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Author(s): John Farrenkopf

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# Spengler's "Der Mensch und die Technik": An Embarrassment or a Significant Treatise?

**John Farrenkopf**  
University of Virginia

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The significance to historical philosophy of Oswald Spengler's little book, *Der Mensch und die Technik*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1931 in the twilight of his life, has frequently not been appreciated by scholars writing about him, to say nothing of the general intellectual community. The latter is not surprising when one considers that the work is completely ignored in many discussions of his philosophy of history.<sup>2</sup> The unusual, short treatise deserves a reassessment, which is the purpose of this article, principally for two reasons. Firstly, as we shall see, its scrutiny rewards one with insight into the remarkable transformation of Spengler's "early" historical philosophy as elaborated in his chef d'oeuvre, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*.<sup>3</sup> Scholars in the English-speaking world writing about Spengler's *Gedankenwelt* do not argue the important thesis that he transformed his philosophy of history.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in the German intellectual community, it is not generally known that Spengler profoundly changed his ideas about history. Secondly, notwithstanding Fukuyama's uplifting gospel of the end of history,<sup>5</sup> some of the ideas advanced in the curious treatise are of surprising pertinence in an age of intensifying civilizational crisis. Since Spengler in *Der Mensch und die Technik* holds man's reworking of his natural environment to be perhaps the most important feature of world history, we will restrict ourselves here to a consideration of the capability of his historical philosophy to offer a distinctive perspective for better understanding the deepening global ecological crisis.

Many readers may be tempted to immediately dismiss the claim made above of the lugubrious German thinker's contemporary significance as audacious.<sup>6</sup> In their healthy skepticism they might raise the objection that it is a dubious proposition that Spengler's philosophy of history helps to illumine the crisis of our age, particularly as he died in 1936, several years before such momentous events as the "nuclear revolution" condemned modern civilization

to its uneasy existence on the brink of extinction. Yet, Spengler conceived his philosophy of history as being very much future-oriented. Indeed, Klemens von Klemperer, in noting that Spengler was born in Central Germany, the birthplace of many outstanding German mystics and romantics, insightfully recognized him as being “possibly the greatest mystic of modern Germany.”<sup>7</sup> Spengler, as a quasi-positivistic historical philosopher, in sharp contrast to the German historicist tradition which opposed positivistic approaches to history,<sup>8</sup> aspired to predictive powers.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, at times it sadly seems, as Erich Heller observed, that “the history of the West since 1917 looks like the work of children clumsily filling in with lurid colors a design drawn in outlines by Oswald Spengler.”<sup>10</sup>

*Der Mensch und die Technik* has suffered at the hands of critics who were not favorably disposed to the impressive *Hauptwerk* of this enfant terrible of German historical philosophy. Harry Elmer Barnes, a leading expert on Western historiography, belittled the slim treatise, confidently declaring that the Spengler “bubble” had been burst as a result, in part, by its publication.<sup>11</sup>

But even scholars who think highly of the oft-disparaged thinker frequently do not attach any real importance to *Der Mensch und die Technik*.<sup>12</sup> H. Stuart Hughes, whose excellent study of Spengler is generally regarded in the United States as the standard critical work in English, and John F. Fennelly adopted a highly critical stance towards the unusual book as a contribution to the study of the vast process of prehistorical and civilizational development, while not showing any appreciation of the fundamental changes in Spengler’s philosophy of world history which it helps bring to light. Hughes’s discussion of *Der Mensch und die Technik* is abbreviated, a mere three pages; that of Fennelly is more cursory. For the former, the work essentially amounts to an embarrassment which offers very little that is new to the reader. “The charitable reader might note an occasional new idea; he might detect a more pessimistic tone than in any of Spengler’s other works. But even this was largely a question of emphasis.”<sup>13</sup> However, not only is the overall tone of *Der Mensch und die Technik* far more pessimistic than that of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, as will become apparent in the following comparative analysis of these works, but one can perceive that the vision of world history developed in the book is significantly different from that showcased in Spengler’s *Hauptwerk*.

It was understandably very difficult for Hughes, who desired to produce, as the subtitle of his monograph indicates, a “critical estimate” of Spengler’s thought, to reach firm conclusions about *Der Mensch und die Technik*. He conveys the impression of not being exactly sure where it fits in the Spengler corpus, a predicament with which one can sympathize given the fact that Spengler’s voluminous *Nachlaß* had not been edited for publication at the time, and no biography of him existed. Thus, he states, “Of all Spengler’s works, it is the hardest to classify, and, as an intellectual construction, the least successful.”<sup>14</sup>

Hughes published the first edition of *Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate* in 1952, over a decade before enormous strides were made in Spengler scholarship which permit one today to more confidently assess *Der Mensch und die Technik* as well as the entire period of historical-philosophical endeavor which ensued almost immediately after Spengler had put the finishing touches to the final revised edition of volume one of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* in 1923. Particularly the publication of the authoritative Spengler biography, a large edited volume of his correspondence, and two tomes of material extracted from his *Nachlaß*, enable scholars to better appreciate the significance of *Der Mensch und die Technik*, despite the unfortunate brevity of the work and its conspicuous inadequacies.<sup>15</sup> These invaluable contributions to Spengler scholarship endure as the achievements of Anton Mirko Koktanek,<sup>16</sup> who profited from collaboration with Manfred Schröter, author of the definitive book on the intellectual controversy which exploded in Germany upon the publication of the first volume of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* in 1918.<sup>17</sup>

To be sure, *Der Mensch und die Technik* is marred by a number of major flaws. Yet in an age of suffocating specialization one should welcome bold attempts at synthetic thought, even if they appear to posterity to be at times a bit awkward. The shortcomings of the little book are to be expected from a scholar who was obviously not a professionally trained prehistorian, although one well read in German, English, and French scholarly literature in the field. There are major deficiencies in Spengler's portrayal of prehistorical and early civilizational development in *Der Mensch und die Technik* which we will not gloss over in our analysis. However, this should not lead one to ignore the Olympian vision of history, in an age of potential apocalypse, which this unusual book offers to the receptive reader. Before we examine in some detail the main theses introduced in the slim treatise, we will review relevant biographical information.

*Der Mensch und die Technik* appeared in print seven years after a watershed had occurred in Spengler's life. In 1924 the frustrated, aspiring man of action reaffirmed the comparatively passive vocation of *Privatgelehrter*, suddenly abandoning his failed dreams of a career as an *éminence grise* and political appointee in high position after *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* and *Preußentum und Sozialismus* had thrust him in 1919 into the public limelight of a desperate and defeated Germany. At the same time, 1924 was to mark the commencement of what has been appropriately described as "die zweite Phase des Spenglerschen Denkens."<sup>18</sup> Spengler in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, like Hegel in his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, had dismissed the vast period of prehistory as unimportant to his inquiry.<sup>19</sup> After completing his *Hauptwerk*, Spengler shifted the focus of his study of the process of civilizational development away from the familiar stage of *Kulturen*. Except for rather brief interruptions when his passion for politics reasserted itself, the *Privatgelehrter*

increasingly and ultimately almost exclusively fixed his attention upon new areas of great interest to him; i.e., prehistory and the periods antecedent to the rise of various civilizations.<sup>20</sup> His passionate interest in prehistory derived partly from the fact that he lived in an exciting period when the allied fields of archaeology, prehistory, and ethnology witnessed some of their greatest discoveries.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, his close association with the brilliant and unconventional ethnologist, Leo Frobenius, who had cogently criticized Spengler's superficial treatment of early man in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, acted as a powerful catalyst in motivating him to channel his scholarly energies in new directions.<sup>22</sup>

Spengler, in the twilight years before his untimely death in 1936, pursued two related projects. In the second volume of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* he had declared his intention to produce a tome on fundamental metaphysical questions concerning the human experience of world history.<sup>23</sup> The second project involved the composition of a major work on prehistory and early civilizational history. In his sedulous study of this vast subject Spengler sought to illumine the mysterious origins of the *Kulturen* whose developmental pattern and distinctive characters he had surveyed in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. He entertained the hope that the fruits of his investigation of prehistory and early civilizational history, in combination with his already published *Hauptwerk*, would constitute a bona fide universal history.

Spengler's diligent and largely parallel-running efforts at completing these exceedingly ambitious projects were frustrated by a deterioration in his health. He suffered a mild cerebral hemorrhage in July 1927, which temporarily weakened his memory and broke his spirit.<sup>24</sup> After a vacation in Spain had led to his recovery the following spring, he nonetheless remained plagued by various recurrent health problems until his death eight years later.<sup>25</sup> Spengler was unfortunately never able to finish these undertakings, not only because of his stubborn ailments, but more likely because of the extraordinarily ambitious nature of these twin projects.

Although Spengler failed to produce the major work on prehistory and early civilizational history on which he had expended years of research energy, he seized the opportunity, when it fortuitously presented itself, to expound his views to the public on these subjects, albeit in very compact form. On 13 March 1931, Spengler received an invitation to become a lifelong member of the managing committee of the *Deutsches Museum* in Munich, one of the most prestigious technological museums in the world. He promised to deliver an address entitled *Kultur und Technik* at the museum's annual meeting. To the surprise and perhaps disappointment of many of the prominent guests, who apparently expected a lecture on the modern age and technology, Spengler used the evening as an opportunity to unveil an adumbration of his new historical-philosophical vision.<sup>26</sup> Shortly after giving the lecture, he expanded the text into

a short treatise, publishing it in July 1931 with the title, *Der Mensch und die Technik*.

The historical philosopher addresses one of the most fundamental questions of the twentieth century — the origins, character, and fate of science and technology and their significance for human history. That he remained conscious of this central problem as he immersed himself in the remote temporal recesses of prehistory and early civilization comes indeed as no surprise, if one notes how Spengler was struck by the explosion in technical expertise and cooperative undertakings of early man which had facilitated the emergence of the first early civilizations.<sup>27</sup> The vital question of the ramifications of modern man's mastery of the environment through refined scientific and technological knowledge is explored within the context of a very sketchy, yet nonetheless intriguing portrait of the history of man's development of technics from early prehistory to the present. He also handles at the end of the treatise a second question, one which has become of burning contemporary importance: the prospects of the West for upholding its traditional position of technological and economic preeminence in the modern world.<sup>28</sup> The book, as well as the lecture that served as its core, were extracted from a projected, larger work which remained unfinished, on "der Geschichte des Menschen von seinem Ursprung an," conceived as complementing the survey of advanced civilizations which Spengler had carried out in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*.<sup>29</sup> Conscious of the extraordinary complexity of the subject and the brevity with which it is treated, the treatise is intended to provide "einen vorläufigen Eindruck von dem großen Geheimnis des Menschenschicksals."<sup>30</sup>

Spengler expresses at the very outset, as the above quotation from the preface to *Der Mensch und die Technik* clearly shows, his belief that mankind, irrespective of the discontinuities and variations it has undergone in its civilizational development, ultimately possesses one world-historical destiny. In *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* his position was diametrically the opposite. There he contended that the concept of mankind was endowed only with a zoological and not a historical significance. "Aber die 'Menschheit' hat kein Ziel, keine Idee, keinen Plan, so wenig wie die Gattung der Schmetterlinge oder der Orchideen ein Ziel hat. Die 'Menschheit' ist ein zoologischer Begriff oder ein leeres Wort."<sup>31</sup> For the "early" Spengler, universal history only displayed its meaning in fragmented fashion within the diverse, autonomously developing, *Kulturen*.

The guardians of the German tradition of historicism were increasingly conscious of the danger of the relativization of historical values consequent to the erosion of faith in a historical metaphysics, which had inspired the trailblazing work of Ranke. Nietzsche, in his radical epistemology, advocated perspectivism and denied the existence of absolute truths. Spengler followed in



his footsteps by fashioning a historical philosophy which systematically grounded relativism. Thus, in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* he argued that his philosophy of world history was only valid for denizens of Western civilization.<sup>32</sup> Now, in *Der Mensch und die Technik*, he asserts in bold Hegelian fashion, at the beginning of the treatise, that the process of world history has finally achieved the necessary stage of maturity, which makes possible the comprehension of its essence: “Das 20. Jahrhundert ist endlich reif geworden, um in den letzten Sinn der Tatsachen einzudringen, aus deren Gesamtheit die wirkliche Weltgeschichte besteht.”<sup>33</sup>

Prehistory has as the object of its study the story of humankind during the immense stretch of time before the invention of writing made possible the eventual establishment of a chronological framework enriched by substantial narrative material. This important discipline deals with a period of time which dwarfs that of recorded history. Of the time for which we have an archaeological record, 99.8 percent belongs to the temporal domain of prehistory.<sup>34</sup> Let us briefly evaluate Spengler’s conception of prehistorical development.

Spengler, like his mentor Nietzsche, was deeply interested in biology. The philosopher of world history had a lifelong interest in the subject of human evolution. In autobiographical fragments he records that he read Darwin and his enthusiastic German popularizer, the zoologist Haeckel, during his school days.<sup>35</sup> Koptanek maintains that Spengler was so keenly interested in the works of the two scientists that it induced him to initially resolve to concentrate on mathematics and the natural sciences in his university studies, although his rather unstructured education turned out to be oriented towards philosophy, literature, politics, economics, and history as well.<sup>36</sup> In *Der Mensch und die Technik*, in imitation of Nietzsche, he emphatically voices his opposition to the idea that modern man was the product of an extended process of biological evolution. Spengler disparagingly dismisses Darwinian evolutionary theory as supporting the notion of “eine langsame, phlegmatische Veränderung” which conforms with the “englischen Naturell.” Instead, he champions the mutation theory of de Vries, arguing that profound changes in biological forms transpire suddenly and dramatically.<sup>37</sup> His rejection of the idea of the gradual biological evolution of man and his firmly held view that the pace of human civilizational development accelerates during the course of world history, a position we will presently examine, combine to motivate Spengler to conclude that the human species is only a comparatively recent biological phenomenon.

Seit wann es den Menschen gibt, wissen wir nicht. Die Zahl von Jahren ist auch belanglos, obwohl sie heute noch viel zu hoch angenommen wird. Es handelt sich nicht um Millionen, nicht einmal um mehrere Jahrtausende; immerhin muß eine beträchtliche Zahl von Jahrtausenden verflossen sein.<sup>38</sup>

Since the early 1930s when Spengler composed his slim treatise, a veritable revolution in our knowledge of early man has occurred with the discovery of important paleontological and archaeological sites and the development of several new methods for dating the material they have yielded. One of the main results of this revolution has been to greatly push back the time when early man is envisioned as having emerged in the process of evolution. Spengler's argument that human beings first appeared only relatively recently is today completely discredited.

The idea of a relatively gradual biological evolution of modern man from his primate ancestors is widely accepted by scientists in the 1990s. While Spengler argues that all the basic anatomical features of modern man emerged dramatically and simultaneously,<sup>39</sup> paleontological evidence, particularly the famous Lucy skeleton discovered in the 1970s in Ethiopia, indicates otherwise. According to a biological definition, the evolution of the first *Homo* species about two million years ago signals man's emergence; according to an archaeological one, the first stone tools, decisive early forms of human material culture, attest the presence of man.<sup>40</sup> The oldest collection of stone tools, discovered in 1976 also in Ethiopia, are roughly estimated to be 2.6 million years old.<sup>41</sup> According to the contemporary picture of human prehistorical development, mankind has experienced a very lengthy process of cultural development during 2 million years of the Stone Age.<sup>42</sup>

A further deficiency of Spengler's views on prehistory, with his Nietzschean glorification of individual struggle, is his notion that Paleolithic and Mesolithic man was a lone wolf, an isolated struggler in a cruel world. "Jeder Mensch [lebt] sein eigenes Leben, stellt selbst seine Waffe her, führt allein seine Taktik im täglichen Kampfe durch. Keiner braucht den anderen."<sup>43</sup> He softens slightly the harsh lines of this picture by noting that very small groups of prehistoric men, women, and children did form extremely loose associations he terms "Rudel."<sup>44</sup> Based on the study of contemporary hunters and gathering peoples, archaeologists conclude that in spite of their low population density, prehistoric hunters and gatherers did not spend all their time so far dispersed that they were not able to operate as a society, for social life is vital for survival.<sup>45</sup>

Spengler maintains that the rise of prehistoric civilization, characterized by the transition from hunting and gathering to farming and animal domestication and the development of organized village life, happened suddenly and dramatically. This transition forms in his estimation a second, epochal event in human history comparable to the preceding one of the abrupt biological appearance of human beings. Spengler's position basically conforms to nineteenth-century prehistorical thought, which introduced the idea of a "Neolithic Revolution," graphically expressing the momentous nature of the adoption of agriculture and stock breeding, which has indeed permitted the production of an economic surplus, the material foundation upon which advanced civilization rests. The original nineteenth-century position continues



to enjoy widespread acceptance among archaeologists. However, Spengler's argument that a complex system of oral communication, a cultural achievement necessary in his scheme for enabling hitherto relatively isolated people to engage in coordinated and planned activities, sprung up around 5000 B.C., must be dismissed as being very improbable. While it is true that a complete system of writing did not come into being until about 3100 B.C. in Mesopotamia,<sup>46</sup> it is widely believed by experts that language originated at least 100,000 years ago.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the considerable inadequacies, from the perspective of the contemporary state of knowledge, in his treatment of evolutionary and prehistoric development which we have just discussed, Spengler does go on to advance historically philosophically powerful ideas to which we will now turn our attention. A key thesis in his revised philosophy of history is that the vast process of world history since the onset of the fifth millennium B.C. manifests accelerated civilizational development. This challenging idea still enjoys validity today, although the acceleration in civilizational development prior to the rise of major urban civilizations to which Spengler perceptively called attention actually started around 8000 B.C., three thousand years earlier than he believed.<sup>48</sup>

The idea of progress dominated the intellectual landscape of the West in the nineteenth century in the diverse writings of a historical nature of Ranke, Hegel, Marx, Comte, Macaulay, and Bancroft. Prehistory does not represent for Spengler, an indefatigable opponent of the idea of progress, the stirring prelude to the glorious emergence of rational forms of advanced civilizations, but a mighty, opening movement of arresting pathos in the symphonic tragedy of world history. Expressive of his deepening pessimism about the character and direction of human history is that he far more emphatically identifies world history with tragedy than he did in his *Hauptwerk*. Although Spengler did describe the history of each of the *Kulturen* in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* as being governed by a tragic logic, it was nonetheless ultimately one of awe-inspiring splendor and harmony. The dissonances within world history, the naturalistic, tumultuous process of the rise and fall of civilizations were to be seen *sub specie aeternitatis* as an unending series of historical pageants, forming a sublime, cosmic order. Now he hammers home the message that the entire sweep of human history is profoundly tragic. "Jede hohe Kultur ist eine Tragödie; die Geschichte des Menschen im Ganzen ist tragisch."<sup>49</sup> But history is not merely deeply tragic for this prominent German *Kulturpessimist* of the twentieth century, the heir to Schopenhauer, Burckhardt, and Nietzsche; it is ultimately apocalyptic. Indeed, in this regard, Spengler decisively goes beyond his three predecessors.<sup>50</sup>

The accelerated civilizational development Spengler perceives is the very opposite of a grand, rational process of progress. It is an irrational one

culminating in cataclysm; the successive *Kulturen* manifest the tempo of the “letzten Katastrophen.”<sup>51</sup> Spengler, as he peers through the murky mists of the future, formulates the Copernican thesis, conceptualized years before the fiery dawn of the atomic age at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that human history will soon achieve its tragic climax.

Die Weltgeschichte sieht sehr viel anders aus, als selbst unsere Zeit sich träumen läßt. Die Geschichte des Menschen ist, an der Geschichte der Pflanzen- und Tierwelt auf diesem Planeten gemessen, um von der Lebensdauer der Sternenwelten zu schweigen, kurz ein jäher Aufstieg und Fall von wenigen Jahrtausenden, etwas ganz Belangloses im Schicksal der Erde, aber für uns, die wir da hineingeboren sind, von tragischer Größe und Gewalt.<sup>52</sup>

In notes preserved in his voluminous *Nachlaß*, housed in the Spengler Archive in Munich, Spengler advanced a *Stufenbau* theory in which world history traverses four successive stages, while in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* he had conveniently divided world history into two separate periods — prehistory and the age of *hohe Kulturen*.<sup>53</sup> In the *Nachlaß* he periodicized world history into four distinct stages of human spiritual or psychological existence which sequentially unfold subsequent to the remote dividing line when man first spiritually emancipated himself from the animal kingdom. The final, fourth stage of world history according to this categorization is that of the *Hochkulturen*, the typology of which remains that presented in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. Spengler, who had intermittently dabbled in playwrighting throughout his life, emplots the course of world history in profoundly pessimistic fashion. In *Der Mensch und die Technik*, he assigns the time when he is writing, the 1930s, to the start of the fifth act, the unfolding denouement bringing to a dramatic conclusion the four stages of world history — “Wir stehen heute auf dem Gipfel, dort, wo der fünfte Akt beginnt. Die letzten Entscheidungen fallen. Die Tragödie schließt.”<sup>54</sup> Given that important historical pessimists including Vollgraff, Lasaulx, Gobineau, Burckhardt, and Brooks and Henry Adams treated the problem of the civilizational crisis of the West in the less drastic categories of decline, decadence, sterility, and exhaustion, Spengler is arguably the first historical pessimist of the modern West to conceive of world history in truly apocalyptic terms. Conflict for Spengler, with his quasi-Social Darwinistic orientation, sets the tone not only for political relationships between human communities organized as states, but for man’s relationship with the natural environment as such. He ponders the nature of modern science and technology and the industrial civilization it has made possible from an expanded perspective. He reflects upon these vital phenomena within the larger context of how man has interacted with his fellow beings and his environment

in order to survive and progressively assert himself from prehistoric times to the twentieth century. Thus, he examines technics; i.e., techniques, procedures, and methods practiced by humans in order to accomplish an extraordinary diversity of goals in what Spengler pictures to be a world of self-assertion and struggle. By technics he clearly means much more than modern technology as it has arisen since the industrial revolution in the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Spengler, like Nietzsche, passionately opposed the English utilitarian tradition. He addresses a fundamental question — what is the purpose of Western man's scientific and technological activity? The purpose is not, as is commonly maintained by utilitarians in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of political and social thought, to further the happiness of the greatest number. Instead, it is to satisfy the spiritual longing of Faustian man; i.e., Western man since the Gothic age, to conquer the infinite, to dethrone nature and to elevate himself as a deity above its totally exploited, prostrate form.<sup>56</sup>

The world of nature serves as the “Hintergrund, Objekt und Mittel” of man in the process of civilizational development.<sup>57</sup> Man in the Promethean struggle against nature is distinguished by the ability to create his own technics.<sup>58</sup> The spirit of man is that of an inventive and resourceful upstart, a “Revolutionär” against the world of nature.<sup>59</sup> “Künstlich, widernatürlich ist jedes menschliche Werk vom Anzünden des Feuers bis zu den Leistungen, die wir in hohen Kulturen als eigentlich künstlerische bezeichnen. Der Natur wird das Vorrecht des Schöpfertums entrissen.”<sup>60</sup>

Hegel, like Kant and in contrast to Spengler, considered the struggle of mankind to reshape the natural environment to be a thoroughly rational and rewarding activity.<sup>61</sup> World history is for this *Kulturpessimist* the saga of the tragic and hopeless struggle between the “erfinderisches Raubtier,” which is man, and nature, one that will be waged to its bitter end.<sup>62</sup>

In revolting against nature by developing civilizational forms, man surrenders the rude freedom of his simple prehistoric existence and imprisons himself in the hothouse of culture. “Die Kultur, der Inbegriff künstlicher, persönlicher, selbstgeschaffener Lebensformen, entwickelt sich zu einem Käfig mit engen Gittern für diese unbändige Seele.”<sup>63</sup>

In *Der Mensch und die Technik* Spengler radically changes the concept of historical time he incorporated in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. In the latter work he presented an image of world history as a process which seemed to be virtually eternal, as cultures rose and declined in an apparently endless, grand procession.<sup>64</sup> Thus his original position was not in sharp opposition to that of Schopenhauer, who regarded history as an infinite temporal process, and Nietzsche, whose teaching of the eternal return precluded an end point to history.<sup>65</sup> Now, Spengler envisions historical time as most likely reaching its catastrophic terminus as terrible crises overwhelm the modern world. Moreover, in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* historical change proceeded within each

cultural cycle at its own tempo; antiquity was distinguished by *andante*, the dynamic West by *allegro con brio*.<sup>66</sup> In his attempt to develop a unified vision of world history which integrates within it the various, independent, advanced civilizational traditions, Spengler propounds, as we have seen, the thesis that the entire process of world history flows in an accelerating tempo, clearly observable with the emergence of the first *Kulturen*. Moreover, in contrast to *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, where the diverse *Kulturen* arose with the aimlessness of nature,<sup>67</sup> *Kulturen* “wachsen in einer Folge auf die von Süden nach Norden weist.”<sup>68</sup> For Hegel, the rationality of history increases as the drama of *Weltgeschichte* proceeds from East to West; for Spengler, the irrationalism of world history deepens as the spectacle moves from South to North. The pace at which world history moves forward for Spengler is an accelerating one, assuming tragic dimensions as it rushes towards its climax. Indeed, he employs the arresting metaphor of a natural disaster, an avalanche, to describe this process.<sup>69</sup>

Längstens zwei Jahrtausende später beginnen schon die Hochkulturen in Ägypten und Mesopotamien. Man sieht, das Tempo der Geschichte nimmt tragische Maße an. Vorher spielten Jahrtausende kaum eine Rolle, jetzt wird jedes Jahrhundert wichtig. Der rollende Stein nähert sich in rasenden Sprüngen dem Abgrund.<sup>70</sup>

The struggle between man and nature, which is a central theme of world history, is intensified to an extreme degree in modern West European-American or Faustian civilization. Spengler reiterates in the following passage the thesis introduced in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, that the origins of industrial civilization lay deeply embedded in the spiritual fundament of Occidental culture. In fact, the “religiöser Ursprung” of Western technical thought was manifested in the happy meditations of “frühgotische Mönche,” who in their prayers and fastings wrung God’s secrets from Him.<sup>71</sup>

Man hatte es satt, sich mit dem Dienste von Pflanzen, Tieren und Sklaven zu begnügen, die Natur ihrer Schätze zu berauben — der Metalle, Steine, Hölzer, Faserstoffe, des Wassers in Kanälen und Brunnen —, ihre Widerstände zu besiegen durch Schiffahrt, Straßen, Brücken, Tunnels und Deiche. Sie sollte nicht mehr in ihren Stoffen geplündert, sondern in ihren Kräften selbst ins Joch gespannt werden und Sklavendienste tun, um die Stärke des Menschen zu vervielfachen. Dieser ungeheuerliche Gedanke, so fremd allen andern, ist so alt wie die faustische Kultur. Schon im 10. Jahrhundert treffen wir technische Konstruktionen von einer ganz neuen Art. Schon Roger Bacon und Albertus Magnus haben über Dampfmaschinen, Dampfschiffe und

Flugzeuge nachgedacht. Und viele grübelten in ihren Klosterzellen über die Idee des Perpetuum mobile.<sup>72</sup>

With the dawn of the industrial era the conflict between man and nature escalates into a veritable war.<sup>73</sup> The machine is characterized as “der listigsten aller Waffen gegen die Natur, die überhaupt möglich ist.”<sup>74</sup> The state of war obtaining between man and nature achieves its tragic apex in Western civilization.

Die faustische, westeuropäische Kultur ist vielleicht nicht die letzte, sicherlich aber die gewaltigste, leidenschaftlichste, durch ihren inneren Gegensatz zwischen umfassender Durchgeistigung und tiefster seelischer Zerrissenheit die tragischste von allen. Es ist möglich, daß noch ein matter Nachzügler kommt, etwa irgendwo in der Ebene zwischen Weichsel und Amur und im nächsten Jahrtausend, hier aber ist der Kampf zwischen der Natur und dem Menschen, der sich durch sein historisches Dasein gegen sie aufgelehnt hat, praktisch zu Ende geführt worden.<sup>75</sup>

Rudimentary and fragmentary knowledge of the pernicious ecological effects of industrial civilization dates back at least to the early nineteenth century. Marx, along with Herder, Hegel, and Spengler, one of Germany's foremost speculative philosophers of history, focuses his attention on the inequities, both actual and purported, originating in the domination of man by his fellow man in successive stages of production. Marx demonstrates far less concern with the equally salient modern phenomenon of the highly deleterious byproducts of man's ruthless domination of the natural world. While he extols the rationality of Western science and technology and is thoroughly convinced that man can establish an ecologically sound form of industrial civilization on a global basis through socialist revolution, Spengler talks of man “poisoning” (*vergiften*) the world of nature through modern scientific and technological processes.<sup>76</sup> While world history consists in large measure, for Marx, of the elaboration of increasingly complex techniques for the control of nature and the phenomenal growth of mankind's productive capabilities, it constitutes for Spengler a record of man's tragic and ultimately disastrous effort to gain the upper hand over the natural world.<sup>77</sup>

In *Der Mensch und die Technik* the anathematized, antimodernist thinker, in a moment of historical prescience, virtually anticipates the global ecological crisis which first gained public attention in the 1960s and has become a salient feature of domestic politics not only in Germany but in many countries of today's world, and increasingly a high-priority item on the agenda of international politics. “Alles Organische erliegt der um sich greifenden

Organisation. Eine künstliche Welt durchsetzt und vergiftet die natürliche.”<sup>78</sup> The *Kulturpessimist* grasps the extremely dangerous quality of man’s extraordinarily sophisticated, yet ultimately brutal mastery of the environment.

Die Mechanisierung der Welt ist in ein Stadium gefährlichster Überspannung eingetreten. Das Bild der Erde mit ihren Pflanzen, Tieren und Menschen hat sich verändert. In wenigen Jahrzehnten sind die meisten großen Wälder verschwunden, in Zeitungspapier verwandelt worden und damit Veränderungen des Klimas eingetreten, welche die Landwirtschaft ganzer Bevölkerungen bedrohen; unzählige Tierarten sind wie der Büffel ganz oder fast ganz ausgerottet, ganze Menschenrassen wie die nordamerikanischen Indianer und die Australier beinahe zum Verschwinden gebracht worden.<sup>79</sup>

Nearing the end of this century, one can easily fill in Spengler’s sketch of a global ecological crisis with alarming details. Multifarious critical ecological problems — acid rain, the death of forests in Europe, desertification, the destruction of the Earth’s tropical rain forests, damage to the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, and the dilemmas posed by the safe disposal of toxic chemicals and nuclear wastes, all amply confirm the significance of Spengler’s visionary thesis of the irrational, environmentally destructive qualities of modern industrial civilization.

Placing the prefiguration of ecological catastrophe in *Der Mensch und die Technik* in its intellectual historical context necessitates a cursory review of certain aspects of the opposition to industry and technology in German culture. As the industrial revolution in Germany gathered momentum in the early nineteenth century, the years from 1850 to 1890 came to form an epoch of widespread enthusiasm for technological advancement and faith in progress. The initial alarming signs of ecological disfigurement and cultural disintegration in the face of modernization gradually appeared and after 1890 became the subject of intellectual discourse in Wilhelmine Germany. The debate intensified during the Weimar period, under the hammer blows of military defeat in an appalling conflict, socialist revolution, inflation, and global economic depression.<sup>80</sup>

Prominent German intellectuals either skeptical about or in outright opposition to the process of industrialization did not generally adopt as extreme a position as Spengler voiced in the twilight of his life. Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, perhaps the most radical among his contemporaries during the years from 1850 and 1980 in his critical stance towards modernization, argued that the deleterious effects of the process of industrialization could be partially compensated for through state intervention to preserve wilderness areas.<sup>81</sup> Ernst Rudorff, pioneer of the *Heimatschutzbewegung*, with his aesthetic critique of ecological



destruction, was hopeful that the unspoiled beauty of the romantic German countryside could be maintained through a consequential limitation of tourist excursions by purportedly decadent city-dwellers.<sup>82</sup> The renowned political economist Werner Sombart, despite his insightfulness into the “Dämonie der Technik,” believed that the process of industrialization could be intelligently managed, minimizing its negative consequences.

Die Kraft, die in der kapitalistischen Organisation steckt und die erzeugt wird durch den schrankenlosen Erwerbstrieb, ist eine so ungeheure, daß sie wo sie sich frei betätigt, rings um sich herum Land und Menschen, Kultur und Gesittung, alles einfach kurz und klein schlägt. Man muß deshalb diesem wilden Tiere Zügel anlegen, damit es seine Kraft zwar betätigen, jedoch seine Umgehung nicht durch allerhand Unarten schädlich zu werden vermag.<sup>83</sup>

Yet the achievement of Spengler, with his universal perspective, was to grasp the centrality of the struggle between man and nature in the entirety of world history, and not merely in modern Western civilization, although it is here that it has achieved by far its most intense form. Moreover, inspired by the *amor fati* of Nietzsche, he did not espouse a flight into misty agrarian-romantic utopias or harbor that which may ultimately prove to be an illusion, namely, the notion that the destructive ecological effects of modern productive processes can be reduced to tolerable levels. Spengler attributes to this tremendous, violent transformation of the environment through the course of world history, an apocalyptic character. Tragically, his argument seems more compelling as each succeeding year raises our consciousness of ecological crisis.

The historical philosopher’s adumbration of a global ecological crisis did not induce him to champion a program of stringent conservation or alternative technology measures, which he never contemplated and would have been far ahead of his time anyway. Quite the contrary. In *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* he had expressed a positively futuristic enthusiasm for science and technology.

Ich liebe die Tiefe und Feinheit mathematischer und physikalischer Theorien, denen gegenüber der Ästhetiker und Physiolog ein Stümper ist. Für die prachtvoll klaren, hochintellektuellen Formen eines Schnelldampfers, eines Stahlwerkes, einer Präzisionsmaschine, die Subtilität und Eleganz gewisser chemischer und optischer Verfahren gebe ich den ganzen Stilplunder des heutigen Kunstgewerbes samt Malerei und Architektur hin.<sup>84</sup>

In *Der Mensch und die Technik* Spengler pokes fun at intellectuals like Burckhardt who valued artistic excellence more than technological and scientific

achievement.<sup>85</sup> Spengler, as an advocate of a controversial form of *Realpolitik*, remained true to his heroic, tragic philosophy of life and world history which glorified struggle and antagonism. As he had declared in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, “Der Krieg ist der Schöpfer aller großen Dinge. Alles Bedeutende im Strom des Lebens ist durch Sieg und Niederlage entstanden.”<sup>86</sup> Twentieth-century Western man must faithfully uphold his commitment to the further development of applied science and technology, irrespective of its environmentally destructive features, for it is expressive of his dynamic and transformative civilizational ethos and may enable the West to defend its vital interests longer in the intense, future power struggles in the arena of world politics.

*Der Mensch und die Technik* clearly demonstrates how Spengler underwent an odyssey from the familiar channels of pessimism and optimism which he had mapped out in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* to the uncharted waters of deep pessimism he started to plumb in his twilight years. In *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* there are two Spenglers. One encounters the nostalgic, romantic, agrarian conservative, who, as a lover of cultural refinement and traditional social mores, laments the setting of the sun upon Western *Kultur*. One also meets the resolute modernist and stern *Realpolitiker* who eagerly accepts the decline of Western *Kultur* because it heralds the dawn of an era completely devoted to the heady tasks of *Zivilisation* — of technology, economics, and imperialistic politics. It is a titanic age where the overflowing, Faustian energies of the West are pressed into the service of its final, grand international political form — the *imperium Germanum*. Yet, having experienced the shocking military collapse of imperial Germany and the outbreak of socialist revolution in the fall of 1918, hyperinflation in the twenties and social and political turmoil throughout much of the Weimar period, Spengler sank into a state of profound pessimism about the future of Germany and the West as a whole.<sup>87</sup> While the stirring closing lines of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* sought to inspire its readership to sally forth from the comfort of their *Studierstuben* and accomplish grand civilizational and imperial tasks as dictated by the *Zeitgeist*, Spengler now can only recommend fatalistic fortitude. *Der Mensch und die Technik* ends with a macabre death vision. The peoples of the West are enjoined to persevere with heroic tenacity at their “verlorenen Posten” like the Roman soldier, who, according to Spengler, remained dutifully on guard at a city gate as the eruption at Vesuvius buried him along with the city of Pompeii, because his commanders forgot to grant him permission to leave his post.<sup>88</sup>

*Der Mensch und die Technik* emerges, despite its brevity and considerable shortcomings, as an important work in the Spengler corpus, one which enables the attentive reader to perceive many of the major changes he made in his historical philosophy. Although the work succeeds in only adumbrating the catastrophic nature of what has been called his second

philosophy of history,<sup>89</sup> this becomes clearer when one turns to the *Nachlaß*. To those tempted to reject out of hand his extreme pessimism about the prospects of modern civilization, we will content ourselves with one final observation. Only the future, the father of historical time, and not Spengler's innumerable detractors, is in a position to authoritatively answer the question, if mankind is nearing in apocalyptic fashion, whether through nuclear Armageddon, the synergistic interaction of international economic collapse and the explosive North-South conflict, or the intensification of the global ecological crisis, the much-discussed end of history.

<sup>1</sup>Oswald Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik: Beitrag zu einer Philosophie des Lebens* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1971).

<sup>2</sup>See for example, Bruce Mazlish, "Spengler," in *The Riddle of History: The Great Speculators from Vico to Freud* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) and William Dray, "A Vision of World History: Oswald Spengler and the Life Cycles of Cultures," in *Perspectives on History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

<sup>3</sup>In this regard, *Der Mensch und die Technik* should be ideally read in conjunction with the following pertinent selections in Oswald Spengler, *Reden und Aufsätze*, ed. Hildegard Kornhardt, (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1937), including, "Plan eines neuen Atlas Antiquus," "Altasien," "Das Alter der amerikanischen Kulturen," "Der Streitwagen und seine Bedeutung für den Gang der Weltgeschichte," and "Zur Weltgeschichte des zweiten vorchristlichen Jahrtausends"; as well as with Oswald Spengler, "Achäerfragen," (Second part of "Zur Weltgeschichte des zweiten vorchristlichen Jahrtausends"), ed. Hildegard Kornhardt, *Die Welt als Geschichte* 6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1940) and above all with selected material from the *Nachlaß* edited by Anton Mirko Kocktanek: Oswald Spengler, *Urfragen: Fragmente aus dem Nachlaß*, eds. Anton Mirko Kocktanek and Manfred Schröter (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965) and Oswald Spengler, *Frühzeit der Weltgeschichte: Fragmente aus dem Nachlaß*, eds. Kocktanek and Schröter (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966). For a more detailed discussion of what Gilbert Merlio appropriately refers to as "la deuxième philosophie de l'histoire de Spengler" see the following works on Spengler: John Farrenkopf, "Oswald Spengler's Philosophy of World History and International Politics" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1989); Kocktanek, *Oswald Spengler in seiner Zeit* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968); and Gilbert Merlio, *Oswald Spengler: Témoin de son temps* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1982).

<sup>4</sup>See in this regard R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); Mazlish, "Spengler"; Dray, "Oswald Spengler"; H. Stuart Hughes, *Oswald Spengler: A Critical Estimate* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952); John F. Fennelly, *Twilight of the Evening Lands: Oswald Spengler — A Half Century Later* (New York: The Brookdale Press, 1972); and Klaus P. Fischer, *History and Prophecy: Oswald Spengler and the Decline of the West* (Durham, N.C.: Moore Publishing Co., 1977).

<sup>5</sup>Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3-18.

<sup>6</sup>For a recent discussion of the question of Spengler's actuality from a skeptical perspective, see Detlef Felken, *Oswald Spengler: Konservativer Denker zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1988).

<sup>7</sup>Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism: Its History and Dilemma in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 170.

<sup>8</sup>The antagonistic attitude of German historicism towards positivistic approaches to history was strikingly demonstrated in the *Methodenstreit* revolving around Lamprecht's innovative work. See Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, rev. ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

<sup>9</sup>Thus, in the very first line of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* he proclaimed, "In diesem Buche wird zum erstenmal der Versuch gewagt, Geschichte vorauszubestimmen." Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* vol. 1., rev. ed. *Gestalt und Wirklichkeit* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1923), 3.

<sup>10</sup>Erich Heller, "Oswald Spengler and the Predicament of the Historical Imagination," in *The Disinherited Mind: Essays in Modern German Literature and Thought*, 4th ed. (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1975), 182.

<sup>11</sup>Harry Elmer Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing*, rev. 2d ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), 205.

<sup>12</sup>Hughes paid *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* the supreme compliment, when he concluded his study with the bold claim that Spengler's work "offers the nearest thing we have to a key to our times." Hughes, *Oswald Spengler*, 165.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>15</sup>Koktanek, *Oswald Spengler in seiner Zeit*; Oswald Spengler, *Briefe: 1913-1936*, eds. Koktanek and Schröter (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963); Koktanek and Schröter, *Urfragen*; and Koktanek and Schröter, *Frühzeit der Weltgeschichte*.

<sup>16</sup>He enjoyed years of generous financial support from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*.

<sup>17</sup>Schröter, *Der Streit um Spengler: Kritik seiner Kritiker* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922).

<sup>18</sup>Koktanek, *Spengler in seiner Zeit*, 363.

<sup>19</sup>Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 2, *Welthistorische Perspektiven* [1922] (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1923), 38-44. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, [1840] (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), 82.

<sup>20</sup>Koktanek, "Introduction," in Spengler, *Frühzeit der Weltgeschichte*, vii.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>22</sup>Koktanek, "Introduction," in Spengler, *Urfragen*, xvii-xviii. In a letter to Spengler, Manfred Schröter wrote, "ich begreife erst jetzt Ihre schicksalvolle Berührung bzw. Kreuzung mit Frobenius' Welt. Es ist in der Tat 'die Fortsetzung nach unten.'" Letter dated 13 December 1920. Spengler, *Briefe*, 176.

<sup>23</sup>Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 3.

<sup>24</sup>Koktanek, *Spengler in seiner Zeit*, 380.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 389, 395, and 423.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 399-410.

<sup>27</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 26-33.

<sup>28</sup>In this article, we will forego consideration of Spengler's interesting thoughts on this important topic of international politics and limit ourselves to a discussion of the significant changes in his philosophy of world history. For a discussion of this subject see Farrenkopf, "Oswald Spengler," 383-88.

<sup>29</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, v.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1: 27.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>33</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 4.

<sup>34</sup>John A. J. Gowlett, *Ascent to Civilization: The Archaeology of Early Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 9.

<sup>35</sup>*Eis heauton*, no. 8, Spengler Archive. The Beck Verlag transferred possession of all the archival material to the Bavarian State Library on 12 February 1990. (According to a letter in the possession of the author from the co-owner of the Beck publishing firm, Wolfgang Beck.) The Spengler Archive houses an extensive collection of material on his life and thought. The wealth of documents; photographs and sketches; miscellaneous papers, interviews, and newspaper articles; accounts by third parties; original letters to and from Spengler; notes intended for an autobiography which was never written; and papers and diaries of his sister, Hilde Kornhardt, were indispensable in Koptanek's research of his authoritative biography of Spengler. The largely biographical material is complemented by the rich collection of scholarly papers. Of particular interest to students of historical philosophy are his numerous aphoristic notes on metaphysics and world history. Of further interest are Spengler's unpublished fragments on politics including partial drafts of memoranda to the German Kaiser and the nobility apparently composed during World War I (and not submitted either) and notes for the projected continuation of *Jahre der Entscheidung* as well as unpublished poems, unfinished dramatic and epic compositions, and scattered reflections on questions of poetry and the visual arts.

<sup>36</sup>Koptanek, *Spengler in seiner Zeit*, 56.

<sup>37</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 19.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 26. In *Frühzeit der Weltgeschichte*, Spengler expresses the view that man appeared upon the earth approximately 100,000 years ago. Spengler, *Frühzeit der Weltgeschichte*, no. 72, p. 76.

<sup>39</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 19.

<sup>40</sup>Gowlett, *Civilization*, 43.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>43</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 27.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>45</sup>Gowlett, *Civilization*, 11.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>48</sup>Human cultural development speeded up with the rapid transition from early village life towards full civilization in the Middle East, Anatolia, Iran, the Indian subcontinent and China, being completed in the astonishingly brief period of only about 5,000 years — from about 8,000 B.C. to 3,000 B.C. *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>49</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 52.

<sup>50</sup>None of them anticipated that the crisis of modern civilization might be synonymous with the end of history. Schopenhauer believed that modern man would just keep muddling through the recurrent trials and tribulations of history. Nietzsche was hopeful that Western man could rejuvenate his decadent world through commitment to tellurian values. Burckhardt, despite his strikingly accurate prophecies about the crises which awaited Europe in the twentieth century in his correspondence with Preen, never abandoned faith in an eventual rebirth of Europe through aesthetic and moral norms.

<sup>51</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 42.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>53</sup>Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 2: 38. In *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* Spengler normally employs the term *Kultur* to designate what in Anglo-Saxon historiography is typically called a civilization. When he contrasts a *Kultur* with the primitive culture of prehistory, he switches to the term *hohe Kultur*. In his *Spätwerk* he introduces the term *Hochkultur* which is likewise equivalent to the *Kulturen* of his *Hauptwerk*. Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1: 23-33; Spengler, "Plan eines neuen Atlas Antiquus," in *Reden und Aufsätze*, 103.

<sup>54</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 52.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-17. The Sprouts, in their important study of the significance of the emergent global ecological crisis for world politics, similarly use an expanded definition of technology. Harold and Margaret Sprout, *Towards a Politics of the Planet Earth* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1971), 209.

<sup>56</sup>The noted political theorist, Leo Strauss, echoes this view: "Nature is understood and treated as an enemy that must be subjugated." Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964), 42.

<sup>57</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 22.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 22, 39.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>61</sup>See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, 237, 295.

<sup>62</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 18, 24-25.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>64</sup>See for example Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1: 140-44, and Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 2: 543.

<sup>65</sup>Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 2, ed. Wolfgang Frhr. von Loehneysen (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 566-70. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, vol. 4, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, 2d ed. (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988).

<sup>66</sup>Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1: 146.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>68</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 44.

<sup>69</sup>Spengler explicitly draws the analogy between the course of world history and an avalanche in his *Nachlaß*. Spengler, *Frühzeit der Weltgeschichte*, 485.

<sup>70</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 27.

<sup>71</sup>Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 2: 622.

<sup>72</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 48.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.



<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 44. One observes how Spengler wavers here. He restrains himself and refrains from arguing that the decline of modern civilization is unquestionably tantamount to the end of history, holding out the possibility that perhaps, a new *Kultur* may arise out of the depths of Russia. When he composed *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, he was convinced that Russia would eventually bring forth a successor *Kultur* to the West.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>77</sup>For a discussion of Marx's view on ecological matters, see Irving Fetscher, *Überlebensbedingungen der Menschheit. Ist der Fortschritt noch zu retten?*, rev. ed. (Munich: Piper, 1985).

<sup>78</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 55.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 54-55.

<sup>80</sup>Rolf Peter Sieferle, *Fortschrittsfeinde?: Opposition gegen Technik und Industrie von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1984).

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 149-52.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 161-67.

<sup>83</sup>Quoted in Sieferle, *Fortschrittsfeinde*, 281.

<sup>84</sup>Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 1: 58.

<sup>85</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 2.

<sup>86</sup>Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 2: 446.

<sup>87</sup>In fact, he fears that Germany might emerge from the approaching Second World War a permanently occupied land. "Aber ich rede hier von Deutschland, das im Sturm der Tatsachen tiefer bedroht ist als irgend ein anderes Land, dessen Existenz im erschreckenden Sinne des Wortes in Frage steht." Oswald Spengler, *Jahre der Entscheidung*, Part I, *Deutschland und die weltgeschichtliche Entwicklung* (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1933), 2.

<sup>88</sup>Spengler, *Der Mensch und die Technik*, 62.

<sup>89</sup>Merlio, *Oswald Spengler*, 1: 455-61.