

CULTURAL-CYCLICAL AND NEO-IDEALIST
PHILOSOPHIES OF HISTORY: SPENGLER,
TOYNBEE, and CROCE

by
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INTRODUCTION

This paper will deal with two rather different views or philosophies of history. These are the Cultural-Cyclical view of history and the New-Idealist view of history. Leading exponents of each view will be dealt with.

The Cultural-Cyclical view of history is represented well by Oswald Spengler of Germany and Arnold J. Toynbee of Great Britain. The proponent of the Neo-Idealist view with whom this paper will deal is Benedetto Croce of Italy.

The views of each man will be considered separately. It is hoped that the similarities and differences in their views will become evident as the individual philosophies are dealt with.

OSWALD SPENGLER

“History just repeats itself so what is the use of worrying about it?” Sentiments similar to these have been expressed by people in virtually every walk of life. Most of us have voiced similar feelings at one time or another, have we not? In many ways this thought could well be a vernacular summary of the views of Oswald Spengler.

For Spengler, the Western view of history has long held up to man an inaccurate view of what is involved in history. We have spoken of World History as if it were the peculiar property of our culture. Implicit in our view of history is the assumption that the only truly significant events in history have transpired on or near the European Continent; these events have likewise been largely limited to the years since the twelfth century. This view is not accurate, says Spengler. It relegates to a secondary position the histories of advanced cultures in the Orient and in America. Sur-

ely there are events in the histories of China and the Mayans that are fully as significant for world history as the Crusades, the Renaissance, or the French Revolution.¹⁾

According to Spengler there is a moving force in history. That force is a combination of fate and an eternal principle of natural biological growth. This "fate" is mysterious, incomprehensible. "We can never know what it is, for it is the ultimate reality as much as Kant's 'thing-in-itself', or Schopenhauer's 'will to live', or Bergson's 'Elan vital.'"²⁾ This fate has no personality. It is "not even a God in the Making."³⁾ We may, however, learn from its process of operation.

We cannot hope to forecast the future in detail any more than we can hope to shape it. Nevertheless, there is the possibility of using the historical inquiry into the comparisons of cultures to draw some generalizations in advance concerning "the form, duration, rhythm, meaning, and outcome of future epochs in the history of the West."⁴⁾

It is misleading to speak of the history of mankind. Humanity has no common life-curve. There is no common ideal, no common goal for human existence. History is not progressive. Rather, it is a succession of catastrophes. Darwinism teaches that there is development and progress within history and within each individual species. Spengler denies this. He says that species appear suddenly and in mature form. From this they struggle unsuccessfully for existence only to die. So, too, with cultures.⁵⁾

¹ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962, pp. 9—18.

² W. K. Stewart, "The Decline of Western Culture," *Century*, CVIII (September, 1924), 590.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

⁴ Richard Grutzmacher, "Oswald Spengler," *Living Age*, CCCXVIII (July 7, 1923), p. 22.

⁵ Spengler, p. 230—2.

True history, then, is the history of individual cultures "each of which possessed its own art, thought, and end of existence."⁶ Each culture rises, almost as if by accident, within definite geographical boundaries. It grows, reaches fulfillment, and dies within that same territory just as a plant is limited to a specific area in its existence. Each culture has its own distinct qualities which distinguish it from every other culture. There is no interrelation between cultures. Each culture passes through stages of growth and decay just as a plant does. These stages are constant for all cultures both in terms of length of years and type.⁷

There have been eight such cultures in the six thousand years of recorded history. These are the Chinese, Babylonian, Egyptian, East Indian, Greco-Roman or Classical, Mayan, Arabian, and Occidental or Western. Each of these has lived out its existence in growth, maturing, decline, and destruction with two exceptions. The Mayan culture was forcibly destroyed by the Conquistadores; the Western culture is now in the state of decline.⁸

The development of each culture has followed a set pattern.

It begins with the barbarism of a primitive society; it goes on to develop a political organization, arts and sciences, and so forth, at first in a stiff and archaic manner, then blossoming into its classical period, then congealing into decadence, and finally sinking into a new type of barbarism where everything is commercialized and vulgarized, and here its life ends. Out of this decadent condition nothing new emerges; that culture is dead and its creative power is spent.⁹

⁶ Ramiro De Maeztu, "A Spaniard's Exposition of Spengler," *Living Age*, CCCXXVII, (October 17, 1925), p. 133.

⁷ Grutzmacher, p. 22.

⁸ Spengler, pp. 234—44.

⁹ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, (1967), p. 181.

Each culture experiences approximately one thousand years of growth before the decline sets in. This period of growth and decline takes on five distinct stages. The first stage is that of the priest-king or the theocratic monarch. During this stage the amorphous tribe settles down and develops the rudiments of a government and organized life. Primitive agriculture is developed. Marriage by means of capture is abolished. The tribe organizes itself into a body which is responsible to the priest-king.

In the second stage a form of feudalism develops. The duties of the priest-king have grown so that he must delegate authority to the landed nobility. These members of the "Aristocracy" become increasingly contentious and assume more and more authority. This feudal period lasts about six hundred years. The third stage revolves around the development of the burgher class. During this time the people begin to gather in the centers of commerce. A recognizable middle class begins to make itself known and its influence felt. This period lasts four hundred years.

The fourth period Spengler calls the *Massemensch*. This is the large city culture. Here, the cities are over-populated. The proletariat are able and ready to be exploited by demagogues. There arises a struggle with the other classes. The growth of freedom has exceeded the awareness of responsibility. The state has been extended to the limits of its effective control of the society. These conditions set the stage for decline. This period lasts about one hundred years.

The fifth and final stage in the life of a culture is called Caesarism. Here the government is run by a dictator tacitly accepted by society and controlled by finance (Realpolitik). According to Gibbon this is the recognition of the failure of the constitutional government to provide liberty *and* order for the people. The supreme power of one may be preferable to the theoretical liberty and

equality of all.¹⁰⁾

One of the main points of Spengler's philosophy is that there is no unity or distinctive relationship between the various cultures. There can be no progress. No culture is superior to another. In its period of decay a culture will stagnate. There will be signs of outward life but the inner self of the culture will be dead.¹¹⁾

In order to show that the Western culture is distinct from all other cultures, Spengler must show especially that there is no dependence on the Greco-Roman culture. According to Spengler, the Greeks lacked all sense of time as an infinite quality. The present is the whole of reality. The past was myth; they had no real records. They had little sense of the future.

The Greeks also had no real concept of space. Their word for space meant literally "that which is not." Likewise, they had no concept of background in art. The Doric column, which was their outstanding piece of architecture, was stark and self-contained. In their paintings, they made no use of blue or green to show distance in the sky and sea. They had no real sense of perspective.¹²⁾

The current culture (1925) is, for Spengler, a period of transition from the stage of Hellenism (city-state government) to Romanism (subordinated central power). Could it be that he saw the possibility of the rise of a new and powerful Germany? Great military power is not necessary to gain political control of the world. If the situation is propitious any nation could take advantage of the circumstances. "Rome did not conquer the world. She merely took possession of what might have become the booty of any first-comer."¹³⁾

There are three signs of the coming of the period of decline in

¹⁰ John Gould Fletcher, "Spengler, Marx and Keyserling," *Living Age*, CCCXXXIII (October 15, 1927), p. 723-4.

¹¹ Stewart, p. 590.

¹² Spengler, pp. 591-2.

¹³ De Maeztu, p. 133.

the history of a culture. These are irreligion, socialism, and the sterility of the cities.¹⁴⁾ Spengler saw these signs in the time in which he lived.

The Christianity of the Western culture was radically different from early Christianity. The early faith had risen in its distinctive culture (Arabian). It grew totally because of the influence of the man Jesus Christ. This early Christianity was characteristic of the other religions of the Arabian culture. Gnosticism and Islam, along with Christianity were dualistic. They saw time as fixed at a starting point which was the Creation and time could come to an end in the judgment. They exhibited a passive, fatalistic obedience to the divine.¹⁵⁾ Modern Christianity is entirely different. We have kept the terms of the earlier faith but have changed the meanings.

The second sign of decline which Spengler saw was the rising influence of socialism. "Socialism's great disservice to the workman was in destroying his pride in personal performance, in teaching him that to advance economically was to betray his class."¹⁶⁾ Along with his scorn for socialism as such, Spengler exhibits a distaste for any reforms which might be aimed at improving the situation either on the personal or national levels. For him, a reformer is one who ushers in the "fella" or the decay of the civilization. Any concept of world peace was seen by Spengler as one-sided. The majority of such reformers want peace so badly that they would be willing to succumb to an aggressive minority. Success goes to the powerful. The fate of such reformers was "destruction whenever they preferred ideal truth to resolute action, or set abstract justice above the power to work their will."¹⁷⁾

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁵ Spengler, pp. 592—3.

¹⁷ Konrad Falke, "An Historians Forecast," *Living Age*, CCCXIV (September 16, 1922), p. 698.

The third sign of the decline of a culture is the growth of the large city society and what Spengler calls the resulting sterility of the cities. Any means of population control is a sign of civilization and therefore a sign of the end. The reason that the growth of the city is a sign of the decline of the culture is that this growth brings with it "civilization." Civilization is that phase of the life of a culture when the strong virulence of the earlier years is gone. No longer is there any emphasis on the great truths and beauty. Rather the main concern is utilitarian. This society is suffering from civilization. We are producing no new ethical or philosophical material. The creative arts are dead.¹⁸⁾ Civilization is the rigor mortis of a culture. It would be well to remember at this point that Spengler was speaking from the years immediately before and after the First World War.

Spengler tends to minimize the efforts of the intellect as a significant force in history. "He looks upon the political annals of the states as the only realities; he sees vital processes at work only where people are either the hammer or the anvil."¹⁹⁾ The state, in a culture, is run by a minority, the elite. As civilization develops, the bourgeoisie makes itself felt. Parliamentarism is merely a transition from the late culture period to the early civilization characterized by the era of the Great Men. The next development comes with the rise of contending force and states. For our culture this phase began with the time of Napoleon. After this must come Caesarism.²⁰⁾

Spengler is a professed monarchist.²¹⁾ He seems to look forward with expectation to the age of Caesarism. Caesarism is "that kind of government which, irrespective of any constitutional formulati-

¹⁸ "Oswald Spengler," *Living Age*, CCCXVIII (July 7, 1923), p. 25.

¹⁹ Falke, p. 697.

²⁰ Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, pp. 373—5.

²¹ Falke, p. 700.

on that it may have, is in its inward self a return to thorough formlessness."²²) Although there is a pretense at following the form of the constitutional government, the real power is invested in the man. Caesarism will bring with it great wars. But, war is not destructive, it is creative. Out of the ruins of a war may well arise the next great culture. That culture may well be Russia.²³)

The West is now ready for Caesarism and will see it in about three or four hundred years. Then will come stagnation and decay.²⁴) We have become critical, not creative. We rely on ingenuity, not on inspiration. "Our religion has ceased to be spiritual because it is no longer whole-heartedly believed."²⁵) To deny this impending decay by pointing to scientific advance is to miss the point. Science is not a reliable gauge. Our knowledge in the area of science is incomplete. But man's political institutions, his records, that which he built as the acme of his culture, this we can fully grasp. These point to phases of growth and decay.²⁶)

Spengler would deny that his theory is pessemistic "To accept the inevitable, to embrace destiny, is the mark of the highest wisdom."²⁷) Neither "is there any reason for deploring the fact that we have been born in an epoch of decadence, because we are not responsible for this fact."²⁸) Furthermore, if one has a purpose or a task to accomplish, an era of decadence is as good as any other time in which to live out one's life.

²² Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, p. 378.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 594.

²⁴ Fletcher, p. 724.

²⁵ Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, p. 594.

²⁶ Fletcher, p. 724.

²⁷ Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, p. 596.

²⁸ De Maeztu, pp. 133—4.

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

In *Civilization on Trial* Toynbee reports that he was deeply interested in the question of how, after the many centuries of existence of life on earth, civilizations suddenly began to sprout. At about that time he read Spengler's *The Decline of the West* and found much that was agreeable to him. "But when I looked in Spengler's book for an answer to my question about the genesis of civilizations, I saw that there was still work for me to do."²⁹ Spengler's attitude, as we have seen above, was dogmatic. This is the way it is and we must live with it. Toynbee, however, wanted more. "And here I became aware of a difference in national traditions. Where the German "a priori" method drew blank, let us see what could be done by English empiricism."³⁰ Toynbee came to an answer for his question. His answer is phrased in the words "Challenge and response."

Toynbee's search was for a clue for the "why" of the growth of one civilization (not the same as Spengler's term) and the failure of another to grow. The major ideas put forth at that time centered around Race and environment. Some said that the success of a civilization came because the people were racially qualified to succeed. But, says Toynbee, most races are far from pure so this possibility is ruled out. Environment was also put forward as a factor in the rise of civilizations. But, reasoned Toynbee, if civilizations rose in the Euphrates valley and in the Nile valley, why not in the Jordan and Rio de Janero valleys? Therefore, there must be another solution. Toynbee found it in "challenge and res-

²⁹ Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp.10-11.

³⁰ Ibid.

ponse."³¹⁾

There are two ways to study civilizations. The first is to look at the ways in which they interact with one another. The second is to look at all of the civilizations as a group and try, by means of comparison, to draw some conclusions that will be valid. Toynbee chose to use a combination of the two.³²⁾ Toynbee identified some twenty civilizations which have existed in the history of man. Only five of these remain today. These are Western Christendom, Orthodox Christendom, Islam, Hindu, and Far East.³³⁾

The birth of a civilization is only one step in an infinite number of steps which will move Man from inanimate Matter to the condition of God. The first battle in the series was characterized by the conflict between an outlaw comet (the adversary) which narrowly missed the Sun (Life Principle) and produced the solar system. The Last and climactic battle in the series will accomplish the change of some future civilization from its then present existence to a Community of Saints.³⁴⁾ This is possible because "societies pass over from the static condition of primitive man to the dynamic movement of Civilization by a decisive act, a "response" to a "challenge."³⁵⁾ This process is at the very heart of all that Toynbee has to say concerning philosophy of history.

M. Whitcomb Hess has this insight concerning Toynbee's method. His "rout-rally-rout account of historical phases has never been anything more than the application of Hegel's view of history to specific cultures." Toynbee sees history as a "succession of higher syntheses representing two opposing cultures and being

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-8.

³⁴ Richard Chase, "Toynbee: The Historian as Artist," *The American Scholar*, XVI(July, 1947), p. 271.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

resolved into a new synthesis.” This then gives rise to another antithesis, *ad infinitum*. History is a continuing series of challenge-response situations between God and the Adversary (satan). The adversary is needed by God to spur men to action. Occasionally it seems that Toynbee is consciously playing the role of adversary. This is especially so with regard to his later rejection of Christianity.³⁶⁾

Some civilizations fail to achieve the status of “civilization” because the challenge they face is either too easy or too difficult. In many more cases, a difficult challenge is the instigating force in the fall of the civilization. This fall is always due to moral, internal failure, not to outside forces.³⁷⁾ A civilization in the process of decay fails to overcome a challenge and gets “hung up” on the failure. Often they try to escape the present by either of two methods, Archaism or Futurism. Archaism is the refusal to live in the present instead of the past. An example would be those in the Old South who are still fighting the Civil War. Futurism is the escape by ignoring the present to concentrate on the dream world of the future.³⁸⁾

The fall of a civilization has three stages. First is the failure of the ruling minority to sustain a creative power. second is the withdrawal of “mimesis, or the faculty of the masses to imitate, by the majority. Third is the appearance of forced schisms in the social body of the people.³⁹⁾ The lack of creativity can take on either of two forms. One is the refusal to engage in action. The other is the tendency to rush into action in untimely circumstances thereby precipitating violence. The schism in society of

³⁶ M. Whitcomb Hess, “The Toynbee Dilemma,” *Christian Century*, LXXXI(January 1, 1968), pp. 8—9.

³⁷ Chase, p. 275.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 278—80.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

which Toynbee wrote is a breakdown between the recalcitrant proletariat and a progressively ineffective ruling minority.⁴⁰⁾ Other sources of decay in the civilization are a loss of self-determination, a breakdown of individual inter-action and the interactibility of the major institutions in failing to adapt to new and vital social forces.⁴¹⁾

Even in the demise of a civilization all is not hopeless. Usually something remains to serve as the founding element of the next civilization. Often that something which remains is the religious institution upon which the succeeding civilization is able to begin the construction of a new society.⁴²⁾

Toynbee is above all "concerned to have us see in all local and partial histories a common achievement and common possession of the whole human family...and it is one family it always has been one family in the making. This search for unity leads him to reject the historic religions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, because they give the scandal of particularity."⁴³⁾ He denies any who say that they are the chosen people or any church that would claim to have complete truth.

If the history of man repeats itself,

it does so in accordance with the general rhythm of the universe; but the significance of this pattern of repetition lies in the scope that it gives for the work of creation to go forward. In this light, the repetitive element in history reveals itself as an instrument for freedom of creative action, and not as an indication that God and man are the slaves of fate.⁴⁴⁾

⁴⁰ Toynbee, p. 13.

⁴¹ Chase, p. 276.

⁴² Toynbee, p. 14.

⁴³ "Toynbee: Criticism and Judgment," *The Commonwealth*, LXVI (April 12, 1957), p. 44.

⁴⁴ Toynbee, p. 38.

All is not hopeless as Toynbee looks at the action of history. Society can avoid destruction if she will act. There are three things that she must do. First, in the realm of politics, she must develop some sort of workable co-operative world government. In the field of economics, some kind of compromise arrangement must be worked out between capitalism and communism so that man can live together peaceably. In the field of religion, the secular life of man must be put back on some common religious foundation.⁴⁵⁾ There are startling parallels between our civilization and the Greek civilization. The Greek civilization grew to the point that the citystate arrangement was no longer satisfactory as a means of government. Attempts at organizing a larger governmental unit failed. The growth of the population demanded more efficient methods of agriculture. These were not possible without the needed new political alliance, This is true of us today. The growth of the population is such that new demands are being placed on our economic machinery. These demands can be met only if we will soon come to some co-operative effort at government.⁴⁶⁾

War and class have been the destructive agents of all civilizations up to now.⁴⁷⁾ Civilizations have gone but "Civilization" has remained. The collapse of one does not mean the collapse of all. But, the destructive possibilities of the atomic bomb change all of this. We must abolish war and class or die.⁴⁸⁾ The world will be unified one day soon. The present inter-dependence of the countries on one another assures this. The threat of mutual destruction also assures this. The question revolves around how the world will be united. Will it be by War? Or, Will it be by some means

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

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of co-operative world government?

Toynbee would like to see the development of a world-wide state which is based on the principles of universal brotherhood. This is his substitute for the evils of nationalism. But, actually what he is proposing is only a magnified version of the city-state.

The evil in nationalism as such is clear enough to Toynbee; what is not clear to him is that the same evil vitiates his picture of world federation on any terms other than those of revealed Christianity.⁴⁹⁾

The function of the state and other man-made social organizations is to

Serve as stepping-stones on the way toward the only society in which man can find a true satisfaction for his social nature; that is a society which, so far from usurping the place of God, has God for its principal member. The true home of man is the "civitas Dei", the "City of God" in which the common fatherhood of God creates a brotherhood between all the human citizens of the divine commonwealth—a brotherhood which cannot be established by any bond of which God himself is not the maker.

For Toynbee, religion is a major factor in human history. He finds the "core of civilization in a society which has sufficient surplus to exempt some of its members, particularly priests, who can concern themselves with the non-material."⁵¹⁾ Civilizations must rise and fall to let religions be made manifest in the world.

⁴⁹ Hess, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Arnold J. Toynbee, "The Menace of the New Paganism," *Christian Century*, LIV (March 10, 1937), p. 317.

⁵¹ J. N. Moody, "Toynbee and the Historians," *The Commonweal*, LXXIV, (June 23, 1961), p. 331.

Christianity is to be rejected because of its militance and its nationalism.

For over two hundred years the historic religions have been losing influence because of two reasons. Intellectually some of the doctrines and practices are incompatible with modern science. Morally the shock caused by the aggression, rancor, and ill feeling that religious wars have aroused through the years. "I am convinced that human beings cannot live without religion, but they cannot at the same time accept religions which seem to them unconvincing or morally shocking.⁵²⁾ There is a spiritual vacuum here which Toynbee tries to fill with a new religion which is a consensus of the seven major religions of the world.

BENEDETTO CROCE

Croce deals with history in a way vastly different from that of Toynbee and Spengler. He raises the question of the nature of history. Is it contained in the chronicles and records of that past? Or, is history a narrative which is alive because of the personality of the person or persons who are involved in the narrative? After a lengthy discussion, Croce comes to the point of saying that history is more than chronicle. Philological (chronicled) history can be correct but it can never be true. There is truth only in personal relationships.⁵³⁾ "it is the human being in its totality, seen from the present and, at the same time, in a historical perspective, that is the constant object of his (Croce's) reflection."⁵⁴⁾

There are two activities of human existence, the practical and

⁵² Roger L. Shinn, "The Religion of Arnold Toynbee," *Christian Century*, LXXIII(October 10, 1956), p.246.

⁵³ Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice*(New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), pp.27—34.

⁵⁴ Lienhard Bergel, "Benedetto Croce," *Books Abroad*, XXXI, (Autumn, 1957), p.349.

the theoretic. Each of these has two grades. The theoretic is divided into the aesthetic and the logical. The aesthetic is that intuitive knowledge and deals with the phenomenon. The logical is conceptual knowledge and deals with the noumenon or the spirit. The two grades of the practical are the economic and the moral activity. The economic adds the economic and the moral activity. The useful wills or gives substance to the phenomenon. The moral wills the activity to the human spirit.⁵⁵ This division of activities makes possible his insistence on the reality of thought.

Croce is "the latest exponent of an idealistic interpretation of the universe and the human life derived from the immanent criticism of Hegelian philosophy."⁵⁶ Croce attacks the deterministic historians who follow after the tradition of Hegel. They try to gather facts and then to connect them causally. But, to do so creates a chain which is not necessarily valid since it can have neither beginning or end. Some try to solve this problem by breaking the chain arbitrarily and claiming to have the content of their field of history. They would seem to be saying that they can determine what truth is. Others say that all we need are proximate causes to posit for the events of history. But, there can be no proximate truth in these matters and one dare not call these ultimate truths arrived at in such a fashion. Such would raise the capricious ideas of man to the level of God. The futility of this search for cause must cause one to turn to a search for a transcendental end in history.⁵⁷

This brings us back to the "facts". We are confronted with

⁵⁵ "Mr. Balfour and Signor Croce," *Living Age*, CCLXIV(February 5, 1910), p. 334.

⁵⁶ Angelo Crespi, "The Religion of Liberty as the Spirit of the Nineteenth Century," *Contemporary Review*, CXLIV(October, 1933), p. 470.

⁵⁷ Croce, pp. 64—7.

these. But, these are not really facts at all; they are unproven presuppositions. Proof of these cannot be externally contained; therefore they are not facts at all.⁵⁸⁾

Thus we come to the mind in which these "facts" arose. The reality of history is contained in the mind. History is to make live again in the mind, the individuals and events of the past.⁵⁹⁾

The theories of history deal with three conceptions. These are the concepts of development, end, and value. The concept of reality as development is merely an expansion of the thesis, anti-thesis idea. This has evolved into the cyclical ideas of history. To speak of the end of history is to posit it (the end) extrinsic to history. If the end is internal, it is realized at every moment in history, but yet not fully attained.⁶⁰⁾

Croce recognized no periods of decay, only dissolution which is a form of birth.⁶¹⁾ History is never a matter of death but of life.

All histories which narrate the death and not the life of peoples, of states, of institutions, of customs, of literary and artistic ideals, of religious conceptions, are to be considered false, or, we repeat, simply poetry.

they do not see that such an end of the world exists only in their own imaginations, rich in elegiac motives, but poor in understanding. They do not perceive that such importunate trumpet-calls (of disaster) have never in reality existed.

A fact is historical in so far as it is thought. Nothing exists outside of human thought.⁶²⁾ This is the sum or reality. There is

⁵⁸ Croce, pp. 72—3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 75—6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 83—6.

⁶¹ Valerie Marcu, "Croce versus Mussolini," *Living Age*, CCCXXX VII (December 15, 1929), p. 500.

⁶² Croce, p. 92.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

no such thing as historical and non-historical causes or facts. For, to conceive of a non-historical event requires thought and at that moment it becomes historical. We have an illusion of this distinction because not all things are chronicled. We tend to still call history only that which is chronicled. Not so, History is bound up in the person and his thoughts.⁶⁴⁾

History is never universal or general; it is always particular and special, or specific. The mind does not deal with the universal but only with the particular.⁶⁵⁾ The form of history has meaning because of the matter which is behind it. We "understand art by referring it to matter (emotion, sentiment, passions, etc.) to which the artist has given form." This is the external versus the internal.⁶⁶⁾ Every piece of art, and every event of history, must be understood and evaluated in terms of the individual personality of the author or the person involved in it. In moral and political philosophy, Croce was primarily a humanist.⁶⁷⁾

Since problems arise in concrete, unsystematic situations, the solutions are likewise concrete and unsystematic. The "incompleteness of a philosophical work is not a defect, but a sign of its validity."⁶⁸⁾ Theory is always accompanied by practical demonstration. The two are inseparable.

To assume a truth above and beyond man is to assume a dualism with a metaphysical world beyond the reach of man. Croce denies this. He calls his philosophy "absolute historicism." The only true reality that exists "is that of the human spirit, unfold-

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁶⁷ Guide Calogero, "Benedetto Croce," *Atlantic Monthly*, CCII(December, 1958), p. 13.

⁶⁸ Bergel, p. 350.

ing itself in time.⁶⁹⁾

This is the logical result of Vico's philosophy; it exceeds Hegel was never willing to say that the spirit was the only reality.⁷⁰⁾

Every man is an artist, in a sense. There are only degrees of artistic ability. "The aesthetic fact is altogether completed in the expressive elaboration of the impressions."⁷¹⁾ When we have conceived and mastered, mentally, an idea or an object, aesthetic expression is complete. To try to communicate this in any way is in the realm of practical activity. It is an act of the will.

Aesthetic activity is spiritually independent, but not always practically so.⁷²⁾ Giovanni Gentile carried this one step farther in his defense of Fascism in Italy. Freedom can exist only in the state. The state is not an entity hovering over the people. It is at unity with the personality of the people. The authority of the state is absolute. It surrenders no portion of authority to religion, morals, etc.⁷³⁾ However, for Croce, the state is, in reality, "a continuous assertion of 'archy' against 'anarchy,' a continuous struggle between the forces of dissolution and the forces of integration."⁷⁴⁾

"Liberty is of the essence of man and is neither given nor taken. It is simply man in action."⁷⁵⁾

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ "Mr. Balfour and Signor Croce," p. 334.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁷³ Giovanni Gentile, "The Philosophic Basis of Fascism," *Foreign Affairs*, VI (January, 1928), pp. 303-4.

⁷⁴ Benedetto Croce, "On Disgust with Politics," *Century*, CVIII (September, 1924), p. 599.

⁷⁵ Dr. Reinhold Aris, "A Philosopher's Notebook," *The Contemporary Review*, CLXXIX (April, 1951), p. 253.

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