

2. CRITICAL REMARKS ON THE THEORIES OF HISTORY OF TOYNBEE AND THE WEBERS

I

If we turn from Hegel and Marx¹ to the outstanding contemporary contributions towards the understanding of the historical process as a whole, we will find that the ongoing secularization of Western thought already mentioned has by no means come to an end with the Marxian "secular theodicy". We shall try to show that the theories of both Max Weber and Alfred Weber have reached a point where all theological and transcendent elements have at last been overcome. Likewise, the socio-historical systems of Pareto, Spengler, and Sorokin², in spite of other shortcomings, are free from theological elements. On the other hand, one of the important recent systems of historical synthesis partly shows such a relapse into a theodicy. Arnold J. Toynbee's *A Study of History*³ constitutes a most ambitious and comprehensive undertaking in the field of history and social theory. There are few elements of thought which the author has not directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, incorporated into his philosophy. Even a casual perusal of the volumes discloses the vitalistic and voluntaristic influences of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson; the individualistic impress of modern Western, particularly English and French, philosophy and sociology; the dialectic and mystic impact coming from the most ancient mythology and theology or from classical German philosophy and poetry. All these influences, however, are overshadowed by the transcendent darkness which the grandiose structure of Christian religious thinking throws over the

1) Cf. the previous essays.

2) Their systems are not dealt with here because they are not quite as important as the theories treated here. Cf. F. Borkenau, Pareto, 1936; Coulborn and DuBois, "Mr. Sorokin's Systems", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 14, 1942, p. 500-521; T. W. Adorno, "Spengler Today", *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, Vol. 9, 1941, pp. 305-325. Among these three, Spengler is still the most important. Yet his significance does not consist so much in his often outrageous construction of the past as in his sometimes ingenious insight into the future. He certainly ranks high as one of the great precursors of what one may hope will develop into a real science of "Futurology".

3) 6 Vols., London 1933 to 1939. The reader of this magazine will be acquainted with Rushton Coulborn's "The Individual and the Growth of Civilizations", *Phylon*, Vol. 1, 1940, pp. 69-89, 136-148, 243-264 and his Toynbee review "A Study of the Destiny of Man", *Ibid.*, pp. 364-367. Cf. also the remarkable review by P. A. Sorokin, "Arnold J. Toynbee's Philosophy of History", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 12, 1940, pp. 374-387. The criticism of Toynbee is put forward here tentatively for two reasons: Firstly, because we do not yet have the complete work before us, no less than three additional volumes will appear later; secondly because my understanding of Toynbee's work is based on a first, necessarily incomplete study of this already stupendous work.