Asia only becomes essential to us, however, when we ask: What is it that, despite all Europe's pre-eminence, has been lost to the West? What we lack and what vitally concerns us is to be found in Asia! Questions come to us from over there that lie deep in our own minds. For what we have produced, accomplished and become we have paid a price. We are by no means on the road to the self-perfection of man. Asia is an indispensable need for our completion. Even though we only understand things from our own vantage point, by recognising what we ourselves are, we may still be able to recognise that which is so deeply buried and concealed within us that it would never have risen into consciousness if we did not see it reflected in this world that is at first so strange to us. We should understand by expanding ourselves within it, while that which lies dormant within us blossoms out. And then the history of Chinese and Indian philosophy is no mere superfluous repetition of our own, nor is it simply a reality in which we can study interesting sociological effects. On the contrary, it is something that directly concerns us because it appraises us of human potentialities that we have not realised and brings us into rapport with the authentic origin of another humanity—a humanity that is not ours in actuality and yet is ours potentially, and that represents an irreplaceable historical entity.

The self-evident equation of a closed circle of Western culture with world history as such has been broken through. We can no longer leave the great cultural worlds of Asia on one side as being made up of unhistorical peoples in a state of perpetual spiritual stagnation. The compass of world history is universal. The picture we form of mankind becomes incomplete and distorted if we narrow this compass. But if we turn our eyes upon the magnitude and efficacy of Asia we may easily be deceived into an exaggerated and indeterminate conception of it:

In comparison with infinitesimal Europe, Asia seems huge in space. In time it appears the all-embracing matrix of the whole human race. It is immeasurable, mighty in its extent and in the human masses it contains, everlasting and slow of movement.
That in the last resort the decision on the future of our Western humanity lies in the relation of our faith to the Biblical religion seems, however, to be certain.

We may consider a transformation of the Biblical religion to be no longer possible, that it is likely to die out in benumbing creeds (instead of being carried alive through the ages in these protective integuments), and hence may simply be extinguished in the coming political catastrophes; in this event, because man cannot cease to be man, something different in its origins is bound to appear. This new manifestation, of which we can form no notion, would cause the Biblical religion to vanish into a mere recollection, such as the Greek myths are for us; even this recollection might be lost. The religion of the Bible would have had a long run, as long as Confucianism, which is today in the same uncertain situation, but not yet as long as the ancient Egyptian religion.

This new manifestation would not come to life through an act of establishment which, in correlation to the rule of force of a world empire, would have outward chances only. If it is really to take hold of men, something like a new Axial Period would have to come to pass. Then the loosening up of mankind would show what is developing in the communication of spiritual conflict, in the harnessing of spiritual unconditionality, in the beatitude of knowing the new process of revelation to be borne by the Godhead.

We may think further: In coming centuries men will perhaps arise who, sustained by the sight of the origin of the Axial Period, will proclaim truths replete with the knowledge and experience of our era that will really be believed and lived. Man would once more experience in full earnestness the meaning of the fact that God is, and once more know the pneuma that sweeps life along.

To expect this in the shape of a fresh revelation from God, however, would seem to be mistaken. The concept of revelation belongs exclusively to the Biblical religion. The revelation has taken place and is complete. The idea of revelation will remain inseparably bound up with the Biblical religion. In the lucidity of our world, a prophecy that made its appearance with the claim to a fresh divine revelation would perhaps always give the impression of madness or false prophecy, of superstition, that collapses before the one great, true prophecy which occurred thousands of years ago. And yet, who knows?

At all events, any such new revelation would become untrue in a merely usurped and enforced exclusivity. For that the truth of faith lies in the multiplicity of its historical manifestations, in the self-encountering of this multiplicity through ever deeper communication, is an insight and experience of latter centuries which cannot be reversed. This experience cannot be fallacious in its origin.

In view, however, of the possibility of a totalitarian world empire and a totalitarian doctrinal truth corresponding to it, the only hope left is for the individual, for innumerable individuals, as they have lived from the Axial Period until today, from China to the West, to preserve the stream of philosophy, however narrow it may become. The independence from both Church and State of the deepest inner being of the man related to transcendence, his liberty of soul, that draws courage from discourse with the great cultural heritage, this remains the last refuge, as it has been so often before in evil periods of transition.

If it be deemed improbable that a world order will develop without unity of faith, I venture to assert the reverse. The universality of a world order obligatory to all (in contrast to a world empire) is possible only when the multiple contents of faith remain free in their historical communication, without the unity of an objective, universally valid doctrinal content. The common element of all faith in relation to world order can only be that everyone desires the ordering of the foundations of existence, in a world community in which he has room to evolve with the peaceful means of the spirit.

So we do not expect a fresh revelation from God in the exclusivity of an annunciation with validity for the whole of mankind. Something else is possible. Perhaps we may expect something resembling a revelation through a prophecy (in using this word we are speaking imprecisely of a future phenomenon in a category belonging to the past) credible today, which would then assume manifold shape, or else, through sages and lawgivers (speaking again in categories of the Axial Period), make possible an ascent to high-minded, devoted, penetrating, pure humanity. There is in us an insufficiency, something resembling waiting, resembling readiness. Philosophy is incomplete and must remain aware of the fact, if it is not to slip into fallacy. We are wandering in the obscurity of the future, on guard against the enemies of truth, incapable of relinquishing our own thinking nescience in obedience to an imposed knowledge—but above all ready to hear and see when fulfilling symbols and profound thoughts once more illumine the path of life.

In this process, philosophising will in any case accomplish an essential task. It will repay us thoughtfully to resist the absurdities, falsifications and perversions, the claim to exclusive possession of
historical truth, and blind intolerance. Philosophy leads us along the road to the point at which love acquires its depth in real communication. Then in this love, through the success of communication, the truth that links us together will be disclosed to those who are most remote in the diversity of their historical origin.

Today individuals are palpable. He who would like to live in the unclosed and unorganised and unorganisable community of authentic human beings—in what used to be called the invisible Church—does in fact live today as an individual in alliance with individuals scattered over the face of the earth, an alliance that survives every disaster, a dependability that is not fixed by any pact or any specific imperative. He lives in complete insufficiency, but in a communal insufficiency, and obdurately seeks with others the right road within this world and not outside it. These individuals meet one another, exhort and encourage one another. They repudiate the modern combination of eccentric faith contents with the practice of a nihilistic realism. They know that the task imposed upon man is to realise in this world that which is possible to man, and that this possibility is not a single and solitary one. But every individual must know where he stands and for what he will work. It is as though everyone were charged by the Deity to work and live for boundless openness, authentic reason, truth and love and fidelity, without the recourse to force that is typical of the States and Churches in which we have to live and whose insufficiency we should like to oppose.

PART THREE

THE MEANING OF HISTORY
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spirit of man is conscious. Consciousness is the medium without which there is for us neither knowledge nor experience, neither humanity nor relationship to transcendence. That which is not conscious is called unconscious. Unconscious is a negative concept, endlessly ambiguous in its implications.

Our consciousness is directed toward that which is unconscious, that is, toward everything we encounter in the world from which nothing inward communicates itself to us. And our consciousness is borne by the unconscious, it is a continual growth out of the unconscious and sliding back into the unconscious. But we can gain experience of the unconscious only through consciousness. In every conscious step of our lives, especially in every creative act of the spirit, we are aided by an unconscious within us. Pure consciousness is incapable of doing anything. Consciousness is like the crest of a wave, a peak above a broad and deep subsoil.

This unconscious that bears us has a dual meaning. The unconscious that is nature, per se and for ever enigmatic—and the unconscious that is the germ of the spirit, that strives to become manifest.

If we overcome history by entering into the unconscious as the existent which becomes manifest in the phenomenon of consciousness, this unconscious is never nature, but that which is revealed in the outcrop of symbols in language, poetry, representation and self-representation, in reflection. We live not only from out of it, but also toward it. The more lucidly consciousness renders it manifest, the more substantially, profoundly and comprehensively it becomes actual itself. For within it that germ is awakened whose wakefulness heightens and widens consciousness itself. The passage of the spirit through history not only consumes a pre-existent unconscious, but also produces a new unconscious. Both modes of expressions are fallacious, however, in relation to the one unconscious, to penetrate which is not only the process of the history of the spirit, but which is Being, above and before and after all history.

As the unconscious, its characteristics are purely negative, however. No cryptograph of Being is to be gained with this concept, as Eduard von Hartmann vainly sought to do in a world of positivist thinking. The unconscious is of value only to the extent to which it takes shape in consciousness, and thereby ceases to be unconscious. Consciousness is the real and true. Heightened consciousness, not the unconscious, is our goal. We overcome history by entering into the unconscious in order, rather, to attain heightened consciousness.

The urge to unconsciousness, which takes hold of us humans at all times of adversity, is illusory. Whether a Babylonian god seeks to put an end to the uproar of the world with the words 'I want to sleep', or whether Western man longs to be back in the Garden of Eden, before he ate of the Tree of Knowledge, whether he considers it best he had never been born, whether he strives to find his way back to a state of nature prior to all culture, whether he deems consciousness a calamity and looks upon the whole of history as a false trail and desires to bring it to an end—it is for ever the same thing in manifold guises. It is not an overcoming of history, but an evasion of history and one's own existence in it.

(6) We overstep history when man becomes present to us in his most exalted works, through which he has been able, as it were, to catch Being in motion, and has rendered it communicable. What has here been done by men, who allowed themselves to be absorbed by the eternal truth which became language through them, although it wears an historical garb, is above and beyond history and leads us along the route that passes over the world of history into that which is prior to all history and becomes language through history. In this realm there is no longer any question of whence and whither, of future and progress, but in time there is something which is no longer solely time and which comes to us, above all time, as Being itself.

History itself becomes the road to the supra-historical. In the contemplation of the great—in the provinces of creation, action and thought—history shines forth as the everlasting present. It no longer satisfies curiosity, but becomes an invigorating force. The great things of history, as objects of veneration, bind us to the matrix above all history.

(7) The apprehension of history as a whole leads beyond history. The unity of history is itself no longer history. To grasp this unity means to pass above and beyond history into the matrix of this unity, through which that unity is which enables history to become a whole. But this ascent above history to the unity of history remains itself a task within history. We do not live in the knowledge of history; in so far, however, as we live by unity we live supra-historically in history.

Every ascent above history becomes an illusion if we abandon history. The fundamental paradox of our existence, the fact that it is only within the world that we can live above and beyond the world, is repeated in the historical consciousness that rises above history. There is no way round the world, no way round history, but only a way through history.

(8) A glance at the long ages of prehistory and the short span of history, gives rise to the question: Is history not a transitory
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phenomenon, in view of the hundreds of thousands of years of prehistory? At bottom, there is no other answer save the general proposition: that which has a beginning also has an end—even if it lasts for millions or billions of years.

But the answer—which is impossible to our empirical knowledge—is superfluous to our consciousness of Being. For even if our view of history may be considerably modified according to whether we see unending progress, or the shadow of the end, the essential thing is that historical knowledge as a whole is not the ultimate knowledge. What matters is the demand for presentness as eternity in time. History is encompassed by the broader horizon, in which presentness counts as abode, verification, decision, fulfillment. That which is eternal appears as decision in time. To the transcendent consciousness of existence, history vanishes in the everlasting present.

Within history itself, however, there remains the perspective of time: perhaps the history of mankind will continue for a long, a very long time on the earth that has now become unitary. Within this perspective then, the question for everyone is: where he will stand, for what he will work.

Notes


3 (Page xv): Toynbee is careful about this. He breaks through or arches over his conception with a Christian outlook. In his view it is fundamentally possible for a culture to continue to exist without going under. It is not subject to the blind necessity of biological old age and death. What will happen is also dependent upon human freedom. And God may help.

Spengler claims that he—the first to do so in his opinion—formulates an historical prognosis methodologically with the certitude of an astronomer. He predicts the decline of the West. Many people found in his book the corroborated of a state of mind which they brought with them to the reading of it.

Two insights are, in principle, to be set in opposition to the dictatorial certitude of his brilliant conception of the play of relationships, which fluctuates between arbitrariness and plausibility: Firstly, Spengler's interpretation in comparisons and analogies is frequently inappropriate to the characterisation of a 'spirit', of an atmosphere, but it pertains to the nature of all physiognomic definition that it involves not the methodological recognition of a reality, but an interpretation extending to the infinite in terms of possibilities. In the process, the imperious idea of the 'necessity' of events becomes confused. Morphological form-sequences are construed causally, the evidence of the senses as a real necessity of events. Spengler is methodologically untenable where he gives more than a characterisation of phenomena. If real problems very often lie hidden in his analogies, they come to light only when it becomes possible to test his statements causally and particularly by investigation, and not simply in the physiognomic view as such. The playful approach, which, in the particular, always supposes itself to have the total within reach, must be transmuted into definiteness and demonstrability; this calls for renunciation of insight into the whole.

The substantialisation or hypostasisation of cultural totalities will then cease. There will then be only ideas of a relative spiritual whole and schemata of such ideas in ideal-typical constructions. These are able to bring a great multiformality of phenomena into context through the application of principles. But they always remain within the comprehensive whole; they are not capable of taking a total grip of any such whole, as though it were a circumscribed body. Secondly, in opposition to Spengler's absolute separation of cultures standing side by side without relations, we must point to the empirically demonstrable contacts, transfers, adaptations (Buddhism in China, Christianity in the West), which for Spengler lead only to disturbances and pseudo-morphoses, but are in fact indications of a common fundament.
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What this fundamental unity is, remains for us a task both of cognition and of practical implementation. No definitely construed unity—such as biological make-up, the universally valid thinking of the intelligence, common attitudes of humanity—is unity per se. The presupposition that man is the potentiality for being the same everywhere, is just as correct as the contradictory assumption that man is everywhere disparate, differentiated down to the particularity of the individual.

In any case, the capacity for understanding pertains to unity. Spengler denies this capacity: the various cultural realms are irreconcilably diverse, incomprehensible to one another. We, for example, do not understand the Ancient Greeks.

This side by side coexistence of the eternally alien is contradicted by the possibility, and the partial reality, of understanding and adoption. Whatever men think, do and create concerns the rest; ultimately it somehow or other involves the same thing.


5 (Page 35): A similar conception was formulated by Alfred Weber. He places the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Babylonia alongside the still surviving cultures of China and India as belonging to the same type of primary culture that remains unhistorical and bound to magic, with which he contrasts the secondary cultures that have arisen solely in the West.

We find this differentiation to be particularly inescapable in the variation between China and India on the one hand, and the West on the other. Once we have become aware of the spiritual compass and depth of the Axial Period, we cannot retain the parallel: Egypt, Babylonia, India, China—in contrast to all of which the West, with its Graeco-Jewish foundations, is to be considered the only new culture. On the contrary, the Axial Period very definitely has a place in the Indian and Chinese worlds as well.

The India and China, that we know were born from the Axial Period, not primary but secondary; spiritually they penetrated to the same depth as the West, which happened neither in Egypt and Babylonia, nor in the aboriginal cultures of India and China (the existence of these latter is attested by a few archaeological finds, which, however, are not sufficient to enable us to form a broad picture of them, as we can of Egypt and Babylonia). Hence China and India as a whole are not to be set alongside Egypt and Babylonia as primary cultures. At the earliest stages of their development they were comparable to the primary cultures; but following the break-through of the Axial Period they became parallels to the secondary cultures of the West. The parallel between Egypt and Mesopotamia, and India and China, holds good only in respect of their de facto synchronicity. From the Axial Period onward China and India cannot be thought of as parallels to the ancient civilizations; they can be reasonably compared only to the Axial Period of the West. Egypt and Babylonia did not give birth to any Axial Period.

Alfred Weber’s historical edifice is buttressed by the principle: ‘In the framework of a consideration of the total process we must depict the growth and dissolution of closed cultural wholes.’ Hence he expressly repudiates operation with ‘emotional values’, which he regards as ‘empty perspectives’. But his undogmatic approach and his perspicacious historical vision see the same facts as we do. Like a fragment out of another historical edifice, we find in his work a

passage that might be cited as chief witness for our interpretation. With him it remains parenthetic and without sequel:

‘From the ninth to the sixth century B.C. the three cultural spheres of the world, which had formed in the meantime—the Hither Asiatic-Greek, the Indian, and the Chinese—came, with remarkable simultaneity and apparently independently of one another, to a religious and philosophical quest, enquiry and decision directed toward universals. From this starting-point, in a synchronic world epoch dating from Zoroaster, the Jewish prophets, the Greek philosophers, from Buddha, from Lao-tse, they evolved those religious and philosophic interpretations of the world and those attitudes of mind which, developed and recast, merged, re-born, or transformed and reformed under mutual spiritual influence, constitute mankind’s criteria of faith in the world religions and its criteria of philosophic interpretation, to the religious side of which nothing fundamentally new has been added since the end of this period, i.e. since the sixteenth century.’

Alfred Weber’s interpretation of the effect of the equestrian peoples points to a reason for the genesis of the secondary cultures in the West (which we call the Axial Period); it was at the same time, however, the reason for the spiritual upheavals in China and India, which he nevertheless leaves in the category of primary cultures.

Alfred Weber does in fact portray the deep dividing-lines in India and China, which, at the outset, represented changes of essence as in the West: the original Buddhism in India, the transmutation of the magico-metaphysical into ethicism by Jainism and by Buddhism—and in China the transmutation by Buddhism. He deems it of crucial significance, however, that the magical was re-established, that it is a matter not of a ‘fundamental’, but of a ‘superficial’ transmutation of the eternal and immutable fabric in which China as well as India was enveloped. The division of a supreme immutable is supposed to distinguish the West from the West.

Is there really a radical difference here? Is there not rather here too a common factor, which may be termed the constant peril to us all, namely the risk that having ascended into the unmagical, human, rational, above the demons to God, we may in the end sink back again into the magical and demonological?


7 (Page 124): To elucidate such tendencies means to demonstrate possibilities, the compass of whose realisation remains uncertain. It is a different matter to treat the technological world as a whole as something that has been seen through, whether as the manifestation of a new heroic figure of humanity, or as the working of the devil. The demonism of technology is then substantiated into something really demonic; with this interpretation, the meaning of labour is either heightened, or denied altogether, technology’s world of work is either glorified or repudiated. Both arise out of the possibilities inherent in technological labour. But these opposed possibilities are both fallacious in their absolutisation. This is the manner in which they are presented by the brothers Jünger in writings that make a strong impression on the reader.

Ernst Jünger—in his book Der Arbeiter, 3. Auflage, Hamburg 1932—sketched a visionary picture of the technological world: labour as total mobilisation, culminating in the battle of equipment—the figure of the worker hard as bronze—the sense of the nihilistic, aimless, intrinsically destructive. Jünger adumbrates the ‘figure of the worker’ as the future lord of the earth. The latter is beyond humanity and barbarism, beyond individual and mass. Work
is his life-form, he knows himself responsible in the total fabric of work. Technology objectifies everything as a means to power. Through it, man becomes master of himself and of the earth. Man, as this new man, as the figure of the worker, acquires a countenance bearing the stamp of rigidity. He no longer asks why and to what purpose? He wills and believes, irrespective of the content. Fatalism and fatal volition and fatal reason give themselves.

Friedrich Georg Jünger (Über die Perfektion der Technik, Frankfurt 1944), on the other hand, presents a desolate, hopeless picture of technology: The elemental, coerced by technology, spreads precisely within technology. Rational thinking, itself so poor in elemental forces, here sets huge elemental forces in motion, but through coercion, by hostile forcible means. The industrial landscape has something volcanic about it, all the phenomena of a volcanic eruption recur in it: ‘Lava, ashes, fumes, smoke, night-clouds lit up by fire, and widespread devastation.’

F. G. Jünger impugns the thesis that technology diminishes man’s labour and increases his leisure. He rightly points out that there is no question today of a decrease in the labour-quantum. But on the whole it is certainly incorrect to say, as he does, that every seeming reduction of work is bought at the expense of an increase at another point. When he contends the thesis that technology increases wealth, he does so with a leap into a different signification of ‘wealth’, according to which wealth is a being, not a having. It is also no stricture on technology, when Jünger erroneously imputes to rationalisation the want (entirely due to military destruction) which it is intended to combat. His topical depiction of this organisation of want hits the nail on the head: It does not create wealth, but is a procedure for the distribution of what little there is in times of shortage. The organisation of distribution in an economy operating at a loss remains invariable amidst the ruins; it grows all the more powerful the greater the poverty becomes. Its collapse comes about only when there is nothing left to distribute. But this statement obviously relates not to technology, but to a terrible phenomenon resulting from the war, which we happen to be living through today, and which has been fallaciously construed as the necessary outcome of technology.

The two formulations of the brothers Jünger are contrary in character in respect of the general tone of their evaluation of technology—but they are similar in one another in their mode of thought. This is analogous to mythological thinking: not cognition, but an image—not analysis, but the adumbration of a vision—but through the medium of modern categories of thought, so that the reader may be of the opinion that he is dealing with rational cognition. Hence the one-sidedness and fervour. There is no lifting of the evidence, no consideration of alternatives are adduced save those selected in such a manner that, by their demolition, the speaker increases the height of his own platform.

There is no sobriety in cognition, but an emotionalism which is not overcome either in the comportment of exactly formulating sobriety, nor in the cold climate of dictatorial observations and valuations. It is above all an aesthetic attitude that draws its sustenance from delight in the spiritual product, and which has indeed, in the case of Ernst Jünger, led to works of the highest literary merit.

Serious speaking, there is no element of truth in thinking of this kind. But it is seductive on that inordinately modern planes, on which reflection has been lost, methodical cognition abandoned, basic knowledge, or the life-long search for it, cast aside. Hence the tone of decisive authority lacks any authentic nexus perceptible to the reader. It is an easy matter to vary the content,

indeed the whole approach and atmosphere: the way of thinking remains; subject, opinion and aim alter.

12 (Page 191): Walter Lippmann and F. A. Hayek have provided a fundamental elucidation of the problem of total planning. According to Lippmann the consequences of total planning can be formulated in a few sentences: The extended compass of the plan is accompanied by a reduction in mobility and capacity for adaptation. The road to mastery of want and disorder through total planning in fact intensifies both. The coercion that is intended to overcome chaos evokes chaos in real earnest.

The coerciveness of organisation is heightened to the point of terrorisation. For the growing dissatisfaction under compulsion can only be prevented from breaking out by the continual increase of compulsion. Total planning goes hand in hand with armament and war; it is cold war through the breaking off of free intercourse.

Total planning is carried over onto the smallest of groups. There develops a tendency to erect barriers, ruthlessly to force through particularisms of all sorts, to nationalise and centralise. Such statements obviously relate not to technology, but to a terrible phenomenon resulting from the war, which we happen to be living through today, and which has been fallaciously construed as the necessary outcome of technology.

Total planning is a means for the devastation of all forms of enterprise; these tendencies of planned economy force themselves through even without the wish of the active participants; they grow because they are in the nature of the matter. Beyond them, planned economy contains tendencies to the modification of the whole of human existence, including its spiritual conditions, tendencies which the idealistic champions of planning conceal from themselves. Hayek has convincingly characterised them:

(1) Planned economy destroys democracy. If democracy is government and government control through Parliament, discussion and majority decisions, it is possible only where the tasks of the State are confined to provinces in relation to which decision can be reached along the path of free discussion and by majorities. But a parliament can never control total planning. It rather diminishes itself through so-called delegation of authority.

(2) Planned economy destroys the constitutional State. The constitutional State lives by laws that remain operative even vis-à-vis the dictatorship of majorities, because a majority cannot abolish it immediately, but only in a legal procedure that takes time and enables majorities to be controlled by other majorities. Total planning, however, requires sovereignty through dispositions, regulations, delegations of authority, that represent a so-called legality, but rest upon the uncontrolled arbitrariness of bureaucracy and those to whom authority is delegated, and can be altered at will.

The constitutional State affords a safeguard against the arbitrary domination of majorities whose only claim to absolute validity rests upon the fact that they are the product of a democratic electoral procedure. Such majorities, however, may be as arbitrary and dialectical as individuals. It is not the origin, but the
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Interrelationships appear to have been demonstrated by Lippmann and Hayek, whose inevitability it is not easy to meet with effective counter-arguments. This conception, which every actively engaged person ought to visualise, at least as a possibility, is compounded out of experiences of our era and ideal-typical constructions.

15 (Page 191): The attempt at a direct realisation of justice by force leads to conditions in which not even the most elementary justice is fulfilled. Trotsky (quoted by Hayek) shows that the differences of income in Russia and America are by no means favourable to Russia from the point of view of justice: Between the lowest and the highest salaries, the ratio, in Russia as in America, is in the neighbourhood of 1:50. In Russia the upper 11 or 12 per cent of the total population receive some 50 per cent of the national income; in America approximately 35 per cent of the national income goes to the upper 10 per cent.


I consider this earlier work supplementary to the present one. The earlier was conceived unhistorically, this present historically. Both relate to the present.

15 (Page 235): But even that which, in the history of nature, is reversible, definitive, unique, does not possess what in man we call 'historicity'. Human history first acquires an essential meaning from the 'historicity' of 'existence'. No doubt its fundament is a process analogous to the processes of nature. This fundament is not its essence, however.

The objectivising categories of a natural process do not apply to the being of man, which is made up of spirit and existence, for the understanding experience of which radically different objectifying categories are requisite.


16 (Page 264): It is a question of a great polarity: catholicity and reason, cf. my book Von der Wahrheit, Munich 1948, pp. 832-68.