" Cultural Apocalypse: Nietzsche, Weber and the challenge of Modernity 1870-1919 "

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Contents

Preface

This thesis examines the German anti-modernist movement of the Second Reich, concentrating principally on the the ways in which the challenge of Modernity was interpreted by two of the formeost critical thinkers of the period, Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Weber.

A first section seeks to establish the nature and provenance of **die moderne** and proceeds to illuminate the nature of the reaction to it across the cultural spectrum in Germany. This examination is necessarily selective and concentrates largely on those figures who relate most closely to Nietzsche and Weber.

Ths thesis then moves to the exposition and analysis of Nietzsche's view of Modernity, after first examining his 'ideal' society in Ancient Greece. His solution to the modern malaise is then outlined.

In section three, a similar investigation is made into Weber's work, again commencing with his 'ideal' society in the heroic age of Protestantism.

My aim has been to establish the challenge of Modernity as a major theme in the work of Nietzsche and Weber and to analyse their respective interpretations of this theme. I have sought to establish the extent of Nietzsche's influence, if any, on Weber in this context, but also to examine areas of difference between the two thinkers. Accordingly, a final chapter assesses the balance and reflects upon the extent to which Nietzsche and Weber can be genuinely identified.

Fig 1 Ludwig Meidner, Apocalyptic Landscape
1912-13

Introduction

For many Germans the Second Reich heralded an era of degeneration, decline and collapse. Coinciding with the Reich's formation in 1871 the challenge of modernity emerged in earnest; a socio-cultural challenge of apocalyptic dimensions which threatened to move man and society where many claim they have arrived today: into a cultural and spiritual wasteland. It was an epoch which threatened catastrophe, and Nietzsche was the epochal consciousness.

> 'For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade, restlessly, violently headlong like a river that wants to reach the end'.1

The phrase 'for some time now' belied the extent of the history to which Nietzsche referred. It began not with the Reformation or the Enlightenment but with the Christian concept of God as a transcendent creator 1900 years earlier; a God existing apart from the world he had created ('Deus Abconditus').

Protestant Christiantity, with characteristic Northern sterness, addressed this matter head on and accepted its full implications. No earthly apostle was accepted, the world was left to man in which to prove his worth. As Karl Jaspers saw, the natural sciences which developed rapidly in the seventeenth and eighteenth

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1. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Trans W. Kauffmann and R. Hollingdale. (New York, 1968). Preface. Section 2

centuries were closely related to this form of Christianity.2 The great Protestant scientists such as Newton, Kepler and Huygens were all devout men who aimed to glorify God not in contemplation of heaven, but in their calling, in the understanding of the earth.

Their investigations, however, began to undermine the significance of the God they sought to glorify. Galileo prepared the way by showing that the earth was not the centre of the universe. Now, scientific proof itself became sacrosanct and destroyed faith in a God-ordered universe altogether, leaving only a mechanical system in His stead.

A new scientific-rational order now advanced and with it came the rise of mass society. A new rational basis for economic production, inspired by the Protestant ethic; the development of machinery and a methodical increase in the productivity of labour; communications improvements; the codification of law and the establishment of rigorous social organisation. All contributed to a massive population growth in the modern period.

Both Nietzsche and Weber regarded these developments with anxiety and pessimism. Yet at the heart of them was an ideal of individual integrity, self-conquest and self-overcoming which each valued supremely. The ethical

2. Karl Jaspers, Man in the Modern Age. Trans E. and C. Paul. (London, 1951).

personalities who had propelled European society into the modern age were at the centre of the discourses they produced on ways to overcome the modern crisis.

Nietzsche's influence on German intellectual history in this period was profound and this fact forms the foundation of my thesis. His influence can be discovered in most of the foremost intellectuals of the generation that succeeded him. Among them was Max Weber. Weber's debt to Nietzsche is still not widely acknowledged3 though in 1920 Weber himself acknowledged it:

> 'The honesty of the present day philosopher can be measured by his attitude to Nietzsche and Marx. Whoever does not admit that considerable parts of his own work could not have been carried out in the absense of the work of these two only fools himself and others. The world in which we spiritually and intellectually live today is a world substantially shaped by Marx and Nietzsche'.

Like Thomas Mann4 I must be forgiven for seeing Nietzsche and only Nietzsche. I have barely touched upon the Kantian elements in Weber's thought, although they are manifestly considerable. My intention, rather, has been

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3. Some major works on Weber barely mention Nietzsche at all. Reinhard Bendix, for example, in Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait. (London, 1962) mentions Nietzsche only once, on p. 464. The more recent Max Weber: An Introduction to his Life and Work by Dirk Kasler (Cambridge, 1988) also mentions Nietzsche only once, in passing, on pp. 185-7. Only two special studies of any substance exist - Eugene Fleischmann's 'De Weber à Nietzsche', European Journal of Sociology, vol 5, 1964, pp. 190-238; and Robert Eden's Political Leadership and Nihilism - A Study of Weber and Nietzsche. (Florida, 1983).

4. Thomas Mann, Reflections of a non-political man. Trans W.D. Morris. (New York, 1983), p.366.

to establish the challenge of modernity as a major theme in the work of Nietzsche and Weber and to illuminate their relationship in this context.

From the psycho-moralistic interpretation of its origins to their ethical-heroic response, the parallels emerge. Each established heroic societies from past ages to which the malaise of contemporary society - social decline, cosmic dissolution and cultural degeneration - could be juxtaposed. Each provided responses in which the integrity of the individual could be maintained and the ideal of human greatness encouraged.

With the foundation of the Reich in 1871 the metamorphosis of Germany from a stateless culture into a modern nation approached completion, as Bismarck set about the politicisation and hence democratisation of the German people.

We begin with the founding of the Reich in 1871 and an assessment of the cultural climate in Germany during the new epoch, from the apocalyptic iconography of the Expressionist painter (Figure 1) to the mystical cults of the poet Stefan George. What was the cultural apocalypse?

Chapter 1

The Challenge of Modernity, 1870-1919

Bismarck's founding of the Second Reich in 1871 was celebrated by most national-minded Germans. Middle-class liberals and entrepreneurs welcomed the Reich because unification fulfilled their nationalistic aspirations, provided a representative form of parliamentary government responsive to the needs of the industrial bourgeoisie, and encouraged the economic modernisation of the nation. Conservative agrarian aristocrats also hailed the new State. Behind its liberal facade stood an authoritarian structure which preserved many of their social, economic and political powers.

Unification in 1871 opened the way for rapid industrial and commercial development of the new nation; the economic expansion of the 1850s and 1860s gathered pace after 1870 and, whilst punctuated by a series of depressions, continued to accelerate until 1918. German trade formed a clear illustration of the rapid industrial development. Exports doubled between 1872 and 1900, and more than doubled again during the thirteen years which led to the Great War.1

The rapidity with which Germany was transformed into a predominantly industrialised, urbanised nation was

1. Stolper, G., K. Hauser, and K. Burckhardt, 'The German Economy, 1870 to the present'. Trans T. Stolper (London, 1967), p. 28.

unique in the European experience and was facilitated by a number of distinctive factors. Significant among these was the formation of new cartels after 1870 and the creation of great syndicates and trusts like Krupps or the General Electric Company (A.G.E.).

These new forms of organisation helped the capitalistic system attain its full development and exposed the structural inferiority of smaller economic units. These were replaced by great, mass production factories, deploying the latest in modern technology; traditional working relationships gave way to more technocratic styles of management and organisation. Even out on the great landed estates of the Prussian nobility east of the Elbe, capitalistic commercial policies, technologies and money relationships between employer and labourer were introduced to replace the centuries-old farming practices and the old patriarchal relations between owners and tenants. The effect of modernisation in the East Prussian countryside was the subject of Max Weber's most important early work.2

Concomitant with the explosion in industrial development was a boom in the German population which climbed from 41 million in 1871 to 65 million in 1910, almost all of this increase swelling the great cities. Berlin, for instance, increased in size fivefold between

2. Max Weber, 'Developmental Tendencies in the Situation of the East Elbian Labourers'. 'Economy and Society, vol 8, (1979).

1850 and 1914.3 This rate of population growth was also without parallel in Europe.

The effects on German society and culture of rapidly advancing industrialisation and a population explosion have been noted by Hinton Thomas:

> 'For many people, the result was to make society massive and impersonal. How to be true to one's natural self in conditions hostile to Individualitat and Personlichkeit was more and more a problem'.4

The abruptness and ruthlessness with which Germany appropriated modern technology created serious cultural problems. German society was in a state of shock. Comparing Germany with England, Thorstein Veblen, in his seminal work on German industrialisation, 'Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution', noted that:

> 'Modern technology has come to Germany ready made, without the cultural consequences which its gradual development and continued use has entailed among the people whose experience initiated it and determined the course of its development'.5

Essentially, Veblen contended, the Germans were culturally unprepared for the sudden, almost overnight emergence of advanced capitalism.

A fundamental anxiety among the cultivated middle-class, the BildungsbÜrgertum, was aroused by these

3. Thorstein Veblen, 'Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution' (London, 1939) p.62 and Stolper, G., K. Hauser, K. Burckhardt, Op Cit, pp.20-25.

4. R. Hinton Thomas 'Nietzsche in German politics and society 1890-1918' (Manchester, 1983), p.2.

5. T. Veblen, Op Cit, p.86.

developments. Industrialisation, rationalisation and urbanisation combined with mass education, popular journalism, and new egalitarian political forces to create a new, mass-based technological society; the cultural elite looked for an alternative, and developed a cultural critique which rejected the values upon which the new Germany was founded.

The critique was aimed less at the conventional political sphere than at the fundamental conditions of life in the new age. Political parties and interest groups were largely scorned, the Bildungsbürgertum believing that a basic transformation of the internal self and the cultural milieu, would, ipso facto, result in a basic reform of social and political life.

It was perceived that the enemy, die moderne, threatened on two fronts. On one, it mobilised the forces of rationalisation and made men mere cogs in a machine. On the other, it precipitated the emergence of the metropolis, of mass culture and uniformity, in this way promoting the values of the crowd. German cultural resistance was manifest in a whole range of defensive gestures which were often inspired by the German Romantics. As the original Romantics at the beginning of the century attacked the postulates of Enlightenment rationalism, the new figures rebelled against the consequences of its progress. They rejected the new unpoetic reality. Scientific laws, based as they were

upon the calculability and quantifiability of all subject matter, were dismissed in favour of more subjective philosophies and those which stressed the mystical elites were championed, often, as the original Romantics, elevating artists, poets and philosophers to a privileged status, holding sway above the madding crowd.

In political philosophy, liberal and democratic doctrines were cast aside in favour of a more radical individualism unbound by political obligation, whilst at the same time regional and national ties were supremely valued. Another pervading feature of German anti-modernism was the development in the country of a variety of pseudo-religious philosophies. A long Protestant critical tradition had undermined the authority of the Christian church to a considerable degree; yet a clear religious tone can be discovered in the writings of many intellectuals during this period, revealing a deep-seated need to fill the spiritual vacuum created by modern existence and for some form of salvation (Erlosung) from the crisis of die moderne. Nietzsche's Zarathustra is cast in the role of redeemer, for example, and Weber's Charismatic Leader performs a similar function, as we shall see in chapters five and eleven.

Of course, the perception of a threat to individuality in modern mass society was by no means exclusively German. In 1895, the French sociologist Gustave Le Bon, observed that: -

> 'Whilst our ancient beliefs are tottering and disappearing, whilst the old pillars of society are giving way one by one, the power of the crowd is the only force that nothing menaces'.6

Le Bon was horrified at the advance of the plebian masses in France and the onset of modernity in his nation also inspired the neo-Romantic manifestos of Barres and Maurras, as George Mosse has pointed out.7 Elsewhere Ibsen, Hamsun and D.H. Lawrence, to name a few, were to express similar fears of the masses and their suffocation of individualism. An anti-modernist movement, importing European ideas, also developed in America.8 The nature of the German experience, however, taken with her strong Idealist and Romantic traditions, meant that ideologies which resisted die moderne, were always likely to be more extreme and wide-ranging there than in the other nations of Europe - and this indeed proves to be the case.

A central figure in the German debate on the cultural problems precipitated by modernity was the sociologist Georg Simmel, a close associate of Max Weber, and a thinker who, according to H.G. Gadamer, responded

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6. Gustave Le Bon, 'The Crowd: a study of the popular mind. Trans R.K. Merton (New York, 1963) pp.13-14.

7. George Mosse, 'The Crisis of German Ideology: intellectual origins of the Third Reich'. (London, 1966)

8. See T. Jackson Lears, 'No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the transformation of American culture 1880-1920'. (New York, 1981).

with 'seismographic accuracy to the intellectual problems of the time'.9

In 'The Philosophy of Money' (1900), his most widely read and influential work, Simmel describes the features of an advanced money economy characterised in its technique by the extreme division of labour and in its commercial policy by the impersonal necessities of the international market. Economic structures, he held, shaped the entirety of man's social life. Like Weber, Simmel's chief concern was not so much with the sociological challenges thrown up by modern capitalism, but rather the spiritual problems it produces and their effects upon the individual. Like Marx, or later Walter Benjamin, Simmel describes the depersonalisation of advanced capitalist societies, in which men are reduced to specialised functions and the objects made, like their makers, lose all individuality and become commodities.

> 'Because of its fragmentary character, the product lacks the spiritual determinacy that can be easily perceived in a product of labour that is wholly the work of a single person'.10

Although it is seldom recognised, Nietzsche too produced a theory of alienation, and I shall examine it in chapter three. Elsewhere, in 'The Concept of the

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9. H.G, Gadamer, 'Truth and Method'. (New York, 1982) p.57.

10. George Simmel, 'The Philosophy of Money'. Trans T. Bottomore and D. Fristy, (London, 1978) p.459.

Tragedy of Culture' (1905), Simmel summed up the position of the individual under advanced capitalism.

> 'Objects in their development, have a logic of their own - not a conceptual one, nor a natural one, but purely as cultural works of man, bound by their own laws - man becomes the mere agent of the force by which this logic dominates their development'.11

Finding himself in a reified world where he has become a mere agent of an objective culture, then, the individual in Simmel's view could only preserve a personality by retreating into the soul, into the milieu interieure. Accordingly, he saw the most hopeful cultural expressions of his age as those through which the soul was re-asserted against the gathering forces of rationality, and he found his own particular ideal in the figure of the artist, particularly the Expressionist artist working, as it were, from the inside out, from the soul and the imagination. Moreover, in contrast to other men, the artist was zweckfrei, that is his work was not subject to the pressures of external, objective compulsion.

> 'The autonomy of the work of art signifies that it expresses a subjective spiritual unity. The work of art requires only a single person, but it requires him totally, right down to his innermost core. It rewards the person by its form, becoming that person's purest reflection and expression'.12

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11. George Simmel. 'The Concept of the Tragedy of Culture' in 'The conflict of modern culture and other essays'. Trans K.P. Etzkorn. (New York, 1968) p.47.

12. The Philosophy of Money, p.458.

Simmel's work, in fact, was distinguished by a dialectical interpretation of the socio-cultural situation in Germany. He recognised that the individual had both to submit and resist when confronted with new developments if he was to be successful in preserving his identity and personality against the forces of modern society. It was inevitable that individuals would - in certain respects - be affected by the new socio-economic conditions, but on the other hand, Simmel argued, it was imperative that the soul should be defended against the tyranny of these conditions if the spontaneity and diversity of individual personalities was to be maintained. According to Simmel, advanced capitalist economies harboured the potential to liberate individuals and actually facilitate their inner development.

> 'If modern man can, under favourable circumstances, secure an island of subjectivity, a secret, closed-off sphere of privacy - not in the social but in the deeper metaphysical sense - for his most personal existence, which to some extent compensates for the loss of the religious lifestyle of former times, then this is due to the fact that money relieves us to an ever-increasing extent of direct contact with things whilst at the same time making it infinitely easier for us to dominate them and select what we require'.13

This passage reflects a typical concern of the Simmel-Tönnies school of sociology with man's metaphysical existence. Here Simmel also touches upon the necessity to create new forms of spirituality in the post-Christian age, another of Weber's preoccupations and a problem

13. Ibid., p.469.

addressed by a number of German intellectuals of the period.

Two other figures eminent in the German intellectual reaction against modernity were Paul de Lagarde and Julius Langbehn. Both produced numerous texts expressive of their horror at the prospect of an age of social levelling and democracy, at the increasing political influence of the masses - and each adopted radical measures to put things right. They were leaders, along with Nietzsche, of a tendency in the anti-modernist debate which focused much of its criticism and invective on Liberals and Liberalism wherein, they believed, could be discovered the intellectual origins of modernity. Attacking the Liberal responsiveness to science and rationality, they found a target in Liberalism as an intellectual movement and opposed it by asserting ideologies of self fulfillment springing from the liberation of instinct, intuition and imagination. In its political form Liberalism was attacked for promoting concepts of political obligation and humanitarianism and encouraging the birth of democratic political systems in modern Europe.

It was in 1890, the year that Nietzsche's work began to receive widespread acclaim in Germany, that Julius Langbehn published his rambling disquisition on the crisis of contemporary Germany culture, '<u>Rembrandt as Educator</u>'. Finding a receptive market among the troubled

bourgeoisie, the work sold 60,000 copies in its first year of publication. Langbehn expended much of his argument attacking Liberal institutions and representative government, ascribing what he perceived to be a catastrophic German cultural decline to the democratic tendencies of his age. As Simmel was to do ten years later, Langbehn erected an ideal figure in the artist whom he treated as a symbol for the wholeness of personal existence. He departed from Simmel, however, by advocating the adoption of völkische values in painting, and his demands were met by, among others, a community of artists at Worpswede whose work was the subject of a 1902 essay by Rilke.14 Whilst the old Dutch master seems a curious figure to install at the head of his new German art movement, Rembrandt's significance to Langbehn was indicated by a passage in Rilke's essay on the Worpswede artists when he observes that 'Rembrandt... saw and painted people as landscape'.15

The innate link between man and his traditional environment was the essence of Langbehn's völkische ideology. Asserting the unity of blood and soil and preaching what was actually a form of theosophy, Langbehn saw in the modern city a concrete mass packed with a restless and unstable alien population of migrant

14. R.M. Rilke, 'Worpswede' in 'Rodin and other prose pieces'. Trans C.G. Houston, (London 1986) pp.82-99.

15. Ibid, p.87.

labourers - a symbol for the soullessness of the modern age. In the same year as the publication of his major work, 1890, Langbehn had actually called at the home of the lately deranged Nietzsche, promising to effect the psychological rehabilitation of his hero. In a flash of rare lucidity, however, Nietzsche tongue-lashed the hapless Langbehn and bundled him out of the door. Langbehn later entered a monastery - a decision which reflected his essentially religious personality.16

The essays and writings of Paul de Lagarde collected in his 'Deutsche Schriften' (1878-1881) are closely related to the work of Langbehn. Constituting a thorough condemnation of Liberalism in all of its forms, de Lagarde's work expounded a dynamic individualism which set the soul against intellect and the will against reason. He argued that: -

> 'All spiritual forces should be set free, all sham stamped out, every organisation of idealistic intent encouraged. If this were achieved, it would be a joy to be alive'.17

de Lagarde was especially concerned with the concessions to Liberalism embodied in the German constitution of 1871, in particular the introduction of universal suffrage for elections to the Reichstag. Like Langbehn, he ascribed cultural decline in Germany to the levelling

16. W. Kauffmann, 'Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist Antichrist'. (Princeton, 1974) p.65.

17. Quoted by F. Stern. 'The Politics of cultural despair: a study in the rise of Germanic ideology. (Berkely, 1974) p.31.

tendencies of Liberal ideology, forecasting in 1881 that:-

> 'We shall sink into nothingness, for the cultural resources of our intellectual life which we possessed in 1870 have been nearly exhausted in the last period of our history and we are face to face with bankruptcy'.18

By 1878, in fact, the German Liberals were in decline, the National Liberal party having relinquished their leading position in the Reichstag to the Conservatives in the elections of that year. Bismarck, after seven years of uneasy alliance with the Liberals, now joined forces with the Conservatives; de Lagarde, however, was less interested in specific political questions than in the invention of a new creative national culture. It was to this end that he endeavoured to establish a new Germanic faith, developed around an organic concept of the Nation, the Volk, and dedicated to National power. Fichte had proposed a new national religion at the start of the nineteenth century and now, as the century drew to its close, de Lagarde followed by developing another form of mystical nationalism which was to find many adherents in Germany and abroad.

Supplementary to this creation of a new Germanic faith was an extreme repudiation of Christian dogma, abhorred by de Lagarde because of its humanistic, pacifistic foundations and its advocacy of social equality. He rejected both the authenticity and content

18. Ibid., p.31.

of the Bible, as well as the contemporary institutions of Christianity, Catholic and Protestant alike. Yet if Christianity was dead, religion was indispensable. In 1887 de Lagarde declared 'I am nothing but a theologian and my interest in all other things has its centre in my theology'.19

One of de Lagarde's more prominent admirers was the composer Richard Wagner. In Wagner's work we find echoes of de Lagarde's call for a new Germanic religion to respiritualise Wilhelmine Germany and Wagner deliberately offered up his work as a source of Germanic politico-cultural revival. In Parsifal for example, he presented a parable for the over-civilised and over-intellectualised modern man. The opera's characters, at first mired in psychological paralysis, are freed through exposure to Parsifal's pure innocence and medieval ideals of heroism. And in Tristan and Isolde, Wagner celebrated the triumph of instinctual wish over rational reality, albeit at the expense of the lover's death.

At the time of writing the 'Birth of Tragedy', 1872, Neitzsche was hopeful that Wagner's new mythology would, indeed, lead to a renaissance of German culture. Four years later, however, he left the Bayreuth Festival for Basle in disgust at the spectacle he had encountered there. Wagner, he felt, had become a populist and his increasingly nationalistic tendencies, his demands for 'a

19. Ibid., p.35.

place in the sun' appalled Nietzsche, who rejected the view that increased national power would effect a regeneration of culture. Instead he found the developments were mutually antagonistic.

Nietzsche likewise was unable to support de Lagarde's new religious movement, though he commended his attack upon Christian ethics. His own assessment of Germany's cultural malaise, and indeed, the cultural malaise of Europe as a whole, emphasised the role of Christianity, its decline and its emergence in new forms. In one of his last notes in 1887, he observed:-

> 'Nihilism stands at the door: Whence comes this uncanniest of guests? Point of departure: it is an error to consider social distress or psychological degeneration or worse, corruption, as the source of nihilism. Distress, whether of the body, soul or intellect cannot itself give truth to nihilism (i.e. the radical repudiation of value, meaning and desirability). Such distress always permits of a variety of interpretations, yet it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted'.20

Christianity, in Nietzsche's account, was responsible to a large degree for Germany's incipient social, political and cultural decay. Having asserted the existence of a God-created universe and then that man must set his sights on the hope of salvation in the world beyond, man was left with nothing in which to trust or believe in an age where science had broken the certainties of his

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20. Friedrich Nietzsche 'The Will to Power'. Trans W. Kauffmann and R. Hollingdale, (New York, 1968) Book 1, p.1.

faith. So long dependent upon God for his salvation, man was now abandoned in a meaningless universe, and in the absence of hope or guidance, despair and degeneration set in. Like de Lagarde, Nietzsche attacked the levelling tendencies of Christian ethics, the repression of individual power drives and the desire for self-aggrandisement, as the source of herd values which poisoned modern society. In Nietzsche's terms, modern morality was a slave-morality and led to weakness and dissipation. He discovered the new expressions of Christian slave morality in the ideologies of the socialist or liberal and rejected them as a prerequisite to his transvaluation of all values. Here his greatest challenge developed: how was it possible to live without a transcendent faith or purpose, and without any system of value?

Nietzsche's response, outlined in 'Thus Spake Zarathustra' (1883), 'Beyond Good and Evil' (1886), The Twilight of the Idols' (1887), and elsewhere owed something to Romantic theories of individualism. He became the prophet of a new and radical individualism, exhorting individuals to personal expression and fulfillment beyond the retraints of ideological systems imposed by the herd. He created a symbol of this new philosophy in the Übermensch, a figure whom we shall examine in chapter six.

As H. Stuart-Hughes has argued, German anti-modernism and anti-modernism in other European nations, may, under one aspect, be interpreted as a revolt against that system of knowledge which formed to a considerable extent the foundations of modernity: rationalistic positivism.21 The belief in technological achievement and social amelioration on the basis of scientific enquiry and method found a good deal of support in Germany. In 1872, D.F.Strauss published 'The Old and New Faith', lambasted by Nietzsche as a canon of vulgar positivism in the first of his 'Untimely Meditations' (1873). Holding to the Liberal optimism of progress, Strauss celebrated the new faith in science and technology, identifying culture with these new developments and rejecting Christianity, the old faith, as a spent force, unable to withstand rational enquiry. Max Nordau, a typical Liberal bourgeois believed similarly, although in his major work 'Degeneration' (1892) his sanguiness was disturbed by visions of catastrophe precipitated by social and moral decay in the modern metropolis.

As Germany moved, juggernaut-like, into the 1890s, the positivist doctrines of Strauss and Nordau appealed less and less to the educated middle classes, the continuing industrialisation and urbanisation led to a

21. H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930. (Brighton, 1979).

parallel rise in those philosophies which deplored its consequences.

Toward the end of the 1870s and into the early 1880s, Nietzsche flirted with positivism - we discover its influence in 'Human all too Human' (1878), 'Daybreak' (1881), and 'The Gay Science' (1882) - but by the end of the latter he had renounced for good the quest for scientific truth. In fact, whilst extolling the capacity of science to extend the control of mankind over the earth and its capacity to dispel metaphysical certainties, Nietzsche was never comfortable with the idea that scientific methodology could be applied to the study of history or thought, literature or art. The comprehension of man, to Nietzsche, engendered an understanding of his whole personality, not only his intellect or his physical properties. The concepts of soul and will or intuition lay beyond the grasp of science. Furthermore, like Weber, Nietzsche realised that science was incapable of creating meaning for existence, perhaps the highest task of all.

Max Weber's attitude to science was rather more ambiguous. In the traditions of the Tönnies/Simmel school of sociology, Weber distrusted blind notions of human progress on the basis of scientific advance and he rejected all forms of determinism which subjected human action to overriding laws or processes. Whilst unable to relinquish his conviction in the autonomy of the

individual personality, however, Weber did much to advance the principles of natural sciences into the human sciences (Geisteswisschenschaften). His formulation of the 'value free' methodological device, the Ideal Type, and his studies of the great world religions, in which he distinguished these religions in terms of specific historical class, are two significant cases in point.

Generally speaking, positivism was never able to take so strong a hold in Germany as it did in England or France for example. There were many thinkers in Germany who would hold no brief for science at all and advocated the rejection of all scientific theory and work. In his later writing, Nietzsche may be included among them, his doctrine of the will to power here transcending any rationalistic formulation, a mysterious primal force originative of man's creative powers. Ludwig Klages, the psychologist and disciple of Nietzsche, also sought to reject science, technology and even intelligence as hostile to the soul. These irrationalist doctrines, rejecting the value of any laws which proscribed voluntarism, were in the ascendancy after the turn of the century.

In 1918, Hermann Bahr in his celebrated 'Expressionism' expressly related new trends in German art to the socio-cultural developments of its age.

> 'All that we experience is but the strenuous battle between the soul and the machine for the possession of man. We no longer live, we are lived. We have no freedom left, we may not

> decide for ourselves; we are finished, man is unsouled, nature is unmanned. A moment ago, we boasted of being her lords and masters, and she has opened up her wide jaws and swallowed us - unless a miracle happens, that is the vital point, whether a miracle can still rescue us from this sunken, buried humanity. Distress cries aloud, man cries out for his soul. This whole pregnant time is one great cry of anguish. Art, too, joins in the great distress, she too cries for help, she cries to the spirit. This is Expressionism'.22

The German Expressionist movement emerged from the great new cities during the last decade of the nineteenth century, presenting an art of spontaneous instinctual renewal, a distinctly revolutionary, individualised art. The Expressionists were pleased to make plain that their painting flowered from the same stem as the philosophy, literature and socio-political theory of the period. The leading Expressionists adopted Nietzsche as a prophet. In one of the oracles of German Expressionism, Wassily Kandinsky pondered that:-

> 'When religion, science and morality are shaken (the last by the mighty hand of Nietzsche), when the external supports threaten to collapse, then man's gaze turns away from the external toward himself'.23

The negative tendency of the new movement was manifest in a total rejection of all naturalist art forms and their affinity with objective, empirical, scientific method. In the more abstract works of the period, including those by

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22. H. Bahr, 'Expressionism'. Trans R.T. Gribble (London, 1925).

23. Wassily Kandinsky, 'Complete writings on art', vol 1. Trans K.Lindsay and P. Vergo. (Boston, 1982) p.145.

two of the leading Expressionists, Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, the link between material object and art work was abandoned entirely as the artist gave expression to his intuitive insight rather than depicting the impression of an actual empirical object on the canvas. It was a form of art which, in its emphasis on individualism and intuitive creation as opposed to the values of mind and reason in art, reflected the aesthetics of Romanticism.

Many of the Expressionists, were, moreover, unashamed elitists. The painters of the Brücke group, founded in Dresden in 1907, argued for an aristocracy of poets and artists, along similar lines to the Romantics or, indeed to Nietzsche in 'The Greek State'. They inscribed their housebook with the legend 'Odi Profanum Vulgis' - I hate the plebian crowd - taken from Nietzsche's preface to the 1886 edition of 'The Birth of Tragedy'.

During the Second Reich, the conviction that the artist was the sole creator of meaning in a meaningless universe detached from traditional religious explanations was a popular one in many circles. Franz Marc (1880-1916), founder of the Blaue Reiter group with Kandinsky, held that art now had a special meaning for those who rejected Christianity and felt unable to find meaning in science. He saw the new art as an ersatz religious force in which the soul and spirit could find new expression.

Weber, who also involved himself with reinvesting the modern age with new forms of spiritual value in his work on charisma, was to recognise the possibilities of art as a religious movement. He made 'the aesthetic redemption of modernity', to quote Adorno's phrase, the subject of a section in his 1917 essay 'The Religious Rejections of the World and their directions'.24

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, new trends in German literature also emerged in revolt against various aspects of modernity. Charting the course of the novel in Germany, E.K. Bennett noted a distinct change of direction as the old century drew to a close and writers such as Heyse and Meyer began to react to the transformation in the traditional structures of bourgeois society:-

> 'The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century sees a dissolution of the Bürgertum as an established mode or code or social life and with it the end of the novelle as a specifically Bürgerlich genre. The subject matter of the novelle deals henceforth with questions of individual psychology detached from any standardised background of Bürgerlich ethics'.25

The growth of industrialism, the rise of the working class in the new cities as urbanisation continued apace, both made a contribution to the disintegration of

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24. Max Weber, 'The Religious Rejections of the World and their directions' in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Trans and edit H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. (New York, 1958) pp.181-196.

25. E.K. Bennett, 'A History of the German Novelle'. (Cambridge, 1965) p.269.

traditional nineteenth century bourgeois life. Detached from their social foundations, bourgeois novelists began to depict man as an individual, isolated from society, a man, very frequently, in despair. As the novel moved into the twentieth century, he sought refuge in Romantic irrationalism and the milieu interieur. Illustrative of this trend was Rilke's 'The Notebooks of Malte Laurents Brigge' (1910) which, using Paris as a prototypical metropolis, depicts a young aristocratic artist alienated by the massive city and the massive crowds which surround him. Brigge opposes this depersonalised world by withdrawing into the realms of imagination or conjuring up memories of his childhood, learning that 'I possess an inner-self of which I was ignorant'.26

Not all writers invented heroes who reacted in this way. Bennett observes that:-

> 'Part of the early twentieth century reaction against urban modernism in Germany was the revived interest in the country life'.27

Novelists such as Bartels, Frennsen, Löns and Burte followed the lead of Langbehn, developing a Heimatkunst. Unlike the traditional country novelists however, they produced novels of rural society as vehicles for a quasi-mystical völkische ideology. A common feature of these works, as Bennett describes, was the establishment of the

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26. R.M. Rilke, 'The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge. Trans J. Linton. (Oxford, 1984) p.5.

27. E.K. Bennett, Op. Citi, p.279.

village in opposition to the city, a device which symbolised a series of conflicting dualities: soul against mind, vigour against ennervation, traditional hierarchical society against modern democracy, individualism against the masses.28

Alongside the cult of the village, there developed a cult of the soul, the High Priest of which was the poet and writer Stefan George (1868-1933). George, too, held an exalted conception of the artist and poet believing that the life of the soul was now in their trust. This view led George to inspire an anti-modernist mystical cult surrounding Maximillian Kronberger, a handsome and gifted youth of George's acquaintance who had died tragically at the age of sixteen. Kronberger was deified by George and his circle. Placed in the context of George's whole life and career, the Maximin cult was little more than an embarrassing episode; but he continued to support the view that 'great men', as distinguished by their cultural achievement, were owed humble reverence and obedience by lesser men and spent his life in search of a new messiah to redeem man from the emptiness of modern existence. In '<u>Das Neue Reich</u>' in 1919, George wrote the following lines:-

> 'He shatters fetters, sweeps the rubble heaps back into order; scourges stragglers home, back to eternal justice, where grandeur once more is grand, lord, once more lord, rule once more rule. He pins the true ensign to the race's

28. <u>Ibid</u>., p.279.

> banner and through the storms and dreadful trumpet blasts of reddening dawn, he leads his band of liegemen to daylight's work of founding the new Reich'.29

At about the same time, 1919, Weber was expounding a concept of charismatic leadership which shared certain elements of George's vision. It is interesting to note, therefore, that Weber had close contacts with the George Kreis, as incidentally, had Simmel. As Marianne Weber reveals in the highly subjective official biography of her husband, the Weber-George association began in 1911. Weber said of George:-

> 'I suppose that in decisive points, Stefan George and his pupils, in the final analysis, serve other gods than I, no matter how highly I may esteem their art and their inventions'.30

The passage indicates a qualified rejection of George's movement, rather than qualified acceptance. Nevertheless, it leaves a distinct impression that Weber was not quite certain where his loyalties lay, that his opinion was not fully resolved. Clearly, he felt unable to subscribe to the elevation of a given individual to the status of a God, yet it is also obvious that he sympathised with the essential impulses that motivated the George Kreis: the desire to restore a spiritual dimension to the life of modern man and to invest his life with meaning. Furthermore, we shall find a distinct air of messianism

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29. Quoted by J. Fest, Hitler. Trans R. and C. Winston. (London, 1974). p.102.

30. Marianne Weber, 'Max Weber: a Biography'. Trans H. Zohn. (New York, 1974). p.459.

pervading Weber's vision of the charismatic leader, who whilst not accorded divine honour and worship, was ascribed the status of a prophet and was to be greeted with pseudo-religious exaltation.

We can see, then, that during the period of the Second Reich, 1871 to 1919, when the new Germany rose rapidly to become the greatest industrial power and the most populous nation in Europe, a series of ideologies developed in all spheres of German bourgeois culture in revolt against this development - against the increasingly rationalised and materialistic mode of life and the tyranny of the masses. The exponents of such ideologies shared, by and large, a quasi-Romantic view of human freedom as freedom from external compulsion or control and sought ways to preserve it under the ominous challenge of modernity. As we have seen, a number of variations were played out on this theme: the same music, different orchestration. The variations of Nietzsche and Weber are to be the subject of the following chapters.

Chapter 2

The Monumental Histories of Nietzsche

The sense of an age in decline is often accompanied by the vision of an ideal age. Nietzsche also found ideals in the past to which he returned with the hope of instilling meaning and value into a modern existence devolved by the masses and materialism. Like Holderlin, or the brothers Schlegel before him, Nietzsche hoped to inspire the redemption of his age with a glorious vision of Antiquity.

In 1874, after a series of works on Ancient Greece and assorted other subjects, Nietzsche turned his attention to the problems of contemporary German culture, treating the theme in the form of four forthright polemics collectively entitled 'The Untimely Meditations'. The second of these was 'On the uses and disadvantages of history for life', in which the role of historical study and scholarship was addressed. As we may discern from the title, Nietzsche cast aside the wissenschaftlich ethos of knowledge for its own sake, as an end in itself. He argued, instead, that history must justify itself by contributing to life and become a search for the useful lessons of the past; in the language of his later work, knowledge was to be recognised as a function of the will to power.

There are three types of history delineated in Nietzsche's account: Critical, Monumental and

Antiquarian. The type with which we are concerned here is monumental history, history which involves:- 'The engagement with the classic and rare of earlier times'.1 Through this engagement, Nietzsche asserted, man could learn what was once great and thereby be inspired to restore himself to the greatness he has lost. A related function of history, of course, is to assist man to place his own age in perspective. It was for these reasons that Nietzsche formed a history of his own, the contours of which were distinctly monumental.

Nietzsche and Ancient Greece

The society which Nietzsche describes in 'The Greek State' (1871) is of somewhat dubious historical status, seemingly composed of elements from the works of Homer and from the inspired imagination of Nietzsche himself. However questionable Nietzsche's scholarship here may be - and as we shall see it was highly so - 'The Greek State' stands in the body of his own work as a political and cultural ideal, a monument to individualism, heroism and elitism. Nietzsche presented an age of vitality and strength in this early essay, and juxtaposed it to the spirit of his own age which concerned itself only with the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

In 'The Iliad, Homer presented a society which is characterised by a strict order of rank and authority; it

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Untimely Meditations'. (Cambridge, 1986) p.69. Trans R. Hollingdale.

is illustrated by the following scene in book two, which describes Odysseus exhorting his warriors to stay on Troy:

> 'Whenever he met someone who was a king (Basileus) or a prominent man, he would stand beside him and try with mild words to restrain him, saying:- "My good fellow, it is not seemly for you to be afraid like a coward. Sit yourself down make the rest of your people sit, for you do not yet clearly know the intentions of the son of Atreus"... but whenever he saw a man of the people and found him shouting, he would strike him with his staff and reproach him, saying:- "Fellow sit still, and listen to what others have to say, those who are better than you'.2

Nietzsche was ill-disposed toward men of the people. Homeric society, which promulgated the rights of the elite only and bound the common man to accept this order, was more to his taste. In this age before Socrates, Nietzsche found a great vitality in Greece, a vitality which, he contended, could be discovered in the fecund and prolific Greek art of the period; art being a paradigm for human activity for Nietzsche. To produce the conditions necessary for such artistic generation, the State instituted a slave-order on the Treitzschkean principle that 'The misery of the toiling men must still increase in order to make the production of the world of art possible to a small number of Olympian men'.3

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2. Homer, 'The Iliad'. Trans E.V. Rieu. (London, 1981) p.182.

3. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Greek State in Early Greek Philosophy and Other Essays'. Trans M.A. Mugge, The Collected Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, vol 2, Oscar Levy (ed.) (Edinburgh, 1913).

The artist-aristocrats formed a leisure class, free from the bondage of mundane everyday labours, their means provided by the toiling masses. The elitist social order depicted in 'The Greek State' had a clear bearing on the arguments of Nietzsche's later work, adumbrating the society which was later to emerge in Beyond Good and Evil (1886), for example. Here slavery is justified to support the Übermensch and the rights of the strong upheld over those of the weak.

Writing in 'Beyond Good and Evil' (1886), Nietzsche stated that:

> 'Society must not exist for society's sake, but only as a foundation and scaffolding upon which a choice type of being is able to raise itself to a higher task and to a higher state of being'.4

The mythological order evolved by the Ancient Greeks reflected their hopes and aspirations and through them the condition of Greek Man was revealed. The order was marked by conflict. Zeus had dethroned his father, Kronos, and laid waste to the Titans in a celestial power struggle to become the Greek god of gods; the heroes of Greek mythology were typically heroes of war, an Achilles or a Patroclus. The conflictive spirit of this society was symbolised by Homer in the agon, or contest, the gladiatorial combat through which the hero would release his primitive aggression. Both the agon and the strictly ranked social structure that emerged from it were

4. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Beyond Good and Evil'. Section 258.

prominent in the Homeric legends for which Nietzsche had such great admiration. He seemed to find in them a celebration of heroic vitalism, a quality manifestly absent in late nineteenth century Europe.

The principle of conflict is essential to Nietzsche's work. To this principle he attributed the emergence of cultures and he also applied it to the politics of the self: in 'Beyond Good and Evil' (1886), he noted that 'under peaceful conditions the warlike man sets upon himself'.5 He deduced the agon to be the fundamental principle of Hellenic life and in the 'Birth of Tragedy' as we shall see in the next section, he placed the Apollonian and Dionysian principles in opposition to each other. This conflict led to a flowering of Greek culture. Nietzsche was later to reject this movement toward unity with some vehemence, and not a little rudeness. 'It smells offensively of Hegel' he remarked in 1888.6 By this time, the conflict per se was held to be the generative force.

The State which Nietzsche presents in this early essay assumes this vitalistic character and through a continual waging of war with rival states, re-enacts at State level the power struggles of individuals. Moreover, the State becomes essential to Nietzsche's purpose in the

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Beyond Good and Evil'. Section 76.

6. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Birth of Tragedy in Ecce Homo'. Section 1.

negative sense in that it prevents a dissolute slide into materialism, thus saving society from the decadence and degeneration that constantly form a threat to it.

> 'Against the deviation of the State tendency into a money tendency to be feared from this side, the only remedy is war, and once again war'.7

There is little question that Nietzsche finds war valuable in itself in that it works against enervation. He does not, however, see it as an end in itself; its ultimate value lies in its capacity to enhance culture. The connection made by Nietzsche between war and culture is somewhat troublesome in the context of the Greek State. The fire and spirit mustered in the time of war were, he believed, somehow related to the instinctual drives which energised the genius, who appears in this essay in the prototypical Nietzschean form of the artist; yet he cannot fathom the precise nature of the link between warring State and work of art which is 'divined' rather than understood.8

Whilst one can see that successful wars would have the effect of enhancing national prestige, it is less easy to recogise how war can enhance the quality of national culture, a point to which Weber alluded in an unfinished section of 'Economy and Society'.9 In the

7. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Greek State'. Op Cit., p.63.

8. Ibid., p. 70.

9. See O. Stammer, (ed.) Max Weber and Sociology Today. (Oxford, 1971), p.87.

light of Nietzsche's later work, however, we may assume that the turning inward of the aggressive instincts of war by the individual, who then harnesses and expresses them in a sublimated form, usually in art, can explain the mysterious nature of this connection. Whilst, therefore, we could justifiably interpret Nietzsche's concept of war in his early work in a militaristic way, this would not be true of Nietzsche in his mature writing, in 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra' for example. Here he is thinking of dynamism and aggression working within the individual personality as he strives to attain the ideal of the Übermensch. This is a conflict the individual enacts within himself.

Seven years on from 'The Greek State', Nietzsche presented an image of the mass democratic state in his own epoch, where the relationship between the State and artistic genius was somewhat different. In 'Human all too Human' (1878) we find the 'Genius and the ideal state in conflict'.10 The Liberal State to which Nietzsche refers was, he contested, conducive only to the welfare of the masses and under these circumstances, Nietzsche argued, 'Mankind would have grown too weary to be still capable of producing genius'.11

10. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Human All Too Human'. (Cambridge, 1984). Section 179.

11. Ibid., Section 235.

That the institution of mass democracy will lead to mediocrity, standardisation and the suffocation of the talents of great men was a popular argument among German intellectuals in Nietzsche's era, and was famously expounded by de Lagarde or Von Treitzschke for example. It can be traced back to German Romanticism and forward to Thomas Mann, in 'Reflections of an non-Political Man' (1918).

Weber, whilst unable to share in the contempt for the masses which often attended such theories, sympathised with this view. In his inaugural lecture at Freiburg University, he stated that 'It is not well-being we want to cultivate in men, but those qualities which we feel to constitute human greatness and the nobility of our nature'.12

In their assessment of the qualities that constituted human greatness and nobility, Nietzsche and Weber agreed upon many points that have seldom been recognised. That human greatness was threatened by the socio-political conditions pertaining in advanced capitalist societies of the modern age, neither was in any doubt.

The Birth of Tragedy

In 1873, Nietzsche continued his engagement with the classic and rare of earlier times in 'The Birth of

12. Max Weber, Inaugural Address Freiburg University. Economy and Society, vol 9, no. 4, pp. 28-49, p.45.

Tragedy', reconstucting through an examination of the Greek stage the cultic and mythic origins of Greek art and culture. As he later explained, Nietzsche turned to these ancient models in the hope of leading modern man out of the decadent and degenerate state into which he had fallen:

> 'Thus I guessed to what extent a stronger type of man would necessarily have to conceive the elevation and enhancement of man as taking place in another direction: higher beings beyond good and evil, beyond those values which cannot deny their origin in the sphere of the suffering, the herd and the majority - I sought in history the beginnings of this construction in reverse ideals (The concepts 'pagan', 'classical', 'noble', newly discovered and expounded').13

Nietzsche's gravitation towards these pagan societies was by no means unusual in late nineteenth century Germany. A number of thinkers turned to the ancient world as a source of inspiration, and one of the most important of them was the German-Swiss anthropologist J.J. Bachofen, a friend of Nietzsche's during his days at Basle. Bachofen's motivation for the study of ancient society was a classic expression of Nietzsche's concept of monumental history and was justified in a strikingly similar way.

> 'The supreme aim of archaeology must consist in... communicating sublimely beautiful ideas of the past to an age that is very much in need of regeneration'.14

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13. F Nietzsche, The Will to Power. (New York, 1968). Trans W. Kauffmann and R. Hollingdale. Section 1041.

14. J.G. Bachofen, Myth Religion and Mother Right. Trans R. Mannheim. (Princeton, 1973), p.23.

Bachofen was particularly intent on overcoming the increasing dominance of rationalistic and material culture in the modern age and recognised that the greatness of Ancient Greek culture lay in the instinctual, intuitive insights of early Greek man. For Bachofen, myth explicated this intuition in the same way that Nietzsche believed that Dionysian truth was exposited in the tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus.

According to Nietzsche, the two elemental impulses in these dramas were the Apollonian and Dionysian, names deriving from the Greek art deities Apollo and Dionysus. Order and form were encapsulated in the Apollonian, whilst a return to the eternal, striving chaos of will characterised the Dionysian experience. Contrary to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche sought to affirm the will and to re-unite man with his instinctual primordial energies and drives. He discovered in the tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus, in the pre-Socratic age, the very antithesis of pessimism and decadence. He also dismissed the Aristotelian notion of tragedy as catharsis, asserting instead the positive attitude of the tragic drama to the vicissitudes and cruelties of fate. Tragedy did not represent the purgation of these elements from the minds of men: it accepted them and celebrated them. As such, for Nietzsche, tragedy was 'A pessimism of strength'.15

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15. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Birth of Tragedy'. Part 1.

The heroic embracement of life in all of its changing colours which Nietzsche recognised in 'The Birth of Tragedy' was later re-interpreted into his theories of amor fati and the yea-sayer and, ultimately, was to emerge in his doctrine of eternal return.

Interpreting the history of Greek culture as the history of the struggle between Dionysus and Apollo, Nietzsche found a wondrous resolution of the dialectic in the Attic tragedies of the sixth and seventh centuries B.C.

> 'Here the sibling and celebrated art of Attic tragedy and the dramatic dithyramb presents itself as the common goal of both these tendencies whose mysterious union after many and long precursory struggles found glorious consummation in this child - at once Antigone and Cassandra'.16

This dramatic form presented Dionysian forces in an ordered, Apollonian state, sublimating them within the formal structure of the drama itself to form a work of art. In 'Thus Spake Zarathustra', this mythological idea is developed into a psychological one, the Übermensch being presented as a figure who masters his Dionysian life energies (now subsumed under the heading of the 'will of power') and refines them through Apollonian control. Here, of course, will is maintained as the primary principle of life. In a real sense, then, the Übermensch idea can be traced back to Nietzsche's early vision of Greek tragedy, and emerges as a personification

16. Ibid., Part 1, Section 4.

of the tragic experience, harnessing the violence of the will in an heroic self-overcoming.

Nietzsche often suggested in his later work that the intoxication of primordial energies and an attendant state of plenitude impelled the powerful man to express his sense of self-abundance in the work of art. As such we may argue, like John Carroll, that 'The artist is the most appropriate paradigm for the egoist or Übermensch'17 and, moreover that 'Nietzsche's Apollonian -Dionysian dialectic stands as a definition of the creative process'.18

In such interpretations, the concept of the Übermensch is treated as an idea capable of being realised in the figure of the artist who sublimates his will to power in the ordered forms of the art work. Not all critics have taken so benign a view of the Übermensch, although the theory can also be interpreted as an existential concept, thus avoiding many of the more monstrous possibilities which it holds. Beyond all questions of hermeneutics, however, it is a fact that Nietzsche's ideas have been projected into the political arena by various modern movements from the neo-Romantic Action Francaise to the Nation Socialists in Germany. In the great debate over the responsibility of Nietzsche for

17. J. Carroll, Breakout from the Crystal Palace: The Anarcho Psychological Critique, Stirner, Nietzsche Dostoevsky. (London, 1974), p.82.

18. Ibid., p.94.

the crimes committed in his name, the 'Birth of Tragedy', or rather the critical reaction to it, provides us with some interesting evidence. Classical philologists of the day, led by Nietzsche's erstwhile tutor at Basle, Willamovitz-Moellendorf, greeted the book with total condemnation. The 'Birth of Tragedy', they held, was nothing but vulgar Wagnerian Romanticism and its author was a charlatan. J.H. Groth, in his assessment of the hostile reaction to the book, concluded thus:

> 'In the spirit of 'The Birth of Tragedy', we have since had works like those of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Spengler, Friedell, Alfred Rosenberg; from them it is a small step to Hitler's 'Mein Kampf'. All of them have several points in common. In the first place they exemplify, consciously or unconsciously, the principal ascribed to Cardinal Manning, that the dogma must correct history'.19

Groth is certainly guilty himself, of overstating his case. Nonetheless, in his unscrupulous exploitation of the cultural history of Ancient Greece, Nietzsche was undertaking the sort of irresponsible and specious scholarship which the National Socialists were to bring to his own work in the 1920s and 1930s.

The 'Birth of Tragedy' concludes with the death of tragedy at the hands of Socrates, the theoretical, anti-instinctual, anti-artistic man - in Nietzsche's view, the decadent man par excellence. The Dionysian truths of Aeschylus and Sophocles were set on mystical, instinctive

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19. J. H. Groth, "Wilamowitz - Moellendorf on Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy". 'Journal of the History of Ideas'. (1950), pp.179-190, p.189.

foundations, but Euripides, like Socrates, equated virtue with reason alone. Nietzsche saw Socrates with his doctrine of the mind eternal as the father of modern science and rationalism. In pre-Socratic Greece, however, he found a counter ideal to modern rationalism - in the celebration of the Dionysian, which was later to be associated with the will to power. He found, too, the aristocratic and heroic ideals which he was to develop in opposition to the nascent humanist and egalitarian societies of modern Germany and Europe; a spirit of heroism to stand against decadence; a stern and robust affirmation of life and fate, no matter how much suffering they visited upon man.

In this farrago, Nietzsche believed he had discovered the means to inspire a new social, political and cultural dynamism in a degenerating Germany.

Chapter 3

Nietzsche on the Age of Mass Production

Nietzsche, in common with many other figures in Germany at this time, was greatly exercised by the problems caused by the advance of machine techology and its effects on the individual. He recognised personal, if not economic, impoverishment as a result of these new developments and argued:-

> 'To the devil with setting a price on oneself in exchange for which one ceases to be a person and becomes a screw'.1

The vitalist strains in Nietzsche's thought meant an abhorrence of forms of industrial production governed by rational-scientific principles in which work was organised according to the capacities of the machine, rather than the individual. He addressed these problems in the works of his middle period, Human all too Human (1878), The Wanderer and his Shadow (1878), Daybreak (1880) and The Gay Science (1882) and though, unlike Weber, he does not debate the advance of bureaucratic rationality, we may assume that his attitude to this development would have been equally negative and critical.

Nietzsche's attitude toward these developments in technology was not, however, straightforward. He regarded modern machine technology as the result of powerful

1. F. Nietzsche, Human All Too Human. (Cambridge, 1984). Trans R. Hollingdale, Section 206.

intellectual energies and the denial of this view he saw as a prejudice. On the other hand he was shocked by certain aspects of modern man's attitude to new technology. He noted, for instance, the tendency to treat individuals as 'Material to heat great machines'.2

Yet in itself he found this unobjectionable. It was the somewhat indiscriminate nature of this technology which was offensive to his elitist viewpoint and he argued that a better order of society would be produced if machine work was reserved for the ordinary masses and 'higher' individuals could be freed from this demeaning form of labour, the efficiency of the machine facilitating the freedom of this elite. In his contempt for the masses, Nietzsche was closely associated with the Professor of History at Berlin University, Heinrich von Treitzschke, whose rejection of liberalism for extreme elitism was a sign of the German times as she moved into the modern age. The road to mass culture in Germany was like the road to Damascus in the New Testament: the scene of striking conversions. According to the new Trietzschke 'the millions must plow, hammer and grind in order that a few thousand can study, paint and govern',3 a remark which found an almost exact echo in Nietzsche's Human All

2. F. Nietzsche, Daybreak. (Cambridge 1982). Trans R. Hollingdale, Section 36.

3. Quoted by W. Struve, "German Elite Theories in 19th Century". (Princeton, 1967), p.160.

Too Human.4 It was Nietzsche's opinion that the machine must not be allowed to become an end in itself, but must instead be used for the purpose of liberating the artist, philosopher, poet or leader.

He recognised the impact of modern technology on the organisational structures of modern society and was aware of the particular method of constructing organisations which Weber termed rationalisation. This method involved a strictly coordinated division of labour and did not work to encourage the aristocracy or self-expression of individuals. General coordination was the essential point, so that the individual became merely a tool for a general purpose once more. The potential of individuals for creative action particularly in view of their indiscriminate deployment could never hope to be developed within this system. The effect of the machine was a generalisation of culture in the pursuit of efficiency, a point made by Nietzsche when he observes that modern society is increasingly comprised of large organisations whose exclusive motive is profit. They only proliferate into larger corporations which then routinise even more widely and more deeply the spheres of human life.5

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4. F. Nietzsche, Human All Too Human. Op Cit., Section 585.

5. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Trans W. Kauffmann, Sections 207, 211.

Nietzsche saw that the mechanical activities of the factory worker expressed only what he described as his lower energies. This activity does not enable him to 'Climb higher to become better, to become an artist'.6

This is due to the fact that machine culture inhibits the irrational elements of the individual personality from which art springs. In a passage expressing sentiments which may also be discovered in the works of Marx, Simmel or Walter Benjamin, Nietzsche writes that the machine 'Deprives the piece of work of its pride, its individual good points and defects which cling to all non-machine-made work, thus its bit of humanity'.7

Again, had the process been a selective one, Nietzsche's fears would have been alleviated; it was the indiscriminate ensnarement of individuals by the machine Kultur which troubled him. And he not only saw a democratic bias in the deployment of machine technology, he even argued that the maleficient demon of democracy was subverting mechanistic theory:-

> 'Forgive me as an old philologist who cannot desist from this malice of putting his finger on bad modes of interpretation: but "nature's conformity to law" of which you physicists talk so proudly - why it exists only owing to your interpretation and bad philology it is no matter of fact, no text, but rather only a naively humanitarian emendation and perversion of meaning with which you make

6. F. Nietzsche, 'The Wanderer and his Shadow'. (Cambridge, 1984), Section 218. Trans R. Hollingdale.

7. Ibid., Section 220.

> abundant concessions to the democratic instincts of the modern soul!'.8

In order that he might escape bondage to his machine Nietzsche advocated a rather drastic course of action to the individual worker: he advised him to emigrate. This was far preferable to a life of servitude:

> 'In contrast to all this, everyone ought to say to himself: better to go abroad, to seek to become master in new and savage regions of the world and, above all, master over himself'.9

He also noted a beneficial side-effect of such an exodus 'Thus, a cleaner air would at last waft over Europe'.10

Nietzsche likewise believed the whole of science to be in the sway of democratic values. And whilst acknowledging the intellectual power of the scientist, he regarded him essentially as a superior form of mechanic. In the We Scholars section of Beyond Good and Evil (1886) which takes its theme as a new philosophical leadership of science, Nietzsche wrote that:-

> 'The ideal scholar in whom the scientific instinct, after thousands of total and semi-failures, for once blossoms and blooms to the end, is certainly one of the most precious instruments there are. But he belongs only in the hands of the more powerful. He is only an instrument let us say, he is a mirror - he is no end in himself'.11

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8. Ibid., 228.

9. F. Nietzsche, 'The Wanderer and his Shadow'. Section 220, Op. Cit.

10. Ibid., Section 220.

11. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Section 206.

Critical values were now to be sublimated in creative values. Nietzsche also attacked those who had 'demoted' philosophy itself to mere analysis (Kant and Hegel) or to a critical science (the positivists) and contrasted them with the 'genuine philosopher':-

> 'Genuine philosophers are commanders and legislators:- they say "thus it shall be". They first determine the whither and for what of man, and in so doing have at their disposal the preliminary labour of all philosophical labourers, all who have overcome the past. With a creative hand they reach for the future, and all that is and has been becomes a means for them, an instrument, a hammer. Their knowing is creating, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is will to power'.12

The philosophic leadership of sciences, too, meant the employment of science in pursuit of new values, which in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy meant labour in pursuit of a new aristocratic society, freed from all association with democracy and the will of the masses. Quite how the scientific labourer was to be used in the construction of this new society, Nietzsche does not elucidate.

Acquiescence to the demands of new working conditions meant a rejection of Nietzsche's faith in the individual will to power, in his potential for self-aggrandisement and self-development. This spirit was imprisoned by modern technology which demanded only haste and industriousness in pursuit of an external goal - profit. We can indeed see in Nietzsche's reaction to

12. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 207, Op. Cit.

modern machine kultur and to materialism a perception of movements forming in parallel:-

> 'Are you fellow conspirators to the present folly of nations which, above all, wants to produce as much as possible and to be as rich as possible? Your task should be to press the counter claim: How much inner value is being thrown away for such an external aim?'13

Moreover, Nietzsche observed that whilst the Greeks had found work demeaning, modern man actually felt uncomfortable in leisure and spare time was regarded as wasteful. Art, conversely, had assumed the role of distraction and entertainment in an age which saw the businessman and banker as the soul of humanity. In his early work, the Untimely Meditations (1871), Nietzsche had also noted the change in the temporal forces of human consciousness nurtured by industrialisation.14 What in earlier times individuals had been urged Nil Admirai, to be exercised only by matters of eternal significance, consciousness in the modern age was directed towards the ephemeral everyday concerns brought to them by the newspaper and the telegraph, and the mind attended only to trivial things.

We can see, then, that Nietzsche approaches the problem of technology in a typically voluntaristic way. The impact of technology for good or ill is decisively affected by the strength of the human spirit or will. His

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13. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 211, Op. Cit.

14. F. Nietzsche, Untimely Meditations. Op. Cit., p.219.

attitude to technology reflected his interpretation of the human spirit as one which exhibited two contradictory impulses. The active, affirmatory, creative force of the positive will to power and the passive reactive force of ressentiment, which inspires the development of slave morality in The Genealogy of Morals. This leads him to an ambiguous position which, again, is characteristic. Technology was regarded by Nietzsche as a product of the highest intellectual processes, but he saw it as a tool which must be placed in the control of the active, creative side of human nature, exemplified in Beyond Good and Evil by the new philosopher. On the other hand, however, the organisational systems of modern industrial corporations stifled the creative energies in man, turning him into a cog in a machine, absorbed and made passive, on a totally indiscriminate basis in terms of the subject - the basis of efficiency and profit. He saw technology as a neutral force providing new freedoms to the elite or, as it was deployed in modern Germany, as the cause of decay and alienation from the creative life forces at the centre of his vitalistic philosophy.

Chapter 4

Nietzsche's Critique of Egalitarianism

The advance of modern technology was not the only phenomenon which Nietzsche perceived as a threat to individual integrity, freedom and volition in the modern age. Like de Lagarde, he also recognised a danger in the new political movements which arrived on the coat-tails of German industrialisation, in particular Liberalism and Socialism. Nietzsche also followed de Lagarde by merging his attack on these movements with his critique of Christian morality; turning over the stone of these movements, he found what he considered to be the worms of Christianity crawling underneath. Negative comparisons were often drawn between the modern age, where Christian values had been rejuvenated, and the heroic vitalism of Ancient Greece of Rome, or the amoral individualism of the Italian Renaissance.1

Nietzsche's proclamation of God's death in 1881, putatively regarded as original, had, in fact, been heard before in Germany. Two generations earlier in the early 1840s Bruno Bauer had emphaticaly rejected the historicity of Christ and declared the gospels to be mere mythologies. Ludwig Feuerbach in The Essence of Christianity (1841) denied the existence of God and observed that man, by projecting his own being into this

1. F. Nietzsche, 'The Will to Power'. Trans W. Kauffmann, R. Holllingdale. (New York, 1968), Section 740.

imaginary concept, had effectively renounced his individual integrity and formed himself into an object of this God.2 God, then, had been dead for some time in Germany. But as John Carroll has observed, Nietzsche's arguments did not only signify the departure of the Christian God. They were a challenge to the establishment of new supra-individual value systems which, to paraphrase Nietzsche's famous passage in The Gay Science, continued to move in 'God's shadow'.3

Christianity was attacked as the basis and prototypical form of all the new political and cultural movements in Germany which expounded egalitarianism and humanism asserting the welfare of the mass over individual freedom. If man was to be saved from the crowd, then an attack on Christian ethics was necessary for it was from these ethics that the crowd drew inspiration, if only subconsciously or out of habitual orientation. In 1888, in one of his last essays, Nietzsche noted the association of Christianity and modern democratic moments:

a) 'one attempts a kind of the-worldly solution but in the same sense - that of the eventual triumph of truth, love and justice (socialism: equality of the person)'.

2. L. Feuerbach, 'The Essence of Christianity'. (1840).

3. F. Nietzsche, 'The Gay Science'. Trans. W. Kauffmann. (New York, 1974), Book 3, Section 108.

b) 'one also tries to hold on to the moral ideal (with pre-eminence of what is un-egoistic, self-denial, negation of the will)'.4

and in 1887, he wrote:

> 'Christianity as a denaturalisation of herd-animal morality: accompanied by absolute mis-understanding and self-deception. Democratisation is a more rational form of it, one less mendacious'.5

To these developments, Nietzsche attributed the blame for the degeneration of Germany in the modern age. Asking himself in The Twilight of the Idols (1888), ''What is the cause of the decline of German culture?' he replied 'the democratisation of culture made universal and common'.6 Modern mass democrative movements were actually responsible for the problem but Nietzsche recognised that Christianity formed their ideological roots.

Nietzsche totally rejected the Christian-Humanist legacy. He recognised in the disintegration of Christian belief an historic opportunity to initiate a re-valuation of the values that had governed Western culture for the best part of almost two millenia. In the 'Untimely Meditations', Nietzsche argued that:

> 'Man must have, and from time to time use, the strength to break up and dissolve a past in

4. F. Nietzsche, 'The Will to Power'. Section 30. Op. Cit.

5. F. Nietzsche, 'The Will to Power'. Section 215, Op. Cit.

6. F. Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols. Trans R. Hollingdale. (London, 1974), Section 64.

> order to be able to live: he does this by bringing it to the bar of judgement, interrogating it remorselessly and, finally, condemning it'.7

Nietzsche's interrogation of Judaeo-Christian ethics in The Genealogy of Morals is based on the 'premise that there are no moral phenomena, only moral interpretations of phenomena. A people invented morality in order to prevail, making moral judgements solely on this basis and thus morality became a political and ideological question. Morality and politics, for Nietzsche, were co-determined.

Nietzsche's account of moral relations in The Geneology of Morals posits an original golden age of spontaneous self-affirming ethics based upon the values of the strong, on individual struggle and increase in power and prestige. These values, termed by Nietzsche knightly-aristocratic, were, however, inverted during the 'slave-revolt' in morals inspired by Judaeo-Christian theology. The new morality founded itself on weakness, sickness and self-contempt and exacted revenge on the knightly-aristocratic ethos by preaching an ethic of universal equality, brotherhood, love and charity. Nietzsche, interpreted all higher cultures as a compound of each type of ethic, though as a compound of varying and uneven composition.8 In the Renaissance, for example,

7. F. Nietzsche, 'The Untimely Meditations' 'On Critical History'. Section 2. Trans R. Hollingdale. (Cambridge, 1985).

8. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. (New York, 1968). Trans W. Kauffmann, Section 260.

Nietzsche recognised a period in which individuals such as Cesare Borgia cast off the chains of Christian morality and followed their own personal course, men of strong, if often un-sublimated, will to power. Nietzsche notes that 'In the age of the Renaissance, the "criminal" throve and acquired for himself his own kind of virtue'.9

There is little question that Nietzsche was greatly influenced in his celebration of the Renaissance by the work of his old tutor, and erstwhile colleague, Jacob Burckhardt author of Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy. Burckhardt had argued that the greatness of the Italian character in the Renaissance, and also, significantly, its fundamental vice, was its excessive individualism. He noted the deliberate repudiation of all moral constraints by figures like Braccio da Montane, Tiberto Brandauno and Werner von Urslingen, the latter of whom inscribed his silver hauberk with the legend 'The enemy of God, of pity and of mercy'.10

Had Nietzsche possessed a coat of mail, it may well have borne a similar message. Nietzsche saw the modern age in Germany as one in which Christian morality returned with a vengeance. He saw this morality as the paradigm for all humanistic doctrines particularly

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9. F. Nietzsche, 'The Will to Power'. Section 197, Op. Cit.

10. J. Burckhardt, The Civilisatiion of the Renaissance in Italy. (London, 1924), p.278.

Socialism which he dubbed 'La religion de la souffrance humaine'.11

It was an ideology, he argued, which, like the Christian priest, promised man a future redemption if only he would prepare patiently for it. He talked of:

> 'Socialist pied-pipers whose design is to enflame you with wild hopes, which bid you to be prepared and nothing further, prepared day upon day, so that you wait and wait for something to happen from outside and in all other respects go on living as you have always lived'.12

Two sentences onward Nietzsche contradicted this view by describing Socialists as 'malicious' and 'conspiratorial'; often only his contempt for them clear, and he abhorred any assignation of individual responsibility to a group or party.

Nietzsche frequently represented the struggle between master and slave moralities in terms of the contest between Greece or Rome and Judaea. He employs these historical symbols in his account of the French revolution under whose dual aspect he found the dichotomy symbolised. Rebelling in the name of liberté, egalité, and fraternitè, the French hordes assured that 'Judaea once again triumphed over the classical ideal'.13 But then:

> 'Like a signpost to the other path, Napoleon appeared, the most isolated and late-born man

11. F. Nietzsche, Beyond God and Evil. Section 21.

12. Ibid., Section 206.

13. F. Nietzsche, 'The Will to Power'. Section 490.

> there has ever been and in him, the picture of the noble ideal as such was made flesh'.14

Nietzsche rejected all notions of equality before God or law and even as they applied to the right of existence, and upheld a strict elitism:

> 'The higher ought not to degrade itself to the status of an instrument of the lower, the pathos of distance ought to keep their tasks eternally separate! Their right to exist, the privilege of the full-toned bell over the false and cracked is a thousand times greater'.15

During his own age he found modern mass movements - particularly Socialism expounding new forms of slave-morality. Despairing of these developments it seemed to Nietzsche that:

> 'A people is Nature's detour to arrive at six or seven great men and then to get around them'.16

He dedicated his own work to reverse the circumvention of the elite and called for great sacrifices to this end:

> 'The magnitude of an advance can even be measured by the mass of things that had to be sacrificed to it; mankind in the mass sacrificed to the prosperity of a single stronger species of man - that would be an advance'.17

Although throwing the weight of his invective against Christian morality, Nietzsche does recognise certain positive aspects within it. Without acquiring a bad

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14. Ibid.

15. F. Nietzsche, The Gennealogy of Morals, Essay 3, Section 12. Op. Cit.

16. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 126.

17. F. Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, Essay 2, Section 12.

conscience or becoming profoundly dissatisfied with himself man could never have envisaged higher states of being and perfection:

> In all fairness, it should be added, however, that on this soil, the precarious soil of priestly existence has man been able to develop into an interesting creature, that only here has the human mind grown profound'.18

Elsewhere, Nietzsche said that 'The protestant parson is the grandfather of German philosophy',19 having substituted the realm of ideas and concepts for sensual experience. Moreover, in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, we find the elements of self-control and self-discipline, selfo-overcoming part of the priestly ethic, to be central to Nietzsche's ideal of self-mastery and on another level we may even see Zarathustra as re-enacting the loneliness of Christ's passion, in his quest to bring new values to man. Although the undercurrent of ascetic tendencies is strong, however, these new values ultimately stand for self-affirmation and autonomy and Zarathustra disciplines himself to isolation from his fellows. He also represents a celebration of the individual will to power and man's primal life instincts, anathema to the Christian.

In the Christian God, Nietzsche recognised a figure before whom man prostrated and tortured himself, the ultimate antithesis of his own ineluctable and base

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18. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 247.

19. F. Nietzsche, The AntiChrist. Trans R. Hollingdale. (London, 1978), Section 10.

instincts. God was a measure of perfection against which man was bound to fail. He compares this God with the Olympian Gods of Ancient Greece in whom the instinctual aspects of nature were actually deified. Whilst the Christian based his religion on suffering and self-abnegation, through which he would achieve redemption, Greek religion was based on self-affirmation and freedom rather than repression and instead of subjecting themselves to the pangs of conscience the Greeks displaced their guilt on to the shoulders of their Gods:

> 'For the longest time these Greeks used their Gods precisely so as to ward off the bad conscience, so as to be able to restore in them their freedom of soul - the very opposite of the use to which Christianity put its God'.20

For the Christian there was only the prospect of 'Guilt before God. This thought becomes an instrument of torture to him'.21

So that he might overcome his powerful sense of inadequacy the Ascetic Priest, Nietsche's character type of Christian man, sought a refuge in the community.

> 'The foundation of a community is a significant victory and advance in the struggle against depression: with the growth of the community, a new interest grows for the individual, too, and often lifts him above the most personal element in his discontent, his aversion to himself (Despectio Sui)'.22

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20. F. Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals. Essay 2, Section 23.

21. Ibid., Essay 2, Section 22.

22. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Section 571.

(In contrast the life-affirming knightly-aristocratic figure seeks solitude. 'For one should not overlook this fact: the strong are naturally inclined to separate as the weak are to congregate').23

Indulgence in mechanical, systematic activity is postulated by Nietzsche as the other principal means of facilitating self-forgetfulness:

> 'Mechanical activity and what goes with it, such as absolute regularity, punctillious and unthinking obedience, a mode of life fixed once and for all, fully occupied time. A certain permission, indeed training, for impersonality, for self-forgetfulness, for Incuria Sui: How subtly the ascetic priest has known how to employ them in the struggle against pain'.24

The direction in which man is led through the psychological changes induced by Christian morality corresponds to the consequences of the socio-cultural changes dictated by the onset of modernity, where individuals are submerged in the crowd and become part of a highly technocratic industrial society. The cause is related and the concatenation plain: each represents a compromise of individual freedom and responsibility. One of Nietzsche's principal aims was to sweep away the inhibitions within and the restrictions without individuals from whatever quarter they should come. In his hatred of das Gemein, Nietzsche relates to the Romantics and, as we shall see, his theory of the

23. Ibid., Section 572.

24. F. Nietzsche, The Geneaology of Morals. Essay 3, Section 18.

Übermensch was influenced to some extent by Romantic theories of the individual. We may also see him as anticipating Sartre's existentialist ethic in his argument that individuals must take responsibility for their own ideals, must create, in Sartrean terms, their own essence. By conceiving himself to be a Christian however, man merely conformed to a socially determined image of himself as an imperfect, somewhat wretched creature and, moreover one constantly under the eye of God. In the modern age, Nietzsche saw Socialists submitting themselves to the powers of the State and in Liberalism he also discerned a lack of genuine individualism. Both ideologies, he noted, were based on humanist premises in which 'The individual concealed himself behind the general concept of Man'.25

Like de Lagarde, Nietzsche perceived Liberalism to be the political movement which posed the most immediate danger to the individual in modern Germany and like de Lagarde, he merged his critique of Liberalism with his attack on Christianity, taking the latter to be the soil on which the former flourished. He explicitly attacked the Liberal theory of political obligation relating it to the impulses of Christian morality and arguing that it inhibited genuine individualism by asserting the 'I ought' over the 'I will'. Nietzsche also found the

25. F. Nietzsche, Daybreak. Trans R. Hollingdale. (Cambridge, 1986), Section 26.

Liberal practising Christian implorations to love one's neighbour and refusing to do unto others what he would not have done unto himself. He represented reciprocity as vulgarity and dismissed Liberal notions of equivalence or equality. Furthermore, there was a considerable difference between Nietzschean and Liberal conceptions of human freedom and the ways in which it was to be achieved. The shortcomings of the Liberal conception of freedom he summarised as follows:

> 'Individualism is a modest and still unconscious form of the will to power. Here it seems sufficient to the individual to get free from an overpowering domination by society (whether that of the State or of the Church) he does not oppose them as a person but only as an individual; he represents all individuals against the totality. That means: he instinctively posits himself as an equal to all individuals; what he gains in this struggle he gains for himself, not as a person but as a representative of individuals against the totality'.26

Whilst the Liberal asserted the primacy of the community and regarded individual liberty as the movement to free man from its obligations, thus making it a negative process, Nietzsche saw liberty in self-realisation, attainable by placing the onus of value creation upon each unique individual beyond any pre-established rules or social contexts. Individuals, then, could aspire to more personal forms of liberation than those afforded by Liberal doctrines.

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26. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Section 784.

In the Genealogy of Morals Nietzsche observed that 'If a temple is to be erected, a temple must first be destroyed'.27

Having destroyed the Christian temple in which Nietzsche now found Liberals and Socialists domiciled, he intended to erect a new ideal, in his ultimate project, a quartet of books entitled The Revaluation of all Values'. This work in fact was never completed although posthumous papers forming an outline of it have been published as 'The Will to Power' and the 1888 work, 'The Anti-Christ', was intended as the first volume of the new work. The latter directly follows Nietzsche's previous arguments on the theme though in a more provocative and less refined manner. The notes collected in 'The Will to Power', too, follow the line of earlier works, though often developing them more extensively. Following most Nietzsche critics, I intend to look for the foundations of Nietzsche's temple in 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra' (1882) 'Beyond Good and Evil' (1886), 'The Anti-Christ' (1888) and 'Twilight of the Idols' (1887), the themes of which continue into the posthumous writings.

Before turning to Nietzsche's new ideal, however, we turn to the most extreme point of his attack on mass values and the collective order: The critique of language and truth.

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27. F. Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals. Essay 2, Section 24.

Chapter 5

Nietzsche Contra Language and Truth

To comprehend the negative sweep of Nietzsche's philosophy, his endeavour to 'found his affairs on nothing' like Stirner, it is necessary to understand his critique of language, because for Nietzsche, language was the world and the world was something man could no longer believe in. Having employed linguistic categories to come to an understanding of the world only to discover that this sense of reality was in fact a pure construction, man was left with no standard by which to compose and organise his experience. Nietzsche argued that reason was mediated by language giving it a false claim to universalism; it had also acted in complicity with moral imperatives determining an ideology of truth and, moreover, as Nietzsche argued in 'Beyond Good and Evil' it encouraged the institution of herd values, establishing the common and average over the rare and exceptional:

> 'To understand one another, it is not enough that one uses the same words; one also has to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences; in the end, one has to have one's experience in common... assuming next that need has ever brought close to one another only such human beings as could suggest with similar signs, similar requirements and experiences, it would follow on the whole that easy communicability of need - which in the last analysis means the experience of the merely average and common experiences - must have been the most powerful of all powers at whose disposal man has been so far. The human beings who are more similar, more ordinary, have and always have had an advantage;

> those more select, subtle, strange, and difficult to understand easily remain alone, succumb to strange accidents, being isolated, and rarely propagate'.1

Nietzsche's attack on Das Gemein, then reaches its extreme point in the critique of language, which also engenders new perspectives on the prejudices of morality and an assault on universal reason.

Written in 1873, the essay 'On Truth and Falsehood in the extra-moral sense' (aussermoralischen), provides an early example of the abrogation of language law that was to emerge at frequent intervals throughout Nietzsche's work.

The essence of the argument is that language is no more than a random system of signs composed in order to make the world easier to harmonise and control and that words bear no actual relation to reality whatsoever. Language was invented so that man could organise, and exercise more efficiently dominion over the world around him; it was in fact, one aspect of the primal drive for aggrandisement, the will to power, and here a significant paradox emerges in Nietzsche's enterprise. Consistently following his doctrine of the will to power, the development of linguistic systems ought to have been approved, facilitating, as they did, an extension in the power of mankind. The consequence of this development for morality, for belief in a transcendent being and for

1. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 268.

standardisation of human perception, however, led Nietzsche to dig away at its foundations.

The value of truth, he held, could not be judged by the degree of reality it conveys but only by its efficacy as a system, its capacity to press the world into service. Truth was actually lying to a fixed convention and falsehood, instead of being merely a contingent aspect of language, became for Nietzsche its constitutive principle. Here we have the lie of language in the extra-moral sense; that it is able to provide a scheme upon which man can order his existence, whereas no such scheme existed extraneous to this invention. The moral sense of lying on the other hand, consisted in the transgression of the truth principle upon which language was based, for as Nietzsche said 'We have a duty to lie in the fixed convention'.2

And he stressed that words were now genuinely designatory, that language was meaningful only within its own system of closed and incestuous conventions. 'Truth', he argued was only 'A mobile army of metaphors, metynomies and anthropomorphisms'.3

Words are simply a metaphor for an image which itself is a metaphor for a sense experience. Through a wilful amnesia, however, the origins of our language are

2. F. Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Falsehood in the Extra-Moral Sense'. Trans D. Breazeale. (Sussex, 1979), p. 84.

3. Ibid., p.85.

forgotten and lost and the actual metaphorical constitution of language comes to be recognised as fixed and constant. In some of his later work Nietzsche alludes to the value of metaphoric and figurative elements in language and perhaps it was only by recognising these aspects and opening our awareness to continually changing modes of expression that he felt that language could be useful at all. Yet no theory of metaphor is proferred.

In another of his early essays 'On Words and Music' (1870), Nietzsche anticipated the later discoveries of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss by suggesting that structuring operations in the unconscious actually form the basis of consciousness and culture:-

> 'In the multiplicity of languages, the fact at once manifests itself that word and thing do not necessarily coincide with one another but that the word is a symbol. What does the word symbolise? Most certainly only conceptions, be they now conscious ones, or, as in the greater number of cases, unconscious'.4

What is initially an amorphous trope is crystallised into a solid fact and then passes into the unconscious. Some years later in his 'Structural Anthropology', Lévi-Strauss presented the same view that this lost domain of language formed the substratum of our culture. For Nietzsche this was like forming a settlement at the site of a mirage.

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4. F. Nietzsche, 'On Words and Music', in vol 2 The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche. Oscar Levy (ed.) (Edinburgh, 1913), pp. 30-31.

He argued that signification was confined to the signifier and that signifiers were their own signifieds. Man, he asserted, must embark on a voyage of discovery to learn that there was no transcendent order beyond language by which linguistic conventions were defined: that there was no divine principle of truth or intelligibility, that there was only a desire for control. Because he viewed the paradigmatic structure of language as rhetorical rather than representational, he rejected any authority within the structure of language that was based upon its relation to extralinguistic referents or meaning. Here the justification of authority by truth disintegrates and a great revolution occurs. The world is open to totally new free and active interpretation. The nihilistic implications of the argument were also quite apparent and were highlighted in the works of the deconstructionist school in the 1960s, such as those by Derrida, Hartmann and, more particularly, Paul de Man.

Here social and political reality are treated as texts, open to a whole range of interpretations with the possibility of attaining truth no longer considered. Where there is no truth, there can be no guilt and no responsibility so that the most horrific crimes can be excused: just this possibility is admitted by Paul de Man in 'Allegories of Reading'.5 Whilst the radical

5. Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading. Chapter 2 "Rousseau's Confessions". (New Haven, U.S.A. 1979).

indeterminacy of historical and social events takes them beyond good and evil in any accepted sense, it can also lead to pure reactionary conservatism, a resigned passivity in the face of a total absence of true meaning, a withdrawal from all political debate, as Terry Eagleton has pointed out.6

Hitherto, metaphysics had regarded truth as an absolute and unchanging value but in Nietzsche's weltanschauung, the world was a constantly changing flux of power quanta and nothing was stable. He thought that 'The world is the will to power and nothing besides'.7

In relating truth to the will to power, Nietzsche undermined the effective subject. Western subject philosophy had confirmed the subject and object division and in this way, grammar, logic and metaphysics acted in complicity to reinforce the distinction between thought and truth through the claim that thought tends toward or wills truth. Descartes' contention, that any notion which struck him powerfully and lucidly must be true, was elemental in the perpetuation of this misleading causality, to which Nietzsche was strongly opposed:-

> 'That thinking is a measure of actuality is a rude non plus ultra of moralistic truthfulness (in an essential truth principle at the bottom of things);

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6. T. Eagleton, An Introduction to Literary Criticism. (Oxford, 1984), p.81.

7. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Final Section, Op. Cit.

in itself, a mad assumption'.8

It was Nietzsche's view that Descarte's cogito had made the ego the very cause of thought and thought also confirmed the ego - formulated famously as 'I think, therefore I am'. It was accepted thereafter that 'I' was the necessary subject of the predicate 'think', so that truth and thought were not related to any will other than that of the rational self. But Nietzsche argued that the will to power, the turbulent primal forces later encapsulated by Freud in his notion of the Id, were the fundamental source of the concept 'truth', which was in fact a fallacy 'Thinking not only constructs, it is itself constructed'.9

With Nietzsche the history of Western logocentric culture takes a new turn. Truth had been embodied in the logos, the dynamics of which had engendered reference to a privileged centre. In any given structure, then, whether anthropological, economic, psychological, scientific, theological, metaphysical or political, this centre acts to stabilise the various elements which comprise the structure. By rejecting the traditional centres of truth and the subject, Nietzsche aimed to liberate discourse from all authority and instead of conceptualising the centre as a locus of transcendental entities, Nietzsche dismisses it as an historical

8. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Section 536, Op. Cit.

9. R. Grimm, 'Nietzsche'. (Berlin, 1977). p. 164

artifice for the provision of order, control and continuity. Such a situation was pondered by W.B. Yeats in 'The Second Coming' 'Things fall apart the centre cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world'.10

Nietzsche saw in the obsession with the free subject a moral and political obsession. The idea of an independent rational subject facilitated the investigation of responsibility and made man accountable for his actions. In this way the individual was exposed, and laid open to interrogation. Thus Nietzsche made a direct link between the idea of a free subject and (moral) subjection.

> 'I give here only the psychology of making man accountable. Everywhere accountability is sought it is usually the instinct for punishment and judgement which seeks it. One has deprived becoming of its innocence if being in this or that state is traced back to will, to intention to accountable acts. The doctrine of free will has been invented especially for... the purpose of finding guilty'.11

Nietzsche contests the concept of free will, asserting instead, that man's actions and volitions are determined by antecedent causes, by the will to power which presents itself as a fait acompli to man's consciousness. In 'Daybreak' (1882), Nietzsche illustrated the position in the following passage:-

> 'We laugh at the man who steps out of his room at the moment when the sun steps out of its room and then says "I will that the sun shall rise" and

10. W. B. Yeats, The Second Coming in Complete Poems. (London, 1980).

11. F. Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols. Section 7.

> at him who cannot stop a wheel and says "I will that the wheel shall roll" or at him who is thrown down in wrestling and says "here I lie but I will lie here". But all laughter aside, are we ourselves ever acting any differently whenever we employ the expression "I will". 12

Elsewhere Nietzsche discovered the significance of those repressive mechanisms in man through which the current of his primal drives could be short-circuited. He made them one of the central themes of The Genealogy of Morals in which the Christian concept of bad conscience emerges as a particularly potent repressive device, acting upon that third part of the human personality that Freud called the superego. It was this last system in the personality that Nietzsche wished to destroy.

It was Nietzsche's intention, then, to discard the common linguistic structures by which man had ordered his perceptions and thereby to disintegrate morality and the values of the crowd. He likewise rejected all so-called natural justice or law and clearly there was no possibility of a revealed religion in his argument. The individual was now responsible for his own, purely self-created set of values. Nor was a system of rights possible under the terms of this new existence; the age of submitting personal goals to impersonal standards of judgement had ended and Nietzsche's position meant that the diverse and conflicting projects of man could no longer be reconciled if a standard of reason, the only

12. F. Nietzsche, Daybreak. Section 124. Op. Cit.

basis for its satisfactory formulation, did not exist. Nietzsche rejected the interpersonal transmissibility of practical reason as a recipe for the development of general mediocrity. Moreover, theories of right necessitated a substantial degree of recognition and co-ordination impossible in a world which Nietzsche wanted to see moved exclusively by an unconstrained struggle for power.

In Western logocentric cultures, language had been the medium for man's co-ordination on all levels, determining an ideology of truth, the concepts of free will and reason. It also produced errors in his perception of time. Reason in language came to possess an all unifying quality because its claims to universalism forced it to make statements of various sorts over and beyond all temporal boundaries. Nietzsche, however, denied that societies were joined by eternal, unchanging patterns of perception, believing that this view failed to account for the vicissitudes of history. The concept of an unchanging rational faculty was one more contrivance; each epoch had its own values and its own style and all socio-cultural phenomena were historically determined. The structure of language, however, dictated that reason be consistent and fossilised man's consciousness in the rigid structure of grammar, so that the possibility of a psyche essentially receptive to new historical influence was ruled out.

As we have seen Nietzsche's theory of language contains a number of ambiguities and contradictions and perhaps the most basic of them is contained within his act of writing at all and stating the fallacy of reference in what is necessarily a referential mode. Nietzsche overcomes this self-refuting paradox by drawing attention to the problem himself and he states that:-

> 'We have to cease to think when we refuse to do so in the prison-house of language. We barely reach the doubt that sees this limitation as a limitation. Rational thought is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off'.13

The illumination of this limit seems to set the limit of Nietzsche's endeavour; the most he can hope to do is expose the prejudices of linguistic convention, to loosen the hold language has upon us and our structures of reason and rationality. Language, moreover, was the cement that bonded society and, acting as a political instrument, it facilitated man's control, not only over the world but also over his fellow men. Each linguistic act is an act of political engagement, and here we can consider the relation between communication and organisation, definition and coercion, the subject and subjection. The rejection of authority at its most basic level, of man's communality and his allegiance to collective systems of value.

However, man was now confronted by a type of chaos, unable to give order to his experiences and thoughts.

13. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Section 522.

Having ruled out the possibility of a private language, perhaps it would only be in the world of art and music where, freed from the structural barriers of the logos, a genuinely individual mode of expression could be found. In this respect, the art of the Expressionists so much influenced by Nietzsche, may have presented an ideal of individualised instinctual expression beyond all traditional concepts of referentiality. There was another alternative - that provided by Nietzsche's doctrine of perspectivism. This was based upon the premise that:-

> '[There is] no limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted; every interpretation is a sympton of growth or of decline. Inertia needs unity plurality of interpretations is a sign of strength'.14

In the same way as the post-structuralist argues that a text is constructed from its readings, Nietzsche suggests that the world is a product and not the ground of various perspectival interpretations: the text is composed in the reading of it and its meaning simultaneously created in the act of interpretation. As Nehemas argues, Nietzsche's model for the world, for objects and for people turns out to be the literary text and its components.15

Unlike Nehamas, however, Nietzsche does not introduce the possibility that conflicting perspectives

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14. Ibid., Section 600.

15. A. Nehamas, 'Life as Literature'. (Cambridge, Masachussetts, 1985).

enter into any hermeneutic part-whole relationship. There are no facts behind interpretations and no means by which these views can be reconciled in a homogenous totality. Implicitly, however, Nietzsche does acknowledge the development of perspectives other than those we ourselves produce, and argues that 'If nothing is true, all is permitted'.16

The doctrine of perspectivism, however, cannot be reconciled to the will to power theory in the sense in which it is meant here. The will to power as the essential life force, precludes the possibility of cultural relativism, and suggests instead the ascendancy of powerful perspectives over inferior ones, as Nietzsche himself makes clear in a passage from 1886 'The most powerful man the creator, would have to be the most evil, in as much he carries his ideal against the ideals of other men and remakes them in his own image'.17

The denouement of Nietzsche's critique of language, then, is fraught with dangers. It contains within it both the prospect of despotism and the freedom for chaos, perhaps the most promiscuous tyrant of all.

16. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Section 602.

17. Ibid., Section 1020.

Chapter 6

Nietzsche's Aristocratic Radicalism

Toward the end of his lucid years in late 1887, Nietzsche wrote to his friend, George Brandes, from Nice and praised Brandes' characterisation of his socio-political ideal. 'The term aristocratic radicalism which you employ is very good. It is, permit me to say, the cleverest thing I have yet read about myself'.1

Subsumed under this heading were a number of ideas and images lacking the coherence of a system or a theory and frequently revealing a lack of conceptual rigour, which suggested the work of a poet rather than a philosopher. Nietzsche oscillated wildly between poetry, drama, philosophy and politico-cultural theory and often gave way to wild flights of fancy. He offered no programme and no specific suggestion for reform; he was generally unsure as to how his new aristocratic order might be introduced. Yet his brilliant rhetoric, his emotional tone, his apocalyptic visions and menacing threats were more striking and impressive and therefore more inspirational than concrete proposals. The most famous expression of Nietzsche's aristocratic radicalism was in Thus Spake Zarathustra (1883) where the concept of the higher man (Übermensch) is first introduced. This work takes the form of a mystical journey, an odyssey of

1. George Brandes, 'An Essay on Aristocratic Radicalism'. (New York, 1972), p.64.

discovery in which the characteristics of the higher man are revealed. In a work laden with symbolism and imagery, the eagle represents the higher man, a symbol of independence, nobility and self-majesty; as a beast of prey it also symbolises the more disturbing aspects of Nietzsche's vision.

Of course any concept which sought to justify the rights of one or the few over the many had to be based on an assumption of human inequality. This for Nietzsche was distinct and inevitable. 'With the teachers of equality I will not be mixed up and confounded, for thus speaketh justice to me: men are not equal'.2

He saw that the man of distinction would endeavour to escape from the equalising, and thereby in his case degrading, influence of the crowd. 'Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the many, the great majority'.3

Nietzsche wished to encourage the development of citadels for the aristocratic egoist, sanctuaries of independence in which each could become the play actor of his own ideal,4 beyond the restrictions of herd values and indeed beyond any external restrictions whatsoever, as we shall see. Nietzsche noted that the type of

2. F. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra. Trans R. Hollingdale. (London, 1976), Section 68.

3. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Trans. W. Kauffmann. (New York, 1968). Section 26.

4. Ibid., Section 97.

morality he termed herd morality, inherited by the Socialist and Liberal from the Christian 'trains the individual to be a function of the herd and to ascribe value to himself only in this function'.5

As we have seen Nietzsche had no objection to herd morality in its proper place. What he objected to was its inculcation into the potentially noble individual. He therefore demanded that 'moralities must be forced to bow first of all before an order of rank'.6

The divergent capabilities and requirements of man, Nietzsche believed, justified the inception of this rank order; he introduced a new higher morality which rejected all judgements external to those created by the individual himself. The higher man was to be the man given the scope to develop his own authentically chosen ends and purposes. According to Nietzsche's advocate (Fürsprecher), Zarathustra, 'He hath discovered himself who sayeth "this is my good and evil". Therewith hath he silenced the mole and the dwarf who say good for all, evil for all'.7

Such a choice individual was to set goals for himself and his particular morality consisted in the laws

5. F. Nietzsche, The Gay Science. Trans W. Kauffmann. (New York, 1974). Section 116.

6. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Trans W. Kauffmann, (New York, 1968). Section 221.

7. F. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra. Part 3, Section 56.

of life and action appropriate to the attainment of these goals. Nietzsche occasionally defined higher morality as an experimental morality, in that it was to be arrived at purely through the exploration and testing of the various means of pursuing the particular goal which the higher man set himself. In terms of herd morality, under which heading Nietzsche subsumes the ideology of the Christian, Liberal and Socialist it is also true to say, as Bertrand Russell remarked in his History of Modern Philosophy,8 that Nietzsche often talked about all that had been considered good in the old society becoming evil in the new; and all that had been considered evil, becoming good. Nietzsche himself explicitly stated:

> 'The strength required for the vision of the most powerful reality is not only compatible with the most powerful strength for action, for monstrous action, for crime - it even presupposes it'.9

This new higher morality was entirely self-promoting as the old had been other regarding. It was the morality of the creator whose only law is that to which the task he sets for himself requires that he submit; Nietzsche chose not to proscribe him in any other way (except one, as we shall see):

> 'The creator a more manifold, more comprehensive life extends and lives beyond the old morality. The individual appears obliged to give himself laws and to devote his own arts and wiles for

8. Bertrand Russell, 'The History of Western Philosophy'. (London, 1968) p.790.

9. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Op. Cit., Section 225.

> self-preservation, self-enhancement, self-redemption'.10

The higher man redeems himself from the nihilism which ensured Nietzsche's destruction of the old tables of value. We note, too, that Zarathustra is cast in the role of 'Redeemer'.

Higher morality assumes a multiplicity of forms to which there is no limit; it required of those strong enough to endure it an heroic self-overcoming with respect to those human, all too human energies which would weaken them and would dissipate their power drives. A morality which aimed to train men for great heights had to have opposite intentions to those of the old morality guided by sympathy, pity and charity. The unheroic and comfortable life prized by the humanists was cast aside. Nietzsche wrote 'War and courage have done more great things than charity'.11

And, addressing directly the humanist doctrine of happiness for all, he wrote:

> 'You want, if possible - and there is no more insane impossible - to abolish suffering and yet it really seems that we would rather have it, higher and worse than ever'.12

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10. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Op. Cit., Section 262.

11. F. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra. Book 2, Section 25.

12. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Op. Cit., Section 25.

And on pity, the 'last sin of the higher man', Zarathustra advocated 'Mark this too, all great love is given above all of its pity: For it still wants to create the beloved'.13

Whether this purely egoistic doctrine can be considered a morality as such is open to question. Certainly concern for the other does not figure directly in it, although the same applied to concern for one's own preservation and well-being. Nietzsche repeatedly implores his higher men to live dangerously:

> 'For believe me - the secret of realising the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is to live dangerously! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas'.14

Moreover, of course, Nietzsche's higher 'morality' possessed no semblance of unity whatsoever; perhaps, however, he could justify a new use for the term in the aftermath of the collapse of all traditional modes of evaluation and interpretation. He did conceive of a form of friendship in Zarathustra, though it was not built on a humanist concept of love, only the natural respect of higher men for each other, reminiscent of the warrior friendship of Achilles and Patroclus for example. Moreover, even the friend was not allowed to form any sort of obstacle to the realisation of one's ideal.

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13. Ibid.

14. F. Nietzsche, The Gay Science. Op. Cit., Section 283.

Instead of seeking to establish a universal law or a categorical imperative, Nietzsche argued instead that men had to limit themselves to their own individualist tables of value through which alone genuine self-realisation could be attained. When Zarathustra talks of new tables of value, they are tables erected by the higher men themselves, not stood over them like the Christian tablets of stone. Nonetheless, Nietzsche upheld the concept of noblesse oblige. Zarathustra says 'Willing no more and esteeming no more and creating no more - oh that this great weariness might always be kept from me'.15

Self-transformation was a privilege not endured by all and Nietzsche regarded it as the duty of the noble man to undergo the drama of becoming himself; that is, his authentic self. Nobility continued to have its obligations even it they were only obligations to oneself although in the sense that Nietzsche believed the goal of humanity to be in its highest examples, it may also be seen as an obligation to humanity also.

In Nietzsche's doctrine of self-overcoming there existed no general notion of a higher morality from which the higher man could infer his ideal. As Colin Wilson has remarked 'The will precedes the ideal'.16

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15. F. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra. Book 2, Section 24.

16. Colin Wilson, The Outsider. (London, 1971), p.103.

And certainly he does not conceive of higher morality as having the same specific content for each man. Nonetheless, he often expresses in his work what we may interpret as clear trait and character preferences of his own. And in Beyond Good and Evil, as Richard Schacht has pointed out, he indicates the general manner in which the higher man may be prompted to live his life, 'by that sensibility engendered through his attainment and appreciation of his own high spirituality and spiritual superiority'.17 Nietzsche forms a description rather than a prescription though it seems to bear a strong hint:

> 'To live with tremendous and proud composure; always beyond. To have and not to have one's affects, one's pro and con at will: To condescend to them for a few hours. To seat oneself on them often as on a horse as often as on an ass - for one must know how much to make use of their stupidity as much as of their fire ... and to choose for company that impish and cheerful vice, courtesy and to remain master of one's four virtues: of courage and insight, sympathy and solitude'.18

Nietzsche also demanded of the higher man a particular attitude toward life itself, an attitude of affirmation and celebration, the opposite to decadence and world weariness. Nietzsche asked the higher man 'How well disposed toward your life and the world do you have to be to consider it worthy of eternal recurrence', Nietzsche's famous theory was not an attempt to offer an empirical or a metaphysical theory of the universe; it represented

17. Richard Schacht, Nietzsche. (London, 1983), p.474.

18. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 284. Op. Cit.

instead an attitude of nihilism overcome. Nietzsche's first aphorism on eternal recurrence appeared in 1882, in The Gay Science.

> 'What if one day or night a demon were to sneak after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you "This life as you now live it, and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every thought and sigh and everything immeasurably small or great in your life must return to you - all in the same succession and sequence ... if this thought were to gain possession of you, it could transform you as you are, or perhaps crush you. The question in each and everything - do you want this once more and innumerable times more, would weigh on your actions as the greatest stress - How well disposed would you have to become towards yourself and your life, to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate confirmation and seal'.19

The higher man is he who is able to affirm eternal recurrence, Nietzsche's ultimate test of life-affirmation. The emphasis here is also on the psychological consequences of the teaching of eternal recurrence upon the actions of the higher man if he behaves as if it were true; hence the hypothetical diction. Man must live in such a way as he would choose to live again, forever. This essentially is an existential imperative, as Wilson sees.

As we have seen, Nietzsche did not proscribe his heroic men in any way; they obeyed no law but their own and their conscience only told them 'You should become him who you are'.20

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19. F. Nietzsche, The Gay Science. Book 4, Section 341.

20. Ibid., Book 3, Section 270.

Yet above this doctrine of self-realisation and egoism, Nietzsche did conceive of one decree: the decree of fate. Man's ultimate condition was brought about by circumstances and events drawn out along the thread of man's destiny by Atropos. The greatness of the higher man, Nietzsche asserted, lay in his capacity to love this destiny no matter how dreadful it became; in such an attitude, Nietzsche seemed to believe, the vicissitudes of fate could be mastered. This could not involve its control of course, only an heroic strength of character which said 'Do your worst, I will not be bowed'. In Ecce Homo, Nietzsche wrote:

> My formula for greatness in a human being is that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward not in all eternity. Not merely to bear what is necessary still less to conceal it - all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary - but love it'.21

Perhaps of all the ideas, notions and images which accompanied Nietzsche's vision of Übermenschlichkeit, the most controversial was the association of the higher man with the will to power. For the higher man, Nietzsche argued, the bad could be defined as 'A degeneration of instinct, a degeneration of will'.22 The good on the other hand lay in his affirmation of will and instinct or his will to power as Nietzsche collectively entitled

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21. F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo. Why I am so Clever, Section 10. Trans W. Kauffmann. (New York, 1972).

22. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 260.

man's mass of instinctual drives whose end ultimately, was power.

The psychological significance of the Übermensch was that he embodied the sublimated will to power. Nietzsche held that the higher man had to employ rather than extirpate his primal drives if he was to flourish. The seed of this argument can be recognised in the opening paragraph of one of Nietzsche's first essays, Homer's Contest (1871) written twelve years before Thus Spoke Zarathustra:

> 'When one speaks of humanity there lies behind it the idea that humanity is that which separates and distinguishes mankind from nature. But in reality, there is no such separation, the natural qualities and those called specifically human are inextricably bound together. Man in his highest and noblest powers is entirely nature and bears in him nature's uncanny dual character. Those capacities which are dreadful and considered inhuman are, indeed, the most fruitful soil out of which alone all humanity in impulse, act and deed can grow'.23

In the Christian allegory of St George and the Dragon, or of mind and instinct, the dragon is slain to represent the vanquishing of man's animalistic drives by the Christian hero. This Nietzsche regarded as a form of emasculation. In Nietzsche's pagan ideal, the Dragon was to be harnessed and employed, He argued that:

> 'Everything good is something evil of former days made serviceable. Standard: The greater and more dreadful the passions which an act, a people, an individual can permit themselves because they are capable of employing them as a means, the

23. F. Nietzsche, 'Homer's Contest'. Trans M. Mugge, p.57.

higher stands their culture'.24

Occasionally and notoriously, however, Nietzsche identified higher cultures and races with acts of sheer barbarism. Nietzsche wrote in Genealogy of Morals that:

> 'It is impossible not to recognise at this core of the aristocratic races the beast of prey, the magnificent blond beast avidly rampant for spoil and victory. This hidden core needed an outlet from time to time - the Roman, Arabic, German and Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, the Scandinavian Vikings are all alive in this respect. It is the aristocratic races who have left the idea barbarism on all the tracks on which they have marched'.25

If Nietzsche now and then let the beast in man have free rein, more usually he intended that the will to power be sublimated, implying the refinement and cultivation of the instincts in the act of creation. Goya had recognised the association of the libido with artistic creation and described the act of painting as 'raping the canvas'. Nietzsche recognised a similar relationship between the will to power, which included the sexual drive and creative expression. Making reference to the architect he stated that:

> 'Pride, victory over weight and gravity, the will to power, seek to render themselves visible in a building. Architecture is a kind of rhetoric of power, now persuasive, even cajoling in form, now bluntly imperious. The highest feeling of power and security finds expression in that which

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24. F. Nietzsche, 'The Will to Power'. Section 1025, Op. Cit.

25. F. Nietzsche, 'The Genealogy of Morals'. Essay 1, Section 11.

possesses grand style'.26

The concept of the will to power as art and the Übermensch as artist are particularly cogent on textual and conceptual grounds. Nietzsche's demand for individual insight to be freed from the barriers of the logos, his demand for instinctual renewal and the creative celebration of this renewal may, for example, be seen as having been met by the generation of German Expressionist artists who emerged at the turn of the century, very much in Nietzsche's shadow. In a Wassily Kandinsky or a Franz Marc, perhaps, Nietzsche's own vision of the Übermensch may have been fulfilled. Kauffmann on the other hand has suggested that the higher man was intended only to illustrate an ideal of the total personality, a creative self-perfection. In his 'Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, and Anticrist' (1979), Kauffmann argues that Goethe exemplified the characteristics and traits which Nietzsche would like to have seen in his higher man:

> 'The Übermensch is the Dionysian man who is depicted under the name of Goethe at the end of 'Twilight of the Idols'; he has overcome his animal passions, sublimated his impulses and given style to his character'.27

Somewhat ominously however, Nietzsche also recognised the creator and artist concealed within the personality of

26. F. Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols'. Trans W. Kauffmann and R. Hollingdale. (London, 1978). Section 74.

27. W. Kauffmann, 'Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist. (New York, 1974), p.126.

the great stateman, who used society as his canvas and 'Worked as an artist upon man himself'.28

The association which Nietzsche recognised between the leader and artist was captured for him in a passage by Taine on Napoleon, which he quoted admiringly in an aphorism of 1887:

> 'Suddenly the faculte maitresse unfolds: the artist enclosed in the politician emerges de sa Gaine; He creates dans l'ideal et l'impossible, he is once more recognised for what he is: the posthumous brother of Dante and Michelangelo and in truth, in view of the firm contours of his vision, the intensity, coherence and inner logic of his dreams, the profundity of his meditation, the superhuman grandeur of his conception, he is like them and leur egal: Son genie la même taille et la même structure.29

Nietzsche argued that Socialism and Liberalism were contriving to produce an epoch in which such statesmen would never be given a chance to emerge, an epoch of mediocrity, of the Last Men who cared only for the comfort and happiness of the majority. Zarathustra observed this situation 'No shepherd and one herd. Everyone wanteth the same, everyone is "equal". He who hath other sentiments goeth willingly into the madhouse'.30

He noticed with relish, however, that such plans could be frustrated and argued that the prospects for a

28. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Section 960.

29. Ibid., Section 1018.

30. F. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra. Prologue, Section 5.

new generation of Caesars could paradoxically be enhanced by certain consequences of modern industrial capitalism:

> 'The very same conditions that will on the average lead to the leveling and democratisation of men into a useful, industrious, handy, multi-purpose herd animal, are likely in the highest degree to give birth to exceptional human beings of the most dangerous and destructive quality ... I meant to say, the democratisation of Europe is at the same time an involuntary arrangement for the cultivation of tyrants'.31

Nietzsche reasoned that the danger of total submergence into the undifferentiated mass of modern democratic culture would compel the aristocratic man to become stronger, more resourceful and more cunning in his efforts to rise above it. He seemed to see modern society acting as an inadvertent forcing-house for exceptional individuals who, upon breaking clear of the crowd, would find an obedient and compliant race of plebian men, ready to be commanded being 'in as much need of a Master as of their daily bread'.32

Here Nietzsche abandoned the aristocratic principle for the monarchic principle - the belief in one man who was utterly superior to all others. His word was law and Nietzsche allowed him mendacity, cruelty and exploitation in the pursuit of his goals. The latter, he argued, was 'A consequence of the will to power, which is after all, the will to life'.33

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31. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 242.

32. Ibid., Section 242.

33. Ibid., Section 259.

The ruled, Nietzsche argued, were purely a means to the tyrants end:

> 'To remain objective, hard, firm, severe in carrying through an idea - artists succeed best in this; but when one needs men for this, then the repose and coldness and hardness soon vanish. With nature like Caesar and Napoleon one gets some notion of "disinterested" work on their marble, whatever the cost in men. On this road lies the future of the highest man'.34

It is scarcely surprising, then, that in one of the most influential appraisals of Nietzsche's work, J.P. Stern has associated Nietzsche's concept of the higher man with the Führer prinzip in Nazi Germany. According to Stern 'No man came closer to the full realisation of self-created values than a Hitler';35 and 'if there is anything in the recent Nietzschean era that comes close to an embodiment of the will to power it is Hitler's life and political career'.36

The total submission of the masses before the ruler was as Stern saw, a key argument in Nietzsche's ideology of power. Whilst never addressing the question of political authority per se, it seemed that the right to govern was based upon the people's recognition of the heroic will of the exceptional individual. 'Whoever can command, finds those who must obey'.37

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34. F. Nietzsche, 'The Will to Power'. Section 975.

35. J.P. Stern, 'Nietzsche'. (London, 1978) pp.85-6.

36. Ibid., p.120.

37. F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Section 249.

Yet he also believed that the hero might be justified in forcing himself upon the people, or insinuating himself upon them through guile and cunning in the manner of a Stalin, should the people fail to recognise his greatness. Carlyle, whose emotional hero-worship Nietzsche often followed, had argued similarly.38 Nietzsche's hero was not to be tied down to any association with the State and even less to any sentimental identification with his nation. On the State, Nietzsche wrote like an anarchist. Zarathustra said 'A state is the coldest of all cold monsters .... A state lieth in all languages of good and evil; and whatever it sayeth, it lieth and whatever it hath it hath stolen'.39

He dismissed all nationalism as a nonsensical prejudice which was particularly inexcusable in the Germans, whose nation and race Nietzsche generally despised. He made no attempt to transpose the concept of the will to power to an international level, and if he made frequent perorations on the subject of eugenics and a new master-race, as a good European he insisted that the progeny be of mixed European stock; the discourses on the subject were nonetheless menacing and their apocalyptic and hysterical tone was redolent of numerous

38. B.H. Lehman, Carlyle's Theory of the Hero: Its Sources, Development and Influence on Carlyle's Work'. (Durham WC, 1928), p.128.

39. F. Nietzsche, 'Thus Spake Zarathustra'. Part 1, Section 11.

infamous statements made two generations later in the name of a purely German concept of the master race:

> 'The possibility has been established for the production of international radical unions, whose task will be to rear a master race (Herren-Rasse), the future masters of the earth - a new tremendous aristocracy based on the severest self-legislation in which the will of philosophical men of power and artist-tyrants will be made to endure for millenia'.40

A reading of Nietzsche which ignores texts which would tend to undermine that reading is, however, impossible and if we, upon reading this passage, would come to the conclusion that Nietzsche's higher man was intended to be a power-monger, legislating values to the masses, a passage elsewhere will make us think again. At one point Christ appears to enter into Nietzsche's description of the Übermensch:

> 'Education in those ruler's virtues that master even benevolence and pity: the great cultivators virtues (forgiving one's enemies is child's play by comparison) the affects of the creator must be elevated - no longer to work on marble, the exceptional situation and power of these beings ... The Roman Caesar with Christ's soul'.41

For Karl Jaspers, this last phrase indicated an attempt to bring together in a higher unity what Nietzsche had hitherto opposed resolutely.42 For Walter Kauffmann, showing the way forward to the perspectical interpretation of Nietzsche's vision of the Übermensch,

40. F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power. Section 960.

41. Ibid., Section 983.

42. K. Jaspers, Nietzsche and Christianity. Trans E.B. Ashton. (Chicago, 1961), p.243.

'the Roman Caesar with Christ's soul was a man capable of both sympathy and hardness, of loving and ruling, not using claws, though having them'.43

No specific personality ideal needs to follow from Nietzsche's characterisation of Übermenschlichkeit although it is clear that Nietzsche developed a number of preferences of his own and widely varying ones at that. The will was to precede the ideal and the higher man was implored to evolve a set of values of his own, to become the 'play actor of his own ideal' avoiding the bad faith of herd values. It was inevitable, however, that the ideals which Nietzsche found worthy of emulation, though without any normative import, would be emulated by others, and they included the barbarian and the tyrant as well as the fantastic notion of the Caesar with the Christ's soul or the creative artist. Moreover his doctrine of self-realisation, personal authenticity and heroic commitment, beyond all moral restraint and inhibition gave us nothing to distinguish between a Caesar and a Stendhal, a Goethe or a Hitler, and we are forced into the admission that the latter was a congruous derivative of Nietzsche's aristocratic radicalism. In a supremely relevant passage which Kauffmann, Danto and others have chosen to ignore, Nietzsche anticipated that:

> 'The most powerful man, the creator, would have to be the most evil, in as much as he carries his

43. W. Kauffmann, 'From Shakespeare to Existentialism'. (Garden City, 1960), p.300.

> ideal against the ideals of other man and remakes them in his own image'.44

We feel sure that if, like Aeneas, Nietzsche had been given the gift of seeing his descendants, he would have recoiled in horror. Yet he was not without responsibility for them and had certainly recognised the dangerous possibilities of personal authenticity and heroic commitment taken to extremes.

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44. F. Nietzsche, Will to Power. Section 1026.

Chapter 7

The Occidental Self

Like Nietzsche, Weber was greatly concerned with the state of the individual in the modern age and shared with him a similar concept of the self and the way in which personal ideals could be realised. For both Nietzsche and Weber, true individuality could only be realised by commitment to ideals and convictions which were removed from the sphere of everyday practical considerations so that the individual must set himself apart from everyday necessity. We do find, however, a difference of emphasis in the conception of the outside world against which the individual must affirm his autonomy. Nietzsche presented the view that the lingering influence of Christian ethics, the levelling influences of the masses and new political movements such as Liberalism and Socialism were the main obstructions to self-realisation, although he recognised, too, the ways in which modern technology compromised individual freedom. Weber, however, found the main sources of the problem in the modern bureaucratic State which systematically imposed instrumental action upon the individual, and in the modern capitalist economy and the factory which did likewise, and deadened individual spontaneity and creativity. Weber, moreover, always placed his individual in the context of his society whilst Nietzsche had endeavoured, in the case of

the higher man, to free the individual from social forces and all collective forms of existence.

As we have seen, Nietzsche turned to Ancient Greece in the search for a cultural ideal which could serve to inspire man to overcome the herd morality he found dominating the consciousness of the modern age. In 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' (1904), we find that Weber found a cultural ideal of his own. Equating freedom with a commitment to absolute subjective ideals or values, he regarded somewhat pessimistically the prospects for freedom in his own age and escaped from this contemporary malaise into an age of powerful superficial values of freedom, in many ways an ideal age. In his celebrated 1919 lecture, 'Science as a vocation', Weber had said that in his own time:

> 'Not a summers bloom lies ahead of us, but rather a polar night of icy darkness and hardness'.1

Whilst modern man struggled on in an absurd universe, the Puritan's life was led in the service of God who gave his life meaning. Mommsen has said that:

> 'We cannot go far wrong in assuming that the Puritan, who has developed his intense creativity in the world out of a purely personal sphere of religious feeling, represented for Weber a personal ideal'.2

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1. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" in 'From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology'. H. Gerth and C. Wight Mills (eds.) (London, 1948), p.128.

2. W. Mommsen, Max Weber's Political Sociology and his Philosophy of World History. 'International Social Science Journal', 17, no. 1 (1965), pp.23-45, p.32.

It was in 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', that Weber's examination of the historico-genetic structure of occidental man commenced. Here he discovered a significant influence on the disciplined, methodical intellectualised modern man. This undertaking, as Thomas Mann realised,3 was decisively influenced by Nietzsche. From The Gay Science (1882) to Beyond Good and Evil (1886) and 'The Genealogy of Morals' (1887), Nietzsche examined the religiously motivated psychological drives in man and exhorted others to do likewise. In 'The Genealogy of Morals', Nietzsche had asked: 'what light does linguistics and especially the study of etymology throw on the history of the evaluation of moral concepts?'. Weber directly addressed this question in The Protestant Ethic.4 As we shall see however, Weber's attitude to the Puritan religion was inherently problematic. For if he found in it a personal ideal (an ideal which, incidentally, was not exclusively discovered in Puritanism but in the Judaeo-Christian tradition in a more general sense also), he also found it to have paved the way for a meaningless and soulless modernity.

3. Thomas Mann, Reflections of a non-political Man. Op.Cit., p. 104.

4. The Genealogy of Morals, Book 1, Section 17, Op. Cit. See also Beyond Good and Evil, Sections 'On the Natural History of Morals'; The Gay Science, 'Something for the Laborious', Book 1, Section 7; and Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic, Op. Cit., p.79.

In Weber's sociology, the examination of the social orders and powers which have a formative effect upon man is always only a means by which he can discover the type of individual formed by the social relations. The motivation behind his work corresponds to that of Nietzsche who had addressed the question of the individual's diminution under the influence of Christianity and its succeeding ideas, Liberalism, Socialism and Democracy.

In the 'Gay Science' Nietzsche had exhorted scholars to embark upon the empirical collection of moral-scientific data so that the religiously motivated psychological drives of the individual could be illuminated.

Weber's examination of the Protestant Ethic may be seen as a response to Nietzsche's call, and is related to Weber's most pressing concern: the fate of individuals under the conditions of modernity.

The relation between Protestantism and attitudes to economic activity was well established in the literature of the nineteenth century. Among others who had made a contribution to the understanding of this curious phenomena, Weber refers to Emile de Laveley whose 'Elements of Political Economy' (1899)5 specifically linked attitudes to economic progress with Protestant

5. Emile de Lavely, 'Elements of Political Economy. Trans P. Wilby. (London, 1925).

religious ethical attitudes. Weber, in fact, believed the link to be quite evident: the burden of proof, it seemed to him, rested with those who sought to deny it. His own thesis, he allowed, was by no means original, but it did represent the first and full systematic investigation into the subject.

He began by looking at the works of Benjamin Franklin, the American statesman and author, in particular at 'Necessary hints to those that would be rich' (1736) and 'Advice to a young tradesman' (1748),6 where Weber found evidence of an ethos as distinct from a guide in the business sense. The summum bonum of this ethos was profit, profit as a sort of ethical obligation. This idea was connected with certain themes in the Bible and is evident for example in the advice of Proverbs 22 verse 29: 'See thou a man dilligent in his business? he shall stand before kings'.7 Somehow profit was desirable in terms of the Protestant ethical order. To discover how and why was the task that Weber set himself.

Before continuing along the line of Weber's search, it is necessary to clarify the distinction that Weber makes between modern and traditional capitalism. He recognised that all economic societies trading with money involved capitalist acquisition and of course capitalism

6. Benjamin Franklin, 'Necessary Hints to Those that Would be Rich, (1736), and 'Advice to a Young Tradesman' (1748), (London, 1908).

7. The Holy Bible, Wycliffe Edition.

in the sense of free enterprise was an ancient pursuit. 'Traditional' Capitalism, however, was free of rules, regulations and ethics, Weber argued, and impelled solely by materialist pragmatic initiatives. Modern capitalism, however, involved:

> 'Rational everyday economising, the attainment of a regular income by continuous economic activity devoted to that end'.8

Yet as we shall see this was not actually a materialist pursuit in terms of the ends to which it was directed. Weber, then, had perceived a change in the nature of capitalism, manifest in the rational utilisation of caital in a permanent enterprise and the rationalistic organisation of a free labour force for financial profit. Irregular, unsystematic acts had given way to the purely methodical pursuit of profit, although the extent to which Calvinism marked the turning point is actually somewhat uncertain. Rational capitalism was certainly practised in the Italian City States of 'the Renaissance', for example, and this has led Gabriel Kolko to claim that 'the whole concept of the Ethic is developed in an unreal historical vacuum'.9

Nonetheless, the explanation for the perceived change is sought by Weber in the religious and ethical teachings of Protestantism, and he rejects the Marxist

8. Max Weber, 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism'. Trans T. Parsons. (London, 1930), p.52.

9. G. Kolko, 'A Critique of Max Weber's Philosophy of History', "Ethics" 10, October, 1959, pp. 21-35, p.33.

view of religious ideas as a part of a superstructure determined by an economic base. Unwittingly, perhaps, he does set the work in a class context - that of the nascent bourgeoisie. Whilst recognising the particular mode of thought which led to the ethical foundation of profit making as the child of Protestantism, Weber does allude to other necessary, if not sufficient, historical conditions for the rise of capitalism, noting for instance, the development of rational book-keeping and the separation of business from household. His references to such factors are opaque and halting, however. As for his approach to the study, Weber states:

> 'It is not my aim to substitute for a one-sided materialistic, an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of cultures and history. Each is equally possible, but each, if it does not serve as the preparation, but as the conclusion of an investigation, accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth'.10

Weber thus accepts the perspectival, subjective status of his thesis, but as M. Stuart Hughes argues:

> 'Under the intentionally dry and scientific style of his religious studies, we can catch glimpses of Weber's own spiritual commitment to his subject matter'.11

This allegiance is quite manifest in Weber's rhetorical expressions of pessimism at the end of the work, where he looks ahead to an era devoid of spiritual values. And though, in common with many Protestants of his era, he

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10. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic. Op. Cit.

11. H. Stuart Hughes, The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930. (Brighton, 1979), p.316.

was no longer fixed to the tenets of his religion he also, like them, still felt himself possessed by an intense spiritual longing, a longing destined for manifestation in new areas of cultural life.

Searching for the religious origins of modern capitalism Weber turned to an examination of the German 'Beruf' (the English 'calling') which connotes a life task set by God, a connotation absent among the Catholic peoples, not because of ethnic factors, but because this sense of the word originated in Protestant translations of the Bible. The Lutheran (German) version of Corinthians 8 verse 24 provided an example of this new sense of the word, an example to which the Wycliffe (English) version conforms: 'Brethren, let each man wherein he was called therein abide by God'.12 What this signified was a Protestant rejection of endeavours to reach beyond worldly morality in ascetic contemplation and the counter-assertion that man could abide by God in the fulfilment of his God given assignment, that is his vocation.

Yet this did not produce a conviction that God was to be served and glorified exclusively by the pursuit of one's worldly calling; it was of largely negative significance, affirming that worldly duties were no longer to be subordinate to the other worldly asceticism practised in the great Christian monasteries which

12. The Holy Bible, Wycliffe edition.

symbolised world renunciation. It was in the Institutes of Jean Calvin (1509-1604) that worldly labour assumed a positive ethical value in the search for salvation.13

The necessity of proving one's faith through devotion to worldly labour was consequent upon the Calvinist doctrine of pre-destination, which held that, by God's decree, some men were fore-ordained to eternal damnation, and, more particularly, on the nature of the Calvinist God. Abstract and unknowable, this inscrutable God (Deus Absconditus) was separated from man by an unbridgeable gulf, and this awesome transcendence meant that there were no means of discovering to which of the pre-destined groups one belonged, the Elect or the Damned. Salvation panic ensued and the Calvinists followed God's will by the devotion of energy to rational systematic worldly activity, practising extreme self-denial through unceasing labour, complemented by a rejection of luxury. Worldly success, they believed, could be the sign that one belonged to the Elect, though it was no guarantee.

In contrast to the extravagance of the Feudal age, the Puritan limited his consumption severely, this having the effect, when combined with inceasing labour, of producing large amounts of capital which was all made

13. Jean Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion'. Trans H. Beveridge. (Edinburgh, 1845-46).

ready for economic investment. Richard Baxter in his 'Christian Directory' (1698) wrote that:

> 'It is for action that God maintained us and our activities; work is the moral as well as the practical end of his power... it is action that God is most served and honoured by'.14

The word 'end' here assumes a somewhat ironic nuance. Baxter and the Puritans adopted and adapted the Lutheran and Calvinist concept of the calling in their drive for action; it was a concept that provided them with an ethical justification for the rational division of labour and production. Departing from Luther, pure efficiency now became the sine qua non of the notion and this emphasises the uniquely methodical character of Puritan worldly ascetism. Man worked in his calling in the hope that success was a sign of grace. It became clear that grace was 'the product of an objective power';15 this being so because the world represented the objectified will of God in Calvin's thought.

Here, then, was an age guided by pure subjective values, by a sense of mission and inner duty. In the commitment to absolute values, as we have seen, Weber recognised the highest degree of individual autonomy. The Protestant ethic, however, held within it the seeds of its own destruction, and the age of autonomy was destined

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14. Richard Baxter, Chapters from the Christian Directory'. (London, 1925).

15. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic. Op. Cit., p.101.

to lead into the 'iron cage' of modernity.16 The subjection of the world to rational, systematic calculation ultimately resulted in the refutation of God's existence, a case of the means destroying the end as man moved away from religion to an empiricist, materialistic rationality. Man found that the control he had been able to exercise over his own life was increasingly limited by institutions of his own making, this being the result of an ongoing process of intellectualisation. Economic, political and legal structures now obstructed the way to individual autonomy, The irrational, intuitive core of the individual personality, which had found expression in religious faith, was now left unfulfilled as the ethic extended rationalisation and intellectualisation into all spheres of life, and a thorough ordering of social action occurred which, when its metaphysical basis was destroyed, compounded the spiritual void with external restrictions of freedom.

Under modern capitalism, the individual ethical interpretation of life conduct (Lebensführung) was dangerously threatened. Moreover, because the modern economic order depended upon the foundation of a formally free labour force, human relationships were depersonalised and if the relationship between Master and Slave could be interpreted as having a distinct ethical

16. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic. Op. Cit., p.182.

content, the modern relationship between factory owner and factory worker could not. Looking to the future in a rhetorical flourish redolent of Nietzsche, Weber wondered if:

> 'At the end of this development entirely new prophets will rise or will there be a great rebirth of old ideals an ideas or, if neither, a mechanised petrification embellished with a sort of convulsive self importance: then indeed for the "ultimate beings" of this cultural development it might well be truly said: specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart. This nullity imagines that it has achieved a level of civilisation never before attained'.17

To avert the latter calamity, Weber would develop a set of ideals and ideas of his own in response to modernity. At the end of The Protestant Ethic, Weber comments that the iron cage of modernity has been decreed by 'fate', a peculiar notion that appears elsewhere in his work.18 For as his account of the rise of modern capitalism had indicated, the domination of individuals by the forces of rationality had been precipitated by reason, not by a force inexplicable and beyond human control.

The examination of the argument expounded by Weber in The Protestant Ethic reveals that his concept of history, like that of Nietzsche, was very much centred on the dynamism of the individual. And like Nietzsche he saw history as a construction formed from the values of historical actors imposing their own cultural values upon

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17. Ibid., p.182.

18. Ibid., p.181.

historical phenomena; he did not believe in the existence of any objective cultural values, realising that there was no other foundation for values than the spontaneous decision of individual personalities. And whilst he himself claimed only to offer 'conceptual points of reference',19 in his writings, Wolfgang Mommsen has pointed out that his work 'is predicated on a definite historico-philosophical theory'.20

He rejected supra-individual factors as the elemental forces in world history, whether represented in Hegel's development of the Zeitgeist towards the consciousness of freedom, the dialectic of forces and relations of production in Marx, or the more recent theory of cultural cycles invented by Oswald Spengler. All such concepts failed to acknowledge properly the concept of personality upon which Weber's political sociology was founded and he particularly disliked the deterministic element of Marxist thought in which individuals were wholly conditioned by their economic status or class situation and freedom was limited to the recognition of necessity.

Nietzsche, too, had opposed such philosophies and shared with Weber the view that the individual could rise above the empirical world via his capacity to discern and

19. H. Gerth, and C. Wright-Mills, From Max Weber; Essays in Sociology'. Op. Cit., p.267.

20. W. Mommsen, Max Weber's Political Sociology and his Philosophy of World History'. Op. Cit., p.25.

judge and create values. Accordingly, Weber subscribed to Nietzsche's argument in The Genealogy of Morals that normative ideals were preemptory in nature and derived from personal judgements and decisions. Weber found the individual personality reaching its highest level in the orientation to a set of absolute values, although these values, being purely personal in origin, necessarily stood in opposition to the outside world. It is then that a conflict ensues between the forces of individual creativity and organisation, personalised in the contest between the cultural man (Kulturmensch) and the technical man (Fachmensch) such as the bureaucrat.

An essential ingredient in Weber's historico-philosophical conception, the view that religious convictions had been a principal dynamic in history and social change, had been famously revealed in The Protestant Ethic. His argument was intended to clarify:

> 'The manner and general direction in which, by virtue of these [religious] relationships, the religious movements have influenced the development of a material culture'.21

Calvinist rationalisation facilitated the development of rationalised economic, legal and political orders in the West, orders essential to the success of modern capitalism, and provides the starting point of Weber's theory of institutional development. The outcome of the quest for rationality, stability and ultimately formalism

21. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic. Op. Cit., pp.91-92.

initiated by the Calvinists was the development of a technically superior form of administration in the spheres of the state, the law and the economy; this form of administration is the modern bureaucracy which we shall look at in chapter seven eight. The Puritan ethic also encouraged the development of the rational market economy governed by the impersonal abstract element of money; as Simmel had observed, within such an economy, human relations were objectified and depersonalised and action was governed by the laws of marginal utility. It is to Weber's account of the rational market economy to which we shall now turn.

Chapter 8

The Iron Cage 1: Market Rationality

Weber's work is marked by a great sense of anxiety for the prospects of individual freedom in the modern age. Instrumental rationality (zweckrationalitat) is central to Weber's concept of rationality in the modern world, it is applied to administrative rationality (bureaucracy) and market rationality, the twin pillars of a modern society somewhat lacking in wisdom. Under today's conditions, Weber asserted:

> 'The approximation of reality to the theoretical propositions of economics has been a constantly increasing one; it is an approximation that has implicated the destiny of ever wider layers of humanity'.1

Weber's early work embodied this pessimism. In his studies of labour movements on the Junker estates in East Elbia during the 1890s, Weber's analysis centres upon external economic forces, namely the changes in the European agricultural market. His account depicts individual freedom at the mercy of objective economic pressures.

Rationalisation on the old estates at the end of the nineteenth century precipitated an influx of Polish and Russian migrant farm labourers. They were imported because they were well adapted to seasonal labour, they

1. Max Weber, 'Marginal Utility Theory and the Fundamental Laws of Psychophysics'. Trans L. Schneider, 'Social Science Quarterly', vol 56, no. 1.

tolerated an inferior diet introduced by estate managers to lower costs and they accepted lower wages than their German counterparts. In short, they were more efficient. For their part, the Poles and Russians were attracted to the estates by wages which were high when measured against their own modest standards.

The old patriarchal estates had begun to disintegrate under the pressures of economic rationalisation and the new free labour forces were a consequence of this. And as capitalist entrepreneurs replaced landed nobility, the spirit of community was destroyed; the labourer was effectively a product, and the personal relationship between instman and landlord, upon which the old estates had been founded, was lost. Market forces had decided human destiny on the East Elbian estates.

This materialist interpretation of the terms of modern existence is evident in other early writings: the recognition of economic determinants also informs Weber's analysis of the stock exchange in Germany which, he asserts, works in a hard-headed environment conducive only to the 'relentless and ineluctable struggle for national existence and economic power'.2 The activities of the stockbroker, he maintained, were wholly dictated by market mechanisms, and though the stockbroker

2. Max Weber, The Stock Exchange, in Runciman (ed.) Max Weber: Selections in Translations. (Cambridge, 1978), p.128.

committed himself to an independent value, that of profit-making, it is a second order value according to Weber because it is largely conditioned by objective factors. Weber maintained that in pursuit of such second order values man was not truly free. True freedom, he argued, consisted in the primacy of ideal commitments to a value, regardless of objective conditions. In his discussion of labour movements on the East Elbian estates, Weber does, however, admit certain idealist elements into his argument, which, whilst somewhat exceptional to the general pessimism of his outlook, are distinct. It can happen that:

> 'The rural workforce forsakes positions that are often more favourable, always more secure, in a search for personal emancipation'.3

Rather than being exclusively driven by the prospect of material improvement, then, an irrational search for freedom may also account for the movement of Poles and Russians on to the estates. Whilst the possibility of subjective determinants was conceded Weber found his epoch dominated by materialism, and these subjective elements were rather uneasily juxtaposed to this general view, as exceptions to the rule of his argument; social action was typically guided by economic forces, though a sense of individual freedom may occasionally emerge. Between 1903 and 1906, however, Weber developed a

3. Max Weber, Developmental Tendencies in the Situation of the East Elbian Labourers. Op. Cit., p. 29.

somewhat more sophisticated theory of social action in a series of discussions on the economic historians Roscher and Knies where, rather than interpreting social action as at one stage realistic and at another subjective, Weber states that all action is a compound of the two. Action must account for external conditions:

> 'The indirect influence of social relations, institutions and groups governed by material interests extends into all spheres of culture without exception'.4

Yet the subjective order of values and principles also exert an infuence on human action so that this action entails reference to both spheres. The Protestant Ethic had incorporated this view, for Weber had explicitly stated that modern capitalism may well have resulted from: 'A complex interaction of historical factors'5 as we have seen. It was, however, an age guided by the subjective ideal according to Weber's account and the term interaction is, to an extent, misleading. Of course, Weber did not state that the proportion of ideal and objective determinants would remain stable, and in the history of the modern age the balance had been decisively shifted toward the latter.

The view of social action in Roscher and Knies adumbrates the methodological system that Weber later

4. Max Weber, Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics (1903 1906). G. Oakes, Trans (ed.) (New York, 1975), p.65.

5. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic. Trans T. Parsons. (London, 1930), p.183.

adopts in 'Economy and Society' in which he presents four types of social action: value rational action (wertrational), instrumental action (zweckrational), affectual action (affektuel) based on instincts and emotions, and traditionel action, based on custom or tradition. Each empirical act according to this later schema involves references, in varying degrees, to each analytic element. The schema roughly corresponds to the mixture of ideal and material elements in Roscher and Knies. Weber defined sociology in the following way:

> 'A science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and its effects'.6

This engendered both an idealist concern with subjective meaning as well as a scientific-naturalistic conern with cause and effect. Weber is presupposing here that human motives are open to discovery and are calculable; he believed that it was possible to reveal the concrete motives in any given act and there were two methodological devices which facilitated this understanding: rational evidence and empathic accuracy.

Rational evidence is attained through simple observation of manifest behaviour that corresponds to typical laws. According to Weber:

'Generalisations are both understandable and

6. Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology. Trans G. Roth and C. Wittich. (ed.) (New York, 1968), p.4.

> definite in the highest degree insofar as the typically observed course of action can be understood in terms of the purely rational pursuit of an end'.7

An example of such pursuits would be in the capitalist market for example where a rational series of steps are taken so that a profit may be made; in such forms of action motive can be discovered purely in relation to external conditions. For example, a high sterling value will reduce exports and cause (a) the exporting companies to rationalise and cut production costs or (b) concentrate on the home market. Even here, however, such instrumental behaviour may be affected by ideal value commitments, so that patriotism may lead an individual to invest in a company owned by his compatriots despite the fact that investment in another, foreign, company would yield material profits. Such behaviour is impossible to explain by mere observation.

It is at this point that empathic accuracy is called into play. Now, instead of observation, we must engage ourselves with the psychological motives of the actor and determine the action from within, as it were. And here is revealed the realm of ideal commitments which decide the ultimate end of social action, an example of which we discovered in The Protestant Ethic. As we saw, Weber's methodology of the social sciences involved a somewhat crude fact/value distinction, a distinction he was unable to maintain in his 1904 thesis. He had discovered in the

7. Ibid., p.18.

spiritual transcendence of everyday reality and the pursuit of absolute values not only the creative-originative elements in culture and history but the realm of greatest human freedom. And it was the question of how to reinvest culture with spiritual value and meaning as man advanced into the machine age that became Weber's most ardent concern.

Chapter 9

The Iron Cage 2: The Bureaucratic Machine

The word bureaucracy is of recent origin, stemming from the French 'bureau', the name given to a coarse woolen material, commonly used to make the covers for the desks of French government officials in the eighteenth century. In present usage, it refers to a highly rationalised hierarchical administrative organisation, governed by rules and staffed by professionals. Following Hegel, Max Weber was one of the first to provide a systematic formulation of the characteristics of a bureaucracy in his major last unfinished work 'Economy and Society (Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft)' and as intended his ideal type model has provided the basis for subsequent works in the field.

Weber devoted much of his sociological writing to the theoretical analysis of bureaucracy. His 'ideal-type' bureaucracy incorporated a set of features which Weber regarded as typical of bureaucratic administrative systems. He did not claim that such ideal types represented an exhaustive classification nor an exclusive one, but presented the ideal type as an eistemological contrivance with which social and historical phenomena could be compared and contrasted. In The Protestant Ethic, Weber made the following remarks on the models which came to form the basis of his comparative and configurative analyses:

> 'A few observations on dogma which will seem to the non-theological reader as dull as they will hasty and superficial to the theologican, are indispensable. We can, of course, only proceed by presenting these religious ideas in the artificial simplicity of ideal types as they are seldom found in history'.1

and a significant clause was inserted in the theory in 'Economy and Society':

> 'The idea that the whole of concrete reality can be exhausted in the conceptual scheme about to be developed in as far from my thoughts as anything could be'.2

Given these qualifications, it is difficult to agree with the criticism of Reinhard Bendix who has this to say of Weber's ideal type configurations:

> 'They deliberately simplify and exaggerate the evidence in order to draw sharp boundaries in historical reality, thereby historical analysis is removed from the ambiguities and complexities of the behavioural context and special steps are needed in subsequent analysis of the latter.3

It is true that Weber's ideal-types simplify and exaggerate this evidence; indeed in the extracts quoted, Weber affirms this. It is quite wrong, however, to argue that historical reality is removed from its context. Whilst the model for analysis is removed, research continues in the historical sphere with which the

1. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism. Op. Cit., p.97.

2. Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation. Trans T. Parson and A.M. Henderson. (Oxford, 1958), p.71.

3, R. Bendix, 'Max Weber on Bureaucracy' in 'Comparative Studies in Society and History'. (April 1967), pp. 172-1196, p.186.

historian or sociologist is concerned, using the ideal-type only as a basis for comparative analysis, a theoretical conceptualisation to which his own findings can be juxtaposed; it was nothing more than a point of reference.

Weber's model of bureaucracy was based upon modern administrative structures and in 'Economy and Society', he said of his ideal-type:

> 'Bureaucracy, thus understood is fully developed only in political and ecclesiastic communities of the modern state; and in the private economy, only in the most advanced institutions of modern capitalism.4

The salient features of the Ideal-type Bureaucracy were as follows: a continuous organisation of official functions bound by rules; specified spheres of competence; hierarchical organisation of offices; offices regulated by technical rules and norms; the complete separation of official activity from private life with the establishment of offices as full-time professional posts, with appointment on the basis of technical skill, as evidenced by qualifications.

The propinquity of the model to modern bureaucratic structures was not purely fortuitous. Weber's ideal-types should not be interpreted only as a value-neutral epistemological device but as a means of highlighting particular aspects of history and society which Weber

4. Max Weber, 'Characteristics of Bureaucracy' in Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building. (Chicago, 1968), p.67.

thought to be of 'cultural significance (Kultur-Bedeutung).5 Before proceeding to an examination of the cultural significance of Bureaucracy, it should be pointed out that bureaucratic structures were not a specifically modern phenomenon; in the Ancient Empires of Egypt and Rome and the Ancient and Modern Empires of China, bureaucratic type administration practices evolved which show some similarities with the features of modern bureaucracies as defined by Weber. Weber, however, recognised a new and highly rationalised form of bureaucracy as having emerged in the Modern period.

In 'Economy and Society', Weber traced the historical developments which contributed to the formation of bureaucracies noting that:

> 'Bureaucratic organisation has usually come into power on the basis of a levelling of social differences... and inevitably accompanies mass democracy'.6

This close connection with modern mass democracy and the levelling tendencies of bureaucratic administration derived from what Weber describes as its 'characteristic principle'.

> 'The abstract regularity of the exercise of authority which is the result of the demand for "equality before the law" in the personal and functional sense'.7

5. M. Weber, Economy and Society. Op. Cit., p.19.

6. Ibid., p.983.

7. Ibid., p.983.

When a civil servant issues commands, he does not do so in his own name, but in the name of the law; the authority he claims for his official acts is independent of any personal quality he may possess. The bureaucrat issuing orders and the person to whom the orders are issued are bound by a system of established legal norms which constitute an impersonal order to which all the actors are subject. Both office-holder and private citizen owe obedience to this impersonal legal order only insofar as its rules have been deliberately established by an organisation of which each are members; and in their capacity as members of the organisation both are subject to its laws, before which they are equal. This created obvious problems for the leadership of bureaucratic organisations, whether in the field of law, economics, or particularly, politics.

It is clear, then, that the social pre-condition of the emergence of modern bureaucratic structures was the removal of the social, material or honorific preferences and ranks connected with administrative duties and the inception of the principle of 'equal rights' which then forms the basis for the standardised execution of bureaucratic authority. The rise of the modern state, which paralleled the advance of democracy, also involved a decisive extension of bureaucratic control; the stability and continuous maintenance of State control could only be established by the exclusive appropriation

of territorial jurisdiction, financial resources and military force. This centralised control of resources, necessitated the introduction of a strict legal code to govern those officials acting as agents of the State and in this way, a mass administrative apparatus was established, rationalised, as we have seen, in a number of ways. Exclusive and continuous control over a given territorial area ('The Nation') therein lies the essential function of the State. Of course, the question of efficiency is of great importance here and whilst Weber attributed modern forms of bureaucratic practice with superior powers in this respect, the view that they represent the most efficient type of administrative system, is as Reinhard Bendix noted, only valid on the narrow grounds that it is more efficient than the Feudal-Patrimonial order which preceded it.8 Therefore we should be cautious of establishing a simple causal relationship between modern bureaucracy and efficiency, although Weber typically established such a relationship.

In his 1917 essay 'On Parliament and Government in a reconstructed Germany', Weber describes and laments the rationalisation of political life by what he termed, 'The irresistable advance of Bureaucratisation'.9

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8. R. Bendix and G. Roth, Scholarship and Partisanship Essays on Max Weber. (London, 1976), p.154.

9. M. Weber, Economy and Society, p.1403.

According to Weber, the bureaucratisation of party politics and of the State's administrative machinery, was leading to the elimination of political talent and the weakening of those institutions, particularly the Parliament, which had encouraged political leaders and groomed them. Likewise in the economic sphere, the exercise of genuine entrepreneurship was becoming increasingly difficult owing to rationalisation of businesses. In both cases, Weber observed, the directing mind or moving spirit was being replaced by the bureaucratic official.

In this essay, Weber noted the technical superiority of the professional bureaucrat over the cabinet minister in matters of political administration. He also noted the threat to proper political control posed by secrecy, a measure of which was obviously necessry in certain areas of government, but which could also be used to increase the power of the public official with his civil service mentality, over the minister. Weber described the difference between the official and the leader in the following way:

> 'An official who receives a directive which he considers wrong, can, and is supposed to, object to it. If his superior insists on its execution, it is his duty and even his honour to carry it out as if it corresponded to his innermost conviction and to demonstrate in this fashion that his sense of duty stands above his personal preference.... This is the ethos of "office". A political leader acting in this way would deserve contempt. He will often be compelled to make compromises, that means to sacrifice the less important to the more important. If he does not succeed in demanding of his master,

> be he a monarch or the people "you either give me now the authorisation I want from you or I will resign", he is a miserable "Kleber" (one who sticks to his post) as Bismark called this type - and not a leader. To be above parties - in truth to remain outside the realm of the struggle for power - is the official's role, while this struggle for personal power and the resulting personal responsibility is the lifeblood of the politician as well as of the entrepreneur'.10

Weber often conceived of politics in terms of a Nietzschean will to power and he saw that the increasing rationalisation of society threatened to precipitate uniform control of the bureaucratic spirit to the detriment of leaders with 'Political ambition and the will to power and responsibility'.11 And there was no place for the hero in the modern bureaucratic State, predicated as it was upon an egalitarian conception of legitimacy that did not allow recognition of a source of authority or normative judgement in the exceptional personal qualities of a particular individual.

Yet these political consequences of bureaucratic advances - which Weber described as an 'unambiguous yardstick for the modernisation of the State' - were by no means the only significant consequence of such advances according to Weber.12 He also found the future of the creative individual endangered, seeing that the modern bureaucracy established a relation between legally

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10. Ibid., p.1404.

11. Ibid., p.1459.

12. Ibid., p.1393.

instated authority and officials entrenched in a network of rigidly defined rules and regulations. The perfect bureaucracy would be one in which all individual freedom of action would be denied and the ideal administration would be more fully realised:

> 'The more completely they succeed in eliminating from official business love, hatred and all purely personal, emotional and irrational elements'.13

Throughout his work, Weber saw the individual personality attaining its most sublime level in the rational orientation to an ideal value (Wertrational Orientation). An example of this was the orientation of the Protestant sects to rational economic activity in the service of God and the pursuit of salvation (verlosung). In the pursuit of such ideals, beyond everyday routine action governed by pure calculation of convenience and advantage, Weber believed that the individual personality discovered its true essence and its highest degree of autonomy. Such ideals, however, stood in conflict with the instrumentally rational sphere which was being inexorably extended by modern bureaucratic expansion.

Alongside these conflicting forces, Weber also recognised the agency of charisma, originally a religious term referring to endowment with divine grace. In Weber's elaboration of the term it referred to the extraordinary personality who possessed the power to produce the most

13. Ibid., p.975.

important changes - that taking place in interiore homine:

> 'By charisma is meant a quality of personality which is esteemed as extraordinary in origin... as magically determined, and because of which (its bearer) is considered to be endowed with super-natural or superhuman or at least extraordinary - not given to every man - powers or properties...'.14

The role of charismatic figures as the source of values and norms in the modern age is the theme of the final chapter.

Weber's great fear was that the systematic advance of rationalisation compelled by an all-consuming inner logic would cripple the individual personality and the charismatic forces which stood in its way. Bureaucracy was the chief means by which rationalisation extended in the modern age, the accomplice of discipline and the natural enemy of the personality and all things charismatic:

> 'The rationalisation of political and economic needs is accompanied by an irresistable process of disciplining which increasingly constricts the influence of charisma and individually differentiated action'.15

In noting the contrast to the practice of the Feudal-patrimonial order, in which matters were regulated on the basis of individual privilege and dispensations of favour, Weber delineated a general movement away from all considerations of personal service and personal influence. The former transformation had three main

14. Ibid., p.140.

15. Ibid., p.655.

dimensions: the change from personal service to public office, the separation of office from the household and the adherence to rules rather than regulation by favour. The modern office-holder served no-one, owed loyalty to no-one - his only devotion was to the abstract legal order and to his functional position within it. Yet behind this functional purpose slipped ideology which invented a grand design to establish the cultural values and ideals towards which the official should strive; so that his duties are identified in terms of service to, for example, the National State or Community and the purely functional purpose is, 'ideologically hallowed'.16

In this way, the goals and patterns of the office are related to a broader cultural order so that the bureaucrat (servant) no longer undertakes his work in the service of a Sovereign or master, but in the service of an abstract ideological comment. Of course, this does not mean to say that masters cease to exist, only that the affiliation of office staff to superiors is not a personal one and that the change of leaders does not affect the bureaucratic corps. Ideologies and leaders change but, Weber argued, policies are implemented in the same manner and, like a machine, the bureaucracy works for anyone who possessed control of the power source. Moreover Weber believed that once bureaucratic power had

16. M. Weber, 'The Position of the Official' in Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building, p.69.

been established, it would prove virtually impossible to destroy:

> 'Where the bureaucratisation of administration has been completely carried through, a form of power relation is established that is practically unshatterable'.17

Any attempt to disintegrate the bureaucratic apparatus was in Weber's view, doomed to failure. The practised discipline of bureaucratic officials and the dependence of the modern State upon the efficient and consistent discharge of administrative tasks conspired to make bureaucracy impervious to all forms of resistance. Finally, the security of the system was underwritten by the officials themselves, a large body of men chained to their activity by material considerations and whose interests were served by the continuation of bureaucratic control:

> 'They have a common interest in seeing that the mechanism continues its functions and that the societally exercised authority carries on'.18

Weber's view of modern bureaucracy as a machine had important consequences for his theory of political authority. He observed that the bureaucracy 'Compares with other organisations exactly as does the machine with non mechanical modes of production'.19 It could be used

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17. M. Weber, 'The Permanent Character of the Bureaucratic Machine' in Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building, p.75.

18. Ibid., p.77

19. M. Weber, 'Economy and Society', p.973. Op. Cit.

as a tool in the hands of anyone who knew how to control it. The basic impenetrability of the bureaucratic apparatus was in stark contrast to the ease with which power could be seized by taking over key positions of the top of the administration. Whilst new formations of authority become technically more and more impossible, accession to key positions of the top of the administration - such as Hitler and his lieutenants achieved between 1933 and 1937 meant total control. As Weber noted, revolutions were no longer possible and change came in the form of coups d'etat.

As well as in the political sphere, upon which he mostly concentrated, and the economic sphere, Weber also addressed the advance of the bureaucratic machine into the legal order. His instrumental conception of modern law contrasted with earlier legal orders to which had been ascribed a socio-cultural meaning of some sort or other. He lamented that:

> 'Inevitably, the notion must gain credibility that the law is a rational technical apparatus which is continually transformable in the light of expediential considerations and devoid of all sacredness of content'.20

For Weber the modern legal order represented another shell of bondage. Employing his favourite simile for bureaucratic rationality, Weber described the process of

20. Ibid., p.895.

modern law as being 'as austerely rational as a machine'.21

As we have seen, Weber found the individual personality in the modern age under grave threat as the remorseless laws of marginal utility and bureacratic rationality advanced apace. He mused, 'how can one possibly save any remnants of individualist freedom'22 under such conditions; he wondered also how meaning could be restored to man's life in the new age. In response to these problems, Weber developed his concept of the ethical personality.

21. Ibid., p.1402.

22. Ibid., p.1402.

Chapter 10

The Ethical Personality

Like the Calvinist and Judeao-Christian, Weber's world view rested on the distinction between 'is' and 'ought'. Whatever meaning the world could have would be attributable to a creative act of will that belonged to an entirely different dimension or sphere of reality from the world as it was given to us in experience. For Weber, however, it was not God who gave the world meaning. He no longer believed in God. Instead he argued that this was to be the responsibility of each individual human being acting on his own, without assistance.

In many ways, Weber's concept of the ethical personality was the natural consequence of Calvinist doctrines. Whilst the Calvinist enacted the wishes of the God in this world, seeing himself as an 'active tool of the divine will' and as 'an instrument' serving to 'increase the glory of God'[1] the inscrutability of this God rendered the relationship between them problematic. Increasingly inaccessible to human reason, it became increasingly difficult to accept this God as a guarantor of the meaninglessness and value of human existence and experience; so that the role, if it was to be taken at all, must be taken by man, who, endowed with free will,

1. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism. Op. Cit., p.113 and Economy and Society, p.546. Trans T. Parsons.

possessed the power to legislate new values into existence and by imposing them on the world, to give it a meaning it did not have in its own right.

The proto-existentialist ethic advocated by Weber was a mixture of three different elements: the notion that men have a metaphysical need to live in a world that they can regard as meaningful, the idea that the world has no inherent meaning of its own but must be given one through a form of legislation and that man himself must perform this value-giving act. Although Weber's value theory was irreligious in the sense that it placed the entire responsibility for guaranteeing the meaningfulness of the world on man himself, rather than God, his theory retained a conception of God's role, in the conception of an individual as a person giving the world purpose and meaning through the deliberate enactment of norms.

As we have seen, the Calvinist, whose God was a transcendent personal deity, could not, like the Buddhist achieve self-deification by, as it were, filling himself up with the divine as a vessel becomes filled with wine. The most he could hope for was to become his tool, helping to realise his plan for the world. In contrast to the Asian religions, Weber noted that:

> 'The occidental ideal of active behaviour - be it in a religious sense concerning the beyond, be it inner worldly, centrally fixes upon personality'.2

2. Max Weber, The Religions of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism. Trans H. Gerth and D. Martindale. (Glencoe, Illinois, 1953), pp. 338-9.

The concept of ethical personality lay at the centre of the specifically occidental notion of salvation, that salvation could be attained only through the systematic unification of one's life conduct in accordance with the wishes of God. Unlike the gnostic sage of Hinduism, the individual did not strive to become God, but only to live in accordance with God's plan or His commands, known or assumed, and to live a life which was ethical in the sense that it reflected a committment to God and willingness to follow him. Moreover, unlike the Asiatic conception of gnosis, which demanded a loss of the self and the erasure of individual identity in order to attain salvation from the absurdities of the world, the occidental ethical personality was a search for:

> 'The individual self in contrast to all others, the attempt to take the self by the forelock and pull it out of the mud, forming it into a personality'.3

Occidental man thus became more of an individual, not less, in his search for salvation, as he aimed to create an identity, not, effectively, to destroy one. He aimed to give his self coherence and value by deliberately imposing an order on his own existence. The concept of ethical personality reproduces the Judeao-Christian conception of God as a transcendental Lord of creation at an individual human level. Just as God brought the world into being ex nihilo, imposing order on the chaos, the

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3. Ibid. p.342.

individual did likewise in forming a personality, without which his life was meaningless and in a natural formless state. Of course, the individual finds his raw material already existent in his talents and characteristics; he is, nonetheless, responsible for the order he imposes upon these materials and therefore for the meaning of his own life.

Originally, then, the ethical personality was a specifically religious ideal. Here the life plan of the individual was tied to the divine will and defined in terms of God's own plan for the world. Thus the Puritan worked in his vocation. At this stage the life plan itself was clearly not a sufficient condition for salvation; it was necessary that it be tied to the Divine will as expressed in the Scriptures. By abandoning the requirement to tie the plan to God, the result was the type of existentalist ethic that Weber proposed. He now denied the inherent value of the world but also the existence of God. The commitments which man made were groundless.

We can see that Weber's response to modernity was based upon his concept of personality, which he summed up in the following way:

> 'The freer the action... i.e. the less it has the character of a natural event, the more the concept of personality comes into play. The essence of personality lies in the constancy of its inner relation to certain ultimate values and life meanings which in the course of action turn into purposes and are thus translated into teleolog-

ically rational action'.4

To the extent that individuals become personalities, then, they cease to be mere events in nature - they are consciously guided, meaningful, understandable. Personality distinguishes the human and the natural from the viewpoint of the social scientist and also from the aspect of moral philosophy. The moral qualities which distinguish human life from an event in nature (such as dignity, authority and integrity) are inherent in the concept of personality.

If, to become a personality in Weber's sense of the term, the individual must commit himself to certain values and shape his personality according to the choice he makes of ultimate values and meanings, he need not be committed to any particular values. Any value was as good as another. Weber argued that the values to which the individual's life may be orientated, ranged from purely personal values to cultural, moral religious social or political values. Nietzsche had rejected all suprapersonal values, but in the heroic effort necessitated by the requirement to unify systematically the whole of one's existence in relation to an ideal, Weber's concept of personality comes strikingly close to Nietzsche's aristocratic ideal:

> 'All systems of ethics, no matter what their substantive content, can be divided into two main groups. There is the heroic ethic, which imposes

4. Max Weber, Roscher and Kneis. Op. Cit., p.87.

> upon men demands of principle to which they are generally not able to do justice except at the high point of their lives, but which serve as signposts, pointing the way for man's endless striving; or there is the ethic of the mean, which is content to accept man's everyday nature as setting a maximum for demands which can be made'.5

Weber's ethic is an aristocratic, heroic ethic. The mass of men are condemned to lead a meaningless merely natural existence. For Weber, as for Nietzsche, few are able to succeed in creating their personalities in completing them and giving genuine meaning to their lives. As Kauffmann wrote of Nietzsche's ideal of the total personality:

> 'Such a dignity is not gegeben but aufgeben, not a fact, but a goal that few approach. To raise ourselves out of the senseless flux, we must cease being merely human, all too human we must be hard against ourselves and overcome ourselves. We must become creators instead of remaining mere creatures'.6

For Weber, as for Nietzsche, not all could make the transformation from a life governed by the chaos of given nature to one ordered by coherent values and meaning.

Weber noted that there was no rational way of deciding among a plurality of value commitments open to man, so that every supposedly rational life was founded on irrational presuppositions and choices, in the same way as the great rational and methodical religions such

5. W. G. Runciman, Max Weber: Selections in Translation. (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 385-6.

6. W. Kauffmann, 'Nietzsche' in Encyclopaedia of the Socila Sciences. (New York, 1967), p.512.

as Calvinism had rested on irrationally held values. Weber shared the view of the existentalists that the most fundamental choices were non-rational. Man makes himself through these choices, existence preceding essence. Weber said:

> 'Life as a whole, if it is not to be permitted to run on as an event in nature but is instead to be consciously guided, is a series of ultimate decisions through which the soul ... chooses its own fate i.e. the meaning of its activity and existence'.7

He rejected any given moral truth and rejected Kant's idea that autonomy sprung from the rule making of the rational will, a will that can adopt as its own ruling principles only maxims that could be individualised. Universality was a necessary and sufficient condition of the rationality and rightness of a moral principle. For Weber, however, and the existentalists, autonomy consisted not in the formulation of laws which could be universalised, but in the value-creating activity of a will unconstrained by any criteria other than consistency. As Weber said, personality was constituted by, 'The constancy of its inner relation to certain ultimate values and life meanings'.8 And whilst upholding the view that ethical legislation depended on criterionless choice, and not advising man what or how to

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7. E. Shils and A. Finch, Max Weber: The Methodology of the Social Sciences. (New York, 1949), p.18.

8. M. Weber, Rowscher and Kneis. Op. Cit., p.192.

choose, he does not affirm that the individual capable of acting so must chose and adhere to an ultimate value.

Weber perceived the threat to the autonomous personality in the modern age as coming from three directions. Firstly, scientific disenchantment of the world and its relation to a structure of causal relationships made it increasingly difficult for man to derive any meaning of life from any generally accepted notion of the world in which he lived. Science itself was unable to yield any value commitments. As Weber saw, objective scientific knowledge was radically distinct from the metaphysical knowledge embodied in subjective value-orientations: science provided no Weltanschauung. 'We cannot learn the meaning of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect'.9

Nietzsche too had recognised the dilemma precipitated by the hegemony of science. Technically exploitable knowledge was useful but could never produce normative values:

> 'Science explains the course of nature but can never give man commands. Inclination, love, pleasure, pain, exaltation exhaustion - science knows nothing of all this. What man lives and experiences he must interpret and thus evaluate, on some sort of basis'.10

9. Quoted in E. Shils and A. Finch, Max Weber: The Methodology of the Social Sciences. Op. Cit., p.57.

10. Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interest. (London, 1978). Trans J. Schapiro, p.292.

Secondly, as Levine has pointed out, rationalisation of modern economic and political order endangered human identity.11 Weber observed that:

> 'The private enterprise system transforms into objects of labour market transaction even those personal and authoritarian - hierarchical relations which actually exist in the capitalist enterprise. While the authoritarian relationships are thus drained of all normal sentimental content, authoritarian constraint not only continues, but, at least under certain circumstances, even increases. The more comprehensive the realm of structures whose existence depends in a specific way on discipline, that of capitalist commercial establishments - the more relentlessly can authoritarian constraint be exercised within them and the smaller will be the circle of those in whose hands the power to use this type of constraint is concentrated and who also hold the power to have such authority guaranteed to them by the social order'.12

And thirdly, the more closely bureaucratic organisation resembled a technically efficient machine, the greater the threat to individual dignity, integrity and freedom. The individual official, Weber saw, was reduced to a 'Small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentialy fixed route of march'. 13 Bureaucracy also involved an ethic of adjustment (Anpassung), of 'adaption to the possible' which compromised the value-orientated striving that Weber argued was central to the formation of an autonomous personality. Under such influences, Weber wondered, 'How

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11. D.N. Levine, 'Rationality and Freedom: Weber and Beyond. Sociological Inquiry, vol 51, pp. 5-25.

12. Max Weber, Economy and Society. Op. Cit. p.731.

13. Ibid., p.988.

one can, possibly save any remnants of individualist freedom'.14 Generally, Weber found that zweckrational action had become increasingly salient in modern society, appearing in its purest form in economic exchange, though in every sphere of life the possibilities of action extended as the domain of prospective actions open to such calculation widened. In a sense, of course, the zweckrational actor was free to a great extent. He was committed to no ultimate values, not carried away by emotions and observed no customs or habits. Yet for Weber he was free only in a negative sense. Genuine freedom was attained only by the wertrational actor who derived his ends only from his value commitments, unlike the zweckrational actor who followed his 'given subjective wants' determined by raw nature, rather than a cultivated personality.15

In 'Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions' (1915), Weber also recognised the value of the decisions to escape an increasingly intellectualised and rationalised world in the spheres of eros and art, which Weber saw as worthy alternatives to the deadening effects of modern rationalist culture. The more these values were consciously elevated to the level of absolute values and the more they were conceived as harbouring the essence of life (realistenlebenskern) the more aesthetic

14. Ibid., p.1402.

15. Ibid., p.26.

and erotic enjoyment took on the form of 'inner worldly mystically salvation' from practical routine.16 Yet elsewhere Weber found that such attempts to escape intellectualisation and rationalisation were fraught with danger. The conscious cultivation of aesthetic and erotic values became itself a form of intellectual rationalisation:

> 'The spheres of the irrational, the only spheres that intellectualism has not yet touched are now raised into consciousness and put under its lense. This modern intellectualist form of romantic irrationalism ... may well bring about the opposite of its intended goal'.17

Notwithstanding this danger, Weber, like Simmel, recognised in particular the role of the artist as creator of the meaning in a meaningless universe and the value of art as a means of salvation from the advancing forces of rationality.

Whilst acknowledging the dignity of world rejection, Weber tended to favour instead an 'ethic of responsibility'. Here the individual accepts the modern rationalised world as the arena in which he must enact his struggle to become a personality. Effectively this involved an integration of zweckrationalität and wertrationalität, a commitment to ultimate values with a detached analysis of the means of pursuing them. In the figure of the Statesman, to whom Weber specifically

16. J.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. (Oxford, 1958), p.340.

17. Ibid., p.143.

applied this ethic, it involved balancing devotion to a cause and 'The ability to let realities work upon him with inner concentration and calmness'.18 Like the Puritan ascetic, the man pursuing an ethic of responsibility affirms the ethical significance of action 'within the institutions of the world but in opposition to them'.19 The concept of the ethical personality, then, is one response to the quasi-religious problem of how man can redeem himself from the meaninglessness of modern existence. Weber had also recognised the value of the erotic and artistic spheres in this direction. In the final chapter we shall see how he also derived new value-orientations from charismatic figures in the modern age.

18. Ibid., p.115.

19. M. Weber, Economy and Society. Op. Cit., p.542.

Chapter 11

'The Hero as Leader' - Weber's Theory of Charismatic Authority

In 1918, amidst the ruins of the Second Reich, Weber delivered his celebrated lecture 'Politics as a Vocation' to the students of Heidelberg University, his last significant political statement before his death two years later in 1920. He began his address by outlining his theory of legitimate authority, according to which there were three justifications for political authority, these being the justification by tradition or habitual orientation, by virtue of a legal statute and functional competence based upon rationally created roles and, lastly, by virtue of:

> 'The extraordinary and personal gift of grace (Charisma) the absolutely personal devotion to and personal confidence in revelation, heroism and other qualities of individual leadership'.1

The latter was the type of authority in which Weber expressed his interest and this was the type of authority which he advocated for Germany in 1918. The concept of charisma was originally derived from the Biblical reference in Corinthians, 12: 8-11 where the forms in which the gifts of divine grace appear are described:

> 'For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the gift of hearing by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of

1. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. (New York, 1958), p.314.

> spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues, but in all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit; dividing to everyman severally as he will'.2

What had been a purely theological concept, however, was re-elaborated by Weber in his sociology of religion, particularly 'Ancient Judaism', in which he defined not only the Prophetic Charisma of the Judean religious leaders but, for example, the war charisma of the Nordic Beserker.3 In Politics as a Vocation Weber noted that:

> 'Devotion to the charisma of the prophet, or the leader in war, to the great demagogues in the ecclesia or in parliament means that the leader is personally regarded as the innerly called leader of men. Men do not obey him by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him'.4

In his later work, then, Weber assigned charisma to self-appointed leaders, typically styled as 'Heroes', whose gift of grace lay in their extraordinary personality and the faith of their fanatical following. Yet their line of descent was quite clear: they were directly related to the Judaic Prophet or the Nordic Beserker a phenomenon rooted in irrationality, emotionality and mysticism. No longer confined to the theological sphere, Weber's concept of charisma now extended to political leaders such as Napoleon, the man

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2. The Holy Bible. Wycliffe Edition.

3. Max Weber, Ancient Judaism. Trans H. Gerth and D. Martindale. (new York, 1952), p.128.

4. From Max Weber:Essays in Sociology. Op. Cit., p.79.

of destiny, or to cultural leaders like his contemporary and friend Stefan George.

Like de Lagarde or Nietzsche, Weber possessed a highly developed consciousness of the heroic, one which was galvanised by the levelling threats of mass democracy. Wolfgang Mommsen has pointed out that Weber's charismatic heroes:

> 'Had much in common with Nietzsche's great individuals who establish new values for themselves and for their followers in an heroic attempt to elevate mankind to a higher level'.5

We can also relate Weber's charismatology to the work of Thomas Carlyle, a task recently undertaken by Rosenberg.6 Somewhat like Carlyle the extraordinariness (ausseralltaglichkeit) that Weber imputed to his charismatic hero lay in a special quality or personality that lifted him above and beyond everyday routine action dictated by considerations of convenience, expedience or advantage or by the demands of the immediate situation. According to Weber he sought to transcent the structure of routine action with new ideal values generated by his special contact with the vital and ultimate powers which guided and determined the meaning and direction of human life. For Weber, as for Carlyle in 'Heroes and Hero Worship' (1841), 'The hero is he who lives in the inward sphere of things, in the true divine or eternal ... his

5. W. Mommsen, The Age of Bureaucracy. Op. Cit., p.88.

6. H. Rosenberg, The Seventh Hero. (London, 1986).

life is a piece of the everlasting heart of nature herself'.7

For Carlyle, this sphere was usually the realm of God. Certainly, his heroes all carried within them a vision, such as Napoleon's ideal of a new Europe, or Shakespeare's perception of a universal natural order. What was to constitute the inward sphere of things for Weber's Hero was left somewhat vague. Shortly after his death, the destiny of the German nation and race became the ultimate and vital power with which Hitler seemed magically connected as he pursued his vision of a thousand year Reich; having stepped into the role that de Lagarde had cast for his own Charismatic Leader and acting, too, within Weber's frame of reference in many respects as we shall see.

Weber conceived of representative mass democracy in modern industrial society as an instrument for redressing the lack of charismatic activity in an increasingly rationalised world. Against the prospect of what he termed a leaderless democracy the function of professional politicians without a charismatic calling, he hoped for the establishment of a Führerdemokratie where strong-willed charimatic leaders could emerge legitimated by a plebiscite. For Weber, then, democracy was solely a means to bring forth such figures, not an

7. Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes and Hero Worship. (London 1846), p.141.

end in itself. His excessively ruler-centred notion of legitimacy bears comparison with Hitler's Volksbefragung which entailed consultation of a subject population but which concentrated executive power at the apex of the political hierarchy and allowed the ruler to accept or reject the advice of the masses. Cavalli has noted that Weber's theory of Plebiscitarian Dictatorship:

> 'Could vary from de facto dominance as in the example of Pericles, to tyranical forms of personal power as in the case of Hitler and the total distortion of democratic institutions and procedures'.8

In 1917 Weber had, indeed, stated that 'The vital interests of the nation stand, of course, above democracy and parliamentarianism'.9

As Momsen argues, however, Weber's leader-centred notion of legitimacy was understandable only in the light of the threat he recognised at the time as the greatest to the spirit of the German nation: bureaucratic rationalisation:

> 'He was haunted by the prospect of a steady growth of the bureaucratic, which was likely to put all individual freedom in more and more jeopardy .... Charismatic leaders had to check the aspirations of the bureaucracy: They had to break up its deadly rule of routine by their unique capacity to set up new goals and to open up new paths in societies hampered by political stagnation and bureaucratic procedure'.10

8. S. Whimster and Scott Lash (eds.), Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity. (London, 1987), p.322.

9. Max Weber, Economy and Society. Trans G. Roth and C. Wittich. (New York, 1969), p.1384.

10. W. Mommsen, The Age of Bureaucracy. Op. Cit., p.93.

According to Weber, 'the directing mind or moving spirit'11 of the charismatic leader was stifled by the mass of bureaucratic officials with their civil service mentality; this development was, he declared 'An unambiguous yardstick for the modernisation of the state'.12

He also noted that 'The bureaucratic organisation came to power on the basis of a levelling of social and economic differences and accompanies mass democracy'.13

The levelling tendencies derived from what Weber described as the charismatic principle of bureaucracy:

> 'The abstract regularity of the exercise of authority, which is a direct result of the demand for "equality" before the law in the personal and in the functional sense'.14

The civil servant did not issue commands or make decisions in his own name but in the name of the law, so that the authority he claimed for his official acts was independent of any personal quality he may himself possess. Both the bureaucrat issuing an order and the person to whom the order is issued were bound by a system of rules that justified the command in question. Both were equals before this law.

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11. Max Weber, Ancient Judaism. Op. Cit., p.93.

12. Max Weber, Economy and Society. Op. Cit., p.1403.

13. Ibid., p.983.

14. Ibid., p.983.

Leadership, however is decisively non-egalitarian and is based upon the individual character of the leader. As Weber argued 'The devotion of (a leader's) disciples, his followers, his personal party friends, is orientated to his person and his qualities'.15

Yet because the modern bureaucracy was predicated upon an egaitarian conception of legitimacy, it did not encourage the recognition as a source of authority of any outstanding individual let alone the extraordinary personal qualities which all charismatic heroism possess and reveals.

Weber saw the charismatic leader as the creative leader and he noted his capacity to produce the most profound form of change - change in interiore homine. 'Charismatic belief revolutionises man from 'within' and shapes material and social conditions in accordance with its revolutionary will'.16 By contrast, the force of rationalisation:

> 'Revolutionises with technical means, in principle as does every economic organisation from "without", it first changes the material and social order and then the people, by changing the conditions of existence and perhaps the opportunities for adaption through a rational determination of means and ends'.17

Whilst rationality advances by replacing traditional norms with technical or legal rules, charisma rejects all

15. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Op. Cit., p.79.

16. Max Weber, Economy and Society. Op. Cit., p.1116.

17. Ibid., p.116.

notions of the sanctity of law, custom and tradition; Weber frequently expressed this idea by quoting the Biblical maxim, now adopted by the Charismatic Leader 'It is written, but I say unto you'.18

The charismatic hero did not merely provide leadership; Weber stationed him at the point where direction, value and order intersect. He noted that the charismatic figure not only feels himself to be an 'innerly called' leader of men, but is also possessed by a sense of mission expressed by Weber in a paraphrase of Luther's statement before the Diet of Worms 'Here I stand, I can do no other'.19

The pseudo-religious character of Weber's leadership theory is here further emphasised, although genuine religious content is now replaced by the appeal of the extraordinary. Weber said that authority was charismatic in so far as it is based upon:

> 'Devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and the normative patterns of order ordained and revealed by him'.20

As Wolfgang Mommsen has remarked, charismatic leadership follows the same pattern of social conduct as Puritanism, in that the group of followers is 'Willing to make the values of the charismatic leader their own and to do

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18. Ibid., p.115.

19. Ibid., p.1521.

20. Ibid., p.215.

everything in their power to reconstruct social reality in accordance with them'.21

Weber's introduction to the concept of charisma may have been seen to uphold his fundamental proposition that only in the value-oriented sphere of action can individuals transcend everyday routine and realise genuine freedom of action. In terms of Weber's theory of social action, the concept of charisma involves a version of value orientated (wertrationall) action; here the rational pursuit of an irrationally held goal, excelling all consideration of instrumental reasoning. Weber admitted that the devotion to and trust in the charismatic leder were 'Inevitably of an emotional nature'.22

The followers of the leader give their allegiance to his personality, not to his policies. One advantage of charismatic rule in this respect was that it solved the problem Cui Bono - whose interest were served by the Leaders' policies. Individual and group interests were replaced by an absolute belief in the powers of the Leader, conditional only upon his continuing possession of charismatic qualities as evidenced by his success and good fortune.

It is important to emphasise that the exceptional and extraordinary powers possessed by the Charismatic

21. W. Mommsen, The Age of Bureaucracy. Op. Cit., p.102.

22. Economy and Society., p.249.

Leader only legitimated his claim to authority if the meaning he ascribed to them was accepted and believed in by the followers. 'It is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma'.23

The followers dedicated themselves to the cause of the leader not out of a sense of passive obedience but in an active response which recognised the cause of the leader as their own. For Weber the concept of Hero-worship engendered not only the election of the hero but of the individual as follower; an election not in the sense of a rationally decided choice but in the sense of a religious revelation entailing the commitment to an active role in the cause or mission embodied by the leader.

The leader's gifts were not rationally intelligible, rather they were specifically irrational in nature. Moreover the leader's authority could not be proscribed or circumscribed by abstract laws and regulations so that it was also 'Specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules'.24

Weber asserted that the limits of the Leader's authority were therefore to be entirely self-determined:

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23. Ibid., p.242.

24. Ibid., p.294.

the leader himself was the source of all law. 'Charisma is self-determined and sets its own limits'.25

The right of the charismatic leader to establish the limits of his own authority through a type of free enactment was predicated upon his possession of unique and extraordinary power which transcended all rules. Presenting the leader as the source of all norms and laws, Weber's theory of charismatic leadership may appear similar to the Decisionism of Carl Schmitt, developed contemporaneously with Weber's theory out of the intellectual legacy of Nietzsche. Both realised the need for a guiding hand. Weber's theory differed from that of Schmitt, however, in that the authority of his Charismatic Leader was regarded as being somehow 'natural'. Schmitt's Decisionist model rested on the decisions of an installed authority and was a self-consciously imposed contrivance.

Weber's intention that the leadership principle should be deployed in the framework of a Parliamentary Democracy seems seriously flawed - the incompatability of charismatic rule with the requisite legal-rationalist elements of parliamentary democracy has been recognised clearly by Adolf Arndt.26 Parliament, in fact, had a dual role in Weber's theory. It provided a training ground in

25. Ibid., p.1112.

26. See 'Max Weber and Sociology Today'. Otto Stammer (ed.). (Oxford, 1971), pp. 127-131.

politics for potential leaders and its committees were charged with the task of keeping the administrative bureaucracy in check. The first role is rendered problematic when one realises that Weber emphasised the natural gifts and innate characteristics and qualities of the charismatic leader, rather than those which he might acquire. As for Carlyle or for de Lagarde or Langbehn, leaders and elites were born and not made. Effective power in Weber's Plebiscitary Democracy was concentrated in the hands of the leader, trusted by the masses; there was no question of his ascendancy over the collective organs of democracy, such as Parliament. Rejecting classical democratic doctrines, Weber's main aim was not to secure the sovereignty of the masses, whom he thought incapable of making reasoned political judgements, but to ensure that charismatic leaders would take their place at the head of the administration. Weber noted that 'The devotion to and trust in the leader are as a rule inevitably of an emotional nature'.27

> And of Plebiscitarian Democracy, he stated: '[It was] a sort of charismatic rule concealed behind a legitimacy. Which is formally derived from the will of the governed and dependent upon it for its existence. In fact the leader rules by virtue of the devotion of his followers and their confidence in him as a person'.28

27. Ibid., p.269.

28. Quoted by W. Mommsen, The Age of Bureaucracy. Op. Cit., p.90.

The leader was elected by plebiscite, which Weber considered to be a specifically charismatic form of appointment, being 'Not an ordinary vote or an election but a profession of faith in the calling of him who demands these acclamations'.29

This whole process as Turner and Factor point out, was nothing more or less than 'A celebration of irrationalism'.30

And it was inevitable that charismatic success should lead to the reduction of parliament and democratic institutions into 'A mere functional machinery in their [the charismatic leader's] hands'.31

One of the most important questions raised by Weber's leadership theory is this: why should those who recognise an extraordinary individual then take the step of acclaiming this man as their natural leader? And secondly, why should the charismatic individual accept the challenge? The process, Weber maintained, began in the extraordinary situation of a political or an economic nature; in this case primarily a political and spiritual crisis, the problem of political leadership in its traditional historic sense and the quasi-religious problem of modern man's redemption by (erlösung) from the

29. Economy and Society, p.1451.

30. Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity. Op. Cit., p.350.

31. Ibid., p.350.

meaninglessness of existence in advanced capitalist society. As for the leader himself, he was driven by a sense of mission, an inner duty. Charismatic leadership represented for Weber a 'calling' in the Calvinist sense.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth, a profound and radical disruption occurred in the lives of the German people. These changes upset traditional cultural expectations tied to vital metaphysical needs and resulted in a pronounced sense of metaphysical and cultural despair. Personal values and social norms were undergoing a rapid transformation in the face of the great changes wrought by modern capitalism - rationalisation, urbanisation, intellectualisation and democratisation. It was Weber's hope that the charismatic leader, as the secular counterpart of the Judaic prophet, would precipitate a new order re-integrating personality and society, passing on to the masses a sense of mission, of direction and a new set of normative values.

As Weber was aware, charismatic phenomena had their roots in irrationality and emotionality, elements aroused in periods of cultural disorder and crisis. The charismatic following were bound to their chief by devotion of a distinctly religious character; Weber, moreover, did not believe that the masses were capable of forming proper political judgements, only those made on the basis of instinct and emotion.

Weber's theory may be seen as paradigmatised by Hitler's rise to power. The latter's career was born in an extraordinary situation, that of a German nation on the verge of social, economic, political and psychological collapse. His ecstatic realisation in the Pasewalk hospital that he had somehow been chosen to lead his nation into a promised land represented the calling of the charismatic leader. Hitler had also a clearly defined 'mission', a chiliastic, messianic vision of the German race and nation in which he appeared as the man of destiny chosen by fate to lead them to glory. There then followed the acknowledgement of his gifts by a people in a state of quasi-religious exaltation, who witnessed and were enraptured by Hitler's astonishing run of successes between 1933 and 1939. During these years Hitler proved his possession of charismatic gifts. The parliament was no match for him. As early as March 23rd 1933, when the German constitution was effectively destroyed by the Enabling Act, Hitler's power was supreme. The Volkische Beobachter reported that it was 'An historic day, the parliamentary system has capitulated to the new Germany. For four years, Hitler will be able to do anything he considers necessary'.32

32. J. Fest, Hitler. Trans R. and C Winston. (London, 1987), p. 410.

The Führer could not exist side by side with parliament under any terms. Hitler became 'The supreme guide'33 of the German people.

Quoting from Goethe's 'Torquato Tasso', Goebels wrote to his Führer 'to you a God has given the tongue with which to express our sufferings. You formulated our agony in words that promise salvation'.34

Hitler appeared as redeemer and a desperate Germany elevated him to the realms of the extraordinary and transcendent, that is, of the divine.

The guilt that German history has retrospectively attached to Weber may however,35 be somewhat palliated by an essential balance in the relationship of hero and follower, suggesting that submission was relevant not only to the latter but the former also. Weber noted that on the one hand the charismatic leader 'Does not derive his right from his followers in the manner of an election'.36 Instead it derives from the spontaneous faith among those to whom he addresses his mission.

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33. F. Neumann, Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944. (New York and Toronto, 1944).

34. Quoted by F. Fest, Hitler. Op. Cit., p.410.

35. See From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Op. Cit., pp. 246-7.

36. Ibid., pp. 246-7.

On the other hand it is true that 'The genuinely charismatic ruler is responsible precisely to those whom he rules'.37

And whilst the leader does not regard his gift as dependent upon the attitude of the masses toward him, Weber asserted 'It is recognition on the part of those subject to his authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma'.38

In the sense that he is 'called', then, the Hero is self-appointed, tending therefore to see his followers as duty bound to acquiesce in his charismatic authority. The followers, however, have no such duty except insofar as they accept the validity of his charisma and acknowledge his path as the true one for them. Yet even in these terms, the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini certainly until 1943 were legitimate in Weberian terms, finding genuine support among the majority of the subject populations.

Whilst stressing the revolutionary dynamic power of charismatic breakthroughs, Weber noted that charisma was incapable of sustaining this power for an extended period. Yet if its influence was not to wane entirely, the charismatic phenomena had to undergo a metamorphosis and on attenuation and formalisation of charismtic

37. Max Weber, Theory of Social and Econoic Organisation. Trans T. Parsons, A. Henderson. (New York, 1947), p.216.

38. S.N. Eisenstadt, Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building. Op. Cit., p.20.

properties and values has to occur. Eisenstadt has expounded the view that:

> 'The test of any great charismatic leader lies not only in his ability to create a single event or a great movement, but also in his ability to leave a continuous impact on an institutional structure'.39

This is inspired by the power drives of the leader: his desire to make his influence lasting and significant, not merely a transitory historical phenomenon. The first problem that arose was that of succession. Typically, the means of assuring charismatic succession was, Weber noted, the designation of an hereditary successor by the original leader, or, failing that, the designation of a member of the charismatic elite; otherwise the leader's office is endowed with the charismatic force (amt charisma). Such were the means by which the charismatic leader's gifts were transferred into everyday orderly institutional reality. Eventually the 'leader' and his kin were replaced by the permanent office or what Weber described as 'The belief in the specific state of grace of a social institution'.40 Thus institutionalised, Weber argued that charismatic movements lost their vitality and dynamic power:

> 'When the tide that lifted a charismatically led group of the everyday life flows back into the channels of workaday routine, at least the pure form of charismatic domination will wane'.41

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39. Economy and Society, p.1130.

40. Economy and Society, p.1121.

Finally, we must recognise a paradox in Weber's perception of institutional structures. On the one hand they are perceived as structural forces in which man enjoys scant freedom and little scope for integrity of action. He accepts, however, in the 'Protestant Work Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism' for example, that these institutions and organisations only emerge through the charismatic activities of exceptional leaders and their movements, even if they no longer embodied their original desires and expectations. The idea of fate once more emerges to confront Weber's vision of creative individualism: the charismatic breakthrough is destined to be attenuated and weakened. Yet in such breakthroughs, so long as they lasted, Weber found a vital source of hope, an alleviation of the pervading sense of despair.

41. Economy and Society, p.1124.

Conclusion

During the fifty years or so of the Second Reich, German society experienced profound change and upheaval. Absence of proof of the existence of God was taken as proof of his absence, as science achieved hegemony over religion and secularism became a mass phenomenon for the first time.

Men began to feel threatened socially and psychologically by the emergence of mass society and egalitarianism and as Arthur Mitzmann observed, rationalisation, from the state administration to private sector administration and the factory floor 'was leading to an unparalleled reification of institutions and values and a corresponding devaluation of the essential features of human personality: grace, dignity, creativity and spontaneity'.1

Nietzsche argued that ascetic man was the great calamity (verhängis) in the development of Western culture, and traced his origins to Socrates and the doctrine of the mind eternal.2 Yet it was Christianity which proved the most powerful and enduring advocate of the ascetic ideal since the waning of classical Greece. Nietzsche made both Socrates and Christian ethics his targets, and, critically, also recognised the association

1. A. Mitzmann, The Iron Cage. (New York, 1984).

2. F. Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals. Op. Cit., Book 3, Section 21.

between the ascetic ideal and science. 'This pair, science and the ascetic ideal, both rest on the same foundation. I have already indicated it, an overestimation of truth'.3

Describing a nemesis of culture, Nietzsche recognised that the new hiatus between scientific and Christian asceticism would have dire consequences:

> 'For when truth enters into a fight with the lies of millenia, we shall have upheavals, a convulsion of earthquakes, a moving of mountains and valleys, the "like of which has never been dreamed of...the concept of politics will have merged entirely with a war of the spirits; all power structures of the old society will have been exploded"'.4

Christianity was also attacked as the basis and prototypical form of all the new political and cultural movements in Germany which expounded egalitarianism and humanism and asserted that the individual should be defined by his role in society. If man was to be saved from the crowd then an attack on Christian ethics was also necessary, for these ethics were the source of the crowd's inspiration.

Like Nietzsche, Weber had endeavoured to ascertain the historico-genetic origins of modern occidental man, beginning with 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in 1905. Here he discovered the consequence of moving asceticism out of monastic cells into everyday

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3 Ibid., Book 3, Section 25.

4. F. Nietzsche, 'Ecce Homo', Op. Cit. 'Why I am a Destiny', Section 1.

life. He saw that the Protestant's 'calling' soon ceased to relate to the highest spiritual or cultural values and became merely an economic compulsion. He pointed to the seemingly inexorable process of intellectualisation and rationalisation as 'the fate of our times',5 sharing Nietzsche's interpretation of modernity as a cultural nemesis.

The work of Nietzsche and Weber, then, is concentrated upon the problem of the modern typus mensch and upon the forces and powers which produced him. Weber accepted Nietzsche's conclusion that the order of values deriving from the Christian God was irrecoverably lost and that modern man unlike his predecessors existed in a spiritual vacuum.

Examining the nature of man's self-estrangement within the rational systems of modernity, Nietzsche and Weber both concluded that a new order of values must somehow be developed to give individuals a raison d'etre; and their work represents 'a last ditch effort to secure a place for unorganised political action',6 in the face of a remorseless reification of the social and political institutions of modernity.

The temptation to look backward for a way out was strong. Nietzsche mused. 'Away from God and gods this will has lured me: What could one create if gods - were

5. M. Weber, The Protestant Ethic. Op. Cit., p. 174.

6. Sheldon Wolin, 'Politics and Vision. (Boston, 1960).

there?'. Though he remained a profoundly religious personality, however, Nietzsche rejected salvation of this nature. 'But my fervent will to create impels me ever again toward man'.7

Weber wondered in The Protestant Ethic 'whether...there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals'.8 Yet he saw in the new age the promise of a new type of freedom. In the prevailing state of anomie, the breakdown of cultural authority opened up new choices. These were the choices upon which Weber, like Nietzsche, decided.

But what of the grounds for choice? Each agreed that, to paraphrase Max Stirner, the individual must found his affairs on nothing. He could then triumph over the emptiness of existence by inventing purposes and projects which in themselves could confer meaning upon his existence. Both figures realised that few men were capable of authenticating their existence in this way, and both allowed for the possibility that purposes invented by an elite of some sort might be appropriated by lesser men, without the courage of their own convictions, as their own. This, of course, was a significant paradox, for an ethical personalism was advocated for the few, with Nietzsche demanding nothing

7. F. Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra. Op. Cit., Book 3, Section 2.

8. M. Weber, The Protestant Ethic, Op. Cit. p.181.

less than a radical revaluation of all values existing hitherto to create an aristocratic-heroic ethic.

Nietzsche's influence upon Weber's ethical personalism and upon his somewhat elitist stance in relation to it have been noted by several critics.9 Weber was not concerned so much with egalitarianism as with individuals who stood over and above the mass. He believed that the individual personality could make its stamp on history; was, indeed, the motivating force in history. Here we must look to Jacob Burckhardt, whose influence upon both Nietzsche and Weber was considerable. Perhaps the most pessimistic of all cultural pessimists, the great Swiss historian could only look miserably upon his Age as one of mass mediocrity. He longed to resurrect the creative cultural elites of former times such as that of the Italian Renaissance of which he waxed approving in his most celebrated work. Mommsen, for one, discovered similar concepts in Weber's critique of modern society.

> 'For there was no room in such a society for his highest ideal: a race of men, free, creative, individualist, choosing on their own initiative the social forms corresponding to their own values in life'.10

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9. See E.B. Portis, Max Weber's Theory of Personality. Sociological Enquiry, vol 48, pp.113-20. W. Mommsen, Max Weber's Political Sociology and his Philosophy of World History, Op. Cit. Wilhelm Hennis, Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction. (London, 1988). Chapter 4.

10. W. Mommsen, Discussion on Max Weber and Power Politics, in Otto Stammer (ed.) 'Max Weber and Sociology Today'. Op. Cit., p.115.

In the discourses of Nietzsche and Weber, we discover the psychological link, recognised by Thomas Mann11 between Calvinism, heroism and ethical personalism. Both Nietzsche and Weber held up past ages of heroism as beacons to modern man, Nietzsche in pre-Socraatic Greece, Weber, following Carlyle, in the great age of Protestantism. The ethical air surrounding Nietzsche is plain, and was plain to his contemporaries. Franz Overbeck described him memorably as a 'Godless Calvin'. Nietzsche spent his entire life in search of a pure individual integrity. The drama of the Übermensch, the drama of self-discipline, self-conquest, self-overcoming was the struggle of the moralist and ascetic to a considerable extent. The search for wholeness, for the holy, was joined by Weber as he developed the concept of the ethical personality and the hero-ethic of the charismatic leader.

The modern age, however, was represented as a slough of decadent pseudo-culture founded on the philistinism of the masses. Weber presented no significant counterpart to Nietzsche's swingeing attack on mass society and social eudaemonism; yet he was pessimistic over the prospects of a society controlled by the crowd and in which individualism and the outstanding figure were denied.

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11. Thomas Mann, Reflections of a non-political man. Op. Cit., p. 104.

Indeed, alongside the many points of comparison there are many points of difference in the work of the two thinkers. Although he read Nietzsche and acknowledged his influence, Weber was reluctant to make direct references to him in his work.

Weber welcomed the development of the national state which was to earn Germans a place in the sun. Yet there was an unresolved tension in his work between his demand for a powerful state and his fears of rationalisation and homogenisation of society which as Nietzsche saw were predicated upon the nationalisation and politicisation of Germany. Nietzsche feared a move from a stateless culture to a cultureless state whilst Weber seemed to believe that the two could be reconciled, that state power and culture renewal would coincide. Nietzsche left this view behind after his early essays on ancient Greece.

He regarded the state as a monster. Nationalism, too, he found unpleasant and he claimed that his racial origin was Polish, his intellectural kinship French.

For Weber the most striking manifestations of modernity were a relentless bureaucratisation, the impersonal organisation of modern secular life, and the formal systems of the modern capitalist market. Nietzsche examined neither and it may accordingly be argued that his diagnosis of the modern malaise was flawed as a

result.12 No analysis of the dilemma, however, could be expected to be all embracing.

The styles of Nietzsche and Weber, too, are at variance. Weber's writing was typically dry and academic, illuminated by an occasional rhetorical flourish, in the Freiburg address of the closing passages of The Protestant Ethic, for example. Nowhere, however did he approach the majesty and richness of Nietzsche's style, and as Jacques Derrida recognised this style was not only an eloquent medium for Nietzsche's thought, it was the message itself.13 Flamboyant and flowing by turns, it leads the reader along many courses; ambiguous, cryptic, and dramatic, laden with metaphor, simile, allegory and symbol, it leaves a considerable interpretative and creative burden upon the reader, who is continually challenged to develop his own view of the proferred text. Not only led a dance, the reader is invited to invent steps of his own.

So, whilst their way of asking questions - with an implicit presumption that man could change and control his social environment - was similar in that it was specifically modern, the style of Weber was that of a social scientist (with all the ironies that this presented); of Nietzsche that of philosopher poet.

12. Mark Warren, Nietzsche and Political Thought. (London, 1989).

13. Jacques Derrida, Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles. (Chicago, 1979).

This brings us to the most fundamental distinction of all. Weber's last great unfinished work Economy and Society, represented an effort to form a coherent theory of social and economic organisation. These were theories to which Nietzsche paid scant regard. For Weber, man was a social animal who had to work and eat and make money. Nietzsche was inconsiderate of man's ineluctable social impulses and of the nature of society which resulted from them. In the more extreme moments of his work he sought to disintegrate man from his socio-economic form.

Throughout his philosophical life, Nietzsche wandered in the margins of chaos, destroying all hitherto held values and enacting his drama of self-conquest, self-discipline and self-overcoming in his endeavour to create a pure individual integrity. This heroic effort ended tragically with 'the intellectual sacrificial death as a heart and brain - rending conclusion'14: 'Insatiable as flame, I burn and consume myself'.15

It was the paradox of modernity itself that heroic commitment and the drive for personal authenticity should consume themselves and lead to nothingness.

14. Thomas Mann, Reflections of a non-political man. Op. Cit., p. 104.

15. F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo. (Poem). The Gay Science, p.67, Op. Cit.

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