DESMOND FENNELL

THE REVISION OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

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by
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In fond memory of
Desmond Williams
who introduced me to
love of history
and of Europe

PREFACE

The motive that animates this book is the author's desire to make sense of the events and processes of western history: first, European history from 1000 AD to the present day; then, in particular, the course taken by the broader West since World War II. By 'making sense' of these histories, I mainly mean looking at them and requiring them to form, in the first case, a true, coherent story; in the second, a true, coherent picture. The results of my efforts can be found, respectively, in Part One and Part Two.

In the main, what still passes for the history of Europe is a version established in the nineteenth century and transmitted with minor revisions to the present day. An uncertain annexe has been attached dealing with events since 1914. In the course of the last century, many historians criticised and revised various aspects and episodes of the standard version. Marxists offered a somewhat revised version of the whole story; it came and went, leaving valid insights but not on the whole convincing. It approached the matter ideologically, whereas the most pressing problem is practical, a matter of organisation and presentation.

The continuing piecemeal revision of the factual story, along with questions raised by the twentieth century and the present condition of the West, have had a cumulative effect. A growing number of historians regard the standard history of Europe, even with particular revisions throughout its length, as too flawed to be worth saving. It is permeated by outworn myth; its general structure and some of its historical terminology obscure the truth; it fails to cohere with our recent experience and present consciousness. A new history is needed which would satisfy the criteria of truth and clarity, and by so doing make sense to present-day Europeans. That is my main argument. As well as criticising the standard history in the light of the latest revisionist scholarship, I sketch out what the revised history might look like. To avoid complicating the argument, I discuss mainly, though not exclusively, the writing of European history in English.

The first spur to taking a critical look at this matter came during the sixteen months I spent in Seattle between 1994 and 1996. While studying what I found to be the 'postwestern' condition of the USA, I became aware of the powerful and still continuing influence of German culture since the eighteenth century. Not only that; I realised that the German role in the final phase of Europe, and in particular the 'post-European' significance of the Nazi period, had been neglected in the writing of European history. So when I returned to Europe, I not only had a new, 'postwestern' view of the contemporary USA and of the West generally; I also felt impelled to look into German history between, say, 1750 and 1945.

When I tackled the initial phase of that history—the remarkable German cultural renaissance of the late eighteenth century—a glance further back to the so-called 'German Renaissance' of the years around 1500 made me realise there

was something wrong. 'Renaissance'? That was a highly creative period in southern Germany, but not, compared with the real renaissance I was studying, a renaissance, a cultural *rebirth*. Its given name was a crib from the 'Italian Renaissance' of around the same time. And come to think of it, was that a rebirth? On closer examination, this alleged Italian event, often magnified as 'the Renaissance' *tout court*, turned out to be the kingpin of the entire standard history of Europe. So when a close, critical look at it led to its disintegrating before my eyes, much of the rest came tumbling down with it. Logically, therefore, my critical examination of how 'a true, clear story' of Europe might be told begins with this Italian 'rebirth' which in fact did not happen.

For occasional, valuable help in the writing of this essay, I am grateful to Tim Blanning, Peter Burke, Manfred Fuhrmann, Brian Arkins, Philip Breen, Sture Ureland, Paolo Triveri, Enrico Nichelatti, Vincenzo Merolle and Mario Leonardi. But they are in no way responsible for the outcome. The chapter 'The Final, German Phase of Europe' is adapted from an article published in the German-studies journal *Cultura Tedesca*, Rome, July 2000.

Naturally, I have tried hard to avoid mistakes of historical fact; but my main aim in writing is to raise the issue stated in my title, and to have it thought about and discussed. If some of my ideas for 'a true, clear history that makes sense' can be improved upon or added to—I have, for example, paid little attention to England's part in the story—I would be delighted that this should happen.

Part Two, 'The Post-European Condition' draws on my book *The Postwestern Condition* published in 1999 and now out of print. Its main import appears here in its proper setting: the depiction of the present era follows intelligibly and logically from the re-interpreted history of the preceding centuries. While I was working on that book in Italy in 1998-99, I became aware that I was catering to a widely felt contemporary need. Many westerners sense that there is something special, strange and dangerous about the present time, but the public discourse offers no explanation. The public language that purports to explain our times is couched largely in clichés and slogans of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with some revamping from the 1930s and 40s. My own language about our times, I can vouch for this, is fresh-coined, out of the metal of the age we are experiencing.

Let me say in conclusion that I do not believe the history of Europe that I argue for will in the near future replace the petrified 'standard history'. That is too firmly ensconced in thousands of books and reference works, too massively supported by vested interests of several kinds—political, commercial, academic and emotional. But I do believe that 'in the meantime' this book will serve another useful purpose. It will provide Europeans who are interested in the history of Europe and of the contemporary West with a yardstick by which to judge, take distance from and correct the established, largely mythical history which, because it is not the true story, lacks sense.

Desmond Fennell
Rome, 2002

PART ONE

THE HISTORY OF EUROPE:

TOWARDS A TRUE, CLEAR STORY

I
The Two Main Obstacles

In the nineteenth century Europe was leading the world, and Europeans, in particular the ruling classes, considered themselves in every way superior to non-Europeans. The fashionable historians narrated the history of Europe in a manner which reflected this European ascendancy and its accompanying belief. Theirs was the main role in constructing a myth of all-round European progress 'forwards and upwards' from the end of the 'Middle Ages' and the beginning of the 'Modern Age'. It was a narrative constructed to satisfy, broadly speaking, the kind of people whom Herbert Butterfield was referring to in his *The Whig Interpretation Of History*, published full seventy years ago. In terminology less specifically English, they were the Progressives and Protestants who were conducting the affairs of Europe during its period of world leadership. However, in the construction and dissemination of the satisfying myth, the fashionable historians were not alone. The political class that was directing Europe's affairs, the thinkers and journalists who were theorising its place in the world, encouraged them. So the myth acquired its full and disseminated form in a process of mutual interaction between professional historians on the one hand, and politicians, ideologues and educational systems on the other. As well as the school textbooks, it entered the encyclopedias and the dictionaries.

In this many-layered form the Victorian myth of Europe became the standard history of Europe for the twentieth century. By the time the first half of that century had to be added to the story, some modifications were being made in the standard version, particularly with regard to the so-called Middle Ages. But by and large, in the general writing and understanding of European history, the standard version as established in the nineteenth century has remained stubbornly intact to this day.

On the face of it, this is remarkable for several reasons. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, historians in Europe and America have been convincingly revising virtually every phase or episode of the standard version. More, there is a fairly widespread recognition among historians and among

educated Europeans, generally, that the standard version is, indeed, a myth. The narrative of a Middle Age characterised by superstition and oppression giving way to an increasingly liberating and clear-sighted Modern Age that strides triumphantly forward from Renaissance through Reformation and Enlightenment to industrial revolution, overseas empire and a Progressive-Protestant ascendancy that confers mental, moral and material benefits on mankind—that version of the story now causes a smile. We know 'it was not quite like that'. That was the 'Great Leaps Forward' school of European history! Moreover, our unease with it, and our even finding it meaningless, are well justified by our recent historical experience and present circumstances.

Europe has surrendered its predominance in the world to its American proxy. The Victorian mentality which the myth was created to serve is no more. The most murderous century in human history has intervened, making us heirs to that also, as well as to what went before. That century, apart from the continuing advance of science and technology, did not look like the summit of human progress which the standard history suggests it should have been. While the rich and powerful western world that we inhabit is marked, certainly, by moral idealism in many of its laws, it displays ethical chaos in its actuality. Rather than encouragement of free spirits, there is powerful manipulation of opinion and desire, the phenomenon called 'dumbing-down' and the quasi-religious cult of the shopping mall. Added to all this, as the new century begins, is the prospect of infinite war accompanied by a gathering encroachment on hardwon liberties and on private life.

For all these reasons, it is a wonder that, with small modifications here and there, the standard version of European history is still on general offer. Schizophrenically, in view of our unease with it, we permit it largely to rule the works of reference and the historical consciousness of the educated.

However, this is remarkable only at first sight. For the standard version even to begin to be replaced, not in isolated episodes but as a whole, an alternative history of Europe must exist and be winning acceptance. The only serious attempt to supply one came from Marxist historians. But their version, while supplying valuable insights, failed to win significant acceptance where it was not imposed by political authority. It may seem odd, but the fact is that by merely substituting another ideological scheme for that which rules the standard history, the Marxists were being insufficiently radical. For the real problem with the standard history of Europe is with its overall interpretative structure, which in large measure the Marxists accepted. That interpretative structure has come to be at variance not only with what we now know, factually, of the remoter past, but also—as I said above—with what we have experienced in the recent past and what we observe in the present.

This is the practical problem which some radically revising historians are now beginning to work on in their studies. I am proposing it for general discussion,

first of all by the title I have given this book. But that is easily done. With trepidation, I am venturing further by offering, together with a personal critique of the standard version, an outline of how I think the story might be better told. I write as a lover of Europe and as a lifelong student and reader of its history. A specialist in no particular period, I do not presume to judge, let alone add to any of the specialist research. Where I am aware of it, I draw on it. When I say 'how the story might be better told', I mean how a history of Europe might be written which would be true and clear, and make sense for contemporary Europeans.

The standard version contains a great mass of true facts, and therefore the possibility of being modified into a true and clear story. The obstacle to be removed is its distorted presentation of the facts. This breaks down, mainly, into two related kinds of distortion—and therefore two obstacles which I will come to presently. First, a word about what I mean by a story that makes sense for contemporary Europeans.

History is a very special kind of story. It makes sense, really, only when it is accepted by the people concerned as the story of their past. If it is not, if it is only something in a book that other historians mull over, it makes no sense *as history*; is not in fact the history of the people in question. It has failed to make it. So a history of Europe 'that makes sense for contemporary Europeans' means several things.

First, the story must cohere with what Europeans know of their recent past and their present. Since their entire past is what has brought them to where they are now, telling it truly and clearly should take care of that. Second—as an art performed for the audience of everyman, which is what history properly is—it must, while keeping to the truth, have a good story form; display a formal elegance or beauty. Third, it must not denigrate our European ancestors indiscriminately. Finally, it must insofar as possible tend to strengthen their living descendants rather than weaken them; tend to imbue them with a sense of purpose rather than encourage them to have none.

Conflicting with the widespread feeling that a revised history is needed is an understandable reluctance to abandon the standard version. Partly this is a simple desire to cling to nurse, partly a fear that the alternative would be offensive, ugly and depressing. There has, indeed, in recent years been a much-publicised revision of European history taught in some American universities: the version about centuries of Dead White European Males oppressing everyone within reach. Obviously, that extreme instance of offence by non-sense has not been a good advertisement for the enterprise I am talking about. I have nailed my colours to the mast. I am talking about a history which makes sense for contemporary Europeans, and I have spelt out what I mean by that. Suffice to add that, without being at all sure that I know how it might be done, I shall keep its requirements in mind.

I say 'for contemporary Europeans'. Someone, doubtless, will find that this

masks the particular category of Europeans that I—as in their day the Victorian historians—wish to please. A social class (have we still social classes?) or ideological group that I belong to or am catering to will be identified. This cannot be helped. I have made clear that my concern is practical, not ideological. Among the many kinds of contemporary Europeans I have met and listened to, or read, I have no particular category in mind. That much said, I gladly leave to others the interpretation of my subconscious mind.

In *Europe: A History*, published in London in 1995, Norman Davies included much of the piecemeal revision of recent years and added some of his own. Despite the mistakes of detail which other historians have pounced on, Davies' brave, ambitious and enormous book provides a useful point of reference and I shall use it as such.

His lengthy Introduction deals with some of the problems that are encountered in the attempt to make the words 'the history of Europe' correspond with the historical reality. I referred above to 'two main obstacles' to truth and clarity that the standard 'history of Europe' presents. In a section of his Introduction headed 'The Allied Scheme of History', Davies illustrates one of these by citing a recent occurrence of it. At the same time, in his manner of doing this, he unconciously exemplifies the other one. He writes as follows:

> "Contemporary views of Europe have been strongly influenced by the emotions and experiences of two World Wars and especially by the victory of the 'Grand Alliance'. Thanks to their triumphs in 1918, in 1945, and at the end of the Cold War in 1989, the Western Powers have been able to export their interpretation of events worldwide...
>
> "The priorities and assumptions which derive from Allied attitudes of the wartime vintage are very common in accounts of the twentieth century; and are sometimes projected back into more remote periods."[1]

Davies then lists some of these "priorities and assumptions", beginning with the following:

> —The belief in a unique, secular brand of Western civilisation in which 'the Atlantic community' is presented as the pinnacle of human progress. Anglo-Saxon democracy, the rule of law in the tradition of Magna Carta, and a capitalist, free-market economy are taken to be the highest forms of Good...
>
> —The ideology of 'anti-fascism', in which the Second World War of 1939-45 is perceived as 'the War against Fascism', as the defining event in the triumph of Good over Evil...

The obstacle that Davies is here illustrating by citing an instance of it is *victors' history*. In the tradition of historical writing that has reached us from the nineteenth century, such 'history' has been obscuring the story of Europe. The other main obstacle, which Davies is unconsciously exemplifying, is *imprecise designation*.

[1] For an alternative, more realistic account of World War II and the subsequent history of the West, see Part Two.

Who precisely, the reader is left wondering, are these particular victors who "have been able to export their interpretation of events worldwide"? A rereading of the first two paragraphs quoted shows the confusion. Davies refers to the victors successively as "the 'Grand Alliance'", "the Western Powers of 1918, 1945 and the Cold War" and—by implication in the phrase "Allied attitudes of the wartime vintage"—once again the "Allies" in *both* World Wars. All in all, several different sets of victors are referred to! It is only because the paragraphs which follow help us, and because we have direct experience to draw on, that we know that Davies means America and Britain. These, we understand and know, are the victors "who have been able to export their interpretation of events worldwide". They alone have been able to do this, and done it—through their political leaders, film-makers and journalists in all media, and the general run of their historians and other writers. Davies could have saved us trouble by saying so.

Ironically, imprecise designation is an obstacle to clear and true history on which Davies comes down hard. For example, he cites "histories of Britain" and references to "British history" when in fact England and English are meant. Of *A History Of Mediaeval Europe* by an Oxford university tutor, he says that at first glance it seems more like a history of "medieval Western Europe" or "Latin Christendom", but turns out, because of the omission or offhand treatment of some pertinent countries, not to be really either of those.

The outstanding instance of *victors' history* addling our view is the Progressive-Protestant version of European history that I have discussed above. In the struggles between religions and ideologies that had marked Europe since around 1500, Progressives and Protestants had come out on top. The history that they encouraged and sanctioned was intended to show by what a splendid path they had come there and how richly they deserved their success. While it has lost relevance for present-day Europeans, and been assaulted by a guerrilla war of revision, it still remains entrenched in the ubiquitous standard history because, as an overall pattern, it has not been replaced. So let us begin with "Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment". Stripped of their thought-suspending role as advertising slogans, are they still valid designations of the historical occurrences they refer to, or must more precise designations be found?

2 'The Renaissance'

"'Renaissance' is the most glamorous piece of shorthand in historical language."
J.R. Hale

"Philosophy is a struggle against the fascination that words exert upon us."
Ludwig Wittgenstein

Take 'the Renaissance'. Much revision has been done on this concept and designation, but confusion and misunderstanding remain prevalent. I begin with the simplest questions. Does 'the Renaissance' refer to an event in Italy or in Western Europe generally? It refers to both or to either; when the Italian location is intended, it is short for 'the Italian Renaissance'. It is a term that leaves one guessing.

When did the Renaissance occur? Works that refer to it or deal with it leave one puzzled. Without specifying a location on the planet, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* says: "in the 14th-16th centuries". Peter Burke of Cambridge University, in *The Italian Renaissance: Culture And Society In Italy* (1999) treats his subject as occurring in the fifteenth and in most of the sixteenth century. In *A History Of Music Of The Western World 1100-1980*, a series of taped lectures published in Britain and the USA in the early 1990s, the tape-title *Music Of The Renaissance* has the dates 1480-1620 appended. The lecturer, Anthony Rooley of Oxford University, introduces his subject with the words, "Europe in the sixteenth century..." Norman Davies, for his part, treads a well-worn path in having the Italian Renaissance begin "circa 1450" and continue through the first half of the sixteenth century. A glance at the title of a book by J. R. Hale of University College, London, published in 1971, surprises. It reads *Renaissance Europe 1480-1520*. Perhaps it was intended as a snapshot of a longer period. But as the only title in the Fontana historical series that mentions 'Renaissance', it does not convey that.

When, by the established convention of historians, did the 'modern history' of Europe begin? In or around 1500 or in the latter half of the 1400s. By convention, the discovery of America and the Renaissance occurred at the start of the Modern Age. Latterly, the modernity of the Renaissance has been called in question on the grounds that a notable feature of the Italian culture of 1450-1600—an increased interest in magic, alchemy and witchcraft—clashes with the established stereotype for 'modern'. Accordingly, that blessèd dawn would need to be brought forward to the Scientific Revolution or the Enlightenment. But that would make the Renaissance 'medieval', and by definition it is post-medieval; it came after the 'Middle Age' and by all accounts expressly rejected that period as one of cultural barbarity. Disturbingly, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*—and it is not alone in this—clashes with the accepted historical scheme of ages by placing the start of

the Renaissance in the medieval 1300s. That apart, the dictionary's vague three centuries—'14th-16th'—with their many variations of circumstance and mentality, is hardly a satisfactory temporal designation for something that is presented as an 'event' in European history.

'The Middle Age' is, of course, another "victors' term" which calls for scrutiny of its designative accuracy. At least in a chapter-heading, Davies takes the overdue step of removing the eccentric and blurring plural which has afflicted it in English. I have the impression that, whereas it originally stood for a period between the fourth or fifth century and 1453 or 1500,[2] we have come to understand 'medieval' as referring roughly to the years 1000 to 1500. Provisionally, I will use 'the Middle Age' in this sense, while intending to return to the matter and to discuss the preceding centuries, which used to be called in English 'the Dark Ages'. (Correction, I have just noticed that term in Davies' book!)

Gordon Leff, in his book *Medieval Thought*, writes:

> "It has become so much a habit to describe any sudden growth of culture as a renaissance that we are in danger of depriving the expression of any meaning."

That sentence comes at the start of Leff's chapter on the (genuine) Carolingian Renaissance in the ninth century. The point he is making, implicitly, is that 'renaissance' means, properly and only, a rebirth; in cultural matters, a fresh emergence of creativity and innovation after a period when they have been absent or scantily present. And in fact, *pace* Leff, 'renaissance' still does convey that meaning—*even when it is misapplied*. In particular, 'the Renaissance' is generally understood to mean an epoch-making return of culture or, more precisely, of high culture—first in Italy, then in Europe generally—after a 'Middle Age' when it was absent or in meagre supply. (That age had, in its latter centuries, produced Italy's greatest poet, Dante, and most eminent philosopher, Thomas Aquinas—not to mention Bologna and Padua universities, Francis of Assisi, Giotto, Petrarch, Boccaccio and St Catherine of Siena.) Also generally believed is that the cultural rebirth in question included, or was caused by, a revival of studious interest in Graeco-Roman culture after a long period of neglect or ignorance. The *Oxford Dictionary* definition reflects both aspects of this received belief: "the revival of art and literature under the influence of classical models..."

Peter Burke records simply a new "enthusiasm for classical antiquity" without any revival except that of Italian vernacular literature at the end of the fifteenth century. Before that, for nearly a century, the antiquarian enthusiasm had caused most poetry to be written in Latin. In painting as in sculpture a vogue arose for a naturalism inspired by surviving Roman sculpture and literary descriptions of

[2] I am referring to the first uses, in Holland and Germany in the 1600s, of *medium aevum* and *Mittelalter* as terms in general European history. When the Italian enthusiasts of ancient Rome had used such 'middle' terms, beginning in 1469 with *media tempestas*, the reference was to a (variable) period of *Italian* history.

ancient painting. Those who regarded such painting as proper painting called this a revival; it was considered 'Italian', as opposed to the non-naturalistic 'Greek' or Byzantine style which had previously prevailed in Italy. The models for the music came, not from the past, but from Flanders, which in the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth was the leading centre of European music. Flanders also contributed oil-paints and stretched canvas to Italian painting. Flemish painting had been naturalistic from the start.

Anthony Rooley, for his part, relays the 'cultural rebirth' idea whole. "Europe in the sixteenth century", he says, "was a vigorously creative place. There was a rebirth of inspired artistic activity in music, painting, poetry and sculpture that spread like wildfire through Italy, France, Spain, Germany and England." Perplexingly, the two lectures previous to his have described the "inspired" musical culture of the Middle Age, especially in northern France shortly after the great cathedrals had been built, and when Paris was Europe's first intellectual centre.

With the widespread notion of the Renaissance as a cultural rebirth goes the suggestion that in all European history there has never been anything so culturally splendid. The titling of the series of tapes just referred to reflects this. The lectures on medieval music are presented as 'New Art for Old, 1100-1480', and those dealing with Viennese music in the days of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven as 'Sonata and the Creative Ideal: The Classical Period 1750-1830'. But the two Renaissance lectures are trumpeted as 'Musick's Feaste'—the playfully antique spelling contributing to the implied celebration of a special excellence!

Such kneejerk glamourisation of anything connected with 'the Renaissance' is commonplace. Two instances are the notion of 'Renaissance man' as a many-skilled genius, and the flatteringly ambiguous use of 'humanist' and 'humanism' in the Renaissance context. For 'Renaissance man', Peter Burke finds little evidence in the historical facts. For the general purposes of his study, he uses a selection of 600 members of the Italian creative elite from the late 1300s into the 1500s: painters, sculptors, writers, 'humanists', scientists and musicians. Of these he finds eighteen who practised three arts or more, fifteen of them architects. Remarking that architecture at the time was a bridge between science, sculpture and 'humanistic' studies, he adds that "apart from Alberti [one of the eighteen] these many-sided men belong to the *tradition* of the nonspecialist craftsmen rather than that of the gifted amateur" (italics added).

'Humanist' came into English from the Italian *umanista* in the sixteenth century. It meant simply a teacher, student or scholar of 'the humanities' as distinct from 'divine' matters. The *studia humanitatis* comprised grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and ethics. The teaching was done in Latin and was based entirely on classical authors. In other words, a 'humanist' was what we now call a 'classicist'. That was still what Dr Johnson had in mind when in 1755 he defined 'humanist' in his Dictionary as: "A philologer; a grammarian". But in the course

of the nineteenth century, that sense of the word faded from ordinary language, and 'humanist' began to have the philanthropic, philosophical meaning it normally has today. It was joined in that new sense by 'humanism', taken from the German (where it had originally denoted only classical education). Later, both words acquired yet another meaning, denoting, in civil affairs, the sufficiency of human rational effort and hostility to interference by religion. The effect, without as much as a hint to the unwary, was to dress all the Latin and Greek scholars of the 1400s and subsequently in the livery of 'humanists' and 'humanism' *in these new senses vaguely combined.* Once established, this ideological and misleading representation of the Renaissance classicists has persisted, both in academic books and in popular history, into the present day.

Hand in hand with the glamourisation of the Renaissance has gone a progressive denigration of the preceding Middle Age. Despite a century of historical writing aimed at correcting this, its correction in narratives of 'the history of Europe' has not been so diligent. Partly for this reason, in the minds and speech even of educated people, 'Middle Ages' and 'medieval' continue to connote at least a primitive and ignorant condition, at most a barbarous one. More, the notion persists that West European life in those centuries was qualitatively inferior to that of ancient Rome and Greece. In part these resistances to a more realistic view of the Middle Age flow from the glamourisation of the Renaissance. Abandoning the 'dark' view of the Middle Age would detract from the 'bright' view of the Renaissance—and from the very meaning of the word itself!

In order to present a true, clear view of 'the Italian Renaissance' and 'the Renaissance' generally, and to integrate this into a true, clear history of Europe, it is necessary to sort out what took place at that time in Italy and in Western Europe generally, and to examine why it has come to be represented in an unhistorical and confused manner. In providing my own corrective account of these matters, I am aware that I will in part be making points which have been made in previous critiques of the 'Renaissance myth'. In the Bibliography of the book by Peter Burke that I have referred to, I notice an entire work of such criticism: Bullen, J.B., *The Myth Of The Renaissance In Nineteenth-Century Writing.* And indeed, in another short book by Burke himself, called simply *The Renaissance*, the first chapter is headed 'The Myth of the Renaissance'. But I am writing about European history and I cannot take for granted that all who are interested in that are also familiar with critical writing on 'the Renaissance' in particular.

For the sake of argument, I shall follow Davies' well-worn track and regard the 'Italian Renaissance' as beginning around 1450 and continuing to around 1550. I define the movement in question as one of heightened innovation in the arts and in scholarship and worldview. It was preceded in 1400-50 by what is often referred to as the 'Early Renaissance': a general, creative growth of interest

in the Graeco-Roman past that was centred mainly in Florence, together with remarkable artistic innovation in that same city. In 1450-1550 the Florentine movement expanded throughout Italy; Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were active; the Graeco-Roman enthusiasm reached and passed its zenith; vernacular literature re-emerged strongly; and the movement as a whole impinged on European culture generally.

Cultural renaissances do occur; we know what they are like. In the ninth century, in Charlemagne's Frankish empire, there was indeed, after two particularly barren centuries, a brief renaissance. A great and sustained re-emergence of high culture—the first such in Western Europe since the fall of Rome—occurred in France in the twelfth century and extended into the thirteenth. Embracing theology, philosophy, architecture, classical Latin, vernacular literature and the plastic arts, it deserves to figure in European history as 'the Renaissance' if this term is to be employed. (It does not so figure because the Italian antiquarians of the fifteenth century rubbished its achievements and its legacy and exalted their own movement as the true rebirth; and northwestern European historians in later centuries took them at their word—and inflated it.) Then again, in Germany in the final third of the eighteenth century there was an outstanding cultural renaissance. And in many small nations, including Ireland, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were lesser ones. By all these measures, in the fifteenth century in Italy no cultural renaissance is discernible, rather *a culmination of the high culture of the preceding two centuries and its gradual transformation into a high culture of a different kind.*

European civilisation around 1450 was still young as civilisations go, but in its most developed areas it did not compare badly with its Roman predecessor. Understandably, in some material respects, such as road-building and hydraulic engineering, it was inferior to Roman civilisation at its height. But in most kinds of structural engineering it equalled Rome and in the Crusades it had shown itself capable of using military force successfully at a great distance and holding the conquered territory for a time. It still lacked Rome's ability to make such distant conquest on an extensive scale and to maintain it for centuries. Europe's monotheism, on the other hand, and its related morality based on neighbour-love were superior to the religion and morality of Rome. And while European intellectual life fell short of that of the Romano-Greek world in its range of enquiry, within its narrower scope it was intense and ambitious and—because Europe had invented universities—better organised. Between 1100 and 1400, in a succession of styles that were in turn described as 'modern', new kinds of thought, poetry, prose, painting, music and architecture had flourished. Institutional creativity in city-states and kingdoms was on a par with that of the ancient world. And again, while Europe was in some material respects inferior to Rome at its height, in other ways which favoured productive power, military effectiveness or the amenity of everyday living it was in advance of it. Wheelbarrows and big shafted carts facilitated

carrying. The invention of the head-collar for horses had tripled their drawing capacity. Specially bred 'cart horses' pulling all-iron ploughs had increased agricultural yield. Eye-spectacles had greatly lengthened the productive life both of scholars and of such artisans as needed keen eyesight. Thousands of windmills and water-mills served multiple purposes; the water-mills were used for, among other things, the manufacture of paper. Mechanical clocks measured time in hours of equal duration. Ships were equipped with fixed rudders and guided by compasses. The biggest ships, carrying multiple decks, two or three masts and great expanses of sail, were capable of long ocean voyages. Stirrups giving foot-purchase to sword-wielding horsemen, the deadly shots of crossbows, and gun-powder put to use in firearms and cannon, made a few hundred European soldiers more than a match for a Roman legion equipped with its conventional artillery. Cities helped finance themselves with public loans. Arabic numerals with their zero sign, and insurance and paper money backed by bankers, facilitated trading. Among the well-to-do, everyday life was enhanced by such innovations as buttons, gloves, underpants, table forks, and fireplaces with chimneys. In helping the poor and alleviating misfortune, pawning establishments subscribed to by the well-to-do, supplemented the charity of monasteries.

In all these aspects of contemporary West European life, Italy was either typical or to the fore. Many of its cities, moreover, were works of urban art containing buildings and art works of great beauty. In the centuries preceding 1450, Italy, along with northern and southern France and northern Spain, had had the most continuously flourishing high culture in Europe. In the following hundred years this developing Italian high culture reached a splendid culmination.

The notion, first, that this culmination was, in fact as distinct from rhetoric, a cultural renaissance—and then that it was '*the* Renaissance' of European history—arose centuries later, north of the Alps. It derived, initially, not from the great art of the period, but from the simultaneous antiquarian movement. It is instructive to observe how this happened.

The Graeco-Roman movement—with the emphasis on 'Roman' and the Greek element secondary—inherited and shared in a 'restorative' ideology which had been present in Italian culture since the early 1300s. In each new generation, dissident intellectuals had seen 'resurrection', a 'return to life' or 'rebirth' occurring in their time. In Rome, Cola di Rienzo had made an abortive attempt to restore the Roman Republic. Successively, the revivalist intellectuals had lengthened the alleged previous period of barbarism or darkness. In the first such instance, it was merely the hundred years preceding Dante's *Divine Comedy*. By the 1400s it was the thousand-year 'middle age' between the fall of Rome and the present. Among the alleged forces of barbarian darkness that thwarted true culture and oppressed *Italia* were the 'Greek' style of painting, French 'Gothic' architecture, 'barbarous' English logicians, Parisian physics, the ignorant treatment of ancient authors, the scholastic distortion of Aristotle and the

Greeks', these offences were attributed variously to 'the moderns', 'the Goths', 'the Germans' or 'the Franks'. France, because of its previous cultural dominance, figured as the principal centre from which the allegedly debased culture radiated.

Thus, when enthusiasm for the Roman past became a confident group movement in the mid-1400s, the notion of 'rebirth' (*rinascita*) lay to hand as its ideology. In the previous centuries, apart from occasional surges of enthusiasm for the classical heritage, educated people had seen it as a valuable quarry to draw on for the construction of a new, Christian world. Knowledge of such ancient writers as were readily available was part of a good education, but no more than that. In the 1300s Petrarch's love affair with the classical past was exceptional. His most important work was not his excellent Latin prose but his Italian poetry. And the main result of his inducing Boccaccio to share his classical enthusiasm was to deprive Italian literature of what would otherwise, very likely, have followed the *Decameron*! The classical enthusiasts of the 1400s were a different matter. Favoured by the rulers of the time, they helped to create a broad, fashionable movement and exulted in belonging to it. They included architects who studied ancient buildings and ruins and who then used their findings in their architecture. They included some painters and sculptors—more particularly their commissioning patrons. But the main body were, of course, literary men. They were the first professional classicists—the first to make Graeco-Roman learning their exclusive intellectual interest. They saw the ancient world, moreover, not only as a value in its own right, but as an example of realised humanity which Italy and Europe stood in need of for their improvement and secular redemption. Thus, apart from Christian revelation and faith, which by and large remained precious to them, they regarded the Graeco-Roman past as qualitively superior to the present and they aimed to bring it to life again.

Partly this was to come about through language revival. The classicists campaigned for the replacement of modern Latin by the Ciceronian language, that is, classical Latin at its best. Believing that the Carolingian script of many monastic manuscripts was Ancient Roman, they adopted it in place of the modern 'Gothic'. More generally, they searched for and found, or otherwise acquired, manuscripts that had been forgotten or that had existed only in the Greek East. As a result, and because book-printing arrived from Germany in 1465, they had more texts available for study than their predecessors. (In Rome alone, in the ten years after a book press was set up there, 160,000 books of all kinds were printed.) In their study of the ancient texts, the classicists were at pains to establish sound versions and they developed critical method accordingly. More

[3] The denigration of the 'middle age' as a time of superstition, perverted religion and intellectual death came later, with Protestantism and rationalism. Insofar as they were northern Europeans, it can only have been the anti-Catholic zeal of these Protestant and rationalist gentlemen that induced them to swallow, without a murmur, the Italian denigration of their medieval ancestors as barbarians in art and learning!

of them learned Greek and learned it better than had scholars in the previous century. A little Greek had been available then too, and some Greek works had long been available in Latin. But now, apart from new Greek texts acquired from Constantinople—more Plato, much mathematics and natural science—direct translations from Greek originals began to replace what were often garbled Latin renderings from Arabic versions.

What all this amounted to in net effect was that ancient Rome and, to a lesser extent, Greece were actively influencing Italian elite culture, just as the latter was beginning to influence the other elite cultures of Europe. The princely rulers, the popes included, welcomed and encouraged the classicists, gave many of them employment, collected ancient statues, and commissioned buildings in Roman styles. Some classicists tried to appropriate the mindset of the ancient authors; others merely used the Roman literary forms for their imitative Latin prose and poetry. Previously Graeco-Roman mythology had played an ancillary role in literature; now it became a self-sufficient source for literature and painting. Many classicists gave themselves Latin names. For many of its adherents the movement became a 'swinging' lifestyle with touches of the carnivalesque.

This kind of feeling and activity directed towards a past culture is what we call—as in the later Celtic, medievalist and neo-Gothic instances—a 'revival', using the verb transitively and figuratively. So it seems to me correct to describe the fifteenth-century Italian movement as, *in this sense*, a 'Graeco-Roman revival'. Like the Celtic and medievalist revivals in later times, so, too, the Graeco-Roman movement believed that in the prevailing high culture, important aspects of man were neglected—and therefore, man as he fully is and could be. In some of the classicists this gave rise to a current of thought and endeavour which can properly be described as a humanism. Such men replaced the medieval discourse on the wretchedness and dignity of man with an emphasis on his dignity and potential. In religious contexts they gave prominence to the humanity of Christ. In education they sponsored a new pedagogy which stressed the building of character, and which included physical exercise along with Latin and Greek.

More generally speaking, Italy's Graeco-Roman revival was a companion and forerunner of all those European movements that believed in renewal of the present life through return to remote origins. The classicists were conscious that 'Ancient Rome' was ancient Italy, and classical Latin, Old Italian. They regarded the Roman past of their country as civilisation, properly speaking. Thus they believed that by reviving that past they were both renewing civilisation and bringing *Italia* spiritually to life again. Similarly, in those same years, the English and French monarchies and German intellectuals were finding inspiration in remote national or pseudo-national origins. Before the Italian revival had run its course, Protestant reformers and Erasmian Catholics were repeating its pattern in Christian terms. Later, Rousseauism would give the myth a universally human dimension; and one nationalist movement after another would be inspired by the

belief that rebirth of the nation could be secured by drawing on, and in some sense repeating the remote national origins. To cite an example with which I am familiar, almost every feature of the Italian Graeco-Roman revival was repeated, *mutatis mutandis*, in the Gaelic revival in early twentieth-century Ireland.

Italian memory in the following centuries recalled no cultural renaissance in 1450-1550. Italians, looking back, saw a 'middle age' reaching from the fall of Rome to Columbus's discovery of America in 1492. The second half of this age, from around 1250, was mainly characterised in their eyes by the revival and development of urban life. The simultaneous growth of commerce and prosperity was accompanied, from the mid-1200s, by 'the revival (*rinascita*) of letters and arts'. This meant the emergence of literature in Italian and of styles of painting and architecture that increasingly rejected foreign models, and recalled the ancient Roman. In the *Quattrocento* (the 1400s) all these developments, except that of literature, reached a peak. The industrious passion for the ancient world brought novelties and intellectual enrichment. But except with respect to the arts, Italy's 'good time'—such was the view of later Italians—ended with the Middle Age! The splendid *Quattrocento* was also characterised by a breakdown in morals; the discovery of America marginalised the Mediterranean trade routes; and the French invasion of 1494 introduced a long period of Italian subjection to foreigners. (This would end only with the *Risorgimento* or 'rising again' of the nineteenth century.)

Outside Italy, after 1550, remembrance worked differently. The educated classes celebrated the industry of the Italian classicists as the outstanding feature of the *Quattrocento*. In English they called it 'the revival of letters' or 'of learning'; in French, *la renaissance des lettres*. The 'letters' and 'learning' intended were those of the ancient sort—literature and learning *par excellence*. This scholarly, restricted concept of revival was, so to speak, the duck from which the peacock 'the Renaissance' later sprang. The metamorphosis began with a gradual broadening of the concept 'letters', notably in France. Italy in 1450-1550 had been leading Europe in painting, sculpture, architecture and the decorative arts, and, ultimately, also in vernacular poetry. The 1500s and 1600s saw high creative periods in Spain, France and England. When the French *philosophes* of the 1700s came to celebrating the modern as against the 'barbarism' of the 'Middle Age', all of that, but particularly its Italian, French and English elements, was *la renaissance des lettres*.

It is in this broadened sense that d'Alembert, in 1751, uses the term in his introductory essay to the *Encyclopédie*. The human race, he writes, in order to escape from barbarism, needed "one of those revolutions which give a new face to the earth". It began in Italy in the mid-1400s. Here are his words—using the historical present with reference to events after 1453, when the Turks captured Constantinople:

> "The Greek empire is destroyed; its ruin sends coursing again into Europe [many Greek scholars migrated to Italy] that little sum of knowledge that still remained in the world. The invention of printing, the protection of the Medicis and of Francis I reanimates minds; and light is reborn everywhere."

For d'Alembert, the 'rediscovery' of the ancient world—nothing in the previous culture of Italy!—made possible the painting of Raphael and Michelangelo. After a phase of mere erudition and slavish imitation, he continues, the Graeco-Roman revival gave rise to flourishing vernacular literature in Italy and France. Racine, Molière, Bossuet and others were there to show that. With Descartes, and among the English, Bacon, philosophy revived. And so on to Newton, Leibniz and Locke. Owing to the pre-eminence of the French language and culture in the 1700s, this view of the (still lower-case) *'renaissance des lettres'* spread through Europe.

But elevation to still greater heights occurred after the French historian Jules Michelet, in the 1840s, dispensed with the delimiting *lettres* in order to celebrate the Italian event, hyperbolically, as *'la Renaissance'*, unqualified. For Italy and for Europe, it was "the emergence of certainty and life, the discovery of man and the world", after a dead age when these realities had been shrouded in doubt. Dressed in this cosmic raiment, *'la Renaissance'* passed, with only the definite article changed, into German and English. In German, then, Jakob Burckhardt's glittering *The Civilisation Of The Renaissance In Italy* (of which more later) confirmed the term, extended its scope vaguely backwards to Dante's time, and depicted the Italy of those centuries as the birthplace of the Modern. The Italians, roused to action and flattered by this grand mythologising of a period in their history, searched among their words for 'rebirth', came up with *il Rinascimento*, applied it with its mythical meanings to the 1400s and, with mixed feelings, to the subsequent decades, and readjusted their academic history accordingly. Thus the stage was set for the still-continuing career of 'the Renaissance' as the epoch-making rebirth of culture, man and spiritual well-being that succeeded the barbaric Middle Age and brought Europe, or all that was best and 'modern' in it, into being.

But to return to the facts of the matter, in 1450-1550 the flourishing culture of medieval Italy culminated in a high creative period that continued in somewhat reduced form into the 1600s. By a 'high creative period' I mean one in which there is an abundant production, in varying proportions, of new fascinating artistic works (including literary ones), new attractive ideas and new useful tools. The Italian high creative period was rich in new art and ideas (though not profound ones), and relatively poor in new tools. It coincided, during parts of its long course, with similar high periods in Flanders, Germany, Spain, France, England and Holland, as the first age of Europe culminated and the second age began.

Some periods of this kind in European nations—in France during the reign of Louis XIV and after, in Germany-Austria from the late eighteenth century to the

1930s—have overflowed beyond the national boundaries to become periods of European cultural leadership by the nation in question. The new art, ideas and tools being produced in the country where innovation is peaking, are found to be, respectively, fascinating, attractive or useful by Europeans generally. This was the case with Italian high culture in the sixteenth century and in the subsequent baroque era until the mid-1600s.

The first half of this period, generally referred to as the Italian Renaissance, was not of itself epoch-making; or rather, as a movement of innovation and high achievement it was no more epoch-making than the Spanish Golden Age, the Age of Louis XIV or 'the Age of Goethe, Beethoven and Kant'. If the misleading name 'Italian Renaissance' had not taken over, it might well be called 'the Age of Raphael and Machiavelli' or 'the Italian Golden Age'. (Indeed, and illustrating the persisting, rather different Italian perspective, the currently most popular history of Italy, in sixteen volumes (Montanelli and Cervi) includes one entitled *Italy Of The Golden Centuries (1250-1492).*

However, the Italian high creative period, between 1450 and 1550, included two components which were epoch-making, inasmuch as they signalled a new age of Europe and helped to shape it. One of these was the Graeco-Roman revival. Its contemptuous rejection of the previous European culture, and elevation of the Roman heritage to a prominent cultural role, exerted decisive influence on the consciousness, elite culture and statecraft of Europe's second age. On the one hand, it spurred Europeans to equal and surpass, in all fields, the great achievements of the ancients. On the other, it started a series of rejections of historic Europe by religious and secular elites, in favour of a different kind of life modelled on a past life, and deemed superior.

Before identifying and discussing the other epoch-shaping feature of Italian culture in these years, I make a brief digression north of the Alps.

A few pages back I wrote that "book-printing arrived from Germany in 1465". Apart from mentioning the name Johann Gutenberg, the city of Mainz and a date c.1450, histories of Europe seldom tell us any more about this momentous invention and the man responsible for it, let alone convey his cultural context. Inevitably, however, against the sketched background of 'Renaissance Italy', we are told about the machines and the physical phenomena that Leonardo da Vinci sketched. And we are invited to marvel at the 'universality' of the man, given that he was also a painter. But apart from innovations in his painting, Leonardo invented nothing, let alone a mechanical process which shaped subsequent European history. There is a strange imbalance here. Norman Davies is exceptional in devoting similar space to Leonardo and to the technical aspects of Gutenberg's invention. The result of fifteen years of dogged effort in the teeth of recurrent misfortune, it served its purpose so effectively that it remained virtually unmodified until the nineteenth century.

In Nuremberg around 1510, a man not even mentioned in the standard 'history of Europe', the locksmith Peter Henlein, invented the pocket-watch. Inasmuch as, by its subsequent diffusion and improvement, it brought precise consciousness of time into the daily lives of Europeans, it ranks close to book-printing as a formative historical influence. About fifteen years earlier, in the same city, Martin Boheim had made the first terrestrial globe. Nuremberg was then the main European centre for the publication of books on mathematics and astronomy—translations from the Greek and new works—and for the manufacture of instruments used in astronomy and navigation. It had a close connection with the Italian, Spanish and Portuguese navigators.

The 'history of Europe' does tell us of Copernicus and his sensational announcement of a sun-centred celestial system that made earth and man peripheral. But because it does not present Copernicus in his cultural and intellectual context, it fails to convey a related historical fact of almost equal importance: the foundation of European as distinct from Graeco-Arab mathematics in Germany in the 1400s. Copernicus, before he latinised his name, was Nikolaus Koppernigk, born in 1473 in a German town in Pomerania that had recently come under Polish suzerainty. His theory of the heavens derived more from mathematical calculation than from accurate observations. When dedicating his main work *De Revolutionibus* to Pope Paul III, he described its findings as "mathematical truths" [which] "can be judged only by mathematicians". So he profited by and contributed to a mathematical movement that had begun before his birth: in Austria with Georg von Peuerbach.

Contemporary concern about the disorder of the calendar gave the movement a bias towards astronomy. Von Peuerbach's interests ranged from arithmetic and algebra to the motions of the planets. He compiled the first European ephemeris, a table predicting the daily positions of celestial bodies. His pupil and collaborator, Johann Müller, a Franconian—he used the Latin name Regiomontanus—was the leading mathematician of his time. He compiled the almanac of astronomical data, *Tabulae Directionum*, used by Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci on their transatlantic voyages in the 1490s. As Copernicus would later do more successfully, he grappled with the problems raised by the Ptolemaic system of the heavenly bodies. Around the time of the transatlantic voyages, Copernicus, at Cracow university (he later attended three Italian universities) was studying Regiomontanus's *Tabulae Directionum* and a work by Peuerbach. Much later, in 1539, when he had completed *De Revolutionibus* but was hesitating to publish it, a posthumous work on trigonometry by Regiomontanus, *De Triangulis*, caused him to revise his own book's trigonometry. *De Triangulis* had been brought to him at Frauenburg in East Prussia by an admirer, Georg Joachim von Lauchen, a mathematician teaching at Wittenberg university. Von Lauchen, also known as Rheticus, persuaded Copernicus to publish. He arranged to have *De Revolutionibus* printed in Nuremberg in 1543.

The developing mathematical skills also helped in depicting the earth. In 1507 Martin Waldseemüller from Baden led an upsurge in improved map-making which culminated in Germany with Mercator and in Flanders with Ortelius. In the printed maps of the world which Waldseemüller published in that year, he named the newly-discovered continent's southern half 'America'. Mercator (Gerhard Kremer), in 1538, applied the name to the entire continent.

I have said sufficient to make several things clear. Innovation north of the Alps was providing an abundance of new useful tools which signalled the new age and shaped it: for example, the techniques of oil-painting and book-printing, pocket-watches, advanced mathematics, mariners' almanacs and navigational instruments, terrestrial globes, improved maps of the world and a radically improved cosmography. On a different plane, Luther launched the strain of Christianity which, as Protestantism in its various manifestations, would best express the spirit of the new age until the eighteenth century and beyond. And before the 1500s ended, Germany had given Europe, in the Faust legend, the myth that represented the age's essence. There is therefore something seriously unbalanced about presenting contemporary Italian culture as the birth of European 'modernity'. Its elevation to this role appears to reflect the aestheticist bias and romantic nostalgia of the northern Liberals who elevated it. In line with the historical scheme they created, the contemporary German cultural scene is generally presented as 'the German Renaissance' with the emphasis on that country's classical 'humanism' and pictorial art. Talk of Procrustean beds: the art in question, far from being 'Renaissance', in the conventional meaning, is in fact a final crowning development of the *Gothic*, with a sprinkling of contemporary Italian influence.

But the imbalance is not only a matter of failing to give an adequate account of innovation in Germany and Flanders. While such figures as Raphael, Brunelleschi and Pico della Mirandola are presented in their cultural context and therefore with adequate intelligibility, innovators such as Gutenberg, Copernicus and Luther who had much profounder historical influence are not. Given the focus on Italy, there is a suggestion of their being marginal, isolated figures from the northern, still Gothic forests, when in fact—like the unmentioned Henleins, Boheims and Müllers and the new map-makers—they are central shapers of the new age; innovators participating in a modernising culture where no one preferred ancient Rome or decried a barbarous intervening period. The suggestion of northern marginality persists even when we are told, as the standard history more or less does tell us, that in the years after 1500 the house of Fugger in Augsburg was the financial centre of Europe, controlling copper production from Hungary to Spain and using the new sea routes to trade with the East Indies.

Here is not the place to develop the matter apart from pointing out that in 1450-1520, in western and southern Germany and in Italy from Rome northwards, two high creative movements were in progress—diverse, independent, closely

interlocked, and to some degree engaged in the same or similar pursuits. Add to this what was happening then in Flanders, Spain and Portugal. There is an exciting prospect for the historian of Europe who, recognising these facts, depicts this period as the culmination of the first, and the multiple beginnings of the second age of Europe.

But to return to the matter we left. Jakob Burckhardt's *The Civilisation Of The Renaissance In Italy*, published in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, offered a view of the Italian phenomenon not so much as a rebirth of high culture, but as the birth, rather, of individualism, realism and secularism. After a slow start, the book ultimately reached and held a wide readership, not least because it conveyed an enchanting message. With the help of much learning, it suggested that in the ("individualistic, realist, secular") men of Renaissance Italy—which for Burckhardt begins in the early 1300s—Modern Man first appeared. To many Liberal and Protestant bourgeois around 1900 and many uprooted intellectuals in the following half-century, this offered a beguiling image of their spiritual origins.

Criticism has shown that with regard to 'individualism' Burckhardt exaggerated. Even in the years around 1500 most Italian city-dwellers still regarded themselves as members of corporations of various kinds. Peter Burke quotes Burckhardt in later life as admitting in private that he no longer believed what he had written about the matter. "But I don't say so", he added, "it gives people so much pleasure." Certainly what we call 'individualism' was growing in Italy as in Western Europe generally, but around 1500 it was more notably evident in the transoceanic activities of Spaniards and Portuguese, and of Italian mariners in foreign service such as Columbus, Vespucci and the Cabots.[4] And it was in Germany in 1520 that a clarion call was issued to all Christians to think and act, individually, as responsible, priestly members of the Church.

For people to be 'secular' in mind or action, they must first be conscious of a clear distinction between the sacred and the secular. Apart from the long-standing legal distinctions between clergy and laity, that was as little the case throughout most of the 'Renaissance' period as it was in ancient Rome or Greece. But that said, it is true that, in Italian art and thought between 1400 and the 1520s, what we would call realism and the secular increased their presence.[5] This, taken

[4] The omission of these world-discovering Italian navigators from the conventional account of 'the Italian Renaissance'—from a place alongside Michelangelo, Leonardo and Ariosto—is part of the tendentious misrepresentation of this Italian high creative period as a lofty phenomenon of spirit, art and learning, quite separate from the innovatory practical activity of contemporary Europe.

[5] René Huyghe in *Art And The Spirit Of Man* attributes "the discovery of matter" to the Flemish, rather than the Italian painters, whose realism he finds "intellectual". In Italy, in the 1520s, the uncontested ascendancy of realism ended. Inspired, initially, by German Late Gothic art, non-realist, anti-classical styles emerged. Art historians who identify 'the Italian Renaissance' with classical naturalism, see it as ending here.

together with other phenomena of the Italian high creative period after 1450, points to what is in fact its primary novelty and its principal epoch-making feature.

Add to those 'thisworldly' tendencies in the arts the increased interest in 'human' studies as distinct from 'divine' ones; the spur towards high secular achievement provided by the Graeco-Roman revival; the new emphasis on the dignity and potential of man; the appearance of analytical writing of Italian history; the splendid and scandalous worldliness of the popes and the papal court; the emergence of Christian activism among secular clergy and among laymen; the first European theorising of 'the State' as a natural entity and some pioneering instances of state absolutism; the ruthless expansionist war and politics of such as the Viscontis, the Sforzas and Cesare Borgia; and the titanic self-confidence, capacity and ambition of Michelangelo, Alberti and Leonardo. All these point to a substantial refocusing of minds and wills in a thisworldly direction. It is a 'secular turn', a lunge of the restrained secular commitment of the Middle Age into aggressive confidence and vigour. Burke cites, as one of the few possible means of measuring this development, a study that quantifies Italian paintings with 'secular subjects' as roughly five per cent in the 1420s and twenty per cent in the 1520s. Add the fact that, along with this increase in 'secular subjects', there was also, both in Italian and in Flemish religious paintings, an increased depiction and celebration of objects and surroundings redolent of material well-being. In this general context it is interesting to note that the Italian universities had never been notable—as were Oxford and Paris—for theological studies. Their forte lay in law and medicine. No country was more predisposed than Italy to take the lead in Europe's secular lunge.

I find Davies convincing when, in his treatment of the Renaissance, he locates its main distinguishing feature in the sphere of mind and feeling and describes it in the following terms:

> "The principal product of the new thinking lay in a growing conviction that humanity was capable of mastering the world in which it lived. The great Renaissance figures were filled with self-confidence. They felt that God-given ingenuity could, and should, be used to unravel the secrets of God's universe; and that, by extension, man's fate on earth could be controlled and improved. Here was the decisive break with the mentality of the Middle Ages, whose religiosity and mysticism were reinforced by exactly the opposite conviction—that men and women were the helpless pawns of Providence, overwhelmed by the incomprehensible workings of their environment and of their own nature."

Surprisingly, coming from the usually measured Davies, that last sentence caricatures the contrast between the emerging mentality and the one that had prevailed for centuries. In the Christian Middle Age, as in contemporary Islam, "mysticism" was one thing, "religiosity" quite another. "Helpless pawns of Providence, overwhelmed" by their circumstances was not how the kingdom-building monarchs and empire-building emperors, the commercial imperialists of

the Hansa, bankers of Florence and Antwerp, roistering Parisian students, Venetian doges and courtesans, crusading Norman barons or Teutonic Knights had seen themselves. It is true, however, that in the first age of Europe which was now ending, the human and material world and man's ability to master it had been valued less than the supernatural reality centred on Christ, and man's ability to participate in it. With this difference of valuation went the belief that only the spiritual power conferred by Christ was absolutely good and desirable, inasmuch as it enabled people to live in God's grace and ultimately to dwell forever in heaven. In comparison with that power, which enabled people to 'overcome the world', the intellectual and ultimately physical power that enabled people actively to master the world was of little account. What had now emerged among the Italian elite—and among some other European elites, but in an exemplary manner in Italy—was an increased valuation of man and the world and a corresponding belief that not only was he capable of mastering it, but that such mastery was of great account. It represented a value almost equal to the absolute value of being able to live eternally in heaven. From this it followed that it was incumbent on people to develop and use to the maximum, within the guidelines of Christian truth and morality, the potential for the control and remaking of their circumstances that lay within them. In the context of this emerging avid will to collective and personal secular power for its own sake, the antiquarian obsession with world-conquering Rome, and with the most gifted personalities of the classical civilisations, makes sense.

An erroneous cliché long opposed a 'Christian' Renaissance in Northern Europe to a 'pagan' one in Italy. Mainly this sprang from lighthearted Italian play-acting with ancient pagan symbolism and allusion—it occurred even in papal circles—being taken too seriously by North European sobersides. But it is also a fact that in the secular turn that manifested itself in Italy around 1500 there was a small, unrepresentative 'left wing', so to speak, which was not committed to pursuing the secular enterprise within the guidelines of Christian truth and morality. Some surviving writings and other evidence show this. The unformulated belief of this minority of the elite seems to have been that the intellectual and ultimately physical mastery of the world were goods of *absolute* value, so that securing them justified breaching, in effect, the Christian limits on thought and behaviour.

To cite three examples. Pico della Mirandola elaborated an eclectic philosophy of the sovereignty of man as self-maker, in which Christianity was merely one of many contributory elements. In *The Prince* Machiavelli wrote that the art of effective politics was best learned from the (non-Christian) ancients. Accordingly, his counsels for ambitious rulers left Christian morality to one side. Norman Davies describes Leonardo Da Vinci accurately as "a left-handed, homosexual engineer, best known for his sideline in painting". Leonardo's principal professional work was as a designer and inspector of fortifications. His sketches

for a submarine and a helicopter are often mentioned. Less advertised is the fact that, in the portfolios which he presented when seeking employment from princes, weapons which would kill large numbers of enemies by mechanical means figured prominently. However, such instances illustrate no more than an *effectively* non-Christian aspect of the secular impulsion. Even Machiavelli received the Last Sacraments before his death.

The argument so far can be summed up as follows. It is possible to deal adequately with this Italian period along the following lines:

> In the mid-fifteenth century, stimulated by remarkable cultural developments in Florence, Italy entered a high creative period which lasted until well into the seventeenth century. Among the features which characterised the early part of this period were a Graeco-Roman revival animated by a myth of 'rebirth by return to origins'—the period has often been naively called 'the Italian Renaissance'—and a passionate secular turn directed towards physical mastery of the world by human effort. In the sixteenth century this flourishing Italian culture, especially its Graeco-Roman revivalism, its architecture and painting, vernacular literature and worldly spirit, influenced European culture generally. It did this partly by offering innovations which were welcomed or reacted against, but mainly by strengthening already existing trends.

The way would then be open to elaborate on that last sentence, allowing each of the other national cultures its true and different story—as distinct from trying to force them all into a mould called 'the Renaissance' just because that mythical mould exists. Davies hints at this truer kind of narrative by using the plural 'renaissances' in the title of his relevant chapter. But there still remains the shadow of that Procrustean mould. In England, but later, under Elizabeth I and particularly after the defeat of the Spanish armada, there was indeed a renaissance. But it was not part of any general European renaissance; and much of what has been called 'Renaissance' in sixteenth-century England and elsewhere is simply 'Italianate' and more accurately described as such. *En passant* the point is worth making that if 'Renaissance' were to be used only adjectivally, to denote a period style in the arts—used, that is, with as little literal meaning as has 'Gothic' in the arts context—it could be acceptable. The fact that it is used as a noun prefixed by the definite article, and with pretensions to be taken literally, is the nub of the problem we are dealing with.

Ideally, as I have suggested above, the account of Italy in 1450-1550 would move in the context of simultaneous innovative movement on both sides of the Alps. Apart from the arguments I have already made for this, there is this clinching one. The typically 'Italian Renaissance' activity of searching for and finding forgotten Latin manuscripts was carried out to a large extent in the monastic libraries of Switzerland and of western and southern Germany by Italian and German scholars in colleaguely cooperation.

The term 'Middle Age' is bad enough, but the invention of the adjective 'medieval' in the early nineteenth century has proved particularly unfortunate for history-writing. Liberal and Protestant historiography propagated a picture of

'medieval life' which, insofar as it derived from facts rather than ideology, was more or less valid only for a part of Western Europe in the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. Along with popes, emperors and kings, it referred mainly to the condition of England, France and—according to who was writing—less or more of Germany, in that period. A problem then arose from the fact that Italy during the same period diverged in remarkably 'modern' ways from the stereotype thus established. The problem was compounded by the fact that—in line with the Graeco-Roman revivalists and Liberal-Protestant ideology—'the Italian Renaissance', beginning around 1450, had to be the breakout from medievalism, the launch-pad of modernity! What to do?

A solution was found. 'The Renaissance' had acquired, apart from 'modern', a number of stereotypical tags: 'free thinking' or critical spirit, realism in painting, return to nature, individualism, enthusiasm for the ancient classics. Accordingly, wherever these characteristics could be recognised in medieval Italians—even, occasionally, in medieval Europe—the individuals in question were depicted and valued as 'forerunners of the Renaissance', and in a sense therefore as the beginnings of it. An academic industry developed around 'the origins of the Renaissance' and has persisted to this day. Competing versions have discovered those 'origins' in twelfth-century Abelard and Frederick II of Sicily, in thirteenth-century Roger Bacon, in various heretics, in St Francis and Joachim of Flora, and only somewhat less wildly in Dante, Giotto, Boccaccio and Petrarch; not in the place and at the time when the movement in question did originate, namely, in Florence, in the early fifteenth century. This practice, more or less engaged in, has had two bad results for clarity and truth. The 'Italian Renaissance', and 'the Renaissance' as shorthand for it, have become capricious, woolly designations with shifting chronological meaning. And because notable figures of the 'medieval' world have been depicted as not fully or really part of it—as simultaneously or more truly 'Renaissance' persons—medieval Europe as well as medieval Italy have not been narrated as they really were.

However, the fundamental fault lies in presenting a cultural movement in Italy, together with its supposed offspring throughout Europe, as the event marking the start of Europe's second (or modern) age. In fact the move into a new age is the central event, and it is signalled by a number of disparate symptomatic occurrences in several countries. Lord Acton in his Inaugural Lecture in 1895, and a few other nineteenth-century historians, used this presentation. To remodel the standard history of Europe on these lines would be a big step towards making it truthful. Taking this perspective, and entitling a chapter accordingly, one would tell about the high creative periods in Flanders, Portugal, Italy and Germany—all culminations of the old culture which become launchpads of the new—and the long-distance voyages from Portugal and Spain which opened large parts of the earth to European conquest, trade and settlement. The account of the Italian high creative period would show it playing a leading cultural role in this context. The narrative of transition from the first age to the second would

extend to the early 1520s, thereby including Luther's symptomatic and influential revolt.

This presentation implies nothing about the centuries before 1450 except that they were not characterised by the new formative factors. So one is left free to narrate those centuries as they were, in all their variety, cultural and otherwise, from Scandinavia to Sicily. Gone is the pressure to uphold a 'medieval' stereotype —or to end the story, especially in Italy, with a fictional Rebirth whose length and nature are disputed. The new narrative would treat as commonplace that a given cultural phenomenon can occur in one period untypically and marginally, and in a subsequent period constitute a substantial movement. (The painter, Turner is frequently cited as a 'forerunner' of Impressionism, but without any accompanying suggestion that Impressionism began with him.) Thus marginal phenomena of the 1200s and early 1300s in Italy would not be treated as advance pointers towards a fashionable movement of the 1400s, let alone described, unhistorically, as 'origins' of that movement. And they would therefore not be treated, unless they merited it intrinsically, as the principal matters of cultural interest in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries![6] Instead, everything that occurred in the first European age would be valued and narrated primarily because it occurred then, and contributed to making that time what it manifoldly was. And everything that happened in the second age would be treated as contributing to the character of the age, regardless of whether it conformed to an a priori 'modern' stereotype. The notion of 'modern'—its illiterate use to describe five centuries done with—would return to its original, yes, 'medieval' sense of 'new, modish, of now'.

I think it should be clear at this stage that revision of how the story is told—which is what we are concerned with—does not mean altering the established factual accounts of what happened, let alone lessening the greatness of what was great. First, it means using periodisation, designation, and general shaping of narrative, in such a way as to end the distorting impact of polemical and advertising slogans, left behind by contending factions or invented later, on the story of what actually happened. Then, as this reworking replaces the rigidity of stereotype with narrative responding flexibly to the facts, revision takes an additional form. It corrects and enriches the story by drawing on something special we now possess: an overall perspective of European history, and a view of its outcome, such as the nineteenth century did not have. This re-seeing from our present standpoint is re-vision in the most literal sense. It is not a matter of rewriting the story in a manner that would ignore Ranke's dictum. It is a matter of bringing to the narration of each century or half-century, 'existing in its own self', an

[6] It is worth quoting here a dictum of Ranke's: "Every epoch is immediate to God, and its value in no way depends on what it produced, but in its existence itself, in its own self." One can interpolate after 'produced', for it is certainly in the spirit of what Ranke said: 'nor on what succeeded it historically'.

understanding and an analytical tool which its mere facts of themselves would not yield to us.

The present condition of the western world offers abundant evidence that the will to physical mastery of the world that emerged around the year 1500 in Western Europe has triumphed beyond the dreams of all but a very few. 'A very few', because it is clear that its present great success has been achieved by the 'effectively non-Christian' component of the original impulsion, or rather by that component massively expanded. On the one hand, unrestricted by the Christian worldview and moral rules, and greatly facilitated by manifold technology, hundreds of millions of individuals from Los Angeles to Helsinki and Palermo are empowered to do a vast number of things which no one living 500 years ago could do; or—in some instances—do with a good conscience and social consent. On the other hand, immense new collective powers make possible these individual empowerments, while at the same time exercising comprehensive mastery over the individuals—singly, intimately and in the mass—and using them to maintain and augment their own power. Obviously, the omnicompetent, omniscient national states, and the shared quasi-state which is the European Union, function thus. But so, too, do the great collectives we call 'science', 'technology', 'high finance', 'multinationals' and 'the mass media'. And so does that preaching collective for which there is no ready name, but which we might call 'the Correctorate'. I refer to the amorphous, state-endorsed body of ethical preachers, successors of the Christian clergy, who enable individuals and institutions to know what is correct thought, feeling and behaviour, and to recognise their opposites.

We experience these unprecedented powers, individual and collective, meeting and mingling within our system. Looking outwards, we perceive the collective power of the West, embodied principally by the USA, dominating much of the globe, mentally and materially. On the one hand, by means of American films, television, advertising and computer technology, and the spread of the English language which these and American prestige promote, the West has a preponderant influence on the world's mind. On the other, the USA alone, unaided by its European appendage, can send men to the moon or to explore outer space, make war anywhere on the globe, and in an hour, if its government so decides, kill a hundred million enemies.[7]

True, in the course of the West's increasing domination of the planet during the past five centuries, the powers which it has generated have, so to speak, spilled over to many non-western individuals and collectives. But for the historian of Europe, what matters is the western phenomenon itself: the fact that this accumulation of secular power, unequalled in world history, has been won by the group of peoples who are his theme—either in their homelands or in their North

[7] A conservative estimate. As far back as 20 August 1963, President John Kennedy said in a press conference: "What we now have...will kill three hundred million people in one hour" (*New York Times*, 21 August 1963).

American area of settlement. In particular, contemplation of this fact in all its dimensions yields practical assistance to the historian who wants to write a true and clear history of Europe.

First, it shows him that the story of the increasing freedom of individuals in the second European age is only half the story. That progress has been depicted as a progressive increase of individual freedom over against 'power', meaning collective power of various kinds, but particularly that of the Catholic Church and the respective States. In fact, however, simultaneously, there was an increase in the power and freedom both of states and of other new collective powers which the rulers privileged because they served to advance their own power. So the story must be corrected to show an all-round increase in the power or freedom of western *man*, *individually* and *collectively*. (Whether it is called 'power' or 'freedom' is irrelevant, but since I have been using the terms 'power' and 'mastery' I will continue to do so.)

Second, the West's unprecedented acquisition of physical mastery makes the historian wonder why this has happened where it has. And wondering, he realises that an explanation, even a tentative one, is a necessary part of the story. In 1400 the knowledge and technology of West Europeans were roughly equal to those of the Arabs and Chinese. Spelt out, then, the matter to explain is the achievement by Europeans, in six hundred years, of collective and individual physical power such as—leave aside the Romans—was not even nearly achieved by the Egyptians or the Chinese in their respective three millennia. It is unlikely that the immediate reason, and therefore the fundamental matter to explain, is the vastly greater intelligence of Europeans. Those other peoples were too obviously highly intelligent and it is improbable that there could be a difference of such magnitude in human brains. Nor can the richness of our inheritance from the Romans and Greeks be the reason. The Byzantines and the Arabs enjoyed the same inheritance. Quite plainly, the immediate reason for the unparalleled success of the Europeans is their immeasurably more passionate will or desire—which is more accurate?—to achieve physical mastery, collective and individual. This, then, is the matter ultimately calling for explanation.

In pursuit of it, the historian is prompted to look again, closely, at the first age of Europe; those centuries before the will to material omnipotence began to be the predominant driving force. What, he will ask himself, happened in that age in the minds, souls and institutional arrangements of Europeans which aroused in them a will to dominate the world that was more passionate, insatiable and successful than any previous will to material power in human history?

Finally, contemplation of the West's present mastery of the world makes clear to the revising historian that in order to write a true and clear history of Europe it is not necessary to abandon the theme of continual progress since 1500, but merely to modify it. So, provided that it is not used to distort the completeness in itself of each historical moment, a general underlying pattern, a guiding *leitmotif*, lies ready to hand and is part of the story.

In the old idea of European progress, the mythical, unhistorical part was the transformation of westerners into a mentally and morally superior species. Enter Modern Man, prototype of the 'cool, clean hero'! We will look at him more closely when we come to 'the Enlightenment'. Suffice now to say two things. That self-image of Europeans as a race of autonomous, righteous, freethinking and humane individuals—a new humanity—was useful in its time: it energised, bolstered morale, spurred Europeans to the effort and excellence that made Europe mistress of the world. However, being a mythical and actually false conception, it is useless for the purpose of constructing a true, clear history of Europe which makes sense to Europeans in the century after the twentieth. But the truth that underlay the legend is a different matter; the truth, namely, that during those same centuries, Europeans, having become imbued with a passionate will for physical mastery, progressively won the new views of reality that enabled the will to become progressively effective. That conception of European 'modernity' and 'progress' holds good. And it suffices for a telling of the European story as forceful as, say, Livy's history of ancient Rome: from small and weak beginnings to mastery of the physical world for all concerned, governments and citizens.

Reorganising the history of our recent centuries around this motif means, for a start, bringing greater coherence into the presentation of the standard facts. Historians have already used the theme in question amply but disconnectedly. They have shown desire for secular power animating the pursuits of personal and national freedom, of reliable knowledge of reality, of wealth-producing and world-subduing technology and of far-extending empire. They have narrated how states progressively increased their control of citizens, how citizens acquired more rights and abilities, and how the Press (the 'mass media') emerged, acquired freedom and rose to great collective power. In the first place, then, it will be a matter of bringing explicit coherence into these various depictions of the active and successful will to power, and of discovering further instances of it and integrating them. But the ground-breaking part of the new history will be to weave into that coherence around the progressive mastery of the world by Europeans, aspects of the process which have hitherto been neglected.

Take, for example, the interplay between the individual agents and the principal new collective agents, the increasingly self-conscious states. In the nature of things, there was a bond of common interest, and an intimate collaboration, between persons seeking power as individuals and these power-seeking states. On the one hand were persons struggling for individual power through detachment from old collectives—corporate, familial, political or religious—which they found restrictive. On the other were the new state-collectives seeking mastery of people by, among other means, their transformation into detached individuals. Both had a common interest in at least weakening, and at most dissolving any inherited or traditional power or authority that lay between them. (It was a shared interest in achieving, in secular terms, an unmediated relationship such as many Christians,

and not only those who became Protestants, wanted with regard to God.) Nothing more natural, then, than that would-be detached individuals and the new states should reach out, collaboratively, to each other: the states by encouraging individualisation and by empowering, in strict order of usefulness, successive categories of individuals; the latter by adhering dependently to the states and thus empowering them. And again, nothing more natural than that the rulers should privilege, as allies, other collectives that shared their interest in the individualisation of people and, later in the massification and homogenisation which the individualisation made possible. (I return to this matter in Part Two.)

Given that these processes, in successive waves and forms, have been at the centre of European history from 1500 to the present, an account of them, as occasion arises in the narrative, would illuminate and enrich it. But that is only one example of how an approach that has benefited from our present-day perspective can provide us with a history much better understood in depth than was possible in the nineteenth century.

Dismantling the myth of the Italian Renaissance, and acquiring an approximate view of the true course of Italian culture in those years, has taken a greater length of words than I expected at the outset. The obvious reason is that the myth of the Renaissance, entangled as it is with the myths of the Middle Age and Modernity, is the foundation on which the *ideological* History of Europe was consolidated in the nineteenth century. It was on that basis, with the Renaissance poised between a debased Middle Age and an exalted Modern Age, that the sequence 'Reformation, Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment, Rights of Man, (liberating) Industrial Revolution, (civilising) World Empire' acquired its mythical significance as the European Path of Comprehensive Liberation and Progress—not merely of Europe, but through Europe of Man. So in dismantling 'the Italian Renaissance' one encounters the entire matter of European history and is obliged to deal with it to some degree.

In particular, one encounters that mythical notion of Europeans constantly advancing in mental and moral quality beyond those who preceded them. True, this boosted morale and thus encouraged achievement; but it also produced in its believers an ugly kind of behaviour. So recurrent as to typify the mental set of Europe's second age, it was a behaviour which will not redound to our credit when others, in a future time, come to write our history. Robert Musil in *The Man Without Qualities* satirised it in a jokey manner: 'The present looks proudly down on the past, which, if it had come later, would have looked proudly down on the present'. But it is not really much of a joke to see snobbish elites in one generation after another saying in effect: 'Our ancestors, who were poorer and less powerful than we are, were stupid and vicious to boot.' It is a sort of generational racism, in which—to cite the most glaring instance—'medieval Europe' comes to figure as the first 'Dark Continent' of the European imagination.

3
'The Reformation' and 'The Enlightenment'

> "Others, including the present author, are trying to situate what happened in fourteenth-century Florence, fifteenth-century Italy and sixteenth-century Europe in a sequence of connected changes between 1000 (or thereabouts) and 1800."
>
> Peter Burke

Norman Davies attempts a double correction by entitling his chapter covering c.1450 to 1670 'Renaissances and Reformations'. The point he is making with the plural 'Reformations' is one that has often been made, but still 'the Reformation', meaning 'the Protestant Reformation', continues to figure in new books and in general consciousness. There was also, in the same century, a general Catholic reform—carried out by the Council of Trent after having long been called for. Luther, after all, began his campaign as one Catholic among others urging a *reformation* of the Roman Church by a General Council. But Davies could have given his plural a wider connotation.

In the history of some European nations there was an event which can rightly be called 'the Protestant Reformation'; but in the general history of Europe no such event occurred. The historian who suggests that it did must then explain that he is speaking figuratively, not factually, because Protestantism did not enter history as a single reforming event but as several separate ones in different countries. It emerged, that is to say, as did socialism in the nineteenth century. And rightly, no history book speaks of a European event called 'The Launch of Socialism'. Between 1520 and 1550, Luther, Calvin, and some Englishmen led by Cranmer who supported King Henry VIII's break with Rome, independently carried out local reformations of the Christian religion. Because of a few shared characterististics—mainly the break with Rome in the name of true Christianity—these three reformations and their faithful came to be called, collectively, 'Protestant'. The word had originated as a nickname for Lutherans.

The narrative loses nothing except a trumpet blast by telling it from the start as the story of 'the Protestant reformations'. It gains by making clear that, from the start as afterwards, Protestantism was plural in form, as opposed to Roman Catholicism which remained singular.

The 'Counter-Reformation' was invented in Germany in the 1830s. Davies attributes the creation of the term to Protestant historians who 'assumed' that the Catholic reform 'was born to oppose the Protestant Reformation'. Perhaps it is somewhat less derogatory to those Protestant historians to say that, rather than 'assuming' that, they wished to suggest it; and it is also more likely. At all events, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* maintains intact the meaning they intended: "the reform of the Church of Rome in the 16th and 17th centuries which took place in response to the Protestant Reformation". That, all sides would now agree, makes 'Counter-Reformation' a misrepresentation. Given the prior existence of the

Protestant revolts, the Catholic reform was, indeed, inevitably, a response to them; but primarily it was the end-product of a reform movement that had begun long before them. What has, however, rendered 'Counter-Reformation' useless beyond repair is the expansion of its meaning to include, and even principally to denote, a quite different thing: the subsequent Catholic campaign to win back people lost to Protestantism! The dictionary has not caught up with this; regardless of the intention of its creators, the word has run amok.

The true story of western Christianity in the sixteenth century is well summed up by the sub-title to Chapter 9 of *A Brief History Of The Western World* by Thomas H. Greer and Gavin Lewis (1992). It reads: 'Division and Reform in the Church'. Even 'Division in the Church' suffices to designate the important European event in question. In the revised history I am imagining, Luther's revolt up to the break with Rome in 1520-21 has been narrated in the context of the German high creative period around 1500 and as one of the indicators of the new age. 'Division in the Church' takes up from that, narrating the subsequent story of Lutheranism, the other Protestant reformations, and the Catholic reform and "countermeasures" (to borrow another term from Greer and Lewis).

I was not suggesting above that serious historians never 'assume' without investigating, or that, if they do, it is an unpardonable fault. When the seeming evidence is strong and the assumed fact attractive, they occasionally do assume, and though culpable, can be forgiven for it. For example, take the notion that prior to the Protestant reformations the Bible had not been translated into vernacular languages. The only way one can imagine that getting into the standard history, as it did for a time, is by 'assumption'. None of the reformers had actually claimed as much; but the appearances were highly suggestive. The reformers had given Scripture a central importance such as the Catholic Church had never done. They had either made translations themselves or had others make them. They used the vernacular Bible in divine service and enjoined daily reading of it on their followers. Decisively perhaps, the idea of a Promethean Luther liberating the Sacred Word from the Latin prison of the Romish priests and giving it to the Christian people in their own language was beguiling. And one 'knew' what the medieval Church was like without having to investigate it!

Davies gives an excellent short account of the heliocentric drama from Copernicus through Brahe and Kepler to Galileo. The only relevant detail he omits is the Lutheran opposition to Copernicus's theory which, among other things, prevented *De Revolutionibus* being printed in Wittenberg. As it happened, the man who tried to get it printed there, the mathematician Von Lauchen, was himself a Lutheran. After his failure in Wittenberg he handed the task over to a dissident Lutheran theologian, Andreas Osiander, who got the book published in Nuremberg. But the latter, with the intention of protecting Copernicus from Lutheran disapproval, disobliged him by substituting for his preface one of his own which described the new account of cosmic reality as a mere hypothesis.

When, I wonder, will Galileo finally cease to be represented as the iconic martyr of Science at the hands of the obscurantist Catholic Church? The irony of the Catholic harassment of Galileo, out of which such mileage was got in rationalist and Victorian times, was that he was merely supporting Copernicus's century-old theory with telescopic observations: the same theory that during Copernicus' lifetime had encountered benign interest in papal Rome and been free of Catholic censure since then. Galileo was provocative about what he called "biblical astronomy" and he argued his case in a book in Italian, not scholarly Latin. But the decisive reason why the Inquisition arraigned him was that 'circumstances' had changed since Copernicus's time. A present-day Galileo would be a psychologist publishing fresh evidence in support of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's racial theories, which elicited benign interest in high circles less than a century ago.[8] Because today, as then, 'circumstances' have changed, the Inquisition's current successor—the Correctorate speaking from its media pulpits—would make short work of him. 'Obscurantism' is a relative thing.

I have referred appreciatively to Davies' revisionist chapter-headings 'The Middle Age' and 'Renaissances and Reformations'. But above these, respectively, he has placed the Latin words MEDIUM and RENATIO (rebirth) in Roman capitals. Such bilingual chapter-titles are a feature of the entire book: the following chapter is headed

LUMEN

Enlightenment and Absolutism c.1650-1789

There is a disappointing contradiction between the spirit of sensible revision reflected in some of the English tsitles and these Latin super-titles which, as it were, set the nineteenth-century historical evangel in stone.

'The Enlightenment' is a term inspired by but misrepresenting the German *die Aufklärung*.[9] It entered English only in 1865. To persist in using it as a designation of the intellectual history of 1650-1789 is bad enough without hammering it home with LUMEN—inverted commas nowhere in sight! Its narrative uselessness is illustrated by Davies' opening paragraph:

> "There is an air of naivety about the so-called 'Age of Reason' In retrospect it seems extraordinary that so many of Europe's leading intellects should have given such weight to one human faculty—Reason—at the expense of all the others. Naivety of such proportions, one might conclude, was heading for a fall; and a fall, in the shape of the terrible revolutionary years, is what the Age of Reason eventually encountered."

[8] For example, in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 December 1910, with regard to Chamberlain's principal work *The Foundations Of The Nineteenth Century*: "unquestionably one of the rare books that really matter".

[9] *Aufklärung* has none of the mystical connotation of 'enlightenment' (the German for that is *Erleuchtung*). It means 'clarification or elucidation, an act of informing or educating'; in this historical context, 'by the use of reason'. In English, 'the Enlightening', while losing out on sensational effect, would have been closer to the sense.

'The Enlightenment', which we were supposed to be hearing about, has disappeared! Down the page, a mention of "rationalism" reaffirms the 'reason' theme. "Enlightenment" follows it as an apparent synonym, but by now it is functioning as a superfluous and distracting adjunct to the story, not the main theme that the chapter-title announces.

The reason for this immediate relegation is that 'Age of Reason' and 'rationalism' relate directly to and fairly describe something that did really occur in Western Europe in 1650-1789. So they are terms that can be used narratively. 'The Age of Reason' is not a metaphor, but indicates intelligibly that 'Reason' (even when standing alone in narratives of the period, it is often capitalised) was a central theme of the times. In the context of the story, whether about Newton, the *Encyclopédie*, geometrical gardens, the guillotine or Frederick the Great, 'rationalism' and 'Age of Reason' make sense. They do not indicate everything that occurred, even typically, in the mind, culture and governmental ethos of the eighteenth century. But they indicate a vein of reality to which we can intelligibly relate both the accompanying sub-themes—progress, individualism, empiricism, humaneness and so on—and the opposing or divergent attitudes and thinking. In short, 'rationalism' and 'Age of Reason' serve well and, until something better is invented, are the best we have.

'The Enlightenment', however, is literally like Mao Tse-tung's 'The Great Leap Forward'; a term that should be used seriously only with quotation marks. A colourful metaphor, an advertising slogan like calling a new soap 'a revolution', it is not the designation of an event or process to whose occurrence the historian can attest. Who, which eighteenth-century persons or nations, experienced what pious Buddhists hope for? Was it temporary or lifelong? Hereditary? Before that, even after 'Renaissance' and 'Reformation', were Europeans unenlightened?

In the preface to a Pelican book *The Enlightenment* by the historian Norman Hampson, the honest author states:

> "The attitudes which one chooses to regard as typical of the Enlightenment constitute a free, subjective choice... It may be argued with equal plausibility that Rousseau was either one of the greatest writers of the Enlightenment or its most eloquent and effective opponent... Within limits, the Enlightenment was what one thinks it was."

I notice that Roy Porter prefaces his recent book on 'the Enlightenment in Britain' with that last sentence, among other quotations, and does not contradict it. Both these works show that an interesting book can be written about something that means anything the author chooses! But writing a true, clear history of the eighteenth century is a different matter. 'The Enlightenment' is particularly without concrete reference in English where, differently from its German counterpart, it lacks a weathered meaning rooted in the language usage of the 1700s.

Often, in an attempt to fill the windy metaphor with some autonomous content, a philosopical metaphor of Kant's is misquoted: the one about 'the exit of man from a state of minority'. Passing from book to book and from language to

language uncorrected—because as Burckhardt might say, 'people like it so much'—Kant's words are presented as his "famous definition of the Enlightenment". In fact, writing in 1784, the philosopher had never heard of a period of European history called *die Aufklärung*, let alone 'the Enlightenment'.

In Prussia, for some time previously, the notion of *Aufklärung* had been loosely associated with the philosophy of reason, as presented in universities, learned journals and the popular magazines called 'moral weeklies'. People had been debating about what precisely the word, taken from ordinary speech, meant in this new context. When a contributor to a Berlin monthly raised the direct question *'Was ist Aufklärung?'*, first Moses Mendelssohn, then Kant responded. In the course of his answer Kant makes clear that he is writing mainly, if not exclusively, in the context of Lutheran religious thought in the Prussia of Frederick the Great. Whereas, he points out, there is no limitation to the free expression of thought in the domains of the arts and sciences, this is not yet the case in religious matters. From the context we assume he is referring to restrictions by the Church authorities or the timidity of the ordinary clergy or both.

Kant begins: *"Aufklärung* [for the sake of argument, call it 'enlightenment'] is the exit of the human being from a state of minority brought about by his own fault". He elaborates:

> "Minority is the incapacity to use one's mind without direction by another. It is a minority brought about by one's own fault when its cause lies not in a lack of mind but of the resolution and courage to use it without direction by another. *Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your own intellect—this is the motto of enlightenment."

In other words, enlightenment means exit from what Kant in the same short essay calls 'tutelage', and attainment—by the use of one's reason—of the free, critical thinking proper to an adult.

On the face of it, this must appear to be a rather odd definition of the English word in question. But leave that aside, it's the word's fault, not Kant's! When his statement is quoted as an authoritative definition of *The Enlightenment*, he is made to say something that he by no means said: namely, that in the rationalist movement that had been proceeding in Europe for more than eighty years, 'man' had been exiting from minority into intellectual adulthood; achieving enlightenment, becoming enlightened. In fact, however, Kant was not even saying that Europeans, let alone mankind, had been doing this. He was describing what happens in a man, metaphorically speaking, when by the use of his rational intellect he achieves 'enlightenment'. And later in his essay he makes very clear that he was saying no more than this. He writes: "If the question is asked, 'Do we live in an enlightened age?', the answer must be, 'No, but rather in an age of enlightenment.'"

Here, rather than in Kant's much-misused definition of *Aufklärung*, is a statement by him which might legitimately be taken as referring to the Age of Reason. But it is hardly what a historian in search of a telling quote would want,

and this becomes all the more evident as Kant elaborates. A state of affairs, he writes, in which people would be actually able to use their minds freely about religious matters is still a long way off. But the "field has been opened for them" by Frederick the Great, who has made clear that "he regards it as his *duty* to prescribe nothing for his subjects in religious matters". In this respect, "this age is the age of enlightenment or Frederick's century".

Here, as it happens, we see Kant giving 'enlightenment' a rather different meaning: something like 'blanket encouragement to free thought by an enlightened ruler'. And in fact, in common usage, as the debate about its meaning might suggest, *Aufklärung* had quite a number of meanings. Among these were 'education of the public in rational thinking and understanding' and 'the mental formation acquired by anyone who reads and heeds the moral weeklies'.

I have highlighted a common misuse of Kant as a historian of eighteenth-century rationalism. I have done this partly in an attempt to discourage the misuse, but also because the misquotation in question, like the term 'The Enlightenment', is indicative of an unhistorical tendentiousness of wider scope. What is at work in both cases is a desire to represent as historical fact what is actually a historical myth created by the protagonists in the events in question and their ideological heirs.

We have visited it already, but it is necessary to visit it again, with the Age of Reason particularly in mind. According to this historical myth, the second European age was characterised by a progressive liberation of 'the European mind'—and thereby of Europeans—from subjection to tradition and tutelage. The liberation from those enslaving agents progressed from the Renaissance through Luther's reformation and its imitators to the Age of Reason, which absorbed the philosophical lessons of the Scientific Revolution. Its beneficiaries, who thereby, supposedly, formed the essential, representative 'Europe', were by virtue of their progressive liberation rendered righteous possessors of true religious faith and true, rational knowledge. In the course of the eighteenth century, in Britain, France, Prussia and the new-born United States of America, and among readers of French everywhere, this personally justifying mental liberation—individual and collective at once—became definitive and complete. Thereafter, there was some trouble with dark Reaction and subversive Romanticism. But despite this and surmounting it, until World War I and even beyond it, this essential Europe, at home and in North America, remained confirmed in its free, superior being. The entire process, but in particular the Age of Reason (thus the myth) was an event not only in European, but in world history. The direct beneficiaries, by virtue of their representativeness, effected a collective liberation of mankind.

As with 'the Renaissance', so, too, with the Protestant reformations and the Age of Reason: the historian of Europe who wishes to tell what really happened notes how the participants in the events described them. He accepts these descriptions as valid, or refuses them as in one way or another unsuitable for describing or recounting what was actually the case.[10] Using language in its literal and present-day meanings, he deploys designations and narrative that he believes to be objectively true. And as historical facts among others, he mentions how the participants designated or understood the matters in question. As he would do with an episode of Roman history, so, too, with this episode of the European story. As a matter of course, in discerning what was really the case—in sifting the truth of the events from their representations then or subsequently—he draws on his knowledge of human nature, and of similar events and processes in the course of history; and he uses his common sense. It tells him, among other things, the following.

There is no such thing as a collective liberation of minds. When a collective change of view is so described, it is a misrepresentation. What has happened is a change from one view accepted by many to another. No view, whether personal or collective, is freer or more virtuous than another: a view is not a being with capacity for freedom or virtue. One view, as compared with another, can only be truer or less true; or more suitable or not for a certain purpose or course of action. (A friendly view of horses helps one to be a good rider.)

The only mental liberation that can happen is that which a person attains with his own mind. It requires a personal will directed to that end, courage, perseverance and a lot of time. Neither today nor at any time in the past have the great majority of people thought out, personally and independently, how it is with the visible world, let alone with invisible reality. This great majority includes, in all ages, most members of the intelligentsia. People in all ages, except for a very few, have found more pressing matters than the nature of things, with which to occupy their minds. They have taken their general view of reality—if not of particular things that specially interest them—from the doctrinal preachers whom their rulers endorse or from other preachers of their choice.

Of the very few who devote themselves to thinking things through, most are not concerned that others do likewise: their only hope—apart from that for interested, critical feedback—is that they or their disciples can persuade others to share the valuable insights they have won. Recurrently, a tiny minority of idealists is differently disposed. Finding the experience of independent thinking exhilarating, rewarding and profoundly ethical, they wish everyone would do the same. Before Kant, to cite the instance we have encountered, there was Martin Luther But the fact that such men express this wish does not mean that it is realised—does not alter human nature.

[10] Sensibly, English historians, in their treatment of eighteenth-century France, do not—in imitation of the French designation—call it 'The Century of Lights' (*le siècle des lumières*), but more soberly and intelligibly 'the age of the *philosophes*' or some such.

In 1520 a German newspaper might well have run the headline: LUTHER DECLARES RIGHT OF EVERY CHRISTIAN TO INTERPRET FAITH AND SCRIPTURES PERSONALLY. And that would have been an accurate report of a passage in Luther's pamphlet *To The Christian Rulers Of The German Nation Regarding The Improvement Of Christian Living*—the first of three pamphlets which he issued in that year. The Christian's right which he declared in that passage was one which, in a very public way, he had exercised himself. Rome did not contest the right in principle, but rather (among other things), the deduction which Luther made from it about the organisation of the Church. Here now, in print, he was at one and the same time exhorting the German rulers and others to make use of the right and justifying his own use of it theologically, with supporting quotations from St. Paul.

As it happens, in his choice of addressees for this pamphlet and in the course of it, we can see the future career of Lutheranism being forecast. Luther believed he had good reason to address himself to the rulers of Germany. He expected that at any moment he would be excommunicated, and he knew that this would be followed by an interdict from the Emperor that could lead to his arrest. He shaped his rhetoric with his audience in mind. The pamphlet is couched in virulently anti-Roman, even anti-Italian terms such as would appeal to German national feeling. The contention that each Christian could interpret Scripture personally occurs in the context of stoutly rejecting the Roman Pope's sole right to do so. In the previous pages, Luther has argued against the right of Pope, bishops and priests to be free of temporal jurisdiction, and asserted the lawful authority over them of Christian rulers. In the following pages, he delivers an extended diatribe on the financial exactions of the Roman Curia which caused great sums of money to flow Romewards from Germany every year. It might well, indeed, be surmised that Luther was taking example from the prudent steward in the Gospel story who, before his master's dismissal of him took effect, made sure that he would have friends among his master's debtors.

In the event, when the blows fell, at the end of 1520 and early in the following year, the Saxon Prince Elector, Frederick the Wise, took Luther under his protection. It was the first step in a process which led to the Lutheran churches becoming subject to the state in all the countries where Lutheranism was adopted. If, thirty years after Luther's bold assertion of the individual Christian's interpretative right, a newspaper had investigated the outcome in Germany and Scandinavia, it would have had to report DISCIPLINE IN LUTHERAN CHURCHES MUCH AS IN ROMAN CHURCH.

It was not simply a matter of the churches being subject to states, as was the case also with the Anglican Church. The Calvinist churches were not. Owing to that and to the lasting emphasis on the individual in Calvinist religion, the principle of personal interpretation of Scripture played an appreciable, if minor role there. And inasmuch as it did, it encouraged, over the years and centuries and

as might be expected, numerous splits. But the historical facts about the matter are superfluous to what our common sense tells us: that individual interpretation of faith and Scripture could not be the norm, and therefore was not the norm in the main Protestant churches, whether Lutheran, Presbyterian or Anglican. Luther's bold words were not—but then, who now would say they were?—'a milestone in the emancipation of the European mind'. It was not the case that in Protestant Europe, as distinct from Catholic Europe, men and women thought independently about religious matters—let alone secular matters—so as to arrive at personal judgements. On the contrary, Protestants generally, as Catholics generally, took the faith that formed the basis of their worldview from their respective churches and preachers. In that respect, there was no significant change and therefore nothing, except the idealism of Luther and a few others, for history to report as novelty.

'Freedom' was indeed a marked component of Protestant religion and ideology, but it was freedom of a different kind and had a profounder source. Like Catholics, Protestants believed that true Christian faith conferred by God had two important functions. On the one hand, it provided the basis for a true worldview. On the other, leaving aside whether or not faith sufficed without good works—even among Protestants there was dispute about this—it also enabled the believer to appropriate the righteousness and freedom which God's intervention in history had conferred on mankind as an available potential. Protestants, however, believed that their true faith did more than that. They believed that it secured for them an extra righteousness and freedom that derived from a second historical event. To share in a Protestant faith meant to be heirs to and enactors of a historical emancipation from the most powerful mental tutelage in Europe. The sacred Word, they believed, had in the sixteenth century liberated them from that to true faith and justified them as true Christians. *Ipso facto* it had freed them from the Tradition which formed part of the Roman faith, and which they regarded as superstitious and heretical because unscriptural.

On these grounds, Protestants believed something that Catholics could not. They believed that allowing their minds to be guided by their preachers—Protestant preachers were ministers of the Word—made them, in the context of the Europe of their time, *doubly* free and righteous persons. Confirmation in their second liberation and justification was completed by their faithfulness to their Protestant tradition—handed down to them from the founding father or fathers, and the heroic martyrs, of their church. (No more than they were freed from mental tutelage, were Protestants, generally, freed from religious tradition. They were freed only from such tutelage and tradition as they considered oppressive or false.)

Rationalism, using the word to mean the ideology adopted by most members of the European elites in the eighteenth century, had a formal resemblance to that

second-liberation aspect of Protestantism. Its central value was true knowledge or, more precisely, rational knowing. Such knowing was to be attained by reasoning about the impressions and ideas of the world which the senses presented to consciousness. Rationalism proposed this true knowledge conferred by Reason as the necessary basis for a true worldview, and as the means by which a human being was secularly justified and rendered free.[11] Reason, it taught, liberated the human mind from its two enslaving agents, both of them enemies of true knowledge. The first, human tradition, consisted of 'prejudice', meaning unexamined and therefore irrational belief. The second was tutelage by ancient or contemporary doctrinal authorities; this darkened or blocked understanding. Dogmatic theology and Aristotle's writings on science belonged equally to this category.

Mainstream rationalism, whatever about its subcurrents, did not propose true, rational knowledge as a replacement for true faith. Reason, as a secular liberator, was not capable of knowing the supernatural; it could rationalise religion only up to a point. But as the agent which rendered man free and righteous in his humanity, it was a necessary basis for faith for a free person.

It was, then, not only legitimate but imperative for everyone to allow their minds to be guided by the expounders of Reason and the purveyors of reasonable views, wherever they might encounter them. Their teachings and views could be found in certain new or recent philosophical books, in the new encyclopedias and the popular rationalist weeklies, or in lecture halls in some German universities. Rationalist views dealt in particular with themes of the rationalist 'package'—progress, science, religious tolerance, humaneness and so on. But they also dealt with everything under the sun, past, present and future. They were widely disseminated by writers and journalists; the century witnessed journalism's first heyday. By picking up in a fashionable *salon* the more *outré* of the new views, and by repeating them elsewhere, a man could win the reputation of a 'freethinker'.

Apart from the role of the popular press, rationalism was brought to ascendancy by the new prestige of science, some persuasive philosophical works, the support of the intellectual and commercial classes and of many states, the widespread diffusion of French—France being the heart of the movement—and the lasting political reforms of the French Revolution. The French monarchical state tried to suppress many of the rationalist publications, but when they did get published, often in Holland, the political class that would make the Revolution read them avidly.

Many Catholics adopted a rationalist outlook, but more Protestants than Catholics found that they could be enthusiastic rationalists. Protestants who adhered to the new views could see themselves as triply righteous and free. Men

[11] Interestingly, in French, as in the other Latin languages, 'to have reason' means 'to be right'.

of this sort constituted and built the United States of America.[12] In Europe, in the mid-nineteenth century, when to be a 'rationalist' was to be a 'Liberal' with a proud tradition of Modern Man to look back to uncritically, this same combination of religion and ideology greatly buttressed the self-confidence of the Protestants who lived it. As for those rationalists, particularly in France, who abjured Christianity, they were dependent on their rationalism alone for their conviction that they were free and virtuous. As a result, their attachment to rationalism (or what they took to be rationalism) was passionate; just how passionate would be seen at the highpoint of the French Revolution.

The fact that eighteenth-century rationalism regarded all previous human 'tradition' as polluted knowledge gave a universally human dimension to the ideology.[13] A rationalist, equipped with true, rational knowledge, could feel himself superior to most of mankind. This is perhaps the main reason why the movement was seen as an event in world history and celebrated as such, with great excitement and poetic names. In France the age was called 'the century of lights' (or, depending on how one translates *lumières*, 'brilliant insights'). In Prussia what was occurring was described by a word of multiple meaning, of which the best rendering is probably the most literal: an 'up-clearing', as of a sky on a dull day when the sun shines through and dispels the clouds. Only British sobriety can explain why there was no equivalent tag in English, despite the fundamental contribution made by Newton and British philosophers.

For intellectual history, the important event of the century was a change of outlook by the European elites. The dual Catholic-Protestant worldview based on faith gave way to a rationalist outlook that combined with either of those faiths or, among a small minority, stood alone. An effect of this for the future of Europe was to make impossible—or at least to discredit—the use of Christian religion as the ostensible motive for war or the killing of people. But as the French Revolution would soon show, Reason itself, religiously and therefore aberrantly understood, could provide a substitute legitimation.

It is often claimed for this eighteenth-century change of worldview that it was uniquely radical in human history. But in fact, as a change of outlook, it was by no means as radical as those which, in Europe and elsewhere, had accompanied changes of civilisation. Consider, for example, how radical was the change of mind when the Germanic peoples and the Celtic Irish—or more precisely, their

[12] Coming out of the rationalist mentality that founded the United States, 'The Land of the Free' has an essentialist connotation. It implies that citizens of the United States, as constituted, are *ipso facto* free persons. Provided that the evolving institutions and laws are judged by the Supreme Court to remain in accord with the Constitution, Americans continue to be free persons—regardless of what their condition, or that of most of them, might come to be in fact.

[13] Tacitly, it exempted certain traditions, notably Protestant ones, and the cult of republican Rome.

intellectual elites—adopted and adapted the Christian-Roman worldview. That change laid the intellectual and moral foundations of western civilisation. Eighteenth-century rationalism, while rationalising the rules of behaviour of that civilisation, retained them, broadly speaking. It remained within the European or western framework. As a change of outlook, it was perhaps comparable in degree, though broader in effect, to that which took place in intellectual Europe in the thirteenth century, with the arrival of Arab and Jewish philosophy and the complete, unadulterated texts of Aristotle.

Again, it has been claimed for the Age of Reason that, in its high valuation of reason and its vigorous use of it, it was unique in human history. But rationalistic movements had occurred in philosophy since the ancient Greeks. What, indeed, was medieval scholasticism but a manner of thinking so rationalistic that it caused Luther to call reason, angrily, "the Devil's number-one whore"? Of course, the new rationalism was quite different from that earlier one, had features special to itself; but the same could be said of every rationalistic movement.

It was not in the fairy-tale ways that have been suggested, but in another respect that the mindset that won ascendancy in Europe in the eighteenth century was unique. Never before in human history had a society equipped itself with a worldview so well suited to achieving collective and individual secular power. Already, in the same century, the efficacy of rationalism in both respects was evidenced in ways which presaged the greater advances yet to come. Modelled on the manner of thinking used by experimental science, rationalism encouraged the scientific spirit. Under its aegis, in the wake of Boyle and Newton, the natural sciences continued their advance, especially in England, France and Italy. The century that taught people to use their minds as similarly as possible to machines saw the start in England of the 'machine age' which empowered people to do countless things they had previously been unable to do. The doctrine that exalted the value of a faculty possessed equally by every man contributed decisively to the declarations of the equal rights of every man with which the century ended. Belief was fading in the divine right of kings as a legitimation for the expanding control of people by states. Rationality, declared by rulers to be their guiding principle and applied by them to government, supplied a convincing substitute which would remain so through the following century and into the twentieth. The very rationalist movement itself provided the vehicle by which the Press first flexed its collective muscles as a doctrinal preaching power independent of the Christian clergies. Significantly, in its rise to the status of Fourth Estate, and to the present day, its most prestigious organs would profess to remain faithful to the movement and the doctrine that gave it its breakthrough.

At the end of Peter Burke's short book *The Renaissance*, he writes, with reference to that period:

"The ancients were admired because they were guides to living. Following

them meant travelling with more security in the direction in which people were already going."

The direction in which Europe was mainly going since around the year 1500 was towards the achievement of maximal secular power for Europeans, collectively and individually. That, through all the vicissitudes and accidents, was the prevalent drive. By keeping in mind this ruling passion, the historian can reduce the role of mere accident in the story, and increase his understanding of why things happened as they did. Just as a painter has often, by developing them, used some of the accidents that occur on the canvas to good effect, so, too, did the second age of Europe; or rather, so did its rulers at various levels and in various spheres.

We do not know how many initiatives of a religious, political or philosophical kind, or how many inventions, occurred and came to nothing, leaving their authors frustrated men. Those we know of we relegate to 'footnotes of history' But by keeping in mind the main drive of the age, we can identify the profoundest reasons why those initiatives that did come to prominence and flourish did so and why others were choked off or petered out. Peter Burke rightly suggests that "the ancients" came to prominence in the decades around 1500 because their example helped Europeans to proceed better "in the direction in which they were already going"—and wanted to go. But there is also the concrete fact that the classicists, rather than remaining few and marginal, became many and influential because the rulers of the time, first and most notably in Italy, encouraged them and used them to serve their interests. With regard to similar rises to power and influence in the succeeding centuries, close study reveals much the same.

The question that has often been asked, 'What would have become of Protestantism if Frederick the Wise of Saxony had not taken Luther under his protection?' makes this point indirectly. It also leads on to asking why, or rather, for what mixed motives, Frederick did as he did. Searching further for underlying, even if only partial explanations, we can ask: why, in the sixteenth century, was the greatest power in Europe which pointed to the 'other world' permanently split and weakened? And why did Protestantism, both in its forms that buttressed states, and in its forms that affirmed the individual, become a permanent and powerful feature of the European scene?

But to return, finally, to rationalism and the quotation from Norman Davies with which I began my discussion of it. Davies writes that it was no wonder, given its fundamental naivety, that the Age of Reason culminated in "a fall, in the shape of the terrible revolutionary years" I take him to be referring mainly to the Terror of 1793-94; specifically, the guillotining of thousands of people throughout France; the cannonades on the square in Lyons which executed prisoners who had been chained together, fifty or sixty at a time; the random massacres of men, women and children during and after the Vendean uprising; the lining up of hundreds to be shot into waiting trenches; and Europe's first industrial massacres at Nantes when, in barges with holes in the bottom that could be alternately closed and opened, successive batches of Vendean civilians, including priests, were

and opened, successive batches of Vendean civilians, including priests, were drowned in the Loire.

I am doubtful that Davies is correct in describing the Terror as a "fall of the Age of Reason". It is true that the members of the Committee of Public Safety believed they belonged to the Age of Reason and acted in accordance with this belief. By entering empathetically into their minds and feelings one can see this. They inherited a new calendar, in terms of which their Terror occurred in Years II and III of Reason. Some of their colleagues had converted the cathedral of Notre Dame into a temple of Reason. The rationalist preachers had taught that liberty, virtue and true humanity were fruits of reason, and therefore, that those who rejected reason as the arbiter of life were opponents of the human good. From this it was easy for the Terrorists to conclude that, in their republic of liberty and virtue, Reason was incarnate, and that its enemies embodied evil. But the rationalist preachers had not laid down how to deal with such radically evil people in the extreme situation in which the Republic found itself—with its existence, and Reason's therefore, endangered. That decision, accordingly, fell to the Terrorists themselves. Saint-Just summed up the conclusion they arrived at: "The republic consists in the extermination of everything that opposes it"—that "everything" being by definition evil.

Given, then, that they believed it was their duty to Reason to kill its many evil opponents, the Terrorists also saw it as incumbent on them to do so in as rational a manner as possible. The guillotine, which became one of the symbols of the Revolution, was also a symbol and embodiment of rationalism: mechanical, efficient and, in the matter of decapitation, humane. But even at the record rate achieved in Paris on 31 October 1793—twenty-two heads in thirty-six minutes—guillotines took a lot of time in proportion to the numbers of enemies and suspected enemies that were due for killing throughout France. It was therefore in efforts to improve efficiency still further that the other 'mass' methods were devised. According to Simon Schama in his book *Citizens*, Jean Antoine Rossignol, a prominent member of the Paris Commune, tried to help by asking the chemist Fourcroy to investigate the possible use of "mines, gassings or other means ...to destroy, put to sleep or asphyxiate the enemy". But nothing came of it; man's ability to kill large numbers of people with rational and impersonal efficiency was still in its infancy.

According to their lights then—without guidance from the philosophers of Reason—the Terrorists did their best to serve it; or, as some of them might say, 'her', mindful of the goddess enthroned in Notre Dame. Their purpose served, the emergency past, and fear spreading among their colleagues, they were beheaded and disowned. A press campaign vilified their memory. France, and more than France—Europe, the West—were not yet willing to condone massacre as an instrument of politics.

However, empathising with the Terrorists, in the sense of entering imaginatively

into their minds and feelings, does not blind the historian to the fact that they deluded themselves. Rationalism had taught that reason was a faculty given by God to man to use to the limits of its reach; a relative value therefore, not an absolute, and certainly not God nor an equivalent of God. It was the Terrorists who absolutised it and who made themselves, self-servingly, the embodiment of that Absolute. Convinced that their Republic and they, its servants, were absolutely right, they absolutised the terms of the rationalist equation that 'having reason' equals 'being right' and self-servingly reversed it. Thus, non-believers in the Christian God, they used the ideology of Reason to create a Manichaean myth in which they were like Yahweh, the Old Testament's God, implementing their righteousness by eradicating the unrighteous.

They did not, then, despite the title of the book which Tom Paine was then writing, belong to the *Age Of Reason*, and their massacres were therefore not a 'fall' of rationalism. By the 1790s the Romantic wind was blowing, fomenting hankerings after Absolutes and sentimental religious revival. The Terrorists were romantic rationalists, the first notable embodiment of a self-divinising, self-righteous and massacring rationalism which, joined occasionally with Puritanism, would flourish in the revolutions and wars of the twentieth century.

4
'Europe' For Historical Purposes

> "I have become convinced of the idea—shared now by not a few scholars—that the Middle Age, understood in its traditional chronological acceptation, is a fictitious entity of very little interpretative utility. I have therefore opted for a radical choice: to abolish the 'Middle Age'—even the word—from my mental horizon....At the end, it seemed as if I had rid myself of a burdensome artificial scaffolding which prevented me from working freely. Unnecessary to say that Antiquity, the Modern Age and other similar abstractions disappeared, also, with the Middle Age. What remained were people, their things and their ideas."
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> Massimo Montanari, *La fame e l'abbondanza*, 1993

Leave aside the 120-page appendix of maps, tables and lists and the 300 'capsules'—panels on interesting minor items—that have been inserted in the text. Davies' *Europe: A History* is a vast production for the simple reason that its contents correspond to its title in a geographically literal sense. This means not only 'from the Urals to the Atlantic' but also from prehistory to 1992 AD. Although the narrative is not presented explicitly in this form, it covers in fact six historically important civilisations: Minoan, Greek, Celtic, Roman, Byzantine and European.

In his Introduction Davies writes at length on what the concept 'Europe' has signified and signifies, and on what 'European history' should not and should mean. In the latter respect, he does not insist that the historian should begin, as he himself does, with the earliest times. But he does argue strongly for the inclusion of Eastern Europe and against its exclusion. Mainly this is in the section headed 'Western Civilisation'. Here Davies inveighs against histories which have suggested that 'Western' is in every way superior to 'Eastern', and that the history of Western Europe amounts to the history of Europe. So two separate questions get entangled: what, properly speaking, is western civilisation, and what, the history of Europe?

Davies does a great service by bringing out into the open, polemically, a lot of unspoken assumptions about these matters. He makes one think and consciously take a stance. My practice so far in this book has shown my understanding, in broad outline, of 'the history of Europe'. I take it to mean a narrative similar to 'the history of Ancient Greece' or 'of Ancient Rome'; in other words, *mutatis mutandis*, the history of the peoples who, in a process of interaction and competition, created and developed European civilisation. This is the history whose revision I am discussing, with the qualities of truth, clarity, and 'sense for now' in mind. The peoples who founded and developed European civilisation, as distinct from the Roman and Byzantine ones, inhabited Western Europe. By that term I mean, roughly, the land west of a straight line from the Gulf of Bothnia (between Sweden and Finland) to the heel of Italy. For the reader who has not a map to hand, that embraces Silesia, Bohemia and Austria. The only necessary

eastwards breach in this line is one that includes, during the period that they existed, the German cities and settlements along the Baltic Sea, in particular East Prussia.

The history of any people or group of peoples requires an explanatory prelude. Some account must be given of the originating circumstances and cultural inheritances of the entity in question. In the case of Europe the period which this must cover is unusually long. The most appropriate starting-point is in the late Roman empire; specifically, the recovery and reorganisation of the empire under Diocletian (284-305) and that emperor's persecution of the Christians. Centuries later, when the new, European civilisation has got under way, narrating its political history requires occasional references to rulers and events in Eastern Europe (Europe east of the line I have mentioned). A recurrent theme will be the spread eastwards of cultural influence from the West. Another, starting in the sixteenth century, will be the overseas conquests and settlements of West Europeans and the accompanying extension of their cultural influence. In the same century, the movements of Turkish armies and navies in southeastern Europe become part of the western story. From the 1700s onwards, a pan-European politics develops. But only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is the flow of cultural influence from West to East accompanied by some cultural traffic in the opposite direction, most notably from Russia.

In terms of peoples and territory, there is nothing new about such a history of Europe. With the exception that we might have begun the introductory part a bit later in ancient Roman history, it is more or less the story that I and others of my generation studied at school. In the broad terms in which I have outlined it, I accept it as a valid outline for European history because I see the sense of it and find no good arguments against it. Although it is centred on Western Europe, it is clearly not, especially in its latter part, a mere 'history of Western Europe'. It does not imply any 'superiority of the West', and I would find any such overtone a tedious irritant. It makes the same sense as the traditional 'history of Ancient Greece', which for the most part deals only with the southern third of the country we call by that name, together with the adjacent islands, the west coast of Asia Minor and the overseas colonies of the peoples concerned. That history brings in the north of Greece only when part of it, Macedon, becomes relevant to the story.

The 'story' in both instances is that of a group of peoples who, sharing a worldview and often in conflict, create and develop a life and a civilisation in which other peoples become involved. In other words, in both instances, there is a unitary story-theme. That, not coincidence with any geographical boundaries, is the basic requirement of a good 'history' since history began.

The only alternative to the 'history of Europe' I have outlined—one of geographical Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals—does not provide such a theme. The affairs of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea, Russian czars battling with boyars, Ottoman policy in

Greece and such like, interfere with what is, willy-nilly, the main European story and until the eighteenth century the only coherent one. An Atlantic-to-Urals history has another serious defect. Assuming it is weighted in accordance with the overall historical importance of the events and personalities, it will inevitably be unfair to the peoples of Eastern Europe. As compared with its treatment of Western Europe, it must deal superficially with their history. In this way and in others, it must make that history, which for them is central, seem marginal.

There could be no better illustration of this than Davies' book, written with explicit commitment to, and profound knowledge of East European history. As we have seen, its chapter-headings and thematic divisions, from 'the Middle Age' onwards, are those devised by West Europeans for their own history! To this scheme of things the history of Eastern Europe has been—shall we say, added?

Very well, but what of 'precise designation'? Surely a 'history of Europe' which is occupied for most of its length with Western Europe is mistitled? I admit there is a slight difficulty here. But it is similar to that which could be pedantically said to occur with the 'history of Ancient Greece', as outlined above. In the European case, the difficulty arises from the fact that, while historians invented the distinctive names 'Byzantium' and 'Byzantine' for southeastern Europe, its peoples and its civilisation after 500 AD, they did nothing equivalent for the distinctive West European enterprise in post-Roman times. History might have done what the historians refrained from doing. Around the eastern Mediterranean, from the time of the Crusades, a distinguishing name for West Europeans existed. They were called 'Franks'. If the crusaders had brought it home with them, in its full extended sense, no double meaning of 'Europe' would exist today. Just as we speak of Byzantium and Byzantines, we would be calling the similar historical distinctiveness of Western Europe 'Frankland' or 'Franconia' and its peoples, history and civilisation 'Frankish'.

The historians had good reason not to invent what history itself had failed to supply. Increasingly, from the fifteenth century onwards, they saw West Europeans laying claim to the names 'Europe' and 'Europeans', while no one else did. So this fact decided the matter and the *double* meaning arose.[14] It can be troublesome, but a double meaning is precisely that. Leave aside the use of 'Europe' as a misnomer for the European Union. In all languages 'Europe' has one meaning in atlases and geography classes, and another in colloquial speech. The latter meaning, which by its nature is the more frequent and powerful of the two, refers broadly to Western Europe. With the adjective 'European' this is even more the case, especially in the usage of the other continents. Consider what, specifically,

[14] Norman Davies adduces a further link between the Franks and historical 'Europe'. He writes: "It was in the court of Charles the Great that the ancient term of 'Europe' was revived. The Carolingians needed a label to describe that section of the world which they dominated, as distinct from the pagan lands, from Byzantium, or from Christendom as a whole."

'European culture' or 'European civilisation' signifies around the world. And that is not to cite the Scandinavian, Russian, Italian and Spanish colloquial usages which locate 'Europe', not merely in Western Europe, but in a Western Europe narrowed almost to its ancient 'Frankish empire' core.

In sum, the historian who entitles a history of the sort I have outlined, 'history of Europe' is using 'Europe' in one of its long-accepted and living meanings. Whatever about geography, he is not misrepresenting history nor is he in danger of being misunderstood. On the contrary, he is supplying that slice of human history which the great majority of Europeans and others expect to find in his book. In this broad sense, the criterion of clarity for the reader is satisfied—as it is satisfied when a 'history of Ancient Greece' relates the story of Hellas, in the south.

But to quote Mao Tse-tung again, "Let a hundred flowers bloom!". In particular, let us have good histories of Eastern Europe available in West European languages. A glance at two such histories, published recently, suggests that this discipline, if that is the word, is not yet sure how to approach its task. *History Of Eastern Europe* (1998) by Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries omits Russia. Its first chapter deals with 'Southeastern Europe' from earliest times to World War I. Then we get two chapters on 'East Central Europe' during the same long period and two on 'Eastern Europe' after World War I. A final chapter, dealing with the 1990s, is—in view of what I have been saying above—significantly titled: 'A tentative "return to Europe"'. By contrast, Philip Longworth's *The Making Of Eastern Europe* (1997) includes Russia. But it works *backwards* from the 1990s. Beginning with 'The Collapse and its Aftermath', it ends with 'Beginnings 324-1071'. Obviously, the theme 'Eastern Europe' presents difficulties to its historians and these two books show quite different attempts to overcome them.

The 'history of Europe' I have outlined is also, broadly speaking, what I understand as the history of the West or of 'western civilisation'. Some recent books bearing such titles, as well as some which announce themselves as histories of Europe (meaning the historic entity), start off with ancient Greece or even with the dawn of history in Mesopotamia. Greer and Lewis, for example, in their *Brief History Of The Western World*, begin in the Middle East and move southwest to Egypt! Peter Rietbergen in *Europe: A Cultural History* (1998) tells us in his Prologue that "this book mainly, though not exclusively, records events west of a 'central European zone'" he has just specified. So far, so good, he means the core Europe I have been talking about. But his history begins with a chapter which treats of ancient Mesopotamia and includes a substantial extract from the legal code of Hammurabi! This chapter, entitled 'Before "Europe"' and concluding with the campaigns of Alexander the Great, is followed—we are still expecting to encounter 'Europe'—by a twenty-page summary of *Roman* history.

Such treatments of the stated themes lack focus. Forget Babylonia; not even

classical Greece, for obvious reasons, is part of the story of the new civilisation founded in Western Europe over a thousand years later. The late Roman empire in Diocletian's time contains, apart from the Irish, all the elements—Roman, Greek, Jewish, Christian and Germanic—that went into the making of Europe centuries later. More to the point: it contains these elements not in the forms they had a thousand, 700 or 250 years previously—which is irrelevant—but in the living forms, with their respective literary heritages, that produced the mix out of which Europe was made.[15] Surely 'the West' or 'Europe', if a book is so titled, deserves to be presented to readers as more than a face at the end of a queue of civilisations, half-way past before it has been recognised as present. It has not been our custom to begin a history of Rome with accounts of Babylonia, Egypt and Greece. Nor do we expect a history of Persia to begin with the hunter-gatherers and the Sumerians. Why, then, do this with the history of Europe?

In recent years there seems to be a fashion for this sort of thing. Doubtless, commercial considerations connected with educational, ideological and psychological factors account for this. It would be interesting to explore the why and wherefore.[16] But it is more to the point to remain with the matter I have raised by urging that the history of Europe be treated as we have treated the histories of similar historical entities; be treated, in other words, normally. Perhaps, if there is a public for such books, the 'beginning with Babylon' eccentricity can be lived with on the principle of 'Let a hundred flowers bloom!' But there is another, in this instance long-standing abnormality which ought not to be tolerated, because it offends against the most elementary rules for telling a story clearly. The 'history of Europe' has habitually omitted to tell us when and how Europe began!

Consider what this means. Europe, like any other civilisation, was a unique creation. Its particular forms and mix of religion, law, political ideology, morality, social structure, language, art and literature, all in continual evolution, had never appeared previously on the planet. It was as distinctive as ancient Rome or Arab Islam, more original than Byzantium. Obviously, then, like the other civilisations, it did not come about independently of human will. It was made and shaped originally, at a particular time, by people who wanted a particular kind of life. Rulers and preachers, acting in concert, established an enduring system of rules and institutions and, to sustain the enterprise, saw to it that there was a good surplus of agricultural production and flourishing trade. And the system, first

[15] This is true except for the fact that under Constantine, a few years after Diocletian's retirement, Christianity, instead of being a persecuted religion, became the favoured religion of the state.

[16] I am excluding from consideration what Davies, in his Introduction, calls 'Eurohistory', meaning history written to buttress the programme and ideology of the European Union. In recent years it has begun to make an appearance, and I regard its future with fear and trembling.

established in a core area, a particular part of Western Europe, gradually extended to the entire area between Scandinavia and Sicily.[17] Without needing to be told, one knows that this happened, because that is how all the civilisations of history began and spread. But the standard history of Europe, as it has been offered to us in the last few centuries, has never said when, where and by whose agency, precisely, those constructive founding acts occurred.

Instead, the standard history-books have told us a lot about the 'foundations' of Europe, meaning what Europe was built on or grew out of. Starting in the late Roman world and naming many barbarian peoples, they give us an introduction to Europe which goes on until either of two things happen. Either the reader, using his wits, and recognising some name or event as 'definitely European'—say, St Bernard, William the Conqueror or the First Crusade—decides that Europe must have begun while he was not looking! Or else, at some point, varying by centuries from one book to another, the historian taps the reader, so to speak, on the shoulder and says: 'By the way, this is Europe now'.

In this respect, Davies conforms to the standard pattern, second variant. He uses the 'tap on the shoulder' method. Realising that, *pace* his Atlantic-to-Urals philosophy, 'Europe' has a valid double meaning, he entitles a chapter: 'ORIGO The Birth of Europe c. 330-800', with only Western Europe in mind. So, watching out for that promised 'birth', we follow a narrative of events and processes up to around 750. The western empire peters out, the Franks are expanding, other Germanic peoples move and settle, the Church holds general councils, Byzantium has successes and reverses, Islam intrudes and conquers, the Irish and Anglo-Saxon monks Christianise parts of the Continent. Then, a short paragraph which could easily be missed, tells us that the "processes" just mentioned have been interacting, and the "essential effects" of their interaction "can now be identified". The paragraph continues:

> "It was the four centuries following Constantine that brought Europe into being. This was the period when the majority of the [European] Peninsula's diverse peoples found their way to permanent homelands. This was the period when the rump of the Roman Empire became just one among many sovereign states in a community of 'Christendom' that was consolidating behind the screen of Islam. No one yet used the name of 'Europe' to describe this community; but there can be little doubt that it was already in existence."

The chapter ends with an account of how Pope Stephen visited the Frankish king Peppin the Short and secured his protection against the Lombards. The next chapter—we noticed it previously—is headed: 'MEDIUM The Middle Age c. 750-1270'. (The following chapter deals with 'the later Middle Ages'.) We hear no more about the birth of Europe. And why should we? We have been told that, around 750, it is with 'little doubt already in existence'.

[17] 'A civilisation', meaning a particular kind of human system (what is being discussed here) is to be distinguished from 'civilisation', meaning 'refinement of mind and manners' or 'culture' in its qualitative sense, such as tend to occur within 'a civilisation'.

It is secondary that Davies makes an unfortunate choice of time—circa 750—to declare this existence already accomplished. The language boundary between French and German (and therefore between the Latin and Germanic languages) has always been central to the character of Europe: in 750 it has not yet been definitively established. The Frankish empire, the first attempt at providing a political, legal and cultural system for what—there's no avoiding it—will be Europe, has yet to be tried and to fail. One could go on, but the unfortunate choice of date is secondary to the crucial fact that at no point in Davies' narrative is there an account of *the creation of European civilisation*, which is what 'the beginning of Europe' amounts to. Instead, for the emergence of Europe, Davies offers us something like a providentially guided parthenogenesis: without any active intervention by human will, Europe has come to be there. And of course that was not—well, obviously not!—how European civilisation began.

This manner of dealing with a fundamental element of the Europe story, as of any story, is at variance with the historical facts, baffling to the reader, and ultimately mystical—requiring assent by faith rather than intelligence. But it is not, as I have made clear above, Davies' invention, and he at least uses the more courteous of the two methods practised: the 'tap on the shoulder' to say Europe has arrived, rather than a narrative which leaves the reader to notice, by personal, alert attention, that it has.

The plain facts of Europe's beginning—an entirely normal beginning—are not unknown. They are well known, and in books dealing specifically with the event, they are related. Two of these books, including a very recent one, I shall come to presently. It is in the telling of 'the history of Europe', the whole story—whether strictly on its own or in a 'from Babylon onwards' context— that the silence is mysteriously maintained. So, obviously, when I spoke above of this pattern of narrative being among other things 'mystical', I was near the core of the matter, just missing it by a syllable. We are once again up against the fact that the standard 'history of Europe' follows a *mythical* pattern. The historians who have failed to do for the beginning of Europe what they do readily for the beginning of Babylon, Hellas or Rome have been obeying not the truth of things, but the dictate of a myth of European history.

It is not difficult to trace the origin of the myth nor is its source surprising. It goes back to those fashionable literary intellectuals of fifteenth-century Italy who acquired a following throughout Europe. Chauvinistic and anti-modern, they rubbished the Europe that the English, French and Germans—and other 'Goths' whom we mistake for Italians?—had created during the previous few centuries. All that, they said, was barbarian darkness and hence not history, which is, properly speaking, the story of civilisation or, more precisely, humane culture. So in the mythical historical scheme which they propagated, they merged those rubbished centuries of Europe with the general mass of the 'middle age'—barbaric, featureless and unhistorical. By definition, nothing of note, no epoch-making event could occur there. And none, consequently (thus further their myth) did in fact occur in those dark centuries between the epoch-making Fall of Rome—humane culture *par excellence*—and the epoch-making Rebirth of that civility which they were effecting in Italy, and through Italy in Europe. Thus, scrubbed, shaven and civilised by Rome reborn, Europe entered history after 1450!

Much better than our ancestors of a century ago, we know about the collective fads and fantasies of intellectuals, their cults of paradises distant in space or time—past time, future time—and their imagined schemes of history.[18] Given our much improved knowledge of this human type, it is truly sobering to realise how lasting and pervasive has been the influence of those fantasising Italian Latinists of five hundred years ago. Even in the matter of the detail we are discussing, the history of Europe taught in schools for centuries derives from the mythical history they invented.

The many historians of Europe who have been sceptical of one or other aspect of the myth have not collectively prevailed. The standard history, widely diffused, still observes the myth's central taboo: no epoch-making event, least of all the start of a new *civilisation* (even Europe's!), may intrude between the end of the Latin Roman empire and the great Rebirth. Once the latter had been accepted as a real event, obeying that taboo was the merest logic. To breach it by inserting the start of Europe would have robbed 'the Renaissance' of its epochal significance and brought the whole, consecrated scheme of things tumbling down! The most that seemed licit, and was done, was to insert little Latin 'renaissances' in the ninth and twelfth centuries, as modest, far from epoch-making prefigurements of the great return of Rome and *civiltà* that was yet to come.

I first read an account of the beginning of Europe in what is by now a classic, R. W. Southern's *The Making Of The Middle Ages*, published fifty years ago. The period which Southern deals with is the late tenth to the early thirteenth century. After Otto the Great, in 955, had decisively defeated the Magyars in the battle of the Lech, the West's eastern frontier was definitively secured and the European enterprise got under way. In his Introduction Southern writes:

> "For a thousand years Europe has been the chief centre of political experiment, economic expansion and intellectual discovery in the world. It gained this position during the period with which we are concerned; it is only losing it in our own day."

By calling the making of the first age of Europe, "the making of the Middle Ages", Southern was conforming to the conventional historical language, while at

[18] Lest I might seem to be distancing myself from the tribe, I confess I know at first hand whereof I speak. In the late 1960s, living in Irish-speaking Conamara, Mao was my Helmsman and the Chinese Cultural Revolution my lodestar. In our local politico-linguistic activism, we believed we were taking part in the epoch-making revolution of 'country versus city' and 'periphery versus centre'. The future, if not exactly a world commune of communes, would be a world community of communities.

the same time rendering it absurd. For apart from the oddity of calling a beginning a middle, if the European 'middle age' began around 1000, what, then, was it 'middle' between? The blurb to the latest edition of Southern's book (1993) is more precise about its actual theme. Referring to the two and a half centuries that Southern covers, it says: "In these years... 'civilisation' as we understand it today was born". It would have been even more precise to say 'civilisation as we knew it until the mid-twentieth century', when that civilisation in effect ended; but the meaning is clear.

Doubtless, since Southern's book first appeared, others have elaborated on his theme. But I have been fortunate enough to come on an extremely recent updating by R.I. Moore of the University of Newcastle on Tyne, published in 2000. Southern used the word 'revolution' with reference to the events he described. Moore uses it in his title: *The First European Revolution c. 970-1215.* The text is more explicit: we read there not only of a "glad, confident morning", "the birth of Europe" and "the new civilisation" in the period cited, but also, repeatedly, of "these first Europeans".

Here is no parthenogenesis, nor mystical transubstantiation of Late Antiquity into Europe. Instead, beginning just before the year 1000, there are the increasingly concerted initiatives of mutually endorsing rulers and churchmen; the engineered rise in food production; the new urban growth; the clarification of law; the creation of centres of higher learning and so on. All the features one would expect to find at the launch of a new civilisation.

There could be no clearer indication of what is occurring than Moore's statement: "No activity is more characteristic of this age than the composition of rules". There follows a listing of all the areas in which this activity was taking place, from the taming of armed men, ecclesiastical reform, biblical commentary and dialectical reasoning to markets, business practice and the transactions of sexual love.

The core region where Moore depicts this process as occurring is France, especially the northern half. As an illustration of how the men of the late twelfth century were conscious of what had been achieved in the previous two centuries, Moore, like Southern before him, cites the writer of vernacular romances Chrêtien de Troyes, from around 1170:

> "Our books have informed us that the pre-eminence in chivalry and learning once belonged to Greece. Then chivalry passed to Rome, together with that highest learning which has now come to France. God grant that it may be cherished here, that the honour which has taken refuge with us may never depart from France. God had awarded it as another's share, but of Greeks and Romans no more is heard; their fame is passed, and their glowing ash is dead."

Southern, when he quotes this, adds the gloss that by "chivalry and learning" Chrêtien meant "all that we comprehend in the word 'civilisation'". I add the obvious: for Chrêtien's 'France' read 'Europe'. No doubt whatsoever, in the true, clear history of Europe I am imagining, the achievement that the *romancier* is

celebrating will figure as the epoch-making beginning of Europe. An explanatory introduction will cover the centuries that led to it; the remainder will recount the long sequel to it. At last—but what a long time waiting!—we will have a history treating Europe in a normal manner, as if it were ancient Rome, Greece or Persia.

Earlier I raised the question of why European civilisation achieved a mastery of the world unequalled by any other. For those who might be interested, I mention that in his final pages Moore suggests the answer may lie in the particular "restless dynamism" that emerged from the revolutionary events he has been describing. He argues, further, that it is here, at the very start of the European enterprise, that "European supremacy" begins.

I have taken the iconoclastic passage by Massimo Montanari that introduces this chapter from another recent book: *Naissance de la noblesse: L'essor des élites politiques en Europe* by Karl Ferdinand Wagner (1998). Wagner explores the origin of the European political elite in the transitional centuries between Rome and Europe. In the course of reinforcing Montanari's dismissal of the 'Middle Age', he quotes a surprising remark by Leopold von Ranke: "The Middle Age lacks any reality whatsoever". Surprising, because it is difficult to understand how that notion survived such a dogmatic rejection from 'the father of modern historiography'.[19] My sentiments on this particular matter are evident, but I would not go along with Montanari in urging the abandonment of all periodisation. I recognise the usefulness in historical narrative of periods with names. Not only do they give it a pleasing story-form, breaking it up into slices of time for easier comprehension; they facilitate periodic summings-up of groups of centuries.

The period between Roman civilisation in the West and the beginning of its European successor names itself, automatically, as 'The Age of Transition'. Only subjection to an Italian myth has prevented this obvious term from being used before now. Of course, 'the Middle Age', if it were to fit any period at all, would fit this one; but along with its accompanying adjective it is too weighed down with misleading associations to retain. The Age of Transition subdivides at some point which historians will continue to argue about into 'Late Antiquity' and 'Prelude to Europe'. Davies, while mentioning 'Late Antiquity' in passing, does not put either of these terms to use; but he is aware, as any historian must be, that such a dividing point must exist. He comments, aptly, that identifying it is a matter of judging "the overall balance at any given time between the legacy of the past and the sum total of innovations—what professional historians call the 'continuities' and the 'discontinuities'".

Wagner stresses the continuities that bridge the juridical end, in 476, of the

[19] I have just glanced casually at *The Penguin Book Of The Middle Ages* by Morris Bishop (1971). The first sentence reads: "'Middle Ages' is an unfortunate term." Is there perhaps, unknown to me, some other science, art or craft whose practitioners continually complain about one of their principal tools—and go on using it?

separately governed western half of the Roman Empire. To clear the ground, he opens with a chapter on 'The Myths of the Humanistic Heritage'. Criticising on a broad front the historical ignorance of the Italian 'humanists' as well as certain named historians who have been influenced by them, he refutes the twin notions of a catastrophic fall of Rome in the West in 476 and a subsequent sweeping imposition of Germanic 'barbarism'. The Late Antiquity he adumbrates starts within the Roman Empire and continues deep into the Germanic centuries.

On the one hand, at least as early as the reign of Diocletian (284-305), the city of Rome had effectively ceased to be the political capital of the empire. The imperial government was conducted from such cities as Nicomedia and Serdica (Sofia) in the east, and Milan and Trier in the west. And from 330 Constantinople, 'New Rome', became the overall capital. On the other hand, the empire in the West did not suddenly end with the deposition, in 476, of the last western emperor by the Ostrogoth, Odoacer. Odoacer was a Roman general who had been proclaimed *rex* by the Roman army in Italy, which consisted in large degree of 'barbarians'. After he had deposed Romulus, Emperor Zeno in Constantinople appointed him 'patrician of the West'. Formally, then, the unity of the empire was restored. Thereafter, moreover, in one guise or another, Roman presence in the West continued. Some western territories were held enduringly or temporarily by Constantinople; and the Germanic successor kingdoms considered themselves to be precisely that. From Rome they took the ideology and practice of the Christian state, Latin as the administrative language, elements of Roman law, and Roman titles for their chief officers. Moreover, as late as the eighth century, the city of Rome and its surrounding territory, ruled by the popes, remained legally part of the Empire. So when the 'Roman people' formally proclaimed Carolus, King of the Franks, as emperor, they did so in their still-surviving legal capacity as *populus Romanus*. Those are merely salient points from Wagner's densely argued and polemical chapter.

I believe that the main thrust of his argument about the manner in which Roman gave way to Germanic would now be generally accepted. In the light of this cancelling of 'the fall of Rome' in 476, another event emerges as the truly decisive event of the late empire: the adoption of Christianity as the Roman state religion, in the decades after 313. Epoch-making within Roman history, east and west, it was also decisive, world-historically, in its shaping of the mould out of which Europe would be formed. Clearly it belongs in an introduction to Europe. The narrative that would situate it in its full context begins with the reign of Diocletian. This reign would then provide the starting point for the Age of Transition as a whole, and more immediately for its first phase, Late Antiquity.

In *Rom in der Spätantike* (1994), Manfred Fuhrmann, has his own reasons for placing the start of Late Antiquity there. His special interest is in *Geistesgeschichte*, intellectual and literary history. He recalls that the term 'Late Antiquity' was invented by the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl about a century ago, and

subsequently found to apply well to every aspect of the late Roman world. For Fuhrmann, the fifty years of anarchic disorder and cultural barrenness which preceded the accession of Diocletian represents a caesura with Antiquity proper. With Diocletian's restoration and reformation of the state, and the state-led revival of the economy, there was also a renaissance of high culture. Antiquity entered its 'late' period.

Determining when this period ended is not so easy. For one thing, as Fuhrmann says, conditions varied greatly throughout the West. But from the viewpoint of his special interest, he finds a clear indication of a second caesura in the "renewed spiritual desert that spreads across the entire European continent in the seventh century". He continues:

> "During the pre-Carolingian century [roughly 650-750], cultural continuity was maintained by the zealous activity of the Irish and Anglo-Saxon monasteries. This functioned as a bridge leading to the early Middle Age. Within this transitional phase, the death of the great English scholar Bede, in 735, serves well as a point of reference."

As I said above, the precise location of this dividing point will continue to be argued about. But keeping to Fuhrmann's scheme, the 'early Middle Age' which he has beginning in Carolingian times, after 751, would translate well into what I call 'Prelude to Europe'. There is much to be said for regarding the Carolingian empire—existing *de facto* in the late 700s and formalised from 800—as a rehearsal for a play called 'Europe' which had to be considerably rewritten before it emerged, definitively, on the stage of history, and began its thousand-year run.

The only remaining big question of a periodising nature is how to name the first and second ages of Europe, beginning, respectively, around 1000 and 1500. There is no need for haste. Given the weight of distorting stereotype with which 'middle/medieval' and 'modern' have burdened these ages, a period of treating them simply as 'first' and 'second' would encourage a fresh-eyed perception of them. I have played on a jotting-pad with 'AGE OF CONSOLIDATION, Exercising the Spirit' and 'AGE OF EXPANSION, Tackling the World'. As with any names of ages that attempt interpretation, the differences they imply are rendered inaccurate by overlap. But that is not the main objection. There seems no point in moving from one pair of Procrustean definitions—such as 'medieval' and 'modern' have become—to another pair. Period names as pragmatically 'open' as those for Roman history—Kings, Republic, Empire—are closer to what is needed if a move beyond 'first' and 'second' is desired.

From the perspective of present-day Europe, the most historically decisive event that occurred around 1500 was the discovery of the American continent by Columbus. That made possible the United States of America and all that followed from that. In the twentieth century, this aggrandised European colony intervened decisively in European affairs and replaced Europe as the main embodiment of the geopolitical 'West'. With Europe in tow, it has continued the domination of

the world that Europe previously exercised.

History is, among other things, a making intelligible of the present. By the same token, our awareness of the geopolitical outcome of the European discovery of America should influence how we write the history of Europe's second age. For one thing, the making of 'America' in the broad, continental sense—our *Magna Graecia*, so to speak—should appear as an intrinsic part of the European story. Apart from that reflecting the truth of the matter, it would be a pre-emptively defensive measure. The possibility threatens that when future Chinese, Indian or Brasilian historians write the history of the white man's world, they might treat European history as mere explanatory background to the history of the USA! In the ancient world it happened to Phoenicia: the name of its colony, Carthage is the name that sounds through history.

For a start, then, it would be useful to introduce the term 'Europe Overseas' to the history of Europe after 1500. 'New Spain', 'New England,' 'Nova Scotia' and the like pointed cumulatively towards that collective term, but nationalism prevented it emerging. 'Europe Overseas' designates overseas settlement by Europeans. In practice that meant, for most people, one part or other of the American continent. But the United States of America became the essential 'Europe Overseas'—'America' *par excellence*—because it was there that the greatest number of Europeans settled, that the mix of settlers was most representative of Europe, and the excess of Europeans over indigenous greatest. But the USA was also an extension of Europe spiritually. Ideas and principles derived from Europe shaped its founding. Through successful conquest—the 'first American empire'—and through guaranteed individual rights and technological invention and development, the USA and its citizens participated in the passionate pursuit of world mastery that characterised the second age of Europe. When, then, in the mid-twentieth century, the aggrandised colony intervened decisively in Europe, it was enacting the pattern of a boomerang returning to its thrower.

This is not to pretend that the United States was consciously or emotionally 'part of Europe', when in fact rejection of Europe was a motive in its foundation and continued as a constant theme there. (Even in this, however, the American elite, in transatlantic isolation, was experiencing and performing the recurrent European self-rejection in favour of a better kind of life that characterised Europe from fifteenth-century Italy onwards.) Nor, again, am I ignoring that many European elites regarded America as anything but their offspring: viewed it, rather, as a repellent Other. But these mutual repulsions and disownings coexisted with mutual attraction and underlying solidarity. The chronicles of many a noble family exhibit, among separated branches, similar love-hate relationships within a basic sense of belonging.

'Europe Overseas' provides the general conceptual context in which integration of the two histories can be effected. A further simple device would facilitate this

greatly. Columbus's voyage of discovery, so literally epoch-making for Americans, coincided with Europe's transition from its first to its second age. By calling European history from 955 to 1492 'Pre-Columbian', and the remainder down to 1945 'Columbian', two birds would be killed with one stone. European periodisation would be expressly aligned with that which American historiography uses for pre-1492, thus making the two histories, graphically, parts of one story. At the same time, we would have names for the two ages of Europe which are both richly suggestive and completely free of programmatic content or Procrustean nuance: empty vessels waiting to be filled by a freshly perceived narrative of Europe, 955-1945 AD, 'as it really was'.

5 The History Of European Culture

Peter Rietbergen's *Europe: A Cultural History* (1998) offers a recent example of how this theme can be dealt with. Leave aside the preliminary explorations in ancient Africa and the Middle East and the account of Rome from Romulus onwards. By Chapter 6 the book is dealing fully with Europe (more precisely, with the European civilisation that has emerged in Western Europe). This chapter, covering the pre-Columbian age to the early 1400s, is entitled: 'One world, many traditions. Elite culture and popular cultures: cosmopolitan norms and regional variations'. It leads to Part III of the book: 'Continuity and change: new ways of looking at man and the world', which brings us, in six chapters, to 'the Enlightenment'. There is a welcome absence of the 'medieval/modern' antithetical scheme. One of the six chapters, dealing with the 1500s to 1700s, is called '"The Republic of Letters" as a virtual and virtuous world against a divided world'. Part IV, which concludes the book, is headed: 'Continuity and change: new forms of consumption and communication'. It includes, as a penultimate chapter, 'The "Decline of the Occident"—the loss of a dream? From the nineteenth to the twentieth century'.

Inevitably, the historian writing a 'cultural history of Europe' must sketch out the preceding historical background in the Age of Transition between Rome and Europe. That done, he will describe how, in the century and a half after 950, two international bodies, the Church and the aristocracy, founded European civilisation and culture. Having established the resulting scenario, his task then is to give good story-form to the following nine hundred years of cultural development in a society which had a more or less shared culture and a number of strong diverse cultures. This certainly involves, as in Rietbergen's book, narrating the successive modifications of the more or less common culture: that is to say, of 'European culture'. Rietbergen's story-form consists, as we have seen, in dividing this process of change into major titled phases with subordinate sections—all the captions having reference to Western Europe as a whole—and organising the historical material to support and elucidate this thematic structure. However, this is to treat 'European culture' as a constant entity changing only in nature, whereas in fact it was also an entity changing in size or quantity—growing from a tenuous beginning to an ultimate density and massiveness.

It seems to me, therefore, that there is advantage to be gained by substituting for the notional title 'a cultural history of Europe', 'the history of European culture'. The latter is more likely to yield a story-form which, besides being more concrete and dramatic, will do justice to the dimension I have just mentioned. It is difficult to write 'the history of European culture' without noticing that the culture in question not only, in successive phases, modified its nature (as in Rietbergen's account), but also, in successive phases, grew. So the resulting narrative would combine with Rietbergen's account of its change by modification, a similarly phased narrative of its growth.

Let me illustrate the 'growth' aspect this way. In 1950 new comprehensive dictionaries of the principal languages of Western Europe, from Norwegian to Italian, would all have contained the following words—or equivalents for them as the case might be:

sonata, sonnet, courtier, gentleman, bourgeois, transubstantiation, modern, Mass, sensibility, grace, jazz, interesting, botany, impression, mercantilism, blitzkrieg, romantic, rationalist, baroque, Freudian, Marxism, opera, psychoanalysis, coffee, café, potato, boyar, Protestant.

I have chosen those twenty-eight words fairly randomly with the year 1950 in mind. They represent, as a sample, the culmination of the common culture which West Europeans had created over a thousand years. All are 'words of European culture' in the sense that, having originated in Latin or in a single West European vernacular—at home or overseas—they entered the vocabularies of all the principal West European languages. They did so gradually over the thousand years. Dictionaries of those languages published a hundred, two hundred or four hundred years before 1950 would have contained progressively fewer of such shared and borrowed words (and concepts). Together, from the start, such words formed a specifically European language, reflecting the specifically European worldview and experience. And as their number grew through the centuries, that common language, peculiar to no West European nation or group of nations, and unknown to every other civilisation, also grew.

That is a graphic way of indicating the growth and formation of 'European culture' as distinct from the cultures of Europe's constituent nations. Tenuous at the start, it grew gradually in extent and depth, reaching its full dimension in the final decades. Formed in Western Europe, it expanded after 1500 into Europe Overseas while simultaneously and increasingly receiving input from that quarter. Present from the start in the nearer parts of Eastern Europe, from the seventeenth century onwards it penetrated the remoter parts. (In 1950 all the words cited above would have been also present in the dictionaries of the principal East European languages.)

In the first 500 years, the international Latin Church, in its many aspects and successive phases, was the principal agent shaping European culture. Secondary in that age, but predominant after 1500, was another agent: the cultural interaction of the West European nations. Their political and economic interaction contributed to making Europe. The same is true, only more fundamentally, of their cultural interaction. Consequently, the portrayal of this creative interaction of the nations in the cultural sphere is even more intrinsic to a true, clear history of Europe than its portrayal in those other spheres.

The interaction that formed and increased the common European culture was only to a small degree casual. Mainly it consisted of successive cultural leaderships

by peoples or nations which were experiencing high creative periods. The first of these 'overflows of innovation', affecting all of Western Europe, occurred in Northern France, which was the core of the French kingdom and contained the Norman homeland. That pan-European cultural radiation lasted from the late 1100s to the early 1300s. The Columbian Age opened with Italian cultural leadership and concluded with that of Germany from the 1830s onwards. Between these two leaderships, France with Italy in the later seventeenth century, and France with Great Britain through the eighteenth into the early nineteenth, exerted the leading formative influences. In each case, the cultural force leading and shaping European culture—and in the later centuries also that of Europe Overseas—was an emanation from a high creative period in the nation or nations in question.

Each of the national or bi-national cultural leaderships had different emphases, deriving from the differing emphases of the creative activity in the leading nations. But that apart, they were alike in nature and in operation. In each case, successively, the national culture or cultures in question achieved leadership because there was widespread willing acceptance of the new things they were producing. More precisely, among the culturally formative elites of Western Europe—and in the later centuries also of Europe Overseas—these innovations struck a chord that was felt to be timely and valuable. As a by-product of the cultural leadership, the contemporary life and affairs of the nation or nations in question drew general attention, had general resonance. Finally, when each leadership ended, its contributions to European culture remained present and operative. They interacted with the contributions of the succeeding leadership. Thus layer piled upon layer, increasing and deepening the common culture.

Moreover, from the fifteenth century onwards, the national cultural leaderships were also the central dynamism by which the shared culture of the Occident modified its nature. Embodying successive versions of 'the modern', they expressed the way the European elites, in successive periods, generally wanted to go. Given that the central drive of the age was towards the legal and material empowerment of individuals and of new collectives of individuals, each of the leaderships, successively, advanced this cause. The Italians gave the drive its main initial impetus, the Germans led its culminating phase. The Age of Reason led by France and Britain equipped it, as we have seen, for the final spurt.[20]

Beginning with that of Northern France, the five leaderships were accompanied by important secondary contributions from other peoples or nations to the pan-European culture. These contributions, being contemporary with the leading formative force, shared its tendency or supplemented it. The radiation of theology, philosophy, architecture, knightly romance and methods of land management from Northern France was accompanied by that of courtly love and its poetry from Southern France and of commercial methods and legal learning from Italy. In the launching, under Italian leadership, of Europe's post-Columbian age, Flanders, Germany, Spain and Portugal participated. As Italy then, in the course of the seventeenth century, was joined in cultural predominance by France, the Dutch added a timely contribution. The ensuing French and English-Scottish leadership was accompanied by a continuing contribution from Italy and a significant cultural overflow from Switzerland. England in the nineteenth century accepted Germany as its principal cultural mentor, while continuing, along with France, to enrich the meaning of Europeanness.

Occasional minor contributions to the common culture came from virtually all the nations of Europe. But for the purposes of European cultural history, the main scheme of interaction, just outlined, constitutes a *sine qua non* of the story. What, after all, was 'Europe', as a distinctive civilisation and culture, but a group of peoples subscribing to a set of common rules which they gradually modified by interaction, and sharing a nuclear common culture which they enlarged and modified by interaction? It follows that a history of Europe, to be true and clear, must make obvious and recount these essential characteristics of its subject.

[20] Rietbergen seems to represent European culture as a given which was modified by a succession of impulses of many different kinds. He fails to narrate its simultaneous growth in extent and depth, and the dynamic of successive national 'overflows' which both induced this growth and led the modifications.

6

The Final, German Phase Of Europe

> "The cultural relativism of present-day American academics (according to which, cultures can be judged only by their own standards) was thought up by the 18th century German philosopher Herder, and even the inconsistency of today's academics in attacking the elitism of their own high culture is unoriginal—that, too, was Herder's stance."
>
> John M. Ellis, *New York Times*, 26 April 1998

In Seattle, in 1995, when I was studying contemporary American society, I read *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis Of The Vietnam War* by Colonel Harry G. Summers Jr of the US War College. In his Introduction Summers writes that "it might seem incongruous that much of the analysis in both Parts I and II will be drawn from a 150-year-old source—Clausewitz's *On War*. But the fact is that this is the most modern source available... In military science *On War* is still the seminal work. As the late Bernard Brodie observed: ...'most of the contemporary books [do] not, as Clausewitz does, have much to say of relevance to the Vietnam war'." Summers continues:

> "Clausewitz can also assist us in understanding North Vietnam's actions. Although we usually ascribe their actions to Mao's 'people's war' theories, it is important to note that as an avowed Marxist-Leninist state they also drew from Clausewitz. In September 1971 Illinois State University Professors Donald E. Davis and Walter S.G.Kohn drew attention to the influence of Clausewitz on V. I. Lenin and detailed Clausewitz's contribution to Marxist-Leninist military thought. More recently in June 1980, Wilhelm von Schramm, one of Germany's foremost authorities on Clausewitz, noted Clausewitz's influence on...Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as well as on Lenin... Clausewitz's theories (in distorted form) 'became part of the dogma of Leninism... Thus Clausewitz attracted more and more interest first in Moscow, where the study of his works was made a compulsory subject at the Frunse Military Academy. From there his fame radiated to...China. When Chancellor Helmut Schmidt visited Peking he was told of the high esteem which Mao Tse-tung held for the German philosopher of war."

My interest at the time was in the 'postwestern'[21] America that had developed after the American government had justified the atomic massacres of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During this half-century the United States had become the dominant cultural force in the West. The passage I have quoted recalled the earlier preponderance of German cultural influence. The references to Lenin reminded me of two of his other German connections apart from Marx and Engels. It is probable that the Bolshevik revolution occurred and succeeded because the German authorities provided the sealed train that brought Lenin from Zurich to St Petersburg, and then supported the Bolsheviks financially. Then, because Marx and Engels had left Lenin no clear guidance on how to construct the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', he found a useful model in the German *Kriegswirtschaft*, or 'economy organised for war', which he had observed at close quarters while living in Zurich. But the Summers passage also presented, in a surprising context, evidence of continuing German intellectual influence in the United States. Alerted by it, I became attentive, during the remainder of my time in the US, to the German cultural impact in America during the period that I was studying, the 1930s to the 1990s.

Allan Bloom, in his book *The Closing Of The American Mind* (1987), has a chapter on 'The German Connection'. It deals with the influence of German thinkers—Freud, Weber, Nietzsche, Heidegger—on the teaching of anthropology in American universities in the decades after World War II.

In the 1970s and 80s the French 'postmodernist' philosophers were much in vogue in the American universities. From the summary of their thinking by two American academics, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, I learned that Nietzsche and Heidegger were the principal philosophical influences on these French thinkers.

By far the biggest ethnic group in the US are Americans of German ancestry; in the Census of 1990 they numbered fifty-eight million.

Robert Oppenheimer and Enrico Fermi, the scientists who contributed most to the making of the first atomic bomb, studied physics under Max Born in Göttingen. Wernher von Braun designed the rockets with which NASA launched vehicles into space and landed a man on the moon.

In the US in 1950 almost all the heads of psychiatric departments in the medical schools were Freudians. In the US in the twentieth century the foreign politician most frequently mentioned was Adolf Hitler.

Felix Frankfurter, an Austrian immigrant, was President Franklin D. Roosevelt's legal adviser in the shaping of the New Deal legislation which transformed the American state. Later, in 1943, as a judge of the Supreme Court, his dissenting judgement in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* began the dilution, to the point of disappearance, of the privileged position of Judaeo-Christian religion in US law

Wilhelm Reich, whose Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin pioneered 'sexual liberation', continued to promote this gospel in the US after 1939, and almost lived to see it triumphing, not only there, but throughout the West.

Those were some of the German presences in the US since the 1930s which, alerted by Summers, I noted during the remainder of my American stay. But the ultimate effect of reading Summers on Clausewitz was a train of thought, and a conclusion, which matured when I returned to Europe. The remarkable, multi-

[21] My intention in choosing this term then—and using it in subsequent writing—was to make clear that I was referring to a new proto-civilisation that had rejected not only European civilisation in Europe, but also its modified American version as this had existed to the 1940s. Inasmuch, however, as the latter was indeed a version of the former, 'post-European' could equally and more pungently fill the bill.

faceted creative power which characterised the German nation between the late eighteenth century and the middle of the twentieth has not been adequately seen, presented or understood. The still-continuing German intellectual influences which I had noticed in the United States were spill-overs from that innovative surge into the period after it had ended.

There is, indeed, a common perception that most of the nineteenth century witnessed great German creative achievement: this is implied by the occasional description of the century as 'the German century'. But the nineteenth century was only the central part of a German high creative period which began before that and continued after it. Moreover, what people have in mind by 'German', in the phrase 'the German century', is not the nation as a whole, but only the part of it that lived in Prussia or, after 1870, in the new Reich. The Austrian part, which produced three of the most influential Germans of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud, Theodor Herzl and Adolf Hitler, and an influential *avant-garde* in several fields, is allocated to a separate compartment in minds as well as history books.

There are two fundamental reasons for the lack of clarity surrounding the 'German phenomenon', as compared with other similar national phenomena in European history. Unlike the other instances, it occurred in a nation which was not, either at the start or subsequently, coterminous with clear geographical and historical boundaries (like Italy), or with a national state (like England, France or Spain). On the contrary, when the German high creative period started, the nation lived in a territory whose boundaries had been changing for centuries. It contained three hundred sovereign entities, several of which behaved like other European sovereign states. Most of the nation was within the shadowy Reich or Holy Roman Empire, parts of it—East Prussia, for example, which made such a large contribution—outside it. The Austrian part, where the Kaiser resided, led the musical aspect of the creative upsurge. But it was situated in a multinational state which lay partly outside the Reich, and in which most of the inhabitants were non-Germans. Consequently, when the creative movement got under way throughout the nation—with some parts in the vanguard and others lagging—it was not perceived as a single phenomenon. Political boundaries took precedence in perception over the national ones.

Secondly, and this is a surprising fact, German historians have never viewed the initial renaissance of roughly 1770-1815 as a single, many-faceted phenomenon. They have not treated it as they have regularly treated the equally many-faceted and politically subdivided 'Italian Renaissance'. They have eschewed narrating even the non-Austrian part of it as a connected whole. Such unity as they perceive and present concerns almost exclusively the literary movement around Goethe and Schiller and its occasional involvement with the philosophical movement. The other elements of the emerging renaissance—mainly music, philosophy, classical scholarship, statecraft, education and military science—are treated more or less as distinct matters. The only partial exception is when all

these elements—the music excepted—come together in the reform of the Prussian state after 1807. The net result is that the general cultural upsurge in Germany from the 1770s onwards is unnamed in the history books. And nameless, it remains unnoticed and unexamined: as in its beginnings, so also, necessarily, in its development and its end.

This obscuring of a defining feature of modern German history leaves a related gap in our understanding of the modern history of the West; in particular because the German high creative period issued in a cultural leadership of the West which lasted, actively, up to the middle of the twentieth century. Its principal contributions lay in perception and knowledge of the human and material worlds (philosophy, social theory, the physical and human sciences); in music, technology, methods of education and of warfare; and (towards the end) in painting, architecture and cinema. That the German leadership lasted until the mid-century has been obscured by a developing habit of referring to the twentieth as 'the American century'. In its second half, certainly, that was the case. There was also, after the First World War, a rising tide of American cultural influence in Europe. But during those years, into the 1930s and the early 1940s, the German impact on western civilisation remained immense. More to the point, in its formative influence and its many-sidedness, there was simply nothing comparable emanating from any other nation.

It was partly an impact by accumulation—the continuing active presence in western civilisation of emanations from the German nation during the previous century. But it was also, in considerable part, the fresh contemporary radiation of German thought, scholarship, language, persons, science, technology, education, political ideology and methods of warfare.

To illustrate this, I present, below, lists of words, persons and things, of German provenance, which, in the period 1900-1960, had presence, resonance or formative impact throughout the West. In the matter of language influence, reference is to the English-speaking countries in particular. The lists are far from exhaustive. Where ambiguity may occur, an asterisk indicates that only the word (or words) comes from Germany, e.g. the *Enlightenment** ; a cross, that only the thing does, e.g. *funicular+*, a German invention.

Adler, aesthetics, allemande+, angst, anthroposophy, anti-semitism*, aspirin, Bach, Baden Baden, Bayreuth, Beethoven, Benz, bildungsroman, biology,* Bismarck, botany,* Bunsen burner, Childhood,+ Christmas tree, chromatography, Clausewitz, Communism+, Daimler, Decline of the West, Deutsche Grammophon, diesel, DIN, ding an sich, Dresden china, eau de Cologne, Einstein, Engels, Enlightenment*, ersatz, existentialism, expressionism, Faust, festschrift, Flying Dutchman, Frege, Freud, garden dwarfs, Geiger counter, gemütlichkeit, gesamtkunstwerk, goetterdaemmerung, goose-step, Graf Spee, Grimm's Fairy Tales, hamburger, Hamburg-Amerika Line, Handel, Hegel, Heidelberg, Herder, heroin, Herzl, Hindemith, Hindenburg, hinterland, Hitler, homburg, homoeopathy, homosexual*, id, idealism,* irony*, Kant, Kaiser, kindergarten, kitsch, Krafft-

Ebing, Leica cameras, Leipzig Fair, leitmotiv, lied, Ludendorff, luminal, Rosa Luxemburg, Marx, Marxism, masochism*, Mein Kampf, menthol, Merry Widow, mesmerise*, metronome, Mommsen, motor car, Nibelungen, Niebuhr, Nietzsche, nihilism*, Norddeutscher Lloyd, obscurantist*, ohm, Parsifal, philistine, pocket battleship, postcard, protoplasm, psychoanalysis, Ranke, Rapallo, Rathenau, Reich (Wilhelm), Reichstag, relativity theory, Remarque, reparations, The Ring, Röntgen, romanticism, sadism,* Schäfer inkwells, Schiller, Schliemann, Schopenhauer, self-expression, semester, seminar, Schlieffen Plan, Schubert, Silent Night, social democracy, social welfare+, Spengler, Strauss (Johann), Student Prince, sturm und drang, sublimation, suspended railway, telegraph, telephone,* thermos, Tirpitz, traffic-lights, U-boat, Vienna Circle (modern music), Vienna School (of psychotherapy / economics / jurisprudence), Wagner, Walhalla, waltz, Weber (Max), Weimar, x-rays, Zeppelin, zinc*, zionism, zither.

And again:

Abwehr, Adenauer, Adorno, Afrikakorps, allopathy,* Alzheimer, anschluss, Arendt, Aryan, Auschwitz, autobahn, Belsen, Benjamin, Bloch (Ernst), BMW, blitzkrieg, von Braun, Brecht, bunker, cartel,*, chromosome, civilian massacre, caffein, Cyclon B, dachshund, diktat, dive-bomber, dobermann, doppelgänger, Dornier, Dresden, economic miracle, European Economic Community*, European Single Market* (both originally Nazi terms), euthanasia, Fahrenheit, flak, Felix Frankfurter, Frankfurt Fair, Frankfurt School, Fröbel, Führer, gestalt, Gestapo, gleichschaltung, Goebbels, Göring, Guderian, Heidegger, Heisenberg, Hess, Hesse, historicism, Husserl, IG Farben, insulin,* Jaspers, kilohertz, kraft paper, Krupp, kursaal, lager, lebensraum, Lilli Marlen, Luftwaffe, Magic Flute, Mann, Marcuse, Max Planck, Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, methylated spirits, Mercedes, Messerschmidt, morphine, Mozart, Munich Agreement, Musil, the Ninth, nuclear fission, Nuremberg Trials, panzer, paraffin, Popper, Porsche, quantum mechanics, racist national socialism, realpolitik, Rilke, Rommel, rottweiler, saccharin, schadenfreude, schmalz, Schönberg, Schumann, sex shop, Siegfried Line, Siemens, Speer, sound film, stalag, spectral analysis, Steiner (Rudolf), Superman, swastika, television broadcasting, Ulbricht, V1, V2, veronal, Volkswagen, Wehrmacht, Waldorf schools, Weill (Kurt), weltanschauung, weltschmerz, Wittgenstein, Zeiss, zeitgeist.

Additionally, in film,

UFA, Murnau, Lang, Ophuls, Marlene Dietrich, Pabst, Wiene, von Stroheim;

in the cult of nature and the open air,

knapsack, rucksack, youth movement, youth hostel, funicular+, abseil, langlauf, lederhose, wanderlust, natural medicine+, naturism*, nudism+;

in music,

Fritz Kreisler, Richard Tauber, Bechstein, melodeon, accordion, travelling 'German bands', Lehar, Offenbach, Richard Strauss, Webern, Carl Maria von Weber, Stockhausen;

in physics, mathematics, astronomy—mostly with laws, phenomena, etc. named after them,

Gauss, Nernst, Born, Riemann, Döppler, Schrödinger, Fraunhofer, Stern, Gerlach, Wolf, Meitner, Schwarzschild, Klein, Kirchhoff, Clausius, Helmholtz, Mossbauer, Lenz, Pauli;

in chemistry and biochemistry,

Fischer (Hans, Franz and Emil), Haber, Meyerhof, Windaus, Hahn, Strassmann, Staudinger;

in medicine—in some cases with procedures or appliances named after them,

Basedow, Von Behring, Domagk, Ehrlich, Forssmann, Förster, Hahnemann, Koch, Langerhans, Löffler, Priessnitz, Rehn, Semmelweiss, Schaudinn, Sertürner, Virchow;

in art history,

Winckelmann, Kugler, Burckhardt, Riegl, Wölfflin, Warburg;

in classical scholarship,

Wilamovitz-Moellendorff, Pauly-Wissowa, Norden, Thesaurus Linguae Graecae/Latinae; Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum;

in modern art and architecture,

Kokoschka, Kandinsky, Nolde, Marc, Grosz, Beckmann, Klimt, Klee, Barlach, Behrens, Bauhaus, Gropius, van der Rohe, Taut, Mendelssohn, Scharoun;

in theology,

Schleiermacher, Barth, Harnach, Tillich, Rahner, Bonhoeffer;

in economics,

Schacht, Freiburg School, neoliberalism, Eucken, Hayek, Röpke, Rustow, Erhard, social market economy;

in linguistics,

Wilhelm Grimm, Wilhelm von Humboldt, sound shift, Bopp, Zeuss, Paul, Leipzig School;

in food and drink,

strudel, wiener schnitzel, sauerkraut, frankfurter, berliner, schnapps, beer garden, rollmops, pumpernickel, liebfraumilch.

The spread of Marxism from the latter part of the nineteenth century was the first instance in which German cultural influence took an overtly political form. Inevitably, therefore, as well as winning considerable adherence, it evoked active opposition and counter-measures. This was a case of formative cultural influence operating in two ways, positively and negatively. In both ways, but more in the latter than the former, Marxism, reinforced by the Bolshevik revolution, partly shaped the West during the twentieth century. Another, if lesser impact with double effect occurred with Hitlerian national socialism after 1933. But this time, except in some enduring ethical respects, the influence was positive only for a few years before being annulled by counteraction.

During the war years 1939-45 German means and methods of warfare exerted far-reaching influence. Subsequently, German cultural presence in the West remained strong; over a century of cultural and intellectual 'Germanisation' could not simply evaporate. And it was still being added to. In philosophy (Heidegger, Jaspers, Wittgenstein), economic theory and practice (neo-liberalism, social market economy), political theory (the Frankfurt School, Karl Popper, Hannah Arendt), and theology—predominant in the Second Vatican Council—German creativity continued. But it came from Germans who had been born before the war, and many of whom were in exile. Not only as cultural leadership of the West, but also

as a a high period of national creativity, the 'German phenomenon' was passing into history. The cultural leadership of the West had passed to the USA.

Mainly because the German high creative period occurred when it did, it had several characteristics that distinguished it from the previous phenomena of its kind in European history. It impinged on all parts of the globe. It had a substantial Jewish component, as the names Marx, Freud, Herzl and Einstein pre-eminently exemplify. Its end coincided roughly with the end of the so-called Modern Age and was not followed by another European cultural leadership. In the America that took over that leading role, a second rejection of European civilisation was under way; this time, unlike its largely rhetorical forerunner of the 1770s, actual and decisive. The only notable external cultural influences that would impinge there during the next half-century would be from Japan and Latin America. Thus the German high creative period, both chronologically and in its particular emphases and colouring, represented the culmination of 'modernity' and—until its last years—European civilisation.

In those last years, from 1933 onwards, it left Europe behind it. Like Bolshevik Russia, to whose emergence Germany had so decisively contributed, it launched into 'Post-Europe'. In a hectic rush of innovation, under national socialist auspices, it rejected and attempted to replace many of the values and ethical rules that characterised European civilisation. Both in this sense, and in the sense that the great war begun by Nazi Germany resulted in a German national catastrophe and virtual creative paralysis, the German high creative period culminated in national suicide.

But it was not only a matter of German suicide. In the course of Hitler's attempt to transform German cultural leadership into political dominance of a united Europe[22] and the counter-effort to prevent this, Europe committed suicide. For about twenty years after the war's end, this was not obvious: material reconstruction and, in a few countries, a flurry of intellectual and artistic creativity veiled the truth. But this over, the truth was out. Europe had ceased to be what it had been and signified historically: *an autonomous cultural and political entity composed of interacting autonomies, which in the continual recreation of itself shaped and reshaped surrounding world.*[23] It had become a ghost still named Europe, subsisting as a unified paralysis, its thousand-year-old civilisation replaced by a post-European chaos of values and ethics emanating from the USA. In sum, the 'German phase' of European civilisation culminated in Europe terminating itself and passing into the definitive, American form of the post-European condition which, in the West, first France, then Germany had briefly pioneered.

[22] Similarly, Napoleon had attempted a political implementation of the existing French cultural leadership on the Continent.

[23] Once again, the structural similarity with what we call 'Ancient Greece'—meaning Hellas, in southern Greece—is worth recalling. Its end was not as swift and decisive as that of Europe, but it is fair to say that, after the takeover by Macedon, its remaining existence was as good as nominal. It was little more than a ghost of itself.

7
Euro-America Becomes Amerope

> "The nineteenth century was intensely preoccupied with the self, to the point of neurosis. During the very decades of the most sustained campaign for mastery of the world ever undertaken, the bourgeois devoted much … anxious time to introspection."
>
> Peter Gay

In 1895, in his Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge, Lord Acton said:

> "Soon after 1850 several of the most intelligent men in France, struck by the arrested increase of their own population and by the telling statistics from Further Britain [the USA], foretold the coming preponderance of the English race. They did not foretell, what none could then foresee, the still more sudden growth of Prussia, or that the three most important countries of the globe would, by the end of the century, be those that chiefly belonged to the conquests of the Reformation."

They would also, all three of them, be nations of Germanic origin. If the USA was 'Further Britain', Anglo-Saxon Britain had begun its career as Further Germany. The emergence of America, Britain and Germany as 'the most important countries' of 'the globe' was the outcome, by 1900, of the movement westward of the Germanic peoples into the lands of the western Roman Empire.

Historically, then, they were sister nations. They were also partners in what Peter Gay in *The Naked Heart* (1995) correctly calls "the most sustained campaign for mastery of the world ever undertaken". But given the nature of that goal, they were simultaneously competitors. It was a race, spurred by Darwinism, which only one of them could win.

The 'world' they wanted to master was the totality of physical circumstances. beginning with vulnerable, mortal bodies, in which they consciously existed as nations and as human beings. Mastery of those circumstances meant collective and individual ability to exist and act maximally in them and by means of them. Potentially, it included control of the earth's lands and peoples and of the heavens above. Inevitably, then, success in the enterprise would involve either America, Britain or Germany mastering the other two.

'Mastery' is a limitless goal. A civilisation, on the other hand, is limited by ethical —moral and customary—rules which together define 'civilised behaviour' for the people in question. In Europe's case, these limits derived from the foundation of the civilisation in the eleventh century. In the opening sentences of *The First European Revolution*, R.I. Moore describes the historic 'fusion' from which the ethical limits were drawn. He writes:

> "Europeans, for as long as they have been Europeans…have cherished the belief…that their civilization is the product of the fusion of the rational and humanistic civilization of Greece and Rome with the spiritual insights and moral strengths of the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition. This belief, like much else

that is characteristic of European civilization, is a product of the eleventh and twelfth centuries..."

It was, then, inevitable that Europe's drive for physical mastery of the world would, in time, strain against the ethical rules about legitimate action derived from that founding fusion. And ultimately, if the rulers of one or other of the associated and competing nations judged world mastery to be a value superior to that of the inherited rules, they would see them as intolerably restrictive and disregard them. More precisely, they would replace them with post-European rules which allowed greater power to themselves collectively, to other collectives useful for their enterprise, and, selectively, to individuals, insofar as seemed useful.

In Europe's drive towards world mastery there is an intriguing pattern to be noticed in the division of labour, as in a relay race, among the leading nations. Because the enterprise was Faustian, it was appropriate that, in the nineteenth century, as it was clearly heading for a decisive climax, Europe should pass the baton, so to speak, to the nation that had created the Faust legend. Europe had rendered Germany a likely candidate for the culminating phase by making it the main theatre of the extremely destructive Thirty Years' War. In the ensuing hundred years, Germany, its creativity maimed in every sphere but church music, architecture and statecraft, became a provincial receptacle into which the most advanced high culture of Europe flowed. If there was any condition in which 'what Europe needs next' could be observed, and the observation acted on, that was it. And indeed Germany became, for the best part of a hundred years, the principal supplier of what Europe believed it needed. In the end, however, Germany did not manage to realise Europe's Faustian dream. It was realised, not by any nation of homeland Europe but by the overseas amalgam of European nations which a German cartographer had named 'America' after an Italian navigator.

On the face of it, an American cultural leadership succeeding the German one would have been in the order of things. It would have been a continuation of the succession of national cultural leaderships which had characterised the European world, at home and overseas, for centuries. However, two factors combined to make it, when it did occur, qualitatively different from its predecessors. Because it was propagating a fundamental change of ethical rules, it was not only a cultural leadership but also a civilisational one. And because it has involved a political and military overlordship, complete with military bases throughout Europe and armed interventions there, it has had an imperialistic dimension. The victory of the US in World War II brought into being the second or new American Empire, with the nations of Western Europe included in it as client states; or what the Romans euphemistically called 'friends and allies'.

Hitler wanted a *joint* mastery of the world by Germany and Britain, but Britain opted instead for an American partnership. The former, if it had happened,

would have been a temporary arrangement, issuing in the supremacy of Germany or Britain. The latter was only in outer form—while the crumbling British Empire lasted—a joint mastery. It issued in an American supremacy with Britain as chief assistant. In the 'contest of three' with which the century had begun, America, with the help of Soviet Russia, came out on top.

I referred above to the present American empire as 'second or new'. That implies that there was a 'first' or 'old' empire. This is another instance where, it seems to me, the historian who aspires to narrating a historical phenomenon 'as it really was' must—while recording the protagonists' description of it—also judge whether their designation was accurate, and if not, himself provide a designation that describes the phenomenon accurately.

Hugh Brogan in *The Penguin History Of The United States Of America* fulfils the first of those requirements when he is narrating the foundation of the United States. He writes:

"Having got rid of the British, the Americans had to cope with the difficulties that had baffled George III and his ministers. The victorious rebels had one advantage: *the American Empire (a favourite phrase of the time)* was smaller, more compact and more homogeneous than the British, so there was much less inducement to break it up." (*Italics added.*)

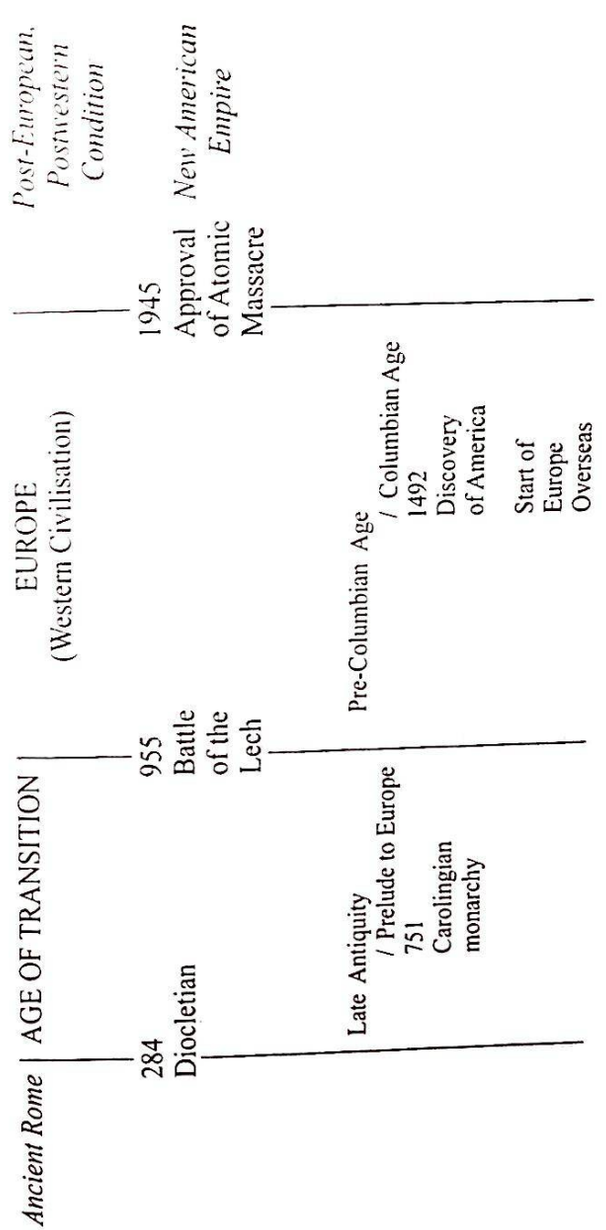
Brogan also quotes a passage in which George Washington, after describing with pleasure the scenes of reconstruction after the War of Independence, concludes: "In short, the foundation of a great empire is laid".

However, in his subsequent narrative, Brogan—and in this he is unfortunately typical of other European historians of the US—falls down on the second requirement of 'real' history. As the USA expands, incorporating conquered Native American nations and a large part of Mexico, he fails to describe this as the growth and establishment of an empire—and indeed, to judge from what I have quoted, of an intended one. Uncritically, he takes at face value, and reflects, the politic avoidance of the term by the empire-builders and their habitual profession of 'anti-imperialism', except in the years of overt overseas imperialism around 1900. Quite different is the practice of those European historians who with good reason discuss the 'Athenian empire', although Athens never so described itself, or the 'informal empire' acquired by republican Rome before it became formally an empire. And again, historians have frequently, and with justice, written of 'empire' in accounts of that other professedly 'anti-imperialist' power, the Soviet Union. So it is a matter of bringing the historical treatment of the US into line with existing realist practice and ending the exceptionalism with regard to it.

'Euro-American' once aptly described the western world. In view of the changes that have occurred in the relationship between the two elements, 'Ameropean' has become a more apt description. Far from living at a 'postmodern' tail-end of a Euro-American story, we are pioneers of the Ameropean, living in the first Ameropean age.

It is an age unaware of its own history because its reigning ideology is anti-historical. 'Since 1945 we have overcome history, moved outside it, and live in a present shaped autonomously and uniquely by ourselves. The things that used to happen in history no longer happen to us, its categories no longer apply'—is the very 'American' doctrine conveyed by rulers and ideologues on both sides of the Atlantic. But since sooner or later this age, too, will be historicised, one might as well start doing it now! In these last few pages I have been sketching, experimentally, what the result might look like. In Part Two I will continue to do the same.

THE NEW HISTORY OF EUROPE



PART TWO

THE POST-EUROPEAN CONDITION

"We still have a special weapon, don't we? A weapon that will change everything?"

Walther Funk, German Minister for Economics, to
Albert Speer in the last months of World War II

"There were whispered arguments between our parents while we watched TV—arguments about changing the rules, we gathered, that applied to all of us, the dads and moms as well as the kids..."

Naomi Wolf on San Francisco in 1970

8 The Change Of Age Perceived

"In very many different forms western civilisation has always been founded on the primary value of the individual, as opposed to the totality celebrated by other traditions."

Claudio Magris

"...the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions."

The American Declaration Of Independence

On 18 August 1945, Norman Cousins, editor of the New York magazine *The Saturday Review*, published an editorial entitled 'Modern Man Is Obsolete'. Reflecting on the atomic bombing of Hiroshima which had occurred twelve days previously, he wrote: "It should not be necessary to prove that on August 6, 1945 a new age is born". He saw Hiroshima as an awesome revelation that human science had outstripped human reason and control. Cousins was the forerunner of a line of observers, first in the US, later in Europe, who in the third quarter of the twentieth century, on various grounds, concluded that the so-called 'modern' age had ended and a new age had begun.

For the American sociologist Bernard Rosenberg, 'postmodern man' was manifested in the 'massification' of people; for Peter F. Drucker, a German immigrant, by the rise of a post-Cartesian view of reality. In 1964 the English historian Geoffrey Barraclough perceived postmodernity in the globalisation of human life and its transformation by technology. The new age, he believed, had been approaching since 1900; from 'around 1955' it had fully arrived. "Its emblem is the mushroom cloud high above Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the nuclear pile in which the old certitudes were consumed forever."[1]

In the subsequent half-century there was widespread assent to the message of these pioneering writers and of the French philosophers who developed the theme. There emerged a common perception that the West had entered a 'postmodern' age of European or western civilisation. What is remarkable is that in all this 'reading of the signs of the times' the evidence for the *demise* of European or western civilisation on both sides of the Atlantic, and the post-European nature of the present age, has been ignored. For just as the third quarter of the twentieth century showed unmistakeable signs of a new age, it also showed the rulers of the West, finally and with trumpet blasts, rejecting European civilisation and proclaiming a new, superior one.

This is a change much more far-reaching than a mere change of age. It has transformed the normative framework of human life and action from San Francisco to Stockholm and Naples. It impinges on us daily.

[1] Referred to here are Bernard Rosenberg and David White, eds, *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts In America*, New York: Free Press, 1957, pp.4-5; Peter F. Drucker, *The Landmarks Of Tomorrow*, London: Heinemann, 1959, Introduction; and Geoffrey Barraclough, *An Introduction To Contemporary History*, London: Watts, 1966, pp. 2-3, 9, 15-16, 35.

9
The Exit From Civilisation

> "The epochal change that we are living through, and that is taking perceptible shape, displays analogies... with the end of the ancient world."
>
> Claudio Magris[2]

Compared with a historical 'age', which is a reality but a vague one, a civilisation is something precise.[3] Essentially, it is a community of rulers and ruled centred on cities, which subscribes to a hierarchical set of rules of behaviour and inhabits an extensive territory for a long time. It begins when rulers—lawmakers, appointed interpreters of the law, chief office-holders, in control of formidable wealth and force—indicate a society's rules with the intention of having them accepted. They do this by declaration, endorsement, abrogation, or permission. They act with a body of ethical preachers, or sometimes—as in a theocracy or a Marxist regime—partly fill that role themselves. The rules win general acceptance, partly because the rulers and preachers apply moral and material persuasion; but definitively and enduringly, because, read together with the set of values they express, the rules make sense. This 'making of sense' is the ultimate founding action: it is what makes a civilisation a social order that lasts.

The substance which the founders of western civilisation drew on for their new creation was provided by two previous operations of collective will. First, the Emperor Constantine, his successors and their subordinates transformed the ancient Roman rules by promoting the preaching and acceptance of the Christian precepts. Then, after the disruption caused by the passage from Roman to Germanic rulers in most of the West, the latter and the remaining Celtic rulers adopted, modified and promoted the Christian-Roman formula. On this basis, from around the year 1000, their successors in collaboration with churchmen brought European civilisation into being.

Barring an obliterating disaster, a civilisation ends when the rulers—the legitimate ones or successful usurpers or invaders—reject the reigning set of rules and, in alliance with a new body of preachers, support and promote new rules. It is no secret that, during the past half-century, the rulers of the West have withdrawn support definitively from many fundamental rules of social behaviour that characterised European civilisation; have endorsed the preaching of a new collection of rules; and have underpinned these by law, regulation and financial measures. Consider some of the old rules that were upheld and generally subscribed to in Europe and in Europe Overseas.

[2] All the quotations I use from Claudio Magris are taken from 'In Attesa del Destino' in *Dialoghi in Cattedrale*, Rome, Edizioni San Paolo, 1997.
[3] See note on p.55.

The West is a Christian civilisation of Christian nations. It worships the Christian God. Whether on religious grounds or for secular motives, national and international law generally support the Christian principles of interpersonal relations. Inter-state treaties and international law must be respected by the strong as well as the weak. Connection with Europe's Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian roots is maintained through the educational system and educated public discourse. An educated man knows Latin. Aesthetic criteria determine what is art. Frugality and chastity are admirable virtues. Reason takes precedence over feeling and desire. Indiscriminate killing of people is grievously wrong and strictly forbidden. Sexual relations are legitimate only in the monogamous betrothal and marriage of man and woman. Homosexual relations are unnatural and abhorrent. Abortion is a heinous crime, pornography a degrading evil which must be denied circulation. Adults do not foist sexual awareness on children. A girl who bears a child without a committed father is a disgrace. Human nudity and bodily intimacies are not for public display, though nudity may be represented decorously in art. Men's work and women's work are different. Men have authority and legal precedence over women; they accord women social pre-eminence and physical protection. Age has authority over youth.

These rules which characterised European civilisation, its modern period included, have been overthrown and replaced, as reigning principles of social behaviour, by a new array of governing norms. Many sins that breached the old rules have been taken, authoritatively, off the sin list, and new sins promulgated: racism, censorship, antisemitism, doubting the Holocaust Story, sexism and ageism, religious fundamentalism, terrorism (with an altered meaning), homophobia, heterosexism and sexual harassment, fatness and careless eating, smoking, unsafe sex and uninclusive language, environmental pollution and species murder.

Virtuous now are actions, thoughts or language of opposite tendency to these new vices, together with ecumenism, respect for unmarried mothers, diligent consumption, funding of AIDS research, and tolerance of pornography, abortion, and weapons of massacre (if subject to approved control). Not, or not yet, a new civilisation, the new collection of powerfully supported do's, don'ts and permissions granted clearly has the makings of one.

The prime movers of this breakaway were the post-war rulers of the United States of America. They launched the new set of rules domestically and backed their propagation where American power could reach. Like all new rules introduced by advancing empires, they were presented as liberations and favoured groups who had been previously subject or marginalised. To many people in some degree, and to the favoured categories in particular, the new dispensation seemed to be indeed what its preachers said it was—liberating and more just. Naturally, versions of the old norms have continued to hold sway in many regions and social pockets. But throughout the home and satellite territories of the New

American Empire of the West, the state and mass media powers, supported by the money power, overwhelmingly preach or endorse the new rules. Hundreds of millions of people live by them in varying degrees. It is much as was the case in the pre-Christian Roman empire with the required religious cult of the Emperor: within a framework of obeisance to the New American rules, pluralism of creed, culture and law is allowed.

Because of the western habit of regarding western events as 'world history', it seems advisable to remark that, in the past half-century, this radical overthrow of the inherited rules has been peculiar to the West. During the same period nothing like it has occurred in the various Muslim civilisations, in Japan or India, or in Buddhist Southeast Asia. The Chinese Cultural Revolution of the mid-1960s might have resulted in something similar if it had lasted. But that onslaught, launched by Mao Tse-tung on the 'Four Olds' of Chinese culture, was stopped after a few years by other Chinese leaders and is recalled today in China with a civilised shudder. This is not to say that the New American system of behavioural norms has not impinged disruptively on those old civilisations. It has, as did European civilisation for two or three centuries previously. But the rejection of the fundamental rules of its inherited civilisation is a unique characteristic of the West.

Many regard the famous 'Sixties' as the beginning of the new departure. The 1960s were indeed crucial, but the pioneers of the postmodern view—though they failed to perceive the radical nature of the break—were correct in locating it before that. For Cousins and Barraclough, Hiroshima symbolised the new departure, and so it did; but in a different way than either of them stated. Hiroshima was the symbolic turning point, not because of the act itself, but because of what happened in its wake. The democratically elected president of the West's leading power had ordered, and his subordinates had obediently executed, a great and sensational massacre. In the wake of it the president and his government did not repent, apologise or try to make amends. After ordering a similar slaughter three days later, they endorsed both massacres as virtuous acts (they had 'shortened the war, saved American soldiers' lives'). The American people, with few dissenters, and Western Europe acquiesced. The verbal endorsement passed into action: the West armed itself thenceforth with weapons made to kill indiscriminately. Doubly, therefore, the rulers of the West overthrew the ban on massacre that was a central rule of Western Christian, liberal, gentlemanly, and warrior ethics. That ban, though often breached in practice, had expressed the high value the West placed on the human individual, the West's Christian regard for mercy, and the special consideration for women and children incumbent on western men. (In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as in other wartime cities, the civilian population was mainly women, children and old people.)

The significance and effects of this were radical. Because westerners who

called themselves 'civilised' and 'liberal'[4] obliterated Hiroshima and then justified their action, 'civilised' and 'liberal' acquired new meanings that negated the old. The first rule of the new order was tacitly promulgated: *If it is believed that killing any number of civilians in their homes, and causing a much greater number to die slowly, will shorten a war, save soldiers from death in battle, or prevent Russian control of Western Europe, it is right to kill the civilians, immoral not to.* The advertised readiness to kill as did the 'merciless Indian savages' of the American Declaration of Independence was used to save Western Europe from Soviet domination and to keep the Free World intact.

As the nuclear arming of Amerope proceeded, so did the secret radiation experiments by government agencies—not revealed until the 1990s—on thousands of American and British citizens. The subjects, who were often unaware of the experiments being conducted on them, included, in the US, children in an orphanage, prisoners in a jail and terminally ill patients.

In sum, in the light of what had preceded it, the Sixties' revolution from above against western moral rules and social customs was an implementation in detail of a rejection already begun and of a new ethics already launched. The justification of the atomic massacres as morally legitimate was not the cause of the subsequent new rule-making. Rather, as an ethical reversal of a fundamental nature, it was the first act in that process, the opening of the sluice-gate of the post-European age.

Both an ordinary change of age such as occurs within a civilisation, and the ending and replacement of a civilisation, are societal changes. Both also amount in effect to a change of age, even if that produced by the civilisational replacement is of an extraordinary dimension. The important difference between the two is that the ordinary change of historical age comes about without any identifiable agent, while rulers consciously will the civilisational change. If, however, as in the mid-twentieth-century West, these are legitimate rulers acting within the forms of the existing order, their civilisational change presents a gradualist pattern not unlike that of the ordinary change of age. Prior to the decisive act of ruling will, there is an observable movement and indeed a straining towards it; after it, there is a process of piecemeal implementation of the new.

For this reason, when early observers of the 'postmodern' change, such as Drucker, Barraclough and George Steiner,[5] identify premonitory signs of a new age early in the century, and an overlap of old with new in its middle decades, their observations help to illuminate the civilisational change. There was, indeed, movement towards it after World War I; and for twenty years after World War II

[4] US journals, such as *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, which made a point of being doctrinally 'liberal', enthusiastically supported the bombing of Hiroshima.

[5] *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards The Redefinition Of Culture*: London, Faber, 1971, pp. 31, 42-3, 52-3.

many of the old rules still stood alongside the new ones. But this seeming gradualness masks the intervening act of decision.

Until around 1941-42, the rulers of the West apart from Nazi Germany, and in particular the United States government, had continued at least to pay lip-service to the European rules. But beginning in the mid-1940s, even the lip-service progressively ceased. From 1945 onwards, and with gathering momentum as the 1960s approached, the fundamental set of rules that made European civilisation the historical entity it was, was being rejected, piecemeal, by the rulers of the West. Lip-service persisted, as it still persists, to 'our western heritage'—the much admired ancestral museum; but for the framework of ethics and custom that had brought that heritage into being, the die had been cast, the decision taken.

The pattern of transition is graphically illustrated by the changing status of the Christian religion in the USA between 1930 and 1970. Until 1944 the definition of 'religion' in US law was essentially the Judaeo-Christian one. It rested on the ruling of the Supreme Court in 1931, in *United States v. Mackintosh*, that "the essence of religion is belief in a relation to God involving duties superior to those arising from any human relation". In 1944 a series of diluting rulings began which culminated in 1970 when, in *Welsh v. United States*, the Court ruled that a religion can be "moral or ethical beliefs about what is right or wrong...held with the strength of traditional religious convictions". (So held, in other words, a citizen's "moral or ethical beliefs" could henceforth constitute 'religion'.) What we see illustrated there, in effect, is the withdrawal of the contemporary Western Empire from implicit commitment to the Christian religion, and from recognising God as the supreme source of morality. It was in effect a cancelling of the decision made and implemented by the rulers of the Roman Empire in the years 313 AD and following—and inherited from them by Europe, at home and overseas.

A simultaneous feature of American life in the 1950s was pressure groups agitating for the removal of Christianity from its customary role in many civic communities and public institutions. The agitators were a newly ascendant wave of utopian progressives who, finding the party name 'Liberal' almost unused in American politics, called themselves 'liberals' with a small 'l'. They in fact constituted the fundamentalist wing of historical Liberalism, and as such, a creed and cast of mind which the American rulers and society had traditionally excluded from influence. Having emerged in the 1930s as advocates of the Big State that would help them realise radical individual freedom, they had endorsed Hiroshima and the nuclear programme. From a European perspective they were a kind of socialists. They dreamed of a new, clean, bright America, rid of the remaining oppressions of its European heritage: an unhistorical, just society of really sovereign, equal, happy and healthy individuals that would live by a better morality than the Christian one and worship no God. To this end, they aimed to take over, in conjunction with the Big

State, the civic ethical function that the Protestant preachers had traditionally exercised. Through the influence they had acquired in the Democratic Party, many of them were already doubling as rulers: they were well represented in Congress, in the upper reaches of the bureaucracy and in the Supreme Court.

A symbiotic common interest had developed between the aggrandisement of the American superpower and the liberals' programme of radical individual liberation. As the utopians saw advantage in the increase of liberating state power, so the ruling power saw advantage in making rule changes that conformed to the utopians' aspirations. The Supreme Court had signalled this by gradually de-Christianising the definition of 'religion'. Now again, in 1962-3, in response to the agitation for practical de-Christianisation, the Court ended organised Christian prayer in the public schools.

However, the transition that occurred in those years in the USA and, concomitantly, in its European protectorates had a prelude that began much earlier than the years after World War I.

10
The Dream Of Post-Europe

> "The defeat of political totalitarianisms in many...countries does not preclude the possible victory of a 'soft' and colloidal totalitarianism capable of inducing the masses to believe that they want what their rulers consider appropriate."
>
> Claudio Magris

The West's definitive break with European civilisation has its deepest emotional and intellectual roots in the Graeco-Roman revival of the fifteenth century. That movement, which scorned Europe as it had developed until then, wanted to replace it with something like pre-Christian Rome in a Christian framework. More immediately, the present breakaway has its origin in the amalgam of ideas that supplied the ideology of the French Revolution and in part—along with English legal tradition—of the American Revolution. Common to both revolutions were, on the one hand, the conviction that European civilisation had been an intolerable oppression and, on the other, the dream of founding another life, characterised by collective and individual sovereignty.

The revolutionaries imagined the desired free life as a revived pre-European condition, which they described as 'natural' or envisaged as like republican Rome. In fact what they wanted was a Post-Europe that would be a negation of historical Europe. It would negate it by allowing nations and individuals the sovereignty which was theirs by nature but which Europe denied them. For the Americans this *post-European condition* would be a *Novus Ordo Seclorum* or New Order of the World (the motto on the reverse of the official US seal designed in 1782 and still legible on dollar bills). For the French Jacobins it was to be a radical new departure beginning with their proclamation of Year I and the reign of Reason.

Because of its influence in subsequent history, the most important event of those years was the emergence of that dream of 'Post-Europe' and its settlement at the core of the western consciousness. Its adherents called it the 'progressive' vision, and themselves, in broad terms, 'progressives'. They believed that, because human sovereignty was a supremely good thing, they, by working for it or simply desiring it, were rendered good persons and thereby entitled to it, while those who opposed or hindered them were *ipso facto* evil. The most successful progressives were the Liberals, who were also the most conservative. They pursued the dream of sovereignty by stages within inherited ethical limits and as reason moderated by feeling seemed to indicate. For *Post*-Europe they tacitly substituted 'Enlightened Europe', meaning themselves and how they ordered things. Flanking them, in a kaleidoscopic spectrum of individualism and collectivism, were the fundamentalists, the utopian absolutists. They strained for unmitigated sovereignty 'immediately', by violent overthrow if need be.

That first American attempt to implement a Post-Europe resulted in a

constitution of society which fell well short of the absolutist goal. The Rousseauist rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence together with national independence, the democratic Constitution and the location outside Europe seemed to the colonists a sufficient cancellation of their European past. They settled for the moderate sovereignty, collective and individual, of a Liberal-Protestant republic of the late 1700s. Its rulers read the Bible, knew Latin and some Greek, and promoted liberty and equality within limits set by reason, Protestant ethics, white skin and capitalist economics. An American semi-Europe, it lasted until World War II.

The French attempt at realising Post-Europe was full-blown but shortlived. After less than two years of absolutist Utopia, in 1793-94, it petered out in the reformed France and Europe of the Napoleonic empire and the nineteenth century. But the dream that had inspired it haunted Europe during that century and into the twentieth. Both in France itself and in other Latin nations there were recurrent lurches in the direction of the dream. Russia and Germany went for it wholesale and realised it for, respectively, seventy years and—omitting the terminal crisis of the German effort—ten. The Bolsheviks and Nazis, as the Jacobins before them, failed to make their Post-Europes last. In sum, before the second, this time full-blown American effort that we are still experiencing, the dream of Post-Europe spawned four major attempts to realise it, with none of them having more than temporary success.

Because their dream and intention was in essence the same as that which inspires the current American breakaway, those four revolutions point towards the latter and illuminate it. But they also illuminate it, prefigure it and constitute increasingly realistic rehearsals for it, by reason of their *modus operandi*—which was essentially the same in all of them; the increasing amount of sovereignty they won and made available; and their conviction that they represented righteousness opposed or hindered by evil. For these reasons it is instructive to consider them.

All four revolutions were progressive group initiatives aimed at liberating a national power—American, French, Russian[6] or German—from external or internal limitations which were deemed unnatural, so that the revolutionaries, using the augmented power, could promote national and individual sovereignty in three ways.

The first of these was to increase useful individual and collective power within the nation in question. The revolutionaries increased the power—legal, political, economic, technological or ethical [7]—of individuals and collectives who were likely, by their nature or in response to their empowerment, to support

[6] The Russian revolution of 1917 and subsequently (actually the second Russian revolution) was a western revolution by proxy: an attempt by semi-westernised revolutionaries in a non-western nation, using a western ideology and initially western resources, to realise a western dream.

[7] Ethical power—the ability to perform an action without moral blame.

the liberated national power and augment it further. According to the time and circumstance, the categories of individuals whom they empowered were defined by such attributes as income, sex, class, race, particular religious adherence, anticlericalism, the possession of property or the lack of it, membership of a particular doctrinal party or—in the twentieth century—simple ability to earn or receive money and spend it. The useful sub-national collectives which, in the successive revolutions, the new rulers empowered included pre-existing ones—a particular religious confession or secret society or association of scientists or scholars or the judiciary, police, military, the press, banks or a doctrinal political party—as well as new agencies created to serve the liberated national power.

The second use which the revolutionaries made of that power was to punish the internal and external opponents or hinderers of their liberating measures—such groups and individuals being by definition evil. Simultaneously and subsequently—their third progressive action—they used the augmented national power to extend their liberating rule to other territories and peoples, and their empowerments to useful groups and individuals belonging to other nations.

In the American revolution of 1774 and subsequently, the national power that George Washington and his fellow revolutionaries fought to free from unnatural restriction was that of a new nation. They augmented it, initially, by mobilising it as a national congress and an armed force. Thus mobilised, they used it to punish an oppressive monarch and hostile Indians and to liberate themselves and their fellow whites, collectively and individually. They did this by establishing a relatively liberal-democratic sovereign state made up of moderately sovereign citizens. This state pushed west and south into Native American territory and invited Europeans to share its freedoms. In the other three cases, the national power that the revolutionaries increased, distributed and projected was that of an existing sovereign state. Before proceeding to use it in the standard manner, they made it more sovereign still.

In all four cases the progressive revolutionaries were conscious that what they were intending and doing was supremely good and that this rendered them incontestably righteous. Successively, the revolutionary ideologies—American proto-Liberalism, Rousseauist republicanism, Russian and German versions of national socialism—spelt out why in particular, in 'this' case, that was so. Moreover, in the revolutionaries' minds, the righteousness thus conferred on them entitled them to the power they seized and augmented, and employed to liberate and punish. It was the just due of their righteousness. How much national power qualified as that? How much was 'just'? As much as constituted *progressive national sovereignty*; that is, a national sovereignty sufficient to be really that and to provide an expandable amount of individual sovereignty, in the nation and beyond it. Because both kinds of sovereignty were man's right by nature, there were natural limits to their self-governing power: limits imposed by physical

nature and by the moral law inherent in human nature and self-given by sovereign human beings. In the American instance, and in the French revolution apart from the Jacobin interlude, that law was taken to coincide substantially with the Christian morality of the West. In sum, the amount of national power to which the revolutionaries felt entitled by their righteousness—the amount that constituted progressive national sovereignty—was limited by those natural factors; but *only by them.*

As the nineteenth century ended and passed into the twentieth, the revolutionaries' perception of those limiting factors shrank. Accordingly, their conception of the amount of power that constituted progressive national sovereignty grew greater. With each enabling advance of science, technology and wealth, each facilitating new perception of physical nature and of the moral law natural to man, and each permissive weakening of inherited ethical restraint, the amount increased. As a result, in the Russian and German revolutions, the power to which the revolutionaries felt entitled by their righteousness approached power unlimited, like that of Yahweh, Israel's liberating and punishing God. It included the power to lay down for themselves and others, in partial disregard of Europe's inherited consensus, which behaviour was right, permissible or wrong. In both those revolutions this ethical empowerment was transmitted to the powerful sub-national agencies which they created. (Unlike their predecessors they empowered virtually no collectives inherited from the past.)

Clearly the utopian absolutists had moved from the fringes to the centre. The process, described above, which greatly increased the amount of power deemed to constitute progressive national sovereignty led to a similar magnification of the amount deemed to constitute progressive individual sovereignty. Accordingly, the Russian and German revolutionaries conferred their new ethical empowerments on the hundreds of thousands of individuals employed by their sub-national agencies. Moreover, in varying degrees, in part determined by Party membership, they increased the individual purchasing and technological powers of all citizens. To some degree, notably permission to abort the unborn and to have (heterosexual) sexual intercourse at will, the Russian revolution also empowered all citizens ethically.

True to form, both revolutions worked to extend their empowerments widely: the Russian, by establishing, or trying to establish its socialist system in many countries; the German by employing Europeans of many nations in its armies and its sub-national agencies and by taking steps to establish a European Economic Community and Common Market under German direction, for the greater prosperity of all its members.

With these developments, the lineaments of the dreamt-of Post-European condition became suggestively visible. In its full realisation, Post-Europe would be an ethically untrammelled and omnipotent western Superpower, ruling over and empowered by superpowerful collectives and individuals. Embodying Good,

punishing Evil and extending its empowerments worldwide, it would dominate Earth, and even perhaps, encroach on the Universe.

That is the historical context in which we can identify and consider with understanding the Second American Revolution, extending from the early 1930s to the 1960s. Throughout its three stages, the state class that directed it was so convinced of its righteousness of purpose and being that it regarded nothing, not even the American republic of the Founding Fathers, as entitled to stand in its way.

The revolution began in 1933 when Franklin D. Roosevelt became president and launched the New Deal programme. This required a great increase of the federal power for the purpose of liberating millions of citizens from poverty and unemployment. In a series of measures that were inspired in part by Mussolini's Italy and Stalin's Russia, legal powers passed from Congress and the states to the President and federal agencies; and the states also lost power to Congress. Eleven of the New Deal measures were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Roosevelt, in defiance of the separation of powers, threatened to appoint extra judges who would do as they were told. Congress refused its assent. But the liberal press backed Roosevelt and mobilised public opinion. Eventually, by means of legitimate new appointments, the Court was rendered compliant. Between 1937 and 1946 it reversed thirty-two of its earlier readings of the Constitution, extending back over a period of 150 years. Thus the decks were cleared for further overthrow of semi-European Old America and further building of its replacement.

In disregard of American precedent, Roosevelt was three times re-elected.(His period in power coincided almost exactly with Hitler's; both of them died, the latter by suicide, in 1945.) Unknown to the American public, which did not want war, Roosevelt decided to contest the German bid for world supremacy. By provoking Germany's ally, Japan, into war with the USA, he secured the German declaration of war that he needed. In the course of the war, the 'Big State', whose creation he had directed, mobilised the national resources as never before and projected liberating military power to Europe and the Western Pacific.

In 1942 Roosevelt launched the second act of the revolutionary process. The Manhattan Project was a collective of highly financed scientists and engineers devoted to putting the indiscriminate explosive power of the atom at the disposal of the United States. When, three years later, that power was acquired, Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman used it twice, as a 'weapon of righteousness', to punish Japan for its 'beastly' tyranny and its treacherous attack on the United States.[8] The documentation that has become available to historians during the past fifty

[8] At a Columbia University seminar in 1959, Truman described the atomic bombs used against Japan as "merely another weapon in the arsenal of righteousness". For 'beastly' in "beastly tyranny", see quotation from Truman's private letter on p. 109.

years reveals the accompanying political reason why the atomic bomb was used against a defeated Japan that was suing for peace. Foreseeing that political confrontation with the Soviet Union would increase, Truman, heavily influenced by his secretary of state, James F. Byrnes, judged that a shocking demonstration of this great addition to American power would have a restraining effect on the Soviets.[9]

Hiroshima made the US the world's first superpower and impelled the President into the role of revolutionary Pope. With his pronouncement on the legitimacy of massacre as a method of warfare, he began the West's replacement of its inherited moral system. Ten years later, well-equipped with superbombs, his successor, President Eisenhower, had the power to reverse the creation of the planet.

The culminating revolutionary effort had celestial and terrestrial dimensions. It occurred in response to an evident superiority of the Soviet Union in space technology and long-range missiles. Signalled by the Soviet earth satellite, *Sputnik*, in 1957, the Soviet lead continued to all appearances into the mid-1960s. In 1958 the US military intensified its space programmes. The government established the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to pursue non-military projects in space. First, earth satellites in growing numbers, then manned space capsules were launched. President Kennedy asked Congress for a large vote of funds for the space programme, and committed the nation to landing a man on the moon by 1970. He also requested increased funds for defence, including a tripling of expenditure on nuclear fallout shelters.

To raise the money for these growing expenditures, there was need for an unprecedented growth of the western economy, specifically of civilian consumption. Such growth was already taking place; the foundation of the European Economic Community in 1958 helped it. The West Europeans shared the American sense of urgency about the Soviet threat, all the more so because it was brought close to them by the large Communist parties in Italy and France and the repeated Soviet demands relating to Berlin. The idea of demonstrating, strikingly, what capitalism could do for people attracted them.

So on both sides of the Atlantic there were pressing motives for maximising a boom which was in the joint interest of the rulers and the businessmen. All were aware of the potential for this purpose of the new brand of liberal ideologues, preachers of state-sponsored individualism. Rich Sweden was offering a much-publicised example of what giving them their head could do. So the rulers of the West endorsed them from Los Angeles to Bonn and Rome.

The result was the joint venture of rulers, businessmen and preachers of liberation which was later called 'consumerism'. With the various national states

[9] For the political motivation of the atomic bombing, see Guy Alperovitz, *The Decision To Use The Atomic Bomb And The Architecture Of An American Myth*, London, HarperCollins, 1995, 'atomic diplomacy' references in Index.

assuming a greatly augmented role in the economy and in private life, those collaborating partners facilitated and encouraged two things simultaneously: on the one hand, the increasing acquisition of money by men, women, youths and the poor; on the other, the avid consumption by all categories of all kinds of goods and sex. In furtherance of this programme, they pilloried and invalidated the fundamental western moral rules that stood in the way and the authorities—parents, fathers, men, clergy, teachers, local communities—that upheld them. New individual 'rights', especially rights to the performance, facilitation and incitement of actions arising from desire, were promulgated and enforced by law. Much as Mao-Tse-tung in China mobilised the youthful Red Guards to overthrow the 'Four Olds', so now, in the West, and for a similar purpose, the passions of youth were harnessed by flattery, by marketing directed at teenagers, and by reducing the voting age.

Inasmuch as 'liberal' was the word used to justify these procedures, that carried-over European term was further bent to signify 'championing the irrational'. 'Permissiveness' was a common description of the new dispensation: the media preachers (including the commercial advertisers) and the compliant rulers 'permitted' people to do things previously forbidden.[10] But it was only a partially apt description, for the 'permissions' were increasingly accompanied by new, liberal do's and don'ts which, both of themselves and, even more, in combination with surviving old rules, produced ethical chaos.

The combination of measures succeeded: the western economy boomed as never before. In 1969 the USA landed the first man on the moon. Consumerism, having proved its effectiveness and popularity, became a standard feature and description of the post-European system. With rare exceptions, such as a Thatcher or a Kohl, the rulers were unable or unwilling to claw back the ascendancy they had yielded to the utopian preachers. The latter, having captured the heights of the mass media, extended their dominance through all the media. Partly as journalists, advertisers and film-makers, partly as lobbyists, lawmakers and interpreters of constitutions, they continued to set the main lawmaking agenda. And they made or broke rulers, or aspirant rulers, as they saw fit.

The principal consequences of the Second American Revolution can be summarised as follows. In America in particular and in Amerope generally, the West's campaign for collective and individual sovereignty made enormous strides forward. Liberation from the inherited European ban on civilian massacre made the emerging New America a military, political and moral superpower which maintained and increased the world supremacy of the West. Liberation from many of the other European moral restraints and interpersonal norms helped to generate, throughout Amerope,

[10] During this phase—which extended into the early 1970s and had delayed effects beyond that—permission was given to mothers and doctors to kill unborn babies if the mother so chose. This was an instance of a 'new right' that 'facilitated actions arising from desire'.

economic superpower. This great wealth and productive capacity served two purposes. More immediately, it paid for the growth of the military power and for the related and expanding space technology. At the same time, progressively, with the help of new rights and regulations pouring from the legislatures and consumer by-products of the new military technology, it empowered Ameropeans individually.

They became richer, physically healthier, more long-lived, bigger spenders, more equipped with legal rights and ethical permissions, able to do more things and at the same time more regulated, than a population of their size had ever been before. The world had not previously seen so many superpowerful and, by a seeming irony, homogenised, easily manipulated, minutely administered and efficiently spied-on individuals. But there is no irony really, only a correction of a common illusion. Successful revolutions restore the previously existing stability by reducing diversity and making the increases in collective and individual power proportionate to each other. More powerful individuals require more collective control—and the greater the individualisation the more necessary this is, and the easier.

The revolution empowered many useful sub-collectives: principally, the Pentagon, NASA, physical scientists, the CIA and FBI, the National Security Agency, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, multinational corporations, the predominantly liberal mass media of communication (enormously empowered by television, operating one-way, 'from the top down', penetrating every household with commercial and political messages), and finally, the liberal Correctorate which used those media to deliver ethical guidance. In America in particular and in the European satellites generally, collectives such as these formed, together with the state power, an interlocked collective of collectives. All together, working in concert, exercised the new, truly revolutionary collective control. They formed what Tom Wolfe, in his novel *The Bonfire Of The Vanities* set in New York in the 1980s, called simply 'the Power'. That was a way of saying, succinctly, that none of the existing names for forms of government or governing institutions fitted the new kind of controlling agency.

A hundred and forty years before Wolfe, Alexis de Tocqueville in his *Democracy In America*, had encountered the same problem when, looking into the future, he tried to describe and name "the oppression by which democratic nations are menaced". And he, too, perforce, had recourse to that same vague word 'power'. "The first thing that strikes the observation", he wrote, "is an innumerable multitude of men all equal and alike, incessantly trying to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives. Each of them, living apart, is a stranger to the fate of all the rest... Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power...". He continues:

> "[It] takes upon itself alone to secure their gratification, and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild. It

would be like the authority of a parent, if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks on the contrary to keep them in perpetual childhood. It is well content that the people should have a good time, provided they think of nothing but having a good time. For their happiness such a government willingly labours, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness: it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry... What remains but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living?

"Thus it every day renders the exercise of the free agency of man less useful and less frequent; it circumscribes the will within a narrower range, and gradually robs a man of all the uses of himself. The principle of equality has prepared men for these things; it has predisposed men to endure them, and oftentimes to look on them as benefits.

"After having thus successfully taken each member of the community in its powerful grasp, and fashioned them at will, the supreme power then extends its arm over the whole community. It covers the surface of society with a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate, to rise above the crowd. The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent, and guided: men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting; such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannise, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes and stupefies a people, until each nation is reduced to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd."

This is de Tocqueville's visionary picture of what Claudio Magris describes as a "'soft' and colloidal [that is, 'glue-like' or 'gluey'] totalitarianism". In the liberal democratic West we have been taught to believe that 'totalitarianism' is something intrinsically alien to liberal democracy. But given that it simply means a 'total' form of collective control, into which various ideologies can be and have been fitted, this is untrue. The socio-political system produced by the Second American Revolution was totalitarian in a liberal-democratic, 'soft' manner. For de Tocqueville, 'mild', for Magris, 'soft'; but both descriptions refer only to the internal workings of the controlling power. In its behaviour towards the non-western world, the West, as represented now by the USA, continued to be militaristic and aggressive.[11]

Two final placings in historical context, one distant, the other proximate, complete the picture. As in the Late Roman change of civilisation led by

[11] Among the cultural consequences of the Second American Revolution were, in the 1960s, the transfer of the world's art capital from Paris to New York; from the 1970s, the absolute dominance of Hollywood films on the cinema and television screens of Amerope; and the establishment of American culture as the only common contemporary culture of the European Community.

Constantine, the predominant motive in the West's rejection of the European ethical rules was the maintenance of empire: in the West's case, its politico-military and economic supremacy. But the historical parallel most relevant to the West's post-European breakaway is the Bolshevik enterprise, now terminated. That, too, rejected the European set of rules for new rules that won wide adherence and facilitated superpower. That, too, used a late-European ideological term ('socialist') to describe both a social utopianism and whatever the building of superpower required. Postmodern also, in the sense that it aimed to replace 'modern man' by a superior 'Soviet' humanity, the Soviet system lasted almost twenty years longer than Amerope's post-European venture has so far endured.[12]

[12] Most of the matters dealt with in this and the following chapters are discussed at greater length in my book *The Postwestern Condition: Between Chaos And Civilisation*, London, 1999.

11
Equalising Memory

> "Whenever you have murders on a large scale against innocent people going about their normal, daily, lawful business, those responsible have got to be made subject to the criminal law and dealt with as criminals."
>
> Sir Frank Cooper, commenting on the IRA[13]

> "It has long seemed to me that Ireland has a particular obligation to do what Germany, because of the moral influence of military defeat, could not do—which is to maintain and develop a history of Europe in the 20th century, and particularly of the two Wars, which is not the British view."
>
> Brendan Clifford[14]

Writing history is always a bringing into memory, with various degrees of relevance for the living people whose history it is. When the historical matter belongs to the contemporary period, the degree of relevance is greatest. What is brought into memory relates to and feeds, in an immediate way, the people's understanding of themselves and their world. Consequently, inasmuch as true understanding of self and world is part of being really human, the writing of contemporary history has a powerfully humanising potential.

That potential is realised when the rendering of the events bearing on the present is full and true. Conversely, if it lies or contains significant gaps—is unequal in its bringing into memory—it not only fails to realise its humanising potential: it promotes delusion and false consciousness. It does this by purporting to present 'the events which have, in an immediate manner, made our present world as it is and ourselves as we are', while in fact presenting a fiction as a habitation for consciousness. And that being the case, it matters not whether the fiction consists in misrepresenting relevant events—simple lying—or in omitting relevant matter In either case, given what the history purports to be, it is a fiction promoting delusion about circumstance and self among the people concerned, and most importantly, among their ruling elites. Such delusion is at least an adult condition of mental childhood; at most, a state of fixed insanity. Either way, it is a decidedly less than human way for human beings to be.

The rulers and their endorsed preachers may, of course, actively want such deception of the ruled and even of themselves. The historical fiction may be a serviceable myth. It may be a story so designed as to clothe the ruling elites in moral legitimacy, and to make the ruled feel good to be ruled by them and thus vicariously virtuous; all this with the effect of energising the society and making it work. In that case, the conscientious historian will find himself at cross-purposes with the rulers and the endorsed preachers and with many of the ruled.

[13] In Peter Taylor, *Brits: The War Against The IRA*, p.196.
[14] *1914: England's Darwinist War On Germany*, p.14.

While working to serve the humanity of all with the truth about their self-circumstance, he will be loved and honoured only secretly and by a few.

The case in point is the contemporary history of the West, which by general agreement began with World War II. Norman Davies, as we have seen, cites the prevailing 'Allied Scheme of History' as a distortion of the recent history of Europe. He could have said 'of the West'; for the 'Allied Scheme' duly reflects the fact that since 1941, when America entered the war, the history of Western Europe and of the US have formed a single, Ameropean story, albeit with respective sub-stories. As a result, any historian of Europe since 1941 who does not narrate accordingly (Davies is one such) ignores both the historical reality and, more to the point, what the mass-media preachers and the politicians have been presenting as 'contemporary history relevant to West Europeans'.

The 'Allied scheme' is the myth of origin of Amerope. It has not been produced by professional historians. It has been created and maintained through a couple of generations by tens of thousands of people working broadly in unison in the USA and Britain. These thousands include some professional historians, but are mainly people involved in government and workers in all kinds of mass media. The 'scheme' has been disseminated and made to prevail by these same people, in combination with countless others of their kinds in the countries of Western Europe and further afield. It programmes and forms the consciousness which the ruling elites and the citizens regard as correct[15], and which is therefore their operative consciousness.

The mythical content of this 'contemporary history' has to do mainly with the two momentous episodes which marked the years 1940-1970: the world war and the launch of a post-European ethical experiment led by the US, and paralleling a similar venture in the Soviet Union. The second of these, the fact that between the 1940s and the 1970s a precipitate break with western civilisation occurred, has been concealed by a misrepresentation. That pell-mell change of social ethics has been represented in the 'Allied scheme' as a required amendment of the inherited rules of behaviour in line with technological and social changes and superior ethical insights; a mere step forward in the West's moral progress since its Enlightenment two centuries ago; nothing momentous.[16] As a result, unlike their counterparts in the now defunct Soviet experiment—who were fully conscious, often proudly so, of their rejection of historical Europe—the ruling elites and the citizens are effectively unaware that they are involved in a similarly momentous new departure.

[15] 'Correct' in the sense of 'doctrinally correct', 'orthodox', and therefore 'proper to regard as true'.
[16] A similar technique was used notably by the first Roman emperor, Augustus, and his collaborators when, with a mere bending of the constitutional forms for which propaganda supplied plausible reasons, the Roman republic was transformed into one-man rule. As one among many indications that 'nothing momentous has occurred', SPQR (Senate and People of Rome) continued to appear on the legionary standards.

Subconsciously, many know or suspect this to be the case. But because they regard that subconscious awareness as both not correct and inexpedient to attend to, they soldier on, suppressing it. For practical intents and purposes—that is to say, operatively—they believe what the prevailing 'history' pretends about the fundamental change of moral framework they have been living through. Ignorant, consequently, of the facts of the situation, they are unable to take charge of it, and to think and act as the threat of senselessness that is latent in it requires.

World War II, by contrast, occupies the central position in the 'Allied scheme'; it is presented there not only as momentous but as the uniquely momentous episode and defining event in the contemporary history of the West. However, its presentation in the 'Allied scheme' suffers from significant gaps. And these in turn have led to a further serious out-of-touchness of westerners with regard to their circumstance and selves.

Mainly films, both in cinemas and on television, but also best-selling books and book reviews, newspaper articles and commemorative supplements have seen to it that Ameropeans remain acutely conscious of World War II. (That is a manner of speaking; those *things* have not seen to this, but rather, western media people working in concert.) Presented as the great shared drama out of which today's fortunate West emerged, the war is generally seen as that. Moreover, its foundational quality is evidenced, concretely, by the fact that its five principal victors are still the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, equipped with veto power, and, symbolically, therefore, joint arbiters of the planet. The media managers and political leaders keep the public acquainted with the story that justifies that enthronement.

So westerners are aware of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, the Blitz in Britain, Pearl Harbour, Rommel in North Africa, D-Day and the fighting in Normandy, Arnhem, the Battle of the Bulge, Belsen, Auschwitz, the French Resistance, Stalingrad, the ruined German cities, the Battle of Midway, the battle for Iwojima. All these and more have become more or less familiar images. And again, within these images, particular, striking images are almost part of people's direct experience: the trains pulling in at Auschwitz and disgorging the captive Jews, the gold teeth taken from the gassed corpses, the small boats from England congregating offshore at Dunkirk, V1s and V2s descending to explode in quiet London streets, stern-faced German guards barking orders, tough American soldiers storming beaches, white-clad soldiers crossing the Russian snow, emaciated Englishmen in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, General McArthur's 'I will return' as he leaves the Philippines, cheering Italian crowds greeting advancing Americans, the Gestapo torturing a French prisoner, Japanese kamikaze planes zooming in on American battleships. . . The birth agonies of the present Good Life, people are given to understand; and they assent with appropriate gratitude.

Films are the main transmitters of these images, not only in themselves, but because their panoramic and dramatic power strongly influences the transmissions

of the other media. The films are, overwhelmingly, American and British. Not surprisingly, then, within the general story a particular message presses in: this present-day western world is born out of a war in which righteous American and British rulers, and brave American, British and Commonwealth soldiers, defeated—with the Russians helping remotely—two evil empires. The winning side was good: not only were its rulers resolute against evil and oppression, they were democrats and just. Its soldiers fought bravely and decently, and except when confronting the enemy on the battlefield, were kind. The losing side was evil: its rulers and their underlings were tyrannical and unjust; it practised mass murder and used treacherous methods of warfare; its soldiers often did cruel deeds. Fortunately for the western community of nations that was born out of this titanic struggle, it bears the features of the winning side.

Westerners have grown used to accepting this myth of origin of their world. Like a great time-bubble enveloping hundreds of millions of minds, it provides the self-sufficient, explained and continuing present, divorced from past history, in which Ameropeans live and act. In this imagined collective circumstance, they have gladly identified with the self-image it provides. Ruling elites and citizens, they believe they inherit the moral legacy of the definitive war for freedom and justice that was nobly, virtuously and successfully fought. Like those resolute statesmen and noble warriors—and unlike the forces of darkness which those good men defeated once for all—they are, they believe, committed to just and compassionate behaviour, hate tyranny, cruelty and murderous deeds. In particular, they abhor the killing of innocent civilians, most of all if they are women and children. (That this abhorrence is a shibboleth of western ethics and belonging is inculcated almost daily by the politicians and the media preachers.)

As a matter of fact as distinct from myth, this notion of the West's collective circumstance and collective self is fictional. The account of World War II on which it is based omits much of the truth about the winning side. (The missing truth is available in some books, but these are read by relatively few and don't notably impinge on the prevalent presentation and understanding.) Leave aside that the winning side included the Stalinist tyranny, its gulags in which millions of prisoners died, and its modes of warfare: notably, the rape of every female above the age of puberty and the 'ethnic cleansing' of six million Germans by terror tactics from lands east of the Oder. And leave aside that, after war's end, Winston Churchill, President Truman and Stalin at Potsdam ordered the ethnic cleansing of six million more Germans from Central Europe and that this was carried out with great cruelty and thousands of murders by Poles, Russians and Czechs. It is a lot to leave aside, but there is a reason. What westerners identify with is, essentially, the American and British waging of World War II, their cruelty in its aftermath being buried in oblivion. The prevalent presentation of the Anglo-American warfare omits the episodes and features which would show the rulers and soldiers acting illegally and cruelly: illegally, in breaking the rules

of warfare to which the West subscribed; cruelly, in the killing or maltreatment of thousands of prisoners, but mainly in the deliberate killing and maiming of millions of unarmed civilians by bombing from the air

The purveyors of the 'Allied scheme' do not portray, in words or pictures, the effects of that British and American air war on the inhabitants of the bombed cities.[17] That war, which reached its pre-atomic peak in 'thousand-bomber raids' and 'carpet bombing' of cities, formed a large part of the Allied war effort. Great resources of research and skill were put into the perfecting of the bombs and into the organisation and execution of the attacks. Thousands of brave airmen died in them. But their deeds of proficient blasting, burning, asphyxiating and skinning of women, children and men—in their tens of thousands in the space of a few hours or, in two instances, a few seconds—are omitted from the prevailing presentation of World War II. So, too, are striking images of such deeds among the many familiar striking images of that war. No sight of German firemen hastening to a blazing city from neighbouring towns only to be erased by the high explosives of the second attack; of schoolchildren mobilised to gather the thousands of corpses from the rubble and pile them in heaps for burning; of the thousands of Japanese girls with radiation-damaged faces who would never find a husband; or of the pilots in their cockpits above Tokyo smelling the roasting flesh of a hundred thousand people.

Because all this is omitted in the prevalent 'Allied scheme', its presentation of World War II is make-believe. Accordingly, its suggestions of the moral principles and convictions which the winning side has bequeathed to its heirs are spurious. In reality, the living Europeans and Americans who identify with the winners of World War II are heirs to a war for supremacy and freedom in which the British and American allies fought bravely and for the most part decently; frequently broke the West's rules of warfare to commit cruel and murderous deeds; at war's end changed the rules to permit massive indiscriminate killing in future wars; and for that purpose built factories of mass death, where tens of thousands of workers produced the bombs for tens of thousands of Hiroshimas. In short, the conception and birth of the present-day West was not at all angelic, but ordinarily, nobly, cruelly human. And so, too, therefore, is its actual moral legacy to contemporary westerners.

From the fictional war and its fictional moral legacy comes the fictional nature of the convictions about 'cruelty and murderous deeds, in particular the killing of innocent civilians', which westerners are told they hold, and usually believe they

[17] Apart from books on particular themes and episodes which provide this information but have had a small circulation, some professional historians do what they can in summary form (Davies does so for the European part). In a few paragraphs, Greer and Lewis, *op. cit.* pp.584-5, give a remarkably lucid account. But for the general consciousness, the massive silence of the mass media, in all forms from films and television to popular books and 'commemorative supplements', annuls their efforts.

do. Our behaviour shows what these convictions really, as distinct from operatively are. We treat as decent people those who have never repented of what their soldiers, on their government's orders, did to civilian men, women and children in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Tokyo and many German, Italian, French and other European cities. Rulers and citizens, we cheer their president if he is a Democrat, and accept their instructions on correct behaviour. We belong willingly to a community of nations whose rulers, preachers and arms manufacturers have been committed for more than half a century to the moral legitimacy of massacre; and all except a few of us were happy that during the forty years of the Cold War that was the case. We were content then that tens of thousands of westerners laboured in factories of mass death. Nor, since the Cold War ended, has there been any sign we would feel outrage if, faced with a serious, external threat to the security and prosperity of Amerope, western missiles were to obliterate a dozen enemy cities. Our elected rulers have regularly decorated, and crowds have regularly applauded, soldiers, terrestrial and airborne, who have used their weapons in such a manner that the killing of innocent civilians, even if not deliberately intended, was a matter of course. For decades past, Israel, an American ally and proxy, has made such killing a regular practice, without any western government, or tribunal of the United Nations, issuing a charge of criminal behaviour. The United States, while acting as moral teacher to the planet, continues to supply the armaments which the Israelis use for this purpose.

Clearly, then, there is a dissociation between what westerners, generally, profess to believe about the ethics of killing and what they in fact believe. In an anxious effort to pretend to themselves that the old civilisation still holds, they refuse to allow their operative ethical judgment to conform to the new rule on this emblematic matter which was established more than fifty years ago. What they really believe about killing civilian men, women or children is in accordance with that new rule; namely, that the legitimacy or criminality of such killing depends on who does it and in what circumstances. But their operative ethical judgement refuses consciousness of their believing this. Divided internally from those actual people—themselves—who know vaguely how the Allies really waged the war, and who have 'circumstantial' convictions about killing civilians, they act out the fictional selves of their operative consciousness.

Contemporary Europeans and Americans do not really believe that those responsible for 'murdering large numbers of innocent people going about their daily business' should be 'treated as criminals'. But like Sir Frank Cooper, quoted at the start of this chapter—a casual instance—they make statements to that effect, in the belief that they believe it. While in fact accepting that in certain circumstances it was and is legitimate for soldiers to kill 'wives and babies', they say with disdain of an IRA squad—witness a British undercover agent in that same book (p.4): "They were going to kill wives and babies. And they call themselves soldiers." A moral contradiction borrowed from the old civilisation, but no

existing, is implied. Or again, in a ruse of self-deceit almost touching in its childishness, they call their weapons of indiscriminate massacre 'weapons of mass destruction'—no massacre intended.

I have singled out the induced and widely held belief that, in regard to the killing of innocents, the old civilisation still holds. I have done this because this fiction is used, emblematically, to suggest and signify that the general kind-heartedness towards fellow human beings which inspired many rules of the old civilisation still holds. But a similar denial of the contradictory intervening history—refusal to know it—pervades the entire western consciousness. Take that central tenet of late-European belief: 'with the passage of time, the kind-heartedness of westerners in particular, and of mankind generally, has been increasing and continues to increase'. The clear evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, an American undersecretary of state for global affairs could say, in 2001, in all sincerity: "It seems incomprehensible that *at the dawn of the twenty-first century*, the primitive and barbaric practice of buying and selling human beings occurs at all". The undersecretary, and he stands for thousands if not millions, could simply not understand.

It is never good for people to be out of touch with the state of affairs actually obtaining and with their real moral convictions. In particular, it bodes ill for the citizens if their guides and rulers are thus oblivious. More particularly again, it bodes ill for us westerners, now, that our rulers and preachers are unaware that we are embarked on a venture beyond Europe into an uncharted ethical space. Ignorant of this, they are uncaring about the threat posed by its sense-destroying ethical chaos (a matter I will turn to in the next chapter). Self-removed from the venture, inhabiting an illusion about their circumstance and their moral selves, they deprive the post-European breakaway of responsible ownership and prophylactic care.

That this state of affairs has come about as the result of bad history, powerfully and widely disseminated, and believed, is a testimony to the power inherent in historical narrative. By narrating now publicly, as I have just done, that it *has* come about, and how and why, I am attempting, for my own part, some small remedial action.

Hiroshima, the single most important event of contemporary western history, linked its two momentous episodes, World War II and the breakaway into Post-Europe. While marking the end of the first, it initiated the second. With 'Hiroshima' I include, as has become a convention, Nagasaki; and I refer both to the massacres and to the justification of them by President Truman, in which his own nation and Europe acquiesced.

Presumably because Norman Davies' history after 1941 lacks the transatlantic

dimension it ought to have, he mentions neither the act nor its justification. The prevailing presentation of the 'contemporary history of the West', while mentioning the act, indicates that, unlike many other events and massacres of World War II, it was not an important, world-shaping event such as deserves to be kept in memory.[18] A striking instance of this treatment is provided by Hollywood. Although it has produced countless films about World War II, including many depicting or touching on the massacres of European Jews by Europeans, it has not produced even one film about what happened in the Japanese city. Again, the prevailing 'contemporary history', while making cursory mention of the justification of Hiroshima, fails to record the historical significance of that act.

Yet the historical importance of Hiroshima, bombing and approval together, is indisputable. It marked a decisive advance in the West's 500-year-old bid for world mastery. By leading to the introduction of nuclear weapons generally, it "confirmed", to quote Greer and Lewis, "a radical shift in the nature of all-out warfare: from attacking opposing *armed forces* to destroying *whole populations*". Ameropeans entered the ranks of the great massacring peoples, alongside Assyrians, Hebrews and Mongols. Again, as an efficient mass killing of an enemy, seen as subhuman and devilish, by self-proclaimed heirs of the Protestant Reformation and the Age of Reason, Hiroshima had a double significance. It was the culminating expression of the European Yahwehan complex that had its dual origin in British Puritanism and the religious rationalism of the French Revolution. Finally, as a simple matter of fact, Hiroshima founded American superpower and, with that, the subsequent history and continuing supremacy and prosperity of the West. The contemporary West is not—despite our constant calling of them to memory—built on Auschwitz and Treblinka, to which we have said 'No'. It is built on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to which we have said 'Yes'.

This fact pulls Hiroshima out of past history to make it a central, even if necessarily suppressed, presence in our lives today. Once the 'Yes' had been uttered and, with it, the way opened to the West's nuclear superpower and all that has followed from it, it was absolutely necessary to dismiss Hiroshima from mind. For the fact is that westerners generally, and Americans in particular, have always felt deeply uneasy about those massacres. An American book I will quote from speaks of them as "a raw nerve". As a consequence, any retaining of Hiroshima in mind or memory would have a subversive effect. It would at least lead to a wobbling of the fundamental and founding judgement that Hiroshima was a morally legitimate act. It might even lead to a crumbling of that rock on which all has been built. More immediately and certainly, mindfulness of

[18] Deaths in the two cities in the immediate aftermath of the bombing amounted to 105,000. By 1952 total bomb-related deaths in Hiroshima were 282,000 (*Chukogu Shimbum*, Hiroshima, 25 July 1952); by 1950, in Nagasaki, 140,000 (*Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan 1.:109*).

Hiroshima would undermine the ideology of professed horror at the killing of innocents, and professed zeal for human rights, on which the New American Empire mainly based its claim to represent benevolence and kindness and Good in the world. In this contorted manner, therefore—there is nothing as contorted as suppressed conscience—the deliberate exclusion of Hiroshima from memory, the constant work of remembering the necessity of this and the taking of measures to ensure it, became and remains a declaration of its fundamental importance

This explains Hollywood's otherwise inexplicable behaviour, as it explains the fate of the Hiroshima commemorative exhibition organised by the Smithsonian Institute to mark the fiftieth anniversary. In that year, 1995, living in Seattle, I witnessed a temporary lifting of the veil of silence in the USA. Some books on the bombing were published. Around 6 August, news magazines carried long feature articles, some newspapers published supplements. A Gallup poll asked Americans would they have dropped the atomic bomb. Of the men, sixty-one per cent, and of the women, only twenty-nine per cent, answered affirmatively It was the biggest gap between the sexes ever found in a Gallup poll.

Robert Jay Lifton, a psychiatrist, and Greg Mitchell, an expert on nuclear matters, published *Hiroshima In America: Fifty Years Of Denial*. Their Introduction, entitled 'The Raw Nerve', begins as follows:

> "You cannot understand the twentieth century without Hiroshima. Each of us has lived there, studied the effects of the atomic bomb, and written extensively about it... That experience led us to explore what happened to America as a consequence of Hiroshima—both the bomb's existence in the world, and our having used it.
>
> "This subject is charged with emotion... It has never been easy to reconcile dropping the bomb with a sense of ourselves as a decent people... Hiroshima remains a raw nerve."

The historian Gar Alperovitz published his exhaustive study, *The Decision To Use The Atomic Bomb And The Architecture Of An American Myth*. At the end of his penultimate chapter, he writes:

> "To be silent about the past [Hiroshima] is to accept the decision silently, with no challenge. It is thereby also to sustain and silently nurture the idea that nuclear weapons can or should be used or threatened to be used.
>
> "To confront Hiroshima requires that if we choose to be silent we know what it means to be silent—to be acquiescent. That in the end also may well be precisely why we have avoided that confrontation for so many years and decades."

Further on in their Introduction to *Hiroshima In America*, Lifton and Mitchell write about the exhibition which the Smithsonian Institute tried to organise at the Air and Space Museum:

> "The Hiroshima raw nerve was responsible for the recent dispute that erupted over an exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington DC.... Curators planned to put on display the Enola Gay, the plane that carried the first atomic bomb over Japan, and designed an exhibit around it that would fully explore the decision to use the bomb, and its effects. They would present both the justifications for, and doubts about, the atomic attack, based on the latest scholarship; and they would not flinch from showing what happened at ground zero. Soon, veterans' groups were claiming that the planned exhibit was pro-Japanese and dishonored US servicemen. Newspaper editorials charged the Smithsonian with 'political correctness'... Both houses of Congress passed resolutions condemning the exhibit."

The museum made "massive deletions and revisions". It produced an exhibit that "endorsed in every detail the official version of Hiroshima that has endured since 1945". Historians, other scholars, and peace activists protested.

> "Finally...the Smithsonian announced that it was, in effect, cancelling the exhibit. Now there would be displayed only the plane, a plaque, and a tape of the flight crew recounting the mission. Hiroshima would be excluded altogether...
>
> "Half a century ago something revolutionary happened, and it changed everything. But instead of attempting to come to terms with the atomic bombing, on all its levels of meaning, Americans continue to treat Hiroshima... as a threat to our national self-image."

When Lifton and Mitchell wrote "it changed everything", they were confirming, fifty years later, what Norman Cousins had predicted in his editorial 'Modern Man Is Obsolete'. The 'new age' launched by Hiroshima, he wrote, would "permeate every aspect of man's activities, from machines to morals, from physics to philosophy, from politics to poetry".[19]

As the year ended, in the widely-read *Harper's* magazine for January 1996, Tom Engelhardt wrote: "As the past year of confusing and contentious non-celebration showed, something happened to American society when the Enola Gay dropped its payload". He did not elaborate—he was writing mainly about the cancelled Hiroshima exhibition—but obviously, he did not mean 'something good'.

After that year of licence, the silence around Hiroshima resumed, in Europe as in America. I have quoted sufficient to show why that silence will and must continue until Amerope acquires a leadership that is prepared to assume responsible ownership of the West's postwestern breakaway.

Adolf Hitler is probably the most remembered politician of the twentieth century. But apart from his decisions that led to many people being killed, he made none that has had any lasting direct impact on subsequent history. By that measure, Harry Truman is an incomparably more important personage in European as well as American history. But it was not only his decision to use the atomic bomb, and

[19] See also the quotation from Walther Funk at the start of Part Two.

to justify it, that has influenced 'everything' since. Of equal or greater impact on subsequent events were his repeated decisions not to repent. For Truman, perhaps uniquely, there could be no 'dismissal from mind'; and as doubts and a sense of guilt assailed him down the years, those steely refusals and reaffirmations secured the foundation on which American superpower, the Second American Empire and the West today were built.

US Secretary of Commerce, Henry Wallace, kept a diary. In the entry for 10 August 1945, the day of the atomic attack on Nagasaki, he wrote that at a Cabinet meeting President Truman "said he had given orders to stop atomic bombing. He said the thought of wiping out another 100,000 people was too horrible. He didn't like the idea of killing, as he said, 'all those kids'". If the question of Truman's repenting for ordering the atomic bombings had not been raised during his lifetime, we could say only that 'he did not repent'. But because the question was raised on at least three occasions, two of them directly personal, we can say that he 'repeatedly refused to repent'.

In March 1946 the US Federal Council of Churches issued a report signed by twenty-two Protestant religious leaders. (Truman was a church-going Protestant. In a radio address to the nation, after the dropping of the bombs, he had said of the new weapon: "We thank God it has come to us instead of to our enemies. May He guide us to use it in His ways and for His purposes.") "We would begin", the churchmen stated, "with an act of contrition". They continued:

> "As American Christians, we are deeply penitent for the irresponsible use already made of the atomic bomb. We are agreed that, whatever be one's judgment of war in principle, the surprise bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are morally indefensible. They repeated in ghastly form the indiscriminate slaughter of noncombatants that has become familiar during World War II... As the nation that first used the weapon, we have sinned grievously against the laws of God and against the people of Japan."

The report also condemned as immoral the massive firebomb attacks on cities which had preceded the atomic bombings. It urged Americans to offer a "convincing expression" of repentance, to help rebuild Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and to cease production of atomic weapons.

Truman did not respond. Twelve years later, in 1958, when he was no longer president, the Hiroshima city council sent him a resolution it had passed. The resolution protested "in deep indignation" against a statement of Truman's that he had felt "no compunction whatever" about ordering the dropping of the atomic bombs, and that "hydrogen bombs would be put to use in the future in case of emergency". Truman, in his reply, ignored the implicit demand to withdraw his statement of "no compunction". He pointed out to the councillors that the Japanese themselves were responsible for the bombings. "The need for such a fateful decision...never would have arisen...had we not been shot in the back by Japan at Pearl Harbor". "The sacrifice of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was urgent and necessary for the prospective welfare of both Japan and the Allies".

Finally, in 1959, at a Columbia University symposium, Truman was asked whether he had regrets about any of the great decisions he had made while in office, and in particular about his decision to use the atomic bomb. He replied: "The atom bomb was no 'great decision'... It was merely another weapon in the arsenal of righteousness..."

Truman refused to repent because, examining his conscience, he did not believe he had done wrong; he believed he had done right. He had acted out of two closely intertwined motives which he believed were right. The first of them is hinted at in his replies to the Hiroshima councillors and the Colombia university students: he was the agent of righteousness punishing the aggression of a beastly tyranny against the Land of the Free. (In a private letter, two days after Hiroshima, Truman wrote: "When you have to deal with a beast, you treat him as a beast.") Moreover, the nature of the weapon used had given the act of punishment a mystical, quasi-divine quality. Not only was it something to thank God for, and therefore, in a sense, a gift from Him; it was also, as Truman said in his statement announcing the bombing, "a harnessing of the basic power of the universe, the force from which the sun draws its powers". Truman could feel that he had exercised the legitimate punishing power of a Puritan Yahweh. At the same time, more mundanely—this was his other, intertwined motive—he believed that, by obliterating the two Japanese cities, he had served the interests of his primary *earthly* value. This was liberating American power and what it stood for: the Christian liberal-capitalist democratic West facing atheistic Communist Russia. He had served the interests of that power by displaying in punishing action, and thereby establishing, American superpower.

However, it was one thing to believe that he had acted virtuously, another to persuade his people and the western world that this was the case. He settled for giving reasons for his action (shortening the war, saving American soldiers' lives) which he believed that ordinary people would find cogent and morally adequate.[20] He worked hard at believing these had been his real motives—they had influenced him at most peripherally—and were of themselves sufficient. His fellow rulers, his nation, and Europe accepted them as justification for the massacres, and by implication, for all similar acts in the future by American rulers or their allies. In this way, Harry Truman became the founder of the West's post-European ethics.

But again, it was one thing to allay the qualms of others by providing plausible justifications and it was quite another to confront within himself, and to overcome, repeated gnawings of guilt. Truman's speeches have left us moving evidence of those private struggles and victories. The 'saving of many American lives', or of

[20] These 'reasons' express an arguable military rationale. Military use of indiscriminate terror is likely, if not certain, to end a war quickly and to spare one's own soldiers. Doubtless, Assyrian, Hebrew and Mongol generals had this in mind. But it is a rationale which Europe rejected.

'lives' simply, became the best known of Truman's justifications for the bombings. This came about not only because he frequently used it in public, but because he progressively increased the number of lives supposedly saved. This well-documented practice can be explained only by the need of Truman, the private man, to keep re-persuading himself that he had done right. He could not help but have occasional doubts. For one thing, there was his knowledge that, as well as breaking with a traditional western ethic, it was an ethic vigorously upheld by his immediate predecessor, Roosevelt. For another, there were the statements of outrage or dissent by some Americans. Insofar as these came from a few journalists, writers and clergymen, Truman could dismiss them as predictable 'yapping' from such quarters. But as the years passed, and as memoirs or journals were published, the dissenters were seen to include some persons whom he respected and whose support he might have expected: Admiral William D. Leahy, Dwight Eisenhower, Herbert Hoover, Under Secretary of State Joseph Grew, Assistant to Secretary of the Navy Lewis Strauss, Vice-Chairman US Strategic Bombing Survey Paul Nitze, Albert Einstein.

The advance estimates by the American military of fatal casualties in a full-scale invasion of Japan varied between 20,000 and 63,000, with 46,000 being the most accepted estimate. Truman's first public use of the 'saving of lives' theme was on 9 August 1945, in a message to the staff of the Manhattan Project, when he hoped that the bombings would save "thousands of American lives". By December the figure had become "a quarter of a million" lives actually saved. A year later it was "three hundred thousand—maybe half a million". After several years in which the figure hovered between 200,000 lives and "half a million casualties" (an ambiguous term), in Truman's memoirs published in 1955 it was "half a million American lives". However, from 1946 onwards, Truman developed a second track, in which the numbers of lives saved included others as well as Americans. In 1948, in a speech in Toledo, Ohio, it was "a quarter of million young Americans" and "an equal number of Japanese young men" Finally, in 1959, in the course of the Colombia University symposium: "The dropping of the bombs stopped the war, saved millions of lives". Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell comment: "Truman hammered away at the 'lives saved' argument because it placed the atomic bombings in the realm of moral virtue. And the more lives saved, the greater the virtue." But also the greater reassurance of his own virtue for a Truman beset by doubt.

A ruler whose lot it is to overthrow the time-honoured framework of his people, and thus set in motion a great historical change, cannot, by definition, repent. Constantine could not repent his blatant betrayal for the Jewish man-god of *mos maiorum*, the 'ancestral ways', and Jupiter Best and Greatest whose temple had crowned Rome for nearly a thousand years and received home its triumphant generals. That great change, like the change ushered in by the endorsement of Hiroshima, had been in preparation long before. It was a matter of

reaching the ripe moment and the ruler who would serve as agent—and not repent.

What can professional historians of Europe do to right the grossly unequal bringing to memory that makes the 'Allied scheme' bad history? The 'Allied scheme' covers the twentieth century from World War I and extends its mythical narrative to the present. Even if we confine the equalising task to the period I have dealt with—the West since World War II—two immense labours would be required. The first of them would affect the presentation of World War II in books of all kinds, films, television and other media. This presentation would have to include the destructiveness, cruelties and war crimes perpetrated by the British and Americans, and the sufferings caused by them, equally with all the other destructiveness, cruelties, war crimes and sufferings of the war. The second great change in the historical narrative would have to do with the exit from European civilisation from the 1940s onwards and the chaos of values and rules in which we have since been living in Amerope. These topics, as well as the question of remedying the latter problem, would have to be part of public currency and discussion in the West. Obviously, the professional historians of Europe cannot themselves perform those labours or bring about those equalising changes in the narrative and public consciousness. But mindful of the powerfully humanising potential of contemporary history truly told, and of the pressing need for a responsible leadership of the West, they can do the best they can in the circumstances.

12 The Challenge Of A Post-European Civilisation

"The radical evil—the radical senselessness with which the world presents itself—must be explored to its core, in order to tackle it with hope of overcoming it. The only adequate response is a continuous, humble, undogmatic search for hierarchies of values."

Claudio Magris

"Civilise Capitalism".

Marion Gräfin Dönhoff [21]

Might-have-beens are not the stuff of history, but historians sometimes play with them. Neither is a contemporary 'could-be' history, but it deserves at least a glance.

The absence of responsible ownership of our postwestern breakaway is the greatest threat to its success. If such ownership existed in the form of a leadership committed to it in full knowledge that it is indeed such a breakaway, the enterprise could be taken in hand. In the first place, the self-destructive threat now present within it, but removable, could be tackled—and at least reduced.

This threat arises from a social problem. Unlike that which menaced Europe in the nineteenth century on account of the massive proletarianisation and the resulting mass militancy, this problem is not of a material nature. It is spiritual and psychic. It arises from the message about right and wrong, and rules to live by, which the age conveys authoritatively—by words and images and by exemplary actions. Consider that message, approximately rendered.

Whether God exists or not, and has given rules to man to live by, is irrelevant; it is best for us to ignore the possibility and make our own rules regardless. Democracy is good, the lack of it bad; people should elect their government. The killing of civilians, particularly women and children, by state forces or terrorists is wrong. If a people, say, a Muslim or Latin American one, shows signs of electing a government unfriendly to the West, that is bad, and measures to prevent it are good. The killing of civilians, including women and children, is legitimate when done by western atomic bombs, or in any other circumstances which western governments consider legitimate.

Formal commitments must be kept. Married partners must be faithful to each other, but if one of them finds the other boring and falls in love with somebody else, it is legitimate, often laudable, to be unfaithful and to end the marriage. Our primary right is happiness. A woman has the right to bring a child into the world whose biological father and mother are unknown to her and, consequently, cannot be known by her child. Child abuse is heinously wrong and must be severely punished.

The western democracies want a world at peace. The US, Britain and France are the principal exporters of armaments, and this trade is the biggest branch of international commerce. It is important that the GNP keeps rising and anything that helps this is good. The arms trade, the expanding security business, the building and staffing of new prisons, all these help.

Women, if they so choose, have the right to use any means to excite the lust of men unknown to them, with or without their consent—in commercial videos, in magazine and television advertisements, in darkened bars and peepshows, on roadside hoardings. Men have the right to employ women to do these things, and may use female bodies to sell anything they wish. Men must not treat women as mere sexual objects, but must respect them as persons.

The sexual self-control that used to be taught to all, and that is still preached by some, is repression: sexual pleasure is good and natural; masturbate at will, and couple as you will with either sex, but taking due precautions, for SEX CAN KILL. The growing frequency of rape must be combated by encouraging more women to report it and by increasing the punishment for it. The use of women's bodies for the sexual provocation of men must continue because commerce and freedom of expression require it.

Democracy means government by representatives elected by the people, even if two-thirds of the people have elected none of the representatives. People's rights are those which Amerope calls 'human rights'. These respected, people may be uprooted, bombed, their cultures assaulted, be driven into exile by economic pressures, or subjected to senselessness or to any other living condition that serves.

Prejudice against people on ethnic, religious or racial grounds is strictly forbidden. Art is anything that an art gallery or museum says is art. Anti-semitism is permissible only against Arabs, but prejudice may also be legitimately displayed against men, Germans, strict Muslims, orthodox Christians and especially Catholics. Material things can make you happy, but only if you have and use enough of them selectively enough; keep trying and you'll succeed.

Abortion does not involve killing a person, merely removing a non-human foetus or a lump of tissue. Women's experience must be treated with the same respect as men's. When a pregnant woman feels the baby stirring within her, she usually speaks of it as 'him' or 'her'.

General experience shows that a child, and especially a boy, often suffers psychological damage if a father-figure, preferably his natural father, is not actively present during his upbringing. Child abuse is heinously wrong. Girls who bear children without a committed father must be treated with special regard.

Resolutions of the United Nations Security Council must be obeyed by the country concerned on pain of severe sanctions or devastating bombing; but if the

[21] Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, *Zivilisiert den Kapitalismus: Grenzen der Freiheit*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1997.

resolution affects a client or ally of the United States, it need not be obeyed; the state in question can do as it likes in licensed outlawry.

Fathers should play an equal part with mothers in parenting. If a marriage breaks up, the children are placed as a rule with the mother because women are much better at parenting.

Women who die from breast cancer are unfortunate; homosexual men who suffer and die from AIDS are heroes with a touch of saintliness. Owing to fear of assault by males, the public spaces in which women and children can safely move are diminishing. This is because women are freer, children are better protected, and men are more violent, than before.

It is legitimate for TV advertising and pop videos to encourage ten-year-old girls to make themselves sexually attractive. Freedom of expression is fundamental to democracy. Child sex abuse is a heinous crime. The Internet has proved a boon to paedophiles worldwide. It is necessary because it has proved to be an excellent facility for making money and for keeping people usefully distracted.

There is no such thing as 'men's work' or 'women's work' The fact that some work is done exclusively, or almost so, by either sex has nothing to do with natural differences. A woman's true dignity and fulfilment lies in doing something that makes her money.

Your body already contains many valuable parts and, as medical science advances, the value and the number of these increase. Some of them can fetch money while you are living, others only when you are dead. So take care when travelling in poor countries and at all times mind your children.

Child abuse is a heinous crime. We see to it that our well-spaced offspring or only child have better lives than any children before them. It is very sad that the life we offer them drives many of them to drugs which often have a lethal effect—and more of them than ever before to suicide.

International law must be respected by weak countries and treaties must be honoured by all but the USA. Pluralism, respect for diversity, is a golden rule of the West. Nations which live differently than Amerope thinks proper must be regularly called to order; the Ameropean media must report their non-Ameropean practices with proper contempt. A citizen of Amerope who makes a public utterance that is at variance with correctness of thought or language must be exposed in the stocks of public obloquy and condemned by the Correctorate, lest freedom of expression get out of hand.

From Seattle to Stockholm and Naples, anyone who reads the newspapers, watches television, or looks for a thoughtful moment at the life he is taking part in, sees the problem—the moral chaos. Quite regardless of their individual merits, the rules and values that are being proclaimed, and that are often supported by laws and state financial measures, do not add up to sense. They clash with each other logically, or are transgressed, without apology or penalty, by those who preach

them. They snub emotional and spiritual hungers felt by many people. In the absence of an order of justice generally agreed, they offend the sense of justice, now of one large swathe of people, now of another. As advancing physical science presents new, disturbing possibilities, the only apparent rule is: 'Unless an *ad hoc* regulation stipulates to the contrary, people may use these if they want to and can'. Journalists, functioning as public moralisers, try to police the chaos. Confronted with it—perceiving it as 'life'—people find life senseless, and this has two results.

The chief sense-giver of the age is the increasing flow of money, together with the comforts, protection and mobility, the physical health and longevity, the education and well-stocked supermarkets that the abundant money provides. Most people, most of the time, find that their life makes sense because the amount of money available for spending is, in real terms, constantly increasing, and they share in the benefits, public and private.

But those who for one reason or another cannot find sense or enough of it through money and its increase—those who must continually or frequently look the senselessness in the face—are in great and growing numbers ravaged by it. We see this in the craving for mind-negating drugs which makes the drugs trade, after the arms trade, the biggest branch of commerce. We observe it in the many suicides of young men; the reckless pregnancies and abortions of many young women; the desperate faces and pointless violence of football hooligans; the blank faces of the households mesmerised by television; the organised paedophiles scouring the Internet for children to rape; the growth of random violence and cruelty against the physically weak—now often children against children. Senselessness, inadequately held at bay by money, shows itself, too, in the swelling trek to soul-doctors, magicians and satanists, to New Age sects and therapies. What it would wreak, from Los Angeles to Berlin if the flow of money stopped increasing, can be imagined.

The flow of money will sooner or later stop increasing. Therein lies the structural fragility of our Ameropean system. It depends for its existence on its increasing flow of money being maintained, and that will stop, just as the flow of centralised compulsion that maintained the Soviet system stopped. Following a severe financial crash, a damaging external attack, a natural or man-made catastrophe, or a shift in the focus of world trade, the system will cease to deliver its substitute sense. Whether the result for most people will be a life of violence, dread and social chaos, or a frugal, stable and humane life with the disorder held in check, depends on how our rulers deal with the sense problem now.

They can continue, together with the preachers they endorse, to be careless about its ravages. In their unreflecting view, because the values and rules being preached are right, and maintain consumption and the increase of money, the West is in good order. Those who 'find life senseless' suffer from a subjective disorder which does indeed give rise to social problems. But the ever-increasing

money can cope with these. It can provide more counsellors and treatment centres, more special lessons in the schools, more police and security firms with better equipment, more spy-cameras, prisons and fenced-off residential communities with private guards, bigger public games with balls or jackpots, hundreds instead of dozens of television channels, and rhythmic sound with ads and chatter sedating people more continuously in more places.

This manner of thinking and proceeding ensures that, when the breakdown commences, it will have even more drastic effects than the collapse of the Soviet Union. With no rich West on hand to give assistance, the stricken West will enter a violent, chaotic winter with no foreseeable spring. The rage which senselessness provokes, and which the money flow now holds in check, will see to that. The latest attempt to break free from all-too-limiting, oppressive Europe, and to construct a more empowered and morally superior life that will endure indefinitely, will have failed.

That is the inevitable outcome if the rulers of the West persist in their indifference to the sense problem. But it is not inevitable that, without exception, they will do this—or that they will be allowed to. It is impossible to foresee by what mechanisms, precisely, the change of course might come about; but that it could come about is the 'could-be' I am exploring. A civilisation is the well-tried antidote to moral chaos and to the senselessness in which it dresses life. A civilisation is, essentially, a coherent hierarchy of rules derived from a similar hierarchy of values, which is subscribed to by rulers and ruled and has the capacity to last because it presents sense. And because it presents sense, and therefore binds people to it in love, a civilisation—history shows this—is a form of collective life which can survive even a long period of severe adversity, such as that which, willy-nilly, lies ahead for Amerope.

Obviously, preparing to weather such a period well is not the only good reason for founding a civilisation. There is no greater collective work which people can set about. It is its own justification. What is more, having rejected Europe, self-pride alone would suggest that we attempt to replace it with something that is at least its equal; an equivalent splendour. But our immediate need of a civilisation to overcome the senselessness before the flow of money stops increasing—that need overrides, now, all other motives for constructing one.

To create, with the resources of Superpower, a new, superior civilisation was the intention implicit in all the post-Europes that have been attempted hitherto. For us now, then, it would be a matter of doing what none of our predecessors accomplished; of transforming the implicit intention into a clear-sighted, active will. That will, finding the necessary means, would start to organise the present chaos of rules which are no rules into a coherent hierarchy endorsed by the strong and acceptable to the weak. Even that start would begin to make Amerope, what it is not now, a manifestation of sense. And with that incipient manifestation of a presence which people value more than anything, Amerope would *begin* to become—what it is also by no means now—a loved life capable of lasting.

Already millions of people in their hearts are crying 'Enough, enough of this perverted life!' That cry could find its way to become first articulate, then a shout. A political leadership could emerge to serve it; a leadership that had at last assumed moral ownership of Amerope in full knowledge of what Amerope constitutes in the historical scheme of things—and therefore of what it needs in order to survive.

Let that leadership be embodied—to keep the hypothesis reasonable—in a well-advised, ambitious and far-seeing president of the United States. Heeding the rising cry 'Enough, enough!', duly translated for him by his advisers, he is moved to declare with appropriate action in mind: 'Enough of this chaos! Enough of believing, like simpletons, that with more money, more police and sports grounds, and stricter laws and more medical research, we can patch together a perfect life, making it up as we go along! Let us found again in the West a life that will last—a life that, regardless of whether money is increasing, we will love and cling to, even in adversity, because it meets our deepest needs as human beings—not by being superpowerful and perfect, but by making sense!'

This exceptional president and *de facto* Emperor of Amerope, having been moved to say this 'with appropriate action in mind', would then summon to action—as anciently a Roman emperor would summon an Ecumenical Council of the Church—such persons as united in conclave could make sense manifest, thus satisfying that part of each one of us which wants and needs this boon.[22]

The exploration of a historical 'could-be' is only marginally more useful than the exploration of a historical might-have-been. But that this slender degree of greater usefulness attaches to a 'could-be' is evident from its name. Hence my justification, even if slender, for this addendum to my exploration of the West's post-European condition since 1945. It takes a brazen streak of hopefulness to write and publish it as a could-be in the face of the West's present efforts to provoke an extension of its senselessness to the planet as a whole.

[22] Inspired by Mikhail Gorbachev, a new organisation, The World Political Forum, was launched in May 2003 in Turin. Among its founding members are many 'world figures' of the 1980s and 90s (including Bono of U2). Its motto, inscribed under its title, is 'Towards a New Civilisation'. That such a motto was chosen might perhaps indicate that someone had identified that pressing need; or again, it might be thoughtless rhetoric without awareness of its momentous import. Unfortunately, Gorbachev's opening statement, printed in *La Stampa*, suggested the latter was the case. After mentioning, merely, the motto they had given themselves, he confined himself to high-sounding sentiments such as one might read anywhere.

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Index of Subjects

In this conversational book Desmond Fennell provides three things in one:

- a critique of the standard History of Europe as found in textbooks and works of reference, on the grounds that it is distorted by 'imprecise designation' and 'victors' history' and does not make sense for Europeans in the twenty-first century;

- a manual which enables readers of the 'standard history', wherever encountered, to note the main distortions and make appropriate mental corrections;

- an outlined 'new history of Europe' which would be 'true and clear' and make sense for Europeans living in the twenty-first century (see page 79).

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