

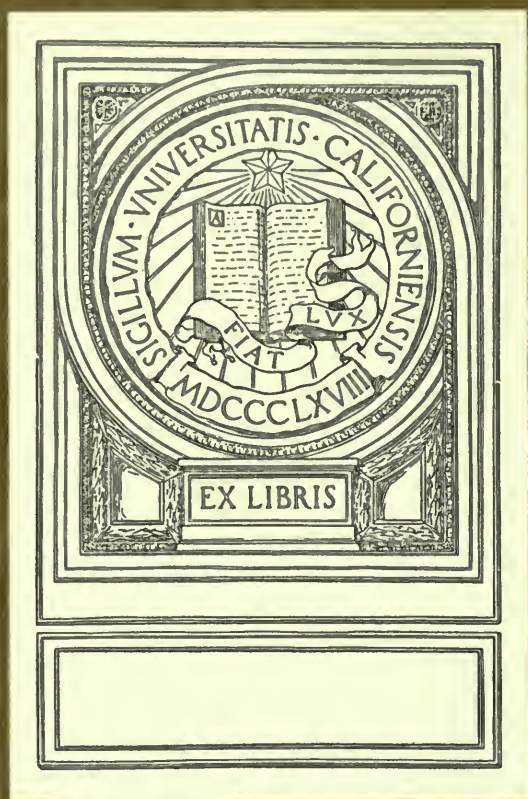
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and if the trophies and proofs of its success consisted merely in the symbols of successful money-getting. The money must be there as a basis, but by no means as broad a basis as most of the very successful men among us have made it in their lives. It must be there as a basis, as a foundation, but it is only the foundation, and the foundation is worthless unless upon it you build the superstructure of the higher life, the life with ideals of beauty, of nobility, of achievement for good for the sake of doing what is good, the life of service and of sacrifice in any one of a hundred lines, all directed toward the welfare of our common country.

German philosophy of war

by

William Baird Elkin

Indiana University Alumni Quarterly

July, 1918

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# GERMAN PHILOSOPHY OF WAR<sup>1</sup>

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MY subject falls under three heads: (1) German philosophy of war; (2) German ethics of war; and (3) a critical examination of the fundamental principles involved.

## I

German philosophy of war, one might almost say German civilization, is based essentially on four ideas. These are in four books, two ancient, and two comparatively modern. The first I would mention is Plato's *Republic*. In Plato's philosophy of the state, the state begins small, and the people are poor. It increases in wealth and in population. Then it expands. Expansion leads to war. For war an army is needed. If the army is to be successful, it must be well trained. Hence, the state is organized for the sake of the army; and the army is organized for the sake of the ruling class. This is an aristocracy. It is government by the few. But the few are the intelligent, the wealthy, and the efficient. Consequently, they are the best. And government by the best is thought to be the best government.

The great representatives, in Germany, of this idea were Bismarck and Treitschke. Treitschke held that England was a decadent nation. She began to decline about 1832, with the enactment of the first reform bill, when Great Britain began to become truly democratic. She became more democratic, and therefore more degenerate. Hence it was only a question of time when the British Empire would break up, and most of the fragments would pass to the country in best condition to acquire them. That country would be Germany, with her superior form of government. The process of British disintegration and German expansion might be facilitated by war. "We have already made our reckoning with Austria," said Treitschke, "with France, and with Russia; our last reckoning, that with England, will probably be the most tedious and the most difficult."<sup>2</sup>

The second idea is in the Old Testament, the Hebrew conception of a chosen people, whose national mission was to take possession

<sup>1</sup> This article was given as a lecture in The Causes of the Great War course, in the University this year.

<sup>2</sup> Treitschke: *His Life and Works*, p. 208.

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of the Promised Land, and then to increase and multiply until they should become like the stars of heaven, or the sand on the seashore in multitude.

The great representative of this idea is the Kaiser, as when he said, "Remember that the German people are the chosen of God."<sup>3</sup> "It is, as it is written in the Bible, my duty to increase this heritage, for which one day I shall be called upon to give an account."<sup>4</sup> On January 18, 1896, the writer joined in the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the German Empire. That evening the Emperor in his famous Palace speech declared: "The German Empire has become a world-empire. Thousands of our countrymen live abroad in the most distant parts of the world. . . . It is your duty, gentlemen, to see that you help me to incorporate this Greater Germany permanently into the old Fatherland. . . . You will loyally and devotedly assist me to discharge my duty, not only to our countrymen at home but to those thousands of our countrymen who dwell afar, so that when they need my protection, I may have the power to extend it to them."<sup>5</sup> And, in a confidential memorandum, issued March, 1913, he said that their aim was "to fortify and to extend German power throughout the whole world."<sup>6</sup>

If one inquires how this extension of power is to be effected, one comes to the third idea. It is in Machiavelli's *Prince*, as expounded by Frederick the Great. "No treaty," said Treitschke, "and no alliance could ever make him [Frederick] renounce the right of free self-determination," consequently, "all his life through he was exposed to the accusation of faithless cunning."<sup>7</sup> German power is to be extended partly by alliances, when Germany would have the better of the alliance, and would observe the alliance only so long as it was thought to be advantageous; and partly by war, brought on at the opportune moment.

The chief representatives of this idea are Bernhardt and the General Staff. "Let it be the task of our diplomacy," wrote Bernhardt, "so to shuffle the cards that we may be attacked by France, for then there would be reasonable prospect that Russia for a time would remain neutral. . . ."

"But we must not hope to bring about this attack by waiting passively. . . ."

<sup>3</sup> Davenport: *History of the Great War*, p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> Prince: *Psychology of the Kaiser*, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Hammer: *William the Second*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> Davenport: *History of the Great War*, p. 223.

<sup>7</sup> *History of Germany*, Vol. I, p. 61.

"We must initiate an active policy which, without attacking France, will so prejudice her interests or those of England, that both these states would feel themselves compelled to attack us. Opportunities for such procedure are offered both in Africa and in Europe, and anyone who has attentively studied prominent political utterances can easily satisfy himself on that point."<sup>8</sup>

The fourth idea is in Comte's positive philosophy, "the law of the three stages". According to Comte, civilization passes through three stages: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive. The first stage is called the theological, because then people explained natural phenomena by means of personal agents, as when they thought that the sun was carried around the earth in the chariot of Apollo, and eclipses of the sun and moon were caused by gods or demons eating them up. After a time civilization advanced to the second stage. Then theology was relegated to a subordinate position, and people explained things by means of metaphysical principles, such as substances, essences, energies, etc. Finally, civilization advanced to the third stage. Then there is no more use for either theology, or metaphysics, since people explain phenomena in terms of antecedent and consequent, in accordance with natural law. In the third stage, science usurps the place formerly held by theology and metaphysics, and rules alone supreme.

In the latter half of the last century the Germans almost universally adopted Comte's idea. They said that theology and metaphysics were outgrown and outworn. Science alone was sufficient for the needs of modern civilization. And they applied science to agriculture, to industry, to commerce, to education, to war, to government, and to everything mechanical. This application of utilitarian scientific principles to modern life, without due regard to other equally important factors of civilization—religious, ethical, esthetic—is the peculiar and striking characteristic of German "Kultur". The Germans claim to be much farther advanced in this respect than any other people in the world. Hence they have a divine mission to civilize, to lead, and to rule all other peoples. Of course, they profess to act for the good of mankind. Thus Ostwald, the noted chemist, says: "Germany, thanks to her genius for organization or social efficiency, has attained a stage of civilization far higher than that of all other peoples. . . . Among our enemies the Russians, in brief, are still in the period of the undisciplined tribe [theological stage, perhaps] while the French and

<sup>8</sup> *Germany and the Next War*, p. 290.



the English have only attained the degree of cultural development which we ourselves left behind fifty years ago [metaphysical stage, probably].

"Do you ask me what it is that Germany wants? Well, Germany wants to organize Europe, for up to now Europe has never been organized. . . . How does Germany propose to realize this project of social efficiency? In the west of Europe, she demands that the Germans and the French shall have an equal welcome in their respective countries. . . . In Eastern Europe Germany will create a confederation of states, a sort of Baltic confederation, which will include the Scandinavian countries, Finland, and the Baltic provinces. Finally, she will tear Poland from Russia, and will make of it a new independent state. The moment has come, I believe, for remodeling the map of Europe."<sup>9</sup>

Summarizing what has been said: The Germans, according to their own view, have the best form of government; they are an elect people with a divine mission, which they are carrying out in a strictly scientific way, in accordance with natural law, and, consequently, the will of God.

## II

We come now to a discussion of the German ethics of war. Ethics may be defined as the science of right and wrong. Here two questions arise: (1) What is right? and (2) How do we know it? These constitute the two fundamental problems in ethical theory: the highest good, and conscience. We shall consider both in succession.

The highest good for man means that which, if people attained it, would make for them a perfect life. Hence all acts which tend to realize the highest good are right. All acts which prevent or tend to prevent the realization of the highest good are wrong. And all other acts are morally indifferent. So that acts are moral, immoral, or non-moral, according as they realize the highest good, prevent its realization, or do neither.<sup>10</sup>

The next question is, What is the highest good? Two general answers are given. Some people say the highest good is happiness. Others say, not happiness, but perfection, or some form of development. If we say the highest good is happiness, then another question arises: whose happiness? mine? or others? the happiness of the

<sup>9</sup> *Outlook*, January 6, 1915, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> This takes account of only one division of ethical theory, the teleological; but that is sufficient for the present purpose.

individual? or the happiness of all people? If we say that the happiness of the individual is the highest good, the ethical theory is called Egoistic Hedonism. If we say the happiness of mankind, the theory is called Altruistic Hedonism, or Utilitarianism. If we say the highest good is perfection, a similar question arises as before, whose perfection? the perfection of the individual? or the perfection of all people? If we say the perfection of the individual is the highest good, the theory is that of self-realization. If we say the perfection of mankind, the theory is that of social welfare, closely akin to social service.

Our next inquiry is, What is the German highest good? For the common people the highest good is the Fatherland, a modification of the fourth ideal. But the common people are not Germany. The common people exist for the sake of the Fatherland. "In the German view," said Münsterberg, "the state is not for the individuals, but the individuals for the state."<sup>11</sup> And the Fatherland exists for the sake of the ruling class. The ruling class of Germany molds and makes both the Fatherland and the common people. The ruling class is the real Germany. And the highest good of the ruling class is self-realization.

If space permitted, it might be interesting to trace the development of the German highest good from the time of Luther, through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, then through the Romantic movement in the eighteenth century, and the Prussian school system in the nineteenth century, until the rise of Nietzscheism in recent times. Nietzsche did not make the theory, he found it. And it is his distinctive merit, or demerit, that he took up this theory of the highest good and developed it to its ultimate logical conclusion, in his doctrine of the superman.

Nietzsche's greatest book is his *Zarathustra*. Of it he said: "I have given to mankind the profoundest book it possesses, my *Zarathustra*." This profoundest book in the world, according to the author, proclaims that God is dead! But if God is dead, what are men to do? How get along without God? All that is necessary is for men to become gods themselves, and thus take God's place; or if they cannot do that, then they ought to do the next best thing, viz. become supermen. To become a superman means to be, to do, to get, and to hold, all raised to the *n*th power. But everyone cannot become a superman. Hence there are two classes

<sup>11</sup> *The War and America*, p. 135.

of people: supermen, and back-worldsmen; or, briefly, masters and slaves.

Accordingly, there are two systems of morality: the morality of the masters and the morality of the slaves. But as it is better to be a master than a slave, the master morality is the good morality, the slave morality is the bad morality. The slave morality is essentially the same as Christian morality. It is fit only for "shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen, and other democrats." Nietzsche thinks it is impossible to say anything too severe against Christianity. It is the greatest evil that ever appeared in the world, because it tends to prevent the realization of the highest good, and the development of the superman. In the *Antichrist* he says: "The Christian concept of God—God as God of the sick, God as cobweb-spinner, God as spirit—is one of the most corrupt concepts of God ever arrived at on earth."<sup>12</sup>

"Every expression in the mouth of a 'first Christian' is a lie, every action he does is an instinctive falsehood—all his values, all his aims are injurious, but *he whom* he hates, *that* which he hates, has value. . . . Have I yet to say that in the whole New Testament, only a *single* figure appears, which one is obliged to honor—Pilate, the Roman governor? To take a Jewish affair seriously,—he will not be persuaded to do so. A Jew more or less—what does that matter?"<sup>13</sup>

Finally: "With this I am at the conclusion and pronounce my sentence. I *condemn* Christianity. I bring against the Christian church the most terrible of all accusations that ever an accuser has taken into his mouth. It is to me the greatest of all imaginable corruptions. . . . The Christian church has left nothing untouched with its depravity, it has made a worthlessness out of every value, a lie out of every truth, a baseness of soul out of every straight-forwardness. Let a man still dare to speak to me of its 'humanitarian' blessings! . . . The 'equality of souls before God,' this falsehood, . . . this explosive material of a concept which has finally become revolution,—is Christian dynamite. . . .

"This eternal accusation of Christianity I shall write on all walls, wherever there are walls, . . .—I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, the one great instinct of revenge for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous,

<sup>12</sup> P. 258.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

secret, subterranean, mean,—I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind. . . . ”<sup>14</sup>

Contrasted with Christian or slave morality is the morality of the superman, the morality of the masters. Thus Zarathustra spake unto the people: “I teach you the higher man. Man is something that must be overcome. What have ye done to surmount him?

“All beings hitherto created something greater than themselves; and would ye be the ebb of this great flood, and rather go back to the beast than surmount the human?

“What is the ape for men? A laughing-stock or a painful disgrace. The same shall man be for the higher man—a laughing-stock or a painful disgrace. . . . See, I teach you the higher man.”<sup>15</sup>

“Ye have heard it said of old, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; but I say unto you, blessed are the valiant, for they shall make the earth their throne; and ye have heard men say, blessed are the poor in spirit; but I say to you, blessed are the mighty and free in spirit, for they shall enter Valhalla. And ye have heard men say, blessed are the peacemakers, but I say unto you, blessed are they who make war, for they shall be called not the children of Jahve, but the children of Odin, which is greater than Jahve.”

From the German theory of the highest good a few practical conclusions follow:

First, justification of war. Nietzsche did not invent this doctrine. He found it already prominent in German thought, and emphasized it.

Frederick the Great: “War opens the most fruitful field of all virtues.”

Hegel: “Just as the movement of the ocean prevents the corruption which would result from perpetual calm, so by war people escape the corruption which would be occasioned by a continuous peace.”

Moltke: “Perpetual peace is a dream, and not even a beautiful dream. But war is a link in the divine system of the universe.”

Treitschke: “War is a biological necessity of the first importance.”

“Efforts directed toward the abolition of war are not only foolish, but absolutely immoral, and must be stigmatized as unworthy of the human race.”

<sup>14</sup> *Antichrist*, pp. 349-351.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Seth: *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, p. 280.

Nietzsche: "Ye shall love peace as a means to new wars, and the short peace better than the long.

"I do not advise you to work, but to fight. I do not advise you to conclude peace, but to conquer. Let your work be a fight, your peace a victory! . . .

"Ye say, a good cause will hallow even war? I say unto you: a good war halloweth every cause."<sup>16</sup>

"Oh, blessed remote time, when a people said unto itself: 'I will be—*master* over peoples!'

"For, my brethren, what is best, shall rule; what is best, *will* rule! And where the teaching soundeth different, the best is—lacking."<sup>17</sup>

A second conclusion is the justification of Germany's claim to a place in the sun, the acquisition of more colonies and the extension of commerce. In 1912 Delbrück, Trietschke's successor in the chair of history in Berlin University, dealt with this subject in his own periodical, the *Preussische Jahrbücher*. He thought the time had come to remodel the map of Africa, so that Germany might have a colonial empire in that continent. Not that Germany had colonists to send there. Germany is not an emigrant country, but an immigrant country. She employed annually upwards of one million foreign workmen. But the situation was this: Suitable positions were not available at home for the many young men of birth and wealth highly educated by the German school system. In other words, there were so many high officers in the army and navy, so many high officials in the government, and so many nobles and wealthy men throughout the country, that suitable positions for their sons could not be obtained in the Fatherland. Hence Germany needed a colonial empire which these young men could organize and develop. Germany, in short, needed colonies where her ambitious youths might have an opportunity to exploit the native inhabitants, and thus to become supermen.

How officials in the German colonies succeeded in carrying out this policy of exploitation a writer in the *Nineteenth Century* for July, 1915, informs us. In German Southwest Africa the native population has decreased from nearly 1,000,000 to less than 100,000 during the thirty years which the Germans have administered the affairs of the colony, and in 1913 the Colonial Secretary admitted that 105,000 natives in Togoland had been killed, during the preced-

<sup>16</sup> Thus Spake Zarathustra, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

ing ten years, by German expeditions sent against them. The Germans could not make their colonies pay. And in order to make them pay, they wanted the natives to work almost without pay, hence insurrection and war. This policy of annihilation which the Germans introduced into their colonies, they are now extending to their recently conquered territories. And it has the approval, not only of Germans at home, but of some Germans abroad. A writer in a German-American paper has expressed himself as follows:

"When we have humbled our enemies and confiscated their lands, let but any one of the former natives of the soil, be he English, French, Italian, American, or a man of any other lower race, lift up his voice louder than a sigh, and we will dash him to pieces against the earth.

"And after we have demolished their worm-eaten cathedrals and the rest of their hideous structures, together with the temples of India and the other countries of heathendom, we will build much bigger cathedrals and more splendid temples in which to honor our noble Kaiser and the great deeds of his people, who are the destroyers of the decadent races of the world.

"Oh! how we thank God for having chosen our great and incomparable Kaiser and his people to accomplish this mighty mission, for has Darwin not said (and no doubt he borrowed this idea from some of our great German professors) that only the fittest shall survive? And are the Germans not the fittest in all things? Therefore let all us Germans say: Perish the carrion! Only the Germans are noble men."<sup>18</sup>

Another conclusion from the German theory of the highest good is Pan-Germanism, that is, the world for Germany. For if the native races of the colonies were exterminated what would the administrators do? As supermen they could not live on one another. Then they would need other countries to govern, and other peoples to consume. The following are a few of the many statements that might be cited from German Molochs in support of their cherished Juggernaut:

Major General von Roehl: "Only one people has the right to play a leading rôle in the political world, and that people is the German people."<sup>19</sup>

The Kaiser: "The ocean reminds us . . . that on it and

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Le Bon: *Psychology of the Great War*, p. 145.

<sup>19</sup> White: *A Text-Book of the War*, p. 39.

beyond it no great decision may henceforth be made without Germany and the German Emperor."<sup>20</sup>

Goette: Expansion "is our law of life. To live and expand at the expense of other less meritorious peoples finds its justification in the conviction that we are of all people, the most noble and the most pure, destined before others to work for the highest development of humanity."<sup>21</sup>

*Vossische Zeitung*: "As we are the supreme people, our duty, henceforth, is to lead the march of humanity itself. . . . It would be a sin against our mission to spare the people who are inferior to us."<sup>22</sup>

Rommel: "The time is at hand when the five poor sons of the German family, allured by the resources and the fertility of France, will easily make an end of the solitary son of the French family.

"The land between the Vosges and the Pyrenees was not made by the Almighty just in order that 38,000,000 Frenchmen should vegetate there without growing, when 100,000,000 Germans could live and flourish there as well, according to the divine law."<sup>23</sup>

Treitschke: "Then when the German flag flies over and protects this vast empire, to whom will belong the sceptre of the universe? What nation will impose its wishes on the other enfeebled and decadent peoples? Will it not be Germany that will have the mission to ensure the peace of the world?"<sup>24</sup>

Evangelical League: "The King at the head of Prussia, Prussia at the head of Germany, Germany at the head of the world."<sup>25</sup>

Still another conclusion which follows from the German theory of the highest good may be mentioned, viz. the German language ought to become the language of the world. The argument on this subject is clear and brief: All other European languages are based on the roots of dead languages. The roots of dead languages are dead. Therefore, all languages based on these roots are decadent. Q.E.D.

The position of English is peculiarly unfortunate, for English is based on the roots of two dead languages, Greek and Latin; therefore it is doubly decadent.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the Ger-

<sup>20</sup> Hammer: *William the Second*, p. 128.

<sup>21</sup> Bullard: *Diplomacy of the Great War*, p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> *Outlook*.

<sup>23</sup> *The Real Kaiser*, p. 140.

<sup>24</sup> White: *Text-Book of the War*, p. 46.

<sup>25</sup> Reich: *Germany's Swelled Head*, p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Frantzius: *Book of Truth and Facts*, p. 35; Harrison: *Pan-German Doctrine*, p. 320.

man language came straight from God, and is thus, in every respect, pre-eminently fitted to be divinely instrumental in spreading the culture of mankind. Says a prominent writer in the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*: "It is a crying necessity that German should replace English as the world language. Should the English language be victorious and become the world language the culture of mankind will stand before a closed door, and the death knell will sound for civilization.

"Here we have the reason why it is necessary for the German, and with him the German language, to conquer. And the victory once won, be it now or be it one hundred years hence, there remains a task for the German, than which none is more important, that of forcing the German tongue on the world. On all men, . . . on men of all colors and nationalities, the German language acts as a blessing which, coming direct from the hand of God [or from his mouth?], sinks into the heart like a precious balm and ennobles it.

"English, the bastard tongue of the canting island pirates, must be swept from the place it has usurped, and forced back into the remotest corners of Britain, until it has returned to its original elements of an insignificant pirate dialect."<sup>27</sup> To help accomplish this object the German government subsidized the Alliance of Teachers of German in the United States.<sup>28</sup>

We come next to the treatment of conscience or the moral faculty. Conscience was formerly defined as the voice of God in the soul of man. That definition may have done very well in the theological stage of civilization, but it is not satisfactory in the scientific. Conscience must now be explained in terms of antecedent and consequent like any other natural phenomenon. The usual account of the moral faculty, in the first three stages of its development, is somewhat as follows:

At first the child has no conscience, just as it has no language. But it has the capacity of acquiring both. As it grows it gradually acquires a conscience and a language, and it acquires the one in much the same manner as the other. Brought up in one country, it acquires one language; brought up in another country, it acquires another language. Similarly, the child brought up in one country develops one kind of conscience; brought up in a different country, it develops a different kind of conscience. The first form

<sup>27</sup> White: *Text-Book of the War*, p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1917, p. 741.



of conscience which the child acquires may be called the conscience of the home, and is derived largely from its mother. This is conscience on the first level, to speak in the language of psychology.

But the child goes to school, to church and Sunday School, meets and plays and works with other children and with other people. Thus its conscience grows, as its language grows. And after a time the youth acquires the conscience of the community. This is conscience on the second level. It is the conscience of custom. Whatever is in accordance with custom is right, and whatever is contrary to custom is wrong. This conscience can scarcely be regarded as an individual faculty; rather it is social faculty, a collective faculty; the common conscience of the people. And this is as far as the development of conscience often goes.

For some persons, however, there is a third stage in the development of conscience. This is the result of a process called individualization. People who are accustomed to do their own thinking, or who read some of the masterpieces of literature, or who study science, philosophy, ethics, or religion gradually advance from the second level to the third level, from the collective conscience to the individual conscience. Then they may criticize the customs of the community, which they formerly accepted without question. Some customs they approve, others they disapprove. Some modes of conduct they commend, others they would change or abolish. They have acquired a higher conscience than that of custom. This is properly an individual conscience, in contrast with the collective. It has been acquired through contact with the thought of other minds, and exists in the higher ideals of one's community, of one's country, or of the race.

It should be observed further, that in this process of individualization there are two paths or directions, either of which conscience may take: the upward path, and the downward path. A person may acquire a higher conscience than that of custom, or a lower one. Not only may a person acquire a perverted conscience, or a seared conscience, but may lose the conscience one formerly had, and proclaim complete emancipation from all moral restraints whatever. This experience may be illustrated in the sphere of knowledge. A thinker examines many different theories,—scientific, philosophical, or religious,—and as a result of his examination he may arrive at the correct view. He has then a higher idea of truth than before. He is in a position to criticize other theories, and say this one is true, or that one is false, as the case may be. But he

may also arrive at a degree of bewilderment, or dissatisfaction, such that he may say this theory is false, and that theory is false—they all are false; truth is not to be discovered anywhere; there is no such thing as truth. The case is precisely similar in the sphere of ethics, during the process of individualization. Some persons rise to a higher level of conscience, others sink to a lower. Of the two paths in the moral life, one leads up the front stairs to the treasure-house of virtue; the other leads down the back stairs to the charnel house of vice.

There is a fourth stage in the development of conscience, that which implies the existence of a transcendental factor; but it does not call for treatment here, as very few Germans now advance to this stage.

Naturally the next question is, To what stage of development does the German conscience attain? The conscience of the common people is on the second level. The common people have a collective conscience, that of custom. The ruling classes, on the other hand, have advanced to the third level. But in the process of individualization most members of the ruling classes seem to have gone on the downward path, instead of on the upward, and have acquired a perverted conscience, or a seared conscience, or have lost their conscience altogether. This seems to be particularly true of the officers of the army and navy, of the members of the diplomatic corps, and of government officials generally.

Thus much as to the theoretical treatment of the German conscience. It only remains now to show how the peculiar brand of conscience, universally known as "Teutonic", has been developed in the German people through the influence of their chief institutions as directed and controlled by the Kaiser and his government.

Many years ago when the writer was in Germany, he was interested in education, and visited Jena University, then the Mecca of American educators. In conversation with an American fellow-student one day, I asked him what he thought of the German schools. He replied: "Not very much. They scarcely teach anything but God and the Kaiser." He ought to have said "the Kaiser and God," for that is the way in which instruction in a German elementary school impresses an American. One fine morning a normal school man from West Virginia proposed to me that we take a day off, and visit a village school. And we did. We went out some twenty miles on the train, reached our destined village, and obtained admittance to the school. German village schools

are much alike. I had already visited several, but my friend saw this world-renowned phenomenon then for the first time.

In this school there were some seventy or eighty pupils. There were two teachers, an old man and a young man, but only one schoolroom. In the afternoon the old man took charge, with all the children in one class. He taught a great lesson in history, on the German Kaisers. Long, lank, and earnest he stood before the class, and delivered his message with animation and with power. In all seriousness and with glowing fervor, he told the pupils what grand and glorious deeds the wonderful and incomparable Kaisers had done for the German people and their beloved Fatherland. God did not have even second place; the Kaisers were the whole thing. The schoolroom was decorated with many pictures of the Emperor and other Hohenzollerns, as indeed are the walls of all German schools. The teacher may have taught many other subjects that afternoon. I remember only the history lesson. It is as vivid now, after a lapse of twenty years, as is any experience of yesterday. And I believe the impression made on the children was no less strong than that on me. In this manner the German school develops what may well be called a "Kaiser" conscience.

Dr. Busch, in his secret *Life of Bismarck*, has told us how the German government controls and directs the press. Busch was Bismarck's right-hand man in this field for three years. And Bismarck kept him busy, Sunday and Monday, sometimes day and night, sending at any hour a messenger to call him, if a press communication demanded despatch. "I sometimes saw him," says Busch, "as often as five or even eight times in one day. At their first interview Bismarck said: "I intend to get you to write notes and articles for the papers from such particulars and instructions as I may give you. . . . You will also arrange for others doing so."

"At these interviews," wrote Busch, "I had to take good care to keep my ears well open, and to note everything with the closest attention. . . . Through practice, I gradually succeeded in retaining long sentences and even whole speeches, practically without omissions, until I had an opportunity of committing them to paper." Busch gives a list of newspapers to which "articles thus prepared were supplied," and mentioned several writers to whom he himself gave "instructions and material for publication," among them "Herr Heide, who had previously been a missionary in Australia and was at that time working for the *North German Corre-*

spondence, which had been founded with a view to influencing the English press."

As an illustration of the character of Bismarck's instructions we may take a brief item of March 11, 1870: "Attention is to be directed, at first in a paper which has no connection with the Government, to the prolonged sojourn of Archduke Albrecht in Paris as a suspicious symptom. In connection with it rumors have been circulated in London of an understanding between France and Austria. Our papers will afterwards reproduce these hints."

Busch's duties "also included the reading of piles of German, Austrian, and French newspapers," which were laid upon his desk "three times daily."<sup>29</sup>

In this way Bismarck and Busch helped to develop in the German people a "Kaiser" conscience. And their policy still continues. On July 27, 1914, Austria was "wild with joy at the prospect of war with Serbia".<sup>30</sup> A few days later Germany was wild with joy at the prospect of war with Russia. The German press had made thorough and effective preparation for the Great War, as later it made thorough and effective preparation for the destruction of merchant ships by submarines. The result for the government in both cases was similar. To the editor of the *New York Nation*, Darmstaedter of Göttingen University wrote: "I find the sinking of the *Lusitania* was just, necessary, and useful, and I may add that the whole German nation has the same opinion."<sup>31</sup>

The Church also helps to develop a "Kaiser" conscience. Every clergyman when taking his oath of office swears: "I will be submissive, faithful, and obedient to his Royal Majesty. . . . In particular, I vow that I will not support any society or association, . . . which might endanger the public security, I will inform his Majesty of any proposals made, either in my diocese, or elsewhere, which might prove injurious to the state. I will preach the word as his Gracious Majesty dictates."<sup>32</sup>

It is not surprising that an observant publicist like Rohrbach bewailed the slight influence of religion on the German conscience. Writing a few years before the war he acknowledged that the problem of religion was one of the most difficult that the German people had to face. "Are the churches," he asked, "capable of dealing with the demoralization of our national conscience owing to the idolatry

<sup>29</sup> Busch: *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages*, chap. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *British White Paper*, No. 41.

<sup>31</sup> *Nation*, July 8, 1915.

<sup>32</sup> *Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1918, p. 20.

of class distinctions, by awakening a strong Christian religious consciousness?" He admitted that the outlook was not encouraging, because the Lutheran church, as he asserted, "appears from the first to be the church of princes and classes, and has remained so faithful to itself that the principle of worldly authority and class superiority has been better developed within its walls than anywhere else."<sup>33</sup>

The theater, similarly, is an important factor in molding the German conscience. "When I succeeded to the throne," said the Kaiser, "I was convinced and had firmly determined that the Royal Theater, like the schools and the universities, must be an instrument of the monarch. . . . The theater is also one of my weapons."<sup>34</sup>

The university is one of the most effective weapons of the Kaiser in the development of the German conscience. The University is a state institution. The government controls and may prescribe the subjects of instruction. The present Emperor, soon after his accession, ordered the Minister of Education "to discourage as far as possible the study of the French Revolution in German schools and universities". Later he changed his mind and recommended it, with the direction that "we should learn from it to know the powers of darkness and of destruction and attach ourselves by so much the more closely to monarchy and authority."<sup>35</sup>

The government appoints the professors, promotes those who please it, and dismisses or disciplines those who do not. Dr. Arons, a teacher of physics in the University of Berlin, was dismissed, not because of his teaching, but because he was a Social Democrat.<sup>36</sup> Hueffer relates "the case of the brothers X,"—a burgomaster, a professor, and an assistant professor. The burgomaster wrote for a Liberal paper an article which displeased the government. He was tried *in camera* for this offense and deprived of his office. Then the Minister of Education presented to the other two brothers for signature a paper disavowing the liberal opinions of the burgomaster. They refused to sign. The assistant professor was not only dismissed, but the Prussian government endeavored to prevent his appointment at any other university in Germany. And the professor was boycotted in the following manner: He was deprived of his seat in the university senate; he was prohibited from examin-

<sup>33</sup> *German World Policies*, p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> *The Real Kaiser*, p. 98.

<sup>35</sup> Hueffer: *When Blood Was Their Argument*, p. 212, n.

<sup>36</sup> Paulsen: *German Universities*, p. 251.

ing students; the students were warned that if they attended his lectures their subsequent careers would be prejudiced; and another professor was appointed to offer his courses. And yet, so peculiar is the German mental constitution, that soon after the outbreak of the present war one of these professors wrote Hueffer making a spirited defense of Germany, "as the true land of culture and of democratic progress".<sup>37</sup>

Of course it will be asserted that all the factors named thus far are not sufficient to explain the real character of the German conscience, as it has been revealed in this world war. They explain it in part. But they do not explain the fiendish cruelty of German soldiers as manifested in the most horrible atrocities committed on a stupendous scale. And they do not explain the general acquiescence of the German people in the wholesale massacres of noncombatants, and in the incredibly inhuman methods of warfare carried on in Belgium, in Poland, in Armenia, and on the high seas. Two additional considerations, however, will serve to indicate how the German conscience has been molded along these lines.

First, as to the soldiers. Most Americans have no idea of the methods of training and discipline which prevail in the German army. If American officers treated their men as German officers treat theirs, the American army would soon be without officers. For instance, a German officer is putting his men through some exercises. The men, perhaps raw recruits, do not always remember their instructions or do not respond promptly. A man, let us say, does not hold his head high enough. The officer shuts his fist and gives him a blow under the chin, knocks up his head, and tells him to hold it that way. This is only a trifling occurrence. The officers use their feet as well as their fists, and sometimes their swords too. Huessner, a German ensign, "killed his life-long friend, Hartmann, a private of artillery, for failure to salute him properly".<sup>37a</sup>

Immediately before the war, during the prosecution of Rosa Luxemburg for asserting that cruelties committed by officers were an everyday occurrence in the barracks, the Social Democrats secured "thirty-two thousand certified cases of recent acts of cruelty".<sup>38</sup> German soldiers are brutalized in a manner wholly unknown to soldiers serving under a democratic regime. They tend to lose all the little element of conscience that they ever had, except

<sup>37</sup> *When Blood Was Their Argument*, pp. 220-1.

<sup>37a</sup> Cf. *Nation*, June 4, 1903, p. 447; June 8, 1915, p. 71.

<sup>38</sup> Walling in *Outlook*, November 25, 1914, p. 675.

obedience to their officers. And their officers, as already stated, usually have little or no conscience or else a perverted one. When passing from the second level of conscience to the third, they go down the back stairs instead of up the front. It would be easy to show how this process of moral degeneration takes place if space permitted.<sup>39</sup>

Enough, perhaps, has now been said to indicate how the German army became an immense breeding-place for unnatural, as well as natural, vices. Hence the abominable and diabolical acts of barbarity and bestiality, countless and inexcusable, committed in France and Belgium, by privates and officers alike, against innocent and defenseless women and children, acts that are now heralded throughout the world, and the record of which will ever remain to the everlasting shame of the German aristocracy and of the German army. As Morgan says, to the end of time they will be remembered, "and from one generation to another, on the plains of Flanders, in the valleys of the Vosges, and on the rolling fields of the Marne, oral tradition will perpetuate this story of infamy and wrong".<sup>40</sup>

Secondly, the people. It is necessary to bear in mind that at the beginning of the war, and during the first few weeks of the conflict, the German people passed through an experience such as no people ever passed through before, on such an extensive scale. Their press, their preachers, teachers, and leaders made them believe that they were attacked by their enemies who wished to destroy them. The common people were made to believe that they would easily and quickly vanquish all their enemies, and, further, they were led to believe that the war would result in great material and spiritual advantages to themselves. The events of the first month seemed to confirm all their expectations. They read of nothing but victories, day after day, on all the battle fronts. In a few weeks they would be in Paris, in a few months in London, and then the whole world would lie at their feet. For the first time in their history the entire population became supermen. Nietzsche's doctrine reached its culmination. The following quotation from the press campaign of that time may serve to portray the national feeling:

"There are two kinds of races, master races and inferior races. Political rights belong to the master race alone, and can only be won by war. This is a scientific law, a law of biology. It is

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Harrison: *The Kaiser's War*, chap. iv, Intelligent Brutality; also *German War Manual*.

<sup>40</sup> *German Atrocities*, p. 90.

*unjust* that a rapidly-increasing master race should be struggling for room behind its own frontier, while a declining, inferior race can stretch its limbs at ease on the other side of that frontier. The inferior race will not be educated in the schools of the master race, nor will any school be established for it, nor will its language be employed in public. Should it rebel, it is necessary to use the most violent means to crush such insurrection, and not to encumber the prisons afterwards. Thus the conquerors can best work for the annihilation of the conquered, and break forever with the prejudice which would claim for a beaten race any right to maintain its nationality or its native tongue."<sup>41</sup>

### III

We come now to an examination of a few fundamental principles of German philosophy of war.

Plato's principle of aristocracy, government by the best is the best government, is a sophism. The practical justification of democracy, in a few propositions,—as there is not space for discussion,—is as follows:

In general, people attend to their own business better than other people would attend to it for them.

In general, people govern themselves better than another people would govern them.

All the people are more likely to govern themselves better than any one party, class, or sect would govern them, for this reason: Government is an exceedingly difficult and complicated matter, and mistakes are continually occurring. But when all the people have a voice in the government, if a mistake is made, those on whom the evil of the mistake falls are in a position to help correct the mistake, and thus remove the evil; and they have a tendency so to do. That is, in a democracy the corrective force lies within the government. Hence the natural tendency of democracy is progress and improvement.

In an aristocracy, on the other hand, when a mistake is made the resulting evil usually falls on those without the government. And these persons have little or no power to remove the evil by correcting the mistake. Hence the natural tendency of an aristocracy, no matter how good the government was originally, is to grow grad-

<sup>41</sup> *Pan-Germanische Blätter*, September, 1914; cf. *North American Review*, January, 1915, p. 43; *Atlantic Monthly*, January 1918, p. 17.



ually worse. After education becomes universal, aristocracy is an anachronism.

The Hebrew idea of a single chosen people is one-sided. Later writers in the Old Testament arrived at a truer and juster conception. Thus Isaiah and Jeremiah regarded God as the God of all peoples of the Egyptians and Babylonians, as well as of the Hebrews. Of course it is eminently becoming for everyone to think that one's own country is the best, just as it is meet and right for every man who is married to think that his wife is the best woman in the world. But such thought seems to be a process of the idealizing imagination, rather than a judgment of the understanding.

Machiavelli was a keen observer, and a versatile writer; but he was not a profound thinker. He failed to perceive that the moral order lies at the basis, as the very essence of human affairs. As Morley said, in his *Romanes* lecture: "The modern conception of a state has long made it a moral person, capable of right and wrong, just as are the individuals composing it."<sup>42</sup>

Comte's law of the three stages is a superficial generalization, and is consequently inaccurate. He did not distinguish between the terms "theology" and "mythology". If he had said that civilization passes through two stages, the mythological and the scientific, he would have been correct; or he might have said that it passes through three stages, the mythological, the transitional, and the scientific. For this is the order in which civilization always has advanced. As theology and metaphysics arose out of mythology, likewise did ancient science. Mythology was the great mother science. And as the special sciences gradually freed themselves from mythology and became more strictly scientific, so did theology and metaphysics also. Hence, instead of Comte's statement being true, that theology and metaphysics have become outgrown and useless, precisely the contrary is the case. With the methodical and logical advance of the special sciences, theology and metaphysics have advanced in like manner. Theology, metaphysics, and science have all advanced in concert, or in close relation to one another, sometimes one, sometimes another being in the lead. And there is not any rational ground for inferring that the course of civilization, in this respect, will be different in the future from that in the past. As long as human nature endures, theology, metaphysics, and science will stand or fall together.

Regarding lonely and unhappy Nietzsche two brief remarks

<sup>42</sup> P. 45.

must here suffice: (1) Nietzsche was a specialist. He may have been a great scholar in philology,—though even in this field his unfortunate prejudices sometimes lured him aside from the straight and narrow path of scientific procedure. But he wrote on anthropology, psychology, sociology, philosophy, ethics, and religion, subjects about which he knew comparatively little. Hence his religious and philosophical opinions are largely of the nature of personal guesses, not logical or valid conclusions. Frau Wagner's criticism on *Human, All-too Human* applies to many of his books; superficial in matter and pretentious in manner. And although the pretentiousness increased until he boasted that he had attained to "an elevation" where he spoke "no longer with words, but with flashes of lightning," the superficiality alas! remained. (2) The last eleven years of his life Nietzsche was hopelessly insane; and for the ten years preceding this period he was a confirmed invalid, suffering part of the time, if not all, from a lesion of the brain. Consequently his writings, particularly the later ones, are not to be taken as the expression of a normal or rational mind. They are of practically no value, except from the subjective point of view. They are of interest to the psychologist, or to the pathologist as they serve to throw light on the gradual progress of nervous disease in this remarkable, but erratic and unbalanced man.

For nearly a generation Germany has been intoxicated with Kaiserism and Nietzscheism. Recently the *Deutsche Zeitung* proclaimed: "Down with the world-conscience! Away with the spirit of world-brotherhood! Let the German spirit of power alone be our commander and leader! Its cry is more power! More German power! That is the legacy bequeathed to us by our dead heroes, and written in the flame-red letters of their blood. May those who trifle with this legacy be struck by the curse which will rise from their graves to God's heaven! He whose 'world-conscience' or sense of 'responsibility toward humanity' causes him to say or write anything less than that which the power of the German sword commands is, and always will be, a feeble political dreamer, a gloomy wanderer in the clouds".<sup>43</sup> The social tissue of the German nation has become diseased. The public mind is delirious. National responsibility is paralyzed. A surgical operation is required. After the diseased portions of the body politic shall have been removed, the nation will doubtless return to its right mind, and recognize that world-empire, at the present stage of political evolution, is but an atavistic phantom of a deranged imagination.

<sup>43</sup> *Literary Digest*, March 2, 1918, p. 22.



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