ФРИДРИХ ВИЛЬГЕЛЬМ НИЦШЕ

THOUGHTS OUT OF SEASON, PART II

Фридрих Ницше

Thoughts Out of Season, Part II

Ницше Ф. В.

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Содержание

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche
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INTRODUCTION

The two essays translated in this volume form the second and third parts of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. The essay on history was completed in January, that on Schopenhauer in August, 1874. Both were written in the few months of feverish activity that Nietzsche could spare from his duties as Professor of Classical Philology in Bâle.

Nietzsche, who served in an ambulance corps in '71, had seen something of the Franco-German War, and to him it was the "honest German bravery" that had won the day. But to the rest of his countrymen it was a victory for German culture as well; though there were still a few elegancies, a few refinements of manners, that might veneer the new culture, and in this regard the conquered might be allowed the traditional privilege of conquering the conquerors. Nietzsche answered roundly, "the German does not yet know the meaning of the word culture," and in the essay on history set himself to show that the so-called culture was a morass into which the German had been led by a sixth sense he had developed during the nineteenth century – the "historical sense": he had been brought by his spiritual teachers to believe that he was the "crown of the world-process" and that his highest duty lay in surrendering himself to it.

With Nietzsche, the historical sense became a "malady from which men suffer," the world-process an illusion, evolutionary theories a subtle excuse for inactivity. History is for the few not the many, for the man not the youth, for the great not the small – who are broken and bewildered by it. It is the lesson of remembrance, and few are strong enough to bear that lesson. History has no meaning except as the servant of life and action: and most of us can only act if we forget. This is the burden of the first essay; and turning from history to the historian he condemns the "noisy little fellows" who measure the motives of the great men of the past by their own, and use the past to justify their present.

But who are the men that can use history rightly, and for whom it is a help and not a hindrance to life? They are the great men of action and thought, the "lonely giants amid the pigmies." To them alone can the record of their great forebears be a consolation as well as a lesson. In the realm of thought, they are of the type of the ideal philosopher sketched in the second essay. To Nietzsche the only hope of the race lies in the "production of the genius," of the man who can bear the burden of the future and not be swamped by the past: he found the personal expression of such a man, for the time being, in Schopenhauer.

Schopenhauer here stands, as a personality, for all that makes for life in philosophy, against the stagnation of the professional philosopher. The last part of the essay is a fierce polemic against state-aided philosophy and the official position of the professors, who formed, and still form, the intellectual aristocracy of Germany, with a cathedral authority on all their pronouncements.

But "there has never been a eulogy on a philosopher," says Dr. Kögel, "that has had so little to say about his philosophy." The essay on Schopenhauer is of value precisely because it has nothing to do with Schopenhauer. We need not be disturbed by the thought that Nietzsche afterwards turned from him. He truly recognised that Schopenhauer was here merely a name for himself, that "not Schopenhauer as educator is in question, but his opposite, Nietzsche as educator" (*Ecce Homo*). He could regard Schopenhauer, later, as a siren that called to death; he put him among the great artists that lead down – who are worse than the bad artists that lead nowhere. "We must go further in the pessimistic logic than the denial of the will," he says in the *Götzendämmerung*; "we must deny Schopenhauer." The pessimism and denial of the will, the blank despair before suffering, were the shoals on which Nietzsche's reverence finally broke. They could not stand before the Dionysian

outlook, whose pessimism sprang not from weakness but strength, and in which the joy of willing and being can even welcome suffering. In this essay we hear little of the pessimism, save as the imperfect and "all-too-human" side of Schopenhauer, that actually brings us nearer to him. Later, he could part the man and his work, and speak of Schopenhauer's view as the "Evil eye." But as yet he is a young man who has kept his illusions, and, like Ogniben, he judges men by what they might be.

Afterwards, he judged himself too in these essays by "what he might be." "To me," he said in *Ecce Homo*, "they are promises: I know not what they mean to others."

It is also in the belief they are promises that they are here translated "for others." The *Thoughts out of Season* are the first announcement of the complex theme of the *Zarathustra*. They form the best possible introduction to Nietzschean thought. Nietzsche is already the knight-errant of philosophy: but his adventure is just beginning.

A. C.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF HISTORY.

PREFACE

"I hate everything that merely instructs me without increasing or directly quickening my activity." These words of Goethe, like a sincere *ceterum censeo*, may well stand at the head of my thoughts on the worth and the worthlessness of history. I will show in them why instruction that does not "quicken," knowledge that slackens the rein of activity, why in fact history, in Goethe's phrase, must be seriously "hated," as a costly and superfluous luxury of the understanding: for we are still in want of the necessaries of life, and the superfluous is an enemy to the necessary. We do need history, but quite differently from the jaded idlers in the garden of knowledge, however grandly they may look down on our rude and unpicturesque requirements. In other words, we need it for life and action, not as a convenient way to avoid life and action, or to excuse a selfish life and a cowardly or base action. We would serve history only so far as it serves life; but to value its study beyond a certain point mutilates and degrades life: and this is a fact that certain marked symptoms of our time make it as necessary as it may be painful to bring to the test of experience.

I have tried to describe a feeling that has often troubled me: I revenge myself on it by giving it publicity. This may lead some one to explain to me that he has also had the feeling, but that I do not feel it purely and elementally enough, and cannot express it with the ripe certainty of experience. A few may say so; but most people will tell me that it is a perverted, unnatural, horrible, and altogether unlawful feeling to have, and that I show myself unworthy of the great historical movement which is especially strong among the German people for the last two generations.

I am at all costs going to venture on a description of my feelings; which will be decidedly in the interests of propriety, as I shall give plenty of opportunity for paying compliments to such a "movement." And I gain an advantage for myself that is more valuable to me than propriety – the attainment of a correct point of view, through my critics, with regard to our age.

These thoughts are "out of season," because I am trying to represent something of which the age is rightly proud – its historical culture – as a fault and a defect in our time, believing as I do that we are all suffering from a malignant historical fever and should at least recognise the fact. But even if it be a virtue, Goethe may be right in asserting that we cannot help developing our faults at the same time as our virtues; and an excess of virtue can obviously bring a nation to ruin, as well as an excess of vice. In any case I may be allowed my say. But I will first relieve my mind by the confession that the experiences which produced those disturbing feelings were mostly drawn from myself, – and from other sources only for the sake of comparison; and that I have only reached such "unseasonable" experience, so far as I am the nursling of older ages like the Greek, and less a child of this age. I must admit so much in virtue of my profession as a classical scholar: for I do not know what meaning classical scholarship may have for our time except in its being "unseasonable," – that is, contrary to our time, and yet with an influence on it for the benefit, it may be hoped, of a future time.

I

Consider the herds that are feeding yonder: they know not the meaning of yesterday or to-day, they graze and ruminate, move or rest, from morning to night, from day to day, taken up with their little loves and hates, at the mercy of the moment, feeling neither melancholy nor satiety. Man cannot see them without regret, for even in the pride of his humanity he looks enviously on the beast's happiness. He wishes simply to live without satiety or pain, like the beast; yet it is all in vain, for he will not change places with it. He may ask the beast – "Why do you look at me and not speak to me of your happiness?" The beast wants to answer – "Because I always forget what I wished to say": but he forgets this answer too, and is silent; and the man is left to wonder.

He wonders also about himself, that he cannot learn to forget, but hangs on the past: however far or fast he run, that chain runs with him. It is matter for wonder: the moment, that is here and gone, that was nothing before and nothing after, returns like a spectre to trouble the quiet of a later moment. A leaf is continually dropping out of the volume of time and fluttering away – and suddenly it flutters back into the man's lap. Then he says, "I remember…" and envies the beast, that forgets at once, and sees every moment really die, sink into night and mist, extinguished for ever. The beast lives *unhistorically*; for it "goes into" the present, like a number, without leaving any curious remainder. It cannot dissimulate, it conceals nothing; at every moment it seems what it actually is, and thus can be nothing that is not honest. But man is always resisting the great and continually increasing weight of the past; it presses him down, and bows his shoulders; he travels with a dark invisible burden that he can plausibly disown, and is only too glad to disown in converse with his fellows – in order to excite their envy. And so it hurts him, like the thought of a lost Paradise, to see a herd grazing, or, nearer still, a child, that has nothing yet of the past to disown, and plays in a happy blindness between the walls of the past and the future. And yet its play must be disturbed, and only too soon will it be summoned from its little kingdom of oblivion. Then it learns to understand the words "once upon a time," the "open sesame" that lets in battle, suffering and weariness on mankind, and reminds them what their existence really is, an imperfect tense that never becomes a present. And when death brings at last the desired forgetfulness, it abolishes life and being together, and sets the seal on the knowledge that "being" is merely a continual "has been," a thing that lives by denying and destroying and contradicting itself.

If happiness and the chase for new happiness keep alive in any sense the will to live, no philosophy has perhaps more truth than the cynic's: for the beast's happiness, like that of the perfect cynic, is the visible proof of the truth of cynicism. The smallest pleasure, if it be only continuous and make one happy, is incomparably a greater happiness than the more intense pleasure that comes as an episode, a wild freak, a mad interval between ennui, desire, and privation. But in the smallest and greatest happiness there is always one thing that makes it happiness: the power of forgetting, or, in more learned phrase, the capacity of feeling "unhistorically" throughout its duration. One who cannot leave himself behind on the threshold of the moment and forget the past, who cannot stand on a single point, like a goddess of victory, without fear or giddiness, will never know what happiness is; and, worse still, will never do anything to make others happy. The extreme case would be the man without any power to forget, who is condemned to see "becoming" everywhere. Such a man believes no more in himself or his own existence, he sees everything fly past in an eternal succession, and loses himself in the stream of becoming. At last, like the logical disciple of Heraclitus, he will hardly dare to raise his finger. Forgetfulness is a property of all action; just as not only light but darkness is bound up with the life of every organism. One who wished to feel everything historically, would be like a man forcing himself to refrain from sleep, or a beast who had to live by chewing a continual cud. Thus even a happy life is possible without remembrance, as the beast shows: but life in any true sense is absolutely impossible without forgetfulness. Or, to put my conclusion better, there is a degree

of sleeplessness, of rumination, of “historical sense,” that injures and finally destroys the living thing, be it a man or a people or a system of culture.

To fix this degree and the limits to the memory of the past, if it is not to become the gravedigger of the present, we must see clearly how great is the “plastic power” of a man or a community or a culture; I mean the power of specifically growing out of one's self, of making the past and the strange one body with the near and the present, of healing wounds, replacing what is lost, repairing broken moulds. There are men who have this power so slightly that a single sharp experience, a single pain, often a little injustice, will lacerate their souls like the scratch of a poisoned knife. There are others, who are so little injured by the worst misfortunes, and even by their own spiteful actions, as to feel tolerably comfortable, with a fairly quiet conscience, in the midst of them, – or at any rate shortly afterwards. The deeper the roots of a man's inner nature, the better will he take the past into himself; and the greatest and most powerful nature would be known by the absence of limits for the historical sense to overgrow and work harm. It would assimilate and digest the past, however foreign, and turn it to sap. Such a nature can forget what it cannot subdue; there is no break in the horizon, and nothing to remind it that there are still men, passions, theories and aims on the other side. This is a universal law; a living thing can only be healthy, strong and productive within a certain horizon: if it be incapable of drawing one round itself, or too selfish to lose its own view in another's, it will come to an untimely end. Cheerfulness, a good conscience, belief in the future, the joyful deed, all depend, in the individual as well as the nation, on there being a line that divides the visible and clear from the vague and shadowy: we must know the right time to forget as well as the right time to remember; and instinctively see when it is necessary to feel historically, and when unhistorically. This is the point that the reader is asked to consider; that the unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary to the health of an individual, a community, and a system of culture.

Every one has noticed that a man's historical knowledge and range of feeling may be very limited, his horizon as narrow as that of an Alpine valley, his judgments incorrect and his experience falsely supposed original, and yet in spite of all the incorrectness and falsity he may stand forth in unconquerable health and vigour, to the joy of all who see him; whereas another man with far more judgment and learning will fail in comparison, because the lines of his horizon are continually changing and shifting, and he cannot shake himself free from the delicate network of his truth and righteousness for a downright act of will or desire. We saw that the beast, absolutely “unhistorical,” with the narrowest of horizons, has yet a certain happiness, and lives at least without hypocrisy or ennui; and so we may hold the capacity of feeling (to a certain extent) unhistorically, to be the more important and elemental, as providing the foundation of every sound and real growth, everything that is truly great and human. The unhistorical is like the surrounding atmosphere that can alone create life, and in whose annihilation life itself disappears. It is true that man can only become man by first suppressing this unhistorical element in his thoughts, comparisons, distinctions, and conclusions, letting a clear sudden light break through these misty clouds by his power of turning the past to the uses of the present. But an excess of history makes him flag again, while without the veil of the unhistorical he would never have the courage to begin. What deeds could man ever have done if he had not been enveloped in the dust-cloud of the unhistorical? Or, to leave metaphors and take a concrete example, imagine a man swayed and driven by a strong passion, whether for a woman or a theory. His world is quite altered. He is blind to everything behind him, new sounds are muffled and meaningless; though his perceptions were never so intimately felt in all their colour, light and music, and he Seems to grasp them with his five senses together. All his judgments of value are changed for the worse; there is much he can no longer value, as he can scarcely feel it: he wonders that he has so long been the sport of strange words and opinions, that his recollections have run around in one unwearying circle and are yet too weak and weary to make a single step away from it. His whole case is most indefensible; it is narrow, ungrateful to the past, blind to danger, deaf to warnings, a small living eddy in a dead sea of night and forgetfulness. And yet this condition, unhistorical and antihistorical

throughout, is the cradle not only of unjust action, but of every just and justifiable action in the world. No artist will paint his picture, no general win his victory, no nation gain its freedom, without having striven and yearned for it under those very "unhistorical" conditions. If the man of action, in Goethe's phrase, is without conscience, he is also without knowledge: he forgets most things in order to do one, he is unjust to what is behind him, and only recognises one law, the law of that which is to be. So he loves his work infinitely more than it deserves to be loved; and the best works are produced in such an ecstasy of love that they must always be unworthy of it, however great their worth otherwise.

Should any one be able to dissolve the unhistorical atmosphere in which every great event happens, and breathe afterwards, he might be capable of rising to the "super-historical" standpoint of consciousness, that Niebuhr has described as the possible result of historical research. "History," he says, "is useful for one purpose, if studied in detail: that men may know, as the greatest and best spirits of our generation do not know, the accidental nature of the forms in which they see and insist on others seeing, – insist, I say, because their consciousness of them is exceptionally intense. Any one who has not grasped this idea in its different applications will fall under the spell of a more powerful spirit who reads a deeper emotion into the given form." Such a standpoint might be called "super-historical," as one who took it could feel no impulse from history to any further life or work, for he would have recognised the blindness and injustice in the soul of the doer as a condition of every deed: he would be cured henceforth of taking history too seriously, and have learnt to answer the question how and why life should be lived, – for all men and all circumstances, Greeks or Turks, the first century or the nineteenth. Whoever asks his friends whether they would live the last ten or twenty years over again, will easily see which of them is born for the "super-historical standpoint": they will all answer no, but will give different reasons for their answer. Some will say they have the consolation that the next twenty will be better: they are the men referred to satirically by David Hume: —

> "And from the dregs of life hope to receive,
> What the first sprightly running could not give."

We will call them the "historical men." Their vision of the past turns them towards the future, encourages them to persevere with life, and kindles the hope that justice will yet come and happiness is behind the mountain they are climbing. They believe that the meaning of existence will become ever clearer in the course of its evolution, they only look backward at the process to understand the present and stimulate their longing for the future. They do not know how unhistorical their thoughts and actions are in spite of all their history, and how their preoccupation with it is for the sake of life rather than mere science.

But that question to which we have heard the first answer, is capable of another; also a "no," but on different grounds. It is the "no" of the "super-historical" man who sees no salvation in evolution, for whom the world is complete and fulfils its aim in every single moment. How could the next ten years teach what the past ten were not able to teach?

Whether the aim of the teaching be happiness or resignation, virtue or penance, these super-historical men are not agreed; but as against all merely historical ways of viewing the past, they are unanimous in the theory that the past and the present are one and the same, typically alike in all their diversity, and forming together a picture of eternally present imperishable types of unchangeable value and significance. Just as the hundreds of different languages correspond to the same constant and elemental needs of mankind, and one who understood the needs could learn nothing new from the languages; so the "super-historical" philosopher sees all the history of nations and individuals from within. He has a divine insight into the original meaning of the hieroglyphs, and comes even to be weary of the letters that are continually unrolled before him. How should the endless rush of events not bring satiety, surfeit, loathing? So the boldest of us is ready perhaps at last to say from his

heart with Giacomo Leopardi: “Nothing lives that were worth thy pains, and the earth deserves not a sigh. Our being is pain and weariness, and the world is mud – nothing else. Be calm.”

But we will leave the super-historical men to their loathings and their wisdom: we wish rather to-day to be joyful in our unwisdom and have a pleasant life as active men who go forward, and respect the course of the world. The value we put on the historical may be merely a Western prejudice: let us at least go forward within this prejudice and not stand still. If we could only learn better to study history as a means to life! We would gladly grant the super-historical people their superior wisdom, so long as we are sure of having more life than they: for in that case our unwisdom would have a greater future before it than their wisdom. To make my opposition between life and wisdom clear, I will take the usual road of the short summary.

A historical phenomenon, completely understood and reduced to an item of knowledge, is, in relation to the man who knows it, dead: for he has found out its madness, its injustice, its blind passion, and especially the earthly and darkened horizon that was the source of its power for history. This power has now become, for him who has recognised it, powerless; not yet, perhaps, for him who is alive.

History regarded as pure knowledge and allowed to sway the intellect would mean for men the final balancing of the ledger of life. Historical study is only fruitful for the future if it follow a powerful life-giving influence, for example, a new system of culture; only, therefore, if it be guided and dominated by a higher force, and do not itself guide and dominate.

History, so far as it serves life, serves an unhistorical power, and thus will never become a pure science like mathematics. The question how far life needs such a service is one of the most serious questions affecting the well-being of a man, a people and a culture. For by excess of history life becomes maimed and degenerate, and is followed by the degeneration of history as well.

II

The fact that life does need the service of history must be as clearly grasped as that an excess of history hurts it; this will be proved later. History is necessary to the living man in three ways: in relation to his action and struggle, his conservatism and reverence, his suffering and his desire for deliverance. These three relations answer to the three kinds of history – so far as they can be distinguished – the *monumental*, the *antiquarian*, and the *critical*.

History is necessary above all to the man of action and power who fights a great fight and needs examples, teachers and comforters; he cannot find them among his contemporaries. It was necessary in this sense to Schiller; for our time is so evil, Goethe says, that the poet meets no nature that will profit him, among living men. Polybius is thinking of the active man when he calls political history the true preparation for governing a state; it is the great teacher, that shows us how to bear steadfastly the reverses of fortune, by reminding us of what others have suffered. Whoever has learned to recognise this meaning in history must hate to see curious tourists and laborious beetle-hunters climbing up the great pyramids of antiquity. He does not wish to meet the idler who is rushing through the picture-galleries of the past for a new distraction or sensation, where he himself is looking for example and encouragement. To avoid being troubled by the weak and hopeless idlers, and those whose apparent activity is merely neurotic, he looks behind him and stays his course towards the goal in order to breathe. His goal is happiness, not perhaps his own, but often the nation's, or humanity's at large: he avoids quietism, and uses history as a weapon against it. For the most part he has no hope of reward except fame, which means the expectation of a niche in the temple of history, where he in his turn may be the consoler and counsellor of posterity. For his orders are that what has once been able to extend the conception “man” and give it a fairer content, must ever exist for the same office. The great moments in the individual battle form a chain, a high road for humanity through the ages, and the highest points of those vanished moments are yet great and living for men; and this is the fundamental idea of the belief in humanity, that finds a voice in the demand for a “monumental” history.

But the fiercest battle is fought round the demand for greatness to be eternal. Every other living thing cries no. “Away with the monuments,” is the watch-word. Dull custom fills all the chambers of the world with its meanness, and rises in thick vapour round anything that is great, barring its way to immortality, blinding and stifling it. And the way passes through mortal brains! Through the brains of sick and short-lived beasts that ever rise to the surface to breathe, and painfully keep off annihilation for a little space. For they wish but one thing: to live at any cost. Who would ever dream of any “monumental history” among them, the hard torch-race that alone gives life to greatness? And yet there are always men awakening, who are strengthened and made happy by gazing on past greatness, as though man's life were a lordly thing, and the fairest fruit of this bitter tree were the knowledge that there was once a man who walked sternly and proudly through this world, another who had pity and loving-kindness, another who lived in contemplation, – but all leaving one truth behind them, that his life is the fairest who thinks least about life. The common man snatches greedily at this little span, with tragic earnestness, but they, on their way to monumental history and immortality, knew how to greet it with Olympic laughter, or at least with a lofty scorn; and they went down to their graves in irony – for what had they to bury? Only what they had always treated as dross, refuse, and vanity, and which now falls into its true home of oblivion, after being so long the sport of their contempt. One thing will live, the sign-manual of their inmost being, the rare flash of light, the deed, the creation; because posterity cannot do without it. In this spiritualised form fame is something more than the sweetest morsel for our egoism, in Schopenhauer's phrase: it is the belief in the oneness and continuity of the great in every age, and a protest against the change and decay of generations.

What is the use to the modern man of this “monumental” contemplation of the past, this preoccupation with the rare and classic? It is the knowledge that the great thing existed and was

therefore possible, and so may be possible again. He is heartened on his way; for his doubt in weaker moments, whether his desire be not for the impossible, is struck aside. Suppose one believe that no more than a hundred men, brought up in the new spirit, efficient and productive, were needed to give the deathblow to the present fashion of education in Germany; he will gather strength from the remembrance that the culture of the Renaissance was raised on the shoulders of such another band of a hundred men.

And yet if we really wish to learn something from an example, how vague and elusive do we find the comparison! If it is to give us strength, many of the differences must be neglected, the individuality of the past forced into a general formula and all the sharp angles broken off for the sake of correspondence. Ultimately, of course, what was once possible can only become possible a second time on the Pythagorean theory, that when the heavenly bodies are in the same position again, the events on earth are reproduced to the smallest detail; so when the stars have a certain relation, a Stoic and an Epicurean will form a conspiracy to murder Cæsar, and a different conjunction will show another Columbus discovering America. Only if the earth always began its drama again after the fifth act, and it were certain that the same interaction of motives, the same *deus ex machina*, the same catastrophe would occur at particular intervals, could the man of action venture to look for the whole archetypic truth in monumental history, to see each fact fully set out in its uniqueness: it would not probably be before the astronomers became astrologers again. Till then monumental history will never be able to have complete truth; it will always bring together things that are incompatible and generalise them into compatibility, will always weaken the differences of motive and occasion. Its object is to depict effects at the expense of the causes – "monumentally," that is, as examples for imitation: it turns aside, as far as it may, from reasons, and might be called with far less exaggeration a collection of "effects in themselves," than of events that will have an effect on all ages. The events of war or religion cherished in our popular celebrations are such "effects in themselves"; it is these that will not let ambition sleep, and lie like amulets on the bolder hearts – not the real historical nexus of cause and effect, which, rightly understood, would only prove that nothing quite similar could ever be cast again from the dice-boxes of fate and the future.

As long as the soul of history is found in the great impulse that it gives to a powerful spirit, as long as the past is principally used as a model for imitation, it is always in danger of being a little altered and touched up, and brought nearer to fiction. Sometimes there is no possible distinction between a "monumental" past and a mythical romance, as the same motives for action can be gathered from the one world as the other. If this monumental method of surveying the past dominate the others, – the antiquarian and the critical, – the past itself suffers wrong. Whole tracts of it are forgotten and despised; they flow away like a dark unbroken river, with only a few gaily coloured islands of fact rising above it. There is something beyond nature in the rare figures that become visible, like the golden hips that his disciples attributed to Pythagoras. Monumental history lives by false analogy; it entices the brave to rashness, and the enthusiastic to fanaticism by its tempting comparisons. Imagine this history in the hands – and the head – of a gifted egoist or an inspired scoundrel; kingdoms will be overthrown, princes murdered, war and revolution let loose, and the number of "effects in themselves" – in other words, effects without sufficient cause – increased. So much for the harm done by monumental history to the powerful men of action, be they good or bad; but what if the weak and the inactive take it as their servant – or their master!

Consider the simplest and commonest example, the inartistic or half artistic natures whom a monumental history provides with sword and buckler. They will use the weapons against their hereditary enemies, the great artistic spirits, who alone can learn from that history the one real lesson, how to live, and embody what they have learnt in noble action. Their way is obstructed, their free air darkened by the idolatrous – and conscientious – dance round the half understood monument of a great past. "See, that is the true and real art," we seem to hear: "of what use are these aspiring little people of to-day?" The dancing crowd has apparently the monopoly of "good taste": for the creator

is always at a disadvantage compared with the mere looker-on, who never put a hand to the work; just as the arm-chair politician has ever had more wisdom and foresight than the actual statesman. But if the custom of democratic suffrage and numerical majorities be transferred to the realm of art, and the artist put on his defence before the court of æsthetic dilettanti, you may take your oath on his condemnation; although, or rather because, his judges had proclaimed solemnly the canon of "monumental art," the art that has "had an effect on all ages," according to the official definition. In their eyes no need nor inclination nor historical authority is in favour of the art which is not yet "monumental" because it is contemporary. Their instinct tells them that art can be slain by art: the monumental will never be reproduced, and the weight of its authority is invoked from the past to make it sure. They are connoisseurs of art, primarily because they wish to kill art; they pretend to be physicians, when their real idea is to dabble in poisons. They develop their tastes to a point of perversion, that they may be able to show a reason for continually rejecting all the nourishing artistic fare that is offered them. For they do not want greatness, to arise: their method is to say, "See, the great thing is already here!" In reality they care as little about the great thing that is already here, as that which is about to arise: their lives are evidence of that. Monumental history is the cloak under which their hatred of present power and greatness masquerades as an extreme admiration of the past: the real meaning of this way of viewing history is disguised as its opposite; whether they wish it or no, they are acting as though their motto were, "let the dead bury the – living."

Each of the three kinds of history will only flourish in one ground and climate: otherwise it grows to a noxious weed. If the man who will produce something great, have need of the past, he makes himself its master by means of monumental history: the man who can rest content with the traditional and venerable, uses the past as an "antiquarian historian": and only he whose heart is oppressed by an instant need, and who will cast the burden off at any price, feels the want of "critical history," the history that judges and condemns. There is much harm wrought by wrong and thoughtless planting: the critic without the need, the antiquary without piety, the knower of the great deed who cannot be the doer of it, are plants that have grown to weeds, they are torn from their native soil and therefore degenerate.

III

Secondly, history is necessary to the man of conservative and reverent nature, who looks back to the origins of his existence with love and trust; through it, he gives thanks for life. He is careful to preserve what survives from ancient days, and will reproduce the conditions of his own upbringing for those who come after him; thus he does life a service. The possession of his ancestors' furniture changes its meaning in his soul: for his soul is rather possessed by it. All that is small and limited, mouldy and obsolete, gains a worth and inviolability of its own from the conservative and reverent soul of the antiquary migrating into it, and building a secret nest there. The history of his town becomes the history of himself; he looks on the walls, the turreted gate, the town council, the fair, as an illustrated diary of his youth, and sees himself in it all – his strength, industry, desire, reason, faults and follies. “Here one could live,” he says, “as one can live here now – and will go on living; for we are tough folk, and will not be uprooted in the night.” And so, with his “we,” he surveys the marvellous individual life of the past and identifies himself with the spirit of the house, the family and the city. He greets the soul of his people from afar as his own, across the dim and troubled centuries: his gifts and his virtues lie in such power of feeling and divination, his scent of a half-vanished trail, his instinctive correctness in reading the scribbled past, and understanding at once its palimpsests – nay, its polypsests. Goethe stood with such thoughts before the monument of Erwin von Steinbach: the storm of his feeling rent the historical cloud-veil that hung between them, and he saw the German work for the first time “coming from the stern, rough, German soul.” This was the road that the Italians of the Renaissance travelled, the spirit that reawakened the ancient Italic genius in their poets to “a wondrous echo of the immemorial lyre,” as Jacob Burckhardt says. But the greatest value of this antiquarian spirit of reverence lies in the simple emotions of pleasure and content that it lends to the drab, rough, even painful circumstances of a nation's or individual's life: Niebuhr confesses that he could live happily on a moor among free peasants with a history, and would never feel the want of art. How could history serve life better than by anchoring the less gifted races and peoples to the homes and customs of their ancestors, and keeping them from ranging far afield in search of better, to find only struggle and competition? The influence that ties men down to the same companions and circumstances, to the daily round of toil, to their bare mountain-side, – seems to be selfish and unreasonable: but it is a healthy unreason and of profit to the community; as every one knows who has clearly realised the terrible consequences of mere desire for migration and adventure, – perhaps in whole peoples, – or who watches the destiny of a nation that has lost confidence in its earlier days, and is given up to a restless cosmopolitanism and an unceasing desire for novelty. The feeling of the tree that clings to its roots, the happiness of knowing one's growth to be one not merely arbitrary and fortuitous, but the inheritance, the fruit and blossom of a past, that does not merely justify but crown the present – this is what we nowadays prefer to call the real historical sense.

These are not the conditions most favourable to reducing the past to pure science: and we see here too, as we saw in the case of monumental history, that the past itself suffers when history serves life and is directed by its end. To vary the metaphor, the tree feels its roots better than it can see them: the greatness of the feeling is measured by the greatness and strength of the visible branches. The tree may be wrong here; how far more wrong will it be in regard to the whole forest, which it only knows and feels so far as it is hindered or helped by it, and not otherwise! The antiquarian sense of a man, a city or a nation has always a very limited field. Many things are not noticed at all; the others are seen in isolation, as through a microscope. There is no measure: equal importance is given to everything, and therefore too much to anything. For the things of the past are never viewed in their true perspective or receive their just value; but value and perspective change with the individual or the nation that is looking back on its past.

There is always the danger here, that everything ancient will be regarded as equally venerable, and everything without this respect for antiquity, like a new spirit, rejected as an enemy. The Greeks themselves admitted the archaic style of plastic art by the side of the freer and greater style; and later, did not merely tolerate the pointed nose and the cold mouth, but made them even a canon of taste. If the judgment of a people harden in this way, and history's service to the past life be to undermine a further and higher life; if the historical sense no longer preserve life, but mummify it: then the tree dies, unnaturally, from the top downwards, and at last the roots themselves wither. Antiquarian history degenerates from the moment that it no longer gives a soul and inspiration to the fresh life of the present. The spring of piety is dried up, but the learned habit persists without it and revolves complaisantly round its own centre. The horrid spectacle is seen of the mad collector raking over all the dust-heaps of the past. He breathes a mouldy air; the antiquarian habit may degrade a considerable talent, a real spiritual need in him, to a mere insatiable curiosity for everything old: he often sinks so low as to be satisfied with any food, and greedily devour all the scraps that fall from the bibliographical table.

Even if this degeneration do not take place, and the foundation be not withered on which antiquarian history can alone take root with profit to life: yet there are dangers enough, if it become too powerful and invade the territories of the other methods. It only understands how to preserve life, not to create it; and thus always undervalues the present growth, having, unlike monumental history, no certain instinct for it. Thus it hinders the mighty impulse to a new deed and paralyses the doer, who must always, as doer, be grazing some piety or other. The fact that has grown old carries with it a demand for its own immortality. For when one considers the life-history of such an ancient fact, the amount of reverence paid to it for generations – whether it be a custom, a religious creed, or a political principle, – it seems presumptuous, even impious, to replace it by a new fact, and the ancient congregation of pieties by a new piety.

Here we see clearly how necessary a third way of looking at the past is to man, beside the other two. This is the “critical” way; which is also in the service of life. Man must have the strength to break up the past; and apply it too, in order to live. He must bring the past to the bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it. Every past is worth condemning: this is the rule in mortal affairs, which always contain a large measure of human power and human weakness. It is not justice that sits in judgment here; nor mercy that proclaims the verdict; but only life, the dim, driving force that insatiably desires – itself. Its sentence is always unmerciful, always unjust, as it never flows from a pure fountain of knowledge: though it would generally turn out the same, if Justice herself delivered it. “For everything that is born is *worthy* of being destroyed: better were it then that nothing should be born.” It requires great strength to be able to live and forget how far life and injustice are one. Luther himself once said that the world only arose by an oversight of God; if he had ever dreamed of heavy ordnance, he would never have created it. The same life that needs forgetfulness, needs sometimes its destruction; for should the injustice of something ever become obvious – a monopoly, a caste, a dynasty for example – the thing deserves to fall. Its past is critically examined, the knife put to its roots, and all the “pieties” are grimly trodden under foot. The process is always dangerous, even for life; and the men or the times that serve life in this way, by judging and annihilating the past, are always dangerous to themselves and others. For as we are merely the resultant of previous generations, we are also the resultant of their errors, passions, and crimes: it is impossible to shake off this chain. Though we condemn the errors and think we have escaped them, we cannot escape the fact that we spring from them. At best, it comes to a conflict between our innate, inherited nature and our knowledge, between a stern, new discipline and an ancient tradition; and we plant a new way of life, a new instinct, a second nature, that withers the first. It is an attempt to gain a past *a posteriori* from which we might spring, as against that from which we do spring; always a dangerous attempt, as it is difficult to find a limit to the denial of the past, and the second natures are generally weaker than the first. We stop too often at knowing the good without doing it, because we also know the better

but cannot do it. Here and there the victory is won, which gives a strange consolation to the fighters, to those who use critical history for the sake of life. The consolation is the knowledge that this “first nature” was once a second, and that every conquering “second nature” becomes a first.

IV

This is how history can serve life. Every man and nation needs a certain knowledge of the past, whether it be through monumental, antiquarian, or critical history, according to his objects, powers, and necessities. The need is not that of the mere thinkers who only look on at life, or the few who desire knowledge and can only be satisfied with knowledge; but it has always a reference to the end of life, and is under its absolute rule and direction. This is the natural relation of an age, a culture and a people to history; hunger is its source, necessity its norm, the inner plastic power assigns its limits. The knowledge of the past is only desired for the service of the future and the present, not to weaken the present or undermine a living future. All this is as simple as truth itself, and quite convincing to any one who is not in the toils of "historical deduction."

And now to take a quick glance at our time! We fly back in astonishment. The clearness, naturalness, and purity of the connection between life and history has vanished; and in what a maze of exaggeration and contradiction do we now see the problem! Is the guilt ours who see it, or have life and history really altered their conjunction and an inauspicious star risen between them? Others may prove we have seen falsely; I am merely saying what we believe we see. There is such a star, a bright and lordly star, and the conjunction is really altered – by science, and the demand for history to be a science. Life is no more dominant, and knowledge of the past no longer its thrall: boundary marks are overthrown everything bursts its limits. The perspective of events is blurred, and the blur extends through their whole immeasurable course. No generation has seen such a panoramic comedy as is shown by the "science of universal evolution," history; that shows it with the dangerous audacity of its motto – "Fiat veritas, pereat vita."

Let me give a picture of the spiritual events in the soul of the modern man. Historical knowledge streams on him from sources that are inexhaustible, strange incoherencies come together, memory opens all its gates and yet is never open wide enough, nature busies herself to receive all the foreign guests, to honour them and put them in their places. But they are at war with each other: violent measures seem necessary, in order to escape destruction one's self. It becomes second nature to grow gradually accustomed to this irregular and stormy home-life, though this second nature is unquestionably weaker, more restless, more radically unsound than the first. The modern man carries inside him an enormous heap of indigestible knowledge-stones that occasionally rattle together in his body, as the fairy-tale has it. And the rattle reveals the most striking characteristic of these modern men, the opposition of something inside them to which nothing external corresponds; and the reverse. The ancient nations knew nothing of this. Knowledge, taken in excess without hunger, even contrary to desire, has no more the effect of transforming the external life; and remains hidden in a chaotic inner world that the modern man has a curious pride in calling his "real personality." He has the substance, he says, and only wants the form; but this is quite an unreal opposition in a living thing. Our modern culture is for that reason not a living one, because it cannot be understood without that opposition. In other words, it is not a real culture but a kind of knowledge about culture, a complex of various thoughts and feelings about it, from which no decision as to its direction can come. Its real motive force that issues in visible action is often no more than a mere convention, a wretched imitation, or even a shameless caricature. The man probably feels like the snake that has swallowed a rabbit whole and lies still in the sun, avoiding all movement not absolutely necessary. The "inner life" is now the only thing that matters to education, and all who see it hope that the education may not fail by being too indigestible. Imagine a Greek meeting it; he would observe that for modern men "education" and "historical education" seem to mean the same thing, with the difference that the one phrase is longer. And if he spoke of his own theory, that a man can be very well educated without any history at all, people would shake their heads and think they had not heard aright. The Greeks, the famous people of a past still near to us, had the "unhistorical sense" strongly developed

in the period of the greatest power. If a typical child of this age were transported to that world by some enchantment, he would probably find the Greeks very “uneducated.” And that discovery would betray the closely guarded secret of modern culture to the laughter of the world. For we moderns have nothing of our own. We only become worth notice by filling ourselves to overflowing with foreign customs, arts, philosophies, religions and sciences: we are wandering encyclopædias, as an ancient Greek who had strayed into our time would probably call us. But the only value of an encyclopædia lies in the inside, in the contents, not in what is written outside, in the binding or the wrapper. And so the whole of modern culture is essentially internal; the bookbinder prints something like this on the cover: “Manual of internal culture for external barbarians.” The opposition of inner and outer makes the outer side still more barbarous, as it would naturally be, when the outward growth of a rude people merely developed its primitive inner needs. For what means has nature of repressing too great a luxuriance from without? Only one, – to be affected by it as little as possible, to set it aside and stamp it out at the first opportunity. And so we have the custom of no longer taking real things seriously, we get the feeble personality on which the real and the permanent make so little impression. Men become at last more careless and accommodating in external matters, and the considerable cleft between substance and form is widened; until they have no longer any feeling for barbarism, if only their memories be kept continually titillated, and there flow a constant stream of new things to be known, that can be neatly packed up in the cupboards of their memory. The culture of a people as against this barbarism, can be, I think, described with justice as the “unity of artistic style in every outward expression of the people's life.” This must not be misunderstood, as though it were merely a question of the opposition between barbarism and “fine style.” The people that can be called cultured, must be in a real sense a living unity, and not be miserably cleft asunder into form and substance. If one wish to promote a people's culture, let him try to promote this higher unity first, and work for the destruction of the modern educative system for the sake of a true education. Let him dare to consider how the health of a people that has been destroyed by history may be restored, and how it may recover its instincts with its honour.

I am only speaking, directly, about the Germans of the present day, who have had to suffer more than other people from the feebleness of personality and the opposition of substance and form. “Form” generally implies for us some convention, disguise or hypocrisy, and if not hated, is at any rate not loved. We have an extraordinary fear of both the word convention and the thing. This fear drove the German from the French school; for he wished to become more natural, and therefore more German. But he seems to have come to a false conclusion with his “therefore.” First he ran away from his school of convention, and went by any road he liked: he has come ultimately to imitate voluntarily in a slovenly fashion, what he imitated painfully and often successfully before. So now the lazy fellow lives under French conventions that are actually incorrect: his manner of walking shows it, his conversation and dress, his general way of life. In the belief that he was returning to Nature, he merely followed caprice and comfort, with the smallest possible amount of self-control. Go through any German town; you will see conventions that are nothing but the negative aspect of the national characteristics of foreign states. Everything is colourless, worn out, shoddy and ill-copied. Every one acts at his own sweet will – which is not a strong or serious will – on laws dictated by the universal rush and the general desire for comfort. A dress that made no head ache in its inventing and wasted no time in the making, borrowed from foreign models and imperfectly copied, is regarded as an important contribution to German fashion. The sense of form is ironically disclaimed by the people – for they have the “sense of substance”: they are famous for their cult of “inwardness.”

But there is also a famous danger in their “inwardness”: the internal substance cannot be seen from the outside, and so may one day take the opportunity of vanishing, and no one notice its absence, any more than its presence before. One may think the German people to be very far from this danger: yet the foreigner will have some warrant for his reproach that our inward life is too weak and ill-organised to provide a form and external expression for itself. It may in rare cases show itself finely

receptive, earnest and powerful, richer perhaps than the inward life of other peoples; but, taken as a whole, it remains weak, as all its fine threads are not tied together in one strong knot. The visible action is not the self-manifestation of the inward life, but only a weak and crude attempt of a single thread to make a show of representing the whole. And thus the German is not to be judged on any one action, for the individual may be as completely obscure after it as before. He must obviously be measured by his thoughts and feelings, which are now expressed in his books; if only the books did not, more than ever, raise the doubt whether the famous inward life is still really sitting in its inaccessible shrine. It might one day vanish and leave behind it only the external life, – with its vulgar pride and vain servility, – to mark the German. Fearful thought! – as fearful as if the inward life still sat there, painted and rouged and disguised, become a play-actress or something worse; as his theatrical experience seems to have taught the quiet observer Grillparzer, standing aside as he did from the main press. “We feel by theory,” he says. “We hardly know any more how our contemporaries give expression to their feelings: we make them use gestures that are impossible nowadays. Shakespeare has spoilt us moderns.”

This is a single example, its general application perhaps too hastily assumed. But how terrible it would be were that generalisation justified before our eyes! There would be then a note of despair in the phrase, “We Germans feel by theory, we are all spoilt by history;” – a phrase that would cut at the roots of any hope for a future national culture. For every hope of that kind grows from the belief in the genuineness and immediacy of German feeling, from the belief in an untarnished inward life. Where is our hope or belief, when its spring is muddied, and the inward quality has learned gestures and dances and the use of cosmetics, has learned to express itself “with due reflection in abstract terms,” and gradually lose itself? And how should a great productive spirit exist among a nation that is not sure of its inward unity and is divided into educated men whose inner life has been drawn from the true path of education, and uneducated men whose inner life cannot be approached at all? How should it exist, I say, when the people has lost its own unity of feeling, and knows that the feeling of the part calling itself the educated part and claiming the right of controlling the artistic spirit of the nation, is false and hypocritical? Here and there the judgment and taste of individuals may be higher and finer than the rest, but that is no compensation: it tortures a man to have to speak only to one section and be no longer in sympathy with his people. He would rather bury his treasure now, in disgust at the vulgar patronage of a class, though his heart be filled with tenderness for all. The instinct of the people can no longer meet him half-way; it is useless for them to stretch their arms out to him in yearning. What remains but to turn his quickened hatred against the ban, strike at the barrier raised by the so-called culture, and condemn as judge what blasted and degraded him as a living man and a source of life? He takes a profound insight into fate in exchange for the godlike desire of creation and help, and ends his days as a lonely philosopher, with the wisdom of disillusion. It is the painfullest comedy: he who sees it will feel a sacred obligation on him, and say to himself, – “Help must come: the higher unity in the nature and soul of a people must be brought back, the cleft between inner and outer must again disappear under the hammer of necessity.” But to what means can he look? What remains to him now but his knowledge? He hopes to plant the feeling of a need, by speaking from the breadth of that knowledge, giving it freely with both hands. From the strong need the strong action may one day arise. And to leave no doubt of the instance I am taking of the need and the knowledge, my testimony shall stand, that it is German unity in its highest sense which is the goal of our endeavour, far more than political union: it is the unity of the German spirit and life after the annihilation of the antagonism between form and substance, inward life and convention.

V

An excess of history seems to be an enemy to the life of a time, and dangerous in five ways. Firstly, the contrast of inner and outer is emphasised and personality weakened. Secondly, the time comes to imagine that it possesses the rarest of virtues, justice, to a higher degree than any other time. Thirdly, the instincts of a nation are thwarted, the maturity of the individual arrested no less than that of the whole. Fourthly, we get the belief in the old age of mankind, the belief, at all times harmful, that we are late survivals, mere Epigoni. Lastly, an age reaches a dangerous condition of irony with regard to itself, and the still more dangerous state of cynicism, when a cunning egoistic theory of action is matured that maims and at last destroys the vital strength.

To return to the first point: the modern man suffers from a weakened personality. The Roman of the Empire ceased to be a Roman through the contemplation of the world that lay at his feet; he lost himself in the crowd of foreigners that streamed into Rome, and degenerated amid the cosmopolitan carnival of arts, worships and moralities. It is the same with the modern man, who is continually having a world-panorama unrolled before his eyes by his historical artists. He is turned into a restless, dilettante spectator, and arrives at a condition when even great wars and revolutions cannot affect him beyond the moment. The war is hardly at an end, and it is already converted into thousands of copies of printed matter, and will be soon served up as the latest means of tickling the jaded palates of the historical gourmets. It seems impossible for a strong full chord to be prolonged, however powerfully the strings are swept: it dies away again the next moment in the soft and strengthless echo of history. In ethical language, one never succeeds in staying on a height; your deeds are sudden crashes, and not a long roll of thunder. One may bring the greatest and most marvellous thing to perfection; it must yet go down to Orcus unhonoured and unsung. For art flies away when you are roofing your deeds with the historical awning. The man who wishes to understand everything in a moment, when he ought to grasp the unintelligible as the sublime by a long struggle, can be called intelligent only in the sense of Schiller's epigram on the “reason of reasonable men.” There is something the child sees that he does not see; something the child hears that he does not hear; and this something is the most important thing of all. Because he does not understand it, his understanding is more childish than the child's and more simple than simplicity itself; in spite of the many clever wrinkles on his parchment face, and the masterly play of his fingers in unravelling the knots. He has lost or destroyed his instinct; he can no longer trust the “divine animal” and let the reins hang loose, when his understanding fails him and his way lies through the desert. His individuality is shaken, and left without any sure belief in itself; it sinks into its own inner being, which only means here the disordered chaos of what it has learned, which will never express itself externally, being mere dogma that cannot turn to life. Looking further, we see how the banishment of instinct by history has turned men to shades and abstractions: no one ventures to show a personality, but masks himself as a man of culture, a savant, poet or politician.

If one take hold of these masks, believing he has to do with a serious thing and not a mere puppet-show – for they all have an appearance of seriousness – he will find nothing but rags and coloured streamers in his hands. He must deceive himself no more, but cry aloud, “Off with your jackets, or be what you seem!” A man of the royal stock of seriousness must no longer be Don Quixote, for he has better things to do than to tilt at such pretended realities. But he must always keep a sharp look about him, call his “Halt! who goes there?” to all the shrouded figures, and tear the masks from their faces. And see the result! One might have thought that history encouraged men above all to be honest, even if it were only to be honest fools: this used to be its effect, but is so no longer. Historical education and the uniform frock-coat of the citizen are both dominant at the same time. While there has never been such a full-throated chatter about “free personality,” personalities can be seen no more (to say nothing of free ones); but merely men in uniform, with their coats anxiously pulled over their ears. Individuality has withdrawn itself to its recesses; it is seen no more from the

outside, which makes one doubt if it be possible to have causes without effects. Or will a race of eunuchs prove to be necessary to guard the historical harem of the world? We can understand the reason for their aloofness very well. Does it not seem as if their task were to watch over history to see that nothing comes out except other histories, but no deed that might be historical; to prevent personalities becoming "free," that is, sincere towards themselves and others, both in word and deed? Only through this sincerity will the inner need and misery of the modern man be brought to the light, and art and religion come as true helpers in the place of that sad hypocrisy of convention and masquerade, to plant a common culture which will answer to real necessities, and not teach, as the present "liberal education" teaches, to tell lies about these needs, and thus become a walking lie one's self.

In such an age, that suffers from its "liberal education," how unnatural, artificial and unworthy will be the conditions under which the sincerest of all sciences, the holy naked goddess Philosophy, must exist! She remains, in such a world of compulsion and outward conformity, the subject of the deep monologue of the lonely wanderer or the chance prey of any hunter, the dark secret of the chamber or the daily talk of the old men and children at the university. No one dare fulfil the law of philosophy in himself; no one lives philosophically, with that single-hearted virile faith that forced one of the olden time to bear himself as a Stoic, wherever he was and whatever he did, if he had once sworn allegiance to the Stoa. All modern philosophising is political or official, bound down to be a mere phantasmagoria of learning by our modern governments, churches, universities, moralities and cowardices: it lives by sighing "if only…" and by knowing that "it happened once upon a time…" Philosophy has no place in historical education, if it will be more than the knowledge that lives indoors, and can have no expression in action. Were the modern man once courageous and determined, and not merely such an indoor being even in his hatreds, he would banish philosophy. At present he is satisfied with modestly covering her nakedness. Yes, men think, write, print, speak and teach philosophically: so much is permitted them. It is only otherwise in action, in "life." Only one thing is permitted there, and everything else quite impossible: such are the orders of historical education. "Are these human beings," one might ask, "or only machines for thinking, writing and speaking?"

Goethe says of Shakespeare: "No one has more despised correctness of costume than he: he knows too well the inner costume that all men wear alike. You hear that he describes Romans wonderfully; I do not think so: they are flesh-and-blood Englishmen; but at any rate they are men from top to toe, and the Roman toga sits well on them." Would it be possible, I wonder, to represent our present literary and national heroes, officials and politicians as Romans? I am sure it would not, as they are no men, but incarnate compendia, abstractions made concrete. If they have a character of their own, it is so deeply sunk that it can never rise to the light of day: if they are men, they are only men to a physiologist. To all others they are something else, not men, not "beasts or gods," but historical pictures of the march of civilisation, and nothing but pictures and civilisation, form without any ascertainable substance, bad form unfortunately, and uniform at that. And in this way my thesis is to be understood and considered: "only strong personalities can endure history, the weak are extinguished by it." History unsettles the feelings when they are not powerful enough to measure the past by themselves. The man who dare no longer trust himself, but asks history against his will for advice "how he ought to feel now," is insensibly turned by his timidity into a play-actor, and plays a part, or generally many parts, – very badly therefore and superficially. Gradually all connection ceases between the man and his historical subjects. We see noisy little fellows measuring themselves with the Romans as though they were like them: they burrow in the remains of the Greek poets, as if these were *corpora* for their dissection – and as *vilia* as their own well-educated *corpora* might be. Suppose a man is working at Democritus. The question is always on my tongue, why precisely Democritus? Why not Heraclitus, or Philo, or Bacon, or Descartes? And then, why a philosopher? Why not a poet or orator? And why especially a Greek? Why not an Englishman or a Turk? Is not the past large

enough to let you find some place where you may disport yourself without becoming ridiculous? But, as I said, they are a race of eunuchs: and to the eunuch one woman is the same as another, merely a woman, "woman in herself," the Ever-unapproachable. And it is indifferent what they study, if history itself always remain beautifully "objective" to them, as men, in fact, who could never make history themselves. And since the Eternal Feminine could never "draw you upward," you draw it down to you, and being neuter yourselves, regard history as neuter also. But in order that no one may take any comparison of history and the Eternal Feminine too seriously, I will say at once that I hold it, on the contrary, to be the Eternal Masculine: I only add that for those who are "historically trained" throughout, it must be quite indifferent which it is; for they are themselves neither man nor woman, nor even hermaphrodite, but mere neuters, or, in more philosophic language, the Eternal Objective.

If the personality be once emptied of its subjectivity, and come to what men call an "objective" condition, nothing can have any more effect on it. Something good and true may be done, in action, poetry or music: but the hollow culture of the day will look beyond the work and ask the history of the author. If the author have already created something, our historian will set out clearly the past and the probable future course of his development, he will put him with others and compare them, and separate by analysis the choice of his material and his treatment; he will wisely sum the author up and give him general advice for his future path. The most astonishing works may be created; the swarm of historical neuters will always be in their place, ready to consider the authors through their long telescopes. The echo is heard at once: but always in the form of "criticism," though the critic never dreamed of the work's possibility a moment before. It never comes to have an influence, but only a criticism: and the criticism itself has no influence, but only breeds another criticism. And so we come to consider the fact of many critics as a mark of influence, that of few or none as a mark of failure. Actually everything remains in the old condition, even in the presence of such "influence": men talk a little while of a new thing, and then of some other new thing, and in the meantime they do what they have always done. The historical training of our critics prevents their having an influence in the true sense, an influence on life and action. They put their blotting paper on the blackest writing, and their thick brushes over the gracefullest designs; these they call "corrections"; – and that is all. Their critical pens never cease to fly, for they have lost power over them; they are driven by their pens instead of driving them. The weakness of modern personality comes out well in the measureless overflow of criticism, in the want of self-mastery, and in what the Romans called *impotentia*.

VI

But leaving these weaklings, let us turn rather to a point of strength for which the modern man is famous. Let us ask the painful question whether he has the right in virtue of his historical "objectivity" to call himself strong and just in a higher degree than the man of another age. Is it true that this objectivity has its source in a heightened sense of the need for justice? Or, being really an effect of quite other causes, does it only have the appearance of coming from justice, and really lead to an unhealthy prejudice in favour of the modern man? Socrates thought it near madness to imagine one possessed a virtue without really possessing it. Such imagination has certainly more danger in it than the contrary madness of a positive vice. For of this there is still a cure; but the other makes a man or a time daily worse, and therefore more unjust.

No one has a higher claim to our reverence than the man with the feeling and the strength for justice. For the highest and rarest virtues unite and are lost in it, as an unfathomable sea absorbs the streams that flow from every side. The hand of the just man, who is called to sit in judgment, trembles no more when it holds the scales: he piles the weights inexorably against his own side, his eyes are not dimmed as the balance rises and falls, and his voice is neither hard nor broken when he pronounces the sentence. Were he a cold demon of knowledge, he would cast round him the icy atmosphere of an awful, superhuman majesty, that we should fear, not reverence. But he is a man, and has tried to rise from a careless doubt to a strong certainty, from gentle tolerance to the imperative "thou must"; from the rare virtue of magnanimity to the rarest, of justice. He has come to be like that demon without being more than a poor mortal at the outset; above all, he has to atone to himself for his humanity and tragically shatter his own nature on the rock of an impossible virtue. – All this places him on a lonely height as the most reverend example of the human race. For truth is his aim, not in the form of cold intellectual knowledge, but the truth of the judge who punishes according to law; not as the selfish possession of an individual, but the sacred authority that removes the boundary stones from all selfish possessions; truth, in a word, as the tribunal of the world, and not as the chance prey of a single hunter. The search for truth is often thoughtlessly praised: but it only has anything great in it if the seeker have the sincere unconditional will for justice. Its roots are in justice alone: but a whole crowd of different motives may combine in the search for it, that have nothing to do with truth at all; curiosity, for example, or dread of ennui, envy, vanity, or amusement. Thus the world seems to be full of men who "serve truth": and yet the virtue of justice is seldom present, more seldom known, and almost always mortally hated. On the other hand a throng of sham virtues has entered in at all times with pomp and honour.

Few in truth serve truth, as only few have the pure will for justice; and very few even of these have the strength to be just. The will alone is not enough: the impulse to justice without the power of judgment has been the cause of the greatest suffering to men. And thus the common good could require nothing better than for the seed of this power to be strewn as widely as possible, that the fanatic may be distinguished from the true judge, and the blind desire from the conscious power. But there are no means of planting a power of judgment: and so when one speaks to men of truth and justice, they will be ever troubled by the doubt whether it be the fanatic or the judge who is speaking to them. And they must be pardoned for always treating the "servants of truth" with special kindness, who possess neither the will nor the power to judge and have set before them the task of finding "pure knowledge without reference to consequences," knowledge, in plain terms, that comes to nothing. There are very many truths which are unimportant; problems that require no struggle to solve, to say nothing of sacrifice. And in this safe realm of indifference a man may very successfully become a "cold demon of knowledge." And yet – if we find whole regiments of learned inquirers being turned to such demons in some age specially favourable to them, it is always unfortunately possible that the age is lacking in a great and strong sense of justice, the noblest spring of the so-called impulse to truth.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.