

The Decline of the West

A. Moeller Van den Bruck
for and against
Oswald Spengler




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Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Für und wider Spengler, 1920.

To confer tribute of truth and augur crimson to Moeller Van den Bruck's ostensive interpretative theses in his critical reading of Oswald Spengler's monumental *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* ^[1] (commented in the 1918 edition, ie before the revision and integration of '22), nothing could provide a greater *signum* of certainty than the experiential results obtained by those who dared to re-propose such a thetic articulation - but in their own virginal guise - in our time.

In fact, venture this experimentation: proclaim that, with the impetus and pride of discovery and prophecy, within any eccentric appendage of the contemporary German academic apparatus (or, *equally*, western, since it is precisely our contemporary impossibility of opening the distinctive partition or identity hiatus between gothic and occiduity to constitute the horizon against which to evaluate the theses of Van den Bruck), that Destiny unpredictably leads the primordial immanence eternally and viride and spring of historical happening; that there is no principle of causality in events; that humanity can never decline into the singular, rather dividing itself in *Kultur* that are unrelated to each other if not for the common ground in the land of Difference, of novel forms perennially impressive and all vivifying; that the fate of mankind does not appear at all linearly ascending, eternally progressive, asymptotically perfectible, evolutionistically selective of the best, since man can only suggest the height of authenticity and power in the historical re-emergence of the precordial primordial time, when the primeval Chaos breaks the crust of the linear succession and the now cleared and available fertility of which the cosmeticizer *anthropos* can imprint its creation of form to the Virgult Civility ("A *Kultur* is born in the moment in which a great soul awakens from the original psychic state of eternally childlike eternity and detaches itself from it, as a form from what is formless, as something limited and perishable from the limitless and from the permanent"); that, therefore, finally, not the best survive, not the most suitable for existence (if the formula is to mean something more than the un-advancing tautology: "who can live lives"), rather that they *aristoi*, precisely because they are elected, perish, sacrificed (*Ausrottung der Besten*) to the evocation of History, instead indifferent to the delectable blood of the weak and unfit for sacrifice, surviving precisely because they are unworthy rejected; well, he would not only be immediately deprived of every chair and title, ostracized as the worst of the infectors and sowers of hatred and discord, but would risk even being subjected to forced medical treatment by the "Apparatus" of orthogony and noumenal and nomenclare.

Because, therefore, the association between the impossibility of the present opening of the Difference between Germany and the West, on the one hand, and the

opposite opening and maximum, on the other, of the Divergence between Moeller's Germany and our contemporary, would confer dignity of trabeal purple to the Rhenish thinker?

Proceed therefore according to the order of the discourse, starting with the merits recognized to Oswald Spengler:

On the level of the philosophy of history, the merit of Spengler's book lies precisely in the fact that it speaks again of destiny. It breaks the illusion of that causal thought with which historicism sought to bring history back to a defined order of the deduction of fundamental concepts, but which was nothing more than a mere succession of events. And it replaces it with the power of a thought of destiny that interprets history starting from an original phenomenon, which gives everything living its possible form [...]. It is in these things that the intimate grandeur, the richness, the splendor of Spengler's book lies. It requires a metaphysics of history that is based on analogy. And it already contains a metaphysical conception of history whose formal language is the symbol [...]. We have long been accustomed to equating the concepts of Culture and Civilization [...]. Only little by little did we at least come to understand Culture and Civilization as opposing values: Culture as the domination of what creates and Civilization as the dominion of what gives shape [...]. Only Spengler conceived them in their periodicity, as an expression of "a rigorous and organic succession". As long as men are creative and immersed in culture, they remain close to the earth, whose bonds also hold their works together. But as soon as Culture becomes Civilization and what gives shape becomes an end in itself, as soon as men lose their connection with the earth and no longer lead a life of nature but of stills, their works too are lost. Culture dies, becoming Civilization. And with it the historical life of the corresponding formal circle slowly dies: "Civilization is the inevitable end of a Culture", says Spengler [...]. This discovery appears surprising today because it overturns that satisfied image of the world with which the front of progress had identified itself, which liked to think that in the end things would receive their fulfillment through evolution. But this front will have to resign itself: fulfillment is always in that beginning in which it was achieved for the first time as a form. While the very idea of progress constitutes only an end, together with that civilized world that produces it to embellish its own sterility. If the primordial generation is the symptomatic creative foundation of every culture, progress is the typical self-deception of every civilization.

And continuing with the explanation of its contradictions:

And yet Spengler is not a metaphysician but in all respects a skeptic of the West. He too is half of his nature a rationalist and therefore subject to the fatality which all rationalists face. It speaks of the metaphysically

exhausted soil of the West and at the same time promises a metaphysics of history that has only to arrive and which will be the last great philosophical contribution that is still reserved for the West [...]. The real question is whether the rationalist can become a prophet. It is about the question that questions our fate that we must answer Spengler. From the answer to this question, yes or no, the fate of the West immediately follows. Can a rationalist have the intimate right to proclaim the sunset? [...]. Because destiny can only be understood in a metaphysical, not rationalistic way. If it looks forward and anticipates the future, it can only be elusive. The rationalist explains things and can be refuted. The metaphysician expresses them and is always true [...]. Spengler's discovery places culture and civilization in this relationship of beginning and end, but does not draw the relative conclusions about those opportunities for the future that remain open to us too [...]. He says that that circle of becoming we call Western has reached the point after which he can only expect a destiny of sunset [...]. The path from myth to statistics expresses the extreme distance that passes from culture to civilization. When men have brought the world to the point of perfection that it can be calculated, it shatters into its elements. The scepticism present in Spengler's own book, as a self-testimony of the present, as an attempt to calculate the future from now on, would be a sign that we have reached this point. But this scepticism is only evidence against the civilization of which it is an expression. It is by no means a test against life. The beginning is always. What is calculable always has against it what cannot be calculated. Spengler himself has the incalculable against him [...]. From the sunset of the ancient world Spengler deduced that of the West: he compared men born from 100 BC. to 300 BC of our chronology with those from 1800 to 2000 of the coming terrestrial becoming. And interpreting them as "contemporary" in a psychological sense and in a peculiar interchronological sense, he established that by their habits of life they were what we are today: "late men" [...]. The "surface" is life. The "internal impulse" is destiny. But only what is human can be compared. And therefore the very surface [...]. The "internal impulse", on the other hand, is incomparable: and with it is what changes in existence, as in drama. Therefore it is precisely the incomparable that Spengler intends to compare: destiny [...]. History is destiny expressed in difference, in conflict, in contradiction. History is linked to races, political forms, epochal ideals that it creates for itself. History depends on the grace of great inspirations and great personalities. Where men are alike, destinies are alike too: this is the conclusion that Spengler draws. However, only what occurs twice can be part of a comparison. The attempt at comparison alone therefore goes dialectically beyond the concept of destiny. Fate is "irreversible," Spengler says. This is his finding. But, as Goethe says, it is not even "replicable". Here Spengler's observation is reversed. And it turns on itself. Destiny is unique.

Collating two different Kulturs by projecting their convergence in the commonality of Destiny by inferential deduction contradicts the same idea of the *Nöte*, blind and aleatory: "*Fate is a throw of dice, Ares judges*" (Aeschylus).

And this is above all true for two radically different *Kulturs*:

Maintaining within what is finite, the Apollonian and Euclidean culture of antiquity was based, according to Spengler, on compact corporeality. The Faustian and infinitesimal culture is instead based on the infinity of open space. The destiny that is predetermined for it is the destiny of something unknown. However, Spengler rationalistically deduces the Nordic destiny from the ancient one. But a Faustian culture must end in a different way than the Apollonian one. Spengler has Spengler against him here.

While agreeing the thesis expressed here by Moeller about the need for the difference between the forms of the decline of Euclidean *Kultur* and Gothic, we nevertheless feel obliged to better elucidate this relationship of *Kulturs*, which is above all the relationship of the Heliacal epochs within the Second Era of the original Night, even if this forces us to digress and exceed our here declared aim of an inerrative investigation on Moeller's "profection".

The Apollo / Faust opposition and the very detailed outline of its articulation in the articulated prism of the human, represents in fact - according to the writer here - the top of Spenglerian thought and intellectual production. We refer all those who had an interest in understanding the essence of European history of the last three thousand years to a careful analysis. Well, difference, or rather antitheticity, in this case does not mean irrelation or relationship through the mere intermediary of the antithesis: there is much more to connect Apollo and Faust in unity of destination, and this surplus is the Eternal himself, and therefore the essence of Deuteriarity otherwise and elsewhere declined and undone: the Original, autochthonically concretized in the *dia-ference* - transcendental or extreme all beyond and always because immanent or inseital - between concretion and foundation of the Other from every affirmation, cannot but deposit beyond the auroral being of the contradictory *ansichselbst*, the position of selfness assumed by its own distinctive or identity content precisely itself being with itself of the archea *Dia-vergence-in-itself*. Thus begins the Second Era of Being-in-self or *inseital Seity*, "in which a virgin was born" Apollo. But between mode and content of being the Conflict cannot be quieted, this diverging contrast being the very identity content of first onto-sameness.

And here, therefore, that the eternal being - compact and finite and continuous - "that entity to entity approach", transmutes the essence of Parmenidean *Kultur* ("Powerful necessity keeps it within the limits of adamantine bonds, since it is forbidden for the Being to be incomplete and imperfect") into the perennial reaching out, in which the destination of the principal eternation regains the breath

of the infinite, but it loses the subjectivity that founds it, in dissipating, among the mists of the Whole, of the finitude or assignment to the identifying *determination* of the Ego that is eternal.

Therefore, Faustian and Apollonian *Kultur* cannot but necessarily share the same destiny, that is the historical unfolding or diurnal differentiation of the Original, *between* the original affirmative anticipation of the self in-itself-Purpose-of-the-self and its ultimate self-contradictory fulfillment or extreme entelechy of the absolute Self-contradictory.

Having duly objected to this, let us now return from our circumnavigation to the linearity of Moeller's *anabasis* towards the destiny of the West traced by Spengler. The story, for Van den Bruck, is based on the immanent law of Transmission, i.e. on *Pólemos* as *Hypokeímenon*: the Difference of everything from everything, everything unites.

External differentiation is grafted onto this constant hypogeum: the form of history cannot be either the ring of the eternal Nietzschean return, nor the line of the eternal progressive ascent of the forces of "Versailles", rather it is the spiral, the union that is of the rotary motion and translation on the rectilinear plane (form on which one fully agrees precisely since the teleologically self-tending-si ins [linearity] of the Original is in itself Differentiation of everything from everything [circularity]).

Spengler already neglects the fact that Antiquity and the West pass through each other through the mediation of Hellenism first, then of Christianity and finally of the migrations of peoples [...]. He, who in general establishes connections, does not see here the connection of all connections, the connection of all cultures [...]. He does not see that culture is always an ancient culture built up around the forms of a new one, and that civilization too is always an ancient civilization built up around the forms of a new one. He does not see that here it is not only a matter of influences that flow from some lateral place but of a current that flows from the depths, a current that every cultural circle created by a people transmits to the cultural circles that are closest to it in terms of space, of the time and spirit. He does not see that a law is at stake here, the effect of which appears to be possible to infinity. Of the only historical law that exists, of a law of nature that has become the law of history: of Transmission [...]. In the world there must be a will that does not tolerate that the things created by men are lost [...]. Anyone wishing to exchange the will of this anticipation for a will to progress would forget that the world that perpetually transforms itself is spontaneous, that spontaneity is its perennial genius, while rationalism remains a calculation that has eternally failed to become destiny [...]. History is the history of what is incalculable. As long as there is Transmission there is no sunset. There is only eternal present [...]. There is no repetition of the same. There is only one repetition in the different. It is based on an infinite connection of things, on a continuous variation of the eternal

primordial generation, and obeys the great law that Franz Evers expressed in his original words: "everything returns differently". We should therefore renounce the belief in an eternal return, which is the faith of incurable romantics. But we cannot renounce the concept of an eternal Transmission, which is a metaphysical reality. If it were a point, history could be calculated. The point can be established in a finalistic perspective by the nature researcher and a rationalistic one by the philosopher of history. But the totality of the story comes from the rotation. And the rotation is like the cosmos from which it derives: incalculable for us in its course. It does not rewind itself into that ring in whose image Nietzsche had represented the eternal return. Rather, it moves into an eternal stratification which in its spiral path always extends in an elliptical manner, welcomes new possibilities and establishes new stages.

Having expressed this as a premise, we can now, not trembling, affix the essence of Moeller's "political" interpretation - which is a hope in itself - about the detachment of the Destiny of *re-puerescens* Germany from the Destiny of senescence and decline of West. According to the thinker from Solingen, in fact, the ominous outcome of the First World War for Germany nevertheless emancipated the defeated from the twilight perspectives attributed by Spengler to the setting lands.

The conclusion that Spengler had drawn from those assumptions was not correct for Germany [...]. Here there must be a contradiction from which the possibility of a double destiny derives and which completely changes the terms of this problem. Couldn't the fate of sunset that sweeps the West hasten now, especially for the winners? And the losers, among whom we must also include the Russians in this context, could they not be saved from this fate of decline to the extent that they suddenly withdraw from the course of the world? Couldn't they be given the opportunity to prepare at this time to take part in a future era in history? And since it is here that this historical passage takes place, since the natural reference to the early development of the West is found precisely in Central Europe, and since the Germans - in whose land the West now passes into the East - would also be the natural of this evolution, could not the scene of this era be Europe again with its Eurasian background? [...]. Didn't the outcome of the world war overturn the assumptions from which Spengler had deduced the decline of the West? Did it not in the first place regarding the fate of those who were defeated? Didn't he put our fate back? With these questions, the problem of Spengler's book extends to the political dimension. Spengler's book was conceived as a pre-war idea. As a work it came out during the war. And it was concluded in confidence in a victory for the German people. From this victory Spengler expected the beginning of a great imperialist era: an era of planetary domination by organizing the world under essentially German leadership. An era in which the West

[...] would have gathered its European forces for the last time in a great civilization and then definitively disintegrate after this supreme expenditure of political power, like the Roman Empire and like any other type of empire [...]. Spengler argued that "imperialism is pure civilization" and taught to understand it as the symbol of the spill, as the typical conclusion of a great people.

The war has torn the West apart, thus dissecting its Destiny itself:

There is no single West. Already for this reason it cannot go down all together [...]. Those who speak of the West today are precisely confusing Europe with what is West [...]. The West [...], in the French Revolution, which was its greatest publicity, finally took the decisive step. That step, that is, which on Anglo-utilitarian bases constituted the final and long-awaited passage [...] from culture to civilization.

Here, for Germany, in the year in which Moeller writes these pages (1920), the possibility of the extreme decision, well authentic, of the decision opens up, that is to say that it is his own being there: or detach from the aging West (*Zivilisation*) and re-align with the primordial power of rotation of the Earth (*Ur-zeit*) to shape a new Culture (*Kultur*) and thus survive (bud of the inexhaustible chthonic lymph of which Germany itself would become the center, foundation and western bulwark welcoming in itself the Slavic East as its hinterland: "each in their own way, Russia and Germany today share the fact that they are in the dimension of chaos rather than in an inorganic situation, with those forms of life that are more secure and apparently more solid but already rigid and therefore very easy to break that are reserved to the countries of a victorious civilization. Russia has always remained close to what is organic. Germany is returned to the staff"); or remain immersed in the Civilization of the West and with it extinguish, passing through Caesarism and the universalization or monadization of the world predicted by Spengler.

In the life of peoples there always comes a time when the people of a particular culture must feel that the values that emanate from this are broken into another circle of culture, peoples, forms [...]. This moment usually comes as soon as the Earth collects in primordial peoples the monstrous force of rotation necessary to create a new destiny. For Europe it has returned right now, and starting from the war and the revolution it places the European peoples before a final decision: what do they want to belong to, to the West or to a second West that begins beyond the West? [...]. At one time we recognized in the South what was up to the South. And in the end we protested against the South. Now we have given the West too long what is due to the West or perhaps no longer due. We are left with the protest against the West. The Russians are part of this protest as a race. In their entirety, they are a tacit protest that awaits eternally threatening. This unites us but distinguishes us at the same time. We are this same protest, but we are as awareness. We are exposed to aggression and therefore we can only affirm ourselves with a

counterattack. Il nostro compito non è essere il paese della protesta ma divenire il popolo della protesta. Non ci resta che guidare la protesta contro l'Ovest [...]. How is it possible that the world belongs to the old and declining nations of Western Europe, while the young and exuberant peoples do not have land, sea, air and freedom to live? [...]. The desert grows. Woe to those who hide the West within themselves! The men of the West, who are the first today, will be the last tomorrow. The young peoples will rise up against the old peoples.

We certainly know today which choices - utterly wrong and above all tragic for all humanity - Germany made then, and which the effigy (deadly) and the warp ("*hamartiale*") of the dark drape of this protest elevation against the lands of the West. Moeller himself discovered it, and in time, with clear foresight, and for this he killed himself, stoically, as an extreme form of protest against these decisions and drifts. And he deserves the honor of it.

This fate of error and horror, nevertheless, certainly does not dispense guilt and tribute mendacity to the Moellerian interpretation of Spengler and the Destiny itself of their homeland: "If you choose to share the story and fate of the aging lands of the West, you will perish, Germans", thus, in fact, resounds the prophecy launched by Van den Bruck in 1920.

As of today, there are no Germans in Germany, but only English and Yankee epigones, but only the world of Woodrow Wilson (and Mayer Amschel Rothschild), but only the world of dust (1789) and altar (1918) of Versailles, but only finally the world of the universalistic Unity of the world precognized by Spengler as the last epiphenomenon of the next destination at sunset of the Abendlandes.

And proof of all this - which the Moellerian prophecy verifies - dwelling precisely in the outcome of the experiment whose implementation was initially hypothesized here.

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