

I. The popular and familiar notion is that we have reached the highest point of civilisation and are marching on willy nilly to a more glorious future.

A. History shows that this is the natural view in its hey-day of any culture.

B. Elements on which this point of view is based.

1. Greater development of science and practical control of nature than witnessed before in history.

2. Communications which bring the whole world together as never before.

3. Increase of general education which has the same apparent uniqueness.

CC For the vast majority the conclusion is based upon an observed course of movement perhaps a couple of centuries old.

1. This optimism concerning the future is thus based on assumption is that observed development is part of a straight line, not part of ~~it~~ a curve.

II. Objections to this attitude of uncritical optimism.

A. While some departments of human culture have advanced other phases either have not progressed or have lagged woefully in their development.

1. Aesthetically we are backward.

2. Ethically we are far behind.

a. The monstrosity of the recent war possible only because of gulf between technical and ethical development.

b. We are in the position of having awakened powers of nature, which if not controlled by strong moral will bid fair to turn upon their awakeners.

(1) The moral will required is such that can stand unshaken for principle at whatever cost to interest.

(a) Otherwise our mechanical giant may prove to be a frankenstein monster.

B. The typical western culture is almost wholly outward and does not offer anything to answer soul yearnings.

1. We have been content largely in finding new facts and building up control of Nature.

a. We have not destroyed, but simply changed the frontier of the Unknown.

b. This movement has made no progress toward solution of basic problems of philosophy and religion.

III. Conclusion from the above is that we stand at a critical point in the history of our culture.

A. Continuing on present line would lead:

1. At best mechanising and therefore chrystalizing of life, thus regimented and dead.

a. This shown in program of such movements as materialistic socialism

b. Would involve throttling of genius and hence decay.

2. At worse the violent destruction of the whole culture in the next war.

- B. By balancing present tendencies by the elements in which they are deficient we may reach to greater heights than those reached in known history.
 - 1. Mechanical development might free man on unprecedented scale from gross physical problem, thus
 - a. Affording leisure for penetrating subjective life-values.

IV. General criticism of straight-line theory of development.

- A. Evidence points to the principle of Periodicity in Nature in many domains and thus to discontinuities of the manifestation of any given modes.
 - 1. Periodic table in chemistry.
 - 2. Alternation of warm and cold periods in geology.
 - 3. The octave principle in music and elsewhere.
- B. Philosophical consideration that in a rational self-contained universe, all process must run into its own negation.
 - 1. Which when laid out in Time calls for a cyclic process.

V. Specific criticism based upon the studies of Spengler.

- A. Analysis of civilisations by this writer shows a traceable periodicity in cultures of all.
 - 1. Eight civilisations before our present, one show origin in amorphous tribal state thru various stages to high organisation and then return to first state.
 - a. Analogous governmental forms recur at corresponding stages.
 - b. Similiar stages unfold in thought and religion, etc.
 - 2. At final stage the culture either goes out quickly or may persist for centuries with possibility of another rejuvenation.
 - a. The dominant warring states go out quickly.
 - b. The non-resistant cultures have greatest power of resistance to decay.
 - c. For the latter a new cycle of life becomes possible.
- B. A possible implication suggested is that civilisations are reincarnations of larger Consciousness of which individual men are but component parts.
 - a. The cycle of 1400 to 1600 years fits surprisingly the given average for man of 1500 years.
 - b. Bearing this out is striking fact that while stages parallel each other, still each culture elaborates a basic idea which is different from that of all other cultures.
 - (1) Thus it would seem in the sum-total a grand synthetic consciousness would be builded.

VI. The work of Spengler fits remarkably with the teachings of the ancient Wisdom.

VII. Practical implications.

- A. Gaining the perspective that the tendency of the hour is not all-important or summum bonum, but is of value in relation to the larger structure.
- B. A culture practice analogous to the building of the subtle body in the individual would make for cultural continuity ~~in~~ through culture pralaya.

1. The individual may facilitate this by following the practice of Yoga.
 - a. Strong action of this kind on part of component parts of a civilisation will determine the course of that civilisation.
 - b. The practice of true Yoga unlocks potencies of the order of radiant energy in physics.
 - (1) Thus individual units devoting themselves to Yoga become mountains of strength.

Notes re. Civilisation

Spengler's periodicity makes possible the idea that the primitive forms we can trace in the past we can reach were but the decadant aspects of earlier cultures. Present geological knowledge shows that alternations of warm and glacial periods goes back as far as we are able to trace and hence implies a temperature range compatable with supporting a human culture in the far past. These facts and views open further ther door to acceptance of the Theosophical Teaching that human culture is very ancient and moves through a series of cycles.

It is possible for a culture to be wiped out at its decadence, as is true of the military cultures, or to persist for many centuries, as is true in the case of the non-resistant peoples like those of India and China, and then later enter a new cycle of cultural activity.

"The Kabiri --- gave the first impulse to civilisation, and directed the mind with which they had endued men, to the invention and perfection of all the arts and sciences."

S.D. II 380

"Civilization has ever developed the physical and the intellectual at the cost of the psychic and ~~the~~ spiritual. The command over and the guidance of one's own psychic nature, which foolish men now associate with the supernatural, were with early Humanity innate and congenital, and came to man as naturally as walking and thinking." SDII 332

Note: What we gain in physical and intellectual capacity we lose in psychic and spiritual capacity. Thus when the cycle has moved in one direction to an extreme further progress must involve moement in the opposite direction.