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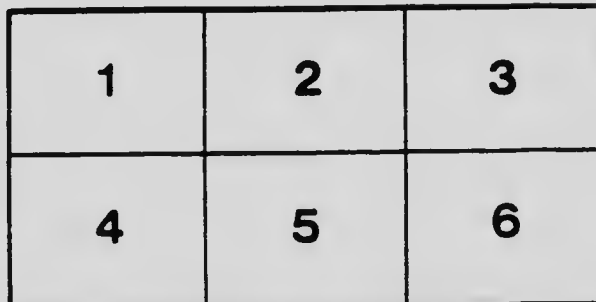
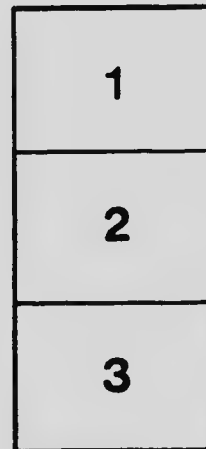
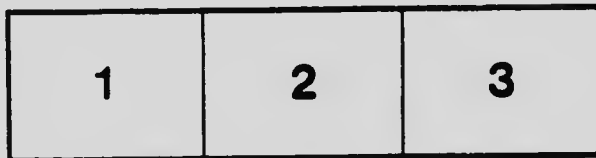
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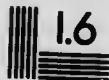
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GERMAN PHILOSOPHY
AND THE WAR

BY

J. H. MUIRHEAD

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GERMAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE WAR

PROFESSOR CRAMB has said that it would be possible to treat the wars of 1866 and 1870 as the work of professors and historians. With the addition of philosophers this might be said *a fortiori* of the war of 1914. It is at least true that no account of the events which led up to the present crisis can be complete which does not include the course of philosophical ideas. There is the more need to recall this inner history at the present moment as attempts have not been wanting to fix a large part of the responsibility indiscriminately on what is popularly known as German Philosophy which has dated from Kant.¹ What I believe on the contrary can be shown is that, so far as philosophy is responsible, it is one that represents a violent break with the ideas for which Kant and the whole early idealist movement stood. It is a story of a great rebellion, I believe on the whole a great apostasy.

I

GERMAN IDEALISM

If we would understand the significance for modern thought and life of the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), we must recall the spirit that dominated the leading thinkers in England and France in the eighteenth century. It was an age of steady advance in physical science, the method of which is the resolution of objects

¹ See *Times*, Sept. 21, 1914. Letter by 'Continuity' on 'The New Barbarism'.

and entities into their constituent parts, with a view to understanding their nature and operation. Its motto might be said to be 'Nothing can be more than the aggregate of its parts'. We are not here concerned with the value of this method as applied to the special sciences, but with the consequences it brought with it when it came, as it did,¹ to be applied to the problems of organic and particularly of human life. In the life of intelligence it meant the attempt to explain experience as the mechanical connexion through the laws of 'association' of ideas which were the fading remnants of isolated impressions. In the life of the will it meant that actions were the result of impulses, appetites, instincts and passions that own no lord but that one amongst themselves which chanced to be the strongest. 'The Will', Hobbes had said, 'is the last appetite in deliberating'. Applied finally to society and the State it meant individualism. Society is the aggregate of individual wills, and as water cannot rise above its own level neither can the State rise above the self-seeking of its members. Itself resting ultimately on force for the cohesion of its parts, it owns no other law in its relations with other States. These ideas might be developed, as they had been by Hobbes, into a complete system of State politics and a morality based on fear, or they might be played with in a sort of *jeu d'esprit*, as they were in Mandeville's *Bees*, as the basis of a doctrine that 'private vices were public benefits', but in one form or another they constituted the philosophical enlightenment of the whole period.

Against all this the German spirit may be said to have

¹ Descartes had already suggested that animals were only machines. It remained to show that man, too, was a machine. Lamettrie's *L'homme machine* appeared in 1748.

been in continual revolt. 'Search for the ideal runs through the whole century,'¹ and Goethe may be said to have summed up the mind of his time when, speaking of Holbach's *System of Nature*, the Bible of Materialism, he wrote, 'We could not understand how such a book could be dangerous. It appeared to us so dark, so Cimmerian, so death-like, that we could scarcely find patience to endure its presence.' All the same the deeper mind of the nation felt that it was dangerous so long as it went unanswered, and may be said to have been continuously occupied with the problem of a philosophical substitute for it. The most notable attempt to find such a substitute was that of the mathematician Leibniz. Unfortunately Leibniz's philosophy was vitiated by the acceptance of the very individualism that was the stronghold of materialism. After splitting up the universe into monads which were without windows, far less doors opening on the world without, he had no principle to reunite them and was fain to have recourse to the miracle of an external creator and regulator of their actions.

From the alternative that was thus forced upon the thought of the century of materialism, or unreason and incoherence, and the moral chaos to which it inevitably led, it was the merit of Kant to have offered a way of escape. The metaphysical basis of his system is too long a story to enter on here. It amounted to the demonstration that no experience of any kind, even that on which materialism itself relied, was possible except on the assumption of a constructive or, as he called it, a synthetic principle which was supplied, or at least first revealed itself consciously in mind, and was the source of our judgements of value, whether of truth, of beauty,

¹ Lange, *History of Materialism*, vol. ii, p. 143.

or of good. It is with the last and its application to morals and politics that we are here concerned.

As against the naturalism of his time, Kant maintained that in all judgements of moral good and bad it was implied that while man is undoubtedly part of a mechanically determined system, so far as his body and senses were concerned, yet in virtue of the law of his mind he was able to rise above his merely natural relations, and maintain himself in a spiritual, or as he called it an intelligible, world as a person among persons. The deepest thing in man was not therefore the instinct of self-assertion that separated him from others, but the self-imposed law which united him with them—the touch of reason that made all the world kin. While just in virtue of the possession of freedom it was possible to take natural impulse as his guide, and so to fall from human fellowship, it was possible also for man by accepting the rule of reason to raise himself into membership of what Kant liked to call the Kingdom of Ends. Whereas the law of nature was to treat everything only as a means to the ends of the self, the law of reason was to 'treat humanity in their own person and the person of others always as an end and never as a means only'.

These ideas are sometimes spoken of as transcendental, as though they had no ground in experience. In reality, as William Wallace has shown,¹ they were suggested to Kant by a profound reading of history as a continuous effort to substitute the rule of law for the rule of force, and thus vindicate man's true freedom. It is for this fact that the civilized State stands. *Might* the State must possess, but it is only the might of the *State*, when it is employed in the service of law and freedom. Kant was profoundly influenced by the French Revolution. He was a repub-

¹ Kant, c. xiv.

lican ; but a republic meant to him, as it ought to mean, the reign of a law which embodies the public good and from which all individual or class egoism has been purged away. So long as the State meant the obedience of the citizens to a self-imposed law, the actual form was comparatively unimportant, and Kant was content in his own day to be the subject of a monarch who thought of himself as the ' first servant of the State '.

But the reign of law was not confined to the relations of individuals within the State. States, too, were units—in a sense persons—and over their relations with one another there reigned the same law as bound the citizens together within them. Here, too, the appeal was to history, which showed that just as the reign of force was gradually being superseded within States, so it was being superseded by law between them. In this way there dawned upon Kant, not as a mere poetic dream, but as at once a consequence of his philosophy and a promise of actual fact, the idea of a federation of States, a republic of the world, consisting of members small and great, owing allegiance to a common law as much in the interest of the strong as of the weak. This is the idea he works out in his essay *On Perpetual Peace*, which was published in 1795. It is in the form of a treaty, of which it lays down the articles. Some of these have a special interest at the present time. The first two enjoin that the States shall themselves be free, and that the civil constitution of each shall be republican. Only thus, Kant thought, could not only the causes of discontent be removed, but the seeds of international hatred be destroyed. Kant saw in all forms of absolutism one of the most potent causes of war. Other articles refer to standing armies, in which he sees a continual menace to peace ; secret reservations in treaties which are merely a means of

blinding an enemy to the real designs of a nation and 'material for a future war'; the actual conduct of war which must be such as to avoid 'all modes of hostility which would make mutual confidence impossible in a subsequent state of peace'. As to war itself Kant was no pacifist. He was ready to recognize in it 'a deep-hidden and designed enterprise of supreme wisdom for preparing, if not for establishing, conformity to law amid the freedom of States, and with this a unity of a morally grounded system of those States'. He was further ready to recognize its purifying and exalting effect upon a nation. But he was under no delusion as to its true nature. It was the outcome of the bad principle in human nature, and however we may be tempted to find compensation for it in the evil that it uproots and in its superiority to the deadness of a universal monarchy, 'yet, as an ancient observed, it makes more bad men than it takes away'.¹

There can be no doubt that Kant's ideas had a profound influence on the politics of the time. In spite of Carlyle, Frederick the Great is not a hero in England. Yet, on the whole, the spirit of his reign may be said to have been the spirit of Kant. 'The Categorical Imperative of Kant', says Seeley,² 'was appropriately first named and described in the age and country of Frederick the Great.' His claim was to be the first servant of the State, and the saying is reported of his extreme old age, 'Did the whole Gospel contain only this precept: "What ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"', it must be owned that these few words contain the summary of all morality.'³

¹ See *Critique of Judgement*, App. § 83, and *Philosophical Theory of Religion*, I. iii.

² *Life of Stein*, vol. i, p. 44. Cf. Carlyle's account of the celebrated Miller-Arnold case in his *Frederick the Great*.

³ Wallace, *ibid.*, 152.

If the ideas of Kant may be said to have presided at the birth of modern Prussia under Frederick, those of his great follower, Fichte, may be said to have been the inspiring influence of its re-birth after the humiliation that Napoleon inflicted upon her. Fichte's teaching on the Divine Idea is probably still most familiar to this country through Carlyle's essay on the 'State of German Literature'.¹ We are here concerned with its political application. At the nadir of his country's fortunes, in the winter of 1807-8, Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* were a summons from the heights. What, he asked, in times of storm is the spirit that can be put at the helm? 'Not', he answers, 'the spirit of quiet civic loyalty to the constitution and the laws. No; but the consuming flame of the higher patriotism which conceives of the Nation as the embodiment of the Eternal, for which the high-minded man devotes himself with joy; the low-minded man, who only exists for the sake of the other, must be made to devote himself.' The addresses were an appeal from the power of force to the power of the spirit:

Strive not to conquer with bodily weapons, but stand before your opponents firm and erect in the dignity of the spirit. Yours is the greater destiny to found an empire of mind and of reason, to destroy the dominion of rude physical powers as the ruler of the world. . . . Yes, there are in every nation minds who can never believe that the great promises to the human race of a kingdom of Law, of Reason, and of Truth are idle and vain delusions and who consequently cherish the conviction that the present iron-handed time is but a progression towards a better State. These, and with them the whole later races

¹ *Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. i.

of humanity, trust in you. If ye sink, Humanity sinks with you without hope of future restoration.¹

When the time came, in 1813, to strike for the freedom which the spirit claims, Fichte was again to the fore announcing in his *Political Fragment for 1813* that 'A nation becomes a nation through war and through a common struggle. Who shares not in the present war can by no decree be incorporated in the nation.'

Hegel, the third in this great succession, was elected to Fichte's chair in Berlin in 1818 and became the spokesman of the re-established constitution. 'Let us greet the dawn of a better time,' he had already said in his inaugural address at Heidelberg, 'when the spirit that has hitherto been driven out of itself may return to itself again and win room and space wherein to found a kingdom of its own.'

But it was in his theory of the State,² which he developed in the Berlin period, that we have to look for the chief source of his political influence. The State he conceived of after Kant as 'the actualization of freedom'. It is 'the world which the spirit has made for itself'. It is sometimes thought that the State has weakened in modern times. Not so, says Hegel: 'The modern State has enormous strength and depth.' It is just this that enables it without detriment to itself to do full justice to individual and sectional interests. The political disposition, in other words patriotism (Hegel will not separate them as Fichte does),

¹ Some courage was needed for this plain speaking. A luckless printer of Nürnberg in the previous year had been shot for publishing a pamphlet on *Germany in its Deep Humiliation*. See Adamson's Fichte, p. 81.

² *Philosophy of Law*, English translation by Dyde.

is just 'the confident consciousness that my particular interest is contained and preserved in the interest and end of the State'.

It is on the ground of his exaltation of the State and his manifest leaning to the Prussian form of monarchy that Hegel has been accused of having cast a slight on international law and organization and of being the philosopher of the Prussian military tradition.¹ This view can only be maintained if to have vindicated one factor in the moral order of the world must be taken to mean the denial of others. Hegel had lived through the enthusiasm of the French Revolution and, like Burke in England, had come to realize the element of individualism and anarchy which it contained. He felt that the time had come to vindicate the reality of the State as of the very substance of individual, family, and national life. Further than this there is no ground to ally his political teaching with military tradition. He expressly rejects the militarist doctrine that the State rests upon force. 'The binding cord is not force, but the deep-seated feeling of order that is possessed by us all.' He has no words strong enough for von Haller, the von Treitschke of his time, who had written :

It is the eternal unchangeable decree of God that the most powerful rules, must rule, and will for ever rule,

and who had poured contempt on the national liberties of Germany and our own Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights as mere 'documentary liberties'.²

With equal decisiveness he would have rejected the doctrine that war is the 'continuation of politics'.

¹ See Mr. Barker's *Nietzsche and Treitschke* in this series, p. 4, and Dr. Michael Sadler's *Modern Germany and the Modern World*, p. 10.

² *op. cit.* p. 243, n.

He would have agreed with Aristotle that the State 'comes into being for the sake of life, but continues in being for the good life'. War is not the continuation but the failure of politics. Its true continuation is the life of art, science, religion, for the full development of which it is the essential condition. Nor would he have tolerated the doctrine that the State is the ultimate appeal in matters of right. Above and beyond the State there is the Spirit of the World or the Spirit of God: 'the history of the world is the judgement of the world'. It was he who said of Napoleon that he had brought the highest genius to victory only to show how little victory alone could achieve against the moral forces of the world. It is true that his political theory was approved by contemporary statesmen, but before his death they had come to suspect that there was 'perilous stuff' in it for all reactionary and repressive policies.¹ It is not in Hegel but in the violent reaction that set in shortly after his death, in 1831, against the whole Idealist philosophy that we have to look for the philosophical foundations of Prussian militarism.

II

THE REACTION AGAINST IDEALISM

The story of this reaction is a complicated one. That it was due in part to certain high-handedness in method and obscurity in result of the older philosophy cannot, I think, be denied. But the main causes lay elsewhere. I select two of the chief factors in it.

1. Germany has been accused of culpable absent-mindedness in occupying herself with mystical speculations while other countries, by commerce, colonization, mining, and manufacture, were laying the foundations

¹ See E. Caird's *Hegel*, p. 94.

of material power. I believe that, on the contrary, never was Germany truer to herself than when, in the instinctive conviction that no civilization could be secure in which the things of most value in life rested on no surer foundation than tradition or unverified instinct, she devoted herself to the task of verifying them to the reason. But this only made the reaction more violent when the time for material expansion came, and coal and iron took the place of reason and freedom as the watchwords of the time. The 'forties and the 'fifties were years of rapid development in all parts of Germany. With the needs of industry went the need of concentrating the intellectual resources of the nation on the physical sciences. This is what had taken place in other countries. What was peculiar to Germany was that the old metaphysical habit reasserted itself in the changed circumstances, and chemists and physiologists seized the trowel which the metaphysicians had dropped.¹ The result was that, going along with the material expansion and the devotion to the special sciences it evoked, we have a philosophy which sought to invert the old order and to read matter and body where it had read mind and spirit. 'The old philosophy', said Feuerbach, who first raised the standard of revolt, 'started from the principle: I am a thinking being, the body is no part of my being. The new philosophy, on the other hand, begins with the principle: I am a real and sensible being; the body is part of my being; nay, the body is its totality, is my ego, is itself my essence.' To the same period belong Karl Marx's materialistic interpretation of history and his exaltation of the economic interests to the place of the ruling factor in human development. But not in vain

¹ See Lange, *loc. cit.*

had Feuerbach and Marx sat at the feet of Hegel. In both the humanitarian note was more pronounced than the materialistic, and the development of the implications of their starting-point was left to younger writers.

The way was prepared by two events in the field of science which roughly divide the period, the experimental demonstration by Robert Mayer of the Conservation of Energy (1842), and the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. Belonging to the first period we must reckon a group of writers of whom probably Büchner was the most widely known, his book, *Matter and Force*, published in 1855, going through sixteen editions in as many years. They may be said to have expressed the reigning spirit in the great period of industrial development that marked the middle of the century and made possible the victories of 1866 and 1870. It is, of course, a mistake to hold that either of these movements—the practical or the theoretical—by itself is necessarily hostile to a comprehensive view of life. Materialism has been the creed of some of the noblest of the human race. It is the combination of them that is dangerous—when the commercial, money-making spirit is tempted to seek in a materialistic philosophy for the justification of what it would like to believe as to the chief ends of life. That something like this happened in Germany at this time is borne out by the judgement of the greatest of German historians. 'Everything', wrote Ranke of it, 'is falling. No one thinks of anything but commerce and money.'¹

The social and political implications of Darwinism have from the first been a subject of controversy. There

¹ Quoted by Professor Hicks in his article on 'German Philosophy and the Present Crisis', *Hibbert Journal*, Oct., 1914.

are two ways in which Natural Selection may be interpreted. The struggle for existence may be taken to be one among other agencies in development. In the lower orders of creation it may be said to be of dominant importance, as in fishes, where thousands of the spawn are sacrificed that one may survive. But as we advance in the scale of intelligence, it is gradually superseded by the power of organizing the environment and securing the survival of the species with growing economy. In civilized communities it may be said, in its crude form, to have been altogether superseded. The struggle is no longer for bare existence, but for a particular form of existence involving the opportunity of becoming a parent—'selection for parentage', as it has been called. What is true, moreover, within societies, may, in the course of time, without detriment to the race, come to be true of societies in their external relations with one another. According to another interpretation, struggle is the supreme law of life, and rages, in however disguised a form, in the higher as in the lower orders of creation, between societies as between individuals. While, according to the first of these two views, there is no limit to the extent to which the rule of force may be eliminated consistently with a high level of physical and mental fitness, according to the latter, struggle is the sole effective instrument, and all attempts to eliminate it are doomed to failure.

If we turn to Darwin himself there is nothing to connect him with the second of these views. On the contrary, he more than once distinctly repudiates it.

With highly civilized nations continued progress depends, in a subordinate degree, on natural selection for such nations do not supplant and exterminate each other as do savage tribes

And again :

Important as the struggle for existence has been, and still is, yet as far as the highest part of man's nature is concerned, there are other agencies more important. For the moral qualities are advanced either directly or indirectly much more through the effects of habit, the reasoning powers, instruction, religion, &c., than through natural selection.¹

This has, on the whole, been the view taken in England. In Germany the seed fell on ground prepared by a quarter of a century of materialistic thought. Whether it is the one generally accepted by biologists it would be difficult to say. At any rate it was the one adopted by the most distinguished in this field of his time in Germany.

'The theory of selection teaches us', writes Haeckel, 'that in human life, exactly as in animal and plant life, at each place and time, only a privileged minority can continue to exist and flourish. The cruel and relentless struggle for existence which rages throughout all living nature, and in accordance with nature must rage, this ceaseless and pitiless competition of all living things is an undeniable fact; only the select minority, the privileged fit, is in a position to successfully survive this competition, the great majority of competitors must meanwhile of necessity perish miserably. We may mourn this tragic fact, but we cannot deny or alter it. Obviously the principle of selection is anything but democratic; it is aristocratic in the precise sense of the word.'²

Had this been an academic opinion as to the social tendencies of Darwinism without specific application to ethics and external politics, it would have had little significance in the present connexion. But it was the view

¹ These passages are quoted from the *Descent of Man* by Karl Pearson, in his *Chances of Death*, vol. i, pp. 127-8.

² *Freie Wissenschaft u. freie Lehre*, quoted ib.

underlying the writer's *Riddle of the Universe*, which was published in the last year of the nineteenth century and probably had a wider circulation in Germany than any work of the kind has ever had. It ran through several editions in two years, was subsequently issued in popular form, and by 1906 was being sold in tens of thousands. It contains a remarkable chapter on 'Our Monistic Ethics', in which the external policy of England is attacked for its direct contradiction of every precept of Christianity, while at the same time the principles which are attributed to her are claimed as those which rightly govern international relations.

'The glaring contradiction', so the passage ends, 'between the theoretical *ideal* and altruistic morality of the human individual and the *real* purely selfish morality of the human community, and especially the civilized Christian State, is a familiar fact. It would be interesting to determine mathematically in what proportion among organized men the altruistic ethical ideal of the individual changes into its contrary the purely egoistic "real politics" of one State and the nation.'

2. This is ominous doctrine. But it was along the second line of development mentioned above that it received its most sinister expression.

Side by side with the development of the materialistic element in Feuerbach's philosophy, there rose out of the disturbed times that preceded the revolutions of 1848 a violent reaction against the humanitarian ideas with which Feuerbach had sought to combine it. 'My first thought', Feuerbach had announced 'was God, my second was Reason, my last was Man.' But if, as he held, God and Reason were mere abstractions, why not also Man? This was the question raised by a remarkable book which appeared under the *nom de plume* of Max Stirner,

with the title of *The Sole One and his Own*,¹ in 1844. 'God and man', so runs its claim, 'have concerned themselves for nothing but themselves. Let me likewise concern myself for myself who am equally with God, the nothing of all others; who am my all, who am the only one.' After showing that the life of the individual and the course of civilization is a progress towards emancipation, first from things, then from ideas ('the child is realistic, the youth is idealistic, man is egoistic'), the writer boldly applies his doctrine to current ethics and politics, demanding a transvaluation of all values, which anticipates in a remarkable way the teaching of Nietzsche. 'What's good? what's bad?' he asks. 'I myself am my own concern and I am neither good nor bad. Neither has any meaning for me.' From this it follows that my 'rights' have no foundation except in my power, and that whatever opposes this in the name of family, society, nation, or State, is my enemy.

My rights are what I can master. Whatever interferes with this is my enemy. As enemy of myself count I therefore every form of community.

'To neither man nor the State do I owe anything at all. I offer it nothing. I use it only. That is, I annihilate it and put in its place the society of egoists.' 'Sacred,' say you. 'Take courage while there is time. To be rid of the sacred you have only to devour it.' The note of revolt against all the recognized standards of present-day civilization was struck by Stirner in what has been called 'the most radical, unsocial, and subversive book which last century produced'. It was taken up, combined with the other factors in the revolt above mentioned, and carried through a hundred variations by Nietzsche (1844-1900).

¹ Eng. tr. *The Ego and his Own* (Fifield), 1913

III

THE NEW NATURALISM

The chief ideas for which Nietzsche stands have already been indicated in this series;¹ it is with their connexion with a general philosophical movement that we are here concerned. (a) In his own view Nietzsche stood with Schopenhauer in open rebellion against the whole philosophy which sought in the organizing work of mind for the type of reality. 'The mind', he declares, 'counts for us only as a symptom of relative imperfection and weakening of the organism as a stage of experimenting and feeling about and missing our aim.' Our true life is to be looked for not in experiences that (in his own phrase) have been 'sifted through with reason', but in the dark, unconscious, and instinctive elements of our nature. (b) He goes beyond Schopenhauer and allies himself with Stirner in interpreting these instincts in terms of the ego :

I submit that egoism belongs to the essence of a noble soul. Aggressive and defensive egoism are not questions of choice or of free will, but they are fatalities of life itself.

But again he goes beyond the author of *The Ego and his Own* in declaring that the central impulse of the ego is neither life nor enjoyment, but Power :

A living being seeks above all to discharge his strength. Life itself is the will to power. It is this that every man in his inmost heart desires—to assert himself against the world without, to appropriate, injure, suppress, exploit. . . . Exploitation belongs to the nature of the living being as a primary organic function. It is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power.

¹ See Mr. Barker's finely balanced appreciation in *Nietzsche and Treitschke*.

The mortal sickness of our age, the sign of its decadence, is that we have been willing to exchange this unchartered freedom for the slave's portion of security, and low-scale gregarious well-being represented by Christianity and the democratic State. But it was not always so. Primitive natural morality recognized a wholly different standard of values, and in the history of civilization these were at least once embodied in a worthy form in the Roman Empire—only to fall a victim to the vampire of Christianity. But 'Vengeance only lingers. False values and fatuous words bear a fate with them. Long it slumbers and waits, but at last it comes, and awakes and devours and engulfs.'

The call of the age is for a deliverer who can stamp it, as Napoleon stamped his, with the image of power, the image of a new ethics, 'under the pressure and hammer of which a conscience shall be steeled and a heart transformed into brass to bear the weight of the new responsibility.' The danger is that when he appears he should be captured by the old false philosophy and sublimated, as Kant tried to sublimate Frederick the Great, into a servant of the people. It is for this reason that there runs as a recurrent strain through Nietzsche's writings the necessity of stamping out the last remnants of the Tartuffian philosophy of Königsberg—the Will to Good—and substituting for it the true gospel of the Will to Power.

It would be easy to find in Nietzsche another note and even to show, as William Wallace does,¹ that in the later phases of the development of his thought on the Superman, he was forced into the recognition of something approaching the old Greek doctrine of a divinity that shapes our ends. But these remained only hints,

¹ *Lectures and Essays*, p. 540

and it is the less necessary to follow them here as this higher note was not likely to be caught by a generation whose ear had been trained in a different music, and as Nietzsche himself did his best to drown it in the blare of his paradoxical naturalism.

Yet even on this level it would be difficult to find in his teaching anything that could be taken as an incentive to a policy of national violence. On the contrary it would be easy to find much that condemns it. It has been pointed out by the writer of 'The New German Theory of the State' in *Why we are at War*, that 'in his later years Nietzsche revolted against the Prussian military system'. But he was never enamoured of it. So early as 1871 we find him deeply disturbed by the spirit that was being fostered in the nation by its military successes. Developing the theme in *Unseasonable Contemplations*, in 1873, he warns Germany against the error of supposing that the success of 1870 was due to anything that could be called German Culture. 'A great victory', he writes, 'is a great danger. The greatest error at the present is the belief that this fortunate war has been won by German Culture. At present both the public and the private life of Germany shows every sign of the utmost want of culture.' The same note is struck in 1889 when he complains that 'There are no longer German philosophers. German seriousness, profundity, and *passion* in intellectual matters are more and more on the decline. The State and civilization are antagonistic. Germany has gained as to the former, but lost in regard to the latter. Education has been vulgarized to utilitarianism and has lost its high aim.'¹ It would scarcely be too much to say that his ideal approximated nearer to

¹ *The Twilight of the Idols.*

Kant's, of a new non-national or supernational type of civilization, than to that of the idolizers of any particular nation. 'Nations', he tells us, 'are something artificial at present and unstable', wisely adding: 'such nations should most carefully avoid all hot-headed rivalry and hostility'. 'In Europe at least', he hoped, 'the barriers between different nations will disappear more and more and a new type of man will arise—the European.' But these were reservations which, along with the whole philosophical atmosphere that accompanied them, it was only too easy to overlook, and not the least of the tragedies of my story is that there had risen up historians and military writers prepared to accept and give currency to the philosophy of power in its barest and crudest form.

Of these Treitschke has rightly been taken as the typical. Born at Dresden in 1834 and professor of history successively at Freiburg and Heidelberg, he placed himself in violent antagonism to South German particularism and liberalism:

'I am longing', he wrote, 'for the North, to which I belong with all my heart, and where also our fate will be decided. If I am to choose between the two parties I select that of Bismarck, since he struggles for Prussian power, for our legitimate position on the North and the Eastern Sea.'¹

He was, as he tells us himself, more patriot than professor, and when at last, in 1874, he was called to the Chair of History in Berlin he felt that the time and opportunity had come to rouse his country to a sense of the great destiny which awaited it. After describing the crowded audiences of princes, statesmen, soldiers,

¹ *Treitschke: His Life and Works* (Allen & Unwin), p. 18.

diplomats, and leaders of society which he addressed with a natural eloquence which made them feel there was nothing he was not ready to dare for his opinions, Professor Cramb asks what they came together to hear? and he answers :

They came together to hear the story of the manner in which God or the World-spirit, through shifting and devious paths, had led Germany and the Germans to their present exalted station under Prussia and the Hohenzollern—those great princes who in German worth and German uprightness are unexampled in the dynasties of Europe and of the world. Treitschke showed them German unity and therefore German freedom lying like the fragments of a broken sword, like that of Roland or of Sigurd or the Grey-Steel of the Sagas; and these fragments Prussia alone could weld again into dazzling wholeness and might.' ¹

But this was only one side of his teaching. He supported it with lectures on politics, in which the changed spirit that had come to pervade the philosophy of Germany since Hegel occupied a similar place stood out with startling clearness. In one thing he was in agreement with Hegel's teaching. The lesson, we might say, of the State and the Nation had in the meantime been learned, some would say over-learned. 'The State', says Treitschke, 'dates from the very beginning and is necessary. It has existed as long as history, and is as essential to humanity as language.'² But here agreement ceases. For the rest we have a vehement reassertion of doctrines of which the whole Idealist movement had been the denial. Hegel, as we have seen, repudiated the doctrine that the State was founded upon force. It rested on the disposition and the will

¹ *Germany and England*, p. 89.

² *Lectures on Politics*, i, § 1 (English translation by Gowans).

of the governed. With Aristotle he held that it came into existence for the sake of life, its abiding purpose was the good life—the life of science, art, religion.

In opposition to all this Treitschke fiercely announces :

The State is in the first instance power. It is not the totality of the people itself, as Hegel assumed. On principle it does not ask how the people is disposed ; it demands obedience.

The State is no academy of arts ; if it neglects its power in favour of the ideal strivings of mankind it renounces its nature and goes to ruin. The renunciation of its own power is for the State in the most real sense the sin against the Holy Ghost.

If art is incompatible with politics, religion is its sworn enemy. It starts from an opposite principle : ‘ Religion wishes to know only what it believes ; the State to believe only what it knows.’¹ So of the form of union required by each. ‘ The ideal of a religious fellowship is there public. But as the State is in the first instance power, its ideal is undoubtedly the monarchy, because in it the power of the State expresses itself in an especially decided and consistent way.’ True—real monarchs are becoming scarce, even in Germany. ‘ Prussia alone has still a real monarch who is entirely independent of any higher power,’² and who is prepared to say with Gustavus Adolphus, ‘ I recognize no one above me but God and the sword of the victor.’³ But that can be remedied by extending the benefits of the Prussian

¹ This I take to be a parody of Hegel’s statement ‘ The State is that which knows’, *op. cit.*, § 270, n. Hegel’s own view is condensed in the sentence : ‘ Since ethical and political principles pass over into the realm of religion and not only *are* established but *must* be established in reference to religion, the State is thus furnished with religious confirmation.’

² *op. cit.*, iii, § 17.

³ *Ibid.*, i, § 1.

monarchy and the Culture it represents, as Treitschke generously desires to do to other less favoured lands.

The instrument of this idealistic extension is war. 'It is precisely political idealism that demands wars, while it is materialism that condemns them.'¹ International law certainly has to be taken into account as an historical development. But it succeeds best in time of peace in adjusting the forms of intercourse between nations. It has a more limited application to the manner of conducting war after it has broken out. But to apply it to the limitation of the right to declare war is a vain and degenerate dream. Here 'no State in the wide world can venture to relinquish the *ego* of its sovereignty'. 'It has always been the tired, unintelligent, and enervated periods that have played with the dream of perpetual peace.'²

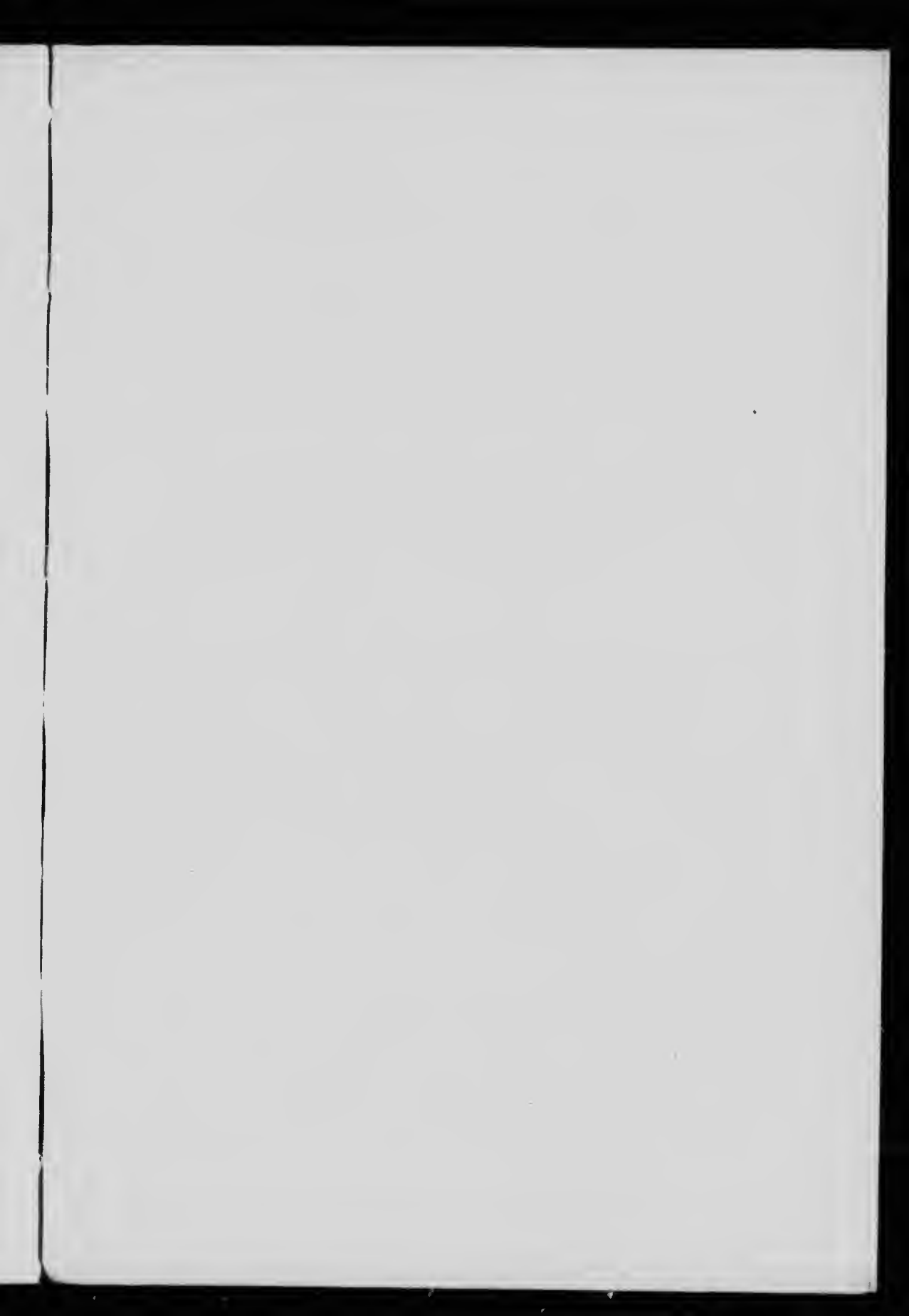
It is not surprising that these doctrines should have found favour among military writers in Germany, descending in them to even a lower grade of crudity. A great deal has been said by the apologists of Germany as to the obscurity in his own country of von Bernhardi. But that is not the point. His books are written for the military class, and you would no more expect to find them on the bookshelves or drawing-room tables of the ordinary educated man than you would expect Hegel's *Logic* or *Philosophy of Right*. The point is that these ideas have been taken up by able specialists and made by them the philosophical background of military instruction.

It is not my business here to discuss the truth of *Realpolitik* as thus interpreted. My task has been to show

¹ *op. cit.*, § 2.

² *op. cit.*, v, § 28. It follows naturally from these principles with regard to neutrals that 'If a State is not in a condition to maintain its neutrality, all talk about the same is mere claptrap.'

that it comes to us not as a continuous and legitimate development of which we are accustomed to think as 'German Philosophy', but as a reaction against it. I may, however, be permitted to remind the reader that as these ideas are not new in theory neither do they appeal for the first time to 'the judgement of the world'. They have been judged in a hundred decisive battle-fields from Marathon to Waterloo. If they are now judged once more and if there is truth in this story, we shall be able to appeal for confirmation of the judgement of history not to any philosophy of ours but to the better mind of Germany itself, the mind that found its highest and most condensed expression in Kant and Hegel and the doctrine of the Will to Good.



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