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Prophets of Decline

The Global Histories of Brooks Adams, Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee in the United States 1896–1961

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TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER O.K.—A SCHOLAR IN ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH HISTORY

Prophets of Decline
The Global Histories of Brooks Adams, Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee in the United States 1890s-1960s

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Tiivistelmä

Tämä väitöskirjatyö käsittelee Brooks Adamsin Oswald Spenglerin ja Arnold Toynbeen globaalihistorioiden aikalaisvastaanottoa Yhdysvalloissa 1895–1961. Työn ensimmäisessä luvussa osoitetaan, että toisin kuin Euroopassa yleisesti tiedetään Yhdysvalloissa maailmanhistorialla ja debatilla ”sivilisaation” olemuksesta on ollut keskeinen sija Amerikan globaalisen aseman hahmottamisessa. Yhdysvaltalaista keskustelua Spenglerin, Adamsin ja Toynbeen teorioista yhdistettynä modernin globalisaatiokehityksen alkuvaiheisiin ei ole aatehistoriain valossa aiemmin tutkittu.

Tutkimuksen fokus on yhtäältä em. globaalihistorioitsijoiden tulkinnassa ”Amerikasta” ja sen merkityksestä osana maailmansivilisaatiota – toisaalta siinä argumentaatiossa, joita varhaiset globalisaatioteoriat provosoivat ”sivilisaatio”-käsitteen määrittelystä Yhdysvalloissa. Adams, Spengler ja Toynbee diagnosoivat ”degeneraation” sivilisaatiota kalvavaksi taudiksi teoksissaan: *The Law of Civilization and Decay (1896)* ja *The Decline of the West* (Yhdysvalloissa 1926&1928) *A Study of History* I-VI (1934&1940). Mutta he myös esittivät myös parannuskeinot tuohon tautiin seuraavissa niteissään. Adamsin *laissez -faire* kapitalismin kritiikkiä seurasi vaatimus siirtymiseen maailmanlaajuiseen sosiaaliseen korporatismiin, jossa Amerikan imperiumilla ja suuryhtiöillä olisi keskeinen sija; Spenglerin herättämä massakulttuurin kritiikki saavutti vastakaikua kyynisellä 1920-luvulla–toisaalta New Yorkin lehdistön ”massakulttuurin” voimat tekivät Spengleristä tunnetun Jazz-kaudella [kuten julkaisija Henry Lucen *Time-Life* tiedotusimperiumi teki kuuluisan Arnold Toynbeesta 1947-1950]. 1930-luvulla maailmanhistoriallisen tilanteen muututtua Yhdysvaltain liberaalit nimesivät Spenglerin yksimielisesti fasismin profeetaksi. (Luku 6), sillä Spenglerillä uusi maailmanjärjestys perustui saksalaisen *kulttuurin* pohjalle sekä insinöörien ja eliittityöläisten muodostamaan ”kansallissosialismiin”. Toynbeella ratkaisu Ensimmäisen maailmansodan kulttuurikriisiin oli maailmanvaltio, jossa sivilisaation sipirituaaliset arvot oli toteutettu.(luku 7)

Toisaalta tutkimus keskittyy merkittävien amerikkalaisten liberaalin kulttuurieliitin – mm. Charles Beard, Theodore Roosevelt ja Lewis Mumford – arvioihin em. maailmanhistorian tulkinnoista. Tekstin konteksti siirtyy *fin- de-siecle* ” antimodernismista” Toynbeen määrittelemään ”post-modernismiin”; väitöskirjassa jäsennetään ”modernismi” -käsitteiden variaatioiden avulla sitä aateympäristöä, jossa aikalaisreseptio muotoutui. Tutkimus osoittaa, että amerikkalaisen liberaalin kulttuurieliitin reaktio oli aluksi positiivinen, mutta imperialismin, fasismin ja kylmän sodan eri vaiheet muuttivat tulkinnan lopulta negatiiviseksi, sekä vahvistivat Yhdysvaltalaista liberaalista määrittelyä oman sivilisaationsa erityislaadusta.

Loppupäätelmänä todetaan modernistisen [l.antimetafyysisen] liberaalisen ”sivilisaatio”- paradigman jatkuvuus Yhdysvalloissa. (työn 9 luku käsittele sitä, miten Yhdysvaltalaisten uusliberaalien kritiikki 1950-luvulla lopetti maailmanhistorian ja sivilisaatioiden analysoimisen organismeina osana ”poliitttisesti korrektia” akateemista keskustelua.) Toisaalta osoitetaan, että ne jotka ovat tyytymättömiä kapitalistiseen ”Amerikkalaiseen kulttuuriin ”ovat usein ottaneet kaikupohjaa maailmanhistoriankirjoituksen ei-liberaalista traditiosta republikanismista , metahistorijoitsijoista aina post-modernismin eri muotoihin saakka. Historiografisesti todetaan myös, että Adams ja Spengler kuuluvat aatehistorian, mutta Toynbee on Yhdysvaltain nykyisen ”World history” – oppisuunnan keskeinen synnyttäjä.

Acknowledgments

During the writing of this thesis I have accumulated many debts, only some of which I can partially acknowledge here.

I wish most to thank the supervisor of this thesis, Professor of the Finnish Academy Marjatta Hietala, for her guidance. Professor Seikko Eskola originally provided the topic for this thesis in his lectures on cyclical theories of world-history, by posing the question: why Toynbee and Spengler had such a huge following in the USA? Professors Eskola and Aira Kemiläinen, who were referees of this dissertation, provided valuable suggestions as to how I might sharpen my argument. My appreciation to Professor Pertti Haapala and the Finnish Graduate School of History for giving me the opportunity to complete my doctoral studies.

Late Professor of education Matti A.Sainio at Åbo Akademi and Docent of intellectual history [lärdomshistoria] at Uppsala University recruited me into the field. I had the opportunity to be his personal assistant at Uppsala, before his sudden death in 1987. Professor Sainio wanted me to probe the arcane sphere of pre-modern alchemy—however; the dissertation took quite another course.

Professor Olli Vehviläinen, is probably most “responsible” for my becoming an “Americanist.” He hired me as the secretary for the newly found American Studies Program in Tampere University. In this position I had the privilege of assisting many distinguished scholars. My appreciation goes to Professors Alfred Crosby Jr. of the University of Texas—who taught global, but not "meta" history; Keith Olson, of Maryland University College Park, whose advice, kindness and hospitality has helped me at the various stages of this study ; and Robert Bannister, who taught American intellectual history at Swarthmore College PA. As a participant in his seminar I had the opportunity to experience first class instruction in one of America's leading undergraduate colleges.

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My colleagues at the Washington D.C. National Archives Military Records Office also deserve my gratitude for allowing me to experience first-hand how the “modern Rome” works.

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To quote Norman Bates, "a mother is a boy's best friend," in this case for endless support, moral and financial. My gratitude also to my "aunt" Liisa Suomela for her generous travel grants and to Architect Leila Tuominen for her continuous backing. My appreciation furthermore to Master of Science in Technology Matti Simola , for his H.S. Chamberlain & Gobineau translations; MaSc (Economy) Markku Lampi & Master of Science Jorma Riihikoski for computer & web expertise.

In Lieu of a Preface

Quotation from the world- historian Arnold Toynbee:

"Our particular purpose is to help to address the balance between the microscopic view of history and the panoramic view of it. Both views are indispensable, but sometimes one is more in fashion than the other and recently the microscopic view has been in the ascendant...[My panoramic approach to history] is a controversial one, so, of course, is the microscopic approach too. The controversy is perennial, and it would be misfortune if ever it wound up; for as long as it continues, we may feel fairly confident that our understanding of history will make progress."

(Arnold Toynbee, "Preface", *The Intent Of Toynbee's History*, ed by Edward T.Gargan,(Loyola University Press, Chicago 1961) p.V.)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Rising Global Environment

The 19th century closed with high expectations of a homogeneous world-civilization to be achieved through the expansion of Western values and technology. But this process of "modernization"[1] also held extraordinary dangers— later realized in two World Wars. The global environment held promise of a better world, but also contained the capacity for self-destruction of the West, because of the emerging technological means for war and social control. Emphasizing this danger, American Brooks Adams (1848-1927), German Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) and Englishman Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) re-interpreted the lifecycles of entire civilizations in widely-read volumes of world-historical theory—Adams's, *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1895), Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* I-II (in German 1918 and 1922 and *The Decline of the West* in English 1926 and 1928) and Toynbee's A *Study of History* (12 vols. 1934 –1961). Although none envisioned the full-scale globalization and the digitized world economy, which John Naisbitt so accurately predicted in *Megatrends* (1982), each anticipated the coming transformation to the "global age."[2]

Pronouncing the entire West, including the United States, on the verge of decline, these metahistorians viewed this development as a consequence of secular liberalism and industrial civilization. For each the term "civilization" was central. But each turned its meaning 360 degrees from conventional usage. The final stage of historical cycles, "civilization" meant weakness, lack of creativity, and a diminished spiritual life. "Civilization" heralded decline.

Expressing their own ambivalence toward the commercial, urban, free-market way of life, this redefinition directly challenged secular liberalism's promise of eternal advancement. Each of these historians saw liberalism as the source of materialism, of the evils of urban life, and of spiritual decay— the "darker side of progress." The result, they predicted, would be a "time of troubles" within Western civilization.

Despite this gloomy message, each of these historians, in varying degree, enjoyed their short-term fame among American readers: for Adams in the mid-1890s, a relatively small East Coast elite, including future president Theodore Roosevelt; for Spengler in the late 1920s, a far larger audience that included the publisher Alfred A. Knopf, his chief promoter, and Charles A. Beard, still one of America's best-known historians; and for Toynbee in the early years of the Cold War (1947-51), national celebrity thanks in large part to the efforts of *Time*- magazine magnate Henry R. Luce.

Although contemporary interest in their major works soon cooled to disinterest or soured to outright hostility, all three made their way into the annals of historical writing and social theory. In recent decades, Spengler and Toynbee in particular have been the subjects of several major studies, while their work attracts attention from a new generation of world-

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1 Terms such as modernization, modernism, and civilization are given in quotations in the first use only, but should be understood in a special sense throughout.

2 Norman Cantor, *The American Century: Varieties of Culture in Modern Times*, (New York 1997); Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore 1973); Paul Costello, *World Historians and Their Goals: Twentieth Century Answers to Modernism*, (De Kalb Ill.1993).

historians. Only Adams—the undisputed pioneer of metahistory among American historians—had failed to receive his due. [3]

The earlier reception of all three nonetheless raises common problems. Why the interest in studies that were both gloomy and metaphysical in a nation known for its optimism and devotion to the "scientific" study of "facts"? Why in particular the American fascination with "civilization"? What distortions, if any, occurred in the process of popularization; and for Spengler and Toynbee, "Americanization?" What light does their popularity and influence shed on the transition in American thought from Victorian to "progressive" to "modernist?"

Spengler's popularity is especially puzzling. Although there was clearly a market for historical surveys in the 1920s, as witnessed by sales of James Harvey Robinson's *The Mind in the Making (1921)* and H.G. Wells's *Outline of History* (1922) with its progressive message of advancing liberty and the world-state, Spengler presented an opposite message, identifying American "scientism" and "pragmatism" as traits marking the decline of civilization. Attempting to finesse the contradiction, Spengler's publisher Alfred Knopf marketed *The Decline as* a "History of the Future." But the question remains: why did arch-liberals such as historian Charles Beard and "Smart Set" New York intellectuals welcome and temporarily embrace the German's work?

Addressing these and related questions, this study focuses, more generally, on the problem of the fading of Victorian optimism and the rise of a modernist world-view in the United States in the 20th century with reference to a new conceptualization of world-history and of "civilization" as evidenced in the work of Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee.

2. Civilization and Progress

Among Americans few words resonate like "civilization." Popular histories include Edward Eggleston's *The Transit of Civilization* (1901), Charles Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization* (1927), and Max Lerner's *America as a Civilization (1957).* Politicians and public figures have trumpeted its virtues. "The exact measure of the progress of civilization is the degree in which the intelligence of the common mind has prevailed over wealth and brute force," wrote 19th century historian George Bancroft in defense of democracy. American politicians present the war against terrorism as a battle for "civilization." In popular usage, "civilized" denotes good taste and luxurious living. A PC-game series "Civilization" allows gamers to ponder the nature of history. [4]

Opposing this line of degenerative thinking was a continuing American tradition of progressive liberalism deriving from the Enlightenment. A key ingredient in the ideology of the American Revolution, Enlightenment liberalism promised positive changes which would eventually result in emancipation, freedom, and material affluence. In this liberal definition, America would spread civilization through modernizing the world. Late 19th century evolutionism reinforced the identification of civilization with modernization and progress. Progress would extend to human evolution itself, as humanity attained a near-angelic state "as the fittest who survived also turned out to be the morally strongest and the best."[5]

According to prominent liberals, this modernization-process would transfer military monopolies to the industrial republics, which in the age of "positive modernity," would no

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3 Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "World History in Global Age," *The American Historical Review*, October 1995, p.1034; Costello, *World Historians,* passim.

4 "Civilization and Its Discontents," *The American Prospect*, June 3, 2002, p. 33.

5 B.G. Brander, *Staring into Chaos, Explorations into the Decline of Civilizations,*(Texas 1998), p.12.

longer wage war with one another. Two representatives of this “progressive” conception in this study are Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Luce, who stressed the positive consequences of industrialization and democratic co-operation in eliminating the destructive violence of past wars. From the mid-1890s onward, the work of Adams, Spengler and eventually Toynbee figured centrally in this discourse over the perils and promise of civilization.[6]

3. Objectivism vs. World History

Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee explained the past in *cyclical* terms, recasting the ancient conception of cycles in historical development in a modern context. This re-formulation challenged not only the liberal evaluation of material progress, but also reigning definitions of “science,” in particular the dominant "scientific-empiricist" attitudes of professional historians trained in the last two decades of the 19th century. During the 1880s and 1890s, American professional historians disregarded (consciously or unconsciously) Ranke’s original demand for “universal history” [world history], and instead took his concept of “objectivity” as a guideline.[7] Measured by this standard, as two commentators have recently put it, the world-histories of Adams, Spengler and Toynbee seemed a ”foolish and illegitimate and a non-professional enterprise.”[8] The grand generalizations, magnificent in the abstract, horrified the specialists. Adams, Spengler and Toynbee, from their point of view, accused specialists of “antiquarianism” and dusty pedantry in a perilous era of world war and globalization.

Analyzing civilization in terms that were anathema to most academics, Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee revived a tradition of Victorian moral reflection on Western civilization, while at the same time producing works that were modernist literature and poetry in the highest degree. Their popularity, it will be argued, was in part the result of a growing gap between professional historians and the general reading public.

The reception of Adams, Spengler and Toynbee thus feeds directly into recent debate over the state of academic history and the failure of academic historians to serve as "public intellectuals" at a time when the West faces global challenges that are no less acute than a century ago. Although the metahistorians were easy targets for scholastic criticism, Cambridge historian J.H. Plumb has observed, the metahistorians were "more difficult to explain away, and quite impossible to write off.”[9] Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* is now in a 20th printing, enlightening a new generation of American readers.

During the 1980s, renewed interest in global study led to the reintroduction of world-history at leading American colleges and universities. Prominent American historians saw the earlier metahistorians as precursors of a much-needed unitary vision of history: Among them was Chicago historian William McNeill, who has re-focused historians’ attention to world history, “The profession still needs, as in the Christian past, a vision of the ecumenical setting within which each separate national state and more local community lived and moved and

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6 Geyer and Bright, ”World History,” passim; Charles Townsend, “The Fin de Siecle,” in *Fin de Siecle: The Meaning of Twentieth Century,* ed. Alex Danchev, (London 1995), pp.201-204.

7 As described in Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity -Question and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge 1988),pp.28-30.

8 Geyer & Bright, ”World History,” p.1034.

9 J.H. Plumb, “The Good, the Bad, the Indifferent,” *Making of an Historian: Collected Essays of J.H.Plumb*, (New York/London, 1988), p.208.

had its being." McNeill also recognizes the usefulness of metahistory in providing mythic background for the study of humanities.[10]

Although the recent world-history movement is beyond the scope of this study, the reception of the early metahistorians sets this movement in broader perspective, exploring both the reasons for and limits of the appeal of metahistory in the United States.

4. Modernism vs. Modernization

The reception of Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee also figured in the transformation of American thought from Victorian optimism to "progressive" reformism to "modernist" gloom — a transition that also raises several semantic questions. What is "modernism"? How does it relate to "modernization"? Or to "cognitive" and "aesthetic" modernism, "antimodernism," and "reactionary" modernism, labels also applied to American culture from the late 19th to the mid-20th century?

"The problematic definition of modernism," historian Dorothy Ross has observed, "has its origins in the fundamental division of intellectual life created by the Enlightenment." Kant separated scientific knowledge and aesthetic judgment, giving the former priority. The Romantics challenged the separation and reversed the priority, launching a debate that continues today." The label modernism was first applied retrospectively to a variety of artistic movements that developed from the 1890s through the 1920s, premised on the radical potential of subjective consciousness rooted in the artist's social alienation.

Modernity and modernization, Ross continued, are terms "reserved for the actual world brought into existence by democracy, capitalism, social differentiation, and science."[11] Celebrating this world, leading American intellectuals in the late 19th century adopted the term "modernization" as they re-conceptualized Providence as "progress." Secularizing earlier religious ideals, modernization promised a bright future for an emerging American "new republic."

Meanwhile, other historians broadened the definition of modernism to include a larger group of social scientists and intellectuals—including the American pragmatists— who, while recognizing the subjectivity of knowledge, continued to pin their hopes on reason. This position is termed "cognitive modernism" as opposed to "aesthetic modernism". [12]

Further complicating this issue, others have identified an "antimodern" side to "modernism," notably R. Jackson Lears in *No Place of Grace* (1981), an early study of this transition from Victorian to modern. Lears' antimodernism was in fact a minority voice within modernism broadly defined, referring specifically to Brooks and Henry Adams and other American upper-class thinkers who were disappointed with Gilded Age capitalism, while at the same time hoping to revitalize American society through an infusion of pre-

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10 William McNeill, *Mythistory and Other Essays*, (Chicago 1986), pp.79, 21-22.

11 Dorothy Ross, ed. *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences 1870-1930* (Baltimore, 1994), p. 8. On the "darkness" of modernism, John Patrick Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism, Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority*, (Chicago, 1994), Ch.1. "The Disenchantment of the World."

12 Ross, *Modernist Impulses*, pp 3-8. On "cognitive" modernism see David Hollinger, "The Knower and the Artificer," *The American Quarterly*, 39 (Spr.1987).

modern martial and aesthetic values.[13] The term nonetheless remains useful in underlining the retrogressive side of the modernist creed.[14]

Historians have explained the rise of this modernism/antimodernism alternately as the result of a collapse of religious faith[15] and of the poverty of secular liberalism.[16] Both apply to the work of the metahistorians . Each sought escape from modernity in traditional or exotic religions, or in idealized visions of former or future civilizations: the martial and spiritual Middle Ages (Brooks Adams); the cultural unity of the Florentine and Venetian city states (Oswald Spengler); or an emerging world-government dominated by "spiritual superminds" (Arnold Toynbee). Each was disenchanted with the liberal politics of their day, although difficult to place on a conventional radical-conservative political spectrum.

Together, however, these explanations raise as many questions as they answer. If religion was the issue, how explain the appeal of Adams to a secularist such as Charles Beard? or of Spengler to Beard and to humanist Lewis Mumford? Or of the spiritually-minded Toynbee to hard-headed Cold Warriors? If a crisis of liberalism was at issue, what alternatives did these historians pose? A revitalized liberalism, as some hoped? Or one or another form of totalitarianism or authoritarianism, as many of their critics eventually charged? An answer to these questions, it will be argued, depends not only on religion and politics, but on such factors as fortuitous timing, skilful marketing, and conscious or unconscious distortion, as prophecies of decline were viewed through the lenses of liberal American optimism.

5. Organization, Methodology, and Sources

An opening chapter describes the American debate over civilization and progress through the 19th century; intellectual, political, and economic developments through the 1890s; and the pre-World War I revolution in American manners and morals that together provided a context for the work and reception of all three metahistorians (ch. 1). Introductory chapters on Adams Spengler, and Toynbee (chs. 2, 4, 7) provide biographical synopses; information regarding the author's relation to the United States and to the American intellectual establishment; and a summary of the major work. Successive chapters on each man (chs.3, 5-6, and 8-9) explore the American reception of their work: the *zeitgeist* that informed the reviews; changing paradigms of science and historiography; and the political context in which they were at first embraced and then rejected.

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13 T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace; Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920*, (New York 1981), pp.4-7.

14 Norman Cantor, *The American Century: Varieties of Culture in Modern Times*, (New York 1997), p.50. Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "World History in Global Age," *The American Historical Review*, October 1995, pp.1034-1035 also use the term antimodernism, to characterize the philosophies of Spengler and Toynbee, describing their work: as the "antimodernist phase" in the writing of world-history.

15 Costello, *World Historians*, pp.20-21; Andrew Feenberg, *Alternative Modernity: The Technical Turn in Philosophy and Social Theory*,(London 1995),p.41, and Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: on the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Cambridge, Mass. 1991), p.21.

16 Francis Fukuyama, "Reflection on The End Of History, Five Years Later," in *World Historians And Their Critics*, ed. Philip Pomper, (Wesleyan, 1995), p. 27; John Patrick Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism*, p.25.

My method is primarily that of "internalist" intellectual history: a close reading of reviews and comments with reference to the prevailing *zeitgeist*, changing definitions of science, and prevailing fashions in history and related social sciences. In each case however, attention is also given to such "external" factors as the changing political climate and the role of promoters and patrons. Examining the roles of Theodore Roosevelt, Alfred Knopf, and Henry Luce in promoting metaphysical world-histories, in particular, the study relates the world-historians to prominent "power- brokers" and "gate-keepers." [17]

Primary sources include materials in the Toynbee Papers in Oxford's *Bodleian Library* relating to Toynbee's interaction with American movers and shakers, but otherwise consist mainly of materials published in scholarly journals, a majority in history and the social sciences; highbrow mainstream magazines such as the *Forum*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Republic* and *The Partisan Review;* and New York newspapers, as a sample of "popular" opinion. Materials from magazines and periodicals focus especially on the most prominent and best-known liberal and progressive reviewers—Theodore Roosevelt, Lewis Mumford, Charles A. Beard, for example —although an attempt has also been made to include representatives from a variety of academic disciplines. *The Presidential Addresses* of *the American Historical Association*—from Henry Adams 1894 to Charles Beard in 1931 and Sidney B. Fay in 1947—reflect changing paradigms in American historiography.

In making these choices, I am aware that several possibilities exist for further study. Examination of the radical and regional press might yield a different picture of the American reception. A wider sample of the many reviews and comments—especially or Spengler and Toynbee—would doubtless reveal additional dimensions of their influence, as well as provide more insight into the personal and professional agendas of reviewers, promoters, and patrons. A fuller study of the recent world-history movement would shed light on parallels that here are largely speculative. The present study, it is hoped, lays a basis for such future investigations.

One other issue not considered continues to puzzle historians of the subject, namely the influence of the three historians upon one another. Adams's relation to Oswald Spengler, in particular remains a matter of conjecture. In 1943 , as Alfred A. Knopf reissued Adams's *magnum opus,* Charles Beard argued that Adams's work anticipated many of Spengler's conclusions[18] More recently Swiss scholar Max Silbersmith has opined that "though not demonstrated in black and white… there could be understanding between [these] American and German intellectuals on the basis of aversion to the consequences of material civilization."[19] Yet the connections, along with Toynbee's view of Spengler, remain subjects for future investigation.

These three metahistorians have been the subject of numerous studies and considerable controversy. Of the three, the American Brooks Adams has received the least attention. Although an immense literature has grown on his brother Henry, Brooks has received only cursory treatment. The most important studies are Thornton Anderson, *Brooks Adams: Constructive Conservative*, (New York 1953) and Arthur Beringause's, *Brooks Adams: a*

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17 On "internalist' versus "externalist" approaches to intellectual history see John P. Diggins, "The Oyster and the Pearl: The Problem of Contextualism in Intellectual History," *History and Theory* 23, (1984).

18 Charles A. Beard, "Historians at Work: Brooks and Henry Adams," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1943, pp.87-88.

19 Max Silbersmith, *The United States and Europe, Rivals and Partners,* (London 1972), p.70.

Biography (New York 1954), the latter especially based on extensive research in the Adams papers. These and such later studies as Walter LaFeber's *The New Empire* (1964) and B*ehind the Throne* (1993) [edited with Thomas J. McCormick] focus on Adams's role in shaping the policies of the newly emerging American superpower. The present study in contrast, examines his role as pioneer in the 20th century quest for a global history.

Scholarly opinion of Spengler has projected both a positive and negative image. For H. Stuart Hughes, the author of a pioneering 1952 study of Oswald Spengler, states: "*The Decline of the West* offers the nearest thing we have to a key to our times."[20] In *The Riddle of History, The Great Speculators from Vico to Freud* (1966) his Harvard colleague Bruce Mazlish argued in contrast that "it is clear that [Spengler] does not understand either modern civilization or modern history…It is Spengler's blindness to the important ideas and movements and movements of his own time which marks the bankruptcy of his intuitive method." [21] John F. Fenelly—a New York based economist and another American Spengler-scholar— cites the failure of the Spengler's professional critics to discredit him as proof of the appealing literary "quality" of his work. "[If] ever a piece of work could be buried under an avalanche of criticism," Fennelly observed, "the *Decline* would have disappeared forever…" [22]

Among these many studies I found especially useful sociologist Jeffrey Herf's *Reactionary Modernism* (1984). Herf placed Spengler among other "Reactionary Modernists" in the Weimar Republic, who embraced technology and industrialism as the final and inevitable closing-phase of Western civilization. In the new age of industry and power politics, Spengler believed, the age of humanities was over. In his ambivalent modernist exaltation he hoped that *The Decline of the West* would encourage the young to channel their energies into technology and politics, instead of poetry and philosophy, in an age characterized by ruthless will-to-power.[23] These conflicting assessments have helped me understand Spengler's American reception.

I have also profited from renewed interest in Arnold Toynbee's work among global historians in the 1980s. In *Mythistory and Other Essays* (1986) William McNeill underlined the value of Toynbee's philosophy of history and his questions concerning modern civilization. In combination with his biography *Arnold J.Toynbee: A Life* (1989). McNeill has done much to restore Toynbee's reputation, although without specific attention to his reception in the United States.

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20 H. Stuart Hughes, *Oswald Spengler: a Critical Estimate*; Finnish philosopher G.H.von Wright agrees with Hughes: "…The Decline of the West is on of the most remarkable books, one of the few, whom nobody can bypass , if he wants to gain more profound perspective to our own age and our meaning in life." in *Ajatus ja Julistus,* "Spengler ja Toynbee," (Helsinki, 1961),pp.126-127.[translated by author]

21 Mazlish and Hughes quoted in, John Farrenkopf, *Prophet of Decline, Spengler on World History and Politics, (*Baton Rouge, 2001), p.102.

22 John F. Fennelly, *Twilight of the Evening Lands: Oswald Spengler, a Half Century Later* (New York, 1972), p. 17.

23 Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism, Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, (Cambridge¸ 1984),p.49; "reactionary modernism," in Finnish context, Cf. Pauli Kettunen, "Tekniikka, kulttuuri ja työläisen sielu: kasvatustietelijä Aksel Rafael Kurjen reaktionäärinen modernismi," in, *Ajan paineessa kirjoituksia 1930-luvun suomalaisesta aatemaailmasta*, ed. Pertti Karkama and Hanne Koivisto (Helsinki, SKS, 2000).

Among more general studies that have guided my analysis, two in particular are B.G. Brander's, *Staring into Chaos, Explorations in the Decline of Civilizations* (Texas 1998) and Arthur Herman's *The Idea of Decline in Western History*, (New York 1997). Both provide a summary of the works of Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee, but do not deal with their American reception. Paul Costello's *World Historians and their Goals* (1993) offers a good overview of the governing *problematique* of modernism, but explores only briefly the problem of the American success, and omits Brooks Adams entirely. Peter Novick 's *That Noble Dream*, (1988) provides background on the evolution of American historiography, along with skepticism of the prospects of writing "objective" history. John Patrick Diggin's insightful *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority*, (University of Chicago Press, 1994) has increased my knowledge of American liberal "modernism."

6. Cultural pessimism and American Liberalism

Cultural pessimism of the Adams-Spengler-Toynbee variety differs from historical pessimism in a crucial respect, Arthur Herman has noted.[24] Historical pessimists view the threat to civilization as coming from without; cultural pessimists see decay and dissolution developing within civilization itself. Despite vast improvements in the American standard of living, cultural pessimism strengthened in the final decades of the 20th century, taking forms as seemingly diverse as environmentalism ("eco-pessimism"), multiculturalism, postmodernism, and the self-justifications of the Unabomber. Rather than spawning a mass movement, it has particular appeal to the "new classes": artists, intellectuals, and members of the media, university professors and students.

Although it's political offspring have ranged from far Right to far Left, cultural pessimism builds on a shared contempt for the liberal and rational traditions of the Enlightenment. Social determinists, cultural pessimists subordinate individuals to a larger whole and consider the individual less significant than the group, whether as pictured in the pre-Enlightenment "Great Chain of Being" or such modern groupings as *volk*, class, or race.

The reception in the United States of the histories of Adams, Spengler and Toynbee suggests that this modernist *angst* has had a perennial and abiding appeal to some Americans for more than a century. Given these roots, its strength in recent decades can no longer be attributed simply to Vietnam or Watergate. At the same time, the process by which these metahistorians were massaged and repackaged to be suitable for American readers, and were finally widely rejected for what seemed their authoritarian tendencies, suggests further that America's liberal-rational ethos—the belief that individuals matter —is stronger than some may believe.

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24 Herman, pp. 441-51.

CH.1.CIVILIZATION AND DECLINE: AN AMERICAN DEBATE 1630S-1890S

1. The Perils of Prosperity: Puritanism to Republicanism

Mission and Money

The American idea of civilization began with the search for riches in the 16th century, was molded by Puritanism in the 17th, and again by Republican Humanism in the 18th. During the 19th century, assuming a meaning close to that which persists today, the concept of civilization was further transformed by the values of liberal capitalism.

After 1500, following the Columbian invasion of the New World, the peoples of the western European subcontinent expanded their borders in a fashion unique in world-history. "Faustian" men, in Oswald Spengler's term, spread European institutions and ideas, languages and culture, technologies and economy over the face of the earth.[1] Initially, the dream was of a kingdom ruled by *El Dorado* (literally, in Spanish, the "Gilded man "), rich beyond mankind's wildest dreams. This myth of the "Gilded man" flourished throughout the Middle Ages and now inspired the Spanish Conquistadors and the English adventurer Sir Walter Raleigh in their pursuit of New World riches.[2]

Some who settled the North American continent in the 17th century, however, justified their conquest in terms of both wealth and religion, claiming to bring "civilization" to the "savages." One aspect of the American view of civilization derived from the view that the secular process is part of a higher purpose. For nearly five hundred years Americans have cited "mission" and "money" as their twin goals.[3]

The Puritans of New England declared themselves of two minds regarding the purposes of their "New Jerusalem." The founders believed that grace revealed itself in property, assigning a spiritual meaning to money. But until the 1660s, they were wary of making this connection directly. The result, as historian Lewis H. Lapham has written, was a Calvinist double standard. "One faction thought that money was merely a commodity and the American experiment was about the discovery of a moral commonwealth. Another faction equally idealistic but not so pious, thought that money was a sacrament and that America was about the miracle of self-enrichment."[4]

Puritanism, and Calvinism thus justified Americans in developing a continent and much of the globe in the name of civilization, a term that soon embraced commercial expansion. The men who drafted the Constitution in 1787 hoped to make a world safe for both civilization and trade. Throughout most of their history, Americans have had no problem seeing their prosperity as part of higher purpose. [5]

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1 Kirckpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Colombian Legacy*, (London, 1991), p.4.

2 Further on the myth of the New World and America as the fulfillment of history, see, Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, *The Myth of the West: America as the Last Empire*, (Michigan, 1995), p.54-56.

3 Walter La Feber, *The American Age United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750*,(New York and London, 1989),pp.5-6.

4 Lewis H. Lapham, *Money and Class in America, Notes and Observations on the Civil Religion,* (New York, 1988), pp.3-4.

5 LaFaber, *The American Age,* p. 5.

The Puritans

American civilization has its roots in a unique set of circumstances. On the shores of New England, a group of intellectuals—some ministers, others university educated—established a social order that was by definition a contract society, bound by a "covenant theology" derived from Calvinism. Once a persecuted minority in England, the American Puritans were suddenly a dominant religious establishment which considered itself a model of reformed society. On their shoulders rested nothing less than the fate of the Reformation. The fact that God had withheld America until the Reformation purified the church argued that He had been saving the new land for some ultimate manifestation of his grace.[6] "A city on a hill," their mission was the reformation of the world. [7]

At the same time, the Calvinist notion of providential history argued against American "exceptionalism"—the idea that the nation is immune from the cycles of growth and decline that have led to the disappearance of earlier civilizations. All secular communities , the Puritans believed, are finite and problematic; all flourish and all decay.[8] Against the idea of providential history, they set the Augustinian notion of the rise and decline of secular communities within history, with the redemption and salvation of the elect occurring beyond history. Not until later would exceptionalism become yet another ingredient in the definition of civilization.

After 1660, with the Restoration of monarchy and collapse of the Puritan Revolution in England, many New Englanders believed they saw signs of decay in the own society. Once the advanced guard of the Reformation, they now seemed a provincial backwater, ignored by most European Protestants—a fate not unknown to revolutionaries-in-exile through the ages. Materialism, commercialism and immorality seemed rampant. Evidence of this dismay surfaced in a new literary form—the Jeremiad—in which clergymen and poets such as Michel Wigglesworth told of "The Day of Doom" and "The Decline of New England." In future centuries, these dark doubts would perennially cloud America's sunny conception of civilization.

Humanism and Republicanism

Although Puritanism remained a vital force among ordinary folk, many of its leading ideas took a secular form in a Republican Humanism that during the 18th century offered an alternative to the political and economic liberalism of John Locke and Adam Smith. Derived from the Latin *res publica* (the public "thing" or "good") *Republicanism* stood for the collective morals of the classic world against the individual passions and newly found freedom unleashed during the Enlightenment.

Republicanism had its roots, as historian J. G. A. Pocock and others have noted, among English libertarians of the 17th century who posed virtue against commerce, the country against the court, the independent landed warrior citizen against the bureaucrat and the mercenary. Sharing a static agrarian vision, the "country ideologues" of England, transmitted their fears of the growth of civilization to the Republican thinkers in America. From the

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6 Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Cycles Of American History,(* Boston,1986), p.13.

7 Warren Sussman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*, (New York, 1984), pp. 11-12.

8 *Ibid*., p.4.

Revolutionary era onward, the "country" strain in Republican thought exalted the free-holding warrior-citizen as a redeemer of modern comfort and complacency.[9]

Whereas liberalism stressed individual autonomy, free enterprise, and material gain through free market capitalism, Republicanism emphasized mutual obligation, economic restraint. and community well-being. Virtue rather than happiness, and liberty under law were its goals. Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., among others, has argued that the traditional emphasis on John Locke as the father of American political thought obscures the darker strain of Republican thought, expressing the Calvinist idea that life is a “ghastly risk.” Further the republican strain of thought in America led, "from Machiavelli's *Discourses of Livy* through Harrington, the English country party and Montesquieu to the Constitutional Convention."[10]

Republicanism informed debates during the Revolution and at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. For the Founders, a Republic was not only the opposite of monarchy and tyranny, but a society where wisdom ruled over men's passions. Writers took Roman pen names such as Cato, Brutus, or Publius; George Washington embodied the ideals of antiquity: duty, honor, courage, seriousness, manliness, glory. A major threat to the new Republic was the conflict between Machiavelli's *virtu* and *fortuna* —public virtue and private greed.

The history of antiquity haunted the imagination of the Founders. In 1734 one of the "fathers of the American constitution," baron de Montesquieu published his *Considerations Sur Les Causes De La Grandeur Des Romains Et De Leur Decadence.* For Montesquieu, the slow disintegration of the Roman Empire was not to be seen as a series of unhappy accidents, but was a result of a "law of the civilization and decay." Montesquieu claimed that there was an underlying logic to the fate of Rome, which implied that some such patterns would be repeated in other empires. Civilization contained the seeds of its inevitable destruction, as a secure, rich, and comfortable aristocracy became addicted to luxury to a point where the barbarians could no longer be kept at bay.[11]

The history of Rome was the Founders' favorite case study, illustrating the development of freedom and the fate of despotism.[12] The history of antiquity did not teach the inevitability of progress, but showed the risks of republics and empires alike —the transience of glory. The Roman Republic had declined into "Caesarism" and a period of wars—a warning Oswald Spengler would sound more than a century and a half later.

Eighteenth-century Americans' sense of history was cyclical rather than linear, and often included fantasy and despair. Political theorists worried incessantly about national destiny and the fragility of their Republican experiment. Seeing political plots everywhere,

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9 J. G.A Pocock, *Politics Language Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York, 1971), chapters, 3, 4, passim.

10 Schlesinger, *Cycles,* p.6. The "Republican" tradition was outlined in Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republicam Tradition* (1975) and R. Shalope, "Toward a Republican Synthesis," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 29 (1972), 49-80, and "Republicanism," ibid., 39 (1982), 334-56. In the past decade some historians have questioned whether republicanism was a coherent tradition. See Daniel Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992), 11-38

11 Brian Stableford, "Introduction," *The Deadalus Book of Decadence*: *Moral Ruins*, (New York, 1993), p.2

12 *Ibid*., p.5.

they turned partisan disputes into treason and viewed imperial mismanagement as conspiracy and deliberate design.[13]

In creating the Republic the Founders knew they were bucking the odds of history since time guaranteed decay. Machiavelli also assumed that virtue can reign for only short periods since time also threatens virtue. In contrast, the Founders believed that time was redemptive rather than destructive. The America experiment soon came to mean the flight from the classic Republican doom.

After the Revolution, American leaders increasingly claimed that the Almighty had contrived a nation unique in its virtue and magnanimity, driven by different motives that governed other states, and exempt from the cycles of decline and decay that destroyed past civilizations. Thus "mission" and "exceptionalism" joined hands as the nation entered the 19th century.[14]

2. Liberal Values in Victorian America

As industrialism and free market capitalism transformed the new nation in the first half of the 19th century, Republicanism continued to provide a language of discontent for those who questioned the new order, among them working men and women in the mills and factories of New England. [15] But the majority of white, middle-class Americans shed the gloomy pessimism of the classical Republicans for a brighter vision of the future of American civilization. Historians from George Bancroft to Henry Steele Commager captured this mood in several generations of now classic texts. " [Progress] was not to him a philosophical idea," Commager wrote in his *The American Mind* (1950), "but a commonplace experience: he saw daily in the transformation of wilderness into farm land, in the growth of villages in to cities, in the steady rise of community and nation to wealth and power."[16]

The guiding assumptions behind the Victorian conception of civilization were the middle-class values of thrift, diligence and persistence— values key to the success of the expanding capitalist economy. Sustaining these values from the 1830s into the 20th century were four underlying convictions: a belief in (1) individualism; (2) morality; (3) progress; (4) and, increasingly as the century unfolded, a "genteel" conception of culture.[17]

Victorians also firmly believed in a predictable universe watched over by a benevolent God. The universe was governed by immutable laws, and a fixed set of truths to be understood through scientific observation. Assuming a macro-historical perspective, they viewed world-history as the providential instrument of God's will.[18] Thus the 18th century

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13 Daniel T. Rogers," Republicanism," p.14.

14 Schlesinger, *Cycles* p.16.

15 See for example, Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic***:** *New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class*, 1788-1850, (Oxford U. Press, 1984).

16 Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind*, (New Haven, 1950), p. 5.

17 Norman Cantor, American *Century: Varieties of Culture in Modern Times,* (New York, 1997), pp.16-18.

18 *Ibid.*, pp.16-18.

Republican pessimistic view of human nature was overshadowed by a belief in linear progress by the middle of the 19th.[19]

Several popular texts, two at the beginning and one at the end of this era evidenced this new mood. In "The Office of the People," historian George Bancroft, speaking in 1835 during Andrew Jackson's second term, tied progress to democracy. "[The] measure of the progress of civilization is the progress of the people," he told his audience. "The irresistible tendency of the human race is therefore to advancement. . . The movement of the species is upward, irresistibly upward." Defining "The Law of Human Progress" a decade later, statesman and reformer Charles Sumner outdid Bancroft: "Man. . .is capable of indefinite improvement. Societies and nations . . . and, finally, the Human Family, or collective Humanity are capable of indefinite improvement. [20]

Looking forward to the new century, *The Saturday Evening Post* of December 24, 1898 echoed Bancroft's optimism, predicting" that the twentieth century is to be one of splendid progress along altruistic, philanthropic, and educational lines…as the fifteenth [century] made the world larger and the nineteenth added so wondrously to its luxury and comfort, so the twentieth is to make it better and lead its people upward."[21]

Interestingly, although half a century apart, both conceived of progress less in terms of technology and industry than of democracy, philanthropy, and education. By the 1880s, however, others were equating progress with material advances, for example industrialist Andrew Carnegie in *Triumphant Democracy* (1887) and other writings.

A Well-Ordered Universe and Victorian Scholarship

In its institutions and intellectual life, Victorians prized order. An emerging middle class, at once ambitious and energetic, feared the consequences of unfettered ambition and individualism, historian Burton Bledstein has written in *The Culture of Professionalism* (1976). The result was a tendency in thought and public action to separate, divide, and contain: limiting things in terms of their "nature," for example, or using "science" to restructure space. Courtrooms and jails removed criminals from the community; schoolrooms contained children; asylums isolated the mentally ill; and parks set aside space for leisure.

Victorians also stressed the written over the oral, thus creating a divide between the private reader (thrown on his/her resources) and external "authority" in the form of the experts charged with interpreting the written word. Such was the source of the "culture of professionalism" that shaped history and the social sciences along with most areas of American life.[22] The outcome was what historian Norman Cantor terms Victorian "formalism, " one of two meanings of the term as applied to late 19th century America.

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19 Stow Persons, *American Minds a History of Ideas*, (New York 1958), p.345; Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace - Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880- 1920*, (New York, 1981), p.100.

20 George Bancroft, "The Office of the People in Art, Government and Religion," *Literary and Historical Miscellanies (New York : Harper, 1855),* quoted in Robert C. Bannister, *American Values in Transition* (New York, 1972), p. 295; Charles Sumner, "The Law of Human Progress," *Complete Works,* 2 (1900), quoted in *ibid.* p. 245.

21 *Saturday Evening Post December* 24, 1898, quoted Gail Thain Parker, *Mind Cure in New England: From the Civil War to World War I,* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1973).p.27.

22 Robert C. Bannister web page: http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/rbannis1/RCB.html

“The formalist view of the world grants a positive, prescriptive quality to cultural structures, that control behavior," Cantor noted, "formalism believes in the intrinsic value of the system, program, or law itself.”[23]

During the 1860's and 1870's, the study of civilizations came increasingly under the influence of natural sciences. Influenced by Herbert Spencer’s *Social Statics* (1851) and his multi-volume "Synthetic Philosophy," and indirectly by Darwin's *The Origin of Species (1859),* historians and anthropologists were no longer content with the view that the development of human institutions was an illogical, largely aimless unfolding—in contrast to the cyclical views of gloomier Republicans.

According to historian Stow Persons “this organic analogy suggested a teleological interpretation of history, a point of view emphasizing the realization of an implicit historical destiny that was already well established in American historical thought by the nineteenth century. It also suggested the study of the history of institutions as a genetic development rather than as the result of the invasion of causal factors mechanically conceived.”[24]

In line with the Victorian impulse to divide and contain, American anthropologists visualized the evolution of civilization as a clearly-defined three-stage development from "savagery" through "barbarism" to "civilization.” Victorian writers agreed that modern man was rational, self-controlled, progressive and anxious to avoid violence. Societies were either "civilized" or "savage"—just as a century later Americans distinguished the "free world" from the "unfree" and "underdeveloped"' portions of the globe.[25]

Morality and immorality were also black and white. Victorians were assured that "virtuous conduct generally produces pleasure and peace of mind, while the immoral conduct is a source of misery." These ideals offered spiritual balm in a world-historical context to members of societies "who were still suffering." Through "progress," backward civilizations might at last free themselves from the barbaric, non-modernized pre-industrial past. [26]

In psychology, the Victorians drew equally sharp distinctions between the "higher" mental functions, such as rational thought and spirituality, and those of "lower" instincts and passions, which Freud described as the "Id." In the so-called "faculty psychology," the human mind was a tidy triptych of "intellect," "will", and "emotion."

"Formalism," in a second sense, also characterized the emerging social sciences. In economics, advocates of *laissez faire* and free trade based their analyses, not on how people function in the real world, but on an abstract wealth-maximizing "*homo economicus."* Political scientists likewise postulated a power-maximizer who early appeared in *The Federalist Papers.* Legal scholars viewed the law in terms of the powers of an abstract "sovereign," not what the courts actually do. "Formalism," in both senses of the term, set the stage for a massive "revolt against formalism" by the generation who came of age in the 1880s. [27]

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23 Cantor, *American Century,* p.350.

24 Persons, *American Minds,* p.225.

25 Daniel J. Singal, "Towards a Definition of American Modernism," *American Quarterly,* , no.1, 1987, p. 9.

26 *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

27Morton White, *Social Thought in America, The Revolt Against Formalism,* (Boston, 1959), passim.

Professionalizing Historical Writing

Among American historians the quest for certainty took the form of an exaggerated objectivism, associated (albeit unfairly) with the work of German historian Leopold von Ranke. Ranke distinguished two qualities of the able historian; a love of the particular for itself and a resistance to the authority of preconceived ideas. Ranke's method, properly understood, meant only that the historian should not have any specific preconceptions about the nature of the world and its processes. According to Peter Novick, the historian thought he must bring a deeply reflective mind to his documents, opening his intellect to fully comprehend the historical reality.

In Ranke's original view, history, for all its apparently chaotic nature, displayed a meaning and comprehensibility to the properly-conditioned historical consciousness. History would not directly reveal its ultimate meaning: only a religious sensibility was capable of deriving it from a spirited reflection on the historical documents. Ranke's ideal historian was a medium for interpreting universal history, opening himself to an intuitive perception of universal world- history.[28] The result however was finally ironic: most German historians saw Ranke as the antithesis of non-philosophical empiricism, while in America “Ranke¨s reputation as an unphilosophical empiricist underwrote an already existing American predisposition to disparage philosophical speculation about history… “ [29]

The professionalization of American historical writing brought instead a narrow positivism and an almost exclusive concentration on political history and history of Anglo-Saxon institutions.[30] Objectivity also dictated an austere style. Through a complex process of cultural exchange, these ideas made their way from Germany from the 1870s until anti-German sentiment stopped the flow after 1914. American graduate students in Germany dreamed of becoming in Kansas and Kentucky a figure as respected as the German professor. Göttingen, Heidelberg and Berlin trained new dynasties of the learned for such American establishments as Harvard and Columbia and for the newly established research-centers at Johns Hopkins and the University of Chicago, founded by funds from John D. Rockefeller.

Incorporation and Consumption

By the 1880s, new modes of organization were transforming the American economic landscape. With the creation of Standard Oil (1879-81), the first of the modern "trusts," John D. Rockefeller organized one of many new companies on a national scale. Banker J.P. Morgan presided over a financial empire more powerful than the U.S. Treasury. The public at large viewed the mega-businesses of the”plutocrats" with suspicion and disapproval. Meanwhile, World's Fairs celebrated the fruits of the new technology, and newly-created department stores made consumer goods available to an ever- larger segment of the American public.

In older accounts of the Gilded Age, businessmen, intellectuals, and other champions of free market capitalism turned to the theories of Charles Darwin to bolster older ideas rooted

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28 Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession,* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 27-29.

29 Novick., *That Noble*, p. 30.

30 Keijo Korhonen, *American Historical Review Amerikkalaisen Historiankirjoituksen Heijastajana 1895—1920,* (Jyväskylä, 1974); pp.16-17.

in the Puritan notion of a Divine "elect"[31] and in classical economics. This "social Darwinism" proved that, in the struggle for survival, the best people come out on top. This was especially true of the Anglo-Saxon race, whose institutions best fitted them to compete in the national and international arena.[32] In "social Darwinism," biology and with it, progress, was transferred to the economic sphere. Monopolistic corporations, like their organizers, had proved to be "the fittest" in a Darwinian "struggle for existence." [33]

In recent decades, however, historians have questioned the existence of a dog-eat-dog social Darwinism, not only because Darwin (as opposed to Herbert Spencer and other social evolutionists) had little influence on defenses of capitalism, but also because the celebration of struggle and survival would have flown directly in the face of the desire for orderly progress. [34]

Rather, as Yale historian Alan Trachtenberg has written, "incorporation" serves not only as a description of economic reorganization but as a metaphor for a more fundamental re-structuring of American society and its cultural sensibilities. The monopoly or the "trust" was organized in accordance with precisely calculable and strictly functional procedures, managed by a hierarchical bureaucracy of salaried executives, geared to dominate emerging national and international market. American society was likewise re-conceptualized hierarchically. Distinctions were now drawn between high and popular culture, "good" and "bad" literature, the middle class and the rest, including native Americans and other "exotics" who as a result were less "real" and hence less "American." This "Faustian process" of "incorporation" meant new demands on urban individuals, as standards of personal achievement were adjusted to the needs of the emerging corporations.[35]

Consumerism, as Jackson Lears has added, in the long run also brought drastic changes in individual psychology. The re-structuring of capitalist society, which included advertising, created mass-markets, and enforced a shift towards cultural conformity. The *inner directed*, fixed self in middle- and upper-class America was previously constructed by "tender childhood" and "Protestant ministers." Consumerism, in contrast, contributed to the creation of an other-directed personality, molded by demands to conform to peer pressures. [36] In the course of this change, a generation of Americans—upper-middle class whites in particular—suffered from a pervasive malaise in the post-Civil War decades , a sense of "weightlessness" as some put it, in the face of a Protestantism that had lost its Calvinist bite and a science that was rapidly de-mystifying the universe.

A small group of *fin de siécle* intellectuals, observing that modern industrial civilization had produced not greater autonomy, but a spreading sense of moral impotence, yearned for "pure" experience amidst a vacuous "genteel" Victorian culture. "Authentic experience of any sort seemed ever more elusive," Lears wrote, "life seemed increasingly confined to the airless

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31 Walter Struve, *Elites Against Democracy*, (Princeton, 1965), pp.17-18.

32 Persons, *American Minds*, pp.237-284.

33 Nordholt, The *Myth of the West*, p.172.

34 See for example, Carl Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, (New York, 1991), Ch. 1. Robert Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth* (Philadelphia, 1979) Ch. 1, 2.

35. Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America, Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, (New York 1982), pp. 83-86.

36 Jackson Lears ed., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980*, (New York, 1983), chapters I, VI, passim.

parlor of material comfort and moral complacency. Many yearned to smash the glass and to breathe freely — to experience *real life* in all its intensity."[37]

These disappointed Victorians, as will appear, used the term "over-civilization" to describe their dissatisfaction with the industrial civilization.

3. Dissatisfaction and Dissent

The American revolt against Victorian values and ideas was not an overnight product of World War I disillusionment. Long before the "Lyrical Left" bohemian thinkers of prewar Greenwich Village and the Lost Generation writers of 1920s launched the attack on "Puritanism" (their word for Victorianism), the Victorian world-view was under siege from at least two directions. One was from a new generation of social scientists and intellectuals who came of age in the 1880s, launching the so-called "anti-formalist" or "pragmatic revolt." The second, and the focus of this chapter, came from a relatively small-band of disaffected patricians and outsiders who, under the banner of "anti-civilization," turned Victorians values on their head.

Among these was Brooks Adams and his more famous brother the historian Henry Adams, and other "men-of- letters" whose cranky dissent has been largely lost to history. In the person of Henry, if not Brooks Adams, it was the latter group that paved the way for an antimodernist branch of a movement soon to be called "modernism."

Of the two groups, the anti-formalist social scientists had the greater influence both in the short and long run. Working in philosophy, political economy, legal studies, and sociology, they ranged themselves, as historian Morton White has written, "against formalism in every sphere of life . . . convinced that logic, abstraction, deduction, mathematics and mechanics were inadequate to social research and incapable of containing the rich, moving, living currents of social life."[38] In the Pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey they made America's first distinctive contribution to world philosophy. As professors in leading universities, they shaped the thinking of a generation, contributing directly and indirectly to the reform of the Progressive Era.

Less important, although arguably more colorful, the disenchanted Brahmins provided a minority counterpoint, particularly during 1890s. The decade was a troubled one. In 1892 the Populist Party organized to protest agrarian distress; the following year an economic depression hit the nation as a whole. Labor strife broke out in the Homestead steel mills and later among the workers in George Pullman's "model city" outside Chicago." A fear of democracy, and of its underlying revolutionary social implications, broke the surface among the old patrician elite of the United States…" [39] To Brooks Adams these and related developments suggested that the "over-civilized" culture of the American bourgeoisie was vulnerable to overthrow and anarchy would be the inevitable result of laissez-faire capitalism.

In literature, Hamlin Garland's dour stories of farm life in *Main Traveled Roads* (1892) announced a new *genre* of pessimistic "naturalism." At the annual convention of the American Historical Association in 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner announced that the American frontier, symbol of hope and optimism, had closed. Pessimism was suddenly in fashion.

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37 Lears, *No Place*, p. 5.

38 Morton White, *Social Thought in America*, p.11.

39 Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History*, (New York, 1997), p.157.

In national politics, the issue was whether silver, gold, or some form of credit should be the basis of American currency. The 1896 election of Republican William McKinley over the Democrat-silverite William Jennings Bryan —the "Great Commoner"—confirmed the gold-standard as the monetary basis and guaranteed the rule of the Republican party. These debates played a central role in shaping Brooks Adams's *The Law of Civilization and Decay*.

Concerns over the social and psychological consequences of industrialism were not new. A decade earlier, American physician George Beard in *American Nervousness* (1881), a work that directly influenced Sigmund Freud, noted that American adults were particularly prone to physical and mental weariness and exhaustion. Beard implied that American civilization was bound to decline if not re-vitalized.[40]

A fear of decadence also found its way into philosophy, neurology, and art. For many members of the American "Brahmin-class" the political and economic developments of the Gilded Age threatened degradation, rather than progress. The assassination of Lincoln (the "false Caesar" in the eyes of the Confederacy) by the frustrated Southern actor John Wilkes Booth reinforced the 18th century Republican predictions of the uncertain destiny of the American "New Republic."[41] After the Civil War, as Henry Adams' later testified in his *Education* (1907), president Grant's administration proved to be the most corrupt of all the previous U.S. regimes. Poetry and historical novels often dealt with the decline of the Roman Empire.[42] In Henry Adams's novel *Democracy* (1880) one of its main characters Baron Jacobi, predicts that, "in one hundred years, Washington will become like Rome under the Medici popes, or Caligula."[43]

The appearance of an English translation of Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1893) in the mid-90s brought many of these concerns to the surface. Nordau, a Swiss author-physician, wished to consider irrationality in civilization in a scientific manner. He maintained that the Western race was becoming progressively polluted by accumulated diseases, caused especially by increasing use of tobacco and alcohol, and exposure to pollution in large cities. *Degeneration* provoked considerable debate in the United States, although according to Linda Malik, American critics generally accepted his intellectual credentials and scientific conclusions, while rejecting his overall pessimism regarding the downward course of civilization.[44]

Putting the interest of degradation in broader perspective, European historian Eugen Weber has noted: "This stress on nerves and search for sources of nervous energy went hand in hand with a sense of enervation, lassitude, *enervement d'esprit…* a grand degradation of energy, apparently confined by the theory of entropy, derived from the second law of thermodynamics."[45]

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40 Parker, *Mind Cure*, p.24; Linda L. Malik, "Nordau's Degeneration, The American Controversy," *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, Oct-Dec, 1989, pp.609-610.

41 Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age, From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* ,(New York, 1988), p.2.

42 Charles Townsend, "The Fin de Siecle," in *The Fin de Siecle. The Meaning of Twentieth Century,* ed.by Alex Danchev, (London, 1995), pp.201-204.

43 Herman, *The Idea of Decline,* p.164.

44 Linda L. Malik, "Nordau's Degeneration: the American Controversy," *The Journal of the History of Ideas,* Oct-Dec, 1989, pp.609-10.

45 Eugen Weber, *France- Fin de Siecle, (*Cambridge, Mass. 1989), p.14.

According to Weber, French culture, especially with its artistic and dandified upper-class, glorified the enervating artificiality of modern civilization and refinement. Further, according to literary historian Oscar Cargill, the French cultured upper-class tended to admire behavior that demonstrated a triumph over nature and its constricting laws, or over a constricting society and its conventions. The American model for this behavior was the poet Edgar Allan Poe.[46]

The mid-century French poet Charles Baudelaire, later considered as a prime example of "decadent species," glorified the anxieties, addictions and neuroses, which the author of the “Raven” exposed in his stories of doom. These abnormal destructive psychological traits, Baudelaire and the other “decadents” considered to be the stigma of the “modern genius.”[47]

Commenting specifically on Henry Adams, Garry Wills connects the Adams brothers’ pessimism to the *fin-de-siecle* sense of decadence, "Each part [of *The Education*] is redolent of the *fin-de siecle* aestheticism and millennial fears that ushered out the century of Adams's birth. The education Adams seeks at the outset is something a dandy can play with while entertaining hints of doom." [48]

Against this background, American Protestantism, traditionally the arena, in which, such issues were resolved, was forced to modernize. In the “masculine” sermons of Henry Ward Beecher and Dwight S. Moody, God was pictured as an ally in the struggle to modernize, and a help in repelling “the final challenge of Matter… steel fingered, boiler sounded.”[49] But sensitive Brahmin pessimists saw, far from a healthy challenge, “machines, giant corporations, evolution interpreted as fated waste, cities, everything that made men uneasy by speed, noise, visual confusion, status uncertainty, or the sensation of physical weakness.” [50]

4. The Adams Brothers and the Origins of "Modernism"

The Adams Ethos

Already sensitive to these concerns, the Adams brothers—Brooks and Henry—had personal reasons to regret the 1890s. In May 1893, the failure of the National Cordage Company sent the stock market into a tailspin; the following panic endangered the Adams family fortune, and convinced Brooks that plutocratic conspiracy was manipulating the currency to the ruin of the American people. This caused him to examine the economic forces behind civilization. He rejected the progressive optimism that some middlebrow Boston Victorians advocated during the economic slump that followed. [51] He translated his distress into the”gold-conspiracy theory” in *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, a direct echo of the bimetallic debate of the 1890s.

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46 Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America*, (New York, 1941), pp.176-182

47 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces Of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitch, Postmodernism*, (Durham, 1987), pp.171-178.

48 Garry Wills, "Henry Adams as Holy Fool,” *The New York Review of Books*, June 14, 1990, p.45.

49 Gerald Stanley Lee, *Inspired Millionaires*, (Northampton, 1908), p.49.

50 Parker, *Mind Cure*, p.24.

51 Charles A. Beard, “Introduction,”(Knopf Vintage 1943 edition of *The Law of Civilization and Decay)*, pp. x-xi.

As members of America's most distinguished political families—their grandfather and great-grandfather had been President and their father Charles Francis Adams Ambassador to England— both Adams cared deeply about the apparent decline in national politics in the Gilded Age. Both felt that the Jeffersonian democratic ideal in America would never materialize because of the corruption of the boss-ridden political machines. The presidency, the highest executive sphere of the American government, was filled with dishonest procrastinating scoundrels. In a devastating portrait in the *Education* (1907), Henry would observe that "the [Gilded Age] progress of evolution from President Washington to President Grant, was alone evidence to upset Darwin."[52]

Both Brooks and Henry also insisted that American capitalism with its ethic of self-control, autonomous achievement, and cult of scientific rationality, paid too much attention to material progress, instead of advancing spiritual values. The "modernization-program," at full force by the end of the century destroyed values of faith and courage, such as informed more vital cultural periods in the West, the idealized Middle Ages in particular.[53]

The rise of the corporation meant the triumph of administration and of the economic mind over the creative phase of civilization. To Brooks Adams, the present age seemed "unimaginative, practical and competitive." In later years both Oswald Spengler, and in a slightly different way, Arnold Toynbee would echo this argument in a distinction between Culture (the vital phase) and Civilization (a spiritual dead water).

Both Adams brothers further agreed that nervous exhaustion-neurasthenia-"Americanitis" was the disease of "modern civilization." Both saw and despised middle-class culture. They also looked down on their fellow Bostonians, who were mainly concerned with respectability connected to a high-minded concept of "culture." Just as several members of distinguished "Brahmin" families revolted against the moral upbeat of the polyannish "positive thinking" embodied in Victorian mind-cure, the Adams brothers clung to their fore-fathers ancient republican moral-code. Believing that man was depraved, they viewed history not as linear progress, but as a process of development and decline. According to the disgruntled grandsons of John Adams, the inevitable end of all human societies was not perfection but "over-civilization," "decadence" and "degeneration" —in the model exemplified by the Roman empire during the Caracalla and Elagabalus regimes.[54]

Accordingly both harbored grave doubts regarding American exceptionalism, the view of Thomas Jefferson and other post-Revolutionary optimists that the American republic was to be exempted from the operations of general laws that governed old-world civilizations.

Henry in particular agonized over the disappearance of religion in the modern world—an issue that would later concern Arnold Toynbee. The shift from the religious to the scientific world-view seemed to Adams utterly dangerous. Adams maintained that this transition from spirituality to secularity would produce the "acids of modernity." These toxins, he predicted, would later corrupt 20th century Western civilization.[55]

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52 *Idid*., p. 266.

53 Gregory S. Jay, America *the Scrivener: Deconstruction and the Subject of Literary History*, (New York, 1990), pp.218-219.

54 Lears, *No Place of Grace*, p.4.

55 John Patrick Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism, Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority*,(Chicago 1994), p.31. Henry Adams's question of centrality and disappearance of religion in the human history, remained overriding problem also to the other

Paradoxically, however, Henry no less than Brooks was attracted by the latest science. In Henry's case, this interest, as expressed in the *Education*, was to confound linear evolutionism and ultimately to show that the search for "laws of history" is futile. For Brooks it was to turn evolutionism on its head in a Darwinized portrait of decline and decay.

The evolution of new physics demonstrated to both that the nature of the physical world was partly entropy and chaos. The turn-of-the century physical theories of the exhaustion (entropy) seem to prove that energy was running away from the cosmos and civilizations alike. Drawing from this scientific evidence, both would argue that man could not escape the fate of the unwinding universe, demonstrating in their writings that decay and disorder in "modern civilization," was already underway.[56]

Finally, in the Brahmin quest for authenticity and a vital culture both Henry and Brooks Adams developed a keen interest in Medieval Christianity and the Middles Ages.

From Medievalism to Anti-Modern Modernism

In their interest in the Middle Ages, Brooks and Henry Adams were not alone. In a search for authenticity and a vital culture, upper-class American pilgrims returned to explore the ruins of Europe, often ransacking its treasures for their Gilded Age palaces. "The professional interest in the medieval world accorded with a distinct trend in New England after the Civil War," literary critic Alfred Kazin has explained:

> The descendants of the rock-ribbed Puritans impatient with the cultural limitations of their inheritance were now passionate pilgrims to the old world. The more the upper-class American "pilgrims" returned to Europe, the more they were attracted to the church aesthetically...In those times the most irascible among them, like Brooks Adams , even began to dream in those increasingly strenuous times of a neo-medievalist deliverance, from what Henry Adams decried as an economic civilization.[57]

Some New England Protestants converted to Catholicism, finding values in the medieval church that were a welcome contrast to the dry Unitarianism and other varieties of New England Protestantism. At a time when Darwinian evolution was causing a "crisis of modernism" among conservative theologians, and popular ministers like Henry Ward Beecher were preaching a watered-down rationalism and commercialized Protestant ethic, the medieval warrior-peasant seemed to symbolize religious faith with martial courage in the service of a unified church. [58]

Among prominent American Medievalists was architect Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942), who shared the Adams brothers' view of modern civilization. Cram pictured medieval Europe as an aesthetic, religious, and social paradise where all men were artists and social classes were bound in an "organic," obeisant social order. From his earliest essays throughout

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"historical anti-modernists" of the twentieth century, like T.S. Eliot, Julius Evola, C.K. Chesterton, and W.B.Yeats.

56 Keith R .Burich, "Henry Adams, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, and the Course of History," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, July-September, (1987), p.467.

57 Alfred Kazin, "American Gothic", *the New York Review of Books*, November 8, 1989. p.46.

58 *Ibid*.,pp .45-46.

his career, he assaulted “modern civilization” for its deification of "purely materialistic and enervating bodily comfort." His hope, in a chilling anticipation of World War I, was that future world wars might purify an over-civilized Western world. In his autobiography *My Life in Architecture* (1936) he seconded Spengler's contrast between pre-modern Culture and modern Civilization. [59]

In the pre-Raphaelite *zeitgeist* of *fin-de-siecle* Medievalism, Brooks Adams considered turning Catholic, although he finally did not. In the jargon of post-modernist scholars, he wanted to “transcend the binary machine of Puritan masculine logic,” while making an antimodernist leap to Yin-medievalism. Idiosyncratically, Brooks Adams used the European Middle Age as a tool to solve the riddles of 19th America's “industrial civilization.”[60] This civilization symbolized a mechanical universe, no longer capable of producing the rich supernatural illusions of the medieval world.

Henry Adams's interest in the medieval world had begun when he served as an assistant professor of history at Harvard. His poetic celebration of medieval cathedrals in *Mont St. Michel and Chartres* was similar in tone to Cram's neo-gothic philosophy. To Brooks Adams, the constant traveler, the glory of the medieval architecture of France also made a powerful impression.

In the *Education* Henry contrasted the Virgin and the Dynamo, the first the symbol of faith and unity in the Medieval Age, the second a symbol of the vast energies of the machine age. Modern civilization had confused the powers of the noble Virgin, the symbol of the Holy Catholic church, with the modern *Dynamo*, the symbol of ultra-scientific modernity. This fatal conflation of two different energies, according to Adams, prepared the way for Western decline in the 20th century.[61]

The 12th century, Henry Adams continued with characteristic Patrician insouciance, “never knew *ennui*." ”The violent tenor of life, the deep contrast between wealth and poverty, saint and sinner,” all made the Middle Ages more amusing than modern times.[62] But Henry's interest also had a more serious, spiritual dimension. In *Mont Saint- Michel and Chartres* (1904) and the *Education* , an underlying motif—resembling Arnold Toynbee’s later struggles with his own spirituality— was a desire to escape “his restless self” to effect a union with a higher Being. "Man is an imperceptible atom always trying to become one with the God...," he wrote. "Energy is the inherent effort of every multiplicity to become unity."[63]

To both Brooks and Henry, the medieval knight represented an exhilarating fusion of martial virtue and religious faith— a counterpoint to the sordid commercial ethic of the Grant *regime*. The knight also seemed to embody classic Anglo-Saxon WASP- values: courage, honesty and martial fitness.

Brooks' admiration of the knight's willingness to submit him to the “oceanic feeling of grace and unity” was tinged with a hint of envy. While celebrating the martial vitality of the ancient Anglo-Saxon knights, he defined himself spiritually as the “lost pilgrim [who]

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59 Lears, *No Place*, p.208-207.

60 Jay, *America the Scrivener*, pp.212-213.

61 *Ibid*., pp.212-213.

62 Henry Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 3 August,1896, quoted in Lears, *No Place*, p.276.

63 Henry Adam, *Mont St, Michel and Chartres*,([1904], New York, Anchor books reprint 1959), p. 369.

realized the agony of consciousness." [64] He too was a man. Henry also created a personal mythology centering on an archaic feminine principle of the Virgin, who for him was a symbol of what the Chinese philosophers would call, the Yin-side of civilization, while the knight represented with Yang—masculine, constructive, and sometimes destructive. [65]

Neither Henry nor Brooks, unlike some American Medievalists, ended their intellectual journeys in mere celebration of the Middle Ages. For Henry the path led to what the historian Daniel Singal has termed "modernism," not in the narrow sense in which the term was applied to *avant garde* art, but as a label similar to the terms "Renaissance" and "Enlightenment," that define a more general cluster of ideas and major chapters in cultural history. Modernism, according to Singal:

> begins with premise of an unpredictable universe where nothing is ever stable, and where accordingly human beings must be satisfied with knowledge that is partial and transient at best… Nor it is possible in this situation to devise a fixed and absolute system of morality; moral values must remain in flux, adapting continuously to changing historical circumstances.

Modernists, he added, acknowledge reality in all its complexity; are willing to live with contradiction and speak often of "paradox," "ambivalence," and "irony;" crave authenticity over certainty; view personal identity as problematic; and believe that art provides the best if not the only means for understanding the world in all its complexity. [66]

The "Henry Adams" of the *Education* realized finally that the unified vision and unquestioning faith symbolized by the Virgin was no longer possible in an age of "twentieth century multiplicity." Nor was the Enlightenment complacency of late 18th century Boston that allowed his forebears to rule so confidently, any longer an option. Henry now saw that traditional education was bankrupt, and —as T. S. Eliot wrote in "Gerontion" after reviewing The *Education* — that History had "many cunning corridors/and issues, deceiving with whispering ambition." Behind this realization lay countless regrets over the course of "modern civilization" which Henry shared with Brooks. Together these produced in Henry Adams, as Jackson Lears has written, America's first full-blown "antimodern modernist".

For Brooks, more modestly, these same impulses led to a path-breaking analysis of the decline of civilizations and later to predictions of America's rise to world power in *America's Economic Supremacy* (1900), and *The New Empire* (1902).

A New "Law of Civilization"

As historians, Brooks and Henry Adams questioned both linear evolutionism and non-philosophical empiricism. Although a former Harvard professor of history , the successful author of a multi- volume history of the administrations of Jefferson and Madison, and president of the American Historical Association, Henry broadcast his dissatisfaction with current conceptions of historical study first by example in *Mont St. Michel and Chartes* (1904), and then explicitly in the *Education*. For his part, Brooks felt that the rendering of

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64 Brooks Adams to Henry Adams 13.October 1895, in Lears. op.cit. p.136.

65 Se further in this study: Spengler's dubious evaluation of Faustian (Yang) scientists; and Toynbee's use of the "dynamic duo" of Yin and Yang in his theory.

66Daniel J. Singal, "Towards a Definition of American Modernism," *American Quarterly*, 1987, no.1, p.15.

linear development not only untrue, but dangerous. He thus questioned Victorian conception of “civilization” long before Oswald Spengler moved this issue to center stage after 1919.[67]

Brooks and Henry also challenged the "objectivist-school” of professional historians, who opposed the search for laws in history, and instead concentrated on documents, their “holy relics.” In the *Education* Henry recalled that he "imposed Germany on his scholars with a heavy hand." His Jefferson-Madison history was written "for no other purpose than to satisfy himself whether, by the severest process of stating, with the least possible comment, such facts as seemed sure, in such order as seemed rigorously consequent, he could fix for a familiar moment as necessary sequence of human movement." The effort, like everything else in the *Education*, failed. Brooks, warning against narrow specialization, in 1910 added that "The weakness of the specialist is a certain distortion of judgment caused by an education which unduly accentuates a single series of phenomena."[68]

As of 1895 American professional historians had done little theorizing, because of a strong Romantic and then “false” Rankean tradition. The 19th historians, from Washington Irving to Francis Parkman, celebrated the individual, but did not examine underlying forces determining individual action. The monographs of the new professionals testified that no synthesis came easily in an age exposed to more and more complex facts. To be an academic "scientific historian" in America in 1895 was clearly not to be involved in any law-generating activity.[69]

In *The Law of Civilization* Brooks would display a view of history in sharp contrast both to the Romantics and to the “scientific” fact-gathering:

> The value of history lies not in the multitude of facts collected, but in their relation to each other, and in this respect an author can have no larger responsibility than any other scientific observer. If the sequence of events seems to indicate the existence of a law governing social development, such a law may be suggested, but to approve or disapprove of it would be as futile as to discuss the moral bearings of gravitation.[70]

Objectivist "professional" historians, Brooks would argue in *The Law*, strove for *ideographic* (particularistic, descriptive), rather than meaningful world- history. Brooks would show how a true "science of history” should be formulated. Thus he searched relentlessly in the data of history for a clue to the rise and decline of civilizations. [71]

Both Adams brothers replaced the linear evolutionist account of historical progress with a series of indeterminate and irrepressible fluctuations. For Henry the fly in the ointment of historical progress was "general entropy," while Brooks recorded the consequences of entropy in human civilizations in the oscillation between civilization and barbarism. Both Adams brothers reversed the progressive conclusions deduced from the Darwin’s law of “natural selection”, and suggested instead that civilizations and races, like aristocratic

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67 Norman F. Cantor, *The American Century*, (New York, 1997), p.44.

68 Henry Adams *The Education of Henry Adams*, (Boston, 1961),pp. 304,382; Brooks Adams, "A Problem in Civilization," *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1910, p.28.

69 John Higham, *History - Professional Scholarship in America*, (Baltimore, 1965) p. 98.

70 Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, (1986 McMillan edition, New York, Knopf reprint, 1943), p. 57.

71 Charles Beard, “Henry and Brooks Adams, Two Historians At Work,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 1943, April, pp. 88-90.

families, were subject to degeneration. In the *Education*, Darwinism served as a literary device to show the absurdity of all progressive scenarios. [72]

As Brooks put the finishing touches on his manuscript, Henry, as the established scholar, considered it "good and worth printing." He also agreed with Brooks attempt to determine "if history [as science] had a future."[73] Writing to the philosopher William James, Brooks observed: "I am attempting to show that mind and matter obey the same laws in history." [74]

Henry, disillusioned by his time at Harvard, and devastated by the death of his wife midway through writing his history of the Jefferson and Madison administrations, was increasingly sympathetic with his brother's search for laws of civilizations rise and decline. In his 1894 Presidential address to The American Historical Association, Henry claimed that history must proceed towards more predictive "scientific" forms,

> In form, the science of history may take the form of great European capitals, it may point to socialist triumph, it may announce present evils of the world, its huge armaments, its vast accumulation of capital, and its advancing materialism, and declining arts... [the] science of history might bring into sight some new and unsuspected path of civilization to pursue.[75]

Referring to this address to the A.H.A., Henry wrote again to Brooks that without a specific defense of the search for laws in history, *The Law of Civilization and Decay* would be "ignored in a conspiracy of silence or furiously attacked by professional historians." The teaching profession in colleges, Henry maintained, "…is like the church and the bankers, a vested interest. And the historians will fall on any one who threatens their stock in trade quite as virulently as do the bankers or the silver-men."[76]

Thus encouraged and forewarned , Brooks launched a first edition of his book in London in 1895, drawing upon the accumulated fears and experiences of the 1890s, and intellectual crosscurrents—physics, evolutionary naturalism, and a psychological/ economic interpretation of history — which in one way or other would transform the writing of American history and intellectual life in the coming decades.

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72 Michael Shermer, "Exorcising Laplace's Demon: Chaos and Antichaos, History and Metahistory," *History and Theory* 1, 1995, pp.61-69.

73 Charles Beard, "Review of The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma," *The New Republic*, March, 31, 1920, p.162.

74 Brooks letter to William James, quoted in Aaron, *Men of Good Hope: A Story of American Progressives*, (New York, 1961), p.257.

75 Henry Adams, "The Tendency of History," in *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*,(New York ,1919), pp.130 -131.

76 HA to BA, quoted in Beard, "Introduction," p.xviii. Beard cites letters—only for his exclusive research use—unpublished, in possession of the Adams family.

CH.2.BROOKS ADAMS'S "LAW OF CIVILIZATION AND DECAY"

1. The Law of Civilization and Decay

Brooks Adams published a first edition of *The Law of Civilization and Decay* in London in 1895, and a revised version a year later in New York. The sale of the revised work was surprisingly brisk. In February 1896, three months after the revision was published, New York's MacMillan publisher was already selling a third printing of the revision. *The Law* was also distributed to members of the Supreme Court and the Cabinet, and even—as Adams put it— presented to the "enemy," the financial baron J. Pierpont Morgan.[1]

Although only a few scholarly journals reviewed the book—some merely listed it among books received—its fame grew as Adams followed with *America's Economic Supremacy* (1900) and *The New Empire* (1902). In the 1940s, the *Law* had a second birth with the appearance of a new edition, published by Alfred Knopf, with an introduction by Charles Beard. It had always been and remained controversial. One early reviewer rather venomously likened Adams to "the old theologians [who] used to treat the Scriptures. . . as a sort of rusty nail box out of which they selected odds and end in order to rack some framework of doctrine together."[2] Writing in 1943, Charles Beard judged it to be "among the outstanding documents of intellectual history in the United States, and, in a way, in the Western World." In contrast, another scholar has recently cited *The Law* as an example of American "proto-fascism." [3]

"A Gentleman Rebel"

Brooks Henry Adams (1848-1927) was the great-grandson of President John Adams and the grandson of President John Quincy Adams. A lawyer and historian, he was also the youngest son of Charles Francis Adams, a distinguished diplomat, who transferred the values of classical Republicanism to his children. From an early age, Brooks was eccentric and arrogant, vehemently opposing what he saw as the many disagreeable aspects of Victorianism. A chronically dissatisfied man, as Charles Beard later described him; he conducted a one-man mutiny against the world. [4]

During his brief tenure as a teacher at Harvard Law School from 1882 to 1883, Brooks, "revolted against formalism," and helped to found the school of legal realism, which would be most closely associated with his friend Oliver Wendell Holmes.[5] After his marriage in 1889 Brooks retired from the active practice of law and began to write history. Drawing his income from the Adams estate, he was not obliged to earn his living from history, and was thus free to pursue paths closed to work-a-day academics, translating his own sense of the decline of the Adams family to Western civilization as a whole.

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1 Arthur Beringause, *Brooks Adams: A Biography*, (New York, Knopf, 1955), p.129.

2 Benjamin Terry, [review of *The Law of Civilization and Decay*] , *American Journal of Sociology*, 2 (1896) p. 467.

3 Charles A. Beard, "Introduction," *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, (New York 1943), p.3, quoted in Donald J. Pierce [review of "The Law"], *Political Science Quarterly* 58 (1943), p. 437; Robert O. Paxton. "The Five Stages of Fascism, "The *Journal of Modern History*, 70, March, (1998), p.12.

4 Beard, "Introduction."

5 Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History*, (New York, 1997), p.167.

Adams led the life of a gentleman-scholar, traveling extensively in Europe, South America, the Near East, and India. Adams later said that *The Law of Civilization and Decay* was partly inspired by a tour in 1889 to the monumental Roman ruin at Baalbek in Syria. As the lawyer-historian gazed at the ruins of the dead Roman civilization, “the conviction dawned on me…that the fall of Rome came about by a competition between slave and free labor and inferiority of Roman industry.” [6] Outlining his agenda for his enterprise in a letter to his father, however, Adams wrote that "the dawning of *our* civilization...has interested me more than the splendor of the ancient.”[7]

Afterwards he considered himself a philosopher of a dying world, last of his species, who was forced to adjust to the modern world, even though he despised the American faith in "progress." He once remarked to his brother that he was too original a person to survive in a world, which, in Daniel Aaron's paraphrase, “protected a man only if he joined a guild and listened to him only if his ideas were stolen."[8]

A family friend Wihelmina S. Harris later described the lifestyle of this eccentric Brahmin scholar. Brooks Adams traveled with seven trunks of luggage, including his own china, handmade shirts from London, formal clothes and selections from his library— each book, wrapped separately and placed about his private sitting room in hotels around the globe. Such were the eccentricities of a man unwilling to make concessions to a world dominated by mass-taste.[9]

Adams has been characterized as both romantic and conservative—the admirer of the medieval knight and the Machiavellian political schemer. Historian Daniel Aaron treated these seeming contradictions as two phases in Adams's thinking, "In the first, he glorified the pre-industrial man, lashed out against the money power, and identified himself with the obsolete organisms, who retained the vestigial attributes of the age of faith. In the second, he played the ambitious opportunist, the lover of power, the geopolitical schemer mapping the course of his country's destiny and bolstering the *status quo*."[10]

Brooks and his brother Henry, as members of a distinguished Boston "Brahmin" family had previously reinforced republican moralism and family traditions of public service, Aaron continued, but during the 1890s grew pessimistic towards American form of civilization. Thus his fascination with "degradation,” and with it, some fundamental questions regarding American society, and world history.[11] Aaron failed, however, to explore complexities in Adams's personality and thought that underlay this shift.

Arthur Schlesinger, hinting an alternate sociological explanation, commented on the "prosopographical felicity” of the fact that a fourth generation of Adams—direct offspring of the Founders— "raised the keenest doubts whether Providence in setting America had after all opened a grand design to emancipate mankind." [12] In the course of history, Schlesinger

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6 Adams quoted in Herman, *The Idea of Decline,* p.170.

7 BA to CF Adams, (April 1868), quoted in Arthur Beringause, *Brooks Adams: a Biography* (New York 1955), p.44-45.

8 Daniel Aaron, *Men of Good Hope: the Story of the American Progressives*, (New York, 1961), p.256.

9 Wihelmina S. Harris, "The Brooks Adams I Knew,” *The Yale Review*, No 1., 1969, p. 68-69.

10 Aaron, *Men of Good* , p. 264.

11 Brooks Adams, *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*,(New York, 1918), “Introduction,” passim.

12 Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Cycles of American History*, (Boston, 1988,) p. 18.

might have added, Brooks Adams was neither the first nor would be the last child of privilege to question the world his parents built.

Energy and Civilization

In *The Law of Civilization and Decay* Adams's method was to outline a basic theory briefly, then to use the body of the work to illustrate its operation. He began with energy and its role in shaping history. Adams assumed that the earth was endowed with a specific sum of solar energy that was constantly expanding, part of it through human society. "The theory proposed is based upon the accepted scientific principle, that the law of force and energy is of universal application in nature, and that animal life is one of the outlets through which solar energy is dissipated," he explained in the preface to the first edition. This "hypothesis," he continued, "would allow him to classify a few of the more interesting intellectual phases through which human society must pass, apparently, in its oscillation between barbarism and civilization."[13] His first theme was thus the convergence between fields of energy and the evolution of civilization.[14]

On these naturalist/materialist assumptions, Adams concluded that life and consciousness were forms of animal life. History being a composite of human lives and thought, merely reflects material conditions and is substantially helpless to alter the natural social relationships determined by these conditions. "History, like matter, must be governed by [natural] law."[15] "Thought," he explained further,

> is one of the manifestations of human energy, and among the earlier and simpler phases of thought, two stand conspicuous—Fear and Greed. Fear, which, by stimulating the imagination, creates a belief in an invisible world and ultimately develops priesthood; and Greed, which dissipates energy in war and trade.[16]

Adams built his law of devolution in civilization on the laws of entropy. The lifecycle in civilization first evolved, as described by anthropologists, from barbarism to civilization, with a strong tendency to return to barbarism. Stated in the language of physics, that is in terms of energy, it moved from the condition of physical "dispersion" in barbarism to one of "concentration" in civilization—the period of "highly centralized age."

Turning to money, his favorite subject, he noted that the centralization process meant the accumulation of gold in the hands of the plutocrats. Developing a full theory of the causes and effects of the deflationary process, Brooks maintained that increase of surplus wealth

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13 Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, (New York edn., 1896) . pp. Viii-ix. The obsession with energy was part of Adams's *zeitgeist*, Jo-Anne Pemberton, *Global Metaphors: Modernity an the Quest for One World*,(London/Virginia,2001), ch.1,"Unknown Forces."

14 On this theme in Finnish context, Matti Klinge, "Politiika luonnontieteenä : energiaperiaate ja organismianalogia. " *Vihan Veljistä Valtiososialismiin: Yhteiskunnallisia ja Kansallisia Näkemyksiä 1910- ja 1920-Luvuilta* (Helsinki,1972).

15 Contradicting Adams's materialistic view of the origins of consciousness, see for example, Robert G. Sohn, *Tao and Tai Chi Kung*, "A Discussion On The Origins Of Consciousness," (Vermont,1989),pp.15-17.

16 Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, (1896, MacMillan ed.), p. ix.

lowered prices [deflation], meaning finally—in his general theory of civilizations— that empires like ancient Rome collapsed. [17]

Further phases in the lifelines of civilizations were not the causes, but only the expressions of social movements. These movements, in turn, were the consequence of the release of energy. The rate of the expenditure of energy explained the unfolding of "civilization's birth and decay."[18]

The velocity of social movements in any community was proportionate to its energy and mass, and centralization proportionate to velocity. As human activity accelerates, that is, societies centralize. In the earliest stages of concentration, Fear is the channel through which energy finds its readiest outlet. Accordingly, in primitive and scattered communities, the imagination is vivid, and the mental types produced are religious, military and artistic. As consolidation advances, Fear yields to Greed, and the economic organism gives way to the economic and the martial.[19]

The shift from Fear to Greed was an effect of the accumulation of wealth. As long as a society consumed its total product in the daily processes of living, centralization could not proceed. But whenever it was "so richly endowed with the energetic material" that it produced a surplus, that surplus took the form of wealth. This surplus could be used toward consolidation, or could be captured by another community in war or by economic competition. No matter how great an accumulation of wealth might be seized in conquest, however, a community must ultimately enter the phase of economic competition. This "competitive phase" was usually guided by the dominance of "surplus energy" over "productive energy."

Once this point was reached, capital was autocratic and energy vented itself through those organs best fitted to give expression to the power of the capital. In the last stage of "consolidation in civilization," the economic and the scientific intellect gained ascendancy, while the imagination faded and the emotional, the martial, and the artistic types of manhood decayed.

Further, as the social movement of a race accelerated, more of its energetic material was consumed. Ultimately, societies attained velocity at which they are unable to make good use of the excess energy. In high stages of centralization, where unrestricted economic competition prevailed, a loss of energy manifested itself in a gradual dissipation of capital, which ended in a return to barbarism. [20]

Adams thus turned the progressive evolutionist scenario on its head whereby competition guarantees a "survival of the fittest." When a highly centralized society disintegrates under the pressure of economic competition it is because the energy of the "race" has been exhausted. Consequently, the survivors of such a "race" lack the power necessary for renewed concentration and remain weak and ineffective until supplied with fresh energetic material from "barbarian blood."

Although ostensibly "scientific" Adams's concept of "energetic material" was at bottom mystical (not unlike Oswald Spengler's later concept of "race") since in the concept he included not only mineral deposits and soil fertility, but even more, an inherent and transitory "racial quality" which he, like Spengler also, made no attempt to explain.

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17 *Ibid.* pp.77-78.

18 Adams, *The Law*, (1896 ed., Knopf 1943 reprint),p. 61.

19 *Ibid.*, p.60.

20 *Ibid.*, p.61.

A Naturalist Psychology

Adams's second theme was psychology. At the time he wrote, psychology was freeing itself from an earlier "mental science" in which God and an immortal soul were realities not to be questioned. A new naturalist psychology challenged Christian assumptions of the special ontological status of the soul. Adams thus attempted to formulate laws of psychology in history on the basis of materialist assumptions.

In the 1896 revision of *The Law of Civilization and Decay* Adams formulated his theory of the devolution of civilizations in psychological terms. He maintained that men do not differ in any respects from the other animals, but survive by adapting themselves to prevailing, external conditions.

Adams further pictured a society in which individuals are at the mercy of symbols and controlled by the desires of greed. Fear and greed determine the individual's rise and fall in the social scale," just as they dictate the markets." When economic types became dominant in civilization, the old peasant militia was converted into a mercenary standing army, and the soldier himself, although still an imaginative type became an expression of Greed rather than of Fear. Religion suffered the same fate. "Faith in the hands of the moneyed oligarchy became an instrument of the police and, from the Reformation downward, revelation has been expounded in England by statute."[21]

Adams also expanded his idea of Fear to cover the imaginative, artistic and ecstatic elements in human nature, repeating several themes. One was the concept of "types of mind," within which there were variations. Among "imaginative minds" he included the religious or priestly, the artistic, the martial, and the agrarian (types Spengler would later identify with a vital "Culture"). Each of these felt a mutual affinity within one another and a common opposition to the "economic types." The latter he divided into landowning, mercantile, manufacturing, banking types (which Spengler would identify with, *Gesellschaft* and "Civilization"). In the eras of economic competition these types gradually supplanted one another, resulting in the final predominance of the banking type— the pure usurer.[22]

Adams's distinctions were "organic," in that they separated men in society as fundamentally as if they were "distinct species." The historical sequence of types was not arbitrary, but followed naturally from the characteristics of the minds, from their relation to their geographical environment, and from the existing state of knowledge.

Fear of the unknown produced the highest religious, military and artistic developments that the West had known. The social disintegration in medieval Europe generated a widespread fearfulness, which in turn produced a towering achievement in the Gothic Cathedral and other accomplishments of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Also in the 1896 MacMillan edition Adams, added new psychological corollaries in history, the most important of which was his conviction that conscious thought played a much smaller part than did instinct and intuition, a notion anticipating the irrationalism of Henri Bergson and others. At the moment of action, Adams wrote, man "almost invariably obeys an instinct, like an animal; only after action has ceased does he reflect." These instincts were involuntary and differed sufficiently among individuals to divide men into "species distinct enough to cause opposite effects under identical conditions."

In Adams's psycho-historical theory, men cowered before the unknown with rituals and fetishes of the Catholic Church as the Roman Empire disintegrated. During the Middle Ages, the rationalism of the Romans was forgotten and "the imagination had full play." After the shield of the Roman law and government were gone, European social structures started

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21 Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, (1895 ed., London), p. 216.

22 *Ibid*, vii.

disintegrating and life became uncertain. The Germans in Italy— more barbaric than the Latins, thus more imaginative in Adams's view— elevated the priest into a sacred class. In that age of decentralization," mystery shrouded the processes of nature," while "religious enthusiasm…was their power, which produced the accelerated movement culminating in modern centralization."[23]

What emerged was a "magical world" that produced the classical Medieval hero — the knight. Fearful of unseen powers but capable of great physical courage, the knight paved the way for the great crusades. The crusaders attitude to war was quite different from that of the modern soldier. The holy warrior was in alliance with the supernatural powers and possessed talismans that he considered omnipotent, "the originals of the fairly knights, clad in the impenetrable armor, mounted on miraculous horses, armed with resistless swords and bearing charmed lives." Summarizing the psycho-history of the "pre-modern age" Adams wrote:"…perhaps the combination of the two great forces of the age, of the soldier and the monk, was the supreme effort of the emotional mind."[24]

In the new preface for *The Law*, Adams alluded to a personal psychological source of his theory— the fear of decline of aristocratic families:

> Like other personal characteristics, the peculiarities of the mind are apparently strongly hereditary, and, if these instincts be transmitted from generation to generation, it is plain that, as the external world changes, those who receive this heritage must rise or fall in their social scale, according as their nervous system [which] is well or ill adapted to the conditions to which they are born. Nothing is commoner, for example, than to find families who have been famous in one century sinking into obscurity in the next…[25]

International Competition

A third theme in *The Law* was the work of competition in the interchange between civilizations in the international arena. Brooks Adams subscribed to a Darwinian view of competition and of natural selection. Competition in Adams's theory could be military or religious, without being exclusively economic. Indeed, the military mentality reigned before the economic interests gained control.

According to Adams the history of international exchanges, reflecting the economic relations and Darwinian struggle of the different races of the world, emulated the process of natural selection.[26] The concentration of wealth was the result of the work of the "survival of the fittest"; capital was concentrated to the strongest and most energetic civilizations. These conclusions he claimed to have deduced from the viewpoint of the disinterested "scientist."

In Adams's view the social context of late Roman history resembled that of *fin-de-siecle* America. With the growth of capital in Rome, the producer, especially on the land, sank into debt and servitude— the same development that had happened in America during the agricultural depression during the 1890s. Further in Adams's analysis, the extension of the Roman Empire was bringing into play low-cost servile labor from regions annexed to the

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23 Adams, *The Law*, (1896 ed., Knopf 1951, reprint), ch.3; pp.113, 57.

24 *Ibid.*, chapters, 3,4, passim; p.189.

25 *Ibid.*, pp.58-59.

26 According to Thornton Anderson, Adams's use of "competition," was primarily a Darwinian use of the term,"implying…a Darwinian process of natural selection," Anderson, *Brooks Adams, A Constructive Conservative*, (Ithaca, New York, 1951), p.55.

imperial Rome. The landed capitalists, stocking their increasingly large estates with eastern slaves, successfully defying Roman land-laws. In consequence, the economic instinct changed all relations of life, dissolving the family and making marriage rare.[27]

In the Rome of late antiquity, wealth brought the man of capital and greed to the top of society. Only barbarian blood, according to Adams—who was reverberating Count Gobineau's theories— kept the dying Roman civilization alive by providing generals and farmers. Each of these developments had their counterparts in the America governed by the decadent "gold bug." Adam's view of the economic history of the Roman Empire became an allegory of the struggle between capital and labor in Gilded Age. The concentration of wealth and growth of empire destroyed the Roman freeholder, who was, like Jeffersonian agrarian yeoman arms bearing and freedom loving. The Roman martial spirit declined, the mercenary hirelings became dictators, the frontier collapsed, and the barbaric hordes poured into the empire.[28]

In this world-historical synopsis, the trade stimulated by the Crusades created social revolution, the result also of rationalistic impulses traveling from East to West. This new process built new nations, shattered the Church, and created an economic society. As the world economy grew, society became more centralized and life more secure. Individual strength and courage ceased to have importance in the new society. Skepticism increased and individual bravery no longer had importance, because accumulation of money forced the creation of a permanent police.

As the trading centers of "world cities" grew, society becoming more centralized and more secure, Greed surpassed Fear. The corruption due to materialism followed the breakup of the unified church in the Reformation. Calvinism meant the incarnation of Adam's *beté-noire,* the banker. So began yet another social revolution. The Reformation, in Adams's estimation, was thus an economic phenomenon. Religion grew cheap. "As the tradesman replaced the enthusiast, a dogma was evolved by which mental anguish, which cost nothing, was substituted for the offering, which was effective in proportion to its money value."[29]

Summarizing the effects of the economic competition Adams wrote:

> With centralization life changed. Competition sifted the strong from the weak; the former waxed wealthy, and hired hands at wages, the latter lost all but the ability to labor; and, when the corporate body of producers had thus disintegrated, nothing stood between the common property and the men who controlled the engine of the law. [30]

In England rural and urban Puritans united, and expelled their king. Merchant adventurers in 1688 captured the kingdom and produced a social revolution. Bankers won control of England in the late 19th century, making the final social revolution inevitable. The final effect of economic competition was degradation. The economic man, the capitalist and the usurer became dominant in society, the emotional, the martial and the artistic types of manhood decayed.

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27 *Ibid*., pp. 89-96.

28 Herman, The *Idea of Decline*, p.171.

29 Anderson, *Brooks Adams*, ch.7, passim; pp.203-204.

30 *Ibid*., p.256.

Administration

Adams's Darwinian image of success and decline shared much with literary naturalists such as Theodore Dreiser. Like Dreiser, his attitude toward wealth contained a revealing contradiction. Although devoting a great deal of space to the debasement and depletion of coinage in Rome and England, he appeared to attach a monetary value to religious relics, thus giving his "imaginative minds" an economic motivation.[31]

But he was also careful, in his chapters on the Middle Ages and on the Crusades, to show that "a crusade was no vulgar war for a vulgar prize, but an alliance with the supernatural for the conquest of the talismans, whose possession was tantamount to omnipotence." Competition in the Middle Ages was a struggle between ″imaginative" and "military" types of people who sometimes utilized wealth, but who thought ″immaterial things" more important.

His treatment of the rise of Roman power was also the opposite of an economic interpretation. The Carthaginians were far more advanced than the Romans in industry and commerce, but these very traits, in Adams's interpretation, made them poor soldiers and unable to withstand the military competition forced upon them by the Romans.

Adams also stressed the importance of the relative strength of weapons of defense and those of attack. "Until the mechanical arts have advanced far enough to cause the attack in war to predominate over the defense, centralization cannot begin; for when a mud wall can stop an army, a police is impossible."[32]

For Adams, as with later metahistorians, technology played an important role. The "*inventive faculty*" in modern civilization contrasted with its absence in Rome. Roman conquest had not served to stimulate industrial expansion on the Tiber.

But invention also had its drawbacks. Modern Western nations were so inventive that "for more than a century, they have defied the cheap labor of the East." As a result "another phase has intervened between the era of conquest and the beginning of disintegration. " The new phase was not an unmixed blessing," Adams reasoned. But "Like other qualities, which at the outset, are the source of strength, the inventive faculty carries with it the seeds of its own decay; for as, by means of electricity and steam, all people are welded into a compact mass—competition brings all down to a common level."[33]

This analysis led direct to his fourth theme, namely administration. Adams thought that "the tendency of centralization is always toward more costly administration," meaning that the growth of larger political and economic masses required administrative machinery of greater complexity.

The life of a civilization depended on the survival of the most economical nations. Civilizations expanded or receded according to their control of trade routes. Victory in a war of trade depended, in turn, upon ready access to raw materials and of a cheap and efficient administration. Success in modern life was the result of concentration and streamlining. In the global competition of civilizations, Adams concluded, "in the long run, Asia must succeed because it is cheaper than Europe."[34]

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31 Theodore Dreiser, *The Titan*, ([1914] New York ,1965), ch. 49;
on Darwinism, literary naturalism, and international politics, see Robert C Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth (*1979), chs. 11-12.

32 Adams, *The Law,* (1896 ed., Knopf 1951 reprint), p.120.

33 Adams, *The Law*, (1895 ed., New York), pp. 290-291; and, ch.12, passim.

34 Adams quoted in, *Men of Good*, (New York, 1962) p.263.

Adams further asserted that the"two greatest events in history, Rome's decline and the discovery of America," were brought about by the subtly changing pressure of money — the concentration and expansion of the instrument of exchange in civilization. Adams also maintained that monetary policies were manipulated by legislation, which meant that creditors could absorb the profits of producers, thus exhausting the vitality of the people and of the entire civilizations.[35]

Despite his naturalism, Adams viewed progress in civilization, as more a product of Western thought, than as a fact of nature— a seeming contradiction also evident in naturalist novels whose picture of humanity helpless in the face of impersonal forces was intended, however paradoxically, to spur conscious action. In Adams's description "civilization" was a volitional entity, not an element for gradualist evolution. Decadence was the alarm sound of the coming of a neo-barbarian age, which only deliberate action could avoid.

Remedies

Adams, accordingly, prescribed remedies to avert "decline." According to Adams one key to the American future was the transformation of mechanical power through a shift of energy into the "leviathan" of the American "super-power." As he later explained, the coming power-configurations in world-civilization would transform United States into a global military power.

This change also called for revitalization of the anti-decadent martial mentality in the United States where the spirit of the medieval knight was badly needed. In this antimodernist prescription The *Law of Civilization and Decay* glorified the pre-industrial age and praised the non-economic man with martial and artistic imagination in the face of the inexorable movements of the trade routes and money centers. So viewed medieval era Fear was praiseworthy, not because it was pleasant, but because it gave men energy and purpose. [36]

In his nostalgia for the medieval martial era of crusades, Adams resembled Walter Scott, whose novels expressed the ideals of the non-economic man. His heroes were brave, held honor more precious than gold and displayed the utter *naiveté'* about money matters. In Scott's world — a rural society, without police—only the courageous and physically strong could flourish.

Adams's delight in romantic writers like Scott was nothing new in American culture. Antebellum Southern society also embraced Scott as their hero. In the Old South personal honor, the persistence of dueling was a part of the cavalier martial ideal, in stark contrast to the Puritan North. The Old South had displayed cultural preferences which, if taken as *mentalitee'*, had many similarities to medieval Europe. The enthronement of such "knights" as the James brothers—Frank and Jesse—and the horse-backed members of the "Ku Klux

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35 Adams based his theories on the strategic role of money in civilization partly on Sir Archibald Allison's passing remark in *History of Europe* (London 1833-42, I, p.329) where Allison stated that the fall of the Roman Empire was caused by the decline of mines in Spain and Greece. Adams also noticed that the result of Columbus's trips was the long pursuit for mines of precious metals, which were later discovered in Mexico and Peru; see, Beringause, *Brooks Adams,* p.107.

36 Brooks Adams glorification of the martial man carries also reverberations to the New Age and the "New Masculinity Movement" in America, as expressed in Robert Bly, *The Iron John A Book About Men*, (New York, 1990), pp. 146-180.

Klan" were, in the Southern mind, echoes of the popular myths of the "Knights of the Round Table" and the Robin Hood legends of the Middle Ages.[37]

To post-Civil War American antimodernists, like Brooks Adams, Scott's martial ideal fused Republican and Romantic traditions, with their moral and aesthetic appeal. In contrast, Charles Dickens chronicled the new economic era devoid of personal courage. Adams disliked the world described by Dickens, devoid of gallant manners and adventure. Adams thought, that when Dickens wished to personify force, "he never did so through the soldier, or the swordsman, but through the attorney, the detective, or the usurer," the very symbols of the modernized Victorian city.[38]

Brooks also echoed Ralph Cram's view of the de-sacralization of architecture in the Victorian megalopolis, where"the ecstatic dream, which some twelfth-century monk cut into the stones of the sanctuary hallowed by the presence of his God, is reproduced to bedizen a warehouse; or the plan of an abbey, which Saint Hugh may have consecrated, is adapted to a railway station."[39] "The architecture, the sculpture, and the coinage of London at the close of the nineteenth century, when compared with those of the Paris of Saint Louis," he added, "recall the Rome of Caracalla."Adams —like Oswald Spengler later— thought that art provided an accurate index of the process of dissolution in civilization. Art "perhaps, even more clearly than religion, love, or war, indicates the pathway of consolidation; for art reflects with subtlest delicacy those changes in the forms of competition which enfeeble or inflame the imagination."[40]

The antimodernist strain in the thought of Brooks Adams, according to historian Jackson Lears, "revealed idiosyncratic psychic needs and also embodied a recurring activist impulse among American intellectuals: a desire to escape feelings of isolation and impotence by immersing themselves in the bustling, democratic society." Further according to Lears, the American reverence for military force was part of the transatlantic current of romantic activism through martial values. Nietzsche and Sorel— to name only two European men of letters— celebrated violence as protest against over-civilized gentility and intellectualism.[41] Adams's exalting of the knight was one way of updating the Republican idea of virtue in a civilization where "ascendancy of the 'goldbug' symbolized the sterility of a civilization unmanned by prosperity."[42]

In the developing competition between "modernizers" and "modernists," Brooks Adams, however, was really a hybrid. In his disdain for "modern civilization" and celebration of the Middle Ages and its martial values, he was well on the path to the "modernism" (or "antimodern modernism") his brother Henry articulated in the *Education*. But in his seeming devotion to"scientific" laws, to efficient administration, and fascination with future of American technological and industrial power, he seemed closer to the "modernizers." In being such a hybrid he was not alone, as comparison with the literary

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37 Lears, *No Place of Grace - Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880- 1920*, (New York, 1981), p. 99; William Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee* (New York, 1963), passim.

38 Brooks Adams, "Natural Selection in Literature," *Anglo-Saxon*, II (September 1899) pp158-80.

39 Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization*, (1896 ed., Knopf reprint) p.349.

40 *Ibid*., pp. 340-341.

41 Lears, *No Place*, pp. 136-137; also H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness & Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930*,(London 1979), pp.161-165.

42 Lears, *No Place*, p. 275.

naturalists suggests. In any case, it was his good fortune that it would be several decades, in another time and place, before German theorists, making their own bid for world power, would invoke a fatal combination of these two impulses.

CH.3. A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR: THE RECEPTION OF *THE LAW OF CIVILIZATION AND DECAY*

1. A Muted Response

A few scholars judged *The Law of Civilization* worthy of serious consideration, but hardly the last word. An unsigned review in *The American Historical Review* was cautiously favorable, but insisted that much more empirical research must be done before any "laws" could be reached in history: "before any complete work can be done upon the general course of history the minute study of the fall of Rome must be made by some one who is not merely a thoroughly trained historical student, but a thoroughly trained economist as well." In conclusion this reviewer was not entirely unfavorable, "The book is very suggestive; it presents a theory of history, which must be reckoned with; and it is remarkable on the skill with which the facts are selected." But in a final word, he called for more research. "Its chief defects are a somewhat uncritical use of authorities, a failure to make the bearing of all details upon the main line of the thought perfectly clear, and its decidedly one-sided treatment of a very complex development."[1]

In *The American Journal of Sociology*, Adams's book fared even less well. The reviewer was Benjamin S. Terry, professor of English history at the University of Chicago, founded with the help of Rockefeller money in 1892. Terry combined his teaching of history with work in the school of theology as did many in the social sciences. A former Baptist clergyman, Terry had studied in Germany, and taken his Ph.D. at Freiburg. After taking his degree, he was recruited by a university noted at the time for its social conservatism and Baptist connections.

Terry objected to Adams's book on political, religious, and methodological grounds. In the great dispute of 1896, his sympathies were with the Republican gold-standard advocates.[2] Regarding politics, he observed that *The Law*'s theories would be harmless, "if they did not have direct application to present issues." As a Protestant, Terry defended the Reformation, judging Adams's treatment of it "as bad, as his treatment of psychological tendencies of history." Adams, he charged, "mistakes the slime and slit and froth and filth, the accompaniments of the rising tide itself."

He also accused Adams of distorting history to prove his theory— especially the theory of fear and greed running through cycles of exploitation. In a negative summary he concluded:

> The book can do harm only in inexperienced hands. But unfortunately just at this time inexperienced hands are reaching out for such books, and witness heads are only too ready to accept anything that fans prevailing discontent, or seems to justify the proscription, of those who by their skill and energy and industry have enriched society.[3]

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[1] [review of the "Law of Civilization and Decline"] *American Historical Review*, 1 (1896), pp. 568-69.

[2] Charles A Beard, "Introduction" *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (New York, 1943 edition), p.49.

[3] Benjamin S. Terry, [Review of the "Law of Civilization and Decay"]," *American Journal of Sociology*, 2 (1896), pp. 467-72. Professor Robert C. Bannister has kindly mailed me a dossier of Brooks Adams's reviews by early American sociologists; he has also suggested some revisions concerning this chapter, which I am indebted.

Robert Latta, reviewing in the *International Journal of Ethics,* found Adams's indictment of modern civilization a "sad picture," and wondered how its author could claim to stand "passive" before the events he reported. He also found Adam's references to "energy" unmanageably vague. '"[Leaving] its philosophy out of account" he continued, he nonetheless found it "of very great interest and suggestiveness," leaving readers to wonder what, aside from the "philosophy," he could have found so interesting. Supplying his own conclusion, Latta noted hopefully that Adams revealed the "folly and futility" of attempts to rob communities of their wealth, whether through slavery, religion, confiscation or currency manipulation.[4]

A reviewer in the *Annals of the American Academy* named John Stewart but identified only as based in Philadelphia, was also outwardly sympathetic to the search for "laws of social change," calling their existence "undoubted." But no one as yet, and certainly not Adams, had "a collection of observations sufficient to establish [them]…." Unlike Terry, he feigned to welcome the work as a "tract for the times," but concluded that as "an essay in history it is to be severely criticized."[5]

In the popular political arena —so Charles Beard later claimed— Bryan Democrats applauded *The Law*, citing the downfall of Rome as a frightful example of what happens when capitalist moneylenders destroyed their debtors. "[Though] Adams preserved a facade of scientific neutrality in his sketch of world history his [anti-plutocratic] commitments were clear," Beard asserted. He added, however, that Adams's "appreciation of imaginative minds in the Middle Ages and the critical treatment meted out to Protestantism and modern materialism gave some aid and comfort to Catholic historians [too]." These comments, as will appear, were part of Beard's strategy to associate Adams, if only indirectly, with progressivism. [6]

Specific criticisms aside (and they were quite a few), these early reviews also posed a problem that Spengler and Toynbee were fortunate not to know, namely the relative obscurity of the reviewers and the fact that only Terry was an historian at a major American institution. "W.W," for whatever reason, chose to remain anonymous. Latta was a Scottish logician /rhetorician. Stewart, if an historian, was apparently not affiliated with any university and published no work in the field. If not exactly adding up to a "conspiracy of silence," as one commentator later claimed, the stature of reviewers does make a difference. Fortunately for Adams, his good and great friend Theodore Roosevelt came to the rescue.

2. Roosevelt and Adams

An amateur-historian of some renown, Roosevelt "regularly consorted with Henry and Brooks Adams"[7] and shared many of his Brahmin friend's worries. Among them were a republican uncertainty regarding the fate of civilization and *fin-de-siecle* discontents concerning decadence and nervous exhaustion. Charles Beard, again doing his best to align Brooks Adams with progressivism, later stated that Roosevelt realized some of Adams's

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[4] R. Latta, [review of the "The Law of Civilization and Decay"] *International Journal of Ethics*, 9, (Jul., 1899), pp. 519-521.

[5] John l. Stewart [review of the "The Law of Civilization and Decay"] *Annals the American of Academy*, 8 (1896), pp. 162-67.

[6] Charles A Beard, "Introduction," p. l. Beard cited as his source a student paper by William Diamond, which was apparently never published.

[7] H.W. Brands, T.R., *The Last Romantic*,(New York, 1997), p.308.

thoughts in his politics. "Brooks Adams by writing history helped to make history through the thought and action of Theodore Roosevelt."[8]

Although Brooks agreed with his brother Henry that the effect of economic competition was one of degradation, and that the second law of thermodynamics spelled disaster for the human race, he, unlike Henry, felt that America's prosperity and potential supremacy could be temporarily restored by reviving heroic virtues. Looking for someone to assume the role of the ancient hero, someone whose instincts were not suppressed by mechanization, Adams called for what would soon be termed, a “charismatic leader." Theodore Roosevelt fit the bill.[9] In Adams's opinion Roosevelt represented the kind of intelligent conservatism that, although accepting limited reform, would preserve the Brahmin class and protect the United States in the increasing global competition.

Adams understood that Roosevelt was a man who loved a fight. Convinced that the military virtues were superior to the industrial ones, he advised T.R. to play the “part of the buccaneer...the role of every historic hero in American history." "[You] are an adventurer and you have but one thing to sell —your sword,” he wrote Roosevelt in early 1896, two years before the "Rough Rider" would lead his troops up San Juan Hill. [10]

When Roosevelt was elevated to the White House in 1901, following McKinley's assassination, Adams congratulated him as the new Caesar in language as archaic as the sentiments it expressed:”…thou hast it now: king, Cawdor; Glamis, all...You hold a place greater than Trajan's, for you are the embodiment of a power, not only vaster than the power of the [Roman] Empire, but vaster than men have ever known."[11]

The Progressive Era anti-degeneration movement also had overtones of the cult of masculinity which Roosevelt, the adventurer president, abundantly embodied. A lifelong proponent of the “strenuous life,” T.R. was America's soldier, cowboy, and big-game hunter rolled into one. Combining Adams celebration of the medieval knight with the sentiments of countless advocates of masculinity, he once characterized the ethical functions of American football as "modern chivalry." [12] Also like Brooks Adams, he advocated moral regeneration through military adventure, including the creation of an overseas American empire. America, as the highest form of civilization, could solve the problems of the world, "for solved they must be, if not by us, then stronger and more manful race."[13]

Roosevelt welcomed Adams's historical analysis in *The Law of Civilization*. ”Roosevelt’s sharply defined historical sympathies...point[ed] unequivocally in a conservative, nationalist, and even antimodern direction,” diplomatic historian Frank Ninkovich has written. Roosevelt was extremely interested in the “problem of civilization” and measured political issues in terms of the “tendencies along which particular civilizations advance or decline," often using ”nation” and “race” often interchangeably.

For Roosevelt as for many Victorians, personal “character” was the rock on which civilization was built. Roosevelt accepted the anthropological view that humans progressed from “savagery” to “civilization.” Global progress occurred through the reinforcement of

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[8] Beard, “Introduction,” p. 44.

[9] Max Silbersmith, *The United States and Europe, Rivals and Partners*, (London 1972), p.95.

[10] B. Adams to T. R., February, 25, 1896, quoted in Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, p.131. The same words also reverberated in Gore Vidal’s novel,”Empire,” in *The Essential Gore Vidal*, ed. Fred Kaplan, (New York, 1999).

[11] Brooks Adams to T. R., quoted in Daniel Aaron, *Men of Good Hope* (New York, 1951), p. 270.

[12] Roosevelt’s attempts to save football from “abolitionists,” in Brands, T.R.,p.553

[13] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, (New York, 1902), pp.16-17.

virtue on a global scale. As a student of degeneration theory Roosevelt concluded that America's greatness would be determined by the degree to which the Anglo-Saxon imperial conquest caused other peoples to live strenuous lives. As with Adams, he believed that”barbarian virtues” in the end would preserve the Republic from decay.[14]

Roosevelt, again like Adams, believed that decline followed the spread of wealth. John M. Cooper has written: "one of Roosevelt's fundamental political views was rejection of materialism and upon that attitude he increasingly based his efforts to elevate public life."[15] Both men also embodied an aristocratic contempt for the complacent bourgeois. As Jackson Lears has noted:

> Men like Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Brooks Adams considered themselves public-spirited warrior- aristocrats. They were from old families with old money, and they had been raised in an atmosphere of republican moralism. Though their values and status were eminently bourgeois by European standards, they enjoyed attacking "the bourgeois type [as] miracle of timidity and short sighted selfishness." They all agreed that the American bourgeoisie needed a dose of aristocratic dash and daring.

Similar ideas, Lears added, resurfaced in Ronald Reagan era conservatism. "[Like George Will and other present- day militarists] Adams posed military ideals against the democratic obsessions with comfort and well being."[16]

Finally, Roosevelt, as an amateur historian, shared Adams's view of academic history, being contemptuous of the pedantic and timid academic historical profession. "[After] a while it dawned on me," the “Rough Rider” wrote, "that all of the conscientious, industrious, painstaking little pedants solemnly believe that if there were only enough of them, and that if they only collected enough facts of all kinds and sorts, there would cease to be any need hereafter for great writers, great thinkers."[17] According to Roosevelt, history had to be “imaginative art, studying great men and heroic deeds.” Although professional historians had not got around to the study of world-history, Roosevelt had no doubt there “there was a need for understanding global currents,” as Adams did.[18]

Roosevelt's Review

Brooks Adams asked Theodore Roosevelt to review *The Law* for the *Forum* and the review was published in 1897. Before Roosevelt's review appeared, Brooks wrote to Henry, "I have had a lot of letters from various people one of the pleasantest being from poor Teddy Roosevelt who is pretty sick of the Gold Bug..."[19] But by this time, Brooks, although he had condemned "gold bug" Republicans in *The Law*, was already concluding that plutocracy must govern under “its true colors.” When William McKinley beat the "inflationist" William

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[14] Frank Ninkovich, “Theodore Roosevelt: Civilization as Ideology,” *Diplomatic History*, (Summer 1986) , p.223; also Walter La Feber, *The American Age, United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750*, (New York & London, 1989), p. 219.
[15] John M. Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p. 11.
[16] T.J Jackson Lears, No *Place of Grace*, (New York, 1981), pp.116, 136.
[17] Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in John Higham, *History: Professional Scholarship in America* (Baltimore 1965), pp. 7-8.
[18] William Appleman Williams, “Brooks Adams and American Expansion,” *History As a Way of Learning*, (New York ,1973),pp.34-36.
[19] B. Adams to H. Adams 1896, quoted in Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, p. 131.

Jennings Bryan in 1896, Adams was relieved, because he now believed that the country and his family fortunes would be safer with the conservative McKinley as president.[20]

Roosevelt felt that that Adams had written a "powerful, but sad book." Noting similarities between the Roman world and American civilization he wrote: "there is in it [*The Law*] a very ugly element of truth. One does not have to accept either all his conclusions or all his facts in order to recognize more than one disagreeable resemblance between the world as it is today, and the Roman world under the Empire." Roosevelt, the "he-man," found Adams's description of martial man "soul-stirring." Perhaps thinking of himself the "Rough Rider" continued: "Adams is...at his best in describing, especially the imaginative man whose energy manifests itself in the profession of arms."

Recognizing the contemporary relevance of Adams's conclusions Roosevelt wrote: "there is grave reason for some of Mr. Adams's melancholy foreboding, no serious student of the times, no sociologist or reformer, and no practical politician who is interested in more than momentary success, will deny." Roosevelt saw that masses of "internal proletariat…constitutes a standing menace, not merely to our prosperity but to our existence." Roosevelt was sure that Adams was "breaking new ground for the philosophy of history."[21]

But T.R. had also his reservations and criticisms. The most important was Adams's defeatism, because he "does not believe that any individual, or group of individuals, can influence the destiny of the race for good or for evil...but we [T.R.] do not think it is impossible." He also felt that *The Law* disagreed with the "sound ideas of the Republican Party," whose members at that time were convinced that industrial "progress" would follow if the gold standard were maintained. He thus lectured Adams that " he was on the level as the populist Democrats and Socialists...to picture debtors as helpless under the rule of money lenders is really quite unworthy of Mr. Adams, or of anyone above the intellectual level of Mr. Bryan, Mr. Henry George, or Mr. Bellamy."[22]

Roosevelt's judgment of *The Law of Civilization* was probably more comforting to Americans than Adams's original because he believed in the ultimate triumph of civilization over the forces of decline and decay. Most readers would also agree with T.R. that Adams was wrong in maintaining that the martial man dies in the age of concentrated civilization. "[While] men are more gentle and honest than before, "Roosevelt wrote, "it cannot be said that they are less brave and they certainly are more efficient as fighters." Referring to McKinley's Civil War service, he noted that "the United States has just elected as President, as it so frequently has done before, a man who owes his place in politics in large part to his having done gallant service as a soldier, and who is in no sense a representative of the moneyed type."[23] Adams had presented a warning, but American civilization, in Roosevelt's view, was far from what Oswald Spengler would later term its "Winter phase."

3. Imperialist and Progressive

After Roosevelt's sympathetic review, Adams followed T.R.'s career closely. In so doing, he dissolved his psychological "crisis of modernity" in advocacy of Roosevelt's "strenuous life" and "Big Stick" policies. During his presidency (1901-1909), Roosevelt, in accord with a second side of Adams's thought, represented the stewardship of public-spirited, but aristocratic elite of skilled administrators serving the nation as a whole. Adams thus

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[20] Beard,"Introduction," p.xv.

[21] Theodore Roosevelt, [review of "The Law of Civilization and Decay"] *Forum* 22 (1897), pp. 575-589.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] *Ibid.*

placed his hopes on T.R., as the “charismatic leader” who was bringing necessary changes—progressive in effect, but conservative in form. [24]

Adams’s letters to T.R. also revealed the “gentleman rebel's" growing imperialism. Because Brooks Adams was convinced that the “law of history” was the law of concentration of force, he wanted the United States to adopt policies according to that law, and thereby to achieve economic and military supremacy in the global arena.

An American Empire

After publishing *The Law of Civilization and Decay* Adams applied his historical laws to world-politics in *America's Economic Supremacy* (1900) and *The New Empire* (1902). He now urged the United States to follow the rules of *realpolitik* and believed further, that the world was entering an American Century, to use a term Henry Luce would coin and Arnold Toynbee elucidate four decades later. Although he did not regard war as inevitable, Adams believed in a coming international struggle, which like most imperialists he viewed as a reason to create international stability through the application of American power. Adams could thus be described as a neo-Hamiltonian expansionist who cheered the revival of American nationalism and wished to substitute the ancient values of the warrior for the spirit-destroying materialism of the plutocrat. In the coming struggle for world resources, success in empire building would be the decisive test of might for modern civilizations.

Despite the “sad” conclusions drawn in *The Law of Civilization*, Adams felt that a strategy might be worked out whereby America's prosperity and economic supremacy could be sustained. A vital question was, whether the money centers were now going to New York, or would remain in Germany or Russia? Long before Oswald Spengler drew his own conclusions regarding New York’s centrality in modern history, Adams became convinced that as of 1896 the money centers were moving from London to the Wall Street. This move continued a march westward as the money markets jumped from the Mediterranean to Paris and then to London and New York. [25]

By 1897 America was on its way to becoming the greatest creditor nation in the world. The liquidation of British assets abroad and the future dissolution of the British Empire became a favorite theme of Adams. The year before, he wrote to TR.,” The whole world, as I look at the future and the present, seems to me to be rotting. The one hope for us, the one chance to escape from our slavery even for a year, is war, war, which shall bring down the British Empire...”[26]

Echoing F.J. Turner’s thesis “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” (1893) Adams explained that “the continent, which…gave a boundless field for the Americans has been filled [and must be supplanted by] the organization of a western empire, which will stretch over into Asia.” [27] The United States already ruled the Pacific Ocean as an inland sea and therefore must make sure that no other power could cut off China. With the new empire, America could save itself from the inevitable decline that Brooks Adams had predicted in *The Law*. In Adams’s global pondering, there was no reason "why the United States should not become a greater seat of wealth than ever was England, Rome, or Constantinople.”[28] With the British collapse, Russia would rise. On the other hand, Adams

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[24] Aaron, *Men of Good*, pp. 254-255.
[25] William, Schulte Nordholt, *The Myth of the West, America as the Last Empire*, (Michigan 1995), pp.199-200.
[26] Brooks Adams to T.R., February 25, 1896, Quoted in Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, p. 208.
[27] Brooks Adams, America’s *Economic Supremacy*, (New York 1900), p.82.
[28] *Ibid.*, p.12.

thought that Germany, with her advanced economy, was more immediate threat. But in some prescient analysis, he concluded: "in the long run Russia would rise as America's primary menace."[29]

Adams analysis was close to Roosevelt's own view of geopolitical change. Their major premise was the coming importance of America in the world balance of power. Britain had been supreme for a century but was now "wearing down." With the collapse of the British Empire, world "equilibrium" would be disturbed and a war for global domination would start.[30]

Following the logic of *The Law of Civilization and Decay* he realized that, with the reorganization of the American industry in the trusts and with her rich natural resource, America would undersell Europe, and by this means gain world domination. He thus slowly agreed that the trust must be accepted as the corner stone of "modern empire," accepting the concentration of administration with the "new high steel building" symbolizing the powerful, compact administrative system in Imperial America. Roosevelt's job was to rebuild a broken-down administrative system in a "scientific" way, sharing the task of empire-building with Henry Cabot Lodge and those politicians who shared Adam's distaste for plutocrats and socialists.

Adams spelled out his new views in a letter to Henry Cabot Lodge, the influential Republican senator, in 1901, "I must honestly and seriously believe that we are now on the great struggle for our national supremacy... We must become so organized, that we can handle great concerns and vast forces cheaper and better than others...It is fate. It is destiny."[31] Unlike his brother Henry, Brooks now believed in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race "because they had organized, democratized and subdued barbarians more effectively than other races." The Spanish American War made Henry and Brooks Adams part company. Henry considered the war as "jingoism," while Brooks saw it, on the contrary, as a sign of civilizational health.

Brooks' speculations on trade routes, international exchanges, and the historical responsibilities of peoples were also congenial to the foreign political ideas of Cabot Lodge. These theories about world politics thus made Adams one of the first proponents of *realpolitik* in the United States.[32]

After the American war with Spain and victories at Santiago and Manila Bay, Adams emerged as a serious strategist, a confidante of such influential naval power-brokers as Alfred Thayer Mahan. He came to be the historical theoretician and international strategist for the younger group of statesmen who came into power during McKinley's administration. Howard Beale, historian of Roosevelt's foreign policy, concluded that *American Economic Supremacy* explained, in Adams's inimitable form, theories, which supported and justified practical analyses of world politics, that Roosevelt himself had been working out..." [33] Seconding this opinion, Adams's biographer Arthur Beringause, wrote that "in the years to come, Brooks

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[29] *Ibid,*. p.41. In the Cold War context, Brooks Adams's admiration of state socialism was lamented in John Chamberlain, "In Brooks Adam's Crystal Ball," *The New York Times,* Oct.12, 1947.

[30] Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of the America to World Power*, (Baltimore, 1956), p. 256.

[31] Brooks Adams to Henry Cabot Lodge, Quoted in Aaron, *Men of Good Hope*, p. 268.

[32] For German appreciation of Adams's thought from the viewpoint of *realpolitik*, see Leopold von Wiese, "Review of The Law of Civilization and Decay," *Zeitschrift für Politik,* 1 (1908), pp. 617-627.

[33] Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt*, p. 259.

Adams, Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt, imbued with theories of *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, were to fight to keep America fit, so she might survive the gigantic, world- wide Darwinian struggles ahead."[34]

Adams's ideas anticipated later proponents of the "Americanization of the world," such as Henry Luce's American Century ideology in the 1940s, in which Luce used Arnold Toynbee's philosophy of "challenge and response" to promote American supremacy in the Cold War. Noting similarities between the visions of Adams and Toynbee, historian Henry Steele Commager wrote: "As nations which failed to meet the challenge of competition declined, it was necessary for the United States to respond to the challenge of force… [Brooks Adams in his theory] anticipated Arnold Toynbee's theory of the decline of civilizations."[35]

Another legacy of *The Law of Civilization* in Adams's imperialism was an admiration of "sheer force" during the centralizing process in civilization. As he stated there, the only alternative to chaos was forceful centralization. Adams warned that the United States must develop the military temperament or perish, at the same time that his newfound reverence for authority and fear of social disintegration led him to do the intellectual spadework for modern corporate liberalism. Like many Progressives, Adams lamented how far America had fallen behind other European countries in terms of growth in the size and the power of government—especially Wilhelmine Germany. Echoing H.G. Wells idea of "samurai" in *A Modern Utopia* (1905), the American leviathan, according to Adams, should be run by a technocratic elite. In Brooks Adams's new adoration of technocracy the antimodernist Brooks Adams joined now forces with such technocratic modernizers as Herbert Croly and Walter Lippmann. On the other hand, Adams's new attitude foreshadowed Oswald Spengler's reactionary modernism—his adoration of engineers, technicians and soldier workers, men "with Prussian instincts" and "discipline, organizing power, and energy"— in fact, the new Fascist superman of the twentieth century. [36]

Brooks Adams also in his "second phase" changed his mind completely regarding general laws in history. In the preface written in 1919 for a new edition of his early book *The Emancipation of Massachusetts*, he repudiated the idea of a universal law, "which the nineteenth century had discovered and could formulate." He also now expressed a relativist "suspicion" that the universe "is chaos which admits of reaching no equilibrium, and with which man is eternally and hopelessly to contend."[37]

These changes produced a "new" Brooks Adams among his progressive era admirers. One evidence was a review of *The New Empire* by James Shotwell, soon to be a prominent member of the Columbia-based "New History." "If college professors of history are as unimaginative and uncreative as Mr. Adams describes them," he began his favorable review, "they should be compelled to read this volume." But Shotwell denied that things were that bad since there were "some teachers of history who do not regard facts as sacred." To be sure, Adams could sometimes be faulted for "a careless grouping of facts," but it was a "work of genius" to find explanations of the traditional categories of stone, bronze, and iron ages in one facet of economic conditions, namely metallurgy. Concluding this lengthy and detailed review in the *Political Science Quarterly*, Shotwell wished that Adams had paid more

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[34] Beringause, *Brooks Adams*, p.143.
[35] Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind*, (New Haven, 1950), p.289.
[36] Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline* (New York, 1997), p.179; Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, (New York, 1981), pp.58-60.
[37] Brooks Adams, *The Emancipation of Massachusetts: The Dream and Reality*, (Boston & New York, 1919), pp.4-5.

attention to facts that would reveal "modifications and exceptions" to his theory. But he nonetheless heartily recommended it to "everyone interested in…the vastest of all problems."[38]

4. The Law of Civilization after 1900

Although Shotwell indirectly alluded to Adams's theory of history. most reviewers of his later books confined their attention to his specific policy recommendations, ignoring *the law* altogether.[39] In passing references , several commentators cited Adams—often negatively—as a proponent of the "economic interpretation" of history. [40] Others criticized his view of the law as reflecting wealth and power. If such were the case, one radical sociologist argued, it was only because the weak failed to assert themselves. [41] In a review of Roscoe Pound's *The Spirit of the Common Law*, a contribution to the new "legal realism," philosopher Morris Cohen argued that Pound was wrong to reject the economic basis of law simply because of the crudeness of Brooks Adams's version. [42]

Given their interest in social evolutionism, still the discipline's dominant paradigm, sociologists might have been expected to display more interest in *The Law* than historians. Yet the relatively few references to Adams in the *American Journal of Sociology* through the 1920s were brief and often critical. In installments of his book *Social Control*, Edward A Ross appeared to accept Adams's view of the Reformation as economic, but otherwise linked him with Marx and other "historical materialists." In his later work Ross viewed *The Law of Civilization and Decay* as an example of the armchair theorizing and crude psychologizing that plagued early sociology. [43]

Adams for his part did little to curry favor among pre-WW I sociologists. Invited by sociologist Charles Ellwood to contribute to a symposium on "The Social Problem and the Present War" in 1915, he replied: "So far as I am concerned I have nothing to add to what I have already written. . . .I beg to refer to them." [44] Adams apparently attended the 1915 meeting of the A.S.S nonetheless. There, as one sociologist later reported, he "challenged" the assembled by describing American government as "the most hopelessly inefficient . . .

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[38] James Shotwell, [review of *The New Empire], Political Science Quarterly*, 18 (Dec. 1903), pp. 688-93.

[39] For example, Isaac Loos [review of *The Theory of Social Revolution*], *American Journal of Sociology*, 19, (May, 1914), pp. 842-844.

[40] R. A. Seligman ," The Economic Interpretation of History. *III Political Science Quarterly*, 17 (Jun., 1902), pp. 284-312; J. E. C., [review of Edwin R. A. Seligman *The Economic Interpretation of History*], *Philosophical Review*, 12 (Jan., 1903), pp. 102-103; Edward Alsworth Ross, "Social Control. XIII. The System of Social Control, " *American Journal of Sociology*, 3, (May, 1898), p. 822.

[41] Vladimir G. Simkhovitch , " Marxism Versus Socialism, " *Political Science Quarterly* 25 (Sep., 1910), pp. 393-419.

[42] Morris R. Cohen [review of *The Spirit of the Common Law*] *Journal of Philosophy*, 20,. (Mar. 15, 1923), pp. 155-165.

[43] Edward Alsworth Ross, "Social Control. XIII. The System of Social Control, " *American Journal of Sociology*, 3, (May, 1898), p. 822; "Social Control. XIX. Class Control," *ibid*.,6, (Nov., 1900), pp. 381-395; "Moot Points in Sociology. III. The Unit of Investigation," *ibid*., 9, (Sep., 1903), pp. 188-207. Also Julius Weinberg, *Edward Alsworth Ross* (Madison, WI, 1972), pp. 54, 160.

[44] Charles A. Ellwood, "The Social Problem and the Present War," *American Journal of Sociology*, 20 . (Jan., 1915), pp. 487-503.

democracy in the world."[45] Still committed to the belief in progress, another sociologist, Arthur J. Todd, ignored Adams in his *Theories of Social Progress* (1919) and later referred to him simply a "pessimist." [46]

Adams eventually got a more sympathetic hearing from proponents of "historical sociology," a movement that opposed the move to objectivist and quantitative approaches in the discipline. Joyce O.Hertzler, a reform-minded theorist trained in Ross's department at Wisconsin, praised Adams for noting that "nothing is accidental," although by this he meant only that Adams showed that laws of causation operate in society. [47]

Writing in *Current History* in 1944, repeated in *Historical Sociology* (1948), Harry Elmer Barnes, a left-liberal maverick in the discipline and leading advocate of "historical sociology," later called Adams "the one American philosopher who had dealt with the history and destiny of man in a profound, searching and skeptical fashion." If his predictions were true there was little hope for world organization or Utopia in the post -war world. But Barnes too was finally critical. If few Americans now accepted the theory of progress Adams attacked, so also almost no one endorsed a cyclical theory of history. Adams's greatest failure, in his stress on finance, was to discount the role of technology and science in history. World War II showed how both could be misused, but also the importance of creating a new world order to assure their positive application. [48]

A more influential voice among sociological theorists, however, judged Adams seriously wanting. In *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (1928), *émigré* sociologist Pitirim Sorokin , soon to teach at Harvard and later the author of his own multi-volume contribution to meta-sociology, complained that Adams presented not one but several contradictory theories, attributing change alternately to geography, race, economics, and "cosmic energy."[49] Sorokin thus dismissed *The Law's* contribution to sociological theory, in marked contrast to his later treatment of Toynbee (ch.8)

The declining fortunes of Adams's *magnum opus*, it should be added, were not entirely due to the fact that "laws" based on natural science were increasingly out of fashion. From the start, reviewers of *The Law* had compiled a formidable list of historical inaccuracies and questionable statements of fact. Roosevelt himself laced his favourable comments with a laundry list of such objections: from the seemingly absurd claim that medieval men cared more for women, because they bought their wives, to the assertion that modern economic men make poorer warriors than the "heroic" types of earlier cultures—the defeat of the heroic culture of Spain by commercial England being, in Roosevelt's mind, proof enough to refute Adams.

In *Contemporary Sociological Theories,* Sorokin also observed that it would take "many pages" to enumerate all of Adams's mistakes. To an historian of a later generation it appeared that Adams was not really worried too much about the factual accuracy of the

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45 Stuart A. Queen, "Can Sociologists Face Reality? " *American Sociological Review,* 7, (Feb., 1942), p. 3.

46 Arthur J. Todd , [review of Boris Sidis, *The Source and Aim of Human Progress*], *American Journal of Sociology,* 26. (Sep., 1920), pp. 236-237.

47 Joyce O. Hertzler, "The Sociological Uses of History*," American Journal of Sociology*, 31, (Sep., 1925), pp. 173-198.

48 Harry Elmer Barnes, "Brooks Adams on World Utopias, "
Current History, 6 (January, 1944), 5; *Historical Sociology* (New York, 1984, [orig. 1946]), pp. 100-03. Barnes derived his argument almost entirely from Charles Beard's introduction to a new edition of *The Law*. See below.

49 Pitirm Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York, 1928), p. 589.

material between his introduction and conclusion since he cared only for his theory and "railed against footnote sloggers who lost their thesis in a morass of details."[50]

5. A Brooks Adams Revival?

The publication of a new edition of *The Law* in 1943 brought the book once again to public attention. In a lengthy, largely favorable introduction Charles Beard not only argued that Brooks had influenced Henry (rather than vice versa, as often claimed), but implied that he belonged in the company of progressives. [51]

By this time, as will later appear (ch. 5), Beard had modified his earlier view of history in light of the notion, derived from Croce among others, that historians inevitably order the facts of history in light of their personal predilections and philosophical assumptions. In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1933 he characterized written history as "An Act of Faith," seeming to endorse a thoroughgoing historical relativism. Beard had not abandoned his conviction that facts mattered, but rather, as his biographer Ellen Nore has written, opposed "the great fallacy of historicism," the idea that the scholar was a "neutral mind" and is "without politics."[52]

In his introduction, Beard devoted much of his attention to the relationship between Brooks and Henry, implying but not quite affirming that the younger Adams had inspired his brother's interest in the philosophy of history. In addition, Beard had three goals: (1) to insist on the importance of having a philosophy of history; (2) to deny that Brooks had simply presented an "economic interpretation" of history; and (3) to relate Adams to the progressive tradition in light of these two points.

The Law was important as a pioneering "philosophy of history," Beard argued, not because Adams was right (Beard pronounced the cyclical view of history "not valid") but because all historians and even statesman have such philosophies, whether acknowledged or not. Distancing Adams from Karl Marx—just as Beard had distanced himself in his book on the Constitution—he insisted that in any "comprehensive sense" Adams offered not an "economic interpretation" but a "psychological " one, stressing "fear" and "greed." Nor did Beard buy the gloomy conclusions that flowed from this analysis, insisting instead that the combined resources of modern democracy, science, and technology would prevent "a return to the primitive age of agricultural scarcity, hunger, and degradation." [53]

The Law stood in "the long line of American protests against plutocratic tendencies," Beard continued, although in relating Adams to progressivism he appeared to be stretching. Adams "helped to make history through the thought and action of Theodore Roosevelt," not in the sense that Roosevelt agreed with everything in *The Law*, but because his review, including its many disagreements with Adams, helped refine T.R's own position. Beard stretched even further in speculating that the anonymous author of the review of *The Law* in the *American Historical Review* was Woodrow Wilson —basing his surmise not on any name or initials below the review, but on the fact that a "W.W." initialed another short review in the same "Minor Notices." Since the second book in question was a study of the French Monarchy in the 12th century; since it is not clear why Wilson would initial one notice and

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[50] Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire*, (Ithaca, NY, 1963), p. 81.

[51] For Adams's influence on Beard see William A. Williams, "A Note on Charles Austin Beard's Search for a General Theory of Causation," *American Historical Review*,(Oct. 1956), pp. 59-80.

[52] Ellen Nore, "Charles Beard's Act of Faith," *Journal of American History*, 66 (1980), p. 866.

[53] Beard, "Introduction," passim.

not another; and since Wilson otherwise contributed no reviews or articles to the *A.H.R.* between 1895 and 1910, Beard was probably overreaching . In any case, the result was to ignore the things that made *The Law of Civilization and Decay* something more complex than the work of a progressive, as this term was conventionally understood. [54]

Among progressive historians, Beard was not alone in his enthusiasm for Adams's treatment of "civilization." In the third and unfinished volume of *Main Currents in American Thought*, Vernon Louis Parrington had already sung Brooks Adams a unique hymn of praise—unique in its enthusiasm for the crotchety Adams, and unique also in its blindness to the darker underside of some of Adams's views. A born "rebel," Parrington's Brooks Adams was an inveterate critic of American capitalism. "The passion for social justice had brought him at last to a philosophy of history," Parrington continued. *The Law of Civilization and Decay* was "an extraordinarily provocative study," done with "conspicuous skill." Adams was "under no illusions . . . he had cleared his mind of all middle-class fetishes and could look calmly upon a mad world." [55]

Behind this curious praise lay the fact that Parrington saw in Adams a kindred spirit. Like another erstwhile progressive historian, Carl Becker, Parrington by the 1920s was deeply disillusioned, convinced that capitalism and middle-class materialism were destroying earlier liberal promise. His *Main Currents* was unique, as Arthur Ekrich later noted, in telling the American story as one of decline. Adams's theory, Ekirch wrote, "formed the very core of Parrington's own interpretation..."[56]

If Beard's intent was to associate Adams with progressivism in his own way, the attempt fell on deaf ears. Ignoring the point, reviewers of the new edition sounded familiar themes. Adams's "philosophy" was less important than his "facts," a reviewer in the *Political Science Quarterly* wrote, apparently unaware of Adam's many shortcomings in this area. By this he meant that Adam's economic explanations were a welcome antidote to "official" histories. Adams's "repudiation of religion" as superstition and greed would lose him many readers, this reviewer added. A second reviewer praised Adams for anticipating the anthropology of Ralph Turner, Ortega y Gasset's theory of "mass man," and Arnold Toynbee's "universal church." But he concluded that Adams's work proved finally that "that the historian should not seek to be a prophet."[57]

In *Critics and Crusaders* (1948), a latter-day example of progressive history, historian Charles A. Madison grouped Adams with "dissident economists" Thorstein Veblen and Henry George as critics of the "gospel of wealth." At least one reviewer found Madison's groupings "confusing," however, and the book in any case faded quickly into obscurity. [58]

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[54] *Ibid*, pp.44, 49.

[55] Vernon Louis Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, vol. 3, "The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: 1860-1920," (New York, 1930). pp. 227-36.

[56] Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., "Parrington and the Decline of American Liberalism," *American Quarterly*, 3, (Winter, 1951), pp. 295-308.

[57] Donald J. Pierce, [review of the new edition of *The Law of Civilization and Decay*], *Political Science Quarterly*, 58 (Sep., 1943), pp. 437-438**;** Rushton Coulborn , [review of the new edition of *The Law*] *American Historical Review*, 49 (Oct., 1943), pp. 77-78. A third commentator compared Brooks's "conventional" or "contingent" pessimism with the more thoroughgoing pessimism of his brother Henry. See Francis G. Wilson , "Pessimism in American Politics," *The Journal of Politics*, 7 (May, 1945), pp. 125-144.

[58] Townsend Scudder, [review of Madison, *Critic*s] *American Historical Review*, 53 (Oct., 1947), pp. 119-120.

More influential was Daniel Aaron's widely-read *Men of Good Hope* (1951) which featured a chapter on Brooks and Theodore Roosevelt. Refiguring "progressivism" as an ethic/religious tradition stretching from Emerson to Roosevelt, Aaron sketched a "true" liberalism that was at once realist and Utopian , and which unlike the technocratic, pragmatic New Deal version would appeal to American's hope and dreams, replacing a now-discredited Marxism. In this story Adams and T.R. served as "pseudo- progressives." Directly and indirectly, Aaron attacked both Parrington's and Beard's portraits of Adams. "Parrington's essay was genial but misleading," he wrote; those who swallowed it made the mistake of taking literally brother Henry's joke that Brooks was a "Jeffersonian, Jacksonian, and Bryan Democrat. " Beard's grass-roots partisans who read *The Law* as a pro-silver tract Aaron termed "innocent populists."[59] Although the term "pseudo-progressive" would catch on, it was, inaccurate, reviewer Joseph Dorfman commented, since Adams never considered himself a "progressive" in the first place.[60]

"New Conservatives" vs."New Liberals"

In the postwar decade, Adams also gained the attention of those now termed "New Liberals" and "New Conservatives" —the second in search of a conservative American tradition free of both Manchesterian economics and the taint of Fascism; and the first hoping to create a hard-headed, "realist" non-Communist Left.

Although New Conservatives recognized in Brooks Adams a kindred spirit one leading spokesman could finally not find room for him in the conservative tradition. The problem, wrote Russell Kirk in *The Conservative Mind* (1953), was not simply Adams's on again-off again endorsement of socialism, but his settled conviction that consolidation would inevitably destroy all vestiges of the past, even those elements he himself revered. The culprit was the corrosive spirit of modern science (Positivism, Darwinism etc.), which Adams embraced and which reduced him to "nihilism." [61]

A new breed of Liberals, in contrast, found in Adams an admirable tough-mindedness. The writers who most interested Beard—-Madison, Louis Brandeis, Justice Hugo Black, and Brooks Adams—wrote journalist-historian Max Lerner, shared not an "ideological conformity" but "a hard-bitten, unfooled quality." Those interested in strong leadership and efficient government would find their dissatisfaction with "democracy" well-expressed by Brooks Adams, added Max Farrand, now one of the grand old men of American history. [62] This image of Adams spilled over in the now-fashionable consensus history, concerned more with "realism" than idealism in international affairs. [63]

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[59] Aaron, *Men of Good Hope*, pp. 254, 266.

[60] Joseph Dorfman [review of Aaron, *Men of Good Hope*], *Journal of Political Economy*, 59 (Dec., 1951), pp. 544-545.

[61] Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind* (Chicago, 1953), pp. 319-26.

[62] Max Lerner,"The Political Theory of Charles A. Beard," *American Quarterly*, 2 (Winter, 1950), pp. 303-321; Max Farrand, "The Quality of Distinction," *American Historical Review*, 46 (Apr., 1941), pp. 509-522. A quarter century later, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., a chief theorist of the New Liberalism, expressed similar admiration for Adams's tough-mindedness in, "America: Experiment or Destiny?" *American Historical Review*, 82 (Jun., 1977), pp. 505-522.

[63] For example see the treatment of Adams in Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals And Self-Interest In America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation Of The Twentieth Century.* (Chicago, 1953).

Two scholarly treatments of Adams in the postwar decades reflected this new appreciation of "realism." In "The Warrior Critique of the Business Civilization," John P. Mallan agreed that "liberal utopianism" had prevented "realism" in foreign affairs, but attributed it to the materialistic complacency of America society. Although he applauded Adams for identifying this danger, he concluded that the Bostonian had been too extreme to gain a listening among the American public at large. In "Brooks Adams and American Nationalism" Charles Hirschfeld argued that earlier characterizations of Adams were flawed because they attempted to place him in conventional categories of "liberal" and "conservative." Rather, Adams voiced a new position in America politics, combining domestic reform and strength overseas—indeed, viewing the two as closely related. He was thus a "realistic" advocate of American expansion, in contrast to " 'idealistic' internationalists and orthodox reformers." Unfortunately for Adams's reputation, however, a counter movement was already well underway. [64]

6. Brooks Adams: Social Darwinist

During the 1940s a darker, more ominous Adams appeared in America's histories, fixing an image which persists today. In *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (1944), Richard Hofstadter placed Adams in a larger tradition of "social Darwinism." Although the context was Adams's long-known support of American expansionism, the phrase "social Darwinism" conjured up associations with defenders of dog-eat dog capitalism, racists, advocates of eugenic sterilization, and theorists of brutal warfare—the latter two now especially associated with Nazi Germany. Although Adams would have been uneasy in most of this company, the point was made: a "social Darwinist," Adams was not a nice person. [65]

As with the identification of Adams with an "economic interpretation," the label in a literal sense was a misnomer. Adams derived his "laws" of civilization primarily from physics, not biology. A reference to nature "selecting" the Gold Bugs as the preferred type in the latter stages of civilization made no mention of Darwin. His selectionism was cultural rather than physical, resembling, for example, the social selectionism of Columbia sociologist Franklin Giddings who's *Principles of Sociology (1886)* appeared at the same time. His hereditarianism drew on a tradition that antedated and existed independent of Darwin.

The label nonetheless stuck. Although in his fair-minded biography, Arthur Beringause included only a single reference to Adams and Darwinism, Wisconsin historian Merle Curti in his review warmed to the theme. "Brooks Adam's thought, as Beringause makes clear, was limited by an unswerving adherence to Social Darwinism," Curti wrote. "Out of his Social Darwinism sprang his unsparing indictment of feminism, his vitriolic anti-Semitism and racism." In an article otherwise devoted to the economic depression of 1893-93, an economist commented that Brooks Adams "became convinced that Darwin's law of selection favored the 'gold bugs' and Republicanism" [66]

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[64] John P Mallan., "Theodore Roosevelt, Brooks Adams, and Lea: The Warrior Critique of the Business Civilization," *American Quarterly* 8 (1956), pp. 216-30; Charles Hirschfeld, "Brooks Adams and American Nationalism," *American Historical Review* 69 (1964), pp. 371-92.

[65] Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Philadelphia, 1944), pp. 161-63.

[66] Merle Curti [review of Beringause], *American Historical Review*, 61, (Apr., 1956), pp. 662-664. Samuel Rezneck, "Unemployment, Unrest, and Relief in the United States during

With the appearance of Walter LaFeber's *The New Empire* (1963), a New Left diplomatic history in which Adams figured centrally, his reputation as a leading social Darwinist was secure. [67]Critics now routinely summarized his position as calling for a "survival of the fittest," even though he avoided this Spencerian phrase, no doubt because it ascribed moral qualities to money-lenders whom he judged "fit" only in the sense that some rats adapt to sewers.

Evidence of Adams's anti -Semitism, as Curti's comment suggested, completed the picture. [68] In Richard Hofstadter's *Age of Reform* (1955), Adams appeared as both a "pseudo progressive" and anti-Semite— a Patrician mirror-opposite of the Populists. Adams, Hofstadter wrote, illustrated "a curiously persistent linkage between anti-Semitism and money and credit obsessions." [69]

From this it was a short step to the conclusion that Adams and his *Law* were "proto-fascist." Given the earlier rejection of Spengler on these grounds (see ch. 5), the charge was curiously slow in coming. In his 1951 biography of Adams, Thornton Anderson approached the issue tentatively. In his search for efficiency and call for strong leadership Adams "was already face to face with the modern choice between fascism and socialism." Adams's comment that war was a "sign of advance" anticipated statements of Hitler and Mussolini. His plans for military education and the curbing of excessive debate were presented with no sense of their possible "perversion." Half a century later this tentative tone was gone as another historian matter-of-factly cited Adams as an example of American "proto-fascism." [70]

Since Adams died in 1927 it is impossible to know how he would have reacted to the rise of Hitler. Some fellow patricians flirted with fascism; other rejected it. But historiographically, the damage was done.

Adams would never enjoy the celebrity of Spengler or Toynbee. For this fate there were good reasons, as this analysis has shown. Basing his cyclical view of history in natural science rather than a more alluring if elusive "world-spirit," he attached himself to a tradition that was already under attack and would soon be out of fashion. His categories were confused: "economic" in particular meant several different things in his usage. Some of his "facts" were questionable by any standard. Even those who shared his *fin de siécle* pessimism regarding civilization or shared his desire for a post-Rankean history found him "crude." To Adams's credit, however, he articulated, if he did not successfully satisfy, a deep need for holistic understanding that would resurface in the 1920s and again in the 1940s.

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the Depression of 1893-97," *Journal of Political Economy*, 61, No. 4. (Aug., 1953), pp. 324-345.

67 LaFeber, *The New Empire*, pp. 61-62, 80-85, 95-101.

68 John Higham," Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 43. (Mar., 1957), pp. 559-578; also Michael N. Dobkowski ,"American Anti-Semitism: A Reinterpretation," *American Quarterly*, 29 (Summer, 1977), pp. 166-181.

69 Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1955), p. 81.

70 Thornton Anderson, *Brooks Adams*, pp. 138, 157-58. 200; Robert O. Paxton,"The Five Stages of Fascism," *Journal of Modern History*, 70. (March, 1998), pp. 1-23.

CH.4. SPENGLER AND "THE DECLINE OF THE WEST"

1. An Aspiring Mandarin

In the summer of 1918, before the final defeat of the German Empire in World War I, Oswald Spengler's sensational book *Der Untergang der Abendlandes* (Decline of the West) was published in Germany. Presenting a holistic interpretation of world history, the German philosopher-historian challenged the post-World War I intellectual world with the claim that Western-European-American culture was on the verge of disintegration. Who was this man?

Born in Blankenburg-am-Harz, Germany, Spengler (1880-1936) studied at the universities of Munich, Berlin, and Halle. In 1904, he received his doctorate at Halle for a dissertation on the heroist-vitalist Heracleitus, famous for his dictum that all is in flux and that "war is the creator of all things." Spengler's studies also included scientific work on the physiology of the eye in animals, studies that echoed Goethe's research into the nature of light and presaged Spengler's later interest in the evolution of sight in history.

Like Brooks Adams, Spengler was a keen student of naturalist psychology. Like Nietzsche, he concluded from his study of evolution that the expression of personality was a protest against the "humanity of the mass." Adopting a Darwinist perspective on the overall condition of civilized man, he ultimately believed that "man is the beast of prey."

In 1911, the crisis in Agadir, where the colonial aims of Wilhelm II in North Africa were frustrated by the French, inspired Spengler's earliest unpublished writings. Anticipating his *magnum opus*, he foresaw a "period of contending states, "presaging a *new Caesarism* and the eventual downfall of Western civilization that would parallel the collapse of earlier civilizations.[1]

In 1911 his intention was to deal primarily with current problems, as suggested in the provisional title "Conservative and Liberal." But as Spengler wrote, he became convinced that he *had* to find solutions to the more general "crisis of modernism," which Darwinism had precipitated within traditional theology and philosophy.,

Exploring the "will to power," Spengler re-formulated Nietzsche's theme of "eternal recurrence" as "the decline of the west, " the title he settled upon after seeing Otto Seeck's *Geschichte des Untergangs der Antike Welt* in a bookstore window 1915. *The Decline* was written in a mood of wartime optimism. Spengler believed that through the victory of its army, Germany would acquire an African empire, invade England, and retain Belgium. Enigmatically, he also believed that the spiritual consequence of the German triumph would be degeneration into a "soulless Americanism," which eventually would dissolve the art, the nobility, and the church of the German empire.[2]

Although Spengler wrote in dire poverty in Munich during the war, the huge and immediate success of *The Decline* made him an international celebrity overnight. In the wake of this success he actively engaged in politics beginning with the publication of *Prussianism and Socialism* (1919), which promoted strict regimentation for German society. Although similar to the position Brooks Adams had advocated, Spengler's conception of the corporate

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1 In Spengler's original table describing the cycle of civilizations downfall the period of Caesarism comes to the West 2000-2300, *The Decline*, I, Chart 3.

2 Paul Costello, *World Historians and Their Goals*, (De.Kalb, 1993), p.52. Brooks Adams also wished for a German triumph, because "Our salvation lay in substituting for the money standard of Wall Street the military standards of West Point," Adams quoted in Aaron, *The Men of Good Hope*, (New York, 1961), p.274.

state was bound to Prussian discipline and nation-state, in contrast to Adams's model of the American multinational corporation. Spengler foresaw an age ruled by Prussian aristocrats, which would end in German incorporation of European nations and finally in a "Caesarian age" ruled by an aristocratic, charismatic leader.

Weimar Germany was a mixture of disillusionment and hope, a perplexing cradle of conservatism and modernity that nurtured National Socialism on the one hand, Expressionism and Communism on the other. It was this context that contributed to the popularity of *The Decline*, and eventually produced Spengler's pessimistic later works, *Man and Technics* (1931) and the *Hour of Decision* (1933).

Politically, Spengler opposed the Weimar regime and considered forming his own conservative party. His aim was to modernize German conservatism, combining an elitist, authoritarian social order with modern industrial technology. Spengler wrote to a friend, "Truly our future lies on the one hand in Prussian conservatism *after it has been cleaned of all the feudal-agrarian narrowness,* and on the other hand in the working people, after they have freed themselves from the anarchist-radical …'masses'." [3]

Like Brooks Adams, Spengler took pleasure in playing power- broker in politics and national affairs. The fame of *The Decline of the West* put him in a position to cultivate new contacts. He entertained a wide circle of important often highly-placed friends and acquaintances, while at the same time cultivating an image of being an aloof, unapproachable titan. His new friends included Bavarian industrial magnates, army officers, and leaders of the right-wing paramilitary organizations. However, he cultivated few friendships within the German academic establishment, an exception being the conservative ancient historian, Edward Meyer, who became a personal friend. The hostile reception of *The Decline* among German academics, in turn, led Spengler to hold "men of action" in even higher esteem. [4]

One of Spengler's pet-projects was the creation of a press-network to provide effective propaganda for big business and to offer advice to German industrialists on how to best advance their interests. He also attempted unsuccessfully to gain control of the German humor-magazine *Simplizissimus*, which he hoped to transform into an organ of the German upper-classes, much like *Punch* in Anglo-American circles.

In *The Decline of the West,* Spengler later explained his thinking, identifying the Press as the symbol of a changing relationship between individual and his society though which modern "power-publishers" molded opinion. In Spengler's view, 20th century civilization was characterized by the manipulation of thought and imagination by privately-owned and politically aligned newspapers. Spengler explained:

> English-American politics have created through the press a force- field of world-wide intellectual and financial tensions in which every individual unconsciously takes up the place allotted to him, so that he must think, will, and act as a ruling personality somewhere or other in the distance he thinks fit. This is dynamics against statics, Faustian against Apollonian world feeling...Man does not speak to man; the press and its associate, the electrical news service, keep the waking-consciousness of whole peoples and continents under a deafening drum-fire of these catch words, standpoints,

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3 Oswald Spengler, December 27, 1918, to Hans Klores, cited in Walter Struve, "Oswald Spengler: Caesar and Croesus," in *Elites Against Democracy* (Princeton 1973), p.236.

4 Struve, "Oswald Spengler," pp.232-273.

> scenes, feelings, day by day and year by year, that every Ego becomes a mere function of a monstrous intellectual Something.[5]

Ironically, as events will show, Spengler himself would owe a great of his success in the United States to the power of the press. Despite his ambition to play power-broker, Spengler was personally unassuming. His American published Alfred Knopf found him to be agreeable, friendly and interesting. The German always dressed quietly—dark suit, dark tie, and white shirt. He was tanned, close shaven, and soft-spoken, with a pleasant voice. He lived in an apartment which had three living rooms strung end-to-end along the street. All three were lined with books, which Spengler playfully said he wanted to throw into the river. Despite his fame, Spengler preferred to live alone with his books, and a collection of primitive arms and of art, while taking care of his elderly sister.

2." Culture" versus "Civilization"

Spengler's metahistory provided a major challenge to the evolutionist faith in progress, *The Decline* diagnosed the "state of Western Europe and America" and analyzed the symptoms of Western decline that, according to Spengler, had "spread all over the globe" during the age of imperialism.[6] "In this book is attempted for the first time the venture of predetermining history, of following the still un-traveled stages in the destiny of a Culture," Spengler wrote in his often-cumbersome prose, "and specifically of the only Culture of our time and our planet which is actually in the phase of fulfillment—the West-European-American."[7]

In addition to opposing western political progressivism, Spengler aimed his "reactionary modernism" at the program of objectivist history and its elaborate system of documentation. This rebellion paralleled that of the Neo-Kantians in Germany, except that Spengler rejected their belief in the possibility of truly re-experiencing the inner life of earlier peoples and cultures.[8]

A leader in the field of historical phenomenology, Willhelm Dilthey claimed that each epoch must be understood in its own terms since each nation and civilization is a unique expression of the eternal life-force. Dilthey believed that it is the job of the true historian to discern morphological structures, which may be shared by many cultures. Human life and culture should be examined, not by the method of natural sciences [*erklären],* but by that of the human sciences [*verstehen].* Like Dilthey, Spengler believed that comparative cultural study would yield profound insights into the nature of history and reveal the spirit of one's own culture and epoch. [9]

Whereas Brooks Adams had earlier tried to turn history into science on the order of physics and natural psychology, Spengler approached it from the other direction. Spengler distinguished eight world civilizations— the Egyptian, the Chinese, the Indian, the pre-

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5 *The Decline* II, p.460.

6 Costello, *World Historians,* p.48.

7 Spengler, *The Decline* I, p.3.

8 Klaus P. Fischer, *History and Prophecy, Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West,* (New York, 1989), pp.92-93.

9 Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology Politics, Art,* (Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1990), p.11; also H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society, the Reorientation of European Social Thought* 1890-1930, (Sussex, 1974), pp.192-199.

Columbian Mexican, the Classical or Graeco- Roman, the Western European, and the "Magian," which included the Arabic, Judaic, and Byzantine cultures.[10] Spengler's world history involved a new racial and cultural redistribution of the previous Eurocentric scheme of world-history, while he controversially argued that they went through a lifecycle analogous to that of living organism. The "idea" that predetermined each particular lifecycle could be grasped intuitively. He thus agreed with the Neo-idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce that the "real historian" is an artist, a poet, and not a "scientist."[11] Like Henry Adams in *Mont Sant Michel and Chartres* (1904), Spengler organized his material around *symbols*—the birth, flowering, maturation and eventual degeneration of a particular cultural "idea" of a particular civilization.

Given currents of thinking within natural science, already underway in the 1920s, this idea of u*rsymbol* [the original symbol around, which civilization is organized] was not as outrageous as might be expected. Favoring a Jungian/Spenglerian theory of *ursymbol* Stanislaf Grof writes in 1993, "Western science [has] neglected the problem of form in nature….[Rupert Sheldrage] suggests that forms in nature are governed by what he calls morphogenic fields, which cannot be detected by measurement by contemporary science."[12]

In Spengler's cyclical theory, the decline of a particular civilization occurred through oscillation from "Culture" [*Kultur*] to "Civilization" [*Zivilization*]. Arguably the most important distinction Spengler made in *The Decline,* the Culture/Civilization- dichotomy became a standard item in the arsenal of right-wing movements during the Weimar era. Rooted philosophically in the work of Immanuel Kant, the dichotomy was employed by such thinkers as Thomas Mann, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Adolf Hitler.[13]

For the most intellectuals in the Anglo-Saxon West, Civilization referred to an advanced state of material and social well-being while culture denoted the institutional and artistic aspects of a civilization. Early 20th century Germans, however, defined the two aspects in a rather different way, portraying them as stages in the development of society. Culture was the era of creative activity; with the development of Civilization, reason was applied to life and concern for material comfort predominated. The term Civilization described a period of decline and artificiality, negating creativity and robbing life of meaning. This definition introduced a "reactionary modernist" challenge to the positive concept of "civilization" which Anglo-Saxon Victorians revered before World War I.[14]

In the German conservative philosophy, Civilization pulled Germany to the West, Culture to the East. Right-wing philosophers argued that real Germany was not part of a

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10 " The Magian culture represented Spengler's tribute to the Orientalist tradition of Schopenhauer and Schlegel, according to which the East is the true creative source of Christianity and the West's religious and philosophical vision," Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History*, (New York, 1997), p.236.

11 Spengler in German historigraphical context, cf. John Farrenkopf, *The Prophet of Decline*: *Spengler on World History and Politics*,(Baton Rouge, 2001),pp.79-84; Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, (Cambridge, 1984), p.53.

12 Stanislaf Grof, *The Holotropic Mind, The Three Levels of Human Consciousness, and How they Shape our Lives* (San Francisco, 1993), p.11.

13 Richard V. Pierard, "Culture versus Civilization: A Christian Critique of Oswald Spengler's Cultural Pessimism," *Fides et History* (No. 2, 1982) pp.39,47.

14Pierard, "Culture vs. Civilization," p.39.

cosmopolitan-international civilization, but a “race-culture” of its own.[15] The German conception of East and West, historian Paul Johnson has written, was one of the central conceptual "motors" of the “crisis of modernism,” and one part of the conservative philosophy that finally overcame the Weimar Republic. The principal characteristics of the pre-war German regime were connected to anti-liberalism, Johnson continued. The German social elite consisted of princes, generals, landowners, law professors (who endowed German society with academic legitimacy), and Lutheran pastors (who gave it moral authority).

The German ruling class loathed the Anglo-Saxon West both for its liberal ideas and for its gross materialism and the lack of spirituality. Their agenda was to keep Germany "pure." This resulted in plans to resume German medieval conquest and settlement of the East, thus carving out a continental empire for Germany. This conquest would make Germany independent of the Anglo-Saxon world-system and its cosmopolitan-international Civilization. This German elite viewed Civilization as rootless, cosmopolitan, immoral, non-German, Western, materialistic and racially defiled. Its opposite was Culture, a descriptive term for organic community [*Gemeinschaft*]—a living force characterized by soul, which was pure, national, German, spiritual and authentic.

Spengler re-formulated these central ideas of the German conservatives to describe how the rich values of an older, nobler period had been lost in the modern West. In contrast to Classical Culture and its respect for limits and proportion, the Faustian West was characterized by a bold, almost ruthless thrust towards the infinite. While the Classical world bowed in “submission to the moment,” Spengler claimed, the “modern world has an unsurpassed tense Will to the Future.” This idea he called the “Faustian-spirit." This Faust of *The Decline,*and especially of the post-Decline volumes, was not the Faust of Goethe, who sublimated his drive in the interests of common humanity, but Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faust, heading for his inevitable doom.

Spengler hoped that *The Decline* would encourage the younger generation to turn toward technology, politics and pure science, instead of poetry and philosophy. Spengler saw forces of intuition and will, more powerful even than Classical philosophy, at work in the rise of Western science and technology. Technology for Spengler expressed a Faustian world feeling, a drive “to expand into the natural spaces of the earth, to overcome resistance and formlessness.”[16]

In Spengler's view, modern Western man is keyed to time and space: "he lives in becoming, in the striving of infinity." This drive figures in the clock and skyscrapers as well as in the teleology of Western science. Symptoms of the West's transition from Culture to Civilization were plutocracy, democracy, and mechanized impersonal economic relations in an abstracting commercial society [*Gesellschaft*]. "Faustian ideas" also found their reflection in mathematical, philosophical and political conceptions of the modernized West. According to cultural historian Stephen Kern, World War I introduced a new way of perceiving the future. Spengler’s “generation had a strong, confident sense of future, tempered by the concern that things were rushing much too fast.”[17]

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15 Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties*, (New York 1983), p.111. on the dichotomy of “Culture” vs. “Civilization,” also Houston S. Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, (London, 1911), I, 25-36.

16 Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, p. 54.

17 Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, (Cambridge, Mass, 1983),p.107.

In the tradition of the European Right and of "reactionary modernism," Spengler argued that “spirit” that once had vitalized Culture was diluted in the period of Civilization. *Art* was not creative but rather meaningless and stagnant, as fads changed from day to day. He thus discarded the “weak” experimentation of ”modern" art, which, like the Impressionism of Manet, was for the “overdeveloped nerves, but scientific to the last degree.” The decay of art was also evidenced in eclectic architecture of 19th century America, one symbol of the fact that the modern megalopolis existed purely for size and extension.

While condemning modern art, Spengler sided with the forces of technology, ambivalently termed “technics”— a mark of the concluding phase [*untergang*] of one historical cycle. In this analysis the modern Faustians applied technics to nature with a firm resolve to be its master. All this differed from the Classical period. The Classical investigator “contemplated” the wonders of nature and the Arabian alchemist sought them out for magical and subtle means. The Faustian scientist, in contrast, strove to master nature, a change symbolized by men like Roger Bacon, who dreamed of perpetual motion machines in order themselves to be God.[18]

According to Spengler, the Faustian passion had altered the face of the earth. The ambition to break all records and boundaries lead to an orgy of activity. The Faustian discoverer appeared in the Age of Columbus, followed by Copernicus and the telescope, the microscope, the technological corpus of the Baroque. During the Reformation, work and the machine became ethically intertwined,”the machine works and forces the man to co-operate.”[19]

Echoing Brooks Adams, Spengler reasoned that, through “modernization,” money became a separate and distinct sphere of power. The institutions of high finance operated free from machine control. In the era of Culture, all wealth was real-property associated with the "fruitful earth" and connected with powerful nobility. Wealth was thus a byproduct of the owner's position in the society. With the coming of Civilization, the symbol of *money* dominated all aspects of society, penetrating even the historical forms of people's existence.

A battle developed between the "productive" and the "acquisitive" economies, with the victory going to the money power, an example being the American Civil War. Only the coming of “Caesarism” could break the dictatorship of money and its political weapon—democracy. Money is overthrown by blood, Spengler wrote. “And so the drama of the high culture—that wondrous world of deities, arts, thoughts, battles, cities…closes with the pristine facts of the blood eternal…”[20]

The ills of modern culture could be traced to the symbolic power of money, as "any high ideal of life becomes largely a question of money."[21] Intellectual activity in the city-metropolis was a case in point. There, money was "the form of intellectual energy, in which, the political and social, technical and mental, creative power, the craving for a full-sized life

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[18] *The Decline* II, pp.501-502.Spengler in this statement anticipated the late 20th century feminist critique of science. See, for example, Carolyn. Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, (San Francisco, 1990) and Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (Yale univ.press.,1985). A New Left model of Faust is Don Huan Matus, “Matus is white magian, a Faust without ambition for political or sexual conquest [an agent of a new world—described in modern physics— as relatively unknown energy].”— “Carlos Castaneda,” in *Makers of Modern Culture*, ed. Justin White, (New York, 1981).

[19] *The Decline,* II, p.503.

[20] *The Decline,* II, p.507.

[21] *The Decline,* I, pp. 33-35.

are concentrated." The "civilization economy" was an urban economy. The world-economy, the characteristic economy of all civilizations, consisted of a network of the economies of World-cities.

Like theorists from the 17th century English libertarians to Brooks Adams, Spengler contrasted the city against the province. In Spengler's analysis the economic life of Civilization was oriented toward the World-city, in the same manner as was cultural life. With the economic activity of Civilization centered in the World-cities, the provincial economy became utterly dependant upon the city. The destiny of the world was concentrated and decided in the money-markets.[22]

In the mental realm, "intellect" in Civilization replaced the myth, intuition and metaphysics of the Culture stage. The result undermined religion. ["The] soul of every Culture possesses religion, ”Spengler continued," but a Civilization has anti-religion." In the oscillation from Culture to Civilization, intellect extinguishes religious and ethical sentiments

Spengler pictured the contrast in terms of differences between Greece and Rome—between the imaginative and the vital, on the one hand, and the utilitarian, non-metaphysical on the other:

> [The Romans]… Unspiritual, unphilosophical, devoid of art, clannish to the point of brutality, aiming relentlessly at tangible successes, they stood between the Hellenic Culture and nothingness. An imagination directed purely to practical objects …was something which is not found at all in Athens. In a word Greek *soul* – Roman *intellect*; and this antithesis is the difference between Culture and Civilization. [23]

He regarded the Americans as the “Romans” of modern Western civilization, because of their pragmatic quality and technical and industrial proficiency.

Again the World-city was the locus of the problem, since it was there that dry reason was applied to life and concern for material comfort came to dominate society. In the wake of the Faustian drive toward Civilization, Culture-cities such as Florence, Nuremberg, Bruges, Prague, Rome, and Madrid became provincial towns. This development also had social consequences, ["The] World-city belongs not to a *folk* but to a *mass*," Spengler wrote, relating the spiritual decay of the World city to the development of mass society. Mass society showed an "uncomprehending hostility to all the traditions representative of the Culture, nobility, church, privileges, dynasties, convention in art and limits of knowledge in science," he reasoned: "the new-fashioned naturalism, that in relation to all matters of sex and society goes back far beyond Rousseau and Socrates, to the quite primitive instincts and conditions… the reappearance of the *panem et circences* in the form of wage-disputes and football-grounds—all these things betoken the closing down of the Culture…”[24] Mass-culture appealed to uprooted people who inhabit the megalopolis and who are hostile to tradition, forever seeking "pleasure and excitement [and always looking for something] new, different, and entertaining."

Mass culture thus represented the ultimate-form of “Faustianism.” In materialistic megalopolises like New York, the interests of plutocrats and real estate speculators drove their inhabitants into misery. To Spengler this sign of Civilized decadence was already

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22 *The Decline*., II, 484-485. On world-cities, Spengler’s theory of world history, and globalization, Joel Kotkin and Yoriko Kishimoto, *The Third Century, America’s Resurgence in the Asian Era*,(New York, 1990),p.220.

23 *The Decline* I, p. 32.

24 *The Decline* I., p. 33-34.

observable in Rome. In this ancient city "of the Crassus—triumvir and all powerful building-site speculator— the Roman people with its proud inscriptions, the people before whom Gauls, Greeks, Parthians, Syrians afar trembled, lived in appalling misery in the many storied lodging houses of dark suburbs."[25] These megalopolises existed in their most unpleasant forms in 19th century Paris, London, Berlin and New York— all places where “money” had taken over as the "ideal of life."

Politically, Civilization was characterized by a degeneration of leadership from the noble estates to the individual "Caesar." In order for any political idea to be actualized, it must first be translated into "terms of money." Democracy was simply the equating of money with political power. Initially, the idea of democracy was the creation of noble intellectuals who established equal rights for all. Since only those with money were able to exercise their constitutional rights, however, leadership quickly passed from the idealistic intellectuals to the rich bourgeoisie who gained control of the voters by means of the press. Following universal education, the press was able to manipulate the thinking of the voters and marshal a large band of faithful supporters. Thus entered Caresarism.[26]

The movement from democracy to Caesarism in the later stages of Civilization was inexorable. Western man was irreversibly heading toward a universal dictatorship —similar in character to those that would soon materialize in Germany and Russia in the 1930s. Caesarism would bring an age of large standing armies and universal compulsory service. Under Caesarism, there would be calls for the reconciliation of all peoples and peace on earth, but to no avail: “The men of race quality face facts; life lets men choose, if they would be great, only between victory and ruin, never between war and peace.”

In this final era, all institutions of government, however carefully maintained, lack all meaning and personal weight. The real center is the personal power of Caesar. Before the Caesar, the money power collapses. The Imperial Age signifies the end of the “politics of mind and money.” "The powers of the blood, unbroken bodily forces, resume their ancient lordship," Spengler wrote, echoing earlier social Darwinists. “Race springs forth, pure and irresistible—the strongest win and seizes the management of the world. In the realm of ideas, problems petrify or vanish from memory.”[27]

3. Spengler on "American Civilization"

In Weimar Germany “Americanism” became a catchword for modernity, arousing enthusiasm for rationality and efficiency, in some quarters, hostility and *Kulturkritik* in others. [28] With Sigmund Freud, Spengler exhibited a kind of educated “highbrow” German anti-Americanism that lacked understanding of the leading nation of the 20th century. [29]

In Spengler's philosophy of history a "people" were a unit created by the cultural soul. In contrast to Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who maintained that Aryan race was the progenitor of all advancements in civilization, Spengler held that a particular *Kultur* existed

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25 *Ibid*, p.34.

26 *The Decline*, II, 456-64. American philosopher Walter Lippmann came to same conclusions on the power of Press in *The Public Opinion* (1922).

27 *The Decline II*, pp.431-.432. In Spengler’s theory *blood* is not material element, but “a mysterious, nonbiological mark of the elite.”

28 Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic, The Crisis of Classical Modernity*,(London 1993),pp178-179.

29 Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920’s*, (New York, 1995), p.144.

prior to "nations," “races” and "people," which they created. “Race” was a matter of spirit, not exclusively biology. The great events of history were not really achieved by peoples; the events themselves created the peoples.[30]

America was not "exceptional." Americans were merely the new Carthaginians, “out for purely economic advantages.” In America he saw, not boundless new territory, the New World of possibility celebrated by its native authors, but the haven of money and technology, a symbol of bigness and the decadence of Civilization. Despite his popularity in the U.S., he viewed its history as a chapter in Western *Faustian* Civilization.

Puritans vs. the Old South, a Transference to Civilization

In Spengler's analysis, the Faustian upheavals during the American Revolution and the Civil War formed the American soul. The "Americans" did not emigrate from Europe, he insisted; the name of the Florentine geographer Amerigo Vespucci designates to-day not only a continent, but also a people in the true sense of the word, whose specific character was born in the spiritual upheavals of 1775 and, above all of 1861-65.[31]

With Brooks Adams and later Arnold Toynbee, Spengler traced American character to Puritanism. In his view, Puritanism belonged to the Civilization phase of a declining Culture. "Puritanism lacks the smile that had illuminated the religion of the Spring… the movements of profound joy in life," he wrote. As a result of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and events of the English Reformation New World Puritans viewed themselves as *God's elect.*

> The grand Old Testament exaltation of Parliament — and the Camps of Independence which it left behind—in many an English family, even to day, the nineteenth century belief, persists that the English are the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, a nation of saints predestined to govern the world. [These elected] dominated the emigration to America which began with the Pilgrim Fathers of 1620. It formed, that, which may be called the American religion of today. [32]

Puritanism carried Rationalism to America. "In Puritanism there is hidden already the seed of Rationalism, and after few enthusiastic generations have passed, this bursts forth everywhere and makes itself supreme," he observed. Centuries later, Puritanism also shaped the values of the Gilded Age. “The era of progress...mechanized as evolution, development, progress... all these doctrines of Monism, Darwinism, Positivism… are elevated into the fitness-moral, which is the beacon of American business men...”[33]

The great crisis for Victorian America was the Civil War. As the United States underwent a rapid process of modernization, slavery symbolized the conflict between “traditional” and “modern” society. Spengler's evaluation of the *meaning* of American Civil

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30 Spengler though scientifically trained, was not a “cognitive modernist” in the sense that he subscribed to the Victorian Darwinian macrocosmic evolutionary scheme, while the hallmark of “modernist science” was the focus on the microcosmic dimension of genetics— in this case, as the determining factor behind cultural change, Norman Cantor, *The American Century:Varieties of Culture in Modern Times*, (New York, 1997),p.46; On Spengler's failure to take into account genetics, Revilo P.Oliver, *America’s Decline:The Education of a Conservative*, (Illinois, 1983), pp. 193-200. Quoted in http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v17/v17n2p10_Oliver.html

31*The Decline*, II, p.165.

32 *Ibid*, p 305.

33 *Ibid.*, pp.308-309.

War was a significant feature of *The Decline*, anticipating Charles A. Beard's portrait of "the second American Revolution" in *The Rise of the American Civilization* (1927).[34]

Consolidation of the Northern money and the destruction of the Culture of the Old South was, for Spengler, "a way of protest against the ancient symbols of the soil-bound life." In this cataclysmic war, the "city -civilization" of the North overcame “the aristocracy of birth and notion of the South,” and the triumph of a new aristocracy of money and of intellect. The doomed Confederacy fell victim to the incorporated capitalist powers.

In the “Late period” of every Culture, a “second crop “grew from the ancient nobility The Southern planter-aristocracy represented the last remnants (the second crop), from more noble times. As Spengler put it: "in the Southern States of the American Union there grew up, from Baroque times onward, that planter- aristocracy, which was annihilated by the money-powers of the North in the Civil War of 1861-5."[35]

Spengler devoted several passages to the military logistics of the Civil War—a favorite subject of pre- World War I German military theorists. Products of American “modernization,” the Yankee breech loading rifles and machine guns were symbols of the streamlined North. The strategies of the American Civil War likewise expressed the mechanized and rationalized aspects of Civilization. In every culture the technique of war hesitatingly followed the advance of craftsmanship, until at the beginning of the Civilization stage, ”it suddenly took the lead and pressed all mechanical possibilities of the time relentlessly into its service.” Military necessity rendered largely ineffectual the personal heroism of the ethos of the Southern aristocrats of late Culture. Spengler explained:

> … the American Civil War was important The fundamental craving of Civilized mankind for speed, mobility, and mass-effects finally combined, in the world of Europe and America, with the Faustian will to domination over Nature, and produced dynamic methods of war… in this respect the American Civil War marked a important stage for the first time, that railway was used for large troop movement, the telegraph-network for messages, and a steam fleet, keeping the sea for months on end, for blockade, and in which armored ships, the torpedo rifled weapons, and monster artillery of extraordinary range were discovered.[36]

The “peculiar institution” of American slavery, in a curious manner, foreboded the Machine-Age. Spengler argued that the slavery of the American South and Roman slavery were different things. Romans considered slaves as "commodity," exchangeable for *money*, but "sugar and cotton slavery" in the South represented slaves as *energy*. American slavery represented a threshold phase in the development of machine industry. Southern slavery, an organization of "living energy"—“the man–fuel” of the enslaved zombies in the plantation — passed over to “coal- fuel” in modern America. Slavery came to be considered immoral only after coal had established itself over “man-fuel.” Looked at from this angle, the victory of the North in the American Civil War meant the economic victory of the concentrated energy of coal over the simple energy of muscle.[37] The defeat of the South thus symbolized the closing of traditional alternatives in the “final phase” of the Faustian West.

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34 Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, (New York, 1937, revised edition,) pp.114-116. Novick, *That Noble Dream, “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge, 1988), p.235.

35 *The Decline* II, p.356.

36 *The Decline* II, p.421.

37 *The Decline* II, p.488.n.

Spengler's analysis of the Gilded Age—a term soon to be popularized by Charles Beard—followed directly from this analysis. In *The Decline*, the city and the megalopolis served as symbols of 20th century America, ”the center in which the course of a world history ends by winding itself up.”[38] New York in particular symbolized modernity's mass-production and consumption. In the place of people rooted in a particular geographical and spiritual place, the megalopolis created a “mass of tenants and bed occupiers... whose commitment is to nothing beyond themselves.”[39]

Spengler’s opposed Henry Ford's contention that mass-consumption would bring liberation of the "masses."[40] He saw the resulting cultural tensions of urban, technological life as no longer producing a genuine *joie de vivre* and relaxation, but instead a need to seek relief from the tensions of “modern civilization.” American consumer culture and its urban life-style— symbolized in Jazz, Hollywood films and prize-fighting — represented for him an empty form of leisure, devoid of tradition. “[All] this is common to the world-cities of all Civilizations,” he commented,” Theosophy, boxing contests, nigger-dances, poker and racing—one can find it all in Rome.”[41]

Describing American politics, Spengler exhibited clairvoyance on certain issues. On the future of American democracy, for example, he predicted the dominant roles of interest groups, money, and the media in politics along with growing political apathy.[42] The corruptness of the American party-machine marked the United States permanently as part of Civilization. This early occurred in the United States under the “spoils system” of Andrew Jackson," when the National-Whig and Democratic parties organized themselves as opposites, and open recognition was given to the principle, that elections were a business, and state offices from top to bottom the *spoils of the victors*."[43]

Americans were without real political leadership because it was "rather a region, than a state.” For Spengler the parallel powers of President and Congress, which the Founding Fathers derived from Montesquieu, was untenable in the era of global world-politics. In times of “real danger” the American government would collapse into a formless might, “such as those with which Mexico and South America have long been familiar."[44]

Historians have differed regarding Spengler's view of the United States. Writing in the1950s, H. Stuart Hughes observed that "Spengler [in the *Decline of the West*] was unimpressed with the United States as a nation. Indeed in his sense of the term, it was not yet a nation at all. During his lifetime he would not have supported any American claim to world leadership."[45] In contrast, University of Virginia historian John Farrenkopf more recently has argued that during the Versailles peace conference, Spengler probably changed his mind regarding the role of the United States in world politics. Writing at the end of the war, Spengler pondered whether Western civilization would conform to the organization of what he termed the “Anglo-American model— the international order, as economy, a global *trust*,

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38 *The Decline*, II, p.98.

39*The Decline*,II, p.100; on megalopolis, C.W.E. Bigsby, *Superculture, American Popular Culture and Europe*,(Ohio,1975), p.8.

40 Henry Ford, “Why I Believe in Progress,” The *Forum*, (November, 1928), pp.682-89.

41 *The Decline*, II, p.103.

42 Farrenkopf, *The Prophet*, p.58.

43 *The Decline*, II, p. 451.

44 *The Decline*, II, p. 416.

45 Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*, p 151.

based on money," or to the: "Prussian-socialist world-hierarchical system, which would develop into an organic world-hierarchy."

Farrenkopf further maintained that Spengler even before the Versailles conference speculated that the United States might attain global primacy within the Faustian West. This idea, Farrenkopf wrote, was evident in Spengler's claim in *The Decline of the West* that "the rise of New York to the position of World-city during the Civil War of 1861-65 may perhaps prove to have been the most pregnant events of the nineteenth century."[46]

Whatever Spengler's speculations, however, he not only expressed many negative opinions of the United States, but pictured Woodrow Wilson as a moralist fool. "In the decisions of high politics, he is ever deceived and made a tool of, as the case of Wilson shows, especially when the absence of statesman like-instinct leaves a chair vacant for moral sentiments."[47]

If American intellectuals and the reading public were to embrace *The Decline of the West*—as they did— it would not be because its author celebrated their country. Rather, he focused on the negative traits of the civilization: unsmiling Puritans, the money power, modern military "technics" and corrupted politics run by the corrupted press-tycoons. The Old South was the only part of America with which he unequivocally sympathized.

4. "The Decline of the West" in Europe

Well before its translation into English, *The Decline of the West* was on its way to being one of the best-known books of the 20th century. The year 1919, wrote historian H. Stuart Hughes, "was the Spengler year…Never had a dense philosophical work had such a success…within eight years after the original publication, total sales had reached a hundred thousand. Spengler, like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche before him had become the philosopher of the hour."[48] But it was also one of the most controversial 20th century classics, a controversy, John Farrenkopf has noted, that will "endure as long as the question of the fate of our civilization preoccupies mankind." [49]

The social context of the post-war era gave Spengler enormous relevance. The appearance of *The Decline* accidentally coincided with Germany's loss of the war and seemed to provide German readers with a rationalization for the defeat. It appealed to Germans, humiliated by defeat and wrecked by revolution, who could now deduce from *The Decline of the West*, that a similar fate awaited the arrogant victors, including America. For this reason it had a particularly large mass appeal as reflected in the sale of hundred thousand, after eight years of the original publication.[50]

The German scholarly world, however, was less than impressed. The work encountered a barrage of hostile scholarly criticism, especially among professional historians and archaeologists. Two exceptions were the distinguished ancient historian Edouard Meyer, who rose to defend Spengler; and the illustrious cultural historian Egon Fridell, who called

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46 John Farrenkopf, "The Challenge of Spenglerian Pessimism to Ranke and Political Realism," *Review of International Studies*, 17, 1991, p.277.

47 *The Decline*, II, pp. 474-475.

48 On Spengler controversy in Europe: Hughes, *Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate*, (New York 1952), p.89, ch.6, passim; Manfred Scröter, *Streit um Spengler: Kritik seiner Kritiker* (München, 1922).

49 Farrenkopf, *The Prophet*, p.100.

50 Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*, p.89; Spengler's influence on the *zeitgeist* of the post-war generation, Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, (London, 1978), p.41.

Spengler “perhaps the most powerful and vivid thinker to appear on German soil since Nietzsche.”[51]

The academic community employed its heaviest artillery against both Spengler's "schematic" and "obscure" view of world-history and his scholarship. What especially aroused the ire of historians was his cyclical theory of history, since it rejected the traditional scientific understanding of historical objectivity.[52] In addition to being in severe economic straits, Weimar Germany faced a cultural crisis of which historicism was an important dimension since, cognitively, it touched deeper issues of ethical relativism. According to Peter Novick, World War I had a cataclysmic impact on German thought since it shattered faith in "the victory of reason, [while at the same time it] described history as pure myth building, not science (*Wissenschaft*) but will (*Willenschaft*).” [53]

Yet scholarly criticism also revealed the probable reasons for Spengler's mass appeal. The scholars failed, according to Hughes, because they had attacked him mostly on narrow and pedantic grounds, on the one hand, or from the standpoint of a "healthy optimism" on the other. This left the field wide open for Spengler to counter-attack with the "full force of his highly-charged rhetoric." [54]

The literary qualities of *The Decline* appealed to the reading audience much more than "professional" history. In contrast to the "dry" style of the professional historians, Spengler sprinkled his narrative with poetic terms and a "hard" Nietzschean style, an ominous forecast of the rhetoric that would later bring Hitler to power. According to Farrenkopf, “Spengler’s denial of absolute truths and eternal values lent support to harsh *realpolitik*. Prizing realism and success, Spengler scorned idealistic commitments to moral absolutes, especially in the field of foreign policy.” [55]

Spengler’s morphological synchronicity and metaphysical determinism (the comparison of different civilizations in different phases of their lifecycles) was both poetry and history. In the terminology of Hayden White’s semantic metahistory of the 19th century, Spengler could be also categorized—although White does not mention Spengler—, as describing the eternal, vertical, *paradigmatic or synchronic* timeless “structures” of world-history, in contrast to the logical, horizontal *diachronic* narrative of the objectivist historians.[56] In Jazz Age America, these qualities would prove to be both strengths and liabilities.

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51 Friedell quoted in, B.G. Brander, *Staring Into Chaos: Explorations In The Decline Of Western Civilization,* (Texas, 1994), p.92. Eduard Meyer, *Spenglers Untergang des Abendlandes*,(Berlin 1925), Meyer, quoted in Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*,p.94.

52 The most helpful in the Anglo-Saxon discourse are: R.G.Collingwood, “Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles,”*Antiquity; a Quarterly Review of Archeology,* September 1927, pp.311-325; Pitirim A Sorokin, *Social Philosophies of an Age of Crisis*,(Boston,1951),chapters, 4 & 12.

53 Novick, *That Noble,* p. 157.

54 Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*, pp.91, 93.

55 John Farrenkopf, *The Prophet of Decline, Spengler on World History and Politics*, p.81.

56 Hayden White, *Metahistory,* (Baltimore, 1973), passim.

CH.5.SPENGLER IN AMERICA: THE 1920S

1. Spengler Comes to America

Despite Spengler's skepticism regarding reason and progress, his attack on democracy, and his challenge to the still-powerful "scientism" of American progressives, *The Decline of the West* became an overnight sensation in 1920s America. Altogether, the English translation of *The Decline* sold about 21,000 — a large number considering its nature and its cost ($12, for the two volumes). With its catchy title, it became required reading for any serious student of the era. Hundreds of thousands who had no intention of trying to read it still knew something about it.[1]

Commenting on this success Spengler's "successor," Arnold Toynbee, wrote in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 1926, "It demonstrated that when an important and difficult new work is published in one of Western languages, it does not at once become the property of the entire Western Community, it is at first tested elsewhere."[2] In 1940, the editor of a volume of selections from *The Decline* wrote that the book had its second birth in the English-speaking world.[3]

The man who publicized Spengler in America was the prestigious New York publisher Alfred A. Knopf, a major promoter of modern German writers including Thomas Mann. Knopf published the first volume of *The Decline* in 1926 as *Form and Actuality*, with Charles Francis Atkinson's faithful and scholarly translation; and a second volume as *Perspectives of World-History*, two years later. Knopf was also a collector and connoisseur of fine arts, an interest that brought him a closer relationship with Spengler than most others enjoyed.

Although Knopf visited Germany as early as 1921, he did not meet Spengler until the summer of 1926. Visiting the author again in 1927, 1929, and 1932, he carefully negotiated the details of the publishing and translation of Spengler's works in the United States.[4] Following the publication of the first volume in English in 1926, Knopf brought out the second volume of *The Decline* in 1928.

By this time Spengler was already a celebrity. In November 1926 Spengler's friend August Albers wrote to say that the sale of the America was going well. On January 18, 1927, *The New York Times* contacted Herman Scheffaur to ask Spengler for an article dealing with the decline of the United States in 2800 words for which they would pay one hundred dollars, which Spengler apparently refused.

Spengler's later works also found buyers in the United States. *Man and Technics* appeared by July 1931, *The Hour of Decision*, by August, 1933. According to publisher Beck, *The Hour of Decision* exceeded the sales of *The Decline* by November, 1933. A letter from Hans Luther to Spengler from the German Embassy in Washington D.C., April 1934,

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1 Hughes, *Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate*,(New York, 1952),pp.96-97.

2 Arnold Toynbee, "Review of The Decline II," *The Times Lit. Sup*. December. 23.1926, p.942.

3 Edwin Dakin, ed., *Today and Destiny: Vital Excerpts from the Decline*, (New York, 1940), "Biographical Notice,"pp.353-64;
Neil McInnes, "The Great Doomsayer, Oswald Spengler Reconsidered" *The National Interest*,June1,1997, www,
http://www.britannica.co…magazine/article/0,5744,236741,00.html.

4 Edwin Dakin,"Biographical,"pp.353-64.

said that Spengler's work was attracting attention in the United States to an ever-increasing extent.[5] But by this time, American public opinion was already souring on the man and his work.

2. A Changing *Zeitgeist*

One reason for the success of *The Decline* lay in changes in the American *zeitgeist* The pre-war years had seen a growing interest in irrationalism following the publication of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* 1900 and of Einstein's general theory of relativity 1905. Spengler belonged with Nietzsche, Freud, and Pareto to a group of skeptics who doubted the power of reason to control man's actions and of his capacity for moral and political progress. Before the First World War those ideas lived in a world far removed from the optimism of the popular writers of the West, who underlined the inevitability of progress in the West.[6] But the probing of these European intellectual currents quickened during the war and the 1920s.

For American modernists and disillusioned progressives nothing seemed plainer than the dependence of great systems of faith and reason on hidden motives and irrational fetishes and prejudices. [7]In *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (1932), his widely- read critique of the Enlightenment, Cornell historian Carl L. Becker spoke of "magic words" through which a historical age concealed its guiding assumptions. Even the so-called Age of Reason had been saturated with unexamined prejudices; history in general was not characterized by intellectual process, but by a succession of "climates of opinion."[8]

A significant segment of the educated American public, as Christopher Lasch and others have noted, was already in rebellion against American materialism in the prewar years. By 1920 a "Lost Generation" of writers was complaining of the artificiality of American "middlebrow" culture. Artists and literary critics, such as Edmund Wilson, Van Wyck Brooks and Sinclair Lewis, proclaimed their disenchantment with American culture. According to these critics, American civilization was too much dominated by materialism and the machines of industrial capitalism.

The critics also questioned American preoccupation with practical utility and the conquest of nature. The Great War demonstrated the destructive uses of technology. The Pragmatists came under attack for their unquestioning faith in intelligence and in technique, despite the mounting evidence of human behavioral irrationality.

For progressive-liberals the collapse of progressive reform and the rise of religious Fundamentalism was a double blow since it challenged their faith in a better future and in evolution. The "post-traumatic-stress" caused by the war made American critics responsive to Spengler's pessimism, just as they were to Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents.* Whereas

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5*Letters of Oswald Spengler, 1913-1936*, ed. Arthur Helps, (New York, Knopf, 1966), p.297.
6 H. Stuart Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*, p.16.
7 Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty, Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920's*, (New York, 1995),pp.3-28.
8 Burleigh T. Wilkins, *Carl Becker: A Biographical Study in American Intellectual History*, (Cambridge, Mass.,1961), ch. 8; pp., 178-81; Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers*,(1932, New Haven), passim.

Brooks Adams, now a forgotten figure, had aimed his message at a small circle of the WASP elite, disillusion and despair now found a larger audience. [9]

Summing up this critique, literary critic Joseph Wood Krutch in his best-selling book *The Modern Temper* (1929) maintained that modern man lived in the twentieth century in an anguished state of disharmony and isolation; art, religion, and philosophy were the charming illusions of mankind's childhood, forever lost. In Krutch's compilation of the 1920s cultural criticism, many artists and literary critics proclaimed their disenchantment with politics and decided to concentrate on cultural matters. Particularly appealing to the cultural critics of the 1920's was the idea that Victorian values had lingered on into the modern world, freezing America in attitudes totally inadequate to 20th century conditions.[10]

The Mass Society Debate

Related to these changes was the debate over "mass society," which as cultural historian Warren Susman observed, centered "often consciously, around the concept of *civilization*, as had the birth of the Republic."[11] Spengler railed against the vulgarity or "leveling" of taste and opinion resulting from the supposed "enfranchisement of the *masses"* through the expansion of public education, mass communication, and popular culture.

The great fear was that an industrial and democratic mass-society could not maintain a significant level of true culture. Critics wondered whether "modern civilization" would become lifeless like the Greek and Egyptian cultures before it? In 1926 classical historian M.I. Rostovtzeff asked "is it possible to extend a higher civilization to the lower classes without debasing its standard and diluting its quality to the vanishing point? Is not every civilization bound to decay as soon as it begins to penetrate the masses?"[12]Commenting on his contemporaries two years later, Charles Beard wrote, "[the intellectuals] are trying to peer into the coming day, to discover whether the curve of the contemporary civilization now rises majestically toward a distant zenith or in reality has already begun to sink rapidly towards a nadir near at hand."[13]

In a symposium titled *Civilization in the United States* (1922) edited by Harold Stearns, leading intellectuals provided an exhaustive analysis of American civilization. The title was deliberately ironic since the participants concluded that America, in fact, had no civilization worth mentioning. What followed was a debate centering on the concept of "civilization." Contrary to the Spengler's German use, the American progressive definition of "civilization" was synonymous with advance and progress. Many Americans saw America as "non-civilization" or even "anti-civilization." The critics of mass-culture explained that popular culture and advertising were taking over in modern world and "individual" and "elite" culture was in decline. [14]

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9 Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, (London, 1983), p.106; Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*,pp.144-146.

10 Stow Persons, *American Minds: A History of Ideas*, (New York, 1958), pp.342-342.

11 Warren Susman, *Culture as History : the Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*, (New York, 1984), p.121.

12 Rostovzeff quoted in, Susman, *Culture as History*, p. 186.

13 Charles Beard ed., *Whither Mankind: A Panorama of Modern Civilization*, "Introduction," (New York, 1928), pp.1-3.

14 C.W.E. Bigsby, *Superculture, American Popular Culture and Europe* ,(Ohio, 1975), pp.6-7.

The New History

Changes in American historiography also prepared the ground for Spengler's reception. In the prewar years a New History movement was launched at Columbia University, inspired in part by Karl Lamprecht's *Kulturgeschichte*. Its main theoretician was James Harvey Robinson but the group also included James Shotwell, Charles Beard, and Lynn Thorndike. The New History tried to give answers to problems ravaging “modern civilization." It substituted the old fashioned history of “battles and kings" with explanations focused on “modern politics and industrial life."

The New Historians had firm faith in the progressive agenda of social engineering and social justice. Leader of the group James Harvey Robinson declared that the intellectual historian's task was to point out anachronisms in modern thinking —"to clear away ancestral rubbish, to explain the circumstances that had given rise to inherited shibboleths." This cleansing had to be accomplished in order to bring men's conceptions “in line with current intellectual and economic system, and its needs.”[15]

World War I posed also a fundamental challenge to the notion of the disinterested writing of history. As America fought the war under liberal auspices and with liberal rhetoric, wartime propaganda showed how little distinction existed between the tendentious, super-patriotic, and propagandistic historical writing of the amateurs, and the austere detachment of the professional historians. Regarding the possibility of war, historians had been often wrong and naïve. In their textbook *The Development of Modern Europe* (2 vols. 1907), Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson themselves had concluded optimistically that war was increasingly unlikely in Europe. Robinson concluded that historians despite their erudition were not wiser than anybody else because during the World War I, they had applauded the battle cries and accepted false propaganda.[16]

During the war many historians lost the faith in progress that was an important element in defining "objectivity" in history. Reflecting the somber mood after Versailles, Beard and Robinson referred to the conflict pessimistically as the "First" World War. For liberal historians the dissatisfaction was all the greater because it was "their man Woodrow Wilson”—with a Ph.D. under the celebrated historian Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins —who occupied the White House. The fact that the liberal hero had failed the progressives at Versailles prepared the way for relativist understanding of world-history. [17]

Spengler's version of U.S. history echoed themes already or soon-to-be familiar. Thanks to essayist Randolph Bourne and iconoclastic journalist H.L. Mencken among others, his image of the dour Puritan had already made its way into popular discourse. Charles Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913) provided a case study of Spengler's contention that leadership in later stages of a civilization passed from idealistic intellectuals to the rich bourgeoisie who gained control of the voters by means of the press. Spengler's sympathetic picture of the Old South found support in the poetry of The Fugitives and in *I'll Take my Stand* (1929), a manifesto of the Southern Agrarians.

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15 World War I and the uses of the higher learning in America, see: Carol S. Gruber, *Mars and Minerva*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975); also,
Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge, 1988), p.94.
16 Novick, *That Noble*, pp.111-114.
17Novick, *That Noble*, pp. 129-131.

Promoting The Decline

Changes in the structure and practices of American publishing also worked in Spengler's favor. One was a vigorous campaign to popularize books dealing with major themes. In response to fears of mass culture, "outlines" of history and science and stories of philosophy filled the best-seller lists.[18] The fight to save American Culture produced a social compulsion to read all the right books. For the "literally and socially chic," A *Book of the Month Club* was organized in 1926— later the basis for the popular success of Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* in 1947. *The Decline* was a major beneficiary of this new interest. Dwight MacDonald, editor of *Fortune* and *The New Republic* during 1920s and 1930s, remembered that, in the 1920s "*The Decline of the West* seemed to be on every 'serious person's' table along with the latest issue of Mencken's *American Mercury*."[19]

Knopf was also a skillful promoter. He advertised *The Decline of the West* under the title “The History of the Future,” most certainly to catch the attention of future-anxious readers. Spengler also had the good fortune to attract as reviewers some of the most prominent intellectuals, whether by accident or the design of his publisher. Among them were historians James T. Shotwell and Charles Beard; cultural critic Lewis Mumford; and philosophers John Dewey and George Santayana.

Knopf’'s title: “The History of the Future" implicitly compared Spengler’s work to H.G.Wells’ highly-popular *The Outline of History* (1919). Wells' book competed with Spengler’s work as a "rival- narrative" of the Western future. Wells’s depicted world-history as “modernization" through the development of science, universal righteousness, and a humanitarian commonwealth. Like Spengler, Wells analyzed history in a global context, rather than within the limits of Western European history. Wells explained that the purpose of his study was to create a common consensus about progress among “world citizens.” The famous British writer maintained that there could be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas.[20] This liberalism gained Wells' book more general popularity in the Anglo-Saxon world than Spengler’s “high brow," conservative, and sophisticated study ever could.

3. Spengler and the New York Press

Acknowledging Spengler’s statement that “the rise of the New York may be one of the most pregnant events of the nineteenth century," the New York press lavished special attention on *The Decline*, and, on balance, contributed to its popularity .[21] Perhaps because of its location in a modern Carthage or Rome, or the fact that the press featured critics of literary (and hence anti-modern) sensibility, there was an astonishing acceptance of Spengler's negative picture of Civilization.

New York quality newspapers, self-proclaimed embodiments of sophistication, greeted *The Decline of the West* with large headlines and a picture of German philosopher's bald, Prussian head looking gloomily at the reader —regarding Spengler as a trendsetter for the Jazz Age—a sort of “John Naishbitt of the 1920s."

A typical headline asked: "Is Our Civilization Doomed?” and “Spengler—An Historical Copernicus?" *The New York Post* “Literary Section" proclaimed : "No Chance of Survival—

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18 Susman, *Culture as History*, pp. 107-108.

19 Dwight Macdonald, "A Somber Vision of Doom," *The New York Times*, March 9,1952, “Book Section,” p.15.

20 John Barker, *The Superhistorians: Makers of Our Past*, (New York, 1982), p.319.

21 Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p.4.; Bigsby, *Superculture*, pp.11-12.

says Spengler, Who Proves his Case by Analogy in the Sea of Facts that Spengler has Prodigiously Put Together." This same critic warned his readers, “courage will certainly be found necessary not only to read the book but to accept its conclusions." He also agreed with Spengler’s thesis that Civilization was the petrifaction of all living forces, “because inevitable progression and decline of Civilization... is a process begun in the very germ in things.”[22]

In James Gordon Bennett’s *New York Herald Tribune*, Professor Stringfellow Barr of the University of Virginia wondered if Spengler actually was "an historical Copernicus?" "The American public has been taught for near on a year now to wait breathlessly a final statement of, how and why our Occidental civilization is tottering to its ruin," he continued. Spengler’s Cultural Relativism made it “a necessity [for Americans] to accustom themselves to the notion that our culture is but one of many and that like others, it had a youth, a maturity and must have an old age (now upon us), and a death."

Barr praised Spengler's intuition and criticized the social sciences for modeling themselves on the natural sciences. However, he saw, as would many of his successors in the 1930s, that Spengler's Western culture too closely resembled German culture: "[Spengler] would be more right if [he substituted] the word Prussian for Faustian and Western. [By this operation] his book would gain in profundity.”[23]

The liberal *New York World*’s reviewer claimed that, “when *Spenglerism* is waving now through Europe, scholars are rushing to their defenses." He argued that Spengler had composed a *cultural fugue*, "...with the assurance of an incarnate Plato, making an exercise in counterpoint of the music of the spheres." By composing a new version of world-history, “the Great German had spread intellectual birthrights for *Spenglerism*." In conclusion Gilbert asked ominously if ”the material West, drunken with power, steeped in all-pervading materialism — can we produce another Beethoven?" Recapitulating pessimistically, he added: "Spengler with his orgy of aesthetic perceptions registers our destiny, and points our doom...Say him nay if you are a better man!"[24]

An early reviewer, *The New York Times*, Eugene Bagger, commented on Spengler’s “obvious inaccuracies and forced parallels," but added, that “*The Decline* was probably the most brilliant synthesis of historical philosophy ever undertaken.”[25] In a second review in the same paper in 1926, William MacDonald concentrated in detail on Spengler's concept of Civilization. After examining the notion, he concluded poetically,

> Civilization is mankind become old, and its destiny is to linger for a brief time and then cease to be. We have become civilized, and for that reason we must die...What Spengler offers us is a new and provocative philosophy of history, as important for the scientist, the moralist, or the man in the streets, as it is for the historians.[26]

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22 John Cournos, "Is Our Civilization Doomed?" *The New York Post Literary Review*, May 29, 1926, pp. 1-2.

23 F. Stringfellow Barr, "An Historical Copernicus?" *The New York Herald Tribune Books*, May 2, 1926, pp.1-2.

24 Douglas Gilbert, “Oswald Spengler's Decline of the West Attempts Diagnosis of Civilization," *The New York World Books*, May 2, 1926, p.6.

25 Eugene S.Bagger, ”Science Man’s Destroyer," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1924, IV, 1.

26 William MacDonald, "Doom of Western Civilization," *The New York Times Book Review*, May 2, 1926, pp. 1-2.

The reviewer in every respect agreed with Spengler's world-historical declaration that Western man had forgotten "world-history in its totality [while] the only history worth talking about, is *world-history*." According to the critic Western culture on this point displayed its fundamental limitation. Cultural Relativism was true, "There are more cultures than our own [while]… the problem of the decline of the West was the problem of Civilization."

Doubting Spengler's method of intuitive analogy, MacDonald opinioned that *The Decline's* cultural morphology "proved too much" —Spengler found in history what he wished to find. But he thought Spengler's main point was valid: "The larger part of what has passed for progress in the historical epochs of which we know most turns out to be …under Spengler's withering scrutiny only progress toward decay."

MacDonald's final poetic summation echoed Spengler's own style, expressing the feeling that Western civilization was on the verge of a sad destiny:

> The destiny of Civilization is destruction, and there is no power in mankind to stay the event. We are the victims of inexorable fate...the Civilization that is passing may not be followed by another Culture, whether the clouded setting of the Western sun may not reveal a rising star in the East to which later ages may look with hope, are questions which Spengler does not answer. We have taken ship, we have made the voyage, we are coming to shore; before long we must step out, for destiny commands.[27]

Again in the *New York Times of December* 1928 MacDonald continued his analysis, offering a further exposition of Spengler's cultural relativism and concentrating on the role of the *city* as the most conspicuous sign of Western decay. He explained: "Spengler's survey of the history and the great world religions pointed out their relation to the decline of the West... which the predominance of city-life, clearly foretell."[28] Like Spengler he was deeply concerned about the advent of the mass-culture in the Western cities. Agreeing with Spengler he asserted that the predominance of the city destroyed all sense of intrinsic values of things, since in the West all values are reckoned in terms of money. Spengler's account of the decadent metropolitan lifestyle also rang true. "Cinema, expressionism, theosophy, boxing contests, nigger-dances, poker and racing-one can find all in Rome...life in a World-city is incapable of genuine pleasure, or joy in living, but finds its relief from strain only in relaxation or distraction."

MacDonald finally agreed with Spengler's world historical theory whole-heartedly, "World history is city history. With the appearance of the World-city: London, Paris, New York, we arrive at the center in which the courses of a world- history ends by winding itself up." Civilization brought "the extinction of nobility, not as physical stock, but as a living tradition." "Spengler's warnings were to be taken seriously," he concluded,"No summary could do justice to the brilliantly written chapters of *The Decline of the West*, which were replete with learning and insight."[29]

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27 *Ibid*.

28 William MacDonald, "Oswald Spengler Concludes His Philosophy of History :He sees Democracy Doomed to Extinction at the Hands of the Press, Money and Caesarism," *The New York Times Book Review*, December 2, 1928, pp.3, 30.

29 *Ibid*.

4. The Prussian Connection: A Threat Avoided

Although changes in the z*eitgeist* and in modern publishing paved the way for a favorable if ambivalent reaction, a changed perception of German thought threatened Spengler's reputation. From the 1870s through the turn of the century, many leading American historians and social scientists received their training in Germany. But admiration for German science did not translate into support of a rising German militarism, especially after the outbreak of war. "Nor had historians' German experience necessarily led to sympathy for the Hohenzollern regime," historian Peter Novick has noted. "Many students' enthusiasm for *Wissenschaft* had been balanced by repugnance for *Militarismus.* By the early years of the 20th century the increasingly strident nationalism of German historical scholarship had offended many of its former admirers.[30]

During the war, American historians struggled between attachment to Germany and a perennial American Anglophilia. By 1915 many American academics were appalled by the German philosophers' and historians' support for the "Kaiser's war," especially since they had played so large a part in building Germany's pioneering “welfare state." With the American declaration of war on Germany 1917, doubts about the righteousness of the Allied cause all but disappeared among most American intellectuals, including historians.

Prussianism was widely viewed as the primary intellectual menace for liberal America. The fear was less of Germany’s capacity for world conquest than of the side-effects of the regimentation that would be necessary to prevent the German world conquest. To American liberals, the “all out war" would mean the “Prussianization of America" and the creation of a garrison state. For Woodrow Wilson the German threat was not so much from the nation, as from the autocratic system.[31]

Of all the German philosophers, Nietzsche, "with his Kaiser Wilhelm moustaches," and with his ideas of *Will to Power* and *Superman*, was considered most responsible for German militarism and aggression. By 1914 the view of Nietzsche as an immoral and dangerous "social Darwinist" was already established in the mind of progressive intellectuals. In the United States World War I was often called the "Euro-Nietzschean War," as Americans equated Nietzscheanism with German action in the battlefield.[32] For some American intellectuals the German Empire was Nietzsche's superman raised to the level of national politics: the German war-effort was for “world domination and teaching of Nietzschean amorality." The association of Spengler with Nietzsche in the popular mind would inevitably hurt his reputation. [33]

Aware of this liability, Spengler's defenders in the 1920s launched a counter-attack, taking advantage of the fact that Spengler had been exempted from military service because of his heart condition and observed the war in relative obscurity while writing *The Decline.* In a 1926 advertisement in the *New York Times* Alfred Knopf declared that “at the height of German Empire Spengler had been the *only* voice dissenting from the consensus regarding

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30 Novick, *That Noble*, p. 113.

31 Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century*, (Chicago 1994), p.53.

32 Bryan Strong, "Images of Nietzsche in America 1900-1970," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 1971, no.4, 1971,pp.581-583;George Santayana, *Egotism in German Philosophy*, (New York, 1914), ch. XI; Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth*, (Philadelphia, 1979), pp.201-211.

33 J.F. Johnston, “Decadence Revisited," *The Modern Age* 1990. 1, p.24.

the supremacy of German culture."[34] —a statement that, strictly speaking, was untrue since Spengler had written his book (originally titled *Conservative and Liberal*) as warning of German pre-war encirclement and over-optimism in military affairs. During the war he anticipated the victory of German arms and further held German culture supreme.[35]

During the 1920s war-quilt debate, Spengler emerged more or less unscathed. He was nominated with the other German "pacifist" Erich Maria Remarque (author of the *All Quiet in the Western Front*) to the "high-brow" *Vanity Fair* magazine's *American Hall of Fame*. Spengler was honored, the magazine declared, "because he is a distinguished German philosopher and economist with an international viewpoint; because his stupendous two-volume work *The Decline of the West*, is one of the most influential books of modern times…because the second volume…completes the thesis, which astounded the literary and diplomatic world in the first." [36]

In the same vein, Thomas Masaryk, the president of Czechoslovakia, writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 1925, considered the war-guilt-question and found that Prussian Pan-Germanism and the German universities were to be blamed, because— as Masaryk claimed—"they had become the spiritual barracks of philosophical absolutism." To the Czech these institutions were responsible for World War I. But, Masaryk added, after the war Spengler had been an "antidote" to German chauvinism "because he talks also about the decline of Germans."[37]

The New World also viewed Spengler as a healthy counter-force to the Euro-centric world-view. Argentinean professor F. Carcia Calderon interpreted the success of Spengler's *The Decline of the West* as evidence of the declining global influence of the Old World in the force- field of the "balance of power." According to Calderon, this was "positive in regard to the situation of the United States and the Latin America in the future world politics."[38]

Thanks to these and a similar effort, Spengler was regarded as anti-German and anti - European philosopher from 1919 to 1931. Although perceived in some quarters as a "Prussian philosopher," he was particularly well treated in America, despite the reaction against Germans and German thought. Many American intellectuals, disturbed by 20th century developments, took *The Decline of the West* as a benchmark.

5. The Critical and Scholarly Response

Spengler's work was immediately involved in an ongoing debate regarding the value of "fact" and "speculation" in history. Many critics, even when ultimately sympathetic, argued that Spengler erred in his facts. Although conservative philosopher George Santayana claimed that Spengler's book was an important call to debate, he warned that Spengler's analogies were "indefensible." His two volumes were "swollen with alleged facts,

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34 "A History of the Future, the Decline of the West," *The New York Times Book Review*, May 2, 1926, [Knopf Advertisement].

35 Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*, pp. 6-7.

36 *Vanity Fair*, August, 1929, p.65.

37 Thomas G. Masaryk, "Reflections on the Question of War Quilt," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1925, pp.535-540.

38 F. Garcia Calderon "Latin America, Europe and the United States," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1929, p.193.

unsubstantial enough in themselves. According to Santayana, “one simply could generalize in history as in nature.”[39]

Others added that Spengler forced the facts to fit his theory. Critic Franklin Fabian maintained that once Spengler had generalized his theories into a concrete system, it was hard to fit in all the facts. It was also easier to catch Spengler on a point of fact than to alter his outline of perspectives, although he conceded that “despite his facts Spengler could not be ignored.”[40]

These skeptical critics charged that Spengler’s work contained more myth than fact. Spengler's myths were not to be confused with history. He was a “poet" and “metaphysician." Even if Spengler were a leading professor in each of the branches of learning which he deflowers so sweepingly,” Santayana noted, we might suspect that there was more fancy than fact in his science.”[41]

Other scholars rushed to criticize sections related to their special fields. Novelist Edith Wharton wrote to Spengler, mocking him for his ignorance of Baroque art. The German replied by citing the sources of his information, among which was an encyclopedia article. Mrs. Wharton replied that she had written the article, and admitted that this time she was wrong.[42]

Still others argued that Spengler’s romantic viewpoint led to distortions of history. Spengler, they claimed, was in love with Winter and decaying Civilization and had a romantic fascination with decline. The Greenwich Village modernist writer, critic, and champion of Walt Whitman, Waldo Frank, accused Spengler of bending the art and mathematics of the Greeks, the religion of the Jews and Arabs, the cultures of the Egyptians, Indians and Chinese to his own purpose—all to prove Civilization meant Winter in the West. According to Frank, ”he has warped history, maimed philosophy, chain-ganged science, perverted art. "Spengler’s book was thus “poor history and worse anthropology.”[43]

Further, according to Frank, Spengler’s organic view placed each Culture in a vacuum. Cultures were described as evolving their destiny out of themselves alone, “without rational struggle, drama, reaction, interference.” Spengler also described civilizations as having the nature of biological organisms—having youth, maturity, and old age. But, according to Frank, no living organism known to man exits in isolation. Rather they arise from other organisms like them. Thus, the cultural organisms of Spengler are mere synthetic constructions of the author, they do not exist. In conclusion, however, Frank acknowledged that it is metaphorically valid to view cultures as organic, within their rise and fall.” [44]

Lewis Mumford, although sympathetic to Spengler, wrote that he was mistaken in maintaining that one Culture is incapable of receiving the contributions and ideas of other Cultures, or even understanding of them. This theory, according to Mumford, exhibited the

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39 George Santayana, “Spengler," *New Adelphi*, II (1929), 211,[quoted in Hugh Larrimore Trigg, *The Impact of Pessimist: The Reception of Oswald Spengler in America, 1919-1939*, (unpublished dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1968), p.110.]

40 Franklin Fabian, “Spengler’s Fascist Manifesto," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, (February 17, 1934), p. 490.

41 George Santayana, “Spengler, "*New Adelphi*, II, (1929), p. 211.

42 Edwin Dakin, *Today and Destiny*,p.356.

43 Waldo Frank, “Reflections of Spengler," *Menorah Journal*, XII, (December,, 1926), pp. 594-95. [Quoted in Trigg, *The Impact*,.p.116.]

44 *Ibid*.

self-imposed isolation of the Germans, "which the Germans have interpreted as world hostility toward them and at the same time their own superiority."[45]

Debates over politics and art also colored the criticism. One early critic pointed out that Spengler did not believe in social control or any progressive idea, but rather Culture for Culture's sake. Spengler, in his admiration of pure "Gothic form," came close to adoring a cultural ideal apart from its use to humans. He seemed to think that a flourishing Culture alone was the aim of human existence. Harry Elmer Barnes later summarized the American critics opinion: man was the means not the end. Spengler's analogies between individual organism and the social group were unverifiable and very misleading.[46] Writer and critic William Harlan Hale faulted Spengler's willful omission of modernist artistic geniuses. Why did Spengler allege that there had been no architecture in the last hundred years? Because his theory would not allow it. He thus failed to appreciate Walter Gropius, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright among others.[47]

Spengler, another critic charged, was equally blind to the genius of modern science. Has all of our energy left us? he asked. Are Gauss and Einstein to be put down as contemporaries of Euclid and Archimedes in the "winter of Culture"? Is the emergence of quantum theory, the doctrine of relativity, mutations in biology, and a new psychology an indicator of decay? In describing scientific progress as decline, Spengler was truly out of his mind. [48]

A few defended his use of myth. When Nietzsche's early book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, first appeared, German classical philologist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, proclaimed that the work did not exist for science. Some American critics likewise held the same opinion concerning the "facts" in *The Decline of the West*, judging it a significant contribution to philosophy and cultural criticism.

Writing in *The American Historical Review* professor Earl E.Sperry praised Spengler's teleological predictions, contrasting his work favorably with objectivist, monographic history,

> Others besides myself, in witnessing the huge volume of historical writing, have doubtless asked wither it all led, what the goal might be. A consoling thought has always been that one day a giant mind would arise endowed with power to grasp this stupendous mass of erudition, with insight to perceive the true relations between its diverse and multitudinous details; a mind endowed as well with fathom its deepest meaning and with literary power to make this meaning clear to less vigorous and perspicacious minds.[49]

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45 Lewis Mumford, "The Decline of the West," *The New Republic*, (November, 1939), pp. 277-279.

46 Harry E. Barnes, *An Intellectual Cultural History of the Western World*, (New York, 1937), p.1199; American critics on cultural analogies, quoted in, Trigg, *The Impact*, p.121-123.

47 William Harlan Hale; *Challenge to Defeat : Modern Man in Goethe's World and Spengler's Century*, (New York 1932), pp. 142-53.

48 W.K. Stewart, "The Decline of the West," *Century Magazine*, 107,(1924), pp.589-98; [quoted in Trigg, *The Impact.*, p.132.]

49 Earl, E. Sperry, "Review of the Decline of the West. vol. I," *American Historical Review*, July 1927, pp. 826-828.

According to Sperry, Spengler paved the way for a holistic view of world- history. "[Spengler has] done more than any other thinker to give logical order and coherence to the vast and perplexing mass of human happenings, to show the organic and spiritual bonds which give them unity, to find their ultimate significance."

Interestingly, two recent critics have praised Spengler in similar terms. Using postmodernist arguments American Spengler enthusiast, Albert Cook, asserts that in his poetic language, “Spengler gave a new dimension to the genre of philosophic history, including in the sweep of his diachronic presentation much more detail than Vico or Hegel," and by, "fleshing out and varying the sources of data he for became first to establish the spiritual unity within a given 'Culture' of its language, literature, art, architecture, religion, government, finance, law, mathematics, physical sciences, exploration, customs, strategy, social structure, and its own theories on all these institutionalized activities."

Agreeing in part with Waldo Frank’s final judgment of Spengler, Cook also maintains that his basic principle, *culture as an organism,* is not really "false any more than it is finally true." He maintains that the metaphor has a certain instrumental value, and it is, "sometimes illuminating to speak of the birth, childhood, or old age of culture." Cook’s criticism thus illustrates a contemporary “literary oriented" post-modernist historian's re-evaluation of Spengler’s paradigmatic and synchronic method.[50]

American historian Jerry Bentley adds that Spengler's legacy lives in the resurgence of world-history. "Spengler’s work has large significance for the emergence of world history for several reasons," Bentley writes:

> In the first place, it was important because of its concept of large-scale communities...as complexes of political, social, economic, and cultural elements, all integrated to some greater or lesser degree in identifiable historical societies. Beyond that Spengler’s work had great suggestive value because he took large-scale communities as units of analysis appropriate for the study of past. Finally Spengler posed questions of high interest concerning interactions between peoples of different societies and cultural traditions. Later scholars have not followed Spengler’s lead in their analysis of these issues, but in many ways have grappled with questions that he first framed in his own peculiar way.[51]

Mumford, Beard, and Shotwell

Spengler received a favorable, if also mixed reception, from two quite different sources: the humanism of Lewis Mumford; and the New History of Charles Beard and James Shotwell. Along with favorable comments interspersed with the negative criticism in other reviews, their reaction helps explain the puzzling attraction of a German reactionary to liberal America.

Lewis Mumford, who reviewed Spengler and Toynbee in the liberal *New Republic,* was a prominent “man of letters," influencing literature, philosophy and architectural criticism in the United States during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Author of more than twenty seven books and one thousand articles, he was, according to Paul Costello, a “universal man— a professional generalist." Politically he was a leading internationalist of the Old Left and,

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50 Albert Cook, *History/Writing,* (Cambridge 1988), pp. 197, 201.

51 Jerry Bentley, “Shapes of World History in Twentieth Century Scholarship”, http://chnm.gmu.edu/aha/pubs/bentley.htm#chapter 2.

before World War II, a persistent enemy of fascism. Mumford was also a prophet, warning of dehumanization and alienation in modern civilization.[52]

Mumford first reviewed *The Decline* in *The New Republic*— the journal which became a major forum for Spengler criticism in the United States. *The New Republic*, as historian Richard Pells has characterized it, was probably the most influential of all intellectual magazines during the 1920s and 1930s. It published the writings of a broad range of intellectuals from orthodox Communists to hard line conservatives. It also could boast a number of glittering names among its associate editors, including Charles A. Beard, John Dewey and Walter Lippmann. During the 1930s, *The New Republic* continued to be the most influential channel for the exchange of ideas, especially for the “Roosevelt-establishment."[53]

At the time Mumford wrote his review of *The Decline* in 1926, he was already occupied with the same kind of problems discussed in Spengler's work. Mumford’s aim was to establish a “green republic," just as Spengler’s goal was a return to a Prussian conservative *Gemeinschaft*. Mumford’s books dealing with world-history were *The Story of Utopias* (1922), *The Golden Day, A Study in American Experience and Culture* (1926) and *Technics and Civilization* (1934). In these books, Mumford depicted a holistic view of humanity as the creator of symbols and positive ideals. In contrast to Spengler’s *Civilization,* he showed that human beings could re-direct their creative power. In the *Story of Utopias* Mumford even stated that the will to utopia could act as a remedy against what Spengler had called the “decline of the West.”[54]

Mumford and Spengler agreed, however, in cursing the modern city for its devotion to commerce and industry at the expense of human living. Echoing Spengler’s description of the “World city," Mumford maintained that the industrial city did not represent the creative values in civilization, but stood for a new form of human barbarism. Spengler and Mumford also criticized the diachronic linear logic of the West, which ultimately lead to the “assembly-line mechanization of the Machine-Age" which eventually would turn into the long winter of *Civilization*.

In his May 1926 review in *The New Republic*. Mumford presented a comprehensive analysis of Spengler. Although, he did not like Spengler's "complacent Germanisms," he declared that Spengler's vision of history was more profound, than the mechanical explanation "that [Brooks and Henry Adams], sadly fumbled around with." The European critics “annoyed by Spengler’s audacious efforts” missed his point and “resorted to the pious academic practice of pointing out the inevitable errors of fact." Shocked by the German philosopher’s prophesies of doom, “they countered with the thought that man at last was a reasonable animal, subject to the ministrations of the health officer and the policeman, beyond the reach of the business cycle, to say nothing of the Spengler’s more remote cultural cycle."[55]

Mumford praised Spengler’s *non-mechanistic* synchronic and relativist approach to culture. According to Mumford, Spengler, in his cultural morphology based on symbols, revitalized the mythical core of a hyper-rational Western civilization. Of that phase in

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52 Paul Costello, *World Historians*, p.155.

53 On the role of the “New Republic” in American “establishment,” see, Richard Pells, *Radical Visions, American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years*, (Wesleyan, 1984) & *Liberal Mind in the Conservative Age*,(Wesleyan,1989), pp.13-18.

54 Costello, *World Historians*, p.160.

55 Lewis Mumford, “The Decline of the West : The First in the Series: Books That Changed Our Minds," *The New Republic*, January 11, 1939, p.277.

Civilization Spengler correctly saw that a "spontaneous, energetic and creative life had been exhausted, its creative impulses had grown mechanical...the purely intellectual type dominates the cosmopolitan culture, the skeptic denies and the dilettante toys, with the things that have been sacred and stimulating to feelings, as well as to thoughts."

Mumford also connected Spengler to Sigmund Freud, whom he defined as the great "mythsolver" of Western civilization. Accordingly, Mumford praised Spengler's Yin-side, antilinear *intuitive* approach to culture. Mumford wrote: "The Decline is one of the most capable attempts to order the annals of history since August Comte... It is audacious, profound, catchy, absurd, exiting and magnificent... When Spengler has searched for the life-cycle in culture, his task is to build up morphology of culture." [56]

In Mumford's view Spengler approached history as the "marvelous waxing and waning of organic forms [rather than as a progressive view of history], which is like tapeworm industriously adding to itself." According to Mumford, Spengler's Cultures are "Leibnizian monads whose collective biography disapproves any progressive ideology." Spengler's symbolic morphology made the mechanical explanation of history appear antiquated. Intuition was the historian's tool. In Europe the mechanistic "Machine-age" of the 1920s produced another other kind of symbolism in the dreamworld of Surrealism, a theme German philosopher Ernst Cassirer elaborated in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1929), where he maintained that all of human culture was made of symbols and that science was in some ways as metaphorical as poetry.[57] Accordingly, the German philosopher of history revealed for that "history is the moving imprint of man's life: to think historically is to place oneself at the center of this movement. In this Croce, Bergson and Spengler are at one . . ."

Spengler wiped out naive provincialism with regard to *time* — the illusion of progress, and to *space* — the illusion of position. In Mumford's analysis, Spengler destroyed the ideas of linear evolution and also the *Eurocentric* understanding of world-history. Mumford acknowledged, that Spengler gave "a final blow to the misconceptions of history that guided the nineteenth century; one that history is a continuous linear development, rising from the depths of Akhnaton or Pericles to the sublimities of Mr. Gladstone and President McKinley, and the other, the notion that history comes to a head in Europe. "[58]

Mumford, a distinguished architectural critic in one of the most prestigious magazines in America, *The New Yorker*, thought that Spengler's descriptions of the development of the *world -city* from *parasitopolis* to *necropolis* were "brilliant and sound." In *The Story of Utopias* (1922) and *The Golden Day* (1926) he himself warned that environmental pollution, dehumanization, and alienation were consequences of the growth of modern urban civilization in America. Intimate, organic communities of the "good old days" were deteriorating into mechanistic societies, with all the problems of impersonal big cities. In Spengler's work, Mumford found confirmation of these pessimist assumptions.

Mumford also believed that Spengler's greatest merit was that "his great work enables us to see more clearly the "nature of these alternatives [in the Western civilization]." He continued:

> If Spengler is right our destiny is in the balance. There are forces that are working towards an extension of megalopolitanism, toward a more rigid, mechanical and finally destructive form of civilization, with its congested cities, its vast slum proletariat, its

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56. Lewis Mumford, "Downfall or Renewal", *The New Republic*, 12 May 1926, p.367-369.

57 Lewis Perry, *Intellectual Life in America:aHistory* (Chicago university press,1989),p.356.

58 Lewis Mumford, "Downfall or Renewal", *The New Republic*, 12 May 1926, p.368.

> conflicting imperialism, its promise of an internecine warfare, organized with the most precise application of science, and unrestrained by any deep life-sense, in which whole populations will commit suicide and murder on a scale beside which the recent will be little more than a gang-fight. [59]

Mumford concluded, however, that forces that were working *against* Spengler's predictions included the progressive ideas of *education* and *garden cities*. But the critic also warned: "if we continue to follow this path [to *Civilization*] mechanically in the world-weary mood of our contemporaries, who live, if at all, on dead hopes, if we give ourselves over to technique, matter-of-fact, spiritual hardness, then there will be no spring [while living in the winter of the modern West]."[60]

Mumford's biographer Donald Miller has argued that Spengler's style of history and his brilliant original approach to material, excited Mumford's interests. Spengler's description of the Western man's Faustian bargain with technology also interested Mumford. According to Miller, "It was Spengler's style of history, his brilliant original approach to material, which excited Mumford's interests. Abjuring every canon of so-called objectivity, Spengler placed himself at the center of history, observing, sympathizing, criticizing, comparing. Spengler probably came as close as anyone Mumford had yet encountered to writing the kind of history that he had set out to write in his several books on America."[61]

Spengler also received a sympathetic response from New Historians Charles Beard and James Shotwell, although more from the former than the latter. If Mumford was a "heavy-weight" humanist and opinion–molder, Beard was his counterpart among progressive historians. Few if any of his contemporaries matched Beard in his far-reaching impact upon 20th century American intellectual and cultural life. [As a historian, he was best known for his path-breaking application of an economic interpretation of the American History.]

Beard was also practitioner of the New History, which aimed at broadening the scope of historical study beyond political history to use the past as an instrument for improving the present and shaping the future. Beyond that Beard was also America's one of the top experts on government and efficiency.

In a review in Mencken's *American Mercury* in 1926 Beard enthusiastically welcomed Spengler's challenge:

> It is a magnificent challenge to the great American people on their way to golf links, factories, corn fields, colleges and delicatessens, inviting them to pause a moment and reflect on the nature and destiny of culture, namely all noble forms of human expression. Its deep thrusting wisdom, its high spurting illuminations, its devastating Socratic questions and its scorn of class-room psychologists and cloistered philosophers make it a call to debate that cannot be ignored or cried down. All people who put Wells's book for adolescents on their center tables had better try up their muscles *to* lift something real.

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59 *Ibid*.p.369.

60 *Ibid*.

61 Donald Miller, *Lewis Mumford - a Life*, (New York, 1989), pp.300-301.

Although Beard had started as a "Progressive historian" believing in perfectibility of humans and human institutions, he now preferred Spengler over H.G. Well's affirmation of *progress*.[62]

Beard also paid indirect homage to Spengler in *The Rise of American Civilization* (1927). In this massive survey of the American past, he dropped the flat monographic style of *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913), writing lush prose and including in the manner of Spengler, politics, social and economic thought, religion, literature, education, science, art and architecture. For these reasons, Spengler and other cultural pessimists inspired Beard to write his own history of civilization.

Beard, as previously noted, shared many themes with Spengler— the role of the money power in shaping the Constitution and its power during the Gilded Age, and perhaps most particularly, the notion of Civil War as the "Second American Revolution" consolidating the triumph of Northern capitalism—an echo of Spengler's contention that the monetary forces of *Civilization* had destroyed agrarian Southern Culture.[63]

Yet Beard and his coauthor wife Mary also diverged from Spengler in emphasizing pragmatism in the study of civilizations. The Beards remained certain that a history of a civilization, "if intelligently conceived, would be an *instrument of directing the course of civilization*."[64] In *The Rise of American Civilization* "the Beards supported the holistic study of civilization and its spenglerian prospects," according to historian Nancy F. Cott. But unlike the German pessimist, at least until the onset of the Great Depression, they remained optimistic about the "tremendous resources of human ingenuity and democratic traditions in America."[65]

With other historians, Beard was skeptical of the wholesale application of historical analogies to modern times, because of the great advantages of "modern civilization." Beard as progressive believed, that the "Machine had not only changed our way of life, but also had created unique break with the past." He also noted that "the law of growth was uniform only for civilizations, which are uniform in character."— Modern Civilization was certainly unlike anything that had gone on before. But Beard also added a Spenglerian caveat, namely that "the Machine system…presents shocking evils and indeed a terrible menace to the noble faculties of the human race."[66] During the Great Depression, Beard would change his position, as he adopted a potentially-corrosive epistemological relativism.

James Shotwell, also one present-minded New Historians, gave an extensive and less favorable review of *The Decline* in *Essays in Intellectual History Dedicated to James Harvey Robinson* (1929), amplifying Robinson's criticism to the German historian's metaphysical and philosophical determinism.

Shotwell acknowledged that the reception of Spengler's work in 20th century intellectual history "constitutes an historical event in itself." He compared Spengler's imposing intellectual figure to, "Beethoven in Vienna during the fall of the *Holy Roman*

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62 Charles A.Beard, "The Decline of the West," *The American Mercury*, May 1926, p.385.

63 Novick, *That Noble*, p.235.

64 Beard quoted in, Susman, *Culture as History*, p.7.

65 Nancy F. Cott, "Two Beard's: Co-Authorship And The Concept Of Civilization," *American Quarterly*, (June 1990), p.286.

66 Charles A. Beard, "Is Western Civilization in Peril?", *Harper's Magazine*, CLVII,(August 1928),pp.265-73.

Empire," while explaining that Spengler's popularity must be explained "by different criteria than those of the historical seminar."[67]

"Spengler's work was not history in the Rankean sense but rather the denial of it… [it is] mythmaking and poetry, not to be mistaken for reality, "Shotwell continued. Spengler's work was "like a some vast museum in which things from different eras have apparently been mixed by some irresponsible fancy... and yet when studied more deeply one sees a design running through what seems at first mere willful medley."[68]

Shotwell's main disagreement was that Spengler's German idealist metaphysics passed as history, not poetry,

> it is an artistic interest in the formulation of a great synthesis, a world philosophy. The incoherent past is to be made articulate and no longer meaningless by stating it in terms of symbols, which in themselves have an art-meaning for the author....this is not history in the true sense of the word, but rather the denial of it. This is mythmaking, it is poetry. [69]

Shotwell's argument would reverberate in Spengler criticism of the 1930s, charging that the poetic morphological view did violence to established historical facts and provided intellectual background for romantic elements in fascism. Shotwell, however, remained innocent of this danger.

Although Shotwell recognized merits in Spengler's diagnosis of cultural decay, he also denounced Spengler's anti-progressive ideas. "[Spengler] has failed to see that the scientific world of today presents entirely new phenomena which cannot be understood by analysis of *Civilization*, "he wrote, echoing Beard. Still wedded to scientism Shotwell remained optimistic, "The author of *The Decline* has failed to recognize that the scientific progress, that made our civilization more resistant to the internal decay." Here was no reason, "to conclude that modern civilization must inevitably repeat declining pattern, because social engineering and other progressive forces were working *against* the downward trend." "In any case," he concluded, "we can assert with confidence equal to that of Spengler that the decline of Western Civilization can be avoided by the application to the social and political organizations of today of that same intelligence, which in the physical sciences is enabling to escape the routine limitations of time and space." Repeating the argument of the progressive historians over the primacy of the economic relations, he also pointed out that previous civilizations went under because they were built upon the "injustice of exploitation [and on] false economic forces."[70]

Many of the arguments of Beard and Shotwell were those held by progressive liberals more generally. John Dewey, for example, voiced similar ideas According to Dewey, classical republicans had believed that the coming of wealth and luxury could undermine the citizen's moral fiber. Stating his case against all historical pessimists Dewey believed that "human development had been dwarfed throughout history because of material scarcity. Thus the rise of industry and technology, instead of threatening the polity, would free men to live beyond the level of economic necessity and pursue more noble goals and ideas." Dewey, also

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67 James T. Shotwell, "Spengler," in *Essays in Intellectual History Dedicated to James Harvey Robinson*,(New York, 1929), p. 59.
68 *Ibid*., pp. 62.63.
69 *Ibid*. p. 61.
70 Shotwell, "Spengler," p.67.

like Beard and Shotwell, testified against Spengler's historicism, claiming that a study of past could seldom serve the needs of the present, because historical experience is "no repetitive pattern."[71]

In sum, progressive liberal critics, like Beard, Shotwell and Dewey converged on the view that advancing technology and science had brought the American people the blessings of material well-being unequalled in the world, while at the same time noting that these developments brought cultural discontents.

As revealing as these comments were, they told almost as much in what they did not say, as in what they did. Unaware that the economic collapse and a Great Depression were just around the corner, Shotwell anticipated that "the Rise of the West" would take place in the "near future." Although Mussolini and Hitler were already on the scene, they were blind to the fascistic undertones in Spengler's work. In an overly-optimistic conclusion Shotwell mistakenly predicted that "the future of the West does not lie in disasters of the, *Caesarism* and *Machtpolitik*, but in the equilibrium of justice of an new era." Events of the next few years would show how wrong he was, and in the process shape a new image of Spengler.

71 John Dewey, "Self -Saver or Frankenstein," *Saturday Review of Literature*, VII, (March 12, 1932), pp. 581-82.; John P. Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism, Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority*, (Chicago, 1994), p.293.

CH.6.SPENGLER THE TOTALITARIAN: AMERICAN RECEPTION IN THE 1930S

1. Fascism, Depression, and New Deal

During the early 1930s, Spengler's prediction of the power of the Caesars was realized in Germany. As the Nazis put Shotwell's social engineering to reactionary ends, science was directed to anti-liberal purposes. The Great Depression meanwhile shattered much of the 1920s faith in the "rise of the West." These developments generated a massive shift in American public opinion. With it came a radical reassessment of Oswald Spengler's classic study, both within the newly-revived Left and among New Deal liberals. Suddenly Spengler became the dangerous Prussian anti-democrat.

Speaking for the Old Left, Dwight MacDonald later commented on the disappearance of the Spengler's "aura" in the 1930s. "In the enthusiastic 'red' Thirties in America, " MacDonald observed ironically, "Spengler's gloom was as uncongenial to the Marxians and New Dealers, with visions of sugarplums dancing through their heads, as Mencken's cynicism." This ideological shift, combined with sympathy for the Soviet Union against Germany, meant that, among American liberal intellectuals, Spengler's "Prussian," conservative manifesto was dropped from "highbrow" tables and talk during the New Deal years.[1]

The New Deal's promise of reform brought a new optimism. As historian H.Stuart Hughes explained:

> After 1933 philosophical pessimism had become old fashioned. With the New Deal, the emphasis had shifted to "social significance and constructive activity." Elsewhere in the West — despite the economic depression —pessimism was no longer the prevailing intellectual temper: the struggle against fascism, the organization of popular fronts, the hope for peace through collective security — these were the things that occupied the thoughts of those who felt themselves to be in the mainstream of current activity. The decaying West had roused from its torpor and would listen no more to the prophet of inevitable decline.[2]

Not everyone shared this optimism. With the collapse of democracy in Germany some American intellectuals feared for its future more generally. The freedom that democracy was supposed to give was only a delusion," philosopher Ralph Barton Perry wrote in 1934, describing this mood. "Outside of England, the United States, and France, there has been a general abandonment or rejection of democratic institutions."[3] Columbia University president Nicholas M. Butler wondered whether "Spengler was right in his contention that the decline of the West was obvious and certain?"[4] Edwin Dakin realized that most readers would likely object Spengler's judgments on the weakness of democracy, but Dakin felt that events

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1Dwight Macdonald, "A Somber Vision of Doom," *The New York Times*,(March 9,1952), Book Section. p.15.

2 H. Stuart Hughes, *Oswald Spengler A Critical Estimate*, (New York, 1952),p 137.

3 Ralph Barton Berry, "The Alleged Failure of Democracy," *The Yale review*, XXIV, (1934), pp.37, 51.[quoted in, Trigg, *The Impact of a Pessimist*, p.143.]

4 Nicholas M. Butler, *Why War?*, (New York 1941), pp.49-54. From a 1938 speech.[quoted in, Trigg, *The Impact*, p.143]

seemed to have to have connected to confirm Spengler so that his views could hardly be disregarded.[5]

But others refused to accept that dictatorship, at least in America, was inevitable. Despite a general admission that democracy often did not work too well, many liberals continued to believe that it held the promise of future re-organization. Democratically controlled federalism and co-operation were called for. Critics could not believe that the choice was Caesarism, or the rule of the fourth-estates (masses)—a return to the history-free "black hole" of a civilization run by the Barbarians.[6]

Critics wanted a philosophy to live by. They preferred not to ground it in Spenglerism, or any other metaphysical, holistic reconstruction of human history, but upon the observation of objective social conditions. Among these analysts was the celebrated journalist Walter Lippmann, who believed that "in the use of intelligence and the free play of democratic institutions there would be a new stimulus to life and energy." Lippmann insisted that "great schemes, metaphysical designs, or cultural ideals should not stand in the way of the [progressive] effort to ease physical suffering."[7] Thus hard times and the rise of fascism, ironically, produced in the United States, not more gloom and doom, but quite it's opposite.

2. Spengler's Later Work

By 1932 there was a different sort of change in Spengler's mood. Alfred Knopf reported that the German seemed neither so robust nor as happy as on earlier visits. His answers to questions on current topics were neither direct nor clear cut.[8] As Hitler rose to power, this new mood heralded a darker, more ominous tone in his later writings.

The first was *Man and Technics*, a continuation of the debate concerning technology and science that resumed in the aftermath of the Great War and continued into the 1930s. First published in Germany as *Der Mench und Technik* , it was translated and published by Knopf as *Man and Technics* in 1932. The book was an extension of the argument regarding the problematic effects of technology that Brooks Adams had previously examined in *The Law of Civilization and Decay. A* contribution to the history of primitive civilizations, the book focused on the ascent of man and the role that technology played in the origin of high cultures, specifically the relation of technology and warfare and the primitive uses of weapons, in order to highlight the complexities in the modern West.[9]

Spengler, as we have seen, was not hostile to technology itself, but was dubious regarding its consequences for the environment. Anticipating the central theme of "green" ecological world-history, half a century later, he grasped the dangerous consequences of mankind's sophisticated, but brutal mastery of nature. [10]

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5 Edwin F.Dakin, *Today and Destiny: Vital Excerpts from the Decline,* (New York, Knopf 1940), "Introduction," pp.1-2.

6 Charles G. Shaw, *Trends of Civilization and Culture*, (New York 1932), pp. 636-53. [quoted in Trigg, *The Impact of Pessimist*,.p.144]

7 Walter Lippman, *The Method of Freedom*, (New York, 1934), pp.6-7.

8 .Dakin, *Today and Destiny*, pp.353-64.

9 Farrenkopf, *The Prophet of Decline, Spengler on World History and Politics*, (Baton Rouge, 2001)p 197-199; Klaus P. Fischer, *History and Prophesy, Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West*,(New York, 1989), pp.131-136.

10 In comparison with Spengler's views of technology, see Michael Zimmermann, *Heideggers Confrontation with Modernity,* (Indiana, U.Press, 1991), Chapters, 1-3.

Spengler claimed that in order to understand the essence of modern technology we must go back to the earliest times. “The free moving life of the animal is struggle,” he wrote. Technics is a tactic in this “struggle of life.” It concerns itself with action, not implements, not with how one fashions things, but what one does with them; ”not the weapon, but the battle.”[11] Life is a combat, a strife involving the will-to-power, a matching of one technique against another.

Spengler outlined both sides of the technology debate: the *idealists* regarded technics and economics as matters beneath “culture” and unworthy of the “cultured individual.” Opposing this view stood the *naturalist progressivists*, who claimed that whatever is useful is a legitimate element of “culture,” while “[The] rest was luxury, superstition and barbarism.” [12]

For "modernizers," like Progressives in *fin-de- siecle* America, technology was superior to past history, a conclusion that followed from their rejection of historicism. But from Spengler's viewpoint —that of *reactionary modernism*—the development of technology was a Faustian bargain with economic growth, leading inexorably to the final phase of the Faustian drive for infinite global extension. Anticipating modern world-system-theoreticians, Spengler described both species and land loss—claiming that Faustian civilization was destroying the organic world during its period of expansion.[13]

The world supremacy of the West was based on an uncontested monopoly of industry, a monopoly that allowed a white worker to draw a high wage. But in the Far East, India, South America, and South Africa, industrial regions were coming into being which, owing to low-wage scales, would eventually face the Faustian West with deadly competition. According to Spengler “the colored world is begging to take revenge of its lords.” The vast tribe of the “colored races” would ultimately shatter the Faustian organization of the West. Unable to foresee the rise of the “online-economy” over the old industrialism by century's end, Spengler falsely predicted that Western "weariness is spreading and the flight of the born leader from the Machine is beginning!”[14]

Projecting the theme of primitive warfare forward in time, Spengler predicted that the "colored races" would in the future adopt the complex technology of the modern West, and employ modern methods of war to destroy the imperialist "dominant white races." Thus the “Supreme Machine" would bring an end to “Faustian civilization.” Spengler asserted: "the works of man are unnatural and artificial, and to fight nature is hopeless." The *nemesis* of nature comes when “man becomes a servant of the Machine.” Only dreamers believe that there is a way out, our duty is to hold on the last position, without hope, “This is greatness. That is what it means to be thoroughbred. The honorable end is the one thing that can *not be* taken from a man.”[15]

In *The Hour of Decision* (1934), Spengler continued his discussion of world wide warfare with specific reference to Germany. The book on the whole was a celebration of Prussian military values and a cornucopia of anti-liberal sentiment—the same sort of ideas which Father Coughlin and Huey Long were already voicing against Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal.

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11 Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technics A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life*, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf),p. 10.

12 *Ibid*., p. 6.

13 Farrenkopf, The *Prophet*, p.204.

14 Spengler, *Man and Technics*, p.97.

15 *Ibid*.p.104.

Spengler warned that Germany was in "danger because it was close to a second world war." According to Spengler, Germany must be in "form" led by the discipline of its "aristocratic caste," while the Nazi celebrations "should be saved for a real and definite success in the field of foreign politics."

Spengler explained further how the West had entered upon an age of world-wars. By 1878 the age was already ripe for World War I; yet the power of the several states, and especially the great statesmanship of Bismarck, kept war at bay. From the turn of the century, the decay of the state-system had become obvious. States were purely political units—not units bound up with race, language, or religion, but standing above these. In the classical era of a European "balance-of- power- politics" *internal politics* existed only to secure the strength and unity of *external politics*. When these two spheres of the state's interests pursued different aims, the state went "out of form."[16]

For Spengler, Prussianism was the aristocratic ordering of life according to achievement and quality. A Prussian statesman was someone who disciplined himself. Prussianism set itself against majority and mob-rule, and against the dominance of the mass. It was aristocratic and conservative in nature; it was the Right as opposed to the Left. It grew from whatever fundamental life forces still existed in the Nordic people: instincts for "power and possession as power; for inheritance, fecundity, and family… for distinctions in rank and social gradation, whose moral enemy is Rationalism from 1750 to 1950." According to Spengler, all really great leaders in history went to the Right. They abhorred Liberalism and Socialism.[17]

In this spirit Spengler repeated that the United States was neither a real nation nor a real state. In the context of the Great Depression, America was a boundless area with a population of uprooted citizens "…drifting from town to town in the dollar hunt, unscrupulous and dissolute…" America was "a dictatorship of the mass-man… [What] was called government was likely to melt away suddenly."

Crime was a popular sport in American big cities. The underworld was powerfully organized. Anticipating the moral dilemma of American foreign policy and the building of the "American empire" Spengler proposed that the big question for the United States was whether the sleeping moral force of the American people would awaken to construct a state and to sacrifice both possessions and blood for it in a time of real danger.

Nor had England or France the potential of Germany; no other country of German origin had as much "race" left in its people. The "colored people," who waited to plunge their sword into the declining West, were not pacifists. Once the "colored had feared the white man," but now they despised him. It was even possible that the "class-war" and the "race-war" would join forces to crush the white Faustians. In America, ravaged by the Great Depression, Spengler forecast: "white proletariat breaks loose in the United Sates, the Negro will be on the spot, and behind him Indians and Japanese will await their hour."[18]

Liberalism, the ideology of the Left, progressed logically from Jacobinism to Bolshevism, Spengler continued. These two versions of the leftist ideology were not in opposition, but were the beginning and the end of a single movement. In the liberal West money and intelligence, counting-house and lecture-chair, accountants and clerks— after the English and French bourgeoisie revolutions— took the place of "form-order existence," of manners, obligations and respect for the ancient ruling class. The scapegoats for the "false

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16 Oswald Spengler, *The Hour of Decision,* (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1934),p.135.

17 *Ibid.*,pp. 194-195.

18 *Ibid*. pp. 214-229.

rhetoric" of liberalism used to be the aristocrats. In the "Age of Bolshevism" they were the "…possessors, from peasant to entrepreneur."[19]

3. Spengler and the Nazis

Did Spengler thus support fascism and Hitler, directly or indirectly? On this issue historians have differed. Writing in the early 1950s, H. Stuart Hughes argued that Spengler was at least indirectly responsible for the turn of events:

> In undermining public confidence in the Republic and in parliamentary institutions, and in preaching the association of the concepts of Prussianism and socialism, he had prepared the way for the Nazi mentality. . . He had tossed off wild phrases about a "hard" philosophy of life, about blood and destruction that could not fail to be misunderstood.[20]

Another critic of the 1950s argued more forcibly that it was self- evident that Spengler gave the Nazis historical credentials when he promoted the Nietzschean idea of life as a struggle between strong and weak, while at the same time transposing this theme to global power-politics.[21]

More recently, Paul Costello has argued that Spengler was at best ambivalent toward National Socialism. "Spengler was averse to Nazi racism and the romantic emotionalism of the movement," Costello noted. "He believed that the Nazis [were not] aristocratic; they were the voices of the mob."[22] Although Spengler admired "condottier" Mussolini, he regarded Hitler as "too vulgar," while *The Hour* was Spengler's ambiguous "call to action."[23]

What Spengler's later critics failed to acknowledge, as did his opponents in the 1930s, was that the Nazis denounced Spengler before his death because of his opposition to anti-Semitism. Spengler did not adhere to the "race" or the "folk" theories of the Nazis, but rather opposed them. For Spengler, "race" was nothing more than a product of geographic forces. In Spengler's theory, Jews lived in Europe as *fossils* of the decaying Oriental *Magian* civilization— stranded in the Western Faustian world. Spengler maintained that, because the Jews came from another Culture, the Faustian Nazis could not understand their supra-national cosmopolitanism.

When *The Hour of Decision* was published in the United States, the Nazi campaign against Spengler was well underway. In 1933 *The New York Times* reported a break between Spengler and the Nazis, noting that in Germany, a professor named Alfred Baumber spearheaded the attack both in the press and in lectures, while the Nazis themselves criticized Spengler's ideas as "political trash."[24] A year later, Nazi propagandist Johan Von Leers, of

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19 *Ibid*.p. 110.

20 Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*, p.132.

21 Martin Brauun, "Bury, Spengler and the New Spenglerians," *History Today* 7 (1952), p.528.

22 Costello, *World Historians,* p.63.

23 H. Stuart Hughes, "Spengler," *The New York Review of Books*, 1963, no.2, p. 21. Best introduction to fascism and it's relation to American thought, John P.Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America,* (Princeton, N.J. 1972).

24 Otto D. Tolischus, "Nazis Are Turning Guns on Spengler," *The New York Times*, December 31, 1933.

the German High School for Politics, challenged the notion that Spengler's philosophy was good Nazism in his book *Spengler's Weltpolitisches System und der Nationalsozialismus* (1934). In his view, Spengler was a negative skeptic who had and, "ice cold contempt for the people."[25]

Spengler himself did not live to see the battle of the “New Caesars." He died in 1936, after being damned by the Nazi propaganda machine because of his denunciation of Hitler and his racist pogroms of the “magian-people.” By this time his influence in Germany had almost disappeared.

4. The American Response

In America, Spengler's *Man and Technics* drew at least one favorable notice. In the “high brow” journal *Vanity Fair,* the reviewer claimed that Spengler —"the greatest German philosopher since Nietzsche— saw the sad ending to the age of technology.” He further explained that in Spengler's book, "the problem of the Machine Age is viewed with detachment and the appreciation of a Kant or Spinoza . . . In view of the Communists there is not frenzied protest of the disgruntled intellectual, no object glorifying American tractors, in the neo-Marxian manner." In conclusion this *reviewer* declared, "Just as Spengler surveyed our Western civilization and traced the curve of its inevitable and natural dissolution, so he now describes the equally inevitable triumph of the machine and the revolt against machinery of the superior man."[26]

Others, however, criticized Spengler for failing to see that the growth of human wisdom held the key to a promising future in which science would be used for man’s benefit. They reformulated the pragmatist viewpoint—stressing that, through intelligent controls the “evils of civilization may be lessened.” Man was not simply a “beast of prey.” The Machine was not necessarily cold and impersonal. Spengler in describing modern *Civilization* was offering only one side of the story. Man could be selfish, yet he created and died for the co-operative institutions he called truth and sought after righteousness.

Pragmatist John Dewey pointed out that Spengler failed to see that the machine could be used for man’s pleasure and advancement and criticized the German for tautologically claiming that human desires and thoughts were impotent.[27] Popular author and critic Stuart Chase maintained that mankind’s faculties had been tremendously extended by the use of machines; telescope enables us to see farther, cars to go farther, radios to hear more, and so forth. There was overall hope in the world that technology would contribute to the welfare of Western man.[28]

Spengler as Fascist

The Hour of Decision, however, turned the tide. Spengler was now associated with the Nazis. The book was described as filled on every page with sweeping pronouncements which lacked evidence—for example, “the rise of the colored” and “the beast of prey.” Critics attacked Spengler’s “false ideal” of Prussianism as a heroic barbarism, which negated all aspirations to a mere civilized life.

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25 Hughes, *Oswald Spengler,* p.131.

26 "Spengler", *Vanity Fair*, March 1933, p.22.

27 John Dewey, “Self-Saver or Frankenstein,” *Saturday Review of Literature,* VII (March 12, 1932), pp.581-82.

28 Stuart Chase, *Men and Machines*, (New York, 1935), pp.1-21

Columbia historian Carlton J. Hayes criticized Spengler for his analogies and his cyclical theory. Spengler was not only inaccurate but reckless, not from blind ignorance, but spiritual pride. Hayes called Spengler's work "simple and naive, filled with wishful thinking, and not to be taken seriously."[29] Literary critic Allen Tate saw the work as "a tract against liberalism," rather than a historical work. It contained a hatred of liberal reform and bellicose, "leader-oriented, pro-German viewpoint"—Spengler in *The Hour* had declared that Germany had had to decide whether she took only a second place in the "return of the Caesars," or produced Caesar himself. [30]

Spengler's attack on reason, once attractive if suspect, was now a distinct liability. Stuart Chase suggested that Spengler be sent to a psychiatrist.[31] American liberals classified Spengler as romantic and irrationalist. According to Max Lerner, Spengler, held that anything good in civilization came from antirational and "plantlike" levels of cognition in man.[32]

John Herman Randall, Jr., author of the best-selling *The Making of the Modern Mind* (1926) argued that "when intellectual methods reveal themselves as being inadequate, one possible remedy is to supplement them with other methods." This was what Spengler had done. He appealed from a "limited reason... to tradition, intuition, and a new faith, and a will to believe." Spengler offered a wholly undiscriminating substitute without direction or intent, even though Randall conceded that "Spengler was trying to add [intuition] to reason rather than to eradicate reason completely." [33]

According James Shotwell, Spengler's work was a reflection of 20th century German thoughts and moods. Germany after the war had lost its taste for history and turned to economics and to the "will to future" for consolation. [34] When Spengler died in 1936, *The New York Times* once again falsely summarized *The Decline* as intellectual fallout from World War I, whereas in actuality, as earlier noted, it appeared before the war ended.[35]

Mumford and Beard Reconsider

By the mid-30s, Spengler's onetime-supporters had also turned on him, among them Lewis Mumford and Charles Beard. During the 1930s, according to his biographer Donald Miller, Mumford wrote consistently against what he called "communal savagery of fascism" in Europe. In his *Technics and Civilization* (1934), Mumford searched for the potentiality in human societies for cultural growth, stressing both self-renewal" and "cultural renewal." Although Mumford agreed in spirit with Spengler, that history was actually a form of moral prophesy, he predicted a vastly different future than Spengler's "Prussian Platonism" had forecast.[36]

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29 Carlton J: Hayes, "The Hour of Decision," *Political Science Quarterly*, XLIX (1934), p.285-286.

30 Allen Tate, "Spengler's Tract Against Liberalism," *The American Review*, III, (April, 1934), pp.41-47.

31 Stuart Chase, *The Tyranny of Words*, (New York, 1938), p.22.

32 Max Lerner, *Ideas are Weapons*, (New York, 1940), pp.3-12.

33 John Herman Randall Jr., "This So-Called Revolt Against Reason," *The American Scholar*, V (May, 1936), p. 347-49.

34 James T. Shottwell, "Spengler: a Poetic Interpretation of History," *Current History*, XXX,(May, 1929),283-88.

35 *The New York Times*, "Oswald Spengler," May 9, 1936, p.14. (Editorial).

36 Miller, *Lewis Mumford*, p.301.

Reacting to Spengler's *Man and Technics* , Mumford argued that science and mechanization "were never wholeheartedly opposed to human culture." He maintained that, technology, if properly used, meant liberation from prejudices and intellectual confusions of the past. Mumford held the conviction, that “men needed technology to create a new civilization.”[37]

Mumford also insisted that the human use and application of technology was not *essentially* for domination and warfare—as Spengler maintained— but instead that technology saved time and physical labor, thus increasing the sentimental and co-operative aspects of human civilization. He strongly disagreed with Spengler's prediction that the industrial machinery of war will destroy Faustian civilization.

In his criticism of the *Man and Technics,* Mumford now also compared Spengler to Hitler,

> The animus of the [*The Man and Technics*] is profoundly with that maudlin romanticism, that sentimental apotheosis of brutality; and that understandable mood of degradation which characterizes the Nazis today. Spengler and Hitler living in Munich have more in common than their place of residence.[38]

Reviewing the *Hour of Decision,* Mumford wrote that it was necessary to put on an “operating gown and disinfecting one’s hands" before opening the book. Mumford thought that Spengler wished for the age of the Caesars to arrive while “men of blood have long been doing battle with the forces of rationalism, liberalism. . . ”[39] In the review in the *New Republic* in 1935, Mumford described fascist movement as, "political parties, organized on gangster principles, paralyzing the development of the modern state." For the establishment of these organizations, he laid blame on Spengler and the Italian sociologist and economist Vilfredo Pareto—whose theory of elites had influenced anti-democratic political movements in Italy. Mumford explained how these *proto-fascists* had used their intellects "to prepare the way for neurotic simplifications of human conduct [which resulted in] silly collective ambitions and perfectly childlike forms of communal savagery." In the perspective of history, Mumford maintained,

> Roman Civilization had a conviction of strength but no strength of conviction, fascism has been preceded by an intellectual advance guard of fantasies and rationalizations and dogma - a spacious system of social psychology, like Pareto's, a Prussian drillmasters version of history like Spengler's. [40]

The fear of rising totalitarianism made Mumford cautious of all German metaphysics. Although he chose *The Decline* for *The New Republic’s* anthology *The Books that Changed our Minds* (1939), he hinted that “together with Nietzsche, Spengler had sensed the advent of

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37 Mumford later changed this anti-Spengler, anti-Henry Adams view, when he criticized modern technological warfare, driven by the "megamachine," in, “Apology to Henry Adams,” *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 1962, no.2. passim.

38 Lewis Mumford, "The Decline of Spengler," *The New Republic*, March 9, 1932, p.104.

39 Lewis Mumford, “The Hour of Disintegration,” *The New Republic*, (February 21, 1934), pp. 51-52.

40 Lewis Mumford, "Civilized History", *The New Republic*, November 22. 1935, pp. 63-66. also reformulated in L.M., “The Menace of Totalitarian Absolutism,” *The New Republic*, November 27, 1935.

something resembling fascism as the last gasp of civilization." Analyzing Spengler's authoritarianism, he added: "Spengler had a free mind and servile emotional attitude; he presented a formidable upright figure, with a domed bald head and a keen eye, but in the presence of authority, particularly military authority, his backbone crumbled."[41] Contrasting Spengler with his "successor" Arnold Toynbee, Mumford later described the German as one of the intellectuals responsible for Fascism in Italy and Germany.

Writing again in the *New Republic* in 1939, Mumford again charged Spengler with promoting Junker barbarism as if it was high philosophy. According to Mumford the Nazis followed Spengler, in making an ideal of irrational violence. They also echoed Spengler in appropriating profit from industry and banking for the state and in plans to make the German army mobile. The Nazis thus owed much to Spengler who was one of their prophets and philosophers.[42] Trusting in pragmatic, liberal values Mumford now judged Spengler's myth of the inevitable decline as "a dangerous dogma [which had created] hate and stupidity [and] savage and imbecile powers, so far from being the natural rulers of the world, are but the advancing outposts of disintegration and death."[43]

More than Spengler's metaphysics, the Munich agreement in 1938 and the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939 destroyed liberal illusions about the peaceful course for human history under progressive technology. Spengler's prophesies of the Faustian decline and the "triumphant machine" began to materialize when the German *blitzkrieg-machine* started its brutal world conquest in September 1939. In 1940 shortly after the fall of France Lewis Mumford resigned from the editorial board of *The New Republic*, after publishing "The Corruption of Liberalism."

Charles Beard also appeared to have lost whatever sympathy he had for Spengler and *The Decline***.** In a revised version of *The Rise of American Civilization*, (1937) he accused Spengler of providing the "keynote of downfall" for the Weimar republic, which finally collapsed because of lack of faith for the democratic government and progressive world view. "[Pessimists] unable to endure the necessary strain of the age, led by Oswald Spengler, announced the doom of western civilization . . . [and] asked whether science, the great God of the nineteenth century, was not the destroying Frankenstein of the twentieth century," Beard continued, "To this challenge the optimists could only answer by promising a return to the old course of `peace and progress´."[44]

By the end of the 1930s, many critics took Spengler's connection to fascism for granted. Writing in 1939, Carl Dreher noted that the links between Spengler and Nazism were clear: in the subservience of the individual to the state, the leadership of the elite, the absurdity of democracy, and the splendor of war. Spengler connected honor with race, race with nobility, and nobility with land, the leading Nazi themes—though other writers such as Houston Chamberlain had expressed the same ideas. [45]

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41 Lewis Mumford, "Spengler's The Decline of the West: The First in the Series: Books That Changed Our Minds," *The New Republic*, January, 11, 1939, p.275.

42 Lewis Mumford, "Spengler's The Decline," pp. 275-79 ; Mumford, "The Hour of Disintegration," *The New Republic*, February 21, 1934, pp.51-52.

43 *Ibid.*

44 Charles A. Beard, *The Rise of the American Civilization*, revised and enlarged edition, (New York 1937), p.777.

45 Carl Dreher, "Spengler and the Third Reich," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, XV (1939), pp.176-193.

But Dreher was also still willing to recognize differences between Spengler and Nazism. According to the writer, when the Nazis were down and out in 1924, Spengler sneered at their idealistic dreams and party spectacles adorned with flags, uniforms, and parades. Later Spengler called for *statesmen*, not party leadership.[46]

To one observer, Spengler's reputation nonetheless appeared to be in decline. Edwin Dakin, well-known as a psychobiographer of Mary Baker Eddy [the founder or the Christian Science] believed that Spengler's reputation was not enhanced by anything he wrote after *The Decline*. He had one great work in him—the rest was "residue and froth." Spengler's "world panorama, like a great play, was its own instigation for existence." [47]

5. The Rise of *The Decline:* Spengler and World War II

The German Émigrés

The rapid deterioration of the international order after 1940, culminating in the fall of France in 1941, focused new interest on Spengler in what might be called a "third phase" of his reception. Recent *émigré* German intellectuals like Theodore Adorno and Hans Weigert argued that Spengler had been right in his prophesies, but warned that "Spenglerism" (meaning denial of man as a creative force) was a dangerous form of "poison" to intellectuals and the youth of the Free World, just as it has already poisoned Germany in the 1920s.

Analyzing Spengler the liberal Germans hoped to strengthen the democratic forces of the West against the dangerous doctrine of the "decline of the West." Exploring Spengler's contributions to the anti-liberal right-wing opposition in the Weimar Germany, Adorno and Weigert argued that *The Decline of the West* had contributed to the German conservative theories and to the German *zeitgeist* in the turbulent 1920s— a turmoil Spengler had ascribed to the twin evils of democracy and plutocracy.

The migration to the United States of leading German intellectuals during the 1930s added a critical dimension to American intellectual life. American intellectuals had typically assumed a unity between thought and action. Ideas were not considered ends in themselves, but ultimately seen as programs of action, the basic premise of pragmatism. The European intellectual tradition, in contrast, assumed that inquiry might be pursued as an end in itself, without a view toward action. The German *émigré*s brought this critical tradition to America, accounting in larger measure for a re-evaluation of Spengler shortly before and after the World War II.

The Diaspora of the German liberals in America began a new "Spengler revival" in the United States. The privately endowed *Institut für Sozialforchung,* founded in 1923 in Frankfurt moved to the United States in 1934, where Columbia University offered it hospitality. There the "critical theory" of Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno made the institute world-famous. Both detested the abstractions by which German metaphysics and philosophical idealism had veiled the "real world," while they, at the same time, were critical of Anglo-American empiricism. "Critical theory," in contrast to German idealism and naïve empiricism, sought to understand the human universe in the "context of real psychosocial processes."[48]

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46 *Ibid.*

47 Edwin Dakin. *Today and Destiny, Vital Excerpts from The Decline of the West*, (New York,1940),p.360.

48 H. Stuart Hughes, *Between Commitment And Disillillusion* & *The Obstructed Path And The Sea Change 1930-1965,* (Connecticut 1987), pp. 144-146.

Adorno had achieved eminence in philosophy, musicology, literary criticism, and sociology, but his main field was cultural analysis. He especially attacked ideas derived from the Enlightenment, which in his view, held that everything could be "illuminated in order to be administered." In the philosophical tradition of Kant, he believed that the human spirit was destroyed by the quantitative and mechanistic spirit of modern culture.[49]

In a penetrating analysis of Spengler in *The New School for Social Research* series for 1941, Adorno maintained that the Western liberals' dismissal of Spengler as an ideological representative of right-wing Prussianism was one-sided. "Abroad he is regarded as one of the ideological accomplices of the new barbarism, a representative of the most brutal type of German imperialism." This myopia, according to Adorno, was dangerous "because many of Spengler's prophesies had come true." Because of his contemporary relevance, Adorno asserted, Spengler must be "reconsidered."

The course of world-history had vindicated Spengler's prognosis. "The forgotten Spengler takes his revenge by threatening to be right." Spengler's predictions regarding the coming of the totalitarianism had materialized exactly, Caesarism had arrived; and the political manipulation of the masses through new cultural forms had been realized. Spengler's political prognoses were no less accurate: "what Spengler correctly prophesies for the small states as political units also begins to materialize among men themselves in the large states and particularly among the inhabitants of the powerful totalitarian ones. . . Here, men have become mere objects of political manipulation.[50]

National Socialism followed to the letter Spengler's description of the change within the structures of political parties. In *The Decline* this process was expressed in the Nietzschean prediction that ”the will to power is stronger than any theory. In the beginning the leading and the apparatus come into existence for the sake of the program . . . lastly the program vanishes from the memory, and the organization works for its own sake alone."[51]

Adorno also found "heuristic" value in Spengler's concept of Culture. According to Adorno, Spengler's strength lay in directing attention towards holistic conceptions, not merely towards empirical facts, "expressed by the individual, even when the latter assumes an air of freedom behind which universal dependence is hidden." As Adorno later wrote: "all observations of discrete social facts are mediated by the social totality [thus the] social observer therefore must examine the social order to make truthful investigations of any of its parts."

Although recognizing the accuracy of Spengler's prophesies, and the value of his method, Adorno opposed a Spenglerian relativism that denied moral absolutes. In Spengler’s holistic metaphysics he also saw the ideological basis for European turmoil and barbarism. The”over-ideological rationalization of social life in the totalitarian ideologies," he wrote,” had resulted in the negation of freedom embodied in the governments of extreme social control."[52]

Adorno also condemned Spengler’s surrender to fate (*Schicksal*) and his absolutist conception of nature that denied the efficacy human reason and will. Adorno argued —as has Czech president Thomas Masaryk in the context of the 1920s war-quilt debate—that the root

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49 Anthony Heilblut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artist and Intelectuals in America from the 1930’s to the Present*, (Boston, 1983), pp.160-163.Norman Cantor, *The American Century*:*Varieties of Culture in Modern Times*, (New York, 1997) pp.253-256.

50 Theodore Adorno, "Spengler Today," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, Institute for Social Research, New York, vol. 9, 1941, pp.306, 310.

51 Spengler, *The Decline* II, p.452.

52 Adorno, ”Spengler Today,”pp.305-325.

of the disastrous political ideologies of the 1930s was the "German system of idealism, which made fetishes of prodigious universal concepts …. [This] tendency, which Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Marx attacked in Hegel… enhances to the point of undisguised joy in human sacrifice." The bad seed of totalitarianism was buried in *The Decline*. "For Spengler too, everything individual, no matter how remote it may be, becomes for him a sign of the big—the Culture."[53]

In this respect Adorno antedated American "New Liberal" thinking after 1945, which rejected both the philosophical and moral relativism of the 1930s and the excesses of metaphysical idealism. [54] This attack continued in Karl Popper's The *Poverty of Historicism* (1945) and Hannah Arendt 's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) both of which criticized Hegel's totalitarian idealism.

Adorno also underlined the political and social responsibilities of the liberal intellectual, another major theme in American post-war thought until the "best and brightest" came to grief during the Vietnam war. The apparent "helplessness" of liberal intellectuals in the face of totalitarianism had led Spengler to abandon them. But right- wing cultural critics like Spengler had, in Adorno's view, also fled their responsibilities when the Nazis came to power, regarding liberty, humanity and justice as nothing "but a swindle devised by the weak as a protection against the strong." The [right wing critique of liberal] ideologies is a comfortable one. According to Adorno: "It consists mainly in shifting from the insight into bad reality…[Freedom] develops only through the natural world's resistance to man. . . Culture is not, as with Spengler, the life of self-developing souls, but rather the struggle of men for the conditions of their perpetuation."[55]

In the most penetrating analysis of Spengler published in America to that time, Adorno in conclusion recast the suggestion that *The Decline* had expressed a fair forewarning to the New World's democratic society:

> There is no chance of evading the magic circle of Spengler's morphology by defaming barbarism and relaying upon the healthiness of Culture… Instead we should become aware that the element of barbarism is inherent in Culture itself. Only these considerations that challenge the idea of Culture, no less than they challenge the reality of barbarism, have a chance to survive Spengler's verdict.[56]

The *émigré'* professor Hans Weigert agreed with Adorno 's assessment of Spengler's importance. "In 1942 *The Decline of The West* is more than antiquated best-seller," he wrote in *Foreign Affairs.* "The similarity of atmosphere between this destiny laden year and the year in which he wrote has bought about renaissance of Spenglerism among writers of politics and philosophy and what is more important, among the youth."[57]

Weigert , like Adorno, accused American scholars of dealing superficially with Spengler. As a result, Spenglerism was often adopted without critical understanding of its fundamental dangers. Weigert maintained that because Spengler consciously eliminated man as a creative factor, he was fatal to the war-effort of the West. "If our youth should succumb

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53 *Ibid*.pp.305- 313.
54 Novick, *That Noble*, p.281.
55 Adorno, "Spengler Today,"pp.319- 322.
56 *Ibid*.p.325.
57 Hans Weigert: "The Future in Retrospect, Oswald Spengler, Twenty Five Years After", *Foreign Affairs*, XXI, October 1942, p.120.

to the seductions of Spenglerism and view the vital crisis of our time as the death agony of the West, "he warned, and then indeed Spengler would have been right. . . "[58]

Spengler in the War Years

By 1941, some Americans also viewed Spengler as a prophet to be taken seriously, as they saw in world events the vindication of his theories.[59] Nicholas Murray Butler, already on record regarding *The Decline*, now called it "one of the four outstanding contributions to the philosophy of history published in the year just prior to 1939." It was received, he said, in countries other than Germany with tempered interest. As time passed, the interest increased and the sarcasm decreased. After discussing war, Butler asked if it were possible that Spengler was right in his contention that the decline of the West was obvious and certain. Circumstances seem to have made Butler more welcoming to Spengler's descriptions.

Spengler was hailed as a realist in his view of politics and world events. Critics seemed to agree that there had arisen a "false" Spengler myth—partly because of the rise of Adolph Hitler—while Spengler in fact remained an enigma. Merle Boyer maintained that, as of 1939, no completely satisfying intellectual refutation of Spengler's thesis had attained the American general reader; he was thus hard to write off. Dr. Karl Heim of Tübingen University, on a visit to America, acknowledged that he knew of no proper repudiation of Spengler's dangerous theories and added that for Christians, none is necessary. Spengler's strengths and wide authority, however, rested on his creative powers as a literary artist and on his sharp intuition and conclusions.[60]

Presenting a new compilation of Spengler's writings in 1940, Edwin Dakin wished that Americans had listened to the German pessimist earlier. "Americans could have regarded Spengler in the Twenties as a warning . . . when Spengler was declaring that only the strong nation could be free."[61] Dakin realized that most readers would probably disagree with Spengler's judgements on the weakness of democracy, but felt that events had confirmed "views [that] could be hardly ignored." There were signs that at last men might be ready to understand Spengler's message, Dakin continued. " Spengler wrote in an age when belief in progress and democracy and man's free will still burned brightly…But time seems to be giving Spengler the status of a prophet—perhaps the greatest of our age and Culture."

Moreover, in Dakin's view, Spengler's prophesies had been coming true sooner than anticipated. The unfolding of world-events was proof he was a true visionary. Agreeing with Boyer and Hein, Dakin asserted that Spengler's work had received no adequate criticism in any language. Its reception by distinguished American critics had been enthusiastic, but did not give Spengler the credit for being right, because, "he was describing a world that Americans hopefully regarded as historically outmoded—a world where force prevailed, and ideals not backed with force, eager to fight, were powerless."[62]

Writing in the context of the French defeat in the Western-front in 1941, literary historian Oscar Cargill reminded Americans that "a study of Spengler would have prepared the Western democracies for the triumph of Hitler in Germany and end of the Republic in

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58 *Ibid.*, p.124.

59 Nicholas Murray Butler, *Why War?* (New York, 1941),pp. 49-54.

60 Merle W. Boyer, "Oswald Spengler, Historian and Philosopher," *Lutheran Church Quarterly*, X, 1939, pp.157-70.

61 Edwin Dakin, "American Communiqué," in *Today and Destiny, Vital Excerpts from the Decline of the West*, (New York, 1940), p. 305.

62 Edwin F Dakin, *Today and Destiny*, p. 305: and "Introduction."

1933." Cargill credited Spengler as the mastermind behind the Nazi victory, repeating old arguments regarding the Nazi debt to his work.[63]

What especially disturbed American's during the Second World War was Spengler's prophesy for the future their own country. In Spengler's view the U.S., as previously noted, was not a "nation" in the Hegelian sense, because its history did not contain elements of common historical tragedy, such as formed the souls of the European nations. Rather the United States was a society organized exclusively on an economic basis, and accordingly lacked "national" depth. Because of the shared powers of President and Congress, the execution of national authority would become unworkable in time of real danger.[64]. The United States would become a formless power without any genuine political leader —if it failed to think and act in accordance with truly "national" politics.

Yet developments within the United States were already allaying these fears. Franklin D. Roosevelt's government dispelled Spengler's doubts about the capability of the American leadership, wrote émigré professor Hans Weigert. Spengler did not understand the "living forces" in England and America. "Spengler was blinded by what he believed to be the decadence of the Anglo-American world. His basic mistake was to fail to realize that the infected bodies of nations may develop antitoxins strong enough to save their lives."[65]

In *The Republic, Conversations on Fundamentals* (1943) Charles Beard's on-again, off-again, relation with Spengler also took a new turn. In these "Platonic discourses," Beard's imaginary partner Dr Smyth anxiously asked if Spengler had correctly restated the original Puritan-Calvinist notion of predestination with reference to the West. For Smyth this was "the ultimate question."— "[If]Spengler was proved right…despite our talk of constitutionals, . . . and the effort to maintain the ideals of liberty and justice . . must the Republic be turned into an empire, like the Roman Republic, and dissolve to ruins?" [66]

To Smyth's question, Beard patiently explained the roots of cyclical theory, assuring his partner that Spengler, "leaves the door of human hope slightly ajar, as I read between the lines." So too had Brooks Adams in the *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, he added with reference to this now-forgotten work, because Adams also "was not sure what happened in the winter [of civilization]."

Comforting his fictional partner, while reaffirming his faith in American civilization, Beard reasserted his confidence in the exceptionalism of the American Republic. " Despite Adams's and Spengler's theories of historical predestination," Beard wrote, "America is fated to be America... besides fate or determinism, there is *creative intelligence* in the world… and all the pulling and hauling of world-planners cannot alter the fact."[67]

In March 1944, Beard's fictional conversation concerning the destiny of civilizations was published in Henry Luce's *Life* magazine, beaming Beard's hopeful message to a larger "middlebrow" American public. Anticipating Whittaker Chamber's essay on Arnold Toynbee, "Our Civilization is Not Inexorably Doomed" to be published in Luce's *Time* magazine in 1947, Beard's message was intended to pacify Americans in a time of global conflict, putting Spengler to yet another use.

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63 Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America: Ideas on the March*, (New York, 1941, 1968, re-print), p.31.
64 *The Decline* II, p.416.
65 Weigert, "The Future," p.129.
66 Charles A. Beard, *The Republic: Conversations on Fund*amentals,(New York, 1943), p. 332.
67 *Ibid*., 341-342.

CH.7.ARNOLD TOYNBEE, WORLD HISTORIAN

1. The Historian as Statesman

During the 1940s and the 1950s, British historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889-1975) became an influential although controversial public figure in the United States. Publisher Henry Luce called Toynbee's *A Study of History*; "one of the most ambitious chores the human brain has ever undertaken." Critics such as fellow British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper called it "perversion of history." [1]

During the years 1947-1955, following the publishing success of an abridgement of the earlier volumes *Toynbee's* history in 1947, most educated persons in the United States had either read or heard of Toynbee. "Toynbee's importance in twentieth-century thought can scarcely be exaggerated," Paul Costello has written, and for good reason:

> There has been perhaps no other historian in the century able to master as extensive a wealth of historical detail from such a far-flung variety of civilizations, no more cohesive and throughout an applied paradigm of universal history, no more dramatic expression of the present crisis facing the world and the West, and no more ambitious study of the interrelationships between religious and secular history.[2]

Toynbee's appeal was also related to the outbreak of the Cold War, statesman George Kennan added, his history clearly met a felt need of many Americans.[3]

The study in question was an unlikely candidate for such attention and influence**.** Published in 12-volumes between 1934 and 1961, *A Study of History* was nothing less than a history of the world. Volumes I-III appeared in 1934, volumes, IV-VI in 1939, and the final volumes, VII-X in 1954. Later the Oxford University Press published *A Study of History* vol.XI, *Historical atlas and gazetteer*, in 1959, later Toynbee's answer to his critics, "Reconsiderations," was published as volume XII in 1961—these final volumes completed Toynbee's gargantuan assignment.

The work of a single scholar, the volumes displayed enormous scholarship, analyzing the dynamics of the growth and decay in some twenty-one civilizations, both ancient and modern. *A Study* also continued a debate begun by Brooks Adams and Oswald Spengler, concerning both the value of metahistorical study and the role of United States in world-history. Who was this Toynbee, and how did he come to have such influence in the U.S. in the early years of the Cold War?

Background and War Service

Born in London, Arnold Toynbee studied at Balliol College, Oxford. After receiving his degree in classics, he made a nine months trek on foot through Crete and the Athos peninsula, and studied archaeology in Athens. From 1919 to 1924 he was professor of Byzantine and modern Greek history and literature at the University of London (1919-1924) and later director of studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, also in London

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1 Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Testing the Toynbee System," in Ashley Montagu ed,.*Toynbee and History*,(Boston, 1956). "The Prophet," *The New York Review of Books*, Oct.12, 1989, p.28.

2 Costello, *World Historians*, p. 70.

3George Kennan, "The History of Arnold Toynbee," *The New York Review of Books*, June 1,1989,p. 19.

(1925-1955). During the 1930's he molded the opinion of world leadership, by writing part of *the Economist's* influential editorials.[4]

When Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, Toynbee moved to Oxford to become the director of the *Foreign Research and Press Service* of the British government. During the war he assumed a leading role in British discussion of possible terms of peace, setting up a Peace Aims-section of the F.R.P.S to advise official British policy with respect to postwar settlements.[5]

During his tenure at the F.R.P.S. Toynbee established important connections in the United States. In 1939 he sent notes and outlines of the remaining parts of *A Study* to New York where the Council on Foreign Relations stored the papers until the war was over. In the summer of 1942, on an invitation from the Rockefeller Foundation, he visited the United States "to consult on post-war problems." Preparing for the trip he told his friend Nigel Ronald in the British Foreign Office that history and contemporary affairs went hand in hand, " It would be difficult to speak at all without getting on to current international politics, even if one talked on ancient history, the audiences would be disappointed, if they could not draw one on current burning questions ..."[6]

Toynbee Visits America

After two weeks in Washington Toynbee began a grand tour that took him to more than a dozen American cities, including Houston, Los Angeles and Chicago. At a Foreign Affairs Committee dinner in Los Angeles he met celebrities such as Walt Disney. [7] Toynbee's lectures laid the basis for his good relations with the American political and financial establishment after the war. The most important meeting occurred at Princeton on 9 October 1942, where he met John Foster Dulles (future Secretary of State) and influential American Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Toynbee's message to them was simple and direct: "there should be a new World Government for the world, a League to convert Germany and other nations to more humane and Christian principles."[8]

Returning from the United States, Toynbee wrote in astonishment "of the security, wealth, leisure and surplus energy" he had witnessed in America. Toynbee was also impressed by American willingness to sacrifice in the "Time of Troubles" in Western civilization. Contradicting Spengler's negative evaluation of American political leadership, Toynbee wrote: "when the war took a more serious turn, this would demand fairly severe personal sacrifices [and] the American people would rise to the occasion."[9]

During his trip, Toynbee made some important converts through his unexpected challenge to traditional American isolationism. One of these disciples was Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* magazines and a leading figure in the Republican party.

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4 S. Fiona Morton, ed, *A Bibliography of Arnold Toynbee*,(Oxford.U. Press, 1980).

5 R.Keyserlink, "Arnold Toynbee's Foreign Research and Press Service 1939 - 1943 and its Post-War Plans for South -East Europe," *The Journal of Contemporary History,* no 4. Oct., 1986, p. 539.

6 Bodleian library, AJT-papers, Toynbee's letter to N.B. Ronald, Esq., 7 July 1942.

7 Boleian library, Toynbee papers, Gibson, Dunn &Crutches Lawyers; report on Arnold Toynbee's travels, in America.

8 Bodleian library, AJT-papers, Report of the meeting with A.J.T. and the Houston Committee on Foreign Relations, 1942.

9Bodleian library, AJT-papers, Toynbee's confidential report to the Foreign Press Service, considering his visit to the United States 23th August -to 20th October, 1942.

During the war Luce had become a powerful shaper of American opinion and especially of decision-makers, in contrast to Alfred A. Knopf who promoted Spengler to a more "high brow" intellectual audience. Toynbee first met Luce on October 7 1943 and spent an evening with him *on* October 19th In his subsequent report, he referred to this meeting favorably, commenting that "the demand of liquidation of imperialism through international administration has been stimulated by Mr. Henry Luce's articles."

In his report, Toynbee also reflected on the course of the war. Regarding the changing tide in the war in Pacific following the Battle of Midway, he commented that “the turn in the war meant that the American Armed forces will pay the heaviest price in casualties in the re-conquest from the Japanese."[10] This turn, in the long run, would mean greater American participation in world- affairs and the waning of isolationism.

Toynbee noted further that Americans were, in general, aware of the [compulsory] future participation of the United States in the post-war collective security system and international co-operation. "They are conscious of the urgency of educating American public opinion now, in order to have a bulwark ready against the day when the tide of isolationism will flow again." Regarding American isolationism after the war, Toynbee added, "on the whole, I got the impression that while isolationism remains a formidable latent force, it is unlikely to return, after this war, with the strength, as after the war of 1914-18."[11] The participation of the United States would form a nucleus for a post-war global world-order.

In Toynbee's opinion the abolition of the “anachronistic institution of war” was the critical challenge confronting Western civilization in the post-war era. In Toynbee's scenario the choice was between a world-conquering empire, on the Roman model, and some sort of voluntary federation, for which the League of Nations and the Achean and Aetolian leagues of ancient Greece offered historical precedents.

As the tide of war turned against Hitler, the relations of the United States and the Soviet Union were most crucial to the future of Great Britain and the world. Toynbee wrote to a close friend:

> In the last resort all depends on whether Stalin and the capitalist core of the Republican Party in the U.S. can, or can't get on together. If they can't we shall have a third world war and then a Pax Americana or Pax Russica. What we are fighting for now is another chance of building a world order which, instead of being imposed by a single Power (Germany, if she were to win this war, or America or Russia if there is a third war), will be co-operative and will therefore leave room for a great deal of liberty in the world.[12]

After taking part in the Paris peace negotiations from April till mid- July 1946 and after that resigning from the *Fore*ign Office, Toynbee resumed his role as the director of the *Royal Institute for the International Affairs* in London. Because of his wartime work Toynbee was offered a knighthood, which he modestly declined. Completing *A Study of History* remained

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10 Bodleian library, AJT-papers, Toynbee's confidential report to the Foreign Press Service, considering his visit to the United States 23th August -to 20th October 1942.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Arnold Toynbee to Columbia Cary-Elwes, 19, may 1944, in *An Historians Conscience - The Correspondence of Arnold J. Toynbee and Columbia Cary Elwes, Monk of Ampleforth*, (Boston, 1986), p.163.

by far his greatest task, which he completed while he was Research Professor of International History at the University of London.

Toynbee's appeal to Americans had much to do with the man himself. Unlike Spengler who championed the "German mind," he was a British gentleman who had high visibility in the international arena and connections to world leaders. Also unlike Spengler, a German pessimist who never visited America, Toynbee enjoyed American culture, preferring Bing Crosby to Wagner, Spengler's favorite.

In the aftermath of World War II and the rise of the Cold War Toynbee suddenly became one of the best-known and sought-after historians in the United States. In March 1946 1.5 million copies of *Time* spread his comforting message "Our Civilization is not Inexorably Doomed," for which *Time* had 14,000 requests for reprints D.C. Somervell's abridgement of the first six volumes *A Study* initially sold 100, 000 copies by September 1947.[13] Thanks to the Luce press the universal historian became a global prophet of Western Christian civilization just at the time of the birth of the "Truman doctrine" in the late winter of 1947.

2. A Study of History

The Cycle of Civilizations: "Challenge and Response"

Toynbee, like Adams and Spengler before him, argued that history develops through cyclical patterns. Also like these predecessors, he insisted that all history should be studied from a point of view of "civilizations, since these, not "nations," are the smallest intelligible units for explaining historical change."[14] Unlike these predecessors, however, Toynbee was a professionally trained historian, a fact that lent weight to his claim to have discovered "standard patterns of development" in world history.

These "spiritual laws," as Toynbee termed them, were common to all civilizations. These cultural units developed through a process of "challenge and response." Each "civilization" during its lifetime encountered challenges (like climatic change, savage neighbors etc.). Response to these trials, either creative or uncreative, brought out the true character of the particular civilization and its citizens. "Civilizations grow," Toynbee wrote, "through *élan* that carries them from challenge through response to further challenge, and from differentiation through integration to differentiation again, "from achievement to fresh struggles, from the solution of one problem to the presentation, from momentary rest to reiterated movement, from Yin to Yang again."[15]

Toynbee's view of the pulse of life— similar to Tao Te Ching's *Yin* (the matrix in which events unfold, the receptive and feminine) /*Yang* (identified with action, the masculine)-dualism— did not postulate a categorically closed system of cyclical sequence, as with Spengler, but rather pictured an open structure that had no predestined end. Enlightened by a "Divine spirit," these historical cycles were not one-way tickets to doom, but open to successful and intuitive human responses. Petrified civilizations were not "dead by fate," nor was "a living civilization… doomed in advance . . . to join the majority of its kind that have suffered shipwreck." Rather, previous civilizations had died from "inside" by adopting patterns of "wrong responses."[16]

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13 William McNeill, *Arnold J.Toynbee: A Life*, (New York, 1989),pp.212-215.

14 *A Study*, Abridgement by D.C.Somervell, (New York, 1946), I, p.20

15 Toynbee, *A Study*, revised and abridged by Arnold Toynbee & Jane Caplan, (New York, 1975), p.136.

16 *A Study*, IV, p.39

Rather than inevitably declining, the West was willfully committing suicide as it approached its nadir in the civilizational cycle. Civilizations break-down by *self-failure* – a result from a failure in *creativity*. This pattern of conduct leading to decadence results from an idolization of an outworn technique or institution that had been effective for one challenge, but not for the next one. Drawing on the sociological theory of "cultural lag," he explained that the dead weight of old institutions gets in the way when the new challenge presents itself. Reverting to Scripture he observed that Jesus made the same point: "neither do men put new wine into old bottles — else the bottles break and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish, but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."[17]

For Toynbee civilizations broke down because of the moral and spiritual degeneration of their members, an argument close to the ideas of British religious-conservatives Hilaire Belloc and C.K. Chesterton. The same religious interpretation of the liberal West was represented in the United States by the Catholic historian Carlton J. Hayes, for whom the cataclysmic state of world-politics in the 1930s was the consequence of "the rise of liberalism with its atomizing of society...a decline of traditional religion and an obscuring of religious values…"[18]

When a civilization was ravaged by the wars resulting from the "anti-ecumenical" national spirit, it entered its Time of Troubles. In a famous metaphor Toynbee described civilizations as climbing in their course of life: "all societies in their process of civilization are endeavoring to reach an unseen ledge above, and for all we know…the number of ledges above this and below that may be infinite in both directions."[19] Following difficult times, a civilization in crisis found its ledge of rest in the *Universal State*. The "Time of Troubles" in civilization gave birth to a universal government, resembling *Pax Romana.* The "schism in the body social" and "schism in the soul" manifest this process of disintegration, he wrote in volume 5. [*the Disintegration of the Civilizations*]. Civilization's breakdown was the chrysalis of a new Universal Church or Universal State which transcended the societies in crisis and dissolved their petty disputes into ecumenical spirit.

The sociology of a civilization's breakdown was one of Toynbee's most imaginative historical constructions. The dynamic of change was the result of three minorities *Internal Proletariat, External Proletariat* and *Dominant Minority* ("proletariat" in Toynbee's terminology, meaning that they had no stake, intellectually or economically, in their community). For example in "Hellenic civilization," the "dominant minority" was the Romans, governing by force.

The most important creative act of a civilization was accomplished by the Internal Proletariat, which produced higher religion, such as Christians produced Christianity inside the "Hellenic civilization." The "external proletariat," were the barbarians living outside the control of the "dominant minority" and posed a constant threat to the civilization's core. But the final crisis came from inside the civilization, the result of its failure to provide a creative answer to the prevailing "Schism in the Soul."

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17 *A Study*, IV., p. 133.Same conclusion of civilization's suicidal spiritual breakdown is also deducted by a Italian esoteric philosopher Julius Evola,"when civilizations generating root from above is worn out, the inner strength abdicates… civilizations collapses,", *Revolt Against The Modern World*,(1932, Vermont 1995 reprint) p.58.

18Carlton J. Hayes, quoted in Novick, *That Noble Dream:The "Objectivity Question" And The American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge, 1988), p.244.

19 *A Study*, I, p.196.

Hope for the future in any civilization rested with the Internal Proletariat, because they were capable of creating a new religion, while dissolving the ravaging “Schism of the Soul.” In the tyranny of the “Dominant Minority's” rule, the Internal Proletariat created a subculture of its own. Against the static repression of the “Dominant Minority” the Internal Proletariat created a dynamic reaction. Through the secession of a “proletariat” from the “Dominant Minority,” a new civilization generated itself through the transition phase from a, *Yin*-static condition, to a dynamic *Yang*-activity.[20] This process Toynbee called "withdrawal and return," meaning that some members of the Internal Proletariat withdrew from the world to find an answer confronting the society. During this process of withdrawal God incarnated in man and the "savior" returned to his community.[21]

Successful creative genius was thus God incarnate in man. The ruling “false saviors” were Anarchists and Futurists who would save the civilization by turning the clock of the civilization either backward or forward. A real savior, according to Toynbee, emphasized spiritual options, thus disarming the “false saviors.” In Toynbee’s classification, the creative saviors in world history have been such figures as Buddha, Jesus, and Solon — world-historical figures who brought a spark of divine inspiration to their community. A society based on purely secular basis stood on quicksand and was bound to perish. [22] The suffering inherent in the down turning wheel of civilization promotes spiritual growth,

Toynbee thus rejected Oswald Spengler’s deterministic view that cultures are living organisms, naturally doomed to age and die. While noting definite patterns in the course of high cultures, he did not accept decline as inevitable. Clarifying the distinction between Oswald Spengler's organic theory and his own, Toynbee wrote, "To declare dogmatically that every society has a predestined time-span is as foolish as it would be to declare that every play that is written and produced is bound to consist of just so many acts. ” With this anti-determinism he advanced his theory of the genesis and growth of civilizations rooted in mystical creativity and the goal of human evolution of saintly supermen in ecumenical unity. [23] Thus he disagreed that civilization exerts a degrading influence upon people, leading them regressively downward with each passing generation— a theme of Brooks Adams's *The Law of Civilization and Decay* and its insistence that barbarian blood had restored Europe after the collapse of Rome.

Historical Method

Toynbee's view of history also had methodological implications. In the West, modern institutions of "nationalism" and "industrialism" blinded modern man's vision to "meaningful" history, he wrote. With their overemphasis on assembling raw material from national archives, scholars could not produce history with reference to an emerging larger global world-system, which *A Study*, in the final analysis, promoted.[24] In a supplementary volume to *A Study*, he classified the *I- Ching*, and his own history as similar types of holistic endeavor. “Like the Taoist” he himself was looking for a peace of mind “through classification." Toynbee wrote:

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20 *A Study*, V,pp.31-63.

21 A Study, VI, p.175; also “Creative Genius as savior;” “The God incarnate in a man,” *Ibid*., 259-278.

22 *Ibid*.

23 *A Study*, IV, p.12; *Ibid*., I, pp.159,194.

24 *A Study*, I, pp.1-2,10-11.

> In the field of human affairs, curiosity prompts us to take a panoramic view in order to gain a vision of Reality that will make it as intelligible as is possible for the human mind. History certainly justifies a dictum of Einstein that no great discovery was ever made in science except by one who lifted his nose above the grindstone of details and ventured on a more comprehensive vision.[25]

Toynbee opposed the [falsely understood] Rankean emphasis on scientific empiricism and the collection of "facts" around the skeleton of national history. He consciously struck a blow against specialized and “scientific” studies which isolate tiny fragments of experience for intensive study. According to Kenneth Thompson, “His chief foe, however, was not the discrete use of the scientific techniques but rather the idolatry of the method and the ready acceptance of the superficial philosophy of 'scientism' with its easy optimism and materialism."[26]

In contrast, Toynbee believed that the "divine laws" governing civilizations could be interpreted through sensitive understanding of myths and high religions. Following Freud's disciple Carl G. Jung, he argued that the racial collective psyche contains structures that fundamentally govern the growth and the decay of civilizations. The subconscious, not the intellect, is the organ through which humans and their civilizations live a spiritual life for good or evil. The basis and justification for Toynbee's "one-worldly vision” from the 1940s onward was a conviction of "the ultimate spiritual Self transcending all boundaries." According to Toynbee this divine substance, in the final analysis, governed the laws that informed the lifecycles of civilizations.[27]

In this way, Toynbee re-introduced God into history, and with Him the question of ultimate meaning in history. Although Toynbee’s inspiration for writing *A Study of History* derived from a belief in the value of “synoptic view of history,” his religious belief sustained the conviction that true historical consciousness must be grounded in the sacred. In his *magnum opus* he hoped to educate modern Western secular readers to the “selflessness of the saints.” This, according to Toynbee, was the only way to avoid the disasters facing modern Western civilization as it headed into the “Atomic Age.”[28]

Refutation of the Whig Paradigm

Among Toynbee’s challenges to traditional historiography, none was greater than his attack on the "Whig interpretation of history," a staple of the Progressive history of the early Charles Beard and his contemporaries no less than of most 19th century America (and British) historians.

Nineteenth century historical giants like Lord Acton in England and George Bancroft in America saw the struggle for freedom as forming history’s master pattern. In the Whig-paradigm, this evolutionary process was assumed to be automatic—first in the Anglo-Saxon world, then world-wide. The Whig-paradigm was one example of Victorian historicism, which progressively assumed that "backward peoples" would follow the Anglo-Americans to

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25 *A Study*, XII, p.136-137.

26 Kenneth Thompson, *Toynbee’s Philosophy and World Politics*, (Baton Rouge, 1985),p.215.

27 Percival Martin, *Experiment in Depth: A Study of the Work of Jung, Eliot and Toynbee* (London 1955),pp. 14, 248, 254.

28 Arnold Toynbee, “A Study of History, What I Am Trying to Do,” in Ashley Montague ed., *Toynbee and History Critical Essays and Reviews*, (Boston, 1956), p.11.

liberty. One monumental endeavor to write world-history according this paradigm was *the Cambridge Modern History*. Planned by Lord Acton, it portrayed world history as the "progress of parliamentary democracy and freedom."[29]

Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947, Toynbee dramatized his opposition to this view in a characterization of Victorians celebrating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897:

> The middle-class English in 1897, who thought of themselves as Wellsian rationalists living in the scientific age, took their imaginary miracle for granted. As they saw it, the evolution of history, for them, was accomplished…they had every reason to congratulate themselves on the permanent state of felicity, which this ending of history had conferred on them…in the United States, for instance, in the North, history, for the middle class, had come to an end with the winning of the West and the Federal victory in the Civil War.[30]

The Whig interpretation, that is, not only viewed history as the triumph of liberty, reason, and representative government but effectively postulated an End to History itself.

Several developments drove Toynbee to refute this paradigm. The first was his bitter experiences during the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference, which appeared to betray wartime visions of the triumph of democracy. A second was the discovery by archeologists of cultural artifacts of "lost civilizations"—the most dramatic being the opening of the Thutankamen grave in 1922—discoveries that seemed to confirm Spengler's cultural relativism.[31] The diversity and the richness of the ancient cultures, whose "challenges and responses" had long ago led to death, made it hard for the aspiring British historian to believe in what he called the "Late Modern" Anglo-Saxon exclusive model of historical development. The new findings also confirmed Toynbee's conviction that the only "intelligible unit of history" is "civilization," since the "nation" was clearly too small to contain the cultural diversity the new archaeological findings had uncovered. New conceptualizations in anthropology also undercut the paradigmatic scheme of Antiquity, Middle Ages, and Modern in historical study.[32]

According to Toynbee, "the Late Modern view" of the Victorians was a reflection of the "halcyon days" which they "fatuously expected to endure to eternity." From the failure of the second Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683, to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Western Europe dominated the rest of the World, while the middle class dominated the rest of the population within Western Europe. The "Western interpretation of history" had its basis

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29 Ernest May, "When is Historiography Whiggish?," *The Journal of The History of Ideas*, April-May, 1990, p. 301. The term "Whig Interpretation.." was defined by English the British historian Herbert Butterfield in 1932 —in short it described Anglo Saxon liberal 19th century linear view of history, which interpreted history of mankind, as if, it was rise from Mesopotamia to the glorious age of "Democracy and Progress." Also Herbert Butterfield, *Whig Interpretation of History*, (London 1932), and J.B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress.* (London 1932).

30 Arnold Toynbee, "The Present Point in History," *Foreign Affairs*, Oct.1947,p.188.

31 William McNeill, "Toynbee's Life and Thought: Some Unresolved Questions," in *Toynbee Reappraisals*, ed. by C.T.McIntire & Marvin Perry (Toronto 1989); Toynbee "A Study Of History: What I Am Trying to Do," in Montagu.

32 Toynbee, "A Study, What I Am Trying To Do," p.5.

only in this domination, and the economic and political impact Europe had made on the rest of the world.

Nineteenth century historians viewed history as a movement in a straight line leading to twentieth century “Europe” and “Britain. In this antiquated “Late Modern” picture there was no room at all for China or India. Toynbee suggested that the beanstalk pattern of Whig history must be diversified to complicate this view, because “in this age our Western civilization has collided with other surviving civilizations all over the world–with the Islamic and Hindu.” Or as he once put it: "The encounter between the World and West may prove, in retrospect, to be the most important event in modern history."[33] To explain this, he recommended that,” Modern Historians” turn to psychology, anthropology, sociology, and economics.[34]

A post-Christian understanding of world religions was central to the effort “[As] I have gone on, Religion has come to take the central place in my picture of the Universe," he wrote. "Yet I have not returned to the religious [outlook of Christianity] I have now come to believe that all historical religions and philosophies are partial of the one truth …I believe that Buddhism and Hinduism have a lesson to teach Christianity…This Indian standpoint is the one from which the last four volumes have been written.”[35]

A Universal State

In constructive Christian terms, Toynbee described an emerging world-order, repudiating Spengler's vision of an icy Western winter. Western civilization was not the highest possible form of cultural and political organization, he maintained. "Western self-glorification" had hindered historians from seeing the global challenges confronting the world, which had previously been divided by “spheres of interest” and by the politics of “balance of power.”

For Toynbee the new wine was the rising ecumenical society, the old bottles the institution of “nationalism.” For Toynbee the establishment of a global ecumenical “universal state” would guarantee the survival of Western civilization, despite Spengler's gloomy predictions. The Western world was on its way towards unification. But the paroxysm of nationalism which ravaged the world in the 1930s suggested breakdown. In the context of clashing German and French national interests in Europe. Toynbee declared,

> Unless, perhaps this frenzy was a last desperate kicking against the pricks - that the unification of our Western world might have to pass through further bouts of internecine warfare before they would either bring themselves to enter into an effective social contract, or else submit to the terrible alternative of being unified by force.[36]

Assuming the preacher's mantle, Toynbee, in contrast to many of his contemporaries, declared that Western civilization had not yet reached its “Universal State.” His highly controversial estimate, later irritating to liberal critics, was that Western civilization had begun to break down with the religious wars of 1500-1600. Following these disintegrative

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33 Toynbee, *The World and the West*,”(New York, 1953), “Preface.”

34 Toynbee, "A Study, What…,” pp. 4-5.

35 Toynbee, "A Study, What…,” pp. 6-7.

36 *A Study* IV, p.3; for a “New Left” evaluation of Toynbee’s goals in world politics, Kenneth Winetrout, *Arnold Toynbee: The Ecumenical Vision*, (Boston, 1975).

wars, the "wars of nationalism" in the twentieth century demonstrated that that the West's "Time of Troubles" was at hand. In an equally controversial statement, he continued: "A plurality of parochial totalitarian states will assuredly give place, to a single ecumenical totalitarian state, in which the forces of democracy and industrialism will at any rate secure, at last, their natural worldwide field of operations."[37] Liberal critics later interpreted this statement as a call for surrender of the West to any totalitarian ecumenical world order—including the Soviet one, an issue that would soon alienate many of his American supporters.

3. Toynbee on America

A Footnote to World History

Agreeing with Spengler that America was only a "young" part of Western civilization, Toynbee gave the New World relatively little attention in *A Study of History,* and at no point devoted a chapter exclusively to the United States. In his later writings he elaborated his thoughts on America, now recognizing that United States was the actual leader of the West. But he now insisted that its virtues had grown into sins. As a “would be missionary” to the rest of the world, the United States suffered from two insulating factors, “affluence” and “race-feelings.” The United States also suffered from "arrogance of power," because a series of victories in war had blurred the American sense of defeat.

In the third volume of *A Study of History,* Toynbee treated the United States as the foremost country in the “Extra-European world,” a phrase acknowledging European primacy in its creation. This process resulted in the dwarfing of Europe which called a new world into being "not to redress, but to upset the balance of the old”[38] Viewing the religious rifts of the Reformation and the subsequent wars of religion as beginning of Western decline, he agreed, in spirit, with Brooks Adams’s conclusions that the Reformation in England was a misfortune for mankind, by creating a ”modern civilization” based on the”modern economic type [discarding] the miracle.”[39] Toynbee wrote: “Western time of troubles, which appears to have begun somewhere, in the sixteenth century [when the religious wars began]… and may be expected to find end some time in the twentieth century…”[40]

The “Protestant temperament in regard to race” in particular, was inspired by the Old Testament notion of a chosen people occupying the Promised Land. The evils of racialism and racial supremacy were projected on a global scale in the eighteenth century with the victory of the English-speaking Protestants in the Seven Years War. “Thus the race-feeling engendered by the English Protestant version of our Western culture became the determining factor in the development of race-feeling [of the elected nation] in our Western society as a whole.”[41]

After winning the colonial struggle, Toynbee continued, the Protestant elect in the United States proceeded to inflict “a swifter and more crushing defeat on the Southerners, “ while at the same time the Winning of the West was a New England triumph over the “stimulus of the hard countries.”[42] The hard winters and rocky soils of New England

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37 *Ibid*., IV, 179.

38 *A Study*, III,p.304.

39 Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, (1951, Knopf, reprint), pp.201-210.

40 *A Study*,VI,p.319.

41 *A Study* I, pp.208-211.

42 *A Study* II, pp.65-73.

toughened the men who conquered the American West, while the "challenge" of religious repression invigorated solidarity and deepened the faith of the Puritans. [43]

Toynbee held an older view of the Civil War as a war against slavery, fastened upon the South by industrial England's demand for cotton. But, like Spengler in the *Decline*, Toynbee saw the military developments of the Civil War creating a new form of warfare, which would be potentially fatal to the entire Western civilization. The Civil War introduced the application of the driving forces of the modern West—Democracy as well as Industrialism—to abolish "an ancient evil of Slavery." Toynbee wrote:

> American Civil War was ominous for the future of our Western Civilization…in putting an end to Slavery…The Northerners fought the Slave Power with railways and with heavy artillery; but these weapons forged by Industrialism would not have decided the issue by themselves if they had not been combined with conscription; and conscription is a weapon that has been placed in a belligerent Government's hand by Democracy…the American Civil War had an effect in the military sphere which was profoundly evil. It carried our Western Society a long step forward in the process of "keying up" War and thus making War a more terrible scourge than it had been in the past.[44]

The Civil War purged industrial America of slavery, while stifling the South. In defeat, formerly-exalted Virginians and South Carolinians became obsessed with the ghosts of their past, whereas humble North Carolina had nowhere to fall, and [according to the spiritual law of the "elevation of the meek"] had to go upward.

Meanwhile, the American colossus in isolation grew to the surprise of the world. Toynbee compared the Monroe doctrine to the British policy of supporting the Ottoman Empire against the insatiable demands of its imperial neighbors; and U.S. continental expansion to the eastern expansion of the *Hapsburg* power after 1526.[45] The emergence of the United States as a world power took place in the victory in the Spanish -American war and brought new commitments overseas.[46] In his references to Woodrow Wilson, Toynbee called the progressive crusader a "nationalist destroyer of the *Hapsburg* empire" and a "prize example of an incompetent statesman."[47]

Abandoning its previous isolationism, the United States was drawn into World War II, and the balance of power ended its cycle, reducing the major powers to the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States presents its high standard of living as evidence of success, he wrote in 1947, but as one of "the prophet of America's decline" he was inclined to believe that American success would not be enduring. Nor did he believe that the United States could escape "class- conflict," in which the complacent middle class would eventually be wiped out in the ruthless workings of capitalism.[48]

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43 A Study, II, pp.15,65-73,203.

44 A Study, IV, pp.141-142.

45 *A Study* IX, pp, 240-241.

46 *A Study* IX, p. 240- *note.*

47 Toynbee's assessment of Woodrow Wilson, *A Study* IX, pp.14, 193,note, 582,722,724.

48 Toynbee, "The Present Point…," pp.188-199.

And End by Opposing Them

In *America and the World Revolution* (1962) Toynbee summarized and supplemented his earlier views. America now seemed the leader of the 20th century anti-revolutionary movements world-wide. Liberalism in the Americans sense meant The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, incorporating Montesquieu's principles and demonstrating that people could create an effective government. Yet Toynbee opined that liberal capitalism reduced society to a collection of self-seeking, disconnected individuals whose highest idea is profit— echoing Adams's attack on the "Gold-Bug" and Spengler's indictment of “money men” in the final phases of Civilization.

Agreeing with 19th century conservatives, Toynbee rejected the American progressive educationalists viewpoint, that evil is a product of a faulty environment, and re-stated the Christian view of man’s inherent sinfulness. Having originated in the Christian belief in the sacredness of the individual soul the liberal conception of personal liberty suffered from an inherited weakness, as liberals removed religious sanctions from the ideal of individual rights. In separating freedom from its Christian context, liberalism could not fulfill its promised aim of promoting human liberty. Conceived purely in secular terms the liberal idea of liberty is powerless to contain human wickedness. Because the United States was an individualistic and materialistic nation, depending on consumer goods and advertising, it had to defend its vested material interests throughout the world through a growing global hegemony. The American Revolution was "the shot heard around the world," followed by subsequent revolutions, which freed many from oppressive empires during 19th century national revolutions. Following the Communist revolution in 1917, he concluded simplistically, the United States became the "arch-conservative power," because rich people in America saw Communism as a “threat to their pocket-books."[49]

After World War II the United States became the leader in the West, “a giant power in its influence.” But American size offended the world— size being always a sensitive issue among people of normal stature. American affluence also handicapped the United States foreign policy in its dealings with the world's nations. In an argument borrowed by many New Left advocates, Toynbee claimed that “affluence brings with it an automatic penalty. It inevitably insulates the rich minority from the poor majority of the human race… the United States [is] handicapped by affluence and racism. America can lead only if it can throw off these handicaps.”[50]

What brought the United States to this position among nations? For one thing, Toynbee reasoned, the body count of the United States in World War II had been light by comparison with those of the other nations. The United States also had a false sense of being always victorious in war. “The general lesson in that country which has so far been invariably victorious in a series of past wars is likely to be menace both to itself and to the rest of the world.” During his lifetime, Toynbee had seen this same “intoxicating experience” be known to Germany, Japan, the United States, and Israel. This series for Germany and Japan had already ended. Most other countries “have now been shaken out of mankind’s traditional acquiescence in war, as being a normal and tolerable institution.”[51]

During the Sixties, Toynbee viewed the situations in Cuba and Vietnam with profound frustration. Militarism dominated American policy-making. The armed forces were a “state within a state.” The Pentagon had assumed unbelievable control over all facets of American

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[49]Toynbee, America *and the World Revolution,* (New York, 1962), p.94-95.

[50] Toynbee, *America and,* p.116.

[51] Arnold Toynbee *Experiences,* (New York, 1969), p.231.

life. With vast power over the economy based on defense contracts, the Pentagon has secured a similar hold over the universities through research grants. “This American mood has been alarming because, since from Pearl Harbor, the United Sates has swung round from isolationism to world wide interventionism.”[52] All this resulted in the fact that The United States was suffering from intoxicating illusions in world politics.

Again agreeing with New Left critics of American foreign policy, Toynbee maintained that Americans were blinded by their fears of a monolithic Communism. ”The Americans have mistaken the identity of the adversary they have challenged in Vietnam. Their opponent there has been not the mythical monster of World Communism, but Vietnamese Nationalism.”[53] Given the still-present dangers of nuclear war, Toynbee also predicted that China “might some day make the Soviet Union and the United States huddle together for mutual protection.”[54]

From his spiritualist viewpoint Toynbee also railed against American consumerism. Since the end of human life is religion, Madison Avenue materialism could only subvert man from his spiritual ends. “The true end of man is not to possess the maximum amount of consumer goods per head.” He foresaw a “future American revolt against Madison Avenue.” [55] Like Adams and Spengler, he also viewed democracy as an inefficient form of government. Even in the "educated" United States, he claimed, the issues of politics were becoming too complex and too technical to be grasped by even the well-educated; the problem is that their increasing incapacity to understand the issues may led them to wield their power unilaterally.[56]

Toynbee expanded his anti-American views in an interview with Norman MacKenzie published in *Playboy* in April 1967, a magazine which according to editor Barry Golson was then "hip" reading among college-educated, socially emancipated young Americans. "America is the leader of worldwide counterrevolutionary movement in defense of vested interests," he told MacKenzie. "She now stands for what Rome stood for.... Rome consistently supported the rich against the poor.”

Explaining the adverse effects of America's false materialism, he added: "America wants to play the role of the saint-George on a world wide scale and therefore needs a worldwide dragon: monolithic World Communism [while] rising student revolt against the Vietnam War may be the first symptom of a general revolt in the U.S. against the American way of life…Sooner or later, I believe there will be a strong reaction against [the American way of life] among Americans of all ages and all social classes.”[57] So spoke the man who had once been Henry Luce's favorite historian.

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52 *Ibid.*,p.236.

53 *Ibid*.,p.263.

54 Toynbee, *A Study of History*,XII,525.

55 Toynbee quoted in Edward Pressen, “Toynbee on the United Sates,” in *Toynbee Reappraisals*, ed. by C.T.McIntire & Marvin Perry (Toronto 1989), p.190.

56 Pressen, “Toynbee on the United Sates,” p.188.

57 “Interview of Arnold Toynbee,” *Playboy*, April 1967, in Barry Golson ed., *Playboy Interview*. vol. II, (New York,1983), pp. 90-101.

CH.8. TOYNBEE IN AMERICA: 1930-41

1. Religion and Relativism

When Toynbee's first volumes appeared, the Great Depression in the United States had begun. Toynbee himself called the year 1931 "annus terribilis," because of mass unemployment, widespread hunger, breakdown of international exchange, and the failure of leading financial institutions. It was also a year when democratic governments floundered: The National Socialist party gained power in Germany and Japan absorbed Manchuria. To an observer of international politics Japan's move looked like the beginning of a decay of international order and a step toward war.

The global disorder of the 1930s produced a deep-felt need for explanation. "Toynbee's vision had, or seemed to have, adequacy to the immediate experience of the 1930's, when peoples and governments drifted toward a war that no one wanted, foreseeing all the while that disaster was bound to ensue," historian William McNeill has written:

> Perhaps there were sophists in Athens after 431 B.C. who continued to teach as before, refusing to recognize that the values of Periclean Athens had reached crisis. But Plato and Thucyidides saw, felt, and thought otherwise; and therefore two of them could therefore speak to an age whose own inherited values and ways of life were adrift in very much the same fashion as had been the case in ancient Athens. [the American historian] Carl Becker and Arnold Toynbee belonged with Plato and Thucydides in this respect; for they saw that the liberal compromise had worn itself out.[1]

The search for new values intensified with increasing signs of global conflict. The Moscow trials in 1936 and Munich agreement in 1938 caused those American intellectuals to turn from Marxism in search of new absolutes.

In the early 1930s the search for absolutes (other than those of Marxism or Fascism) was already evidenced in the sudden popularity of the New Humanism of Paul Elmer More and Irving Babbitt; a reaction against an over-rationalized liberal Christianity, as expressed in John Crowe Ransom's *God Without Thunder: An Unorthdox Defense of Orthodoxy (1930)*; and a turn to the neo-Orthodox ideas of Paul Tillich's, *The Religious Situation* (1932) and Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932). [2]

Along with the search for new values, however, there existed a counter-current of relativism that denied any "objective" standard of truth, making it instead a function of individual consciousness. At its heart was a changing view of science in the post -war years. During the 1920s there was widespread feeling that the old, brute empiricism could no longer claim the mantle of science. Einstein's revolution in physics had destroyed the belief in the Newtonian causality and order, and the new quantum physics had undermined the faith in objective theory. For quantum physicists, the fundamental elements of nature did not obey the laws of causality as traditionally understood and were not "out there" in the old sense. As Danish physicist Niels Bohr explained in *Atomic Physics and the Description of Nature*

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1 William McNeill, "Arnold Toynbee," *Myth -history and Other Essays*, (Chicago, 1986), pp.180-181.

2 On American 1930s intellectual history, Terry A. Cooney, *Balancing Acts*: *American Thought and Culture In The 1930s*, (New York &; London, 1995), passim.

(Cambridge, 1934), physics had shown that simple mechanistic concepts were insufficient, shattering the basis on which the traditional stable Victorian world-view was built.

This development was part of a pattern in Western thought, as historian Ellen Nore has explained:

> Western social thought has often responded to the "science" of their times, be it the witches of St. Augustine, or the evolution of Darwin. The ripples of uncertainty produced by the new physics proved it also no exception to this generalization. As the world of the indeterminate universe crept into intellectual circles during the 1920's, the honorable ideal of social science as a series of statements of "brute facts" was further, if not finally destroyed.[3]

Einstein's theory of relativity postulated a world beyond the experience of ordinary people. Attempts to explain the new science in language comprehensible to the layman thus led to misunderstandings, especially regarding the relation between relativity and subjectivity. The fundamental contradiction was between an objective and subjective universe, Einstein argued. The relativity of time had nothing to do with consciousness. The great physicist thus termed this interest between his theory and consciousness "psychopathological."[4]

In the natural sciences one consequence was Operationalism, a concept defined and popularized in P.W Bridgman's *The Logic of Modern Physics* (1927). An experimental physicist, Bridgman held that complicated systems in physics must be broken down into simpler ones so as to allow study of elements so familiar as to require no further explanation. Further, operationalists insisted that the only valid scientific concepts are those that prescribe the means of measuring the concept. As Bridgman put it:"the concept of length involves as much as and nothing more than the set of operations by which length is determined. In general, we mean by any concept nothing more than a set of operations; the concept is synonymous with a corresponding set of operations." This redefinition was implicit in Einstein's work although not explicitly stated. [5]

A corollary was that data in research are only definable by the frame of reference of the observer who is using them. Length is a different concept when measured on earth rather than in space. Bridgman also argued that new theories produce new facts: "The first lesson of our recent experience with relativity is merely an intensification and emphasis of the lesson which all past experience has also taught, namely, that when experiment is pushed into new domains, we must be prepared for new facts, of an entirely different character from those of our former experience."[6] But Bridgman himself did not embrace the subjectivism this seemed to imply. Instead he believed that it is meaningless to interpret physical concepts except insofar as they are capable of observation.

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3 Ellen Nore, *Charles A. Beard: an Intellectual Biography*, (Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), p.158.

4 Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" And the American Historical Profession,* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.136-137.

5 P.W. Bridgman, *The Logic of Modern Physics*, (New York, 1927), ch. 1.

6 On Bridgman see http://search.eb.com/nobel/micro/86_14.html. On "operationalism" see Gary Zukav, *Dancing Wu-Li Masters: an Overview of the New Physics, (*New York, 1988), pp.44.-66.

By the mid-30s, quantitatively-minded sociologists jumped on the Operationalist bandwagon, lead by F. Stuart Chapin of the University of Minnesota and his student George A. Lundberg of the University of Washington. By "operationally," Chapin told colleagues in his presidential address to the American Sociological Association in 1935, he meant that "social concepts" must be defined "in terms of the operations and processes used in attempts to measure them or test them by experiment." Concepts not so testable were meaningless, he continued. Revealing the political pay-off, he cited the terms "social class, wage slaves, proletariat, bourgeoisie, socialite, aristocrat, plutocrat"— the vocabulary of the Left for almost a century [7]

This new ontology and epistemology, along with misunderstanding of Einsteinean relativity, spread into the social and cultural spheres. One result was skepticism and alienation. Modernist writers, discussing art and relativity, saw Einstein's work as justifying the rejection of all absolute aesthetic standards and legitimizing purely personal expression—just as Marcel Duchamp's painting The *Nude Descending the Stairs* (1912) had already depicted, in cubist-futurist form, "time and its relativity."

History, with its lingering legacy of Rankean empiricism, was a discipline most sensitive to these new ideas. Within the American historical profession “relativism” was undermining both the Rankean belief in objectivity and the New History. Historians noted that precisely those elements of science which had sustained "scientific history" were crumbling beneath their feet.

In response, some historians reverted to the notion of “history as *art*." For them it seemed no longer important to distinguish professional from "gentlemen" scholars. A major influence in this respect was Benedetto Croce, the Italian philosopher of history, who had been a promoter of American Pragmatism in Italy at the turn of the century, and frequently debated at Columbia University during the 1920s.

Oswald Spengler also influenced the turn towards philosophical and anthropological relativism. In *The Decline*, he argued that people do not create cultures, but instead cultures create and shape people. According to Spengler, there were no eternal truths; truth exists only in relation to a definite cultural historical stage of mankind: "each Culture possesses its own standards ... no general standard of morality is applicable to all humanity.” [8] According to cultural historian Bruce G. Bender, Spengler inspired anthropologist Ruth Benedict’s extreme form of cultural relativism in her *Patterns of Culture*.[9]

The debate over relativism divided American historians. At the annual meetings of the American Historical Association in 1933, Charles Beard titled his presidential address ”Written History as an Act of Faith," published in *The American Historical Review* in January 1934. Robert L. Schuyler managing editor of *The American Historical Review* complained, in contrast, that these intellectual developments contributed to the reign of "subjective idealism, which makes the very existence of the cosmos dependent upon consciousness"[10]

These political and intellectual crosscurrents shaped the reception of the first six volumes of Toynbee’s *A Study of History*. Among the reviewers were two men who had already weighed heavily in the debate over Spengler's *The Decline of the West:* Lewis

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7 Robert C. Bannister, *Sociology and Scientism* (Chapel Hill, 1987), p. 158.

8 Spengler, *The Decline* II, pp.11-12, 47.

9 Bruce G. Bender, *Staring into Chaos Explorations in the Decline of Western Civilization*, (Texas, 1994), p.94.

10 Schyler quoted in Novick, *That Noble*, p.138.

Mumford and historian Charles Beard. One other reviewer, sociologist Pitirim Sorokin, represented a wider debate that Toynbee triggered among social scientists.

2. Mixed Reviews (volumes I-III)

Lewis Mumford

In the crisis of the early 1930s, Lewis Mumford gained a new appreciation of the role of religion and religious values in history, thanks in part to conversations with Waldo Frank and Reinhold Niebuhr. [11] Although previously a religious skeptic, Mumford, in this period of rising totalitarianism and institutional and moral collapse, agreed with Toynbee that the Western crisis was essentially spiritual in its nature— a "Schism of the Soul."

Toynbee's history seemed to Mumford nothing less than an intellectual revolution. In a letter to Van Wyck Brooks in 1935, he compared Toynbee's "super Spenglerian work" to an "Einsteinian revolution in physics…where a completely new civilizational view is exposed."[12] In his review of the first three volumes in the *New Republic*, he repeated this assessment: "the change in method, outlook, categories and general frame of reference, marked by his work, may prove as important as that marked Einstein in physics."[13] Mumford also saw Toynbee's A *Study* as being crucial to the development of Western civilization because it helped, "to determine the character of a whole epoch's thought and so eventually influence the actions of men."

Mumford equally approved Toynbee's search for the inner rhythms of civilizations against "dry as dust" objectivist historians, whose history, in a paraphrase of Shakespeare, was "little better than a dream told by an idiot, half forgotten in the waking." *A Study of History* was a "magnificent challenge" to the American readers, although Mumford could not help adding that Toynbee suffered from a case of "T.S. Eliotosis" [over-erudition], which tempted him to "quote the Koran in Arabic."

Mumford concluded by predicting Toynbee's triumph over Spengler. "*A Study of History* stands a whole stratosphere above its nearest rival *The Decline of the West*, because it is a work of civilized man writing in behalf of the values in civilization."[14] Toynbee's more humane interpretation of world history would eventually challenge Oswald Spengler's, dangerous work. Toynbee's religious and pro-life values guaranteed that he would eventually surpass Spengler:

> [In] its complete relativity, in its humane outlooks, in its steady sense of humor, its bold exhaustive method and its massive scholarship, "A Study of History" stands a whole stratosphere above its nearest rival, "The Decline of the West"… where [Spengler] becomes maudlin over the undoing of the proud men of blood (i.e. the barbarians) by the enlightened intellectuals and pacifists and their deluded nerveless followers, adherents of Buddhism and Christianity, for Toynbee the humane forces have a vital and regenerative character. [15]

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11 Miller, *Lewis Mumford*: *A Biography*, (New York, 1989), pp.414-415.

12 Lewis Mumford to Van Wyck Brooks, August 17,1935, *The Lewis Mumford-Wan Wyck Brooks-Letters* (New York, 1970),p.118.

13Lewis Mumford, "Civilized History," *The New Republic*, November 27, 1935, p.64.

14 *Ibid*. p.66.

15 Lewis Mumford, "Civilized History,"pp.64,66.

Charles Beard and Relativism

Charles Beard expressed a less favorable, and in the short run, more influential view of Toybee's work. Beard's interest in metahistory was already evident in his review of Spengler's *The Decline* and in his own *Rise of America Civilization* (1927). In the 1920s he had thought that "the history of civilizations could be instrumental to the history of civilizations." But in 1935 he judged Toynbee's work as "merely speculative."

A leading "Progressive historian" before the First World War, Beard became disillusioned during the early 1930s. From the economic interpretation of history he changed to an idealist (that is relativist) viewpoint in his philosophy of history, influenced by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, the new physics, and Pragmatism.[16]

According to Richard Hofstadter, Beard's change of view resulted from "disillusionment and fear that followed the 1929 crash and the Great Depression."[17]But already in the 1920s, Beard had referred to time itself as a creation of Western mind, a hint of his later relativism. In Beard's view, historical writing meant selecting. Even the denial of a desire to interpret was an unconscious philosophic assertion, "namely, a confession that there is not a discoverable fringe of order in the universe."[18]

Beard's conversion to relativism, according to his biographer Ellen Nore, was also related to the revolution in modern physics. Although he did not refer to "operationalism" by name in his presidential address to the AHA, the term "operation" or derivatives appeared no less than six times in connection with the argument that historical truth is dependent upon the historian's "operations"—thus allowing him to claim the mantle of the new science while rejecting the old. Nore explains, "Beard's purpose was to focus on the great fallacy of historicism, [namely] the idea that the historian stood outside the *zeitgeist*, [was] a scholar without politics," — "a neutral mind working with a mass of facts." [19]

In "Written History as an Act of Faith," Beard praised Croce's notion that "every true history is contemporary history," meaning that it is distinguishable from dead chronicle. According to Croce, determining the facts and judging or interpreting them was inseparable.

Following Croce's attempt to repair the ruptured link between history and philosophy, Beard argued that there is no objectivity apart from the observer.[20] "Every student of history knows that his colleagues have been influenced in their selection and ordering of materials." Beard further maintained that, "Once more, historians recognize formally the obvious, long known informally, namely, that any written history inevitably reflects the thought of the author in his time and cultural setting."[21] Political, social and personal "truths" depend on values, because definitions of truth are always social—one generation's truth is not another's.

The historian, however, should be both activist and scholar. Historians had a social obligation: "history existed for man, not man for history." But Beard acknowledged that accession in historical knowledge played a major role in changing interpretations of social phenomena. The historian had to use scientific methods to produce accurate scholarship. But

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16 Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians*, (Chicago, 1979), pp.304-305.

17 *Ibid*., p.304.

18 Charles Beard, "Time, Technology and the Creative Spirit in Political Science," *The American Political Science Review*, February,1927, p.6.

19 Nore, *Charles Beard*, p.167.

20 Charles Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," *The American Historical Review*, XXXIX, 1934, pp. 229-231.

21 *Ibid*.,p.222.

it was also the historian's responsibility to provide an account of the past appropriate to society's current needs in order to "guide civilization."[22]

For Beard, only three broad conceptions of history seemed possible: (1) history is chaos and every attempt to interpret it otherwise is an illusion; (2) history moves in cycles; and (3) history moves in line, straight or spiral, and in some direction. The historian may escape these issues by silence or by confession of avoidance, or he may face them boldly, aware of the intellectual and moral peril in any decision in his act of faith.[23]

Ranke remained a chief target. The Rankean formula of history (*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*) has been discarded and laid away in the museum of antiquities. Ranke 's rigorous factualism masked a pervasive conservatism. Ranke's adoration of fact "served best the causes of those who wanted to be undisturbed."[24]

Beard on Toynbee

Beard's relativism caused him to take a new look at metahistory. Adams's psychological oscillation between fear and greed, Toynbee's challenge and response, and Spengler's *gestalt* morphology of civilizations were all "acts of faith." Biological analogies were Spengler's mistake because they led him to force everything into the model of organic rise and decay. "[Under the] biological analogy, history was conceived as a succession of cultural organisms rising, growing," Beard explained." To this fantastic morphological assumption Oswald Spengler chained his powerful mind." Beard concluded that the historian who forces history into patterns "performs an act of faith." [25] Later, with reference to Spengler, he added: "A multiplication of historical illustrations is not a proof."[26]

Beard's relativism did not prepare him for an ambitious study of the length and scope of Toynbee's *A Study of History.* Accordingly, his review in the *American Historical Review* was extremely critical. He challenged Toynbee to "…imagine that he is proceeding empirically uncontrolled by any avowed assumptions or by any presuppositions of *Weltgeschichte*." He considered Toynbee ill-advised in failing to realize that, even if he identified specific civilizations as intelligible fields of historical analysis, "no meaning can arise from such comparisons even assuming that there are such social atoms…" Beard also objected to the analogies from biology and physics, which in historical work contributed to "confusion rather than knowledge."

He also criticized Toynbee's historical synthesis. "Some fragments of imaginative metaphysics underlie the structures of his chapters," but it is not possible to make system of these fragments. He continued: Toynbee's work "does violence to the actuality of the history and adds to confusion rather than to knowledge... empirical operations are always limited by the intellectual presuppositions of the author and there is no escape from this rule."[27]

In an introduction to a collection of essays evaluating Toynbee's work, Edward Gargan later wrote that Beard's review was decisive in shaping opinion of Toynbee. Questioning historians reading Beard's review of Toynbee, he speculated, "would not get a hint that there was a historian, who could pose fundamental questions…and would not have guessed from

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22 Hofstadter, *Progressive Historians*, p.308.

23 Beard, "Written History", p.228-229.

24 Beard, "Written History," p.221; Novick, *That Noble*, p.254.

25 Beard, "Written History," p.223.

26 Charles Beard, *The Republic: Conversations on Fundamentals*, (New York, 1943), p.338.

27 Beard, "Review of A Study I-III", The *American Historical Review*, vol.40.1935, pp.307-309.

Beard's remarks that the English historian had anything to contribute to historical poise in a disordered and disorderly epoch."[28]

Yet relativism in the longer run indirectly contributed to Toynbee's later success in the United States. After 1939, a central theme in American thought was mobilization against totalitarianism in both its Nazi and Soviet embodiments. This included a struggle against relativism. A growing band of anti-relativists seized on Beard's "Written History" and similar pronouncements to accuse him of validating any totalitarian or subjectivist interpretation of history. Toynbee, in contrast, expressed his historical conceptions with assurance and faith. As a result, post-war reaction to Toynbee's work changed from Beard's relativism to an understanding of the heuristic value of "large visions of history."

3. The Augustinian Trilogy (volumes IV-VI)

By the time the second installments of *A Study* appeared in the winter of 1939, Toynbee's prophesies concerning the disintegration of Western civilization seemed all too true. As Toynbee put it: "the Vandals stood at the gates Western civilization." Toynbee called volumes four to six his "Augustinian volumes" because he felt that he, like the bishop of Hippo, waited for his civilization to collapse:

> There were moments when it almost seemed like tempting fate and wasting effort to go on writing a book that must be the work of many years, when a catastrophe might overtake the writer's world within the weeks or days. At such moments the writer has often fortified his will by calling to mind the dates of writing of another book with which this book is comparable only on the single point of length. Saint Augustine did not begin to writing *De Civitate Dei* before the sack of Rome in A.D. 410.[29]

Unwilling to accept a vision of irreversible doom, Toynbee, unlike Spengler, sounded a warning against the sins of the Western civilization. The central cause of the breakdown of civilization was a loss of self-determination. War within Western civilization was a sign both that it was moving towards disintegration and towards a new ecumenical world order. But Western Civilization would buy its *Pax Romana* at a deadly price unless it got rid of the sin of excessive nationalism. Western civilization could save itself only with the help of a "divine spark" which would eventually help it to survive its "Time of Troubles."

After 1939, Toynbee increasingly became both prophet and historian of Western civilization. His tone and analysis assumed the character of jeremiad and cosmic prophecy. Western civilization, in the sufferings of World War II, was not suffering in vain, but ascending toward unification with the Godhead:

> We can hear the beat of the elemental rhythm…of Challenge-and-Response and Withdrawal- and- Return and Rout-and -Rally and Apprentation-and-Affiliation and Schism-and-Palingenesia. This elemental rhythm is the alternating beat of Yin and Yang…The perpetual turning of the wheel is not a vain repetition if at each revolution, it is carrying a vehicle that much nearer to its goal: and if "palingenesia" signifies the birth of something new. . . then the Wheel of Existence is not just a

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28 E.T. Gargan, "Introduction," in The *Intent of Toynbee's History*, (Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1969), pp. 15-16.

29 Arnold Toynbee, *A Study* IV, Preface.

> devilish device for inflicting an everlasting torment on a damned Ixion. The music that the rhythm of Yin and Yang beats out in the song of creation…[30]

In this otherworldly vision, Toynbee was not alone. A spirit of mysticism and suffering penetrated the Anglo-Saxon *zeitgeist* during the 1940's. Man of letters turned mystic, Aldous Huxley in 1946 wrote: "For the individual who achieves unity with his own organism and union with the divine Ground, there is the end of suffering. The goal of creation is the return of the all sentiment beings out of separateness ... that which results in suffering, through unitary knowledge, into the wholeness of eternal reality."[31]

Toynbee's message reinforced the spiritual values of the West in wartime. There was no necessity for a civilization to die, "as there is man's divine spark of creative activity instinct in us." The ”barbarians" were merely plunging their swords in to the "body of a suicide whose life-blood was already ebbing away through a self-inflicted wound."[32]

Toynbee's theory of the dynamics of disintegration also raised vital questions for post-war discussion. Who would establish the Universal State in Western civilization? Was the Soviet sphere of interest the "external proletariat" outside the collapsing West? What would the new ecumenical world order like?

Three Reactions

In a review in the *New Republic*, Lewis Mumford applauded the timeliness of Toynbee's “Augustinian” volumes, especially volume five which he considered, "worth reading and re-reading... where the cross-lights are thrown upon the historical scene, by the flashes of the disintegrating world outside the historians’ window." He also admired Toynbee's description of the disintegration of civilizations, "his discussion of the nemesis of creativity by resting on one's oars, idolizing an ephemeral self, an ephemeral institution, or an ephemeral technique, trusting in military power, or becoming over-intoxicated by victory”[33]

But the transcendental stuff was too much. He questioned Toynbee's analyses of the processes "which may halt the disintegration of a civilization… or alleviate the unspeakable agony of a disintegrating society." Like later Cold War liberals, he criticized Toynbee’s “transcendental dissolution” of the problems of Western civilization. By introducing “to the cards of history his transcendental joker, “ Mumford wrote, “Toynbee, lifted the argument above the plane of reasoning, to eternal end heavenly...when St. Augustine reached the point with less humbug." Although the Old Left thinker did not approve Toynbee's elevation of history to the plane of theodicy, he judged his analysis of social disintegration as due to a class struggle: “here Toynbee has gotten a clue from Marx, which he [however] had applied on a much vaster scale than any of the socialist writers” [34]

Mumford later underlined his debt to Toynbee in his book *The Condition of Man* (1944). There he explained that civilizations are held together by an organizing idea or principle—never precisely stated verbally— but working in every institution. Seconding Toynbee’s idea of “Withdrawal and Return,” Mumford explained that “at first the conceiving

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30 *A Study*, VI, p.324.

31 Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy, (*London 1985,[1946]), p.286.

32 *A Study* IV, p.115.

33 Lewis Mumford,”Transcendental Dissolution,” *The New Republic*, April I, 1940, p.445.

34 Mumford, “ Transcendental…,” p 445.

idea of civilization was incarnated in a single person— a type Jesus, Buddha, a Confucius represents. Through a process of *mimesis* the idea took hold on in many persons, and when this idea became exhausted the whole civilization slowly gave away, and a new idea began its unstoppable rise to dominance." Toynbee was right regarding the centrality of Christianity in the fall of the Roman Empire: "it was the Roman unwillingness to re-examine and to reconstruct their whole scheme of living, which drew them to decline… In the end the Christians superego —their capacity for sacrifice and withdrawal— gave them a clear edge over Romans."[35]

Charles Beard

In the fall of 1940 Charles Beard acquired a professorship of history at the Johns Hopkins University, with the hope of establishing there a center for the interdisciplinary study of American civilization. Although metahistory assumed new interest to him, he continued to harbor ambivalent attitudes towards the large-scale studies of Brooks Adams, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold Toynbee.[36]

In a review of Toynbee's new volumes in The *American Historical Review* in 1940, Beard remained curious but skeptical, modifying some of his most iconoclastic stances of the preceding decade but at points assuming an almost sarcastic tone. Though interested in Toynbee's theories he maintained that "at the present rate of the progress the ultimate design of the universe is not likely to be made any clearer, nor the existence of any such design brought any closer to demonstration." Seconding his previous opinions, he further declared: "Some fragments of imaginative metaphysics underlie the structures of his chapters, but it is not possible to make system of these fragments..." Twisting the knife, he added: "[Toynbee's] erudition and his metaphysics, combined with his metaphorical language and his use of anthologies give a peculiar and elusive character to the whole."

Beard, like his Cold War liberal successors, questioned Toynbee's view that Communism was a heretical "anti-Western religion of Western origin." Displaying his own erudition, Beard thought that it would not be easy for any general readers to understand "the meaning of such matters, as Mr. Toynbee's handling of contemporary Communism in the light of other religious or philosophic-religious movements that have turned militant, for example, anti-Hellenic Judaism and Zoroasterism of the Syrian world in the post-Alexandrine age or the militant Muslim-Hindu syncretistic religion of Sikhism."[37]

True to his relativism, Beard, in a tongue-in-cheek conclusion, was not willing to make a final judgment of Toynbee's theories:

> Happy are those, as was said of the old, "who know the cause of things." But in the time when physicists are chary of using the term "cause" even in connection with sequences recognized as deterministic in nature and when metaphysicians, such as Whitehead, are seeking to push mysticism into every area of common sense, it may be

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35 Lewis Mumford, *The Condition of Man*, (New York, 1944), p.40; Donald Miller, *Lewis Mumford*, pp. 416-417.

36Beard, "Introduction," *The Law of Civilization and Decay*, (New York, 1943), p. li, footnote**.**

37 Beard, "Review of A Study IV-VI," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 45, 1940, p.594.

> well to reserve judgment on Mr. Toynbee's monumental work until the final volumes have appeared.[38]

"There is nothing like it in the English tongue. For a comparison it is necessary to resort to such works as Spengler's *Decline of the West* and Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. Yet Mr. Toynbee's erudition makes Spengler look like a petty sciolicist, and his catholicity of thought Hegel's dogmatism sound like the scream of a Prussian drill sergeant."[39]

Beard, who died in 1948, never saw the final volumes of *A Study*. By this time Beard himself was increasingly under attack, in part because of his isolationism, his opposition to Lend Lease, and his contention that Franklin Roosevelt had engineered Pearl Harbor for his own purposes; in part because his views of the role of economics and of social conflict in history were out of fashion in the new age of "consensus" history. [40] In this climate, it was Toynbee who would have, if not the last word, at least the next.

In contrast to Beard's cryptic comments, the Harvard sociologist Pitirim A. Sorokin wrote a more detailed and careful review. Sorokin judged A *Study* to be one of "the most significant works of our own time in the field of historical synthesis." In apparently unqualified praise, he continued:

> Toynbee's philosophy of history is clothed by him in a rich and full-blooded body of facts, empirical verification, and a large number of suppositions. The main theses, as well as sub-portions, are painstakingly tested by the known empirical facts of history of twenty one civilizations studied, in this respect the theory of Toynbee, conceived and executed on a grand plan, is probably documented more fully than most of the existing philosophies of history. [41]

But as the terms "suppositions" and "probably" suggest, Sorokin quickly qualified this praise. He considered Toynbee's work repetitious, ignorant of sociological literature, and uneven in its knowledge of the civilizations that it examined.

Sorokin further alleged that Toynbee erred in identifying civilizations as homogeneous units of analysis. According to Sorokin, "his civilizations are not unified systems but mere conglomerates of various civilizational objects, and phenomena united only by special adjacency but not by causal or mechanistic bonds." For this reason, they are not "real species of society," and therefore can hardly be treated as units and can hardly have any uniformity in their rise and decline.[42]

He also thought Toynbee was mistaken in casting his societies into an apparently inflexible pattern of genesis, growth, and decay uncritically accepting Spengler's model and failing to recognize that "this conceptual scheme is purely analogical and represents not a theory of how sociocultural phenomena change —but an evaluative theory of sociocultural progress, of how they should change."[43]

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38 Beard, "Review of IV-VI," pp.593-594.

39 *Ibid*.p.594.

40 Novick, *That Noble*, p.291.

41 Pitirim A. Sorokin, "Arnold J. Toynbee's Philosophy of History," *The Journal of Modern History*, 1940, vol.12, pp.374-387; reprinted in Ashley Montague, ed., *Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews*,(Boston, 1956),p. 177.

42 Sorokin, "Arnold J. Toynbee's," p.180.

43 *Ibid*., pp.180, 182.

In conclusion, Sorokin described A *Study* as a “most stimulating and illuminating work of a distinguished thinker and scholar”—the sort of praise one lavishes on a book one knows is important but does not really like.[44] By the 1950s, Sorokin's attack on Toynbee's subjectivism would reappear with new force.

4. *The New York Times* Reviews *A Study*

By the time the reviews of Toynbee's new volumes appeared in America, the Second World War had been raging in Europe for more than sixteen months and the tide of global conflict was approaching the United States. But most Americans, as the prominent historians Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager noted, remained unaware of the dangers war posed:

> It was difficult for the most Americans to understand the real nature of the threat that hung over them and over the whole world. It was no mere military threat. The United States had met military threats before and emerged triumphant. It was a new thing, new and incomprehensible— the Americans were easygoing people who had never known defeat or demoralization, the notion of evil as [the Spanish-American philosopher] Santayana observed, is foreign to the American mind.[45]

In this context, the *New York Times* ran a full-length review of A *Study* that suggested why critics Beard and Sorokin would not have the last word. Discussing "Toynbee on History," the *Times* critic Lloyd Eshelman wrote that "in view of the present perilous position of Western civilization, professor Toynbee's second series now published is especially significant and timely. In all probability these volumes contain most of the important lessons, which history may offer to a developed and sated culture such as ours.”[46] Toynbee's analysis led Eshelman to conclude that the time of a "progressive theory" of development in civilizations was over. He hoped "that all ardent champions of 'right causes' and 'human progress' would read at least the present three volumes of professor Toynbee's gigantic work."

As the *Times* critic saw it, the British Empire was at the center of the disintegrating West. He referred to the British leaders as the "dominant minority" trying to hold on to a disintegrating Commonwealth by force. This attempt, according to Eshelman, "may achieve the disintegration of the 'English-nurtured' civilizations altogether."[47] The post-war era proved Eshelman's prediction to be right. The disintegration of *Pax Britannica* was one of the reasons for Toynbee’s success in the United States, as the nation assumed a leading position in Western civilization after 1947.

Eshelman, of course, could not foresee that the United States would be the builder of the new empire. Thus he could not find a clear indication in Toynbee’s work whether one should be optimistic or pessimistic concerning the prospects of Western civilization,

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44 *Ibid*., p.190.

45 Allan Nevins & Henry Commager, *A Pocket History of United States*, (New York, 1976), p. 428.

46 Lloyd Eshelman, "Toynbee on History," *The New York Times Book Review*, 4, February 1940, p.19.

47 *Ibid*.

> It is also suggested by Toynbee, that if absolute proof of the breakdown of our civilization cannot yet be offered convincingly…we are equally without assurance that our year is still in Spring… Professor Toynbee does not commit himself wholeheartedly, but rather throws the case in the lap of the reader. Perhaps he does not wish to be heralded as a pessimist. For the optimists, even a majority, always damn the pessimists for prophesying "decline and fall," although in denying decline the optimists seldom point to anything other than "material accomplishment."[48]

Although his enthusiasm to Toynbee remained somewhat restrained, the sentiments the *Times* reviewer expressed would carry the British historian to new popularity in the post-war era.

48 *Ibid.*

CH.9.PROPHET OF THE "AMERICAN CENTURY"

1. Toynbee and Post-War America

A New World and New Popularity

By the end of the Second World War, Americans were ready for a new look at Toynbee. Relativism was in retreat and Americans craved the affirmation of a civilized "anti-Spenglerian" history. In tone and substance Toynbee's message remained the same, at least until the publication of the final installments. But the world which received it had changed since publications of his early volumes in 1934.

Toynbee became a household word, mentioned at cocktail- parties and wherever persons analyzed the post-war world. As Toynbee had predicted in the early volumes, with the collapse of the British Empire, the United States had to assume a new role in the world politics, especially after the beginning of the Cold War in the spring of 1947.

Toynbee's theory that civilizations "were products of wills" and that there was meaning in history, proved to be just the message that the perplexed citizens of the new superpower needed in their transition towards establishing a global sphere of influence. During 1947-1951 Toynbee's message seemed to echo the original Puritan world-historical vision of how God had created America for a mission and destiny.[1]

World War II also altered the American conception of the European "balance of power. " In its place emerged a larger structure of world-politics, characterized by the opposition of two power blocks — the free West under American leadership, and the sphere of totalitarianism inside the Soviet sphere of influence. America now carried the legacy of Western Europe. As historian Carleton J. Hayes asserted in his presidential address to the A.H.A in 1946,"The American frontier is a frontier of European or Western culture. This culture, however modified by or adapted to peculiar geographical and social conditions in America or elsewhere [is] in essential respects the culture [of the Western civilization]."[2]

The formation of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945, and the locating of its headquarters in New York, emphasized the United States' central position, being the only Western power with the resources to repair a ruined Europe and cope with the Soviet global expansion. In a lecture "One World, Five Civilizations," at Princeton in 1947, Toynbee observed that "historians should be conscious of the interrelations between world-cultures and thus help creating an ecumenical world community." At the time, many historians and politicians applauded this idea.[3]

His new popularity brought Toynbee the opportunity to write for a more popular audience. In *Civilization on Trial* (1948) and the *Prospects of Western Civilization* (1949) he distilled his thoughts for the "middlebrow" public. In them Toynbee challenged the existing Cold War "black and white" view of the Cold War, providing a spiritual basis for analysis of world-politics. As in his earlier work he stressed the value of Christianity and other major

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1 Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Cycles of American History,* (Boston 1986), pp. 5-6.

2 Carleton J:Hayes, "The American Frontier:Frontier of What," (presidential address) *The American Historical Review,* January, 1946, p.216.

3 This global vantage point in history that Toynbee promoted [*Time* March 3, 1947], was elaborated further when Toynbee's assistant and later professor at the University of Chicago, William McNeill published his anti-Spenglerian volume, *The Rise of the West: A Rise of the Human Community,* (Chicago ,1963).

religions in the evolution of world history, transforming the civilizational viewpoint of *A Study* to the analysis of world-politics.

Intellectuals and the Cold War

From the American point of view, the situation in 1947 resembled Toynbee's scenario of a collapse under the pressures from "internal" and "external proletariats." The Internal Proletariat was war-ravaged Europeans living under economic distress. The External Proletariat was the emerging east-European totalitarian states.

The effect of Toynbee's kind of global vision on top American policy-makers could be glimpsed in a report in the London *Economist* of a high level meeting to discuss the funding of Greek government against the communist guerrillas:

> Acheson[the Secretary of State] jumped in and provided an exposition of the coming conflict between the western and communist systems with passion and scholarship. Acheson called in the Old World to the rescue of the New. Suddenly Athens and Sparta, Rome and Carthage were eyeball to eyeball in the Oval office. Senator Vandenberg [a conservative Republican senator yet to be converted to a global outlook] was electrified by Acheson's eloquence and offered his opinion that Congress would respond if the matter were put to it in these global, strategic terms... [4]

Acheson himself later lamented that,"We Americans in our study and writing on international relations have tended to shun [large scale] theory and logical philosophic analysis of historical material — certainly in this century, in favor of narrative exposition and absorption in the problems of international organization."[5]

In fact, Toynbee's popularity was part of a rising influence of intellectuals and academics in post-war America, the romance between Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and other New Liberals with theologian Reinhold Niebuhr being a prime example. Toynbee's supporters viewed him as a necessary agent in the attempt to make the historian a more significant "progressive" character in the Atomic Age. In 1947, *The New York Times*, citing the extraordinary sales of A *Study* in the United States, condemned Soviet intellectuals who charged that Americans did not possess any philosophy of history. [6]

Discussion of international relations after 1947 was characterized by the growth of interest in meta-historical approaches to world-politics. Historians discovered that ironically, a humanist, perspective was welcomed in a world increasingly guided and influenced by the formulas and precepts of physical science. This wisdom could best come from studies of man and his history. In this respect Arnold Toynbee satisfied the curiosity of large number of "searching souls."

One aspect of this New Liberal wisdom was a hard-boiled realism rooted in a distrust of human nature worthy of the Puritans. The American historical profession quickly after the Second World War adopted the realism of the Cold War. Relativism in all fields was under attack and all forms of knowledge that bred nihilism were accused of being responsible for totalitarianism. The kind of historical relativism and isolationism that Charles A. Beard had promoted was *passe´*. Describing this change, Peter Novick writes:

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[4] " Truman Doctrine, the Unstoppable Boulder," *The Economist*, March, 1987, p.23.

[5] Dean Acheson, "Introduction" in *Civilization and Foreign Policy, An Inquiry for Americans* by Louis J. Halle ,(New York, 1955),p. xvi.

[6] *The New York Times*, Sunday, December 7 ,1947,sec. 4, p,4.

> The aftermath of World War I ushered in a period of negativity and doubt, the climate in which the relativist critique flourished. The coming of World War II saw American culture turn toward affirmation and the search for certainty. American mobilization, intellectual as well as material became permanent…struggle of the "Free World" against "totalitarianism"… Textbooks in American diplomatic history were vehicles for exhortations on the necessity of an activist foreign policy.[7]

In Toynbee's case, sales figures told much the story. "Before April 16, 1947, American bookstores received their first shipment of an abridgement of *A Study of History*," historian Eric Goldman reported. "Even in shortened form, Toynbee's work was hardly the usual reading, the 589 pages, part history, part philosophy, and part poetry…wound a labyrinthine way through the fall of twenty-six civilizations." Further, "the book quickly made its way to *best-seller*-lists and stayed on week after week…and soon the slim, pale professor, with the long grave face and the uncompromising language, was the rage of the lecture circuit, and Toynbeeism in some vague and simplified form was reaching amazingly far into the semi-literate public."[8]

Summarizing Toynbee's influence, his biographer, William McNeill claims that his position during the post-war years was unmatched:

> No other historian has ever enjoyed the status Toynbee achieved in the United States after 1947, for he suddenly became a professional wise man, whose pronouncements on current affairs, on the historical past, and on religious and metaphysical questions were all accorded serious attention by broad spectrum of earnest souls seeking guidance in a tumultuous postwar world...For a brief while, Toynbee's voice contributed modestly but significantly to a redirection of United States' policy in foreign affairs, helping the United States to take over the role that Great Britain had played in the world before World War I.[9]

Much of this influence, as will appear, was a result of the efforts one man: Henry Luce of the *Life-Time* publishing empire.

2. Toynbee and *Time*

In March 1947 Luce's *Time* magazine published its celebrated "cover-story" of Toynbee, picturing the pale historian looking ahead against a background of climbing figures, some falling, some struggling on, symbolizing Toynbee's "civilizations" and their struggle to survive. 1.5 million Copies of *Time* spread Toynbee's anti-Spenglerian message, headlined, "Our Civilization is Not Inexorably Doomed." "Luce's ideas as well as Toynbee's went into preparation of the story," McNeill has speculated, "and *Time's* writers and editors

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7 Novick, *That Noble Dream*: *The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*, (Cambridge, 1988), pp.281, 306.

8 Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade and After: America 1945-1960*,(New York, 1960), pp. 60-61.

9 William McNeill, *Arnold Toynbee, A Life*, (New York, 1989), p. 206.

significantly distorted Toynbee's ideas to fit the immediate situation of March 1947."[10]

During the 1940s, Luce came to epitomize "modern," internationalist Republicanism. As earlier noted, he had met Toynbee in 1942 and found the historian's ideas congenial with his conception of an "American century." The thrust of this slogan was America's mission to "civilize" [that is,"*modernize"*] and "Americanize" the world —in Theodore Roosevelt's sense of "civilization" — and in the process create a new world-order based on Protestant and liberal values.[11]

Winston Churchill asserted that no American without political office —with the possible exception of Henry Ford— had greater influence on American society from 1930s to 1940s. Luce exercised power over his countrymen and over foreign leaders, through his press and his personality. Luce's *Time, Life,* and *Fortune* magazines comprised probably America's most powerful media-empire in the 1940s and 1950s.[12]

Henry R. Luce

Henry Robinson Luce was born in Dengzhou China in 1898, the son of missionary parents. Growing up, he viewed China as a decadent nation, to be saved from degeneration, at a time when America was already building its future global empire. Later Luce attended Oxford and Yale, where he explored the history of ancient civilizations, and reflected on America, as the future's reigning empire.

Luce's theory of the American future was incorporated in his notion of an"American Century." This concept explained how the United States would benefit the rest of the world in its struggle to achieve wealth, democracy, and progress. The world would become a global unit, with the United States influence directing it towards"civilization and progress."

The decline of the last global empire, Great Britain, during and after the Second World War made Luce look anew at America's world position. Resurrecting the Puritan idea of mission and exceptionalism, Luce thought the time had come when it was America's turn to create an empire based on Christian and liberal values. Free of periodical swings between democracy and tyranny, and of class- warfare, the American continent had offered the world a new land and a fresh start. With its post- Second World War power, America was now able to fulfill this mission.

In Luce's historical vision Americans in the first half of the 20th century had "rejoined Europe" in rescuing it from its wars. The task now was to bring the East and the West together in mutual understanding, which included intellectual, ethical and political co-operation.[13]

Luce was a loyal Republican and, in accord with his vision of the American Century, a fervent anti-isolationist. Isolationists, often from the Midwest (as with Charles Beard), felt that the United States should stick to its 19th century policy of avoiding foreign entanglements, and influence others only by example. But leaders of the Northeastern establishment, like Luce, thought otherwise.

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[10] *Ibid,*p.217.

[11] Donald W.White, "The American Century in World History", *The Journal of World History,* Spring 1992, p.105-108; also Henry L. Stimson, "The Challenge to Americans," *Foreign Affairs,* October, 1947, passim.

[12] White, "The American Century," p.118.

[13] *Ibid*., pp. 113-114.

Luce, above all, was "a man of faith" and intensely interested in religious matters. As Luce's biographer John Kessup has explained, many of the serious thinkers to whom Luce was most attracted — Toynbee, Paul Tillich and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin— were all semi-mystic followers of a personal path to truth, "who put more of their puzzled faith in intuition than in revelation or authority." Between 1942 and 1949, Toynbee's *A Study of History* became, in a sense, a spiritual guide-book, for Luce.[14]

Using Toynbee's spiritualist terminology Luce's "American Century" ideology can be seen as one way of explaining to his fellow-countrymen that totalitarian aspirations were the "challenge," and America's reactions the fateful "response." In this fight America would be better armed because spiritual aspects would be decisive, in its duty to carry the "American Revolution" as her mission against the totalitarians. In the eyes of many of his American admirers Toynbee's philosophy of history —as edited by Luce—revitalized the concepts of Puritan mission and the search for meaning to history as a whole. As did Luce, Toynbee also saw the shifting of burdens from Europe's shoulders to those of the United States, prophesizing a great struggle between the United States and Russia for world supremacy.[15]

The Time Cover Story

The Toynbee cover-story that appeared in Time on March 17, 1947 was in large part the work of Whittaker Chambers, soon to be the notoriously-famous adversary of State Department official Alger Hiss.

Chambers was one of the more curious figures in 20th century America. An ex-Communist, he had left the magazine *New Masses* in the early 1930's and gone underground to become a courier for a Soviet Spy-ring. He emerged in 1939 a radically changed man, newly-conservative with one of the highest paid jobs at *Time*. Soon he became one of the closest men to Luce who perceived in Chambers "a man who took ideas seriously." Chambers' literary talent made two of the toughest-minded Republicans— Henry Luce and William Buckley Jr.—his biggest fans.

Chambers played a major role in the Alger Hiss case in 1949, where he provided evidence of espionage in the State Department, helping launch the anti-Communist "witch-hunt" of the McCarthy years. Through his testimony, Chambers helped bring the patrician Alger Hiss's career in the State Department to an abrupt end in a controversial case that divided Americans for decades.[16]

Chambers began his article on Toynbee by describing the British withdrawal from Greece, and the challenge facing the United States following the disintegration of the British Empire. According to Chambers, "the U.S must, in Britain's place, consciously become what she had been [in reluctant fact] since the beginning of World War II, the champion of Christian civilization against the forces that threatened it." According to Chambers, "the one man in the world best to tell them [Americans] is Professor Arnold Joseph Toynbee" "But most Americans had no more idea that there is a problem of evil," he continued. "And they

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14 John K. Jessup, "A Look at Luce's Mind," in *The Ideas of Henry Luce*, (New York 1969), pp.9-10.

15 "A Study of History: Brilliant English Thinker Named Toynbee Sees the Past in Terms of the Challenges and Responses that Make and Break Civilization," *Life*, February, 1948, pp.118-133; White, "The American Century," passim.

16 W.A. Swanenerg, *Luce and his Empire*, (New York 1972), pp.401-406; Terry Teachout ed. *Ghost on the Roof: The Selected Journalism of Whittaker Chambers*, (New York 1990), "Introduction."

had been so busy creating the world's first great technology that they had little more notion than the Indians they had supplanted, what a civilization is, or what to do with one."[17]

Chambers claimed that Toynbee had supplanted Marx as the most provoking philosopher of history. In Chambers' analysis, "Toynbee's work is the most provocative work of historical theory written in England since Karl Marx's *Capital*…" Chambers further argued that Toynbee had surpassed Oswald Spengler as the most relevant philosopher of history: "he had found history Ptolemaic and left it Copernican… Toynbee had found historical thinking-nation centered, as before Copernicus astronomical thinking had been geocentric." Toynbee believed that," not `nations' but 'civilizations' were the intelligible fields of study…where before, there had been nations, dramatizing their buzzing brevity upon the linear scale of history, there were vertical progressions of human effort"[18]

Chambers also exposed a wider audience to the spiritual dimension of Toynbee's philosophy of history. "[Toynbee] shattered the frozen patterns of historical determinism and materialism, by again asserting God as an active force in history," he wrote. "His assertion, implicit through the 3488 pages of *A Study of History*, implied another: the goal of history, however dimly sensed in human terms, is the kingdom of God. That aspiration redeems history from being a futile tragedy of blood." [19]

Chambers saw how "from the vast designs and complex achievements" of *A Study, one* lesson stood out:

> …not materialistic factors, but psychic factors are the decisive forces of history. The action takes place within the amphitheater of the world and the flux of time; the real drama unfolds within the mind of man... no civilization including our own, is inexorable doomed. Under God, man, being equal of his fate, is the measure of his own aspirations.[20]

Thus Chambers presented Toynbee's history as a call to action: to accept the challenge of defending a civilization— not Western, or as Toynbee said "post-Christian" and "post-Modern"— but specifically Christian.

3. From Metahistory to Mysticism: The Later Toynbee

Toynbee vs. the West

Toynbee's vision of the West as the aggressor and the United States as the defender of the vested interests was always potentially at odds with Luce's modernizing view of the "American Century," and became more so after 1950. Although Toynbee supported American foreign policy initiatives from the Marshall Plan (1948-1952) to NATO and the Korean War, he grew critical of the West and America especially. As a result, he fell out of favor almost as quickly as he had gained it. [21]

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[17] Whittaker Chambers, "The Challenge," *Time,* Atlantic Overseas Edition ,March 17, 1947. p. 29.

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Chambers, "The Challenge,".p.32.

[21] Toynbee's summary of positive aspects of American leadership in "global civilization," *A Study*, IX, pp.544-547.

At the beginning of the Cold War in 1947, Toynbee favored United States' political leadership. "[If] either Germany or Japan had emerged from the World War II victorious, with the atomic weapon in her hands and with a monopoly of it, one may guess that she would have taken advantage of this unique military opportunity [to create forcefully] a universal state under her dominion, he wrote. "[The] people and administration of the United States did not do this and were not tempted to do this."[22]

But several elements in Toynbee's thought combined to produce a more critical view of the U.S. and the West. One was his appreciation of "Non- European cultures" and "Non-European religions," a cultural relativism that caused him to question Western superiority. Toynbee had written that the smallest unit that could be taken into account was Western Christendom. "But it too, turns out to be inadequate...Western Christendom is merely one of the five civilizations that survive the world today," he declared in 1947 [the other civilizations were: Orthodox Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Far Eastern]. [23]

A second element was his belief in world government. In February 1947, even before the famous *Time* cover article appeared, he appeared at a Princeton conference on "The Challenge of One World" along with Albert Einstein. In its March 3rd issue, Time reported the proceedings under the title "Nationalism is Not Enough." Like Toynbee, Einstein had become a firm supporter of world-government after the implications of the atom bomb were becoming apparent.

By this time, Toynbee was a champion of H.G. Wells's world-state. Through his own ecumenical view of world-history, Toynbee tried to bring better understanding between "hostile tribes" of the world. Toynbee further believed in an emergence of "single ecumenical world-government," which would eventually take over the troubled globe. Echoing Wells' *Outline of History* and Wendell Willkie's *One World* (1942), Toynbee devoted himself to a detailed analysis of the emergent "new world order."[24]

In the *Time* account of the Princeton conference, Toynbee was reported arguing : "within the last four hundred years all five [of the world's religions] have been brought into contact with each other as a result of successive expansions... [We historians] must make the necessary effort of imagination and effort of will to break our way out of the prison walls of the local and short-lived histories of our own countries and our own cultures."[25]

A third and related strand was Toynbee's growing dissatisfaction with progressive "modernization" in the West which he saw as a joint product of the "evil" forces of industrialism, nationalism and democracy. In order to create global peace it was necessary to abolish the national state, Toynbee maintained. He had long preached that Western nationalism was the "false anthropomorphic religion" of modern man, a sin against the universal God. In the nuclear age, it seemed a "death wish" for Western civilization. Toynbee ferociously declared after World War II, "Mankind will either achieve political unification, or will perish."[26]

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[22] *A Study*, XII, p.524.

[23] Toynbee quoted in "Nationalism is not Enough," *Time*, March 3., 1947, p. 40.

[24] Kenneth W. Thompson, *Toynbee's Philosophy of World History and Politics*, (Baton Rouge, 1985), pp.4-5.; Willkie was famous Republican internationalist and Franklin D. Roosevelt's competitor in the presidental elections of 1940.

[25] Toynbee quoted in" Nationalism is not Enough," p. 40.

[26] Toynbee quoted in Roland N. Stromberg, *Arnold J. Toynbee: Historian for an Age in Crisis*, (Carbondale & London, 1972), p.92.

Among historians, nationalism had produced a narrow provincialism and a “dry as dust” production of history on the industrial model—the stockpiling of data, resulting in obsolete monographic productions.[27] In *Civilization on Trial* (1948) Toynbee charged that ”the West is still looking at history from that old parochial self-centered standpoint, which other living societies have now been compelled to transcend." [28]

Toynbee also echoed Spengler's ambivalent assessment of technology. Like his German predecessor, he explained that modern industrial productivity had created an untenable strain on man's relation with nature, which he systematically abused. The turn to “scientism” also failed "to improve the wisdom or the virtue of the human beings, who now possess such vast technical powers." According to Toynbee: “the West has penchant for machinery [not for] human civilization."[29]

Fourthly, and arguably most fatal to his reputation in Cold War America, Toynbee expressed a new-found sympathy for the Soviet Union. In part this grew from his theory that the age of a European “balance of power” was over. "Europe will no longer decide Europe's destiny. Her future lies on the knees of the giants [Russia and the United States] who now overshadow her."[30] But in The BBC Reith-lectures of 1952, a ferocious attack on the modern West published as *The World and the West* (1953), he called the West the world's “arch-aggressor," tracing its arrogance to the Jewish idea of a “chosen people.” He now pictured Russia as the prime target of Western penetration, the "victim” of the Western aggression —from the Polish invasion of 1610 to the German 1941 attack. Russia had responded logically to the influx of Western "materialistic" ideas on her "orthodox soil” by adopting the "false religion" of Communism, also of Western origin. In conclusion, Toynbee predicted, that the “future world-religion” would overcome the Western and Russian "material religions," while prophesizing that the present encounter between the World and the West was ”now moving off the technological plane to the spiritual one."[31]

Up from Metahistory

Meanwhile, Toynbee's vision of history became steadily more mystical. He now envisioned a pattern of birth and death of civilizations, as turns on a chariot wheel, bearing the higher religions "towards an ordained unification of the *ecumene*." The turn of the primitive religions toward dynamic all-embracing religions occurred through a Bergsonian mystical spirit, similar to that in Adams's revised 1896 MacMillan edition of The *Law of Civilization and Decay*. Mystical intuition gave its practitioners the inspiration to reject the “man-worship” found in the primitive religions’ veneration of ancestors and anthropomorphic spirits, or in their modern equivalents, the worship of the *Volk*, as in extreme forms of Nationalism and Nazism. [32]

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[27] Kenneth Winetrout, *Arnold Toynbee: The Ecumenical Vision*, (Boston 1975), p.23.

[28] Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, (New York, 1948), p.80.

[29] Toynbee, *A Study*, III, pp. 159, 385.

[30] Arnold Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, p.138.

[31] Toynbee, *The World and the Wes*t,(New York, 1953), pp-1-17.

[32] *A Study*, VII, p.510. On mystical visions and world historians, Jo-Anne Pemberton, *Global Metaphors: Modernity an the Quest for One World*,(London/Virginia,2001), ch.1,”Unknown Forces.”

In volume VII of *A Study* (1954), Toynbee asserted that "the history of higher religion appears to be unitary and progressive in contrast to the multiplicity and repetitiveness of the history of civilizations."[33] "Second generation" civilizations, came into existence, not in order to perform an achievement of their own, and not in order to reproduce their kind, in a third generation, but in order to provide an opportunity for fully fledged *higher religions* to come to birth—" their breakdowns are therefore their *raison d'être*."[34]

History thus became a fully-constructed progressive and syncretistic [reconciling or unifying] growth through the "carrier wave" of civilizations. Humankind had a common destiny. Each civilization and religion received a different ray of light from a common source, observable to the historian through the "eye of faith."[35] The "creative minority" were "saviors," whose renewed spiritual vision allowed a fresh response to the challenges of psychological dislocation, moral chaos, and spiritual emptiness.[36]

The circumstances favorable to the progress of religion were antithetical to those essential for secular growth, since it is in times of political and social defeat and disruptions that new religions emerge. The suffering inherent in the down turning of the wheel of civilization promotes spiritual growth.[37] The gains that suffering can provide are deeply entrenched in Christianity and in Mahayana Buddhism — Toynbee's two most favored religions. These two religions had grown out of the breakdown of their respective civilizations: for both suffering was the first step in the path toward overcoming self-centeredness.[38] The escape from the "City of Destruction" was to be found in signing up ourselves as citizens of a "Civitas Dei." [39]

In volume VII Toynbee thus wrapped himself fully in the mantle of the evangelical prophet, as Paul Costello has noted. Progress for him had become "the process of the opening of spiritual opportunity with the expansion of religious institutions and spiritual exercises, as a result of the mystical accumulation of successive religious incarnations."[40]

Toynbee's *A Study of History* thus ended in a prayer, in tone a pure New Age religion: "Christ Tammuz, Christ Adonis, Christ Osiris, Christ Baldur, hear us, by whatever name we bless thee for suffering death of our salvation…to Him return ye every one."[41]

4. Toynbee's Reception in Post-war America

A New Age of Faith

In the post war era, reaction to the nightmare of totalitarianism took several forms. One, already noted, was a serious questioning of the optimistic belief in man's rationality and perfectibility. "To a generation that had witnessed racist pogroms and murders, nationalistic

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[33] *A Study*, VII, p. 425-26.

[34] *A Study*, VII, p.422.

[35] *A Study*, VII, pp.443-44.

[36] *A Study*, VI, pp.172-77.

[37] *A Study*, VII, pp.423-25.

[38] Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, (London, 1956), p.128.

[39] *A Study*,VI, p.167.

[40] Costello, *World Historians and their Goals* (De Kalb. Ill.,1993), p.87; *A Study*, VII, pp.558-566.

[41] *A Study*, X, p.143.

war and aggression, and a lust for political power, which swept constitutional liberties before it, progressive liberalism seemed hopelessly naive," historian Marian Morton has written. The faith in man's perfectibility "did not square with the obvious fact of man's imperfection… [Liberal] perfectionism was therefore, ideological."[42]

Faith in progress and man's perfectibility had served as ammunition against Spengler's pessimism, as James Shotwell and other progressive liberals demonstrated. More importantly, as an unarticulated assumption, it indirectly sustained the relativism of Beard and other progressive historians. Ideas could be relative with respect to time and place—for example the political ideas of the Founding Fathers as rooted in economic interests. But exposure of this fact would lead to a better world. The progressives, as it were, had their cake of relativism while at the same time feasting secretly on a guarantee of progress.

The questioning of progress and perfectibility thus went hand in hand with the attack on relativism. As the war progressed, leading intellectuals charged that relativism had weakened the West in its struggle with Fascism during the 1930s. In this charge, Archibald McLeish, Lewis Mumford, Van Wyck Brooks, Bernard DeVoto, and Waldo Frank were joined by Protestant and Catholic theologians in agreeing "on the need for faith and commitment [for] attacks on the objectively pro-fascist disseminators of skepticism, pragmatism, and relativism."[43]

Whether this questioning of human perfectibility in the vintage progressive version would lead New Liberals to abandon their rational and critical faculties for Toynbee's esoteric "antimodernism" remained to be seen.

Related to the questioning of perfectibility popular references to an "Age of Anxiety" surfaced, not only in an outpouring of literature about totalitarianism and the abuses of central government, but also in interest in existentialism and Zen-Buddhism, philosophies that emphasized the "here and now," as opposed to the Christian hereafter.

More importantly, the post-war years saw a return to traditional religion, not only in the much-remarked "return to the churches" but among intellectuals. In America Christian Existentialists were more numerous than Sartrean atheists and included not merely followers of Kiergegaard but also Roman Catholics readers of the work of Christopher Dawson and of Jewish mystic Martin Buber; and Barthian theologians who ruled first in European Protestant circles and then in the United States. Among the latter none ranker higher among so-called New Liberals, than Reinhold Niehbuhr and Paul Tillich.

A More Favorable Hearing

In this climate, historians took a new look at *A Study of History*. In an article "Postwar Reorientation of Historical Thinking," in *The American Historical Review* in 1946, University of Pennsylvania historian Roy F. Nichols concluded that "any great disturbance in the world of action produced noticeable effects upon the methods and controlling thought-patterns of historians." After World War II, "The historian realized that his objectivity and scientific accuracy where somewhat illusory " and "was bound to doubt the spacious optimism and sense of infallibility of the objectivist historians."[44]

Although the attack on historical "objectivism" was hardly new, Nichols' reassessment reflected changes in the American historiographical scene after the World War

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[42] Marian J. Morton, *The Terrors of Ideological Policies*, (London 1972), p.10.

[43] Novick, *That Noble*, p.282.

[44] Roy F. Nichols, "Postwar Reorientation of Historical Thinking", *The American Historical Review*, October 1948, p. 78.

II at a time when the responsibility of a false "historicism" in the rise of Nazi totalitarian and its attendant human miseries was being hotly debated. The nuclear threat revived old questions of how history and science should be integrated into "modern global civilization."[45] Between 1945 and 1950 academic historians, as noted above, began to rethink basic presuppositions most had found so comfortable only a few years before.[46]

The publication of D. C. Somervell's abridgement of volumes I-VI of *A Study* brought an even more positive response. Reviewing it in the *American Historical Review* in October 1947 professor Wilson H. Coates greeted the abridgement enthusiastically. "The prospects of Western civilization have been brightened by a highly improbable occurrence—the extraordinary sale of the abridgement of the first six volumes of *A Study of History*." Writing in a year that also saw the formulation of the Truman doctrine and the Marshall plan, Coates continued: the "extensiveness and reliability of scholarship, as well as the disciplined use of a brilliant historical imagination [makes] professor Toynbee's *A Study* unequalled among universal written according to a grand design."[47]

Historiography was in search of something new and Toynbee's reformulation of the axioms of historical analysis fit the bill:

> Let there be no question, however, that as a formulator of hypotheses which could fruitfully become a part of historian's professional equipment, Professor Toynbee is unsurpassed. Whether as discoverer, expositor, or systematizer, he will leave these concepts as intellectual bequests – "challenge and response," "withdrawal and return," "nemesis of creativity," "internal and external proletariat," "schism" and "palingenesia," and many others.[48]

In "The Idea of Progress," his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1947, Harvard professor Sidney B. Fay acknowledged that Arnold Toynbee has posed a challenge to American progressive thought. Toynbee provided "a magisterial survey of dead and dying civilizations….while [Toynbee] acknowledges that our much lauded Western Civilization may also have passed its zenith for all that we know, " Fay observed. [49] "Whether or not one largely accepts Toynbee's classifications and conclusions, his immense learning and breath of vision demand that his views be given serious consideration in addressing the idea of progress today."[50]

Fay also noted that other factors had undermined the paradigm of progress. One was the failure of institutional religion, a situation soon to be addressed in the return to religion: Americans" are morally adrift or spiritually indifferent…they have not learned how to re-

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[45] Novick, That *Noble,* pp.293-296.

[46] Timothy Paul Donovan, *Historical Thought in America: Postwar Patterns* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1973), pp.16-20.

[47] Wilson H. Coates, "Review of an Abridgement of A Study," The *American Historical Review*, no. 1, 1947, p.75.

[48] *Ibid*.

[49] Sidney B. Fay, "The Idea of Progress," *The American Historical Review*, January 1947, p.232.

[50] *Ibid*., p.242.

interpret and adapt Christian values to the social and economic environment to present."[51] A second was the situation in post-war Europe where a "legacy of ruin, semi-starvation, death, hatred, fear, frustration, and national selfishness seem to make international co-operation and the reconstruction impossible." A third was the conflicting ideologies of East and West that brought "sharp recriminations and ominous talk of the possibility of the third world war."[52]

Employing Toynbee's"climbing" metaphor, Fay concluded on a more positive note:

> Other civilizations may have declined and died, but Western civilization has shown a peculiar vitality. The mountain climber must after slip down decline before he struggles up to new heights. Western civilization, in spite of the developing a miracle of science, may in other respects have reached a depression before beginning a new ascent …our destiny is in our hand… This is the challenge and opportunity that we mountain climbers face.[53]

Others were equally positive. Richard W. Leopold, assistant professor of Harvard university reported in *The American Year Book 1947*:" hopeful sign [of that year]…was the sale of D.C. Somervell's abridgement of *A Study*…It is a rare tribute to the American reading public …[that] Englishman's unfinished survey of the decay of civilizations should find so eager an audience."[54] In *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (1930), the first of many editions of a work that became a standard reference for America scholars, British historian G.P. Gooch remarked of Toynbee "that the scope of history has gradually widened till it has come to include every aspect of the life of humanity." For the 1952 edition of his survey Gooch hailed Toynbee's work as "perhaps the most significant achievement of English scholarship since Fraser's *Golden Bough* [the legendary anthropological study]." In 1958 he added that Toynbee's history "deals with a subject of inexhaustible interests—the whole dramatic story of civilization."[55]

Harvard professor Crane Brinton attributed the popular acclaim of Toynbee specifically *to "*the general swing toward some kind, indeed several kinds, of renewed faith in religion."[56] Toynbee joined the company of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and the English writers Christopher Dawson, later Stilman Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at Harvard; and the historian Herbert Butterfield whose many works included *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1st American ed. 1951), a book widely assigned to American students of history. In contrast to Toynbee, however, Niebuhr rejected idea of a divine force manifesting itself through the evolution of civilizations and hence, of salvation through history. Rather he placed his faith in human endeavor under the guidance of Divine scripture—views that would finally put him at odds with Toynbee.

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[51] *Ibid*.,p.244.

[52] *Ibid*., p.245.

[53] *Ibid*.,p.246.

[54] Richard W. Leopold, "History," *The American Year Book 1947*, (New York, 1948), p.900.

[55] G.P.Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, (Boston, 1959), p. 523; preface to the 1953 edition, p. xxx; and the preface to the Beacon Press edition.

[56] Crane Brinton, "Toynbee's City of God," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Summer 1956, p.373.

New Liberal Critics

Ultimately, however, Toynbee's religious and metahistorical ideas made him probably the most criticized historian of the 20th century. While Brooks Adams attracted only a relatively small elite, and Spengler fascinated a large portion of the liberal establishment at least for a time, Toynbee's *A Study of History* during the 1950s and later became the target of countless volumes of criticism from heavy- weight American liberal intellectuals.

Some historians assailed him as an enemy of the Enlightenment and precursor and advocate of the very "decline of the West" Spengler had forecast. Writing in the mid-1960s, H.R. Trevor-Roper, Toynbee's arch-enemy in England, spoke for many Americans in commenting that Toynbee "is fundamentally anti-rational and illiberal… Everything, which suggests the freedom of the human reasons, the human spirit, is to him odious…" Toynbee's "dismal prophesies" of Western decline "contributed to the spirit of defeatism, with which Western countries first confronted Hitler in the 1930s." Trevor- Roper attributed to Toynbee, an eagerness to see the West destroyed, and charged that "even in 1939… [Toynbee was] blind or indifferent to the particular threat of Nazi Germany."[57] Toynbee would sacrifice Western ideals justice and freedom, and Western rationalism as long as "Christianity or at least its Catholic strand, survives as part of a syncretic religion of [a part of Toynbee's] universal state," he continued. "Toynbee hungers spiritually for the defeat of the West [and] seems to…gloat over the extinction of civilization."[58]

Secular-mined liberals also charged that Toynbee's religious orientation did not provide a sound basis for coping with crises of the modern West, or with the Cold War power struggle with the Soviet Union— echoing earlier criticisms of liberal relativism.

Given these opinions, Toynbee's aversions to secular liberalism in the religious volumes (VII-X) of *A Study* were bound to displease previous admirers. This band of critics, led by Lewis Mumford, charged that at the heart of Toynbee's historical theory lay a profound antimodernism—a rejection of "contemporary secular liberalism" and a "call for a neo-medieval flight from this world."[59]

Hans Morgenthau, a University of Chicago professor of political science, criticized Toynbee for turning too much to Eastern religion. "[In] a post- Christian scientific age, in which religious world view has diminished, and in which Christianity has evidenced little ability to reconvert Westerners to their ancestral religion Toynbee in his later works turned suspiciously more and more towards Eastern religions." Foreseeing Toynbee's later fame in Asia Morgenthau concluded: " The East—being less scientific, industrialized and secularized, and traditionally more introspective—might prove more receptive to Toynbee's syncretistic religiosity." Moreover, he wondered:

> even if it were true that the return to religious faith can save Western Civilization, can a civilization recover its religious faith by an act of will?…Neither a teacher nor a whole civilization can by an act of will create the symbolic and ritualistic expressions

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57 H.R. Trevor Roper, *Historical Essays*, (New York 1966), pp. 301-305, originally "Arnold Toynbee's Millenium, "Encounter, 8 June 1957, pp.14-28.

58 *Ibid.*

59 Lewis Mumford, "Napoleon of Notting Hill," in Ashley Montague, ed. *Toynbee and History*, (Boston, 1956), p.141; Mumford castigated Toynbee for his medieval withdrawal from modern civilization and Manichean refusal of it, Hans Kohn, "Faith and Vision of a Universal World," in Montague, *Toynbee and History*, p.357.

> of religiosity thus restored; least of all can they create the symbolic and ritualistic expressions of religiosity... ; least of all can they create them out of the fragments of religions, whose decline has made restoration of religiosity necessary in the first place…[60]

Secular liberals accused Toynbee of denying man the right to build civilization on secular humanistic foundations because he himself had rejected the liberal progressive vision of human history. Professor Charles Frankel judged *A Study* to be the work of a neo-idealist—"a Victorian, who was hostile to our [Western] technology." In Frankel's view, Toynbee had betrayed the values of modern liberal society, because "instead of controlling our destiny by reason and science and social policy, we are asked to place our trust in the coming breed of men who will bring miraculous vision with them"[61]

Commenting on the secular liberal reaction, Harvard historian Crane Brinton wrote, "the liberals would not give up their anti-supernaturalism, their belief in the form of…'Newtonian world machine'—which for them had become a rather paradoxical kind of Newton-Darwinian world-machine organism" [62]

While secular liberals attacked Toynbee for translating his personal spiritual quest into metahistorical laws, the neo-Orthodox wing of the New Liberalism faulted his conception of religion. In *Faith and History* (1949) Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, inveighed against ideologies which incorporated the idea of "salvation through history." Because human beings are unable to realize the limits of their powers, Niebuhr warned, individuals are overwhelmed with anxieties and unable to use freedom constructively. This anxiety leads to the "will-to-power "and, in turn, to conflict.[63]

Fighting fire with fire, Niebuhr invoked Calvinist arguments to oppose the Puritan idea of American mission. According to Niebuhr, both totalitarianism and Progressive liberalism drew their strength from their promise that man should perfect man and his society.[64] His warnings against "a corrupt expression of man's search for the ultimate within the vicissitudes and hazards of time" clearly applied to Toynbee. The Puritan concept of mission and Toynbee's "salvation through history" were equally a "false religion." History was not a "redeemer." In *The Irony of American History* (1952) Niebuhr again used modernist Neo-Orthodox Christian arguments against ideologies which incorporated the notion of "salvation through history." Niebuhr wrote:

> The whole drama of history is enacted in a frame of meaning too large for human comprehension of management. It is a drama in which fragmentary meanings can be discerned within a penumbra of mystery; and in which specific duties and

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60 Hans Morgenthau, "Toynbee and the Historical Imagination, " in Montague, *Toynbee and History*, pp.198-99

61 Charles Frankel, *The Case for Modern Man*,(Boston, 1959),pp.192-194.

62 Brinton, "Toynbee's City…,"p.375.

63 Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History, A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History*, (New York, 1949), pp. 30-31.

64 *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics*: *His Political Philosophy and its Application to Our Age as Expressed in his Writings*, ed. by Harry R.Davis and Robert C. Good, (New York, 1960), pp.13-40.

> responsibilities can be undertaken within a vast web of relations which are beyond our powers.[65]

Echoing Niebuhr, Christopher Dawson, one the most prominent Catholic historians of the era, was also offended by Toynbee's "reduction of history to theology." Dawson claimed that civilizations had qualitative differences, which made Toynbee's religious synthesis unlikely.[66]

Drawing on this criticism, Brinton argued that Toynbee's view of Christianity was superficial in comparison with modernist theology:

> Toynbee's work, in comparison with that of Niebuhr, Barth, and their school, lacks psychological depth. Compared with Neo Thomism, it lacks theological structure and a concrete social program…for the liberal wing of Christianity itself, Toynbee's work as a religious prophet repudiates completely both the optimism and the naturalism of the Enlightenment, which gives these world-views their modern meaning…Those who are going to throw away our inheritance from the eighteenth century overboard in favor of something new seem much more likely to follow less kindly and respectable leaders than Toynbee. Hitherto, at least, they have preferred a Hitler or a Mussolini.[67]

The British "pied piper," he added, would lead the West to neo-Victorian anti-rationalism.

Summarizing the views of these liberal opponents of the 1940s and 1950s, a more recent commentator targets their underlying complaint: "anti-Modernist Toynbee named capitalism, liberalism, Marxism and technocracy all symptoms of decay, not progress, however defined." [68]

Popper and His Epigones

In *The Poverty of Historicism* (1945) and *Open Society and its Enemies* (1950) British philosopher Karl Popper laid the basis for even more fundamental criticisms of Toynbee. In *The Poverty of Historicism*, he denied the existence of universal historical laws and asserted that all interpretations of history are subjective. In *The Open Society* he discredited all large scale theories of history, charging they supported totalitarianism, while affirming a "critical-objectivism" as the primary pattern of investigation for the "free world."

Karl Popper*'s* "principle of falsification" was objectivist epistemology in the extreme. Holding relentlessly to a strong version of the correspondence theory of truth, according to historian Peter Novick, "he never let slide an opportunity to denounce *relativism* in any form, or to *sociologize* knowledge." Popper wanted to establish a demarcation criterion between "scientific" and "metaphysical" propositions. For the logical positivist, verifiability was the

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65 Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*,(New York, 1952),p.88.

66 Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History, A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History*, (New York 1949), pp. 242; Dawson, "The Place of Civilization in History," in Montague, *Toynbee and History*, p.134.

67 Crane Brinton,"Toynbee's city of God," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Summer (1956), p.374.

68 Walter McDougall, "Mais ce n´est pas l´historie!: Some Thoughts on Toynbee, McNeill, and the Rest of Us," *Journal of Modern History*, March, (1986),p.23.

hallmark of a scientific proposition; for Popper the key was its “falsifiability.” An idea was not true unless means existed to prove it false.

Popper aimed his books at proponents of large-scale planning in defense of freedom against totalitarian and authoritarian ideas. "Historicism" was part of the threat to an ”open society" by placing human beings in a sweep of history transcending the individual. Popper wanted to sweep all "great narratives aside." Toynbee, like Spengler, used false analogies to describe historical processes to prove that history moves to some sort of end. "[History] cannot do that, the human individuals can do that…," Popper maintained. Popper has already earlier testified against Toynbee’s “laws”: “the evolution of life on earth, or of a human society, is a unique process.”[69]

Despite his respect for Toynbee’s erudition, Popper placed him among the villains of the Western thought, along with Plato and Marx. He found Toynbee indifferent to science and scientists and for their contributions to the development of modern Western society—“because only Einstein gets mentioned in *A Study*.”

Popper met Toynbee’s challenge in two ways. First he argued that, while there are repetitions within the historical process, such repetitions take place under “vastly dissimilar circumstances.” Thus we have “no valid reason to expect of any apparent repetition of a historical development that it will continue to run parallel to its prototype.”[70] Secondly, Popper alleged that Toynbee “classifies as civilizations only such entities [which] conform to his a priori belief in life cycles.”

Popper claimed further that Toynbee’s distinctions between “primitive societies” and “civilizations” were based on “his *a priori* intuition into the nature of civilizations.” The entire question of whether primitive societies and civilizations belong to the same species, Popper asserted, “is inadmissible, for it is based on the scientist’s methods of treating collectives, as if they were physical or biological bodies.”[71]

An entire society does not move; there are “only changes of selected aspects,” Popper continued. “The idea of the movement of society itself [the idea that society, like a physical body, can move as a whole along a certain path and in certain direction] is merely a holistic confusion.”[72] Popper conceded that there are trends or tendencies in social change, but “laws and trends are radically different things.”[73]

The claim that Toynbee's "laws" were finally subjective was not new. Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin, as we have seen, implied as much in his charge that his "civilizations" were not “real species of society,” and therefore could hardly be treated as unties and could barely have any uniformity in their rise and decline. [74]

Influenced by Popper, New York University’s acerbic philosopher Sidney Hook now dismissively presented the case from the Left:

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[69] Novick, *That Noble*, p. 298-299. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, (Princeton NJ., 1950), p. 463. Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, (London,1986) pp.108-109 ; originally published in *Economica* 11(1944) and 12 (1945),London.

[70] Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, (London, 1961), p. 111.

[71] *Ibid*.

[72] *Ibid*., p. 114.

[73] *Ibid*., p.115-116.

[74] Pitirim A. Sorokin, “Arnold J. Toynbee’s Philosophy of History,” in Montague, *Toynbee and History*, p.180.

> Toynbee's, empirical "laws," however, are so vague that it is hard to see what kind of empirical evidence could possibly refute them. Many of the Historical illustrations he cites could have been otherwise and still serve as historical illustrations of the thesis e.g., that "schism in the soul" is at the heart of the "body social," which is a necessary phase of social disintegration. He nowhere comes to grips with the view that the spiritual crisis of our time, as of other times, is a consequence of profound dislocation in economic and social institutions, and that the cure of the business cycle will affect the incidence of neurotic anxieties over salvation much more decisively than spiritual therapy will affect the business cycle.[75]

Popper's ideas also surfaced in the remarks of other Toynbee critics. Reinhold Niebuhr claimed that civilizations were not independent and rejected Toynbee's assumption of sharp break between civilization and primitive societies. Christopher Dawson denied the philosophical equivalence of civilizations, while Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset later stressed their unique paths of development.[76]

The charge of subjectivism also stuck. Critics charged that Toynbee's theory of "Challenge and Response" was tautological—if a civilization existed it must by definition have met its challenge. They also pointed out that Toynbee materialized categories deducted from analogies, and acted as though "mental reconstructions" are self-evident truths that required no definition.[77]

In a relatively recent assessment, Princeton University' political scientist Alan Ryan summed up the far reaching effect of Popper's critique of metaphysical world-history:

> Liberals after 1945 did not care for any theory of history. For intellectuals, if not yet for general reader, Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies and Poverty of Historicism* had tarred all large scale theories of history with totalitarian brush. Marxism had encouraged socialists to throw their opponents onto the rubbish heap of history; and fascism messianism had done the same. By 1954 American sociologist like Daniel Bell…were reminding of the blessings of the end of ideology, by which they meant the end of a belief in large historical schemes. [78]

Toynbee vs. American Historians

Whereas Spengler was helped by congruence between his views of American history and that of some Progressive historians, Toynbee became an easy target for a new generation of professionals. Harvard professor Oscar Handlin could not stomach Toynbee's arrogant

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75 Sidney Hook, "Mr. Toynbee's City of God," *The Partisan Review,* 6.June 1948, p.693.

76 Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History*, (New York 1949),p.110; Christopher Dawson, "Toynbee's Study of History; The Place of Civilizations in History," in Montague; and Jose´ Ortega y Gasset, *An Interpretation of Universal History*, (New York, 1973)p. 220-21. Fine summary of the debate over Toynbee's "historical laws," Stromberg, *Arnold J.Toynbee*: A *Historian For an Age in Crisis*, pp.52-66.

77 William Dray, "Toynbee's Search for Historical Laws," *History and Theory,* 1, (1960), p.48; H. Mitchell, "Herr Spengler and Mr. Toynbee," in Montague, *Toynbee and History*, passim.

78 Alan Ryan,"Master of Mish Mash," *The New Republic*, August 7&14, 1989, pp.33-34.

assertion that a primitive form of totalitarianism was intrinsic in the triumph of the American colonists. Further offending, Toynbee maintained, regarding the American Revolution, that "total, all-out war was the consequence of triumph of democracy [in the American continent]." Further, according to Handlin's diatribe"Toynbee gives a horrendous and overdrawn picture of the loyalist in the American Revolution . . . and a completely false picture of the eighteenth century developments… [while] he did not say a good word for democracy"[79]

University of Notre Dame Professor Matthew Fitzsimons charged that Toynbee's notion of "stimulus of the hard countries " provided too vague an explanation for "the rise of the New England." He was equally critical of Toynbee's description of the formative period of the American Revolution and the seminal period of the American Federal Union as the "triumph of democracy and the formation of another parochial state, all the more confirmed in its egocentricity because it had to fight for independence [while] presumably the works of Jefferson and Jackson were a superfluous ratification of the verdict of history [the triumph of declining forces of democracy]."[80]

Fitzsimons also found Toynbee's explanation of the Civil War "old fashioned." He could not tolerate the dismissal of the deeds of free agents like Abe Lincoln, in his broad deterministic overview. Viewed from Toynbee's cosmic perspective, "the result was as inevitable as the conflict had been irrepressible. The Union was preserved but this is a negligible issue, unworthy of the notice of the student of civilizations."[81] To Toynbee's claim that humble North Carolina was elevated by its meekness of spirit —Fitzsimons answered, "Virginia and, to a great extent South Carolina had been in decline for several decades before the Civil War." And with a slap at Toynbee's religiosity: "the miracle of the North Carolina was not the effect of the inexorable operation of a scriptural text about the exaltation of the humble."

In conclusion, Fitzsimons charged that Toynbee's treatment of the U.S. was "inaccurate and distorted, insufficient and indefinite…The unique features are not analyzed, while he has no great interest in the uniqueness of the peoples and institutions—it is the [Victorian] universal and the uniform, which fascinate Toynbee." While, the critic also conceded that the British historian deals with "contemporary [US] problems through insight and enormous learning."[82]

Crane Brinton also found the treatment of American history superficial in Toynbee's *America and the World Revolution* (1962). According to Brinton "Toynbee's love of symbols and metaphors and the constant use of comparisons …the claims to omniscience…all this and much else we find irritating." But as an intellectual historian Brinton wanted to do his job "and understand Toynbee and the reasons for his popular success."[83]

Henry Luce also finally had second thoughts on Toynbee when the famous publisher discovered that Toynbee's millennium was not quite the same as his American Century. The discrepancy between Luce's missionary brand of internationalist Republicanism and

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[79] Oscar Handlin, "In the Dark Backward," *The Partisan Review*, 1947, IV,p. 371-379.

[80] Matthew Fitzsimons, "Toynbee's History and Character of the United States," Edward Gargan ed., *The Intent of Toynbee's History*, (Loyola, Chicago, 1961), p.139-140.

[81] *Ibid*.,p.141.

[82] *Ibid*., pp. 146-149.

[83] Crane Brinton, "Review of the *America and the World Revolution," The American Historical Review*," October, 1963, p,758.

Toynbee's rejection of nationalism as "tribe worship" and bitter assessment of democracy finally alienated Luce. By 1962 he discovered that Toynbee's interpretation of American role in world politics and his “soft view” on Communism differed from the political line that *Time* held.

Broadcasting the divorce, *Time* announced:

> One of the disconnecting details in *A Study of History* is Toynbee's casual indifference to the menace of Communism. In his discussion of economics, Toynbee blandly ignores Communism's ugliest aspect … its totalitarianism. His implication: a have-not nation is entitled to totalitarian methods to catch up with the haves…an argument that was also used by Hitler.[84]

Other Cold Warriors also turned on Toynbee. George Kennan, architect of much U.S. Cold War policy, later observed that Toynbee had become "addicted to limelight," as he accepted the role of the "prophet of Western civilization." This, according to the celebrated American diplomat, increased the scorn of his colleagues. Kennan further claimed that Henry Luce made and unmade Toynbee: shaping him as "an international sage and unmade him, by destroying the last restraints of public modesty." This status, according to Kennan, “resulted from Toynbee's megalomania.”[85]

The Luce- press alone could not have sustained or destroyed Toynbee’s reputation in the long run. Rather it was Toynbee’s own “anti-Americanism,” “antimodernism” and “anti-liberalism” which turned American liberal critics against his scheme of world-history. Toynbee’s anti-liberal and anti-Western ideas in the context of Cold War years made him unwelcome —even in "Christian America."

A Toynbee Revival?

Although disputes over Toynbee’s achievement will probably go on for the foreseeable future, there are signs of a revival. Writing in 1992, Christopher Brewin acknowledged that Toynbee benefited from some specific circumstances during and after the war:

> There can be no doubt that Toynbee derived immense prestige from his authorship of both the *Survey*[*of International Affairs*] and the *Study*…it provided him with a visiting card in America during and *i*mmediately after the war, and subsequently Japan was flattered by his interests in far eastern civilizations. In America his interests in higher religions stood him in good stead in with the World Council of the Churches and the influential American Comission to Study the Basis for a Just and Durable Peace, which brought John Foster Dulles on a visit to Toynbee in Balliol…In Japan Toynbee is studied with the reverence due to a Buddhist sage…among those who worked with Toynbee at Chatham House are Martin Wright and William Hardy McNeill.[86]

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84 "Review of ‘America and the World Revolution’", *Time*, October 5, 1962.p.62.

85 George Kennan, "The History of Arnold Toynbee," *The New York Review of Books,* June 1, (1989), p.32.

86 Christopher Brewin, “Research in Global Context, A Discussion of Toynbee’s Legacy,” *Review of International Studies*, 1992,II, p.120.

But Brewin also insisted that his merits transcend his time. Toynbee was an "international sage," he wrote, driving relentlessly for the right causes: the "anachronism of war" and "understanding between civilizations." [87] Today new breeds of world- historians again focus on the macro- rather than micro-historical agenda, albeit possibly with a difference. As Alan Ryan wrote in 1989:

> To the extent that William McNeill, John Roberts, and Paul Kennedy have revived the [world historical genre]… [it] has been less uncommitted to cramping all societies and their history into a Procustean mold. Toynbee's enterprise was the last gasp of an essentially 19th-century Romantic approach to history…[88]

Whatever the case, in our Postmodern Age, Spengler and Toynbee — in spite or because of their antimodernism— have made a comeback as classics in newly established curriculums of "world history" in American colleges and universities. [89]

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87 Another semi- positive re-evaluation of Toynbee and his theory, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Civilizations*, (London, Pan books 2001),pp. 13, 26-27.

88 Alan Ryan, "Master of Mish Mash,"pp.33-34.

89 Patrick Manning, "Methodology and World History in a Ph.D. program," *World History Bulletin*, Spring-Summer (1992), p.42.

CONCLUSION: THE ONGOING LIBERAL PARADIGM

"America was born modern,"a recent observer writes: "it did not have to achieve modernity, nor did it have modernity thrust upon it."[1] In this same sprit, "consensus" historians of the 1950s and 1960s argued that Americans derived from the Enlightenment a ubiquitous political liberalism, rooted in a faith in the individual, representative government, and social equality. During the 19th century these political convictions combined with a belief in free market capitalism and material well-being. A belief in reason, science, and progress sustained this worldview. Natural science, viewed as neutral and value free, eclipsed religion as guarantor of American progress and power.[2]

Viewed within this liberal paradigm, America has been "exceptional" in being immune to the patterns of rise and decline of older civilizations. Projected overseas, this view has meant United States would by example provide the blueprint for a new world-order, "civilizing" major parts of the globe through the spread of trade and modern values. Equated with "modernization," the term "civilization"—American "civilization"—embodies everything "progressive" and "modern."

These liberal values also shaped American conceptions of history and historical writing from the "scientific history" of the 1880s, to the "progressive" New History after 1910, and the "consensus history" of 1950s and 1960s. For more than a century, successive generations of American historians disagreed on the scope, nature, and purpose of historical writing. For scientific historians of the late 19th century, history was "past politics"; for champions of the New History it included economics, sociological, and psychological factors. For New History "progressives," history was a story of conflicting economic interests; for "consensus" historians, a succession of family quarrels within liberal-capitalism. But with minor variations these historians shared a common view of the direction and nature of historical change; and, more importantly, of the necessity of the careful collection of data as the sole guarantee of historical "objectivity."

The present study traces the ways this hegemonic liberalism within social theory and historical writing shaped the American reception of Brooks Adams's *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1895), Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1926 -1929) and Arnold Toynbee's, A *Study of History* (12 vols. 1934 –1961). The focus is the response of the liberal cultural elite-- exemplified in politician and president Theodore Roosevelt, historian Charles Beard, and publisher Henry Luce-- since it was within these circles that all three metahistorians, rather surprisingly, gained greatest public exposure.[3] Although, in retrospect,

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1 Ernest.Gellner, *Anthropology And Politics : Revolution In The Sacred Grove* (Oxford ; Cambridge, Mass. : Blackwell, 1995), p18 quoted in http://members.tripod.com/GellnerPage/Quotes.html#modernity.

2 Contemporary illustration of this is the *Activision* PC-game "Civilization"- series, which outlines the liberal scientific path as the *only* way to advance in the improvement in "the complex web of scientific and cultural advances …in the progression of human achievement," Activision, *Civilization: Call to power II*, "Introduction," p.64. Among American scholars "classic" explications of this view are Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* and Lionel Trilling *The Liberal Imagination* (New York, 1950).

3 Although an examination of the reception of these metahistories in the writings of self-identified radicals and conservatives might yield a different perspective, it is beyond the scope of this study.

Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee enjoyed little more than a short period of fame, their fleeting celebrity poses the question of why in "liberal" America such attention was paid to a dyspeptic, patrician Bostonian, a reactionary German pessimist, and an Oxford-educated Englishman whose anti-Americanism became more pronounced with the passing years.

Although studies of the three historians have addressed this question in passing, the present work is the first to explore their overall reception in relation to the transformation of American liberalism, the politics of publishing and reviewing, and changes in the literary marketplace. It also places the reception within a broader American tradition of world-history and changing definitions of civilization. More than simple distortion, it is argued, the "Americanization" of these metahistories sheds light on the conservative turn of American liberalism in its encounter with cultural pessimism from the *fin de siecle* to the encounter with European modernism in the first half of the 20th century. Each historian was promoted by a powerful patron with his own political agenda. All were "media celebrities" before this term was known.

Languages of Discontent

To ”consensus" historians, the Unites States also appeared "exceptional" in having no significant "radical" or "conservative" traditions, in the European sense of these terms. Marxian socialism, it was said, flourished sporadically among newly-arrived immigrants and small groups of intellectuals. Columbia historian Richard Hofstadter pictured radicals and conservatives alike as examples of the "paranoid style" in American politics.[4] In The *Liberal Imagination* (1950), literary critic Lionel Trilling characterized American conservatism as little more than a series of irritated gestures.

But a hegemonic liberalism does not entail a monolithic "consensus."[5] A Brooks Adams could celebrate the virtues of the Medieval knight and pine for a lost Feudal order without seriously questioning private property or the other tenets of liberal capitalism. A Charles Beard could ponder whether contemporary civilization was approaching new heights or sinking rapidly to a "nadir near at hand," [6] without doubting that science and technology held the key to future progress.

Throughout U.S history, dissidents on Right and Left, elitist and democrat, have in fact turned to various alternate traditions to voice their disagreements with the liberal-capitalist model. As chapter 1 shows, these traditions have included :(a) religion, from Puritanism (in the Jeremiads of Wigglesworth and others) to the evangelical Protestantism of the 19th century, and to the modernist Neo-Orthodoxy of Reinhold Niebuhr in the 20th; (b) a Republican tradition that surfaced during the American revolution and served through the 19th century; (c) Romanticism, which from the Transcendentalists to Herbert Marcuse and the "New Romantics" of the 1960s often drew on German metaphysics; (d) evolutionary naturalism, which, although fervently optimistic in its dominant form (Spencerianism), produced a pessimistic underside in literary naturalists and a late 19th century fascination with "degeneration."

Unlike their counterparts in Europe, American "conservatives" in the first half of the 20th century defended, not an *ancien regime* consisting of monarchy, landed aristocracy,

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4 Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (New York, 1965). See also his *Age of Reform* (New York, 1955).

5 T. J. Jackson Lears "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *The American Historical Review*, 90 (Jun., 1985), pp. 567-593.

6 Charles Beard ed., *Whither Mankind: A Panorama of Modern Civilization*, “Introduction," (New York, 1928), pp.1-3.

and state-sponsored church. Nor, despite a perennial racism and nativism across the political spectrum, did most conservatives turn to a *volkish* nationalism on the European model. Instead they sought useable pasts in the Middle Ages (Henry Adams), Antebellum South (the Southern Agrarians), and the Classical world (the New Humanists), or at the grass-roots level, the certainties of Fundamentalist Christianity.

Although ranging from religious to secular, from reactionary to revolutionary, these dissidents on the Left and Right voiced common themes: a distrust of mass democracy and majoritarianism; distaste for social egalitarianism, for commercialism and for materialism; and, since the late 19th century, a view of popular culture that has ranged from indifference to contempt. Nor were these concerns a monopoly of self-identified "radicals" and "conservatives" since these same themes surfaced within mainstream liberalism, from turn of the century progressives such as Theodore Roosevelt to the self-proclaimed New Liberals of the 1950s.

The resulting discourse often focused on changing definitions of “civilization, ” a term which held both threat and promise. From the writings of the Puritans to Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) and Charles Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization* (1927-30), conflicting images of civilization served as a focus for the nation's worst fears and best hopes. As threat, civilization conjured images of a corrupt Old World, with its endless cycles of decay and decline. Recast in terms of material and moral progress, however, “civilization” served to define America’s mission in the world.

The Metahistorians

These crosscurrents provide the context for understanding the American reception of the work of Brooks Adams, Oswald Spengler, and Arnold Toynbee. As social theorists, each challenged prevailing views of civilization, questioned the value of democratic government, and denied the inevitability of progress. As theorists, they drew on one or more of America's several "languages of discontent": evolutionary naturalism (Adams); German Romanticism (Spengler), and religion (Toynbee).[7] As historians they offered a cyclical theory of change in opposition to the unilinear evolutionism that in one form or other suffused American historical writing over several generations. Methodologically, their imaginative, often poetic "metahistory" flew in the face of prevailing standards of evidence-gathering and historical "objectivity." This approach, it is argued, appealed to a popular audience while alienating many professional historians. Not surprisingly, renewed interest in their work comes at a time when academic historians are again concerned with their failure to engage the general, reading public.

Advocating a new *world-system ,* Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee believed that global change could be accomplished only by a ”creative minority.” Although their ends diverged, each looked to war—initially the First and then the Second World War —to bring the collapse of a corrupt older order. Adams hoped for an American Empire based on the “modernized” corporation; Spengler for a world order based on German values of *Kultur*; and Toynbee, in the wake of World War II, for an end of the nation-state and the establishment of a world government. Adams and Spengler agreed that only a top-down corporatist-socialist command economy could save “modern civilization," relying on established *elites,* rather than a Marxian proletariat, to accomplish this task. Toynbee looked to a spiritual elite, the prophets of a new religion, to provide salvation for the West.

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7 For the phrase "language of discontent," see Daniel Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History* (1982).

For all the twists and turns of his reputation Brooks Adams was *the pioneer* who paved the way for subsequent efforts in the field—a point Charles Beard made regarding Adams's relation to Oswald Spengler in his introduction to the 1943 edition of *The Law*. Spengler would share with Adams both themes and a common *genre*. At the top of the list was a contrast between vital Culture and decadent Civilization *and* a cyclical view of history— both direct challenges to a linear, progressive evolutionism that, in attenuated form, persists in popular thought today. Both feared that modern America (for Spengler, "the West") showed the same signs of decay that brought the downfall of Rome. Both hung their histories on "laws" but at the same time (as with Arnold Toynbee) lamented the ascendancy of the scientific, secular mind over the religious and creative. For Adams, Spengler and Toynbee historical analysis verged on the mystical: in Adams's "energetic material," Spengler's transcendental concept of "race," and Toynbee's "world-spirit."

The World Historians in Liberal America

Like Brooks Adams, Spengler and Toynbee would profit from having a shrewd sense of the temper of the times in America. Each had the good fortune to articulate the popular mood during the brief period of their butterfly fame: Adams, the contentious and troubled 1890s; Spengler, the cynical and disillusioned "Jazz-age"; and Toynbee, the adolescent confidence of Cold War America.

The reception of Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee thus provides a window on the discontents of American intellectuals in the first half of the 20th century. Given its perennial concern with "civilization," it may even be argued that the United States has been more receptive to world-historical explanations than Europe, a common European perception to the contrary not withstanding. [8] Yet a closer look at the causes and nature of the appeal of the cultural pessimism of the metahistorians underlines the power of the liberal-rationalist worldview and related Enlightenment values.

All three were the products of a new era of mass publishing and media celebrity. Thanks to the media, Spengler and Toynbee were certainly among the first non-American historians to become household names. Ironically, their popular success rested in large part on precisely those market forces and popular culture they disdained, as the American press promoted them as the pop cultural theorists of their era. All three enjoyed prominent press agents or powerful benefactors: Theodore Roosevelt (Adams); the publisher Alfred Knopf and historian Charles Beard (Spengler); and *Time* magnate Henry Luce (Toynbee).

Each also benefited from the growing split between academic history and popular taste. The appeal of these world–histories to the general reading public in the 20th century was related to the same faults that the academic historians found in their work. Whatever its merits "objectivist" history gave readers little to live by. The elaborate documentation of the professionals, with its sharply defined data, footnotes and bibliographies, thus provided an opening for a return to an older tradition of literary history. Readers appreciated this effort even while not accepting the entire argument.

Each metahistorian also paid a price for his celebrity in distortion and misunderstanding. Despite their apparent popularity, a strong and vibrant American liberal culture provided poor soil for their metaphysics. All three, endured misunderstanding and distortion as the price of popularity, although Adams less immediately as he changed course from playing Jeremiah to being a Rooseveltian Progressive.

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8 Harry Elmer Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing*, (New York,1962), [reprint of the 1937 edition], p.204, observed that "the United States has shown considerable interest in the philosophy of history."

It was Adams's good fortune in supporting America's imperial expansion and jumping on T.R.'s bandwagon to be spared during his lifetime the fate of Spengler who was caught in the reaction against Fascism in the 1930s, and Toynbee who discovered in the 1950s that Cold War American had little room for pro-Soviet sympathies. The price Adams paid was initially to be cited as an early advocate of the economic interpretation of history and only later as a reactionary, possible "proto-fascist" American aristocrat.

Theodore Roosevelt aside, Brooks Adams's *Law of Civilization and Decay* found readers largely among a tiny circle of distinguished Boston Brahmins, his contemporary reputation resting less on his pessimistic "laws" of decline, than his purported advocacy of an "economic interpretation of history." Although Adams had the good fortune to die before the triumph of Nazism, his technocratic socialism appeared "proto-fascistic" to generations that came of age after World War II. From the present world-historical point of view, despite his "crude" theorizing, only Adams (of the three metahistorians), in his later volumes, drew the right conclusions describing the rise of American superpower to the global domination during the later half of the 20th century.

The liberal faith in reason, science, and progress also colored the American liberal reaction towards *The Decline of the West.* In the 1920s the result was a myopia regarding Spengler's proto-fascist undertones. Spengler's reviewers (especially the favorable ones in the popular press) were more interested in the sensational aspects of his theory than in making it the basis for a political philosophy or political or social movement, as occurred in Germany. Most of the "serious" reviewers (Charles Beard and even Lewis Mumford) praised Spengler, only finally to suggest a "liberal" alternative. Once Spengler was seen as a precursor of Nazi ideology, Spengler criticism in the United States during the Great Depression and World War II strengthened the scientific-liberal definition of American civilization, with reverberations in criticism of totalitarianism during the Cold War (ch. 6). Arnold Toynbee likewise was accepted only after being presented as a new prophet of progress at a time when the "American Century" concept was popular in the 1940s and jettisoned when his thoughts turned too earnestly to religion and world-government (chs. 8-9).

American Modernism

The American reception of Adams, Spengler, and Toynbee thus also sheds light on the "conservative" turn of American liberalism in its relation to the "Modernist" phase of American thinking from the 1910s through the 1960s. This analysis shows, on the one hand that discontent with the liberal paradigm (often coupled with scenarios of catastrophe in world history and civilization) has been too perennial a theme in the American intellectual tradition to ignore. In the works of the three metahistorians it contributed to what may be termed "American Modernism."

But previous pages also suggest that Modernism (whether or not "reactionary") took a variety of forms, differed in separate countries/cultures, and changed over time. In this regard, it resembled such eras as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Romantic era. In the United States, the reactions of Charles Beard and Lewis Mumford to Spengler, in particular, suggest that what one might call a "modernist" sensibility of pessimism towards "civilization" often co-existed with a faith in reason and progress.

Henry Luce's appropriation of Toynbee also underlines the degree to which early Modernism—the Neo-Orthodox theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth, for example—was in the 1940s retro-fitted to become compatible with the American

establishment culture and a basis for Cold War ideology.[9] After 1947 a revival of interest in Western history and religion, and in holistic approaches to world history, made Toynbee quite acceptable, until Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* and Friedrich von Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, exposed the dangers inherent in turning away from the 19th century rational definition of civilization— devoid of any metaphysical speculation. Meanwhile a new generation of post-progressive historians branded all evolutionary speculation as examples of a dangerous "social Darwinism." "End of ideology" theorists, many of them former socialists or Marxists, argued that any theory was likely to cause trouble. By the mid-1950s, with the exception of a few highbrow critics, the world historians and their anti-American prophesies aroused only lukewarm reception in a nation rediscovering the benefits of liberal capitalism.

Post Modernism—Echoes of Adams Spengler and Toynbee?

Renewed interest in Spengler and Toynbee in recent years, especially in the re-surfaced genre of world-history, illustrates continuities between Modernism on the one hand, and post-1960s radicalism and its postmodern cultural perspectives on the other. In volume five of *A Study of History,* Arnold Toynbee originally coined the term "post-modernism" in the context of the World War II, although it has been re-defined in the contemporary American historical discourse. Cultural criticism in contemporary America once again echoes the ideas of the three world historians. Oliver Stone's and Kevin Phillips's dire warnings about the Reagan era "decade of greed" sound like Brooks Adams's diatribes against the Gilded Age "Gold Bugs." Post-modernist critics of power-driven mega-science repeat Spengler's ambiguous assessment of the Faustian enterprise of natural science. American postmodern historians have interpreted history in the framework of grand narratives, and some have sympathized with the poetic language which Spengler used in *The Decline.*

Toynbee's legacy is evident in the West Coast cultural movements which build on his mythical philosophy of history based on C.G. Jung and *I-Ching*. The *Easalen* institute (an example of the post -New Left, New Age movement in the 1980s) drew its inspiration from Toynbee's celebrations of "Creative minorities," as the agents in the creation of a new world order —a networked, digitized global "gaian" holotropic civilization. Economic globalization and the "Clash of Civilizations" have raised interest in the World Historical curriculums in American colleges. Current world events increase the number of citations in the media to Toynbee's theory of "Encounters between Civilizations," now with reference to his wide knowledge of the relations between Islam and the West.

The legacy of the metahistorians in debates over globalism (anti-globalism), in world-systems theory (Toynbee), in environmentalism (Spengler), and in word-history movement also raises questions about these contemporary movements. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, these questions remain: have these movements escaped the pitfalls of their predecessors, namely association with "reactionary" political currents: Imperialism (Adams); Fascism (Spengler); and Cold Warriorism (Toynbee in the 1940s). Will they, like the three figures treated in this essay, pass as quickly into obscurity?

American cultural pessimists on Left and Right converge in their rejection of materialism, their distrust of science, and the desire for a holistic perspective (whether in God or in metaphysics). Is so-called Postmodernism yet another elitist movement out of touch, not only with the traditions of American liberalism, but with the mass of the American people?

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9 The American "Cold Warrior" liberals were put off by Toynbee[as the New Left modestly habilitated him] during the 1960s . Toynbee described Washington D.C. as " the arrogant capital," reminiscent of imperial Rome, ruled by "abusive and trenched" elite.

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