

Oswald Spengler and the Inspiration of the Classical Age

P A U L G O T T F R I E D

IN HIS INTERWAR political tracts and in numerous passages from *The Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) identifies himself as a Prussophile and conservative as well as philosopher of history. Such forms of identity were interrelated throughout his literary career, for both his cyclical view of civilizations and his belief in the spiritual exhaustion of Western culture combined to justify his distaste for modern political values. Contemptuous of the liberal faith in historical progress, Spengler challenged the association of human improvement with individualism and equality. Individual self-determination—that hallmark of artistic and moral modernity—was synonymous for him with social disintegration. In his political statements of the twenties and thirties, he calls upon his countrymen to abandon atomistic capitalism for a corporate economy and for an explicitly Prussian ethic of duty to the state.

As has often been noted, his historical theorizing reveals both depth and inconsistency. *The Decline of the West* presents a mechanistic view of the rise and fall of eight discrete civilizations. Whereas some of these civilizations are only cursorily treated, Spengler bestows particular attention upon three of them: Magian (*i.e.*, Semitic-Hellenistic-Persian), Graeco-

Roman, and Western. Of these three, the last two are made the major foci for his two volume investigation. Spengler asserts that the groupings which he studies underwent parallel developments without interpenetrating. All of them proceeded through an equivalent life cycle, moving from creative and coherent cultures into materially expansive but despiritualized civilizations; none of them, however, supposedly influenced the distinctive character of any other. Civilizations are seen as mutually impenetrable cultures, each creating a unique heritage with its own inherent symbolism.¹

Thus, classical antiquity, marked by a sense of finitude, brought forth a spatially self-enclosed mathematics (Euclidean geometry), a political constitution designed for city-states, and an art stressing form and balance. By contrast, Western society has always aspired toward the unbounded. While Near Eastern culture exalted depth and interiority, finding its representative in the magus and mystic, and while the classical world glorified Apollo, the god of form, Western spirituality is typified by Goethe's Faust who sought redemption through endless striving. Christianity, in fact, departed from its Magian and classical origins once it had been embraced by those Germanic tribes that invaded the

Roman Empire. Expanding monastic communities, the dream of papal empire, and towering Gothic churches all flowed from this Westernized Christianity.² Historical consciousness, a mathematics embracing infinitude, and an insatiable thirst for universal knowledge were still other characteristics of the Faustian culture.

Such cataloging of distinctive spiritual traits was made possible, according to Spengler, by his disciplined ability to discern a variety of cultural "physiognomies." Only by an intuitive leap, and not by means of discursive analysis, might the historian comprehend the panorama of world civilizations. Such comprehension became feasible for the first time in the modern West; like Hegel and Marx, Spengler believed that only Western society thinks historically, grasping each experienced moment developmentally in relation to a universal process. Yet, true historical consciousness could only prevail once Western man distanced himself from private conceits. "In the end," Spengler observes, "everyone permits himself to bring to the fore that piece of antiquity that most nearly corresponds to his own interests: Nietzsche pre-Socratic Athens, economists the Hellenistic period, politicians republican Rome, and poets the Empire."³

This admonition might suggest that Spengler cautiously rejected any comparison between structurally equivalent but spiritually unique culture-civilizations. But such was indeed not the case. Spengler revelled in civilizational comparisons and repeatedly recommended to his own generation the moral prescriptions of the ancient and non-Western worlds. His inspirations were vitalist (deriving by his own account from Goethe and Nietzsche); and, yet, as Count Keyserling noted, he struggled to reduce universal history to something approaching the "mechanical regularity of a watch."⁴

Each civilization's progress was both fated and predictable; however, not causality but intuition, sacred to the romantics, was made the means for understanding each unfolding life cycle.

Spengler has sometimes been depicted as a self-denying metaphysician, scorning what he perceived as an historically conditioned scientific method and exalting intuitive truth, while nonetheless rejecting all specific religious doctrines. He celebrated cultural creativity, yet even while doing so, clung to a starkly naturalist view of humankind. In his political writings, he sometimes compared men to "beasts of prey" and interpreted human activity as programmed responses to instinct and other biological imperatives.⁵ These zoological assessments, however, were paradoxically juxtaposed, particularly in *Prussianism and Socialism* (1919), with appeals to social conscience and communal concern.

His most prolific German commentator, Manfred Schröter, would have us look beyond Spengler's incongruous eclecticism to his force as a cultural analyst. According to Schröter, the morphological parallels he drew between diverse civilizations, his sense of both their similarity and distinctiveness, and his arresting picture of Western spiritual decay all suffice to justify Spengler's fame, whatever the defects of his documentation and method.⁶ Nonetheless, even the discrepancies in his presentation can be instructive. They underscore dramatically his attempt to be both moralist and prophet within the mechanistic-naturalist framework of his theorizing.

The first volume of *Decline* was written, among other reasons, to instruct the Germans on what historical paths would be open to them once they had triumphed in the Great War. Volume two, composed in the wake of German defeat, contains heady evocations of Caesarism as the ineluctable solution to urban *anomie*, the rule of money, and, finally, mobocracy. Is it mere destiny in the form of some mechanistically predetermined sociological *dénouement* that we encounter here? Or, is there also, as Schröter and I would both argue, a view of triumphant poetic justice in Spengler's portrayal of a new generation of Caesars who would discipline the mob and chasten the money lenders? In *Prussianism and*

Socialism, which he wrote simultaneously with the second volume of *Decline*, Spengler tries to conjure up his avenging angels by pleading: "We need hardness; we need a brave skepticism; we need a class of socialist ruling natures."⁷ As we shall see, he provided profuse instructions on the training of this desired class.

II

WHAT PLACE DID Spengler assign to classical antiquity in preparing the West for its future? In the case of Rome the answer appears evident. The introduction to *Decline* treats the modern West as the antitype to Rome and exhorts the reader to look preeminently to that ancient civilization to know his own historical options and limits. European and American cities are compared to Rome by virtue of their money economies, increasingly derailed populations, and isolation from rural folkways. "The model for the West can only be Rome. Imperialism is pure civilization. In this phenomenon lies irrevocably the fate of the West. The cultivated man directs his energy inward; the civilized one outward. Thus I see in Cecil Rhodes the first man of a new epoch. He represents the political style of a more distant Western, Germanic, particularly German future."⁸ In an even more revealing passage, Spengler confesses: "I believe we are civilized men, not men of the Gothic and Rococo. We must deal with the hard and cold facts of a late life whose parallel lies not in Periclean Athens but in Caesar's Rome. Of great painting and music, Western European man can no longer speak."⁹

Comparing Rome and the West, and, even more, exalting Roman ideals as a model for his own nation and age were both problematic activities for Spengler. If culture-civilizations evolved along parallel, but non-intersecting axes, what mimetic value would Rome have for the West, now condemned to its own form of decadence? Moreover, the Empire's soulless expansion combined with its inner decrepitude did not particularly merit modern emulation.

Spengler himself recognized this, and many of the references to Roman society made in *Decline* are conspicuously condescending. We are told, for example, that the Greeks possessed a "soul" unlike the Romans who merely used "intellect."¹⁰ *Seele* and *Geist* are the descriptive terms applied to Greek culture; whereas the mere pedestrian *Verstand*, or mere factualness (*Tatsachensinn*), are the highest praise that Spengler confers upon Roman intellectuality. Even more to the point: "One can understand the Greeks without speaking about their economic condition. The Romans, however, one can only understand by reference to them."¹¹

Although Spengler may have had no real affection for Roman civilization, he admitted that it did teach lessons to other *Spätzeiten* that had been dealt equally bad hands. "Rome and Caesar taught more to us moderns of a late period than did Athens, Pericles, and Alexander." There were no longer cultural questions at stake for those societies past their prime. All civilizations resembled each other in their spiritual poverty and material expansiveness. They all contained people who were oblivious to family and honor and who seek power and gain until having to submit to a resurgent state. Since the Romans had done as well with this situation as any people could, Spengler rightly called attention to their practical virtues.

This explanation has undoubtedly some merit, but it disregards his changing interpretation of the Western experience. In his political writings, that experience no longer appears structurally analogous to the classical one. *Prussianism and Socialism* presents the history of the West as a continuing confrontation among three powers with distinctive visions of world empire. Catholic Spain, capitalist England, and authoritarian-socialist Prussia have all developed national missions that reflect a need for domination.¹² Supposedly it was instinct that impelled these three peoples toward their future; and yet each one developed an ethic in harmony with its particular destiny. Order and duty became the expressions of Prussia's instinct for obe-

dience, just as individual initiative and free trade were made the rationale for England's economic growth.¹³

Significantly, the struggle which Spengler describes in *Decline* goes back before the modern era and overshadows his usual demarcation between spiritual culture and material civilization. England is repeatedly characterized as a "pure civilization," and Spain as a now weakened vestige of the once proud religious spirit; and yet "the struggle to the death" among these powers is said to have arisen in the Middle Ages in response to primeval instincts. Prussia and England remain armed with their pre-modern legacies, although, unlike Spain, each one has adapted to civilization. England's Viking rapacity shapes its quest for economic domination, whereas ancestral Prussian sentiments still remain alive in the German respect for authority.

As a political analyst and pleader for the Prussian service ethic, Spengler abandoned the structural rigidities of *Decline* for a view of Western history as a protracted confrontation. The struggle for Western leadership which he depicts leads, furthermore, to the construction of several historical analogies. One of them is a hypothetical parallel between the West's fate and the Peloponnesian War.¹⁴ Spengler does not dwell at length on this comparison, but a case can be made that in portraying the political division in his own civilization, he takes his format from Thucydides more than from anyone else.

The *History of the Peloponnesian War* begins by discussing the epic nature of the conflict treated. From the outset this war was destined to become "the most noteworthy of events," for it "showed both (Athens and Sparta) at the height of all their power and seeing the Greek world unite behind each of them, part of it at once and the rest after some deliberation."¹⁵ Thus, the original backdrop is given for Spengler's depiction of the monumental war between Prussia and England, which he believes will ultimately divide Europe, and possibly the world, between two imperial giants. Like the contest which Thucydides

delineates, the one Spengler evokes appears to him to have also been fated. It developed out of ancient instincts (for order and plunder) and would only end "with the death of a people or of their culture."

England and Prussia, as described by Spengler, bear some affinity to Athens and Sparta. Like those ancient powers whose rise to eminence Thucydides charts, the two Western countries are differentiated by their mores and regimes. Like Athens, an urban center marked by barren soil, England practiced trade and in searching for markets became a naval power. Like Athens, whose population swelled "owing to its incorporation of foreign insurgents," England included among its people sometimes defiant individualists and, like Athens, was polarized between rich and poor.¹⁶ Prussia, like Sparta, combined agriculture with military skills and placed the community above the individual. Spengler also suggests that Prussia was pushed into conflict, as Sparta had been, by the economic expansion-turned-imperialism of its more enterprising rival.

Having been more explicitly made by German apologists during the First World War, this analogy was old hat by the time Spengler alluded to it in 1919. Nor need one assume that he himself had discovered an ancient Hellas as paradigm for Germany's moral renewal. To German nationalists Greece had long represented a humanistic ideal which they hoped to see re-embodied in their own country. In distinguishing German culture, whether from the French Revolutionary legacy or from English bourgeois society, nationalist writers from Johann Fichte to Moeller van den Bruck, one of Spengler's contemporaries, attributed to their people Platonic and Aristotelian virtues. Like Aristotle in *The Politics*, Fichte during the Napoleonic Wars and Spengler a century later advocated autarchy for their people. By becoming self-sufficient, Germans would allegedly avoid corrupting contact with their materialist neighbors and thereby preserve their indigenous virtues of simplicity and sobriety.¹⁷

Spengler likewise invoked organic images to describe the essence of Prussian politics; and in so doing associated himself with a tradition of German nationalist rhetoric conceived in the romantic era. His characterization of the Prussian spirit as an "unspoken consciousness that integrates the individual with the whole" had origins, moreover, extending back beyond the romantic past into Greek philosophy.¹⁸ Both Plato and Aristotle identified a sound society with a full integration of all its parts. *The Nicomachean Ethics* views the happiness of the body social as a function of a perfect harmonizing of its constituent elements (*ta merē organikē*). And Socrates in *The Republic* considers a well-ordered society analogous to a properly controlled human constitution. "For unlike courage and wisdom which by residing in some particular part renders the [entire] city wise or courageous, this [discipline-sophrosynē] can only work once produced by being plainly extended throughout the whole, bringing accord to the weakest, most powerful, and mediocre whether one defines that [accord] as due to will, strength, number, possessions or whatever."¹⁹

These observations are not meant to suggest that Spengler knowingly drew his political concepts from Plato and Aristotle—or even less that he treated their ideas in historical context. My point is rather that in spite of his professed indifference toward the Greeks and his assumption of their mutually impenetrable cultures, Spengler as a political teacher did apply classical Greek thoughts, however veiled the form in which they came. Among the critics who most vehemently assailed *The Decline of the West* were Helenophile publicists and professors. Many of them bitterly resented what they perceived as Spengler's denigration of classical antiquity, particularly the Greek world.²⁰ This perception no doubt seemed confirmed by Spengler's greater interest in Roman factualness and imperialism than in Greek thinking.

And yet, what H.C. Butler melodramatically styled "the tyranny of

Greece over Germany" may have claimed Spengler as one of its unknowing victims. His longest political tract, *The Reconstruction of the German Reich* (1924), puts forth Greek philosophical teachings in the guise of Prussian-Roman traditions. The first part of his writings castigates a variety of groups whom Spengler blames for his people's moral and political decline: parliamentary parties that plunder the government, bureaucrats avid for pensions rather than public service, and "non-productive" industrialists who live on government favors while manipulating stocks. Above all, he deplors the absence of strong public personalities, such as Bismarck had been in government, the elder and younger Moltke in the military, and August Bebel as organizer of the German Socialist Party.²¹ Being convinced that German political and cultural well-being could only be restored through new leadership, Spengler turns to the problems of educational reform.

He stresses the need for education that aims at discipline (*Zucht*) and not merely at formal learning (*Bildung*). Mocking the German humanistic curriculum with its heavy philological emphasis, he expresses sympathy for the "gifted youth who hungers after the reality of his own years." As for the more traditional educator, "the blessed master in the threadbare frock with his head full of Horace," one such as he "might inspire awe, but only for those still in an age without automobiles or airplanes."²² The educational plan proposed recommends travel, foreign languages, economics, German composition, history and physics. Philosophy and art are understandably excluded, whereas Greek, an element in the humanistic curriculum, receives no mention at all. The teaching of Latin is given a practical, not humanistic rationale. It enables the young to think analytically, supposedly more so than even "the most rigorous mathematical procedure."²³

At first glance there seems nothing in this program to recall Greek educational theories. Indeed an unmistakably vocationalist flavor is perceptible in many of

Spengler's suggestions: e.g., academic credits be granted for travel and professional internships, languages be taught for their commercial and military use, and students to have an opportunity to acquire degrees on the basis of self-instruction with minimal classroom training.

Juxtaposed with this rudely modern reform, however, are Greek philosophical suppositions. Education is conceived in Platonic terms as *askēsis*, for which the German *Zucht* is an exact translation: a training of the self for public and political service. *The Republic*, Book Three, for example, devotes considerable attention to the question of training guardians from earliest youth to oversee an ideal society. Prescribing a proper cultivation of mind and body, starting with music and gymnastics, Socrates recommends an education that culminates in "the recognition of the ideas of discipline, courage, freedom, splendor..."²⁴ Among his tasks the lawgiver would have to shield his people against "intemperateness [*akolasia*]," particularly in the training of guardians. Like young athletes (*askētai*), and like Spengler's apprentice German leaders, Plato's guardians would come to see that "luxury first breeds intemperateness and then illness, whereas simplicity (*haplotes*) is based on musical discipline in the mind and gymnastic well-being in the body."²⁵

Spengler, too, emphasizes athletic fitness in his discussion of educational *Zucht*, and proposes that both industries and places of learning encourage physical recreation. Like Plato and Aristotle, albeit less consistently, he seeks to give education a political-ethical end and to place it in the service of a new aristocracy of talent. Spengler cites as a model for such leadership the traditional Prussian administrator whose severity he describes as the "Roman element in Prussianism."²⁶ Yet, his stress on leadership formation and his pervasive concern with disciplined political personalities may owe more to Greek philosophy than to Roman administration. Plato, too, had warned against the danger of allowing the morally and intellectually

unfit "to meddle" in politics. *The Republic* had anticipated Spengler's charges about the German state by condemning the practice of allowing one who is a "businessman by nature" to act as a warrior, legislator, or guardian.²⁷ Such "alteration and meddlingness" were harmful to just government, and Plato considered both plutocracy and democracy as morally and intellectually inferior to rule by the best (aristocracy) or to rule by men of honor (timocracy).

Aristotle also foreshadowed Spengler, the educator, when in *The Politics*, Books Seven and Eight, he discussed the methodical training of political leadership. Like Spengler, he asserts the need for differing educations for rulers and subjects; yet also like Spengler he proposes having future leaders serve others in preparation for the exercise of power. In Aristotle's desired regime (*politeia kat' euxēn*), the ruling class is expected to combine practical and theoretical reasoning. Although peace and leisure are preferable to strife and restlessness, Aristotle maintains that only by preparing his people to confront difficulty can the lawgiver ensure their preservation. The military arts are the most suitable activity for the younger members of the ruling *genos* who, enjoying "great physical superiority," are eminently qualified to soldier, just as their elders are to legislate.²⁸ Regarding warlike societies, Aristotle expresses a judgment similar to Spengler's: "Most of these cities can only survive as long as they fight; once they become possessors, their regime is ruined. They let go of their dye, like iron [swords], while pursuing peace."²⁹

Of course, whereas Aristotle intended his comment as a devastating criticism of Sparta ("whose lawgiver [we are told] never taught [his city] to enjoy leisure [*scholazein*]"), Spengler made equivalent remarks partly to justify a bellicose way of life. It is surely not my purpose to blur this difference; nor to deny the higher moral ground from which Plato and Aristotle surveyed political problems as compared to Spengler's naturalistic and presentist perspectives. Still and all, his political

writings do betray the imprint of Greek philosophy in a way that excludes the possibility of mere thematic overlapping. His practice of turning to Greece to chart a "Roman mission" for his nation need not surprise the historian. German thinkers were long ambivalent about two forces they saw in classical antiquity: Greek theory and Roman rule. German poets and philosophers of the *Goethezeit* paid tribute to Hellenic creativity and aesthetics; but their descendants living during the Second Empire deemed Rome, not Greece, a fitting prototype for a political nation.³⁰ This German infatuation with Rome might have even affected the largely apolitical Nietzsche. Despite his praise for Greek tragedy, his *Twilight of the Idols* exalts Julius Caesar and commends the Roman will to power which had been expressed through imperial expansion.³¹

Spengler represented a further stage of a politicized cultural consciousness: something which he himself would never

have denied and would indeed have enthusiastically affirmed.³² Nonetheless, his use of Greek political and educational concepts shows his enduring link to an older German culture. It was a culture created by such Hellenophiles as Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin, the brothers Schlegel, Herder and Schelling; no wonder that in responding to the first stirrings of German nationalism, German patriots still viewed themselves as a *Kulturnation* based upon analogy to the Greeks. Despite the discovery—which Nietzsche was not the only one to make—that the Greeks were "the political idiots of antiquity," German educators like Eduard Zeller, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Werner Jaeger, and Eduard Meyer continued to praise their intellectual and artistic achievements. At some point in his life, certainly in spite of himself, and admirer of political success though he was, Spengler, too, fell under the Greek influence.³³

¹Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* reprint (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1969), particularly pp. 210-277; 282-427 *passim*.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 234-245; 09-927. ³*Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴Hermann Keyserling, *Menschen als Sinnbilder* (Darmstadt: Otto Reichl, 1926), p. 164.

⁵For a caustic statement of this criticism of Spengler, *ibid.*, pp. 166-174; for a more detached and analytical treatment of this naturalist strain, see Lorenzo Gusso, *Lo Storicismo Tedesco* (Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1944), pp. 338-347.

⁶Manfred Schröter, *Metaphysik des Unterganges* (Munich: Leibig, 1949), pp. 34-50; 221-224.

⁷Oswald Spengler, *Politische Schriften* (Munich and Berlin: C.H. Beck, 1934), pp. 104-105.

⁸*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, p. 51.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 56. ¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 44-48. ¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹²*Politische Schriften*, p. 90. ¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 79-83. ¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁵Thucydides, *Historiae*, Oxford Classical Texts A, 1, 1-2. All translations are the author's own.

Although Spengler mocked the opening passages of Thucydides' *Historiae* as an "extravagant assertion," they anticipate much of Spengler's own naturalist view of human development. For Thucydides political regimes grew and declined like natural organisms; and yet he viewed the more recent empires as materially and militarily more formidable than their predecessors. Impressed by the physics of Anaxagoras, he ascribed not only to the natural world, but to history as a unitary process a tendency toward "self-growth (*epidosis eis hautō*)." See G.B. Grundy

Thucydides and the History of his Age II (London, 1948), pp. 27-29; and Siegfried Lauffer, "Die Lehre des Thucydides von der Zunahme geschichtlicher Grössenverhältnisse," *Spengler-Studien*, ed. A.M. Kocktanek (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1965), pp. 177-193. This view of natural increments rendered more believable the "extravagant assertions" about the catastrophic and universal scope of the Peloponnesian War; it also operates as an unspoken assumption underlying Spengler's claims for Western uniqueness. Only the West, according to Spengler, had the material means and the imagination to produce an ecumenical empire; therefore the struggle between England and Prussia was the first intra-civilizational contest of truly universal consequence.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, A, 2, 6-7; A, 6, 1-6; *Politische Schriften*, p. 55.

¹⁷Two studies which treat this subject are Klemens Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism* (Princeton, 1957), and Arnim Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland (1918-1932)* (Basel, 1949), particularly pp. 147-209.

¹⁸*Politische Schriften*, p. 4.

¹⁹Plato, *Res Publica*, Oxford Classical Texts, 432a 1-5.

²⁰*Cf. Metaphysik des Unterganges*, pp. 25-40; for a detailed critique of Spengler's generalizations about classical antiquity, see also O. Th. Schultz, *Der Sinn der Antike und Spenglers neue Lehre* (Stuttgart and Gotha: F.A. Perthes, 1926).

²¹*Politische Schriften*, pp. 145-154; 214; 216.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 229.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 234.

²⁴*Res Publica*, 402C 1-4.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 404e 3-5.

²⁶*Politische Schriften*, p. 219.

²⁷*Res Publica*, all of Book Four but particularly sections 433 and 434. 433c and d offer a social view largely reproduced in Spengler's idealization of Prussia: a community in which men, women, children, slaves, craftsmen, freemen, rulers and subjects are all bound together by the willingness "to do what each can do best without meddling." German corporatist theory—to which Spengler demonstrably contributed—apparently took its bearings from that organic social model so eloquently constructed in *The Republic*, Book Four: "The city striving for excellence through its own wisdom, discipline, and courage, and the ability of each to accomplish what is in him (433d 7-10.)"

²⁸Aristotle, *Politica*, Oxford Classical Texts, 1332b 14-41.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 1334a 6-10.

³⁰On the slowness of this shift in cultural attitudes, see Richard Benz, *Wandel des Bildes der Antike in Deutschland: ein geistesgeschichtlicher Überblick* (Munich: Piper, 1948).

³¹See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke* (Leipzig, 1906) X, pp. 321-324. In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche praises "the agonistic instinct" and "will to power" found among the heroes of Greek epic literature; yet he also condemns Greek philosophers as "the decadents of

Hellenism" while reserving his most effusive eulogies for Roman conquerors.

³²On the differences between Spengler and Nietzsche regarding their attitudes toward the state, see H.S. Hughes, *Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 59-64.

³³Although there is no direct evidence that Spengler consciously applied classical Greek ideals to his own society, Hans Joachim Schoeps has found a precedent for this practice among the supposed precursors of *The Decline of the West*. Jakob Burckhardt and Ernst Lasaulx, both cultural pessimists and widely respected Hellenists, wrote copiously on the Greek contribution to the study of decadence. Both praised Thucydides and Polybius for their naturalist understanding of the cyclical movement of ancient states; and throughout his historical speculation, Lasaulx in particular reverted to Plato's and Aristotle's pictures of the inescapable derailments of political regimes (*katapseis kai parekbaseis ton politeion*). For Lasaulx and Spengler, if I understand them, the normative and deviant models for society would both be drawn from among other places, *The Republic* and *The Politics*. See H.J. Schoeps, *Vorläufer Spenglers*, second edition (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1955), particularly pp. 35-63. On Ernst Lasaulx, see my *Conservative Millenarians* (New York: Fordham, 1979), pp. 110-119; and Stephen Tonsor, "The Historical Morphology of Ernst Lasaulx," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25, No. 3 (July-September 1964), pp. 378-381.