

A STUDY OF HISTORY

Twenty years after the first three volumes of Arnold J. Toynbee's *A Study of History*, the final four volumes have appeared: ten volumes in all, not counting two books still to come, a volume of *Maps and Charts*, and a book of *Reconsiderations*. Perhaps no work so comprehensive as this has appeared since the publication of Herbert Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*. The fact that the latter books dealt with the transformations of nature, while Toynbee's work becomes, through its own inner evolution, a study of the transfigurations of the human soul, tells much about the century that has passed and the present crisis.

In a somewhat wry fashion, life and times have been more kind to Mr. Toynbee than to Herbert Spencer. Whereas Spencer saw his own optimistic philosophy undermined in his own lifetime by the rise of militarism and the "servile state," the deterioration of life during the last generation has provided Mr. Toynbee with further illustrations for his underlying themes of Disintegration and Schism of the Soul, and has prepared many of his contemporaries to accept his interpretation of the role of the Universal Church in history—as a new kind of society that exists to save man from the frustrations of earthly existence. That Toynbee's profound Augustinian pessimism should be taken by many serious minds as an answer to the problems he himself has posed is a further indication of both the mood and the mind of our time, for the salvation to which this monumental study points lies outside the field of history.

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In appraising Toynbee's monumental work one must distinguish between three components: the data that he assembles and evaluates, the intellectual framework he employs for ordering and systematically presenting his empirical analysis, and, finally, the conclusions he himself draws in the light of his own experience and beliefs from the evidence that he presents. Whatever the defects of *A Study of History*, it rises before us as a towering achievement in sustained thought, standing out like the Great Pyramid among the lesser monuments erected by Gibbon, Herder, Comte, Henry Adams, Pareto, Spengler, and Sorokin. Partly because Toynbee's humanistic wisdom breaks with many of the idols of supposedly scientific and objective thought, partly because he has, with unparalleled audacity, sought to encompass world history in detail, there is perhaps a tendency in many scholarly circles to belittle his work. But Toynbee's errors or lapses in judgment in handling historic facts might be more frequent than they are without proving anything more discreditable than liability to normal human error.

Equally, one must defend Toynbee from the typical condemnation of the specialist, who regards as non-valid any wider truth than that which one can view with a lens cut to the same focal length of his own, designed to bring out the last detail in a narrow field. One grants that an interpreter who seeks to take in the widest possible areas, as Toynbee does, will not see the specialist's data with the same intensity and depth: but this fact also holds in reverse: for when the details are in sharp focus the surrounding field will be blurred or often, as in a microscope, completely eliminated; and this brings about an equally serious distortion or falsification. Actually, Toynbee has succeeded better than most scholars in combining the methods of the specialist with those of the "generalist"—to use a term that would long ago have been coined if we had produced enough exponents of the method.

Even as a philosopher of history, it is true, Toynbee sometimes overlooks significant work by precursors in his own field, like Henry Adams. But these oversights are trivial when seen in perspective. Who else has ever brought together in the mind, for comparative study, such a vast mass of historic material? Toynbee's feat in this study rivals the opera of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, and it is all the more notable in a day when most scholars had resigned the possibility of ever again, by their own individual efforts, attempting such a synthesis. Toynbee's work is remarkable, too, because it is, to a unique degree, free from the more obvious forms of parochialism, even from obsessions of nationalism or Europeanism: wit-

ness his strict judgment on the brutal ways of the English speaking peoples in dealing with the “lower” races. His major lapse, a sad one, is in his treatment of the Jews, to which one might add a lack of sympathetic insight into the secular revolt against the Church—a revolt which, in the mind of an Emerson, a Renan, or a Kropotkin had itself a deeply religious cast.

Against these flaws one must weigh the total effect of his patient, empirical method, unwilling to come to snap judgments and rash generalizations, qualifying doubtful conclusions in one place by contradictory data in another place, so that he puts at the critic’s disposal many of the necessary materials for a different mode of interpretation. These virtues speak for themselves. One cannot seriously differ from Toynbee without learning much from him; and the present writer, while finding radical fissures in the structure of Toynbee’s analysis, leading to serious weaknesses in his conclusions, feels impelled to preface this criticism with an expression of admiration and gratitude. The parts of Toynbee’s work that stand up after a rigorous examination will be worthy of a long life.

In this critique, I shall put aside questions of purely historic fact. On these matters, Toynbee’s fellow historians will speak with authority, and with as much charity, let us hope, as he himself extended to H. G. Wells’ *Outline of History*. So, again, I shall not attempt to appraise his destructive criticism of—often highly salutary—contemporary idola such as the overvaluation of technical improvements. I propose, rather, to address myself to the ideological framework of Toynbee’s work; to his sociological, philosophical, and theological assumptions, and to the evaluation of the conclusions that, for all his empiricism, are inevitably as much the product of his own ideology as of the situations that he interprets. How far have Toynbee’s intellectual tools been adequate to his task? How far have his unconscious assumptions, the things he has uncritically taken for granted, warped or misdirected his conclusions?

Since there is no way of condensing these ten, densely packed volumes in the act of criticizing them, I must presume that the reader has already given them his patient attention and is capable of doing justice to details that I must pass over.

In planning *A Study of History*, Toynbee’s intention was to overcome the egocentric illusion of conventional history, which for the most part has confined itself to a small section of the planet and equated the fate of the Jews, the Romans, the Arabs, the Chinese, or the Western Europeans, with that of mankind. He was equally concerned to overcome parochial-

ism in time: the vice made attractive by the nineteenth century doctrines of evolution and progress, which conceived our own age as the culminating point in mankind's steady development—"the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time," as Tennyson put it.

At the outset, Toynbee was stimulated by the fresh insights of Oswald Spengler, with his doctrine of cultures as self-contained organisms that run through a life cycle like that of the seasons: but, with a sense of how wilfully Spengler had handled his data, he approached his task with more conscientious empiricism, that is, with less confidence in his unsupported intuitions. Toynbee conceives that the "intelligible field of historic study" is a society. He uses the term society in two ways. The first is a "relation between individuals" which "consists in the coincidence of their individual fields of action" and the combination of "the individual fields into a common ground" (III, 230). Society, thus considered, is the product of a place or a theater, rather than a process; and the unfortunate result of conceiving it in such a partial manner is that integration comes to signify self-contained, isolated, sealed off. In Toynbee's second usage, he treats a "society" as the equivalent of a "civilization," a particular kind of human association whose emergence from the repetitive self-contained life of nomadic hunters and herdsmen or primitive neolithic peasants, creates a more challenging, dynamic, self-directed life.

Toynbee's first definition of society obviously applies to every variety of social group; his second definition excludes primitive tribal communities until they are annexed to or absorbed by a civilization. Because this separation is for Toynbee a radical one, he does not ask how much of this earlier form of association is still active in the more developed spheres. In addition, he misses the useful distinction between spontaneous and instinctual associations, as aboriginal as the nesting communities of birds, and the highly diversified relations based on shared ideas and sentiments, specialized functions, and ideal purposes, though both components play a part in "civilization." This well-established division into primary and secondary groups (Cooley) *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies), or community and purposive association (MacIver) plays no part in his analysis. By defining society as an external relationship, he deprives the concept, at the outset, of cultural or spiritual values and is therefore driven to describe social transactions in figures derived naïvely from the physical sciences. In fact, his treatment of civilization remains a barren one outside the realm of geopolitics, as his picture of the spiritual life is largely empty except for the part represented by organized religion. Within these vast

realms—like an eighteenth century thinker—he finds only individual atoms, either oppressed by a Leviathan state or seeking solitary refuge in God.

Lacking adequate social categories in his thought, Toynbee is driven back on two systems of interpretation, the one dualistic and misleading, the other mechanistic. The first he owes to Bergson's *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion*. This book, appearing just before he began to write his opus, had apparently a profound effect on Toynbee's thought, not merely because of its intrinsic worth, but because possibly the Bergson who was turning to the Catholicism of Jacques Maritain met Toynbee's religious needs half way. Bergson distinguished, one must recall, between two radically different kinds of society: natural and supernatural. Natural society is instinctual, compulsive, all enveloping, rooted in a tribal morality based on preserving the social species. Supernatural society operates through the vision of great individuals, with a mystic penetration to the sources of life; its exponents stand in opposition to natural society, seeking to overcome its fixations by supplanting the social with the personal, the will-to-survive with the will-to-transcend.

Though there is a large core of precious truth in Bergson's analysis, in his enlargement of the perception that the personal is a higher category of development than the social, neither he nor Toynbee do justice to the fact that these two aspects of human life interpenetrate. Long before the appearance of the prophetic and mystic religions, the forces of intelligence and imagination that had been persistently at work modified animal patterns of behavior and brought about in language and art the first emancipation from man's biological heritage. For Bergson there are no gradients between natural and supernatural society, between the realms of brute instinct and social habit and the realm of personal freedom and divine love. Since belief in such a radical discontinuity between two aspects of man's behavior creates more problems than it solves, Toynbee is often driven to find some other way of describing the social process, the vast network of group and personal relations visible in time and space. Because he rejects the sociological tools that would help him, he falls back on the crudest of metaphors from physics: that of "cultural radiation," the "bombardment" by "spiritual missiles" (VIII, 483).

Confined by a sociology whose main categories are individual, society, state, church, Toynbee is naturally unable to give an adequate account of the development of civilization, for the complex organs of social life—family, guild, corporation, association, village, school, city—forms

that are projections and corporate embodiments of this or that phase of human activity and must, in turn, be internalized by each member of the community, play no part in his social anatomy. One would hardly gather from his work that the rise of civilization itself is associated with the transformation of a village culture into an urban one. Still less would one gather that it is within the city that the complex encounters and challenges he describes, the interminglings, the fusions, the deliberate associations and organizations characteristic of civilization takes place. Since he is not loth to acknowledge his obligations to Spengler, his failure to make use of Spengler's shrewd observations on the function of the city, to say nothing of carrying them further, shows a serious blind spot in his social vision. Apart from his personal confessions on the influence of London in his own development, the one section that acknowledges the existence of the city treats it purely as an administrative agent in a universal state (VII, 193). If Toynbee understood the role of the city—not simply the activity of a detached creative minority—in turning ritual into drama, habit into choice, isolation into cooperation and communion, his descriptions of both the development and the breakdown would have concrete references they now lack. Toynbee's wooden treatment of the operation of ideas in society, under such heads as "mimesis," "social drill," "cultural radiation" only emphasises his failure to grasp the active historic function of the city and the dynamic offices of groups, as specialized collective extensions of the human personality.

On the stage of history, Toynbee recognizes twenty-one fully developed societies or civilizations, as compared with the 650 odd tribal societies of which we have any present record. That these larger groups in space and time are more significant than the whole mass of tribal societies taken together is, I believe, abundantly established by Toynbee: here he provides a necessary corrective to the current tendency of anthropologists to equate the two forms. Yet in his very manner of differentiating these larger fields of association, Toynbee hardly does justice to some of the salient characteristics of all human societies: the elements of continuity, accumulation, diffusion. Possibly because the nineteenth century apostles of progress overemphasized the unity of civilization, as though its institutions marked a single unbroken line of advance in an ever-widening field of interaction, Toynbee seriously underestimates these processes. Yet the fact is that the detritus of pre-historic communities alone—language, fire, tools, symbolization, moral taboos—has constituted the necessary basis of every succeeding civilization.

Accordingly, Toynbee's perception that every culture is an organic whole needs to be corrected by two important qualifications. The first is that however organic a culture may be it is not a closed system, but, on the contrary, it is constantly receiving fresh elements and giving them forth. Contact, communication, communion, cooperation are not merely written into the structure of every society, but tend in the nature of things to overflow its boundaries. For lack of a sociological understanding of these processes, Toynbee is driven to place many normal interchanges under the misleading head of a "renaissance": the action of a dead society, as a whole, upon a living society. He pushes this so far as to make the rise of self-governing cities in the early Middle Ages an evidence of the "renaissance" of the democratic Greek *polis*. A complementary method of analysis, which searched for continuities and accumulations, would bring out many links that Toynbee's method rejects.

Though Toynbee's focus is the society, considered as a self-enclosed entity whose boundaries finally widen into those of a "universal state," his comparative method causes him to dwell on the likeness between societies, on their repetitive elements, and to belittle the new elements that each society brings into being—above all, new types of human personality, new representatives of the human species. This weakness leads him to play down those very elements that his doctrine of human creativity should lead him to emphasize, for surely the realm of the spirit is the realm of the non-repetitive, the unique, the emergent, to use Lloyd Morgan's term. Yet it is precisely these features that Toynbee tends to ignore. Concentrating on similarities, he sees civilization as a series of "vain repetitions." But if this is true all species are vain; and the species Universal Church is as vain as the species Universal State; indeed, in so far as life itself involves repetition, it should on Toynbee's statement be vain and meaningless. That it is the differences, significant even when small, and in a certain degree transmissible if not cumulative, that justify each fresh effort, Toynbee should be among the first to insist. His failure here is part of a general disparagement of life conceived as anything else but an attempt to secure salvation in another world.

Now let us turn to Toynbee's description of the life-history of civilizations; for here, despite his limitations as sociologist, he assembles a vast array of evidence. In the first three volumes he seeks to analyze the forces making for the growth of civilizations. At first he proceeds along the paths marked out by earlier thinkers, like Montesquieu and Buckle. His description of the process of "challenge and response" is that of environmental-

ism: not a crude environmentalism, like that of Karl Marx or Ellsworth Huntington, in which economic or climatic factors play the role of determinants, but a more refined interpretation, closer to that of J. L. Myres or Patrick Geddes, in which the geographic or economic conditions operate by way of human intelligence, courage, will. The challenge, it is true, comes from the outside: the stimulus of hard countries, new ground, blows, pressures, penalizations. Successful mastery of these conditions is rewarded by a more intense form of life, and capacity for further growth. Growth itself is defined, in the Macrocosm, as "progressive and cumulative mastery over an external environment, physical or human" (III, 128).

One must note in passing that all the conditions making for growth are, on Toynbee's analysis, external and negative ones; though within the biological sphere, from which the very concept of growth comes, it is mainly an internal phenomenon, dependent upon nourishment and following a definite order in time. The possibility that rich soil and vegetation, or that the positive assistance of new ideas or inventions might make for growth is hardly even rejected by him; for indeed it is never seriously examined. Now the growth of civilization itself out of the limited life of the neolithic village community seems definitely associated with the domestication of the hard grains, millet, wheat, rice, maize, the first abundant food supply that could be accumulated and stored over the years. So, too, the growth of modern civilization has been favored by the opening up of new food areas, the use of new food plants, and the increase of non-human energy—wind power, water power, coal, electricity, atomic energy—all positive conditions.

No doubt certain aspects of growth are stimulated by conflict and crisis; and from the time of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels this kind of growth has increasingly occupied our attention. But what of simple organic maturation, in accordance with the life plan of a species? Such growth, coming from within, furthered by positive conditions, must surely have analogies in society. If there is such a normal path of growth in societies, with its normal crises, its normal illnesses and accidents, its normal slackening with the onset of middle age, and its final senescence and disruption, as Spengler assumed in his seasonal metaphor, it might account for some of the phenomena that Toynbee paints in a more sinister way. Disease, senility, and death are incidents of life, not a punishment for moral failure; they visit both the just and the unjust.

As Toynbee sees it, outer growth is usually at the expense of inner

growth, and whereas outer growth takes place in the Macrocosm, that is, in society, inner growth takes place in the microcosm, that is, in the individual soul. In the microcosm a “progressive and cumulative self-articulation is the sign of a successful response” (III, 128). In this second development the challenge issues from within; and the process of transforming the outer and the inner, the environment-conditioned into the organism-determined, he calls “etherialization.” This process involves the displacement of the quantitative criteria of success—power, expansion, control over the physical environment—with qualitative criteria, meanings, values, concentration on spiritual development. But is not the separation of these two aspects essentially a pathological development? Can the great basic artifacts of early civilization—writing, number, astronomical observation—be treated solely as the response to an external physical challenge? Is the tendency toward expansion, manifested so often in civilizations, purely a physical fact, imposed by ambitious rulers, armies, and administrators—and devoid of any spiritual significance? Did not Matthew Arnold properly take “expansion” as one of the essential marks of civilization—in contrast to the parochial self-sufficiency of ruder cultures? And can one pass over the spiritual flowering of Athenian culture in the fifth century because it was attended by ominous political and economic expansion?

Toynbee is misled, I believe, by his inveterate dualism into equating outer growth with the macrocosm, the geopolitical, the state, the sphere of power, and inner growth with the microcosm, the purely spiritual, the religious, the sphere of love. But when life is in process of development, these aspects exist in organic unity; there is free intercourse back and forth between the outer and the inner: thus the institutions of society normally become internalized in the human personality; and in reverse order, the desires and purposes of the personality project themselves into the forms of social institutions and social action. Toynbee’s analysis of the process of “etherialization” is, up to a point, admirable. But he fails to see that it implies a complementary process of materialization. This process begins in the minds of detached individuals, who produce new forms and ideas. Only partly are these ideas fulfilled in the direct contact of mind with mind: to become effective and to inform the actions and purposes of a whole society, they go through a process that is the reverse of etherialization. First, the “idea” is incarnated in a living person, whose life is the expression, the existential testing of that idea. Then the province of the idea is extended through its social incorporation in rites, customs, manners,

rituals, laws, observances. Finally—and it is perhaps only then that the idea is fully consummated—it is visibly embodied in political and economic institutions, in buildings, cities, even forms of landscape. This process of translation from embryonic “idea” to all the organs of society is essential in order to explore all the human dimensions of a new vision of the person and the community. Plainly, it is far different from the social drill or mechanical mimesis that Toynbee falls back on to describe the impact of the human personality upon other human beings. In a healthy society, the two processes of etherialization and materialization are—if my interpretation holds—in continuous interplay.

Toynbee’s analysis, accordingly, tends to describe the growing and developing phase of civilization largely in non-spiritual terms: unlike Spengler he associates spiritual vitality not with growth, but with disintegration and crisis. This dualism widens into giving the State the leading role in the early cycle of development and the Church the central part as the final effort to salvage the state’s failure. Eventually, indeed, he reaches the ultimate dualism of This World, in time, and the Other World, in eternity. The business of the Universal Church is to offer salvation after the “Universal State,” through its final breakdown, has proved incapable of overcoming the frustrations and the defeats of the historic process itself. For Toynbee, the ultimate meaning and value of existence become visible only through the miscarriage of civilization. Out of misfortune, disappointment, suffering, man becomes ready for God. To an even greater degree than civilization itself, the Church springs out of a response to negative conditions. A healthy affirmative religious consciousness, that of a Blake or a Whitman, scarcely exists as possibility in Toynbee’s philosophy.

In Volume IV Toynbee deals with the declining phase of a civilization: the loss of command over the environment and the nemesis of creativity. This paves the way for the climactic interpretation of Volume VI: his study of disintegration and transcendence. Before this he seeks to show that when, through the selfishness or stupidity or failure of nerve on the part of a “dominant minority,” society has failed to accept a fresh challenge, it begins to break down; and the internal proletariat, to save itself, brings forth a new kind of society, a Church, that seeks to redeem the chronic miscarriage of civilization by changing its destination, inverting its traditional values, bent on collective survival, and giving to death and renunciation the primacy it originally gave to life and fulfillment. At that point, the

final act of redemption is through an inner regeneration: palingenesis, or re-birth.

Here, as in Toynbee's comparative study of Renaissances in Volume IX his commanding view of historic phenomena enables him to identify seemingly final stages at many different points of historic development. In a disintegrating society, he points out, "the creator is called upon to play the part of a saviour who comes to the rescue of a society that has failed to respond because the challenge has worsted a minority that has ceased to be creative and has sunk into being merely dominant" (VI, 177). For Toynbee, when this point has been reached, the alternative strategies are those of Detachment or Transfiguration: the philosophic approach (Plato, Epicurus, Zeno)—or the religious approach (Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed). These saviours perform the last act in the development of a civilization: they make the whole previous scheme of things meaningless, except as preparation for an Other World.

This re-birth, this redemption, have in Toynbee's hands a contradictory quality. The purpose of re-birth is not to enable a society to resume the path of development, or even save it from further disintegration: its sole feat is to redeem the believer *from* society. The only guiding line Toynbee sees in history finally discloses itself here: "A progressive increase in the provision of spiritual opportunities for human souls in transit through This World." As the prospects for civilization darken, the number of such opportunities correspondingly multiplies: the worse for society and This World the better for religion and the Other World. This means that the final result of Toynbee's investigation is to install him in the very chair occupied by his great predecessor Augustine: after the widest circuit of civilizations he returns to the City of God, without any essential addition to Augustine's position. The way out, for Toynbee, is "the way into An Other World, out of the range of the City of Destruction." Neither life nor the daily transactions of this world have any meaning except as a preparation for eternity. Yet in Volume IX he treats the possibility of an ecumenical religious transformation as a co-ordinate act in bringing about a world state. This is a contradiction Toynbee nowhere fully resolves.

Toynbee himself is not unaware of the curious nature of this conclusion in relation to his self-appointed task; and he examines, in Volume VII, another possibility, which must occur to the historian: namely, that the function of a Universal Church may be to serve as chrysalis for a new civilization. Christianity, certainly, did not save Rome, but it proved to be the midwife of the new civilization that both salvaged many of the living

forms of Hellenic culture and served as the organizing and integrating idea for "medieval culture." Whatever the merits of otherworldly salvation, it was in this world, taking over the temporal powers of Rome, that the Christian Church most surely fulfilled its mission. By the time Christians made a last belated effort to translate the Christian idea into economic and political forms, through the Waldensians, the early Franciscans, and the later protestant brotherhoods, its original force was spent; and the Church itself became the ally, not the enemy, of capitalism. Historically speaking, the City of God, it would seem, is as corruptible and perishable as the City of Destruction.

When Toynbee first came to the conclusion that the result of disintegration is to produce a new species of society, characterized by a Universal Church, seeking salvation in a world beyond, he seemed to regard the Christian religion as the one efficacious form of redemption and Jesus Christ as the only saviour who was in fact God and who had fulfilled his mission, through his actual incarnation and passion. Perhaps the one significant qualification of this thesis in the last four volumes is his admission that other forms of universal religion are equally viable. He underlines this change by bringing his work to an end, in Volume X, with a final prayer in which he invokes the Christian Trinity, the Virgin, and the Communion of the Saints, in antiphonal expression to the Gods and philosophers of other religions, in an attempt to affirm the possibility of a Church Universal, whose province would be the whole planet.

Since this conclusion is largely in the realm of faith, not open to objective demonstration, Toynbee cannot submit it to rational judgment. Indeed, at one point, he departs from his usual urbanity and fair-mindedness by pronouncing anathema, in advance, upon those who do not feel impelled to follow him into his otherworldly sanctuary (VI, 149). But in using an historical method to justify the propositions of faith, he opens himself to rational criticism; and hence it is legitimate, indeed obligatory, to ask if Toynbee's faith, in combination with his ideological scheme, has misinterpreted or obscured important facts in human development. Has Toynbee perhaps built this colossal historic pyramid, overpowering in all its dimensions, in order better to conceal, in its innermost chamber, an archaic mummy, incapable of that re-birth his diagnosis demands?

Now Toynbee's basic weakness, if I analyze his work correctly, lies in his initial assumption of a radical dualism that is even more Platonic and Cartesian than Christian. This dualism divides the world into two in-

violable kingdoms: the Physical World of nature, where cause and effect prevail, where the quantitative methods of science adequately describe the transformations of matter and motion, a realm that contains not alone the natural habitat and man's organic partners but man's own physical body. The other world is for Toynbee the world of the human soul: essentially a supernatural world, to which the natural world is at best only a stepping stone; a world that exists outside space and time, under the close providence of God. Man has to begin with a foot in either world, but the whole meaning of his existence is to escape the empty satisfactions or dismal frustrations of This Life, the life that is continuous with the rest of natural existence, and to identify the good not merely with that which transcends nature and temporal processes but with that which exists beyond them, in an Other World. Toynbee's platonic description is unqualified. "The soldier serving in the Church Militant on Earth," he says, "knows that This World is a spiritual battlefield that is not his spiritual home" (VII, 561).

This essential dualism expresses itself at many points in his argument. It carries with it a reluctance to acknowledge spiritual processes, when they are at work in a secular context, or materialistic processes when they operate in a spiritual context to which he is favorably disposed. In still another way, his dualism comes out in his contrast between the creative minority and the proletariat—the disembodied spirit and the massive, inert, sluggish body. Before I point out some of the distortions that result from this dualistic analysis, let me acknowledge its one great contribution: the fact that Toynbee restores the human soul to history, the human soul with all the by-products of man's subjectivity, his art, his literature, his philosophy, his religion: not least the individual biography, without which all our mass data, based on statistical collections, are defective and misleading.

For the last three centuries those who sought objective truth through science have also been Cartesians in practice; but they have accepted only the mechanical and mathematical side of Descartes' dualism and have rejected as unreal the entire realm of the subjective, the qualitative, the purposeful and planful, and the self-conditioned, which Descartes piously handed back to the Church. Though the method of science has been tacitly dualistic, its nature was concealed by the fact that one side of the twofold interpretation, that which concerned mind and spirit, was sternly repressed. Causal analysis, eliminating the human element as a factor of error in all but controllable intellectual operations, likewise discredited every

form of interpretation in which man's own nature played an active role. Whereas causal investigation in medicine and psychiatry sought to penetrate the very soul of man, teleological interpretation, which is equally fundamental in any holist view, was discredited as anti-scientific. To his honor, Toynbee has had the courage to break with this lopsided empiricism. No other secular historian of our age has made such an ample effort to take into account man's spiritual nature and in particular to examine the full impact of religion as an integral part of civilization.

Now the notion that religion is in some sense extraneous, perverse, meaningless, or infantile, the conviction of modern rationalists from Gibbon to Marx, from Voltaire to Freud, can hardly survive Toynbee's demonstration. He has in fact fully substantiated the thesis of the late Victorian sociologist, Benjamin Kidd, on the dynamics of religious development at the very moment when the pragmatic forces of civilization seem in full command. When a civilization has lost the capacity for growth, through over-materialization or through a failure to replenish its organizing idea, religion, by a mighty counter-effort, restores the balance. So far, these alternations seem like the rhythmic ebb and flow of blind forces, such as Toynbee describes in the Chinese terms of Yin and Yang; for both secular and religious society have failed to create the conditions for dynamic equilibrium and continued growth and renewal. Unfortunately, in his restoration of the rejected side of Cartesian dualism, Toynbee reaffirms the original error that produced it. Hence his way out is no real way out, but a blind alley that has been repeatedly explored.

To say this is to say that Toynbee has, because of his dualistic pre-occupations, been able to make little use of a growing body of thought, beginning with Kant, that points in the end to an intellectual revolution as profound as that effected by seventeenth-century science. This new approach to the nature of human experience regards "the ideal and the real" as William James put it, "as dynamically continuous." For "ideal" and "real" one may substitute subjective and objective, personal and impersonal, or teleological and causal: in any event, those who have been following this path admit no break between the world of nature and the world of spirit. Hence the kind of deliverance that Toynbee seeks in an Other World outside of time remains potential in this world, once our naïve dualistic assumptions are overcome. The Hegelian-Marxian synthesis should perhaps be looked upon as a crude first attempt to effect this essential reconciliation between causality and purpose. Unfortunately, in its practical outcome Marxism failed utterly to do justice to the active role of the human personality, and by treating man himself as a passive product

of a deified “historic process” nullified his essential character of creativity. At the other extreme, by treating the world solely as a moral testing ground for virtue, Toynbee narrows the meaning and value of the whole process of human development: life is richer in its total content than any such one-sided moralism or religiosity would indicate. By the same token, the process of history has possible dimensions that Toynbee fails, in the main body of his work, to explore—though in dealing with the possibility of a truly universal state, in Volume IX, he at least points to one such event, to which all of human history may be regarded as a confused yet persistent prelude.

The fact is that beneath the appearance of Christian humility in Toynbee’s handling of the data of history there lurks a pride against which his own religious convictions should have warned him: the unconscious assumption that, by an immense act of intellectual will he has exhausted the processes of history, and that nothing further remains to be disclosed than what he has already achieved, on the lines that he has so resourcefully employed. Because he has amassed, in a fashion no one else has approached, a vast quantity of evidence dealing with the repetitive processes in history, he has the illusion that he has adequately canvassed all of life’s possibilities. He has not allowed for the fact that it is in the non-repetitive processes which lie beyond the scope of comparative inquiry—in the unique instances, the singular moments, the creative departures, in all that is non-repeatable and has even perhaps escaped witness or record—that the full meaning of human history, in its departure from predictable sequences and natural uniformities, is to be found.

There is a paradox in Toynbee’s philosophic position that does damage at more than one point to his capacity to interpret the upbuilding and creative processes in history. Because for him the spiritual life cannot fully flourish until all the outlets of worldly life are closed, the mission of history is to bring about sufficient disintegration to cause despair of finding fulfillment in history. Viewed statistically, this belief has plenty of historic justification. Thanks to the repeated miscarriages of civilization, that despair is never far to seek: the pessimistic Mesopotamian dialogue between a Master and Slave, dating back three thousand years, reaches the genial conclusion that the master had better cut both their throats and jump into the river. From that conclusion the “axial religions,” as Karl Jaspers calls them, have offered a happy if temporary reprieve. Writing in a period that has even deeper ground for both collective fear and personal despair, Toynbee’s otherworldly conclusions seem to promise deliverance; but, on historic evidence, the development of the higher religions has

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been as full of frustrations as that of secular societies—necessarily so, of course, if they both share the inertia and the creativity that are observable in the whole life process.

The saving remnant of truth in Toynbee's position is what every mature person knows: that spiritual development is in fact deepened by assimilating life's negative moments and coming to terms with them. Herman Melville truly said in *Pierre* that "he who knows naught of gloom or grief" is cut off from wisdom. But this is another matter from saying that human institutions develop for the purpose of providing such negative moments; or that nothing of durable value emerges from human experience until man is, so to say, at the end of his rope. Even as Christian theology, this is hardly good doctrine: in denigrating life, it overlooks the goods of being, as Thomas Aquinas would have pointed out: goods that attend even the satisfaction of transient bodily appetites. Sentience, consciousness, intelligence, feeling, imaginative self-projection, and self-realization are by-products of life-in-society and vehicles for further transcendence. In any event, human responses, even at the lower levels of meaning and value, are not to be dismissed as empty because they are attached to human institutions that disintegrate and pass away, or because their individual form and content are organically related to a whole that encompasses cosmic and biologic and social evolution, and can only be understood within that larger matrix.

So far from the potentialities of human life being exhausted by the six or eight thousand years of visible history over which Toynbee broods, they have scarcely even been adumbrated. Tribes and races and nations have long existed: but man has still to be born. Just as the countless unused neurones in the human brain carry a promise of all but limitless further development, so the existence over the ages of countless millions of human beings in a very rudimentary state of cooperation and interaction, either in space or time, gives promise of their achieving, eventually, far greater development than any group or civilization has so far encompassed. Man's full potentialities cannot be experienced in the single career of any man, or in the transactions of a single lifetime, nor yet in the career of any civilization or the deliverances of any final saviour and Church. Though Toynbee sees the whole process of social development as resulting in the widest possible society, a Universal State or Universal Church, and even now looks forward to the Unity of Mankind, he fails to carry this insight into his interpretations of earlier developments. Had he done so, they would not perhaps have seemed so empty.

And this brings me to an even more damaging weakness in Toynbee's

attempt to find a way out of our contemporary crisis. Because of Toynbee's social dualism, the fact that he attributes creativeness only to minorities, he never poses one of the crucial problems of civilization, critical from the beginning, still unsolved: the diffusion of responsibility, power, creativeness. Dynamic minorities flourished originally, it would seem, because of two factors: because the social process had become too complex to be handled in the simple face-to-face relationships of the small community, even through a formal council of elders, and because there was not a sufficient surplus of energy to provide leisure and education, the foundations of sustained creativeness, for more than a fraction of the community. Today this second limitation has been overcome; but the habits of an earlier period continue.

Civilizations originally overcame the stultifying parochial tendencies of tribal village communities by widening—usually under royal compulsion—the sphere of social interaction. Unfortunately, this transformation was attended by evils that have remained embedded in the structure of every succeeding civilization. Thus organized political power, though it increased internal security, augmented the tendency to external violence by projecting aggression outside the community. And again, while the state overcame the cultural limitations of purely local units, it tended to centralize in the capital city social functions that had once been effectually distributed. Such a distribution of power between the responsible local unit and the coordinating universal organization, as was instituted in the Christian Church of the Middle Ages, or in the educational system of many countries during the last century, has still to be carried through all the organs of modern civilization. The building up of the local institutions, with effective participation through the primary group, limited in number of members but operating within a worldwide framework, is a key problem of modern civilization. A Universal Church that did not face and solve this problem would probably be as stultifying and self-negating as a Universal State.

Now Toynbee is keenly aware of the way that present-day society has taken a turn toward totalitarian automatism: an automatism that threatens to minimize or repress creativity, in the very act of centralizing what remains of the creative processes. Unless, indeed, we find the political and educational answer to this threat, and pour energy into creating new institutions and organs of government that shall again be under direct human control, World Government, for example, might indeed become World Tyranny. Toynbee's philosophy, which relies for improvements, even for salvation, upon the actions of a creative minority, hardly does

justice to this situation. He sees the problem of world unity solved by the simple drawing of mankind together in a belief in "the unity of God." Since this has long been the operative faith of all the major religions, without its having yet succeeded in composing their parochial and sectarian differences, it should be obvious that mere belief, even if intensified by the suffering Toynbee also posits, will not be enough: positive knowledge, practical tools, above all, a fresh organizing idea, not found in the Axial Religions, are equally necessary.

These defects in Toynbee's system of thought have, I believe, vitiated his analysis of the development of civilizations, making him overplay the role of disintegration and underestimate the educational role of civilization itself. For all its repetitious blunders, mankind has learned something in the process of civilization and at last shows—though possibly it may be too late—the beginnings of a self-consciousness and self-understanding that may alter the direction of its instinctual and unconscious drives, or its present mechanical automatism. Even in the exploitation of his own intelligence, through the methods of positive science, man at last faces the fearful dangers of divorcing this intelligence from his will-to-survive and his impulse to creative growth and self-transformation. Toynbee's own *Study of History* itself gives conspicuous evidence of this growing self-consciousness, which may be one of the saving elements in the present situation. That very quality, which seeks to link together in a meaningful sequence so many severed aspects of man's past, may compensate for the structural weaknesses in Toynbee's presentation.

So my criticism must end with a final word of appreciation. No one else has taken in the dimensions of the current crisis in history better than Arnold J. Toynbee—or placed it in fuller historic perspective. The fact that he comes up with no more viable prescription than "Wait and accept suffering and get ready for the Kingdom of God and a passage to An Other World" is less important than the fact that his vast effort, even his very lapses and misdirections, should make it easier for his contemporaries to find a better-lighted path. Though most of his ideas for overcoming the crisis in "This World" are cast in an archaic sociological and theological mold, he at least has taken in the immensity and complexity of the problem and the radical nature of the transformation that must be effected. This *Study of History*, then, is not a terminus, but a starting point, from which the roads radiate in many directions. Those who follow these roads further than Toynbee will have reason to be grateful for his daring initiative and his immense labors.