

Arnold J. Toynbee's Philosophy of History

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

### ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

#### I. OUTLINE AND APPRECIATION

**R**EGARDLESS of the subsequent criticism, Toynbee's *A study of history* is one of the most significant works of our time in the field of historical synthesis. Although several volumes of it are yet to come, six published volumes display a rare combination of thoughtfulness of a philosopher with technical competence of a meticulous empiricist. The combination insures against the sterile scholarship of a thoughtless "fact-finder," as well as against a fantastic flight of an incompetent dilettante. Hence its significance for historians, philosophers of history, sociologists, political scientists, and for anyone who is interested in the how and why of emergence, growth, decline, and dissolution of civilizations.

Mr. Toynbee starts with a thesis that the proper field of historical study is neither a description of singularistic happenings contiguous in space or time nor a history of the states and bodies politic or of mankind as a "unity."

The 'intelligible fields of historical study' . . . are societies which have a greater extension, in both Space and Time, than national states or city-states, or any other political communities. . . . Societies, not states, are 'the social atoms' with which students of history have to deal [I, 45].

Combining religious characteristics and territorial and partly political characteristics, he receives "civilization" as the proper object of historical study, in which "civilization" is "a species of society" (*ibid.*, pp. 129 ff.). Of such civilizations, he takes twenty-one (later on twenty-six) "related and unrelated" species: the Western, two Orthodox Christian (in Russia and the Near East), the Iranic, the Arabic, the Hindu, two Far Eastern, the Hellenic, the Syriac, the Indic, the Sinic, the Minoan, the Sumeric, the Hittite, the Babylonian, the Andean, the Mexic, the Yucatec, the Mayan, the Egyptian, plus five "arrested civilizations": Polynesian, Eskimo, Nomadic, Ottoman, and Spartan (*ibid.*, pp. 132 ff., IV, 1 ff.). With these twenty-six civilizations at his disposal, Toynbee attacks, first, the problem of genesis of civilization: Why do some of the societies, like many primitive groups, become static at an early stage of their existence and do not emerge as civilizations while other societies reach this level?

<sup>1</sup> *A study of history*. By ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE. 6 vols.; Oxford University Press, 1934-39. Vol. I, pp. 476; Vol. II, pp. 452; Vol. III, pp. 551; Vol. IV, pp. 656; Vol. V, pp. 712; Vol. VI, pp. 663.

His answer is that the genesis of civilization is due neither to the race factor nor to geographic environment as such but to a specific combination of two conditions: the presence of creative minority in a given society and of environment which is neither too unfavorable nor too favorable. The groups which had these conditions emerged as civilizations; the groups which did not have them remained on the subcivilization level. The mechanism of the birth of civilization in these conditions is formulated as an interplay of Challenge-and-Response. The environment of the above type incessantly challenges the society; and the society, through its creative minority, successfully responds to the challenge and solves the need. A new challenge follows, and a new response successfully ensues; and so the process goes on incessantly. In these conditions no possibility of rest exists, the society is on the move all the time, and such a move brings it, sooner or later, to the stage of civilization. Surveying the conditions in which his twenty-one civilizations were born, he finds that they emerged exactly in the above circumstances (I, 183-338; Vol. II, *passim*).

The next problem of the study is why and how, out of twenty-six civilizations, four (Far Western Christian, Far Eastern Christian, Scandinavian, and Syriac) miscarried and turned to be abortive; five (Polynesian, Eskimo, Nomadic, Spartan, and Ottoman) were arrested in their growth at an early stage; while the remaining civilizations grew "through an *élan* that carried them from challenge through response to further challenge and from differentiation through integration to differentiation again?" (III, 128).

The answer evidently depends upon the meaning of growth and its symptoms. In Toynbee's opinion the growth of civilization is not a geographic expansion of the society and is not due to it. If anything, the geographic expansion of a society is positively associated with retardation and disintegration but not with the growth (III, 128 ff.). Likewise, the growth of civilization does not consist in, and is not due to, the technological progress and to the society's increasing mastery over the physical environment: "there is no correlation between progress in technique and progress in civilization" (III, 173-74). The growth of civilization consists in "a progressive and cumulative inward self-determination or self-articulation" of the civilization; in a progressive and cumulative "etherialization" of the society's values and "simplification of the civilization's apparatus and technique" (III, 128 ff., 182 ff.). Viewed in the aspect of the intrasocial and interindividual relationship, growth is an incessant creative "withdrawal and return" of the charismatic minority of the society in the process of the ever new successful responses to ever new challenges of the environment (*ibid.*, pp. 248 ff.). Growing civilization is a unity. Its society consists of the creative minority freely imitated and followed by the majority—the Internal Proletariat of the society and the External Proletariat of its barbarian neighbors. In such a society there is no fratricidal struggle, no hard and fast divisions. It is a solidary body. Grow-

ing civilization unfolds its dominant potentialities, which are different in different civilizations: aesthetic in the Hellenic civilization; religious in the Indic and Hindu; scientifically machinistic in the Western; and so on (III, 128-390). As a result, the process of growth represents a progressive integration and self-determination of the growing civilization and a differentiation between the different civilizations in growth. Such is the solution of the problem of growth of civilization.

The third main problem of the study is how and why civilizations break down, disintegrate, and dissolve. They evidently do that because, out of twenty-six species of civilizations, "only four have miscarried as against twenty-six that have been born alive," and "no less than sixteen out of these twenty-six are by now dead and buried" (the Egyptian, the Andean, the Sinic, the Minoan, the Sumeric, the Mayan, the Indic, the Hittite, the Syriac, the Hellenic, the Babylonian, the Mexic, the Arabic, the Yucatec, the Spartan, and the Ottoman). Of the remaining ten civilizations living,

the Polynesian and the Nomadic civilizations are now in their last agonies and seven out of eight others are all, in different degrees, under threat of either annihilation or assimilation by our own civilization of the West. Moreover, no less than six out of these seven civilizations . . . bear marks of having broken down and gone into disintegration [IV, 1-2].

Toynbee points out that the decline is not due to some cosmic necessity or to geographic factors or to racial degeneration or to external assaults of the enemies, which, as a rule, reinforce the growing civilization; neither is it caused by the decline of technique and technology, because "it is always the decline of civilization that is the cause and the decline of technique the consequence or symptom" (IV, 40).

The main difference between the process of growth and disintegration is that in the growth phase the civilization successfully responds to a series of ever new challenges, while in the disintegration stage it fails to give such a response to a given challenge. It tries to answer it again and again, but recurrently fails. In growth the challenges, as well as responses, vary all the time; in disintegration, the responses vary, but the challenge remains unanswered and unremoved. The author's verdict is that civilizations perish through suicide but not by murder (IV, 120). In Toynbee's formulation

the nature of the breakdowns of civilizations can be summed up in three points: a failure of creative power in the minority, an answering withdrawal of mimesis on the part of the majority, and a consequent loss of social unity in the society as a whole.

In an unfolded form this formula runs as follows:

When in the history of any society a Creative Minority degenerates into a mere Dominant Minority which attempts to retain by force a position which it has ceased to merit, this fatal change in the character of the ruling element provokes, on the other hand, the secession of a Proletariat (the majority) which no longer spontaneously admires or freely imitates the ruling element, and which revolts against being reduced to

the status of an unwilling 'underdog.' This Proletariat, when it asserts itself, is divided from the outset into two distinct parts. There is an 'Internal Proletariat' (the majority of the members) and . . . an 'External Proletariat' of barbarians beyond the pale who now violently resist incorporation. And thus the breakdown of a civilization gives rise to a class-war within the body social of a society which was neither divided against itself by hard-and-fast divisions nor sundered from its neighbours by unbridgeable gulfs so long as it was in growth [IV, 6].

This declining phase consists of three subphases: (a) breakdown of the civilization, (b) its disintegration, and (c) its dissolution. The breakdown and dissolution are often separated by centuries, even thousands of years, from one another. For instance, the breakdown of the Egyptian civilization occurred in the sixteenth century B.C., and its dissolution only in the fifth century A.D. For two thousand years between breakdown and dissolution it existed in a "petrified life in death." In a similar "petrified" state up to the present time the Far Eastern civilization continues in China after its breakdown in the ninth century A.D. About one thousand and eight hundred years, respectively, elapsed between these points in the history of the Sumeric and Hellenic civilizations (IV, 62 ff.; V, 2 ff.); and so on. Like a petrified tree trunk, such a society can linger in that stage of life-in-death for centuries, even thousands of years. Nevertheless, the destiny of most, if not of all, civilizations, seems to be to come to final dissolution sooner or later. As to the Western society, though it seems to have had all the symptoms of breakdown and disintegration, the author is noncommittal. He still leaves a hope for a miracle: "We may and must pray that a reprieve which God has granted to our society once will not be refused if we ask for it again in a contrite spirit and with a broken heart" (VI, 321).

Such being the general nature of the decline of civilizations, a most detailed analysis of its uniformities, symptoms, and phases is developed in Volumes IV, V, and VI. Only a few of these uniformities can be touched here. While in the growth period the Creative Minority gives a series of successful responses to ever new challenges, now, in the disintegration period, it fails to do so. Instead, intoxicated by victory, it begins to "rest on one's oars," to "idolize" the relative values as absolute; loses its charismatic attraction and is not imitated and followed by the majority. Therefore, more and more it has now to use force to control the Internal and the External Proletariat. In this process it creates a "Universal State," like the Roman Empire created by the Hellenic Dominant Minority, as a means to keep itself and the civilization alive; enters into wars; becomes slave of the intractable institutions; and works its own and its civilization's ruin.

The "Internal Proletariat" now secedes from the Minority; becomes dissatisfied and disgruntled; and often creates a "Universal Church"—for instance, Christianity or Buddhism—as its own creed and institution. While the "Universal State" of the Dominant Minority is doomed, the Universal

Church of the Inner Proletariat (for instance, Christianity) serves as a bridge and foundation for a new civilization ("apparented" by and) affiliated with the old one.

The External Proletariat now organizes itself and begins to attack the declining civilization, instead of striving to be incorporated by it. In this way the Schism enters the Body and Soul of civilization. It results in an increase of strife and fratricidal wars that work in favor of the development of the ruin. The Schism in the Soul manifests itself in the profound change of the mentality and behavior of the members of the disintegrating society. It leads to an emergence of four types of personality and "Saviors": Archaist, Futurist (Saviors by Sword), Detached and Indifferent Stoic, and finally, Transfigured Religious Savior, posited in the supersensory world of God. The sense of Drift, of Sin, begins to grow; Promiscuity and Syncretism become dominant. Vulgarization and "Proletarianization" invade arts and sciences, philosophy and language, religion and ethics, manners and institutions.

But all in vain. With the exception of Transfiguration, all these efforts and "Saviors" do not stop the disintegration. At the best the civilization can become "Fossilized"; and in this form, "life-in-death" can linger for centuries and even thousands of years; but its dissolution, as a rule, comes. The only fruitful way turns out to be the way of Transfiguration, the way of transfer of the goal and values to the supersensory Kingdom of God. It may not stop the disintegration of the given civilization, but it may serve as a seed for emergence and development of a new affiliated civilization; and through that, it is a step forward to the eternal process of elevation of Man to Superman, of "the City of Man to City of God," as the ultimate terminal point of Man and Civilization. The volumes close with an almost apocalyptic note:

The aim of Transfiguration is to give light to them that sit in darkness . . . it is pursued by seeking the Kingdom of God in order to bring its life . . . into action. . . . The goal of Transfiguration is thus the Kingdom of God [VI, 171].

The whole human history or the total civilizational process thus turns into a Creative Theodicy: through separate civilizations and their uniform, but concretely different, rhythms, the reality unfolds its richness and leads from "under-Man" and "under-Civilization," to Man and Civilization, and finally to Superman and Transfigured Etherial Super-Civilization of the Kingdom of God.

The work of the Spirit of the Earth, as he waves and draws his threads on the Loom of Time, is the temporal history of Man as this manifests itself in the geneses and growths and breakdowns and disintegrations of human societies; and in all this welter of life . . . we can hear the beat of an elemental rhythm . . . of Challenge-and-Response and Withdrawal-and-Return and Rout-and-Rally and Apparentation-and-Affiliation and Schism-and-Palingenesia. This elemental rhythm is the alternating beat of Yin and Yang. . . . The Perpetual turning of a wheel is not a vain repetition if, at each revolution, it is carrying a vehicle that much nearer to its goal; and if 'palingenesia'

signifies the birth of something new . . . then the Wheel of Existence is not just a devilish device for inflicting an everlasting torment on a damned Ixion. The music that the rhythm of Yin and Yang beats out is the song of creation. . . . Creation would not be creative if it did not swallow up in itself all things in Heaven and Earth, including its own antithesis [VI, 324].

Such is the general skeleton of Toynbee's philosophy of history. It is clothed by him in a rich and full-blooded body of facts, empirical verification, and a large number of subpropositions. The main theses, as well as the subpropositions, are painstakingly tested by the known empirical facts of the history of the twenty-one civilizations studied. In this respect the theory of Toynbee, conceived and executed on a grand plan, is probably documented more fully than most of the existing philosophies of history. To repeat, the work as a whole is a real contribution to the field of historical synthesis.

## II. CRITICISM

If now we ask how valid is the general scheme of Toynbee's theory of the rise and decline of civilizations as well as a number of his secondary propositions, the situation changes. Side by side with the unquestionable virtues, the work has very serious shortcomings. Among the unessential and superfluous defects, the following can be mentioned: first, the work is too voluminous and could have been compressed without losing anything in the clearness and completeness of its theory. A pronounced penchant of the author to quote abundantly from the Bible, mythology, poetry—to use overabundant poetic and symbolic images—is partly responsible for this insignificant defect.

Second, in spite of an astounding erudition, the author displays either an ignorance or a deliberate neglect of many important sociological works which deal more fundamentally with the problems Toynbee is struggling with than other works quoted. Neither the names of Tarde, Durkheim, Max Weber, Pareto, or practically any sociologist are mentioned. One of the consequences of such a neglect is that Toynbee has to write dozens and hundreds of pages on the questions that were studied in such works more thoroughly and better than Toynbee does. For instance, mimesis or imitation is one of the cardinal points of his theory to which he devotes many pages. A reader who knows Tarde's *Laws of imitation*, not to mention many later works, does not get from Toynbee's analysis anything new. More than that: Toynbee's theory of mimesis and of its uniformities has many mistakes which would have been avoided if he had studied some of the main works in this field. Similarly, he devotes several hundreds of pages—in Volumes I and II—to investigation of the influence of race and geographic environment upon societies and civilization. And yet, he does not add anything new to the existing knowledge in that field. Even more, he fails to see the demonstrated weaknesses of the claims of some of the climatic and racial theories (like that of Huntington) which he accepts to a considerable extent. A concise characterization of the existing conclusions in these fields would have permitted him to outline his

theory on only a few pages and to avoid several pitfalls into which he fell. The same criticism can be applied to several other problems. In spite of an extraordinary erudition of the author, it shows itself somewhat one-sided and inadequate.

Third, his knowledge of the history of the twenty-six civilizations he deals with is very uneven. It is excellent in the field of the Hellenic (Greco-Roman) civilization, and it is much thinner in the field of other civilizations.

Fourth, his acquaintance with the extant knowledge in the field of such phenomena as art, philosophy, science, law, and some others with which he deals, seems also to be inadequate: little, if anything, is quoted in these fields, and the conclusions of the author sound superficial and dilettant.

Fifth, the same is true of several other fields in which he makes categorical statements. For instance, he contends that "the evil of War in the eighteenth century [was reduced] to a minimum which has never been approached in . . . our Western history, either before or after, up to date" (IV, 143). As a matter of fact, our systematic study of the movement of war (see my *Social and cultural dynamics*, Vol. III) shows that, measured either by the number of war casualties or by the size of the armies per million of population, the centuries from twelve to sixteen, inclusive, and the nineteenth century were less belligerent than the eighteenth century. In Volume V, page 43, he himself seems to repudiate his previous statement by saying that "the life of our Western Society has been as grievously infested by the plague of war during the last four centuries as in any earlier age." As a further example: he contends that "the sense of drift" as manifested in various deterministic philosophies grows with the process of disintegration in all civilizations (V, 422 ff.). The factual movement of deterministic conceptions versus indeterministic is very different from what he claims it is (see my *Dynamics*, Vol. II, chap ix). A third example: he contends that in a diffusion or radiation of a given culture the alien culture is penetrated first by the economic elements; second, by the political; and third, by the cultural elements. In this way a uniformity of the order of the penetration of the alien culture by specified elements of diffusing civilization is set forth (IV, 57). As a matter of fact, such uniformity does not exist. In some cases the economic elements penetrate first; in others, the cultural (see the evidences in the forthcoming Vol. IV of my *Dynamics*).

In the work there are many similar blunders and overstatements. However, in a work of such immense magnitude as *A study of history* such shortcomings are rather inevitable. One should not carp at them. If the main conceptual scheme of the author is solid, such shortcomings can easily be discounted as perfectly superfluous.

Unfortunately, the work has two fundamental defects, which concern not the details but the heart and soul of Toynbee's philosophy of history. They concern, first, "the civilization" taken by Toynbee as a unit of historical study; second, the conceptual scheme of genesis, growth, and decline of the civilizations



put at the foundation of Toynbee's philosophy of history. Let us look at these assumptions more closely.

By "civilization" Toynbee means not a mere "field of historical study" but a united system, or the whole, whose parts are connected with one another by causal ties. Therefore, as in any causal system in his "civilization," parts must depend upon one another, upon the whole, and the whole upon its parts. He categorically states again and again that

civilizations are wholes whose parts all cohere with one another and all affect one another reciprocally. . . . It is one of the characteristics of civilizations in process of growth that all aspects and activities of their social life are coordinated into a single social whole, in which the economic, political, and cultural elements are kept in a nice adjustment with one another by an inner harmony of the growing body social [III, 380, 152; see also I, 34 ff., 43 ff., 149 ff., 153 ff.].

Thus, like so-called "functional anthropologists," he assumes that his "civilizations" are a real system and not mere congeries or conglomerations of various cultural (or civilizational) phenomena and objects adjacent in space or time but devoid of any causal or meaningful ties (see the analysis of socio-cultural systems and congeries in my *Social and cultural dynamics*, Vol. I, chap. i; an unfolded theory of sociocultural systems is given in the forthcoming Vol. IV, of the *Dynamics*). If civilizations are real systems, then, as in any causal system, we should expect that when one important component of it changes, the rest of the components change too, because if A and B are causally connected, then the change of A is followed by the change of B in a definite and uniform manner. Otherwise, A and B are mere congeries but not the partners of the causal system. Is Toynbee's assumption valid? I am afraid it is not: his "civilizations" are not united systems but mere conglomerations of various civilizational objects and phenomena (congeries of systems and singular cultural traits) united only by spacial adjacency but not by causal or meaningful bonds. For this reason, they are not real "species of society"; therefore they can hardly be treated as unities and can hardly have any uniformities in their genesis, growth, and decline. These concepts cannot even be applied to the congeries, because congeries do not and cannot grow or decline. Like the components of a dumping place, they can only be rearranged, added to, or subtracted from; but we cannot talk of the growth or decline of a "civilizational dumping place" or of any merely spatial conglomeration of things and events. This diagnosis of the "civilizations" is inadvertently corroborated many times by Toynbee himself. In many places of his work he indicates that, for instance, the technique and economic life of the civilization often change while the rest of the civilization does not change; in other cases the rest of the civilization changes while technique remains static; in still other cases, the technique changes in one way while the rest of the civilization moves in the opposite direction (IV, 40 ff.; III, 154 ff., *et passim*). If we have A and B where the change of one of the variables is not followed by that of

the other, or when it does not show any uniform variation, this means A and B are causally unrelated; therefore they are not components of the same system or parts of the same whole. Toynbee himself demonstrates—and demonstrates well—that two of the components of his civilization (technique and economy) are causally unrelated to the rest of the “whole.” His whole—“civilization”—thus turns out into a mere spatial congeries. In other places of his work he gives several cases where the religious or the artistic or the political element of his whole—civilization—each appears to be an independent variable unrelated to the rest of the alleged “whole.” In this way Toynbee himself repudiates his basic assumption that his “civilizations” are “the wholes whose parts all cohere together.”

In fact, it is easy to show—and show convincingly—that any of his civilizations is not a “whole” or a system at all but a mere coexistence of an enormous number of systems and congeries existing side by side and not united either by causal or meaningful or any other ties (necessary for any real system) except a mere contiguity in space and time. Such a contiguity or mere spatial adjacency does not make from “a book + worn out shoe + bottle of whiskey” lying side by side any unity, whole, or system. It remains a congeries. Not only is the total civilization of such enormous “culture-areas” as the Greco-Roman, or the Sinic, or of any other of his civilizations not one whole or system, but the total civilization of even a smallest possible civilizational area—that of a single individual—is but a coexistence of several and different systems and congeries unrelated with one another in any way except spatial adjacency in a biological organism. Suppose that an individual is a Roman Catholic, Republican, professor, preferring Romantic music to Classic, Scotch to rye, blondes to brunettes. Roman Catholicism does not require, causally or logically, the Republican instead of the Democratic or other party; the Republican party is not connected logically or causally with professional occupation. This is true also with a preference for Scotch to rye, or Romantic music to the Classic. We have Roman Catholics who are not Republicans, and Republicans who are not Roman Catholics, professors who are neither, and many in other occupations who are Catholics or Republicans. Some Catholics or Republicans or professors prefer Scotch to rye, some rye to Scotch, some do not drink whiskey, some prefer beer to wine, and so on. This means that the total “civilization” of the same individual is not one unified system but a conglomeration of various systems and singular “civilizational” traits united only by a spatial adjacency of the same biological organism. Biological organism, being a real system, changes biologically as a whole; but its total “civilization,” being congeries, does not change in togetherness, nor can the “total civilizations” of many individuals display any uniformity in their change. (See my *Dynamics*, Vol. I, chap. i, and the forthcoming Vol. IV of it for a systematic analysis of this problem.)

If, then, the total “civilization” of an individual is not one system, still

less is one system the total civilization of a city block, or of the total city, of a nation, and of the still larger "civilized societies" of Toynbee. This means that Toynbee's "civilization" is not "species" but a kind of a "large dumping place" where coexist, side by side, an enormous number of various sociocultural systems many of which are not related to one another either causally or meaningfully: the State system, the Religious systems, the Art-Ethics-Philosophy-Science-Economic-Political-Technological and other systems and congeries "dumped together" over a vast territory and carried on by a multitude of individuals. One cannot style as species of the same genus different sets of incidental congeries: "shoe-watch-bottle-*Saturday Evening Post*" here, "trousers-comb-detective story-valve-rose-automobile" there: and still less can one expect uniformities of structure and change in genesis, growth, and decline of such different congeries. Having mistakenly taken different congeries for system, Toynbee begins to treat his civilizations as "species of society" and valiantly hunts for uniformities in their genesis, growth, and decline. In this way he makes the fatal mistake of erecting an enormous building upon a foundation less stable than the proverbial sand.

All the subsequent defects of his theory follow from this "original sin." It is aggravated by another fatal mistake he commits, namely, by the acceptance of the old—from Florus to Spengler—conceptual scheme of "genesis-growth-decline," as a uniform pattern of change of civilizations. Such a conception is possibly the worst among all the existing schemes of change of civilizations; and it is doubly fatal for Toynbee's theory. Indeed, if his civilizations are mere congeries, for this reason only we cannot talk of the genesis, growth, breakdown, disintegration, and dissolution of congeries. Congeries are neither born (alive or abortively) nor can they grow or disintegrate, since they never have been integrated. Generally, this popular conceptual scheme is purely analogical and represents not a theory of how sociocultural phenomena change but an evaluative theory of sociocultural progress: how they *should* change. Respectively, Toynbee's theory is not so much a theory of civilizational change as much as an evaluative theory of civilizational progress or regress. This clearly comes out already in his formula of "growth" and "disintegration." They are evaluative formulas of progress and regress but not the formulas of change.

From these two sins follow all the factual and logical incongruities of Toynbee's philosophy of history. First, his classifications of civilizations. Many a historian, anthropologist, and sociologist will certainly object to it as arbitrary, having no clear logical *fundamentum divisionis*. Several Christian civilizations are treated as separate and different; while a conglomeration of different (religious and other systems) are united into one civilization. Sparta is arbitrarily cut out of the rest of the Hellenic civilization, while Roman civilization is made inseparable from the Greek or Hellenic. Polynesian and Eskimo civilizations or "under-civilizations" (in one part Toynbee states

that they were live-born civilizations; in another he claims that they remained at "sub-civilizational" level and have never reached the state of civilizations)—each is taken as a separate civilization; while all the Nomads of all the continents are united into one civilization, and so on.

Second, Toynbee's mass onslaught of civilizations in the form of making most of them either "abortively born," "arrested," or "petrified," or "broken-down" or "disintegrating" or "dead and buried." According to Toynbee, out of twenty-six civilizations, only one—the Western—is still possibly alive at the present time, all the others being either dead or half-dead ("arrested," "petrified," "disintegrating"). Since, according to the assumed scheme, civilizations must have breakdowns, disintegration, and death, the author must either bury them or make them "abortive," "arrested," "petrified," or at least broken-down and disintegrating. Since such is the demand of the scheme and since Toynbee does not have any clear criteria as to what death or breakdown or integration or disintegration of civilization really is, he willingly takes the role of an undertaker of civilizations.

Third, courageously following his scheme, he is not deterred by the fact that some of his civilizations which, according to his scheme, ought to have been dead a long time ago, after their breakdown, lived centuries, even thousands of years, and are still alive and very much so. He disposes of the difficulty by a simple device of "petrified" civilizations. So China has been petrified for thousands of years; Egypt for some two thousands of years; so the Hellenic civilization was either disintegrating or petrified after the Peloponnesian War up to the fifth century A.D. The whole Roman history was but an incessant disintegration, from the very beginning to the end; and so other civilizations. In his scheme civilizations hardly have time to live and to grow; if they are not born abortive—as some are—they are arrested; if they are not arrested, they have their breakdown almost immediately after they are born and then begin to disintegrate or are turned into a "petrified trunk." Of course, philosophically the birth is the beginning of death; but an empirical investigator of either the life of an organism or of civilization can and must be less philosophical and can and must study the process of life itself, before the real death, or paralysis, or incurable sickness occurs. And for most of the organisms and civilizations there is a great distance between the terminal points of birth and death.

This means that Toynbee studies little the greater part of the existence of the civilizations and drowns centuries and thousands of years of their existence, activity, and change in his penchant of an "undertaker of civilizations." By this I do not deny the facts of either disintegration or even dissolution of real cultural or civilizational systems. Such facts occur, but occur with real systems, not with congeries of civilizations; and occur not immediately after the "birth" of the system but often after their long—sometimes indefinitely long—life and change. As a matter of fact, the elements of the

congeries of Toynbee's civilizations still exist, even of those which he considers dead and buried a long time ago. Quite a large number of Egyptian or Babylonian or especially Hellenic cultural systems and cultural traits (philosophy, ethics, architecture, sculpture, literature, art, etc.) are very much alive as components of the contemporary Western or other cultures. And they are alive not as objects of a museum but as living realities in our and other cultures.

Fourth, the foregoing explains why in Toynbee's work there is little of the analysis of the phase of the growth of the civilizations. There are only fairly indefinite statements that in that phase there is a Creative Minority successfully meeting the challenge, that there is no class war, no intersociety war, and that everything goes well there and everything moves and becomes more and more "etherialized." That is about all that is said of this phase. Such a characterization of the process of growth of his twenty-one civilizations is evidently fantastic in its "idyllic" and other virtues. If we have to believe it, we seemingly have to accept that in Greece before 431-403 B.C. (the breakdown of the Hellenic civilization, according to Toynbee) there were no wars, no revolutions, no class struggle, no slavery, no traditionalism, no uncreative minority, and that all these "plagues" appeared only after the Peloponnesian War. On the other hand, we shall expect that, after it, in Greece and Rome creativeness ceased, and there was no Plato, no Aristotle, no Epicurus, no Zeno, no Polybius, no Church Fathers, no Lucretius, no scientific discovery—nothing creative. As a matter of fact, the factual situation in all these respects was very different before and after the breakdown. The indicators of war per million of the population for Greece were twenty-nine for the fifth, forty-eight for the fourth, and eighteen and three, respectively, for the third and second centuries B.C. Indicators of Internal Disturbances (revolutions) were 149, 468, 320, 259, and 36, respectively, for the centuries from the sixth to the second B.C., inclusive. This shows that the real movement of wars and revolutions in Greece was very different from what Toynbee tells us. The same is true of Rome (see the detailed data in my *Social and cultural dynamics*, Vol. III). The scientific, philosophical, and religious creativeness likewise reached their peak rather in and after the fifth century than before that time (see the figures of discoveries, inventions, and philosophical systems in *Dynamics*, Vol. II, chap iii, *et passim*). In regard to the Western civilization, as mentioned, the diagnosis of Toynbee is somewhat ambiguous. In many places he says that it already had its breakdown and is in the process of disintegration; in other places he is noncommittal. Whatever is his diagnosis, the Western civilization before the fifteenth century is regarded by him in the phase of growth. If this is so, then, according to his scheme, no revolutions, no serious wars, no hard and fast class divisions must have existed in Europe before that century. Factually, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are the most revolutionary centuries up to the twentieth century in the history

of Europe; likewise, serfdom and other class divisions were hard and fast, and there were many wars—small and great (see the data in Vols. II and III of my *Dynamics*). Finally, the medieval Western civilization of the period of growth does not exhibit many of the traits of Toynbee's growing civilizations but displays a mass of traits which are the characteristics of Toynbee's disintegrating civilizations. The same is true of his other civilizations. This means that Toynbee's uniformities of growth and decline of the civilizations are largely fantastic and are not borne out by the facts.

Fifth, a large number of the uniformities he claims in connection with his conceptual scheme are also either fallacious or overstated—for instance, his uniformity of negative correlation between the geographic expansion of civilization and its growth; between war and growth; between progress of technique and growth. Granting a part of truth to his statements, at the same time in this categoric formulation they are certainly fallacious. If Toynbee's twenty-one civilizations did not diffuse over large areas and a multitude of persons and remained just the civilization of a little Sumeric, Greek, Egyptian, or Arabic village, they could hardly become "historical" and certainly would not come to the attention of historians and Toynbee and would not become one of his twenty-one civilizations. All his civilizations are vast complexes, spread over vast areas of territory and vast populations. They did not emerge at once in such a vast form; but in starting with a small area they expanded (in the process of their growth) over vaster and vaster areas and populations and through that became historical. Otherwise, they would not have been noticed. If Toynbee contends, as in a few places he does, that such a diffusion over vaster areas was performed peacefully, without war, through spontaneous submission of the "barbarians" to the charm of the diffusing civilization, such a statement is again inaccurate. All his twenty-one civilizations in their period of growth (according to Toynbee's scheme) expanded not only peacefully but with force, coercion, and wars. On the other hand, many of them in the period of disintegration shrank, rather than expanded, and were more peaceful than in the periods of Toynbee's growth.

Sixth, following Spengler, whose ghost heavily weighs upon the author, Toynbee ascribes different dominant tendencies to each of his civilizations: aesthetic to the Hellenic, religious to the Indic, machinistic-technological to the Western (he does not give further such dominant penchants to each of the remaining eighteen civilizations). Such a summary characterization is again very doubtful. The Western civilization did not show its alleged dominant characteristic at all up to approximately the thirteenth century A.D.: from the sixth to the end of the twelfth century the movement of technological inventions and scientific discoveries stood at about zero in this allegedly technological civilization par excellence; and from the sixth to the thirteenth century this machinistic civilization was religious through and through, even more

religious than the Indic or Hindu civilizations in many periods of their history (see the data on discoveries and technological inventions in my *Dynamics*, Vol. II, chap iii). The supposedly aesthetic Hellenistic civilization did not show its aesthetic penchant (in Toynbee's sense) before the sixth century B.C. and displayed quite a boisterous scientific and technological *élan* in the period from 600 to 200 A.D. (see the figures, *ibid.*, chap. iii). The Arabic civilization (whose dominant trait Toynbee does not stress) displayed an enormous *élan* of scientific and technological penchant in the centuries from the eighth to the thirteenth—much more so than the Western civilization during these centuries (see the data, *ibid.*, chap. iii). All this means that the Spenglerian-Toynbee ascription of some specific perennial tendency to this or that civilization, regardless of the period of its history, is misleading and inaccurate.

One can continue this criticism for a long time. A large part of the statements of Toynbee taken in his conceptual scheme are either inaccurate or invalid. However, many of these statements, properly reformulated and put in quite a different conceptual scheme of civilizational change, become valid and penetrating. For instance, most of the traits which Toynbee ascribes to the civilizations in their period of growth and partly in that of "petrification" are accurate for the phase of civilization dominated by what I call the "Ideational supersystem of culture" (not the total given culture in which it appears). Many of the characteristics of Toynbee's "disintegrating" period are typical for a phase of civilization dominated by what I call the "Sensate supersystem" (not the whole total culture or civilization). Many of the characteristics of Toynbee's stage of acute disorganization are but the characteristics of the period when a given culture passes from the domination of Ideational to Idealistic or Sensate supersystems, and vice versa. Such periods of shift happen several times in the history of this or that "total culture" or "civilization." They are, however, neither a death nor "petrification" nor "arrest" but merely a great transition from one supersystem to another. Put into this scheme, and reinterpreted, many pages and chapters of Toynbee's work become illuminating, penetrating, and scientifically valid. In such a setting his conception of the creative character of human history acquires still deeper meaning. Likewise, his hesitant diagnosis of the present state of the Western civilization becomes more definite and specific: as the status of the civilization entering not the path of death but the painful road of a great transition from the overripe Sensate phase to a more "etherialized" or spiritualized Ideational or Idealistic phase. Translated into more accurate terms of the real sociocultural systems and of the great rhythm of Sensate-Idealistic-Ideational supersystems of culture, *A study of history* is a most stimulating and illuminating work of a distinguished thinker and scholar.

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