

## Articles by Willi O. Sucher

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### *Renewal of Culture?*

Article by Willi Sucher

Cooperation for the Renewal of Culture - D I A R Y, No. 1, April 1946, by Eleanor C. Merry

If today one tries to think or to speak of a Renewal of Culture, one feels almost shouted down by the demonic laughter of a host of invisible beings around oneself.

Renewal of Culture? What do you want to renew? Do not all the signs that you see around you point to the absolute decline of that culture, or civilization, which you want to renew? Some of those mocking voices even go so far as to say that humanity has been proven a failure and therefore is condemned to destruction. The answer depends very much on the human will.

After the First World War, a modern prophet stood up whose name was Oswald Spengler, and he wrote the well-known *Decline of the West*. He did not speak out of Divine Inspiration like the prophets of the Old Testament; he worked with modern scientific means. With the tools of mathematics, historic analysis and comparison, he constructed the picture of the unavoidable downfall of Western culture.

Have the events not proven that he was right? Has not civilized mankind reached a condition in which it might destroy itself any minute? Responsible statesmen have acknowledged this danger.

Yet, this modern prophet, Oswald Spengler, has failed with regard to one of the fundamental ideas of his theory. He compared the present culture with cultures in olden times. From this method of comparison, he derived his knowledge of the "hour" or "season" in which our present culture lives. In olden times, numerous cultures grew up, flourished, fell into decline and finally perished. But when one such cultural organism perished, another one had already grown up beside it. Thus the thread of humanity was never broken. The Chalice of human culture wandered, as it were, over the surface of the Earth. The process of evolution was horizontal with regard to earthly space. This law is the foundation of Spengler's theory.

However, this law was overrun during the time of the great migrations of nations in the first centuries AD. When those Germanic tribes appeared at the frontiers of the Roman Empire, its civilization was already in the process of decay. Those so-called barbaric tribes infiltrated into the deadly sick and weakened body of the Roman culture. They came as conquerors, who had the impulse toward new culture within them. But after the conquest, they did not move back into those regions from which they had migrated. In earlier times, the young nations had also conquered their old and declining neighbors, but they strictly preserved the centers of their cultural gravity in their home countries. This was done by the Egyptians, the Persians, the Chaldeans and Babylonians.

Thus, when the Germanic tribes mixed with the remnants of Roman civilization, they had broken the old law, and a new culture prepared itself under the surface of the declining Roman civilization. This new culture reaches its culmination in the Age of the Renaissance.

The evolution of humanity had turned away from a horizontal expansion of the new offspring of culture and moved toward vertical penetration. The great migrations that may finally lead to Renewal of Culture, now take place throughout the layers or strata of the social structure of humanity. This does not exclude the point of view that the vertical tendency of cultural evolution started much earlier in history,

The events in our modern time illustrate this change in drastic terms. A deep and justified aversion against all methods of horizontal conquest and oppression sweeps today through humanity. These methods are generally recognized as old and dangerous for the human race and can no longer serve the purpose of cultural rejuvenation.

Moreover, the development of modern civilization has made impossible the existence of any virginal regions of cultural life upon the surface of the Earth. The means of modern intercommunication are so perfected that the destiny of one part of humanity is the destiny of the whole of humanity. No nation or race can exclude itself from the events taking place in another section of humanity.

Therefore, if we were to accent the theory of the *Decline of the West*, we should also have to acknowledge the fact that this disease of Decline could not be localized in the “West”. It would spread to the whole of modern humanity, except perhaps those branches of humanity that do not at all come into question in respect of positive new cultural development. In other words: The Decline of the West would finally mean the Decline of Humanity. And it is of no avail to look for new cultural “shoots” to arise upon the horizontal structure of the Earth.

Then where can we seek the springs of New Culture, if we do not want to surrender to fatalism? We must develop a sense for the dynamics of the vertical line. We must learn to think in terms of cultural strata.

Even though we may be in the midst of the decline, let us be aware that this decline concerns only a certain surface-stratum of humanity, although it may even comprise most of the present human population of the Earth. It is of no use to deny this fact; each one of us experiences it painfully enough in daily life. Those who still do not want to recognize it are either illusionist or liars. With one part of our being we are involved in the processes of decline. But whether a future humanity will celebrate a new dawn of culture depends, nevertheless, on the humanity of the present time. If we are not able to live with one part of our being in the declining civilization, as far as we are forced to do so, and with another part in that stratum of modern humanity, which bears the germs of totally new cultural prospects, then humanity might even drop to the level of a kind of animal.

How long that stratum of creative and rejuvenating forces will be kept latent in the catacombs of civilization, nobody can foretell. To a certain extent, it depends on the number of people who become aware of these facts and act accordingly out of a sense of free responsibility for the future. But this is not the decisive factor. Much more important is that this stratum of humanity, which is enshrined in every human being, should be safeguarded against the corrupting influences of decadence.

The most dangerous of these corrupting attacks take place in the human soul itself. They are directed against all realms of the cultural life, whether in art, science, religion or the social life, and they try to infuse into them the old concepts of culture that bear the smell of dust and decay. How often do we see, for instance, that an artist has the deep longing to create something totally new and inspiring in the realm of beauty? And how often are these attempts smothered by sterile tradition in the most clever disguise?

In all branches of cultural and spiritual life, even in our social and daily life, we need totally new capacities and ideas if a Renewal of Culture is to come. For some time humanity will not be able to abandon entirely the capacities that spring from the intellect and which have created the civilization that is now declining. In as much as we, as single human beings, desire these springs of intellectuality, so long will we be involved in the decline. The manifestations of intellectuality bear the signs of decay.

Where can we find new capacities and ideas for a Renewal of Culture? Only if we go back to the fundamentals of human and earthly existence will we find them. The Earth and the people upon it were born from the cosmos. The universe of the stars is our mother.

The mother cannot rule over her child that has grown up, but she will still be able to give healthy advice, if she finds ears ready to listen to her loving Wisdom.

We must create anew the fundamentals of every detail of our earthly life out of a spiritual understanding of the secrets of the cosmos, because there must be the origin of everything that exists or comes into being on Earth. Intellectuality can only create standpoints. But standpoints are always only fragments of truth. As fragments, they are inclined to atomize the foundations of the single human being as well as the unity of the body social. Unity and healthy universality can only be found by new spiritual means and faculties of cognition, which are able to look up to the inner Being of the whole universe.

A new culture will need such universality as a remedy against the destructive and poisonous influences of a declining civilization. These foundations of New Culture can best be laid at present in the silence of the devoted work of however small groups of people gather for such purpose. They will need each other, to share in carrying the burden of being involved in the inhuman chaos of the great decline of our time; but they will also help each other to find, within the small space still left to individuals, the eternal cosmic fountains of New Spiritual Life.