

That the current of ideas with which he deals is, however, a backwater throughout most of the seventeenth century—though constituting a salient feature of its closing decades and of the eighteenth century background—is suggested not merely by what we have lately been taught to think of the rising preachers, the levelling debaters, and the mystical communists of the period, but by the difficulty Mr. Willey seems to experience in keeping *Paradise Lost* in focus against this subdued corner of the seventeenth century scene. The student of literature (who may also, of course, be a student of philosophy) will regard “The Heroic Poem in a Scientific Age” as a key chapter; and he is likely to conclude that for the author of that not altogether unsuccessful epic the problems which confronted the poet as the universe ceased to be heroic and mysterious must have been offset by the unphilosophical and illogical convictions which made most of the century so vigorously tempestuous and to which Mr. Willey, like Browne and the Platonists, seems to prefer to pay as little attention as possible. He has given us a delightful insight into the wistful whimsicality of those who lived in divided and distinguished worlds, and a valuable introduction to the eighteenth century in his nice treatment of rationalists like Herbert and Platonists like John Smith; but it is surely somewhat strange that the index of a book so entitled should contain no entry for Puritanism.

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The Destiny of Western Man. By W. T. STACE. New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1942. Pp. xi, 322.

According to Stace, two irreconcilable civilizations are today locked in life and death struggle: the Greek-Christian and the Totalitarian. The former is based on the doctrine of the primacy of reason (as elaborated by Greek classical philosophy) and sympathy (as established in the teachings of Christ). This doctrine implies the principle of the infinite value of the individual, and that in turn yields the philosophical foundation for democracy. Plato and Christ thus appear not only as the “founders of western civilization” but also as the spiritual fathers of modern democracy. In contrast, Totalitarianism is based on the doctrine of the primacy of will and self-assertion; it regards the individual chiefly as a means for the achievement of the higher ends of the state or society (which is hypostatized as an organic entity above the individuals), employing this doctrine on behalf of aggressive and destructive goals. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are the spiritual fathers of Totalitarianism.

Stace attempts to demonstrate the truth of Greek-Christian and the falsity of Totalitarian civilization according to an objective rational

criterion, the concept of the "good life". Both civilizations, he finds, aim at the realization of the good (that is, the healthy, happy, satisfactory) life, but whereas the Greek-Christian conception gives their proper place and functioning to *all* elements of human nature, the Totalitarian conception exaggerates and releases *some* of these elements at the expense of the others, and thus inevitably leads to a destruction or at least perversion of the complete human personality. The ideas of western civilization are therefore better on rational grounds, and not merely because they happen to be *our* ideas.

Stace's book has a brilliant lucidity; throughout the argument, he fights on the right side and for the right ideas and principles. But precisely because of that, and because of the fact that the rational justification of western civilization has been one of the most disputed factors in the struggle against Totalitarianism, we must draw attention to the points that might weaken or even invalidate that argument. Since it is impossible, in the space of a review, to take up all the issues involved, we shall limit ourselves to a few fundamentals.

Stace attacks the "philosophy" and the moral conception of Totalitarianism and deliberately omits social and economic issues. This would be a perfectly legitimate procedure if Totalitarianism possessed a philosophy and moral conception in the same sense in which western civilization does. But Stace himself emphasizes that Totalitarianism lacks "any clear and consistent set of doctrines", that it manufactures its doctrines *ad hoc*, according to the requirements of the changing political constellation. There is, of course, a general tendency underlying this procedure, but it can only be derived from and explained by an analysis of the social forces with which Totalitarianism has from the beginning associated itself. The New Order which is aimed at is not a new civilization but the violent conversion of civilization into a state of integral enslavement and regimentation. This policy is the result, not of some irrationalistic philosophy, but of the frightfully rational mechanisms which governed the economic and social development in Germany and Italy since the first World War.

The struggle against Totalitarianism is a struggle within "Greek-Christian civilization", against the destructive and aggressive forces which this civilization has time and again overcome. To treat Totalitarianism as a new civilization means to credit it with exactly what it wishes to be credited with. Hitler has frequently said that his goal, too, is the realization of the "good life", and that the final triumph of his New Order would initiate the "proper" development of human nature. That this claim will not be fulfilled, is not due to the philosophical inconsistencies and fallacies of his system but to the contradictions inherent in the imperialistic "command economy". These

contradictions will necessitate ever further conquest and ever harsher oppression, and prevent any future lifting of the restraint imposed upon society.

In order to carry through his philosophical refutation of Totalitarianism, Stace is compelled to transform what are the purely pragmatic values of Totalitarianism into a fairly consistent philosophy. Small wonder that his presentation of this philosophy does not always correspond to the facts. For example, he elevates the organic conception of society to the position of the highest principle of Totalitarianism, whereas in fact this conception plays a definitely inferior role in National Socialist ideology and is often repudiated by prominent spokesmen. Moreover, he endeavors to combine the organic conception of society with the political theory of Hegel, when, in reality, the latter was chiefly directed against organicism and is incompatible with it. He holds that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were mainly responsible for Totalitarian philosophy. But Schopenhauer's doctrine of the primacy of will is conditioned upon his interpretation of the world as a place of perennial suffering, and it terminates in the postulate of the annihilation of will—conceptions which are strikingly opposed to the Totalitarian outlook. Moreover, according to Schopenhauer, sympathy is the only legitimate motive of action, and sympathy Stace counts among the main concepts of Greek-Christian civilization. Nietzsche's case is more difficult to interpret. It is doubtless true that he influenced the German movement toward National Socialism, but the extreme individualism of his philosophy remains hostile to any kind of Totalitarianism, and the idea of an entirely regimented and coördinated society was abhorrent to him. On the other hand, Stace minimizes or omits doctrines which form the very core of Totalitarian ideology and which are not so easily discarded because they lie closest to the material interests that determine the course of National Socialist policy. The doctrine of racial imperialism, of the "proletarian nations", and antisemitism are examples.

Inadequate analysis of Totalitarianism has its counterpart in oversimplification of the compound term "Greek-Christian civilization". This concept is held together chiefly by the (Greek) idea of reason and its historical association with the (Christian) idea of sympathy. According to Stace, they form the center of the "cluster of ideas" which feed western civilization and the philosophy of democracy. True, the idea of reason contains the clue to an understanding of western civilization, but it seems highly questionable whether the latter can be understood by stretching the Greek pattern of reason to cover the centuries from late Ancient to late modern society. Since the sixteenth century, the idea of reason necessarily assumed

features entirely foreign to the Greek conception, features which stem from totally different sources. The idea and the realization of reason were oriented to technological conquest of the material world, and to the pragmatic and instrumentalistic conception of knowledge which Stace so vigorously attacks. Reason in Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes, in Machiavelli and Hobbes, in Luther and Calvin has very little to do with Greek philosophy and very much to do with the new social structure. Stace is of course aware of the essential difference, but in order to reconcile it with his unified picture of a Greek-Christian civilization, he follows Whitehead in attributing these new features to an "anti-rationalistic revolt" against the exaggerated claims of rationalism. The idea that the birth and growth of modern physical science and of the "scientific attitude" was due to a pervasive anti-rationalistic revolt is certainly appealing, but the most decisive developments of western civilization would then come under the sway of anti-rationalism, and Stace's rationalistic interpretation of the Greek-Christian world would break down. It seems more adequate to the facts, however, to abandon the attempt to cover modern society with the Platonic idea of reason and to acknowledge the specific rationality which permeated and still permeates this society. This rationality was from the beginning oriented to the domination and exploitation of the material and intellectual resources with the impulses of competitive self-assertion, elements which Stace seems all too readily to reserve to the philosophy of Totalitarianism.

Stace's picture of Greek-Christian civilization not only oversimplifies the facts but also obscures the historical roots of Totalitarianism and thereby impairs the understanding of its scope and aims. The sharp contrast between Greek-Christian and totalitarian civilization is weakened by the fact that Stace excludes from the former almost all the traits which would disturb his picture. Do Machiavelli, Bodin and Hobbes, Robespierre and De Maistre, Calvin and Loyola not belong to western civilization? But their inclusion would have destroyed Stace's contention that the philosophy of democracy follows "logically" from the Greek and Christian doctrine of man. Is it permissible to speak of Plato and Christ as the "two founders of western civilization" and as the spiritual ancestors of democracy? To be sure, Stace well knows the tendencies in Plato's philosophy which make for a totalitarian political theory, but he feels justified in disregarding them. He knows, moreover, that classical Greek thought was tied to the Greek slave society to such an extent that it could not possibly arrive at the idea of the infinite value of the individual *qua* individual. Stace helps himself out by saying that Greek rationalism planted the seed from which this idea necessarily

grew. The same device is used to derive the philosophy of modern democracy from the teachings of Christ—a device which makes the entire development from the first to the eighteenth century into a history of the realization of the democratic principle. According to Stace, the “ethos” of Greek-Christian civilization developed into the “democratic way of life” with “logical necessity”. “It makes no difference whether the growth to full stature of the ethical idea of Europe took nineteen hundred, or only ninety years. The seed grows into the flower”. This is the Hegelian philosophy of history without the Hegelian philosophy.

Here again, we do not argue from the standpoint of the “historical student” but for the issue’s sake. The issue is the adequate understanding of Totalitarianism so that it can be fought with the best weapons in every field where it manifests itself. For such an understanding, it is imperative to know the roots of Totalitarianism in our civilization and the psychological and social forces which may feed Totalitarianism. Unfortunately, there is no “logical” necessity in the rise of democracy, and the powers which time and again tried to arrest its march knew that only too well. Unfortunately, too, the fight against democracy has also been an integral part of western civilization. In Stace’s interpretation, Totalitarianism appears as an “outside” phenomenon of relatively recent date, confined to a special compound of ideas for which Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are chiefly responsible. In reality, however, Totalitarianism draws heavily from forces which, since the German Reformation, have frequently exploded the Greek-Christian form of civilization. Authoritarianism, terrorism, antisemitism, persecution of minorities have played an important part in almost every social movement since the sixteenth century in which a particular group utilized and manipulated the frustrated masses for the assertion of its special interest. Present-day Totalitarianism has released these forces to serve the most aggressive imperialism the world has ever known. The struggle against it cannot be interpreted as a struggle to refute Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

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Schelling: The Ages of the World. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by FREDERICK DEWOLFE BOLMAN, JR. New York, Columbia University Press, 1942. Pp. xi, 251.

Shortly after that transition in his thought which was signalled in 1809 by his *Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, Schelling centered his reflections on problems connected with what he called *Die Weltalter*. From among various unpublished manuscripts bearing this caption K.F.A. Schelling selected for publication in his edition of his father’s