

The Sunset of Tradition and the Origin of the Great War

*O setting sun! though the time has come,
I still warble under you, if none else does,
unmitigated adoration.*

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By

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To the young people of the world: a guide to the history of the Night Land

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

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PREFACE

“Childhood’s End”

*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child,
I thought as a child,
but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*
–1 Cor. 13:11.

Sometimes the fairytale—the enchanted fantasy that the Modern world has safely relegated to childhood—is the only form in which Truth can survive time. It is significant that most people alive today, caught up in the illusions and hallucinations of Modernity, can now only know and experience Truth by a regress into childhood. The ancient words *...except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*¹ seem intriguingly applicable to Modern mankind. Contemporary “popular culture” is characterized by a prodigious output of games, movies, comics and books, all designed to afford Modern mankind brief spells of mental escape into what is appropriately called “virtual reality”—a parallel universe of infantile fantasy. At its core, however, this commercially exploited “leisure time” phenomenon represents something more than mere hedonistic escapism or psychological regression. It also reflects an indeterminate, but genuine longing for a lost world of authenticity, a longing for the long-lost Traditional world of authentic identities—and for the lost reality of supra-natural experience. Occasionally, the products of the Modern “entertainment industry” give hints at the locations of time, space and thought where this long-lost world should be sought.

Shortly after the Second World War, inspired by its apocalyptic events and its monstrous visions, there appeared a short story that eventually developed into the science-fiction classic *Childhood’s End*. A somewhat contrived but intriguing fantasy, it is undoubtedly good entertainment, but its undiminished appeal to contemporary readers is rather explained by the fact that it manages to conjure up a hybrid vision of scientific-futuristic prophecy and archaic-mythological angst—combination that remains existentially relevant to Modern mankind. The Second World War re-defined Western culture and civilization in a manner so profoundly

disturbing as to inspire in its survivors an enduring distrust of human nature as well as a lasting presentiment of future catastrophe. *Childhood's End* touches these chords, as do all genuinely artistic visions that sprouted up among the post-war ruins of Western culture. For any Westerner born after the cataclysm of 1939-45, the Second World War constitutes a defining moment in terms of culture and civilization—an event that cannot fail to fascinate. Even now, as the Second World War is fading from living memory and as the polemics of its winners are fading from public life, young people still read books, watch movies and play games that revolve around its themes. From their perspective, all wars preceding the Second World War are quaintly archaic and slightly ridiculous spectacles, fought over issues entirely irrelevant to their own lives.

To them, the First World War is only slightly less quaint than, let us say, the religious wars of the 16th Century—less irrelevant only to the degree that it was the obvious cause of the Second World War, which followed it a mere two decades later. If young people bother to investigate this First World War at all, they will soon find themselves discouraged by the scarcity of good-quality movies, by the dull illustrations resulting from obsolete, black-and-white photography and by the less-than-impressive technology of flimsy canvas-wing airplanes and awkwardly-slow prototype tanks. The unfavourable comparison of the First and Second World Wars can only be reinforced by the former's less-than-inspiring, stiffly-aristocratic leaders, its senselessly-prolonged slaughter and its boring background of static trenches. Occasionally, however, some inquisitive youngsters will wonder about this strangely-distant and strangely-unattractive First World War. They might wonder how a humble soldier who miraculously survived Europe's four-year slaughter-session could rise to become the semi-mythological *Führer* of Second World War infamy. They might wonder why in the ever-briefer schoolbook summaries it is written that this four-year slaughter was a sacrifice necessary for the sake of a "free" and "democratic" world and for the sake of mankind's historical "progress". What exactly made the former world, the world that preceded it and that is now remote almost beyond conception, so utterly obnoxious that the sacrifice of millions of human lives constituted an acceptable price to pay for its destruction, a destruction that was apparently necessary for the Modern world to flourish? To sincerely explore these questions is to put away childish things—childish beliefs first. This present work, *Sunset*, will provide the young people of the world a tool to work towards childhood's end.

The Dismal Science

To the children of men bitterness and sweetness, all the secrets of their wisdom, are pointed out bywriting with ink and paper—thus many have strayed all throughout history, even to this day. For men were not born to write their faith with pen and ink—they were only created so that, like angels, they would remain righteous and pure, and not that all-destroying death would seize them, but by their knowledge they perish, and by it they are consumed.

—Enoch

Dutch historian Jacob Presser, famous in his own small country, survived the Second World War in hiding—his relatives and wife were deported and would never return. Excluded from public life for years, barred from academia and libraries, he lived hidden away in a village, always under threat of arrest, deportation and death. As he waited, slowly the years passed, until the wheels of history finally turned to remove foreign rule from his country. Meanwhile, he decided to use his time and write about the great Eighty Year War—the war that, three centuries earlier, had given birth to his country. Having time on his hand, he prefaced his work with a careful reflection on what truly constitutes the essence of the writing of history as part of the larger human endeavour of overcoming time itself. He reflected on the role that the passage of time plays in gradually providing historians with an ever-higher perspective. In his view, it is precisely the slow accumulation of later and higher perspectives that finally allows historians to achieve—after the thesis of “subjective” experience and the antithesis of “objective” re-appraisal—a synthetic understanding of any given historical phenomenon.

This present work, the one now lying before the reader, is written by another Dutch historian about the background to another, shorter, but much greater war, a war during which his country remained neutral. The fact that Holland was neutral during the Great War gives the author a uniquely privileged position—that of a neutral observer.² It is a privilege that even now inevitably escapes historians from the former belligerent countries, even if all great histories of the Great War have been exclusively written by them. The fact that over a hundred years have passed since the outbreak of the Great War, which means that it is no longer living memory, gives the author of this present work another advantage as well—the distance in time that Presser spoke about. During the author’s childhood still, very occasionally, old people spoke about the Great War, but since that time lived experience of it has faded into silence. During the author’s adolescence public libraries and ordinary bookshops

still held books written by those who had actually fought the Great War, but since that time even the “paper book” itself has become unfashionable as a means of communicating knowledge. Perhaps this present work, written by somebody whose lifetime still straddles the border between the old world of physical books and libraries and the new world of digital “virtual reality”, will be one of the last that is based primarily on knowledge in the former domain. That domain will, inevitably, soon become obsolete to Modern men—even as the hieroglyphic and cuneiform texts of ancient wise men became obsolete to men living in later times. But much wisdom and insight will be lost in the process—perhaps this present work can serve to salvage some of it from the wreckage of the Modern Atlantis. Presser cautioned his readers about the effects of the passing of time on historiography—it seems appropriate to preface this present work by a brief summary of his views,³ views that are useful for the reader to hear before he is plunged into the hazardous adventure of actually reading this present work. The adventure undertaken by the author of this present work is nothing less than a complete re-evaluation of the Great War: this present work will give *meta-historical meaning* to the Great War. For the first time, a century after the Great War, history will be allowed to speak its final verdict about its causes, its actors and its results. This verdict—meta-historical Truth—is horrifying almost beyond conception, because it implicates the one remaining axiomatic good still known to contemporary mankind: Modernity itself. The length of the deliberation preceding this verdict is explained by Presser’s analysis of historiography.

Because, by definition, history is never perceived directly, historical knowledge is necessarily derived knowledge: it constitutes a *re-view* of past events by successive generations. In the ancient world history was considered an *art*, dedicated to the proclamation of great past deeds and the glorification of heroes. The claim to “objectivity” by “scientific” historians is a Modern illusion—it represents a myth “invented” by 19th Century academics. Their claim rests on the scientific method of (textual) source material analysis, but it is based on a false view of “objectivity”. Their method inevitably falls short of its aim due to four crucial complications: first, it necessarily involves a pragmatic *pre-selection* of materials, second, it necessarily involves a subjective *choice* of sources, third, the sources themselves constitute cultural artefacts shaped by *culturally-biased* intentionality, and fourth, the sources fail to inform about the *context* in which they were created. Thus, if source materials are acknowledged as random and fragmentary remnants of the past, the only possible object of historical research is *not* the “objective” past itself, but rather a specific construction of past events with a specific relevance to the

present, according to the specific choice of the present-day researcher. Everything that exceeds a mere chronological ordering is no longer a *reconstruction*, but rather a *construction*, a functional re-writing of the past in terms of the present. It logically follows that history will never be written in the same way at different points in time. It also follows that, in the final analysis, whatever is written about a certain previous epoch during any later epoch effectively implies an auto-diagnosis of the latter epoch.

The single most important mechanism that determines the transformations to which historiography is subject is the passage of time itself. The passage of time creates an ever-increasing distance to historical events and this distance allows for a transformative series of theses, antitheses and syntheses. The main stages of this process—a schematic typology subject to overlaps and deviations—are: (1) the *lyrical phase* of immediate and lived experience by contemporaries, (2) the *epic phase* of unifying reflection on earlier experience by survivors, (3) the *dramatic phase* of evaluating interpretation by the next generation and (4) the *scientific phase* of summarizing and de-mystifying the re-evaluations of later generations. During the lyrical phase history is still insufficiently distanced from events to allow for its differentiation from lived experience: its only ability is the ability to speak—in the beginning there is only the ability to *speak*. In the beginning there was the *word*. During the epic phase this distance has sufficiently increased for history to develop the ability to *hear*. During the dramatic phase distance has increased to a point at which history gains the ability to *see*—this is the phase of interpretative *thesis*. During the scientific phase history finally gains the ability to *know*—this is the phase of re-interpretative *antithesis*. After these phases the historiographical process can be completed: a final *synthesis* becomes possible, i.e. a stage at which speaking, hearing, seeing and knowing can be finally combined. This final synthesis represents the highest stage of history in the sense that the transformative cycle of historiography is completed. In terms of functionality, the synthesis achieved during the final stage equals that of a work of *art*: as a definitive statement of ultimate achievement, it essentially serves itself. Once completed, a work of art may be destroyed, lost or forgotten, but it cannot be surpassed, except in terms of aesthetic subjectivity.

In this present work the Great War is defined broadly as a specific series of cataclysms—violent revolutions and armed conflicts—that brought to an effective end the Traditional principle of *Imperium* in the Modern world. More specifically, these events include the fall of the old Chinese, Russian, Austrian and Turkish Empires, thus defining the Great War as the

twelve-year time span between the Chinese Revolution, beginning on 10 October 1911, and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, on 29 October 1923 (a more detailed discussion of the factors relevant to this definition is found in 10.3.). Thus, for purposes of this present work, the *lyrical phase* of the history of the Great War may be said to have ended in 1923. The *epic phase*, characterized by the Lost Generation's mythological Great War narrative, may be said to have ended in 1939 (or in 1936/7, if viewed from an African or Asian perspective). The Second World War was fought by a new generation and it had the combined effect of making the Great War—now downgraded to the less dramatic “First World War”—seem comparatively puny in quantitative terms and of relegating it to an experientially remote past. The *dramatic phase*, characterized by the Greatest Generation's ideologically-tinted concern for *Sinngebung des Sinnlosen* and by its search for “guilty” dramatic personae, may be said to have ended by the “counter-cultural” revolution of 1968. The dramatic phase culminated in the Fischer Controversy, which proved that Germany's supposed “guilt” for the Great War—conveniently linked to its assumed blame for the Second World—was no longer a tenable proposition. The beginning of the *scientific phase* was marked by the 1969 Taylor Railway Thesis, which shifted the historical discourse from emotive recollection and moral argument to dispassionate reappraisal of material circumstances and factual detail. Predictably, this phase is characterized by detailed investigation of endless amounts of material “evidence” and by “objective” number crunching—it produced a staggering quantity of in-depth historical research, a research inflation that is exacerbated by the Late Modern proliferation of mass education and accelerating hyper-literacy.

As its demographic carrier, the “baby boomer” generation, is finally—slowly, reluctantly, painfully—fading from the stage, the scientific phase of Great War historiography is now nearing its end. The baby boomers, the “gravediggers of Western civilization”, are finally becoming history themselves—their view of history will be buried with them. Meanwhile, however, the damage the baby boomers have done is staggering: their legacy includes ecological catastrophe, economic crisis, ethnic warfare and social disorder. Underpinning this legacy is the baby boomers' ideology of “Cultural Nihilism”, characterized by an exterior façade of scientific objectivity and an interior void of cultural-relativism. Historically, the Cultural Nihilist worldview became dominant in the 1960's, bringing together heterogeneous Modernist subversions, including the intellectual “culture of critique” of the Frankfurt School and the political “counter-culture” activism of the New Left. The hey-days of Cultural Nihilism

coincided with the Maoist Cultural Revolution, from which it borrowed its discourse of totalitarian “political correctness”, imposed through political witch hunts, legal harassment and media persecution. Even today, although utterly discredited intellectually, Cultural Nihilism still maintains its monopoly on power. Its socio-political strength resides in the permanent self-renewal of the “anti-elite” establishment by the pragmatic inclusion of ever new groups of resentful *homines novi*, representing convenient agenda’s of “women’s rights”, “gay rights” and “minority rights”. Its socio-cultural strength resides in its moral monopoly on “progress”, upheld by academic (self-)censorship and media manipulation. The Cultural Nihilist elite’s reliance on hidden political agendas and deliberate journalistic cover-ups has caused persistent conspiracy theories (e.g. those addressing the political role of the Bilderberg Group and the academic role of Cultural Marxism). Baby boomer Cultural Nihilism still continues to deprive younger generations of their rightful inheritance. The decades-long Cultural Nihilist assault on the foundations of Western civilization has “abolished” the rich legacy of Western civilization, depriving future generations of any motivating sense of origin and destiny. The Traditional Western Art of History, a *gaia scienza* of intellectual instinct, ethical integrity and poetic subtlety, has been destroyed. In the space of a few decades, it has been replaced by a dismal pseudo-science, committed to the propagation of Modernity’s most extreme social-cultural “deconstructions”. These Cultural Nihilist deconstructions—including institutionalized cosmopolitanism, pacifism, hyper-democracy, anti-nationalism, gay rights and feminism—have resulted in a Post-Modern regime of self-destructive existential modes. This regime operates through a “black magic” combination of internalized cognitive dissonance, informal institutional repression and permanent subconscious conditioning. At long last, however, the magical spell of Cultural Nihilism is starting to fail: the sheer absurdity of its tenets, the unashamed corruption of its practitioners and the destructive results of its suggestions are creating a critical mass of discontent and resistance. Because Cultural Nihilism’s control of the present depends on its control of the past, a decisive re-appropriation of the past by a new generation is sure to topple it.

The admittedly daunting task of re-conquering and re-writing history is greatly eased by contemporary technological developments. The slow decline of physical book-form publication and the rapid rise of digital resource research will contribute much to a realistic re-appraisal of the explosion of scientific data in the fields of history, sociology and anthropology during the last decades. Once the ideological bias of Cultural Nihilism is eliminated and a realistic re-appraisal commences, these fields

will flower in unimagined ways. The ephemeral sophistries of cultural relativism, precariously predicated on the disingenuous quest for cross-cultural “objectivity”, will melt as the snows of winter melt in the sun of spring. The nightmarish hallucinations that have inevitably filled the void of politically-correct nihilist secularism will disappear as the shades of night disappear in the light of dawn. When the masses of scientific data and arguments that have accumulated during decades of Cultural Nihilism are reduced to their essentials, many superfluous books and many superfluous ideas will be relegated to the dustbin of history. Once unshackled from its ideological chains, a New History will become possible, breaching unimagined horizons. This present work anticipates this great renewal.

The dawn of the *synthetic phase* of Great War historiography is on the horizon and this present work reaches across it. Its range, however, extends much further: it covers the entire cultural-historical background to the Great War and it therefore re-views the history of the entire Modern Age. Thus, *Sunset* provides a first textbook and a first guideline for the New History of the Modern Age, an entirely new kind of history to be written for an entirely new kind of audience—as yet largely undefined. In this sense, *Sunset* looks at the past from a *future* perspective, anticipating the dawn of the New Age.

The Second Persona

*[W]hat is thought according to the truth cannot be signed with the name
of an individual.*
—Julius Evola

The history of the Great War and its background has already been written, and continues to be written, in countless works by countless writers, professionals and amateurs alike—the obvious question is why yet more written should be written about these subjects. Any author’s claim to make a crucially different contribution in terms of mere “scientific” or “factual” content is bound to be laughable—the same claim has been made too often and by too many other authors. Thus, the claim to innovative value made for this present work, is not related to its new *content*, but rather to its new *audience*. In the second decade of the 21st Century it is clear, even to the most simple-minded and retired-living individuals, that mankind’s global natural and social habitat is changing beyond recognition—and that this change is taking place at breath-taking speed. Accordingly, culture and knowledge are being transformed at the same speed—and with it mankind’s experience of its history. Thus, a new form of audience for a new form of

history is being created by sheer force of circumstances. It is this new audience, as yet un-defined and un-determined, that is addressed by this present work.

But one thing about this new audience is certain: it will not include the *old* audience. The old audience will cling to its complementary comforts of infotainment consumption and academic snobbery, but it will also be left behind because it is existentially unable to match the impudent curiosity and steel nerves required of the new audience. The old audience can only reject, up front and out of hand, the new realities and new concepts that will inevitably invalidate its own decades-long experience of educational indoctrination, media propaganda and political correctness—an experience that is approaching the *ne plus ultra* of Modernity. About the old audience little remains to be said. Perhaps they are best served by the following sobering words, written almost half a century ago now, at the zenith of Modernist hubris. *La sottise... de la majorité des hommes, à notre époque surtout, et de plus en plus à mesure que se généralise et s'accroît la déchéance intellectuelle caractéristique de l'ultime période cyclique, est peut-être la chose la plus difficile à supporter qu'il y ait en monde. Il faut y joindre à cet égard l'ignorance qui lui est d'ailleurs étroitement liée, celle qui n'est aucunement consciente d'elle-même, qui se permet d'affirmer d'autant plus audacieusement qu'elle sait et comprends moins, et qui est par là même, chez celui qui en est affligé, un mal irrémédiable. Sottise et ignorance peuvent en somme être réunies sous le nom commun d'incompréhension ; mais il doit être bien entendu que supporter cette incompréhension n'implique aucunement qu'on doive lui faire des concessions quelconques, ni même s'abstenir de redresser les erreurs auxquelles elle donne naissance et de faire tout ce qui est possible pour les empêcher de se répandre, ce qui du reste est bien souvent aussi une tâche fort déplaisante, surtout lorsqu'on se trouve obligé, en présence de l'obstination de certains, de répéter à maintes reprises des choses qu'il devrait normalement suffire d'avoir dites une fois pour toutes.* [Perhaps the stupidity... of the majority of men, especially in our age, and increasingly so as intellectual degeneration characteristic of the final cyclical period becomes generalized and accentuated, is the most difficult thing to bear in the world. To this should be added [an] ignorance, inevitably linked to it, that is no longer conscious of itself, establishing itself ever more brazenly in proportion to its own lessening comprehension, and that represents, in those afflicted by it, an irredeemable evil. Thus, stupidity and ignorance may become unified under the single name of miscomprehension, but to bear with this miscomprehension does not imply that one should either make any

concessions to it or that one should refrain from addressing the errors to which it gives rise. Rather, [one] should do everything possible to impede their spread, which obviously is a quite distasteful task, especially because one finds oneself obliged, in the face of persistent obstinacy, to repeat, over and over again, things that in normal circumstances it should have been sufficient to say once and for all.]⁴

Obviously, given the reality of rapidly declining intellectual traditions and rapidly falling standards of education, most adult “Modern people” alive today—even those who are still able to intellectually grasp basic logic—will simply be *existentially* incapable of accepting anything remotely resembling non-relativist, capital-letter Truth. To put it in another and more Traditional way: *[m]odern history is the dialogue between two men: one who believes in God and another who believes he is God⁵*—the former is Traditional man and the latter Modern man. Modern man simply has *...too little love, too much snobbism, too indiscriminate a taste, and too little distaste, and now only the greatest souls by a supreme effort can achieve a synthesis of the past and the future.*⁶ The category of “lesser souls” includes, by definition, all of Modernity’s “shouting classes”:⁷ politicians, celebrities, journalists and academics. In the case of academic intellectuals, it should be noted that their absorption into the “shouting classes” is generally enforced through a professional regime of self-censoring political correctness, implemented through the leveling mechanism of “peer review”, devised to suppress scientific dissent through systemically-biased reporting, where necessary supplemented by insidious defamation. In the final analysis, such “Modern people”, with their permanently distracted minds and ever-shortening attention spans, are solely concerned with the unreflecting and breathless pursuit of empty affairs, exclusively directed at the basest of materialist and status-related concerns. To them the Truth, in any way, shape or form, is simply *inappropriate*—to them apply the ancient words: *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*⁸

This present work is therefore dedicated to a later generation, a generation that still has to make its mark on history—even if history has already marked *it*. Perhaps, however, this present work has been written too early to actually reach any substantial audience during the lifetime of the author—it may very well be so and that may be as it should be. Or perhaps it will only reach a few untimely persons, otherwise foundering in the unmapped, shore-less oceans of countless worthless publications that have been created by contemporary hyper-Democracy and hyper-literacy. In the Modern world, ruled by and for the masses, everybody is equal:

millions so-called “individuals” can be—and feel they *must* be—so-called “authors”, all of them directing their private “self-expression” projects in “authentically expressed” “literary creations”. These millions of egomaniacal creations are, ipso facto, “equal” in terms of scientific, literary and artistic achievement: equal to zero. From this perspective, it will be quite astonishing if in this Dark Age literary ocean of “anti-creative” mud even a single intelligent person will be able to discern this present work. Wandering among the multiplying soulless “tourist” masses of the Dark Age, the few remaining authentic pilgrims in quest of the *meaning* of history are unlikely to ever meet each other. Perhaps this present work will not reach even a single one. But such a fate—even its complete disappearance from the material world—is still preferable to the alternative of Modern “success”. Such “success” would mean vulgar popularization in the course of one of Modernity’s many short-lived “intellectual fashions”. Effectively, these fashions serve to discredit, distort and deform the last scraps of authentic cultural heritage and to feed the narcissist mental void of the “intellectual elites”. The “success” of media “popularization” and commercial “marketing” inevitably tends to pervert all that is still good and beautiful in the world, turning magic into utility and good into evil.

Whatever the fate of this present work, however, it does not really matter. Perhaps its true audience belongs to a far-off future when the world has entered a new Golden Age, when eternal Traditional values will regain a concrete, *lived* relevance for a regenerated mankind, a relevance they inevitably lack for the degraded sub-human masses that swarm and multiply in the festering decay of Dark Age “society”. Perhaps some patient antiquarian living in the coming Golden Age will wish to fathom the depths of the Dark Age of the preceding cycle—and find this present work. If so, the author must apologize for the lack of Traditional dignity in his language and expression. For a message to be imbued with Traditional force, it needs a Traditional language. Perhaps the multi-layered symbolic meanings captured by Egyptian hieroglyphs, Mesopotamian cuneiforms and Mandarin characters were still able to fully capture the numinous sacredness and imperial majesty of the world of Tradition. Perhaps the austere, impersonal preciseness of Classic Sanskrit, Persian, Greek and Latin were still able to conjure up its sense of absolute authority. But Modern mankind, submerged in the Dark Age degeneracy, has irretrievably lost all linguistic vehicles for sublime thought and lofty expression. *Being individualistic, Modern language is too loquacious, too tinged with sentimentalism, and at the same time too narrowly logical to be suited for [true Traditional] usage. ...[It is] overgiven too dotting the*

*i's, as the present author also is compelled to do—but then he is not writing for [a real Traditional] readers[hip], nor does he necessarily think in quite the same way as he writes.*⁹ Thus, this present work can only give a well-intended, but ultimately imperfect account of the Dark Age. It is up to future generations to re-create the experiential preconditions that would allow a truly re-generated New History to flourish.

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INTRODUCTION

Aim

*Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
legato con amore in un volume,
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna;
sustanze e accidenti e lor costume
quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo
che ciò ch' i' dico è un semplice lume.
La forma universal di questo nodo
credo ch' i' vidi, perché più di largo,
dicendo questo, mi sento ch' i' godo.
—Dante Alighieri, “Paradiso”*

Synthesis

() This Introduction is exclusively concerned with issues of scientific methodology, logical structure and analytical instrumentation—it can be safely dispensed with by hasty readers.*

The Preface stated that *Sunset*, as a cultural-historical prologue to the Great War, aims at moving the historiography of the entire Modern Era into its final, synthetic phase—this is its *abstract* aim. This Introduction serves to state the *concrete* manner in which this will be realized, i.e. how this present work will synthesize the earlier—lyric, epic, dramatic, scientific—phases of historiography. The premise of any synthesis must be to respect the equal and simultaneous value of its preceding theses and antitheses—and their contextual validity. To each a tribute is due: to the lyric expression of lived experience, to the epic narration of memorized experience, to the dramatic interpretation of historical achievement and to the scientific re-construction of causal structures. It is on their full combination that a definitive synthesis depends. *Lyric expression* of the world of the belle époque and the Great War has irretrievably moved into the shadows of history: it is beyond recall, except in our imagination. Perhaps some spoken word recorded on cracked vinyl or some moving picture recorded on dimmed celluloid may still magically touch our hearts in sympathy. Perhaps some poem on yellowed pages may still make us

magically relive the wonders and horrors of the poet. In respect of lyric expression this present work cannot but fail abjectly, not only because it is written under the heavy shadow of the still-dominant scientific phase, but also because the written word can only make a small contribution to the artistic *Gesamtkunstwerk* that the incorporation of lyric expression would require. Only a magnificent—perhaps still unimaginable—combined work of art and science could lyrically express the tragic grandeur of *la belle époque* and the deep trauma of the Great War in a manner that truly does justice to their full historical impact on human spirituality. Perhaps, occasionally, the reader can compensate for this lacking lyric component by searching for photos, paintings and poems—they are the only contemporary witnesses to a long-lost lyric experience. *Epic narrative* of the belle époque and the Great War is still with us, but its impact is much diminished because—except perhaps in an occasional documentary sound fragment—its essential oral component is lacking. Great events and heroic deeds of supra-human significance are the central themes of epic narrative: to do justice to these themes, this present work is framed as a grand narrative, allowing the true heroic grandeur of the Great War to re-emerge from the depths of history. *Dramatic interpretation* of the belle époque and the Great War—only recently superseded by scientific construction—is closer to us: echoes of the polemics and controversies that surrounded it can still be heard, even if their focus has now largely shifted from the public sphere of socio-political debate to the academic sphere of theoretical debate. The human—emotional and cathartic—experience of the supra-human battle between good and evil is the central theme of all dramatic interpretation: to do justice to this theme, this present work does not hesitate to take sides. It recognizes the Great War as a single battle of a much Greater War, re-constructing a larger-than-life conflict between the opposing cosmic forces of good and evil, featuring a dramatic cast of heroes and villains. *Scientific analysis*, finally, is fully incorporated in this present work: the methods by which facts are presented and analyzed are scientific. Before proceeding with the actual synthesis, each of these three elements—epic, dramatic, scientific—will now be introduced in more detail.

Epos: grand narrative

*Come away, O human child, to the waters and the wild, with a Fairy hand in hand,
for the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.*

—“A.I.”

Any epic narrative tells a meta-historical story, involving supra-human forces intervening in the human life-world, often acting through human

agency. But truly “Modern” men, their minds and hearts twisted by a lifetime of total immersion in institutional education, media indoctrination and political correctness, will have nearly insurmountable difficulty in grasping that what is beyond the comfort zone of their materialist idols and intellectual horizons: they will neither seek nor recognize supra-human capital-letter History as it prevailed in the world of Tradition. As stated earlier in this Introduction, this present work fully incorporates scientific principles, applying scientific methods and standards, but only to the extent they are *relevant*. This present work is not primarily concerned with scientific facts and proofs—it merely encapsulates them. As stated earlier in the Preface, this present work proceeds from the premise that History is irreducible to “scientific objectivity” and that—beyond mere chronology—absolutely-autonomous and scientifically-verifiable “historical facts” do not exist. Historical causality, arrived at by the academic “science” of small-letter history, can never be more than an ephemeral, elusive intellectual construct. Most frequently such constructs merely representing ad hoc consensus opinions, arrived at by ideologically-biased institutional collectives. This present work, on the other hand, is concerned with capital-letter Traditional History: it is concerned with mankind’s historical interaction with supra-human forces. Through investigation of this relation, Traditional History provides a coherent narrative that, in scientific discourse, may be termed *meta-history*. Authentic Traditional religions express supra-human forces in terms of logically-irreducible Transcendental values—the relativist denial of such values is essential for the maintenance of Modernist ideological superstructures. Modern science, however, also expresses these same supra-human forces—they are the primary research objects of various branches of exact science, such bio-evolution and physical cosmology. Within the scientific discipline of history they are expressly recognized in various theoretical models, including those of the *long durée* and *clio dynamics*. For those readers who need a scientific term to typify this present work, perhaps an approximation of the author’s intent may be found in the term *meta-narrative*, i.e. a narrative that puts into supra-human perspective not only the primary subject matter of the causes of the Great War, but its entire context of Modernity. Such a meta-narrative will provide something that is inevitably lacking in mere science: *meaning*.

The tale to be told in this work, outlining the cultural-historical background of the Great War, is fundamentally a tale of the onset of the Dark Age and the decline of the West. These processes climaxed in a rapid series of cataclysmic events, occurring in a very short span of time during the first quarter of the 20th Century. Long before that time, the onset of the

Dark Age had already been noticed by philosophers and theologians observing the deepening decay of Tradition and the accelerated onset of Modernity. Among the earliest signs of internal and external disintegration of the Traditional order of the West were the Battle of the Golden Spurs, the repression of the Knights Templar and the fall of Constantinople: these events indicated a distinct weakening of the political, religious and social institutions of Europe. Shortly afterwards, Europe's global exploration and its conquest of the New World ensured that the fate of the whole world was irretrievably linked to the fate of the West. As soon as Europe's outer global supremacy had been established, the inner metamorphosis of Europe passed the point of no return. The rising hydra of mercantile Capitalism and Protestant Reformation firmly entrenched itself in north-western Europe—there could no longer be any doubt that the West was entering the Dark Age. Throughout the following two centuries, a slow lengthening of the shadows preceded the final sunset, projecting ahead deceptively distorted forms, such as “enlightenment philosophy”, “democratic freedom” and “industrial progress”. Warped ideas and twisted words could not compensate the actual, lived experience of Modernity, including the destruction of the natural environment, the horror of societal disintegration and the perversion of all higher culture. The natural world was desecrated, animal life was decimated, the basic social units of family, tribe and nation were reduced to anachronisms, the arts and sciences were divorced from Transcendental inspiration: all spheres of life became subject to grotesque experiments at the hands of Modernity's sorcerer's apprentices. Still, throughout this phase, and deep into the 19th Century, there remained the afterglow of the dusk. There still remained standing some remnants of the world of Tradition—the bulwarks of the last empires, last religions and last cultures—even if they were hemmed in, besieged and exposed to incurable internal decay and unremitting external pressure. With the increasing weight of material, technical and scientific “progress” stacked against them, the final remnants of Tradition, holding out in increasingly anachronistic state structures, saw their geographical perimeters shrink, their political institutions decay and their social fabrics splinter. At the dawn of the 20th Century, the expanding forces of darkness, radiating out from Western Europe and North America, finally ruled almost the entire overseas world after having subjugated the last “primitive” Pre-State peoples and after having penetrated into the remotest deserts, mountains and jungles. The Pre-State World was eliminated and the non-western Traditional State World was brought under direct or indirect Imperialist control. Finally, when there was nothing left to conquer overseas, the Western world imploded: the expansive forces of

Modernity were redirected inward, destroying the remnant elements of Traditional order. With the gradual rise of aggressively-Imperialist Modern nation-states and with the gradual decline of Traditional dynastic states, the balance of power slowly but inexorably shifted in favour of the former. Finally, the predominance of the Modernist states was such that they were able to contemplate all-out war as the most efficient way to wipe out the remaining citadels of the Traditional world once and for all. The year 1914—even as some had predicted—came upon the world to lighten the final sunset of Tradition with the deepest red of blood and fire.

Drama: contest

It is not chance that rules the world. ...There are general causes, moral and physical, which act in every [state], elevating it, maintaining it, or hurling it to the ground. All accidents are controlled by these causes. And if the chance of one battle—that is, a particular cause—has brought a state to ruin, some general cause made it necessary for that state to perish from a single battle. In a word, the main trend draws with it all particular accidents.

—Charles-Louis de Montesquieu

By 1914 the world was retrievably split into two opposing camps of warring states. On one side stood the future Allies, *...expressly a coalition of [Modernity] against the residual forces of [Tradition]; it was a coalition of Nationalisms and the great democracies more or less inspired by the “immortal principles” of the French Revolution, which some people wanted to replicate on an international scale and which fact did not prevent the humanitarian and patriotic ideology from playing into the hands of a greedy and supremacist high finance.*¹¹ *[T]he war is merely the evidence and not the cause of European chaos: ...he that is down needs fear no fall. ...The war in Europe [was] no unfortunate accident, but the inevitable outcome of European civilization. ...[W]e cannot be surprised that the philosophy of internecine [i.e. deadly competitive, and mutually exterminating] peace should have been transferred at last to the visible field of battle. We feel that the intention of this war has been to make the world safe for exploitation...*¹² In the vanguard of the dark forces of Modernity were the Anglo-Saxon states, Britain and America, joined by France and by France’s de facto protectorate, Russia—these states had Imperialist control over most of the globe, either through formal colonial empires or through informal hegemony over weaker nations. On the other side stood the future Central Powers: *[i]n 1914, the central empires still represented within the Western world a remainder of the feudal and*

*aristocratic Europe, despite the undeniable aspects of militaristic hegemonism and some questionable collusions with capitalism, especially in Wilhelm's Germany.*¹³ By an extraordinary series of historical accidents a powerful, recently founded and newly industrialized, nation-state had come to stand up against the forces of Modernism as the champion of Tradition. This was Germany: isolated and surrounded by hostile alliances—its primary allies were the crumbling Hapsburg and Ottoman empires. *As few other times before, World War I displays the traits of a conflict not [merely] between states and nations, but rather between ideologies of different castes, [as personified by these states and nations].*¹⁴

These two opposing camps now stood poised to confront each other in a final showdown, embodying the forces of growing Dark and lessening Light. Within each camp there were many inner contradictions and imbalances: the division between Dark and Light was far from absolute. Drawn in by long-established loyalties and pre-occupied by the issues of day-to-day events, few contemporary observers were able to see the coming cataclysmic war for what it really was: the final showdown of the forces of Dark and Light. Only with sufficient detachment and with sufficient insight could the profound issue at hand be truly appreciated—even with hindsight it is fully understood by few people alive today. What did impress all contemporary observers, however, was the general and ever more oppressing presentiment that a catastrophe of Biblical proportions was approaching. An obscure sensation of impending doom pervaded the hearts and minds of Western leaders, thinkers and artists on the eve of the Great War: their lives were drenched in the ill-defined but all-pervading apocalyptic atmosphere of Fin-de-Siècle.

This present work focuses on this Fin-de-Siècle epoch, i.e. the years immediately before the great catastrophe that finally extinguished Tradition in the political world, erasing it from the political map. It will show that the Great War represents the last battle of a much Greater War—a battle in which the forces of Darkness made their final assault on the remaining bulwarks of Light. It will show how it was possible for these forces to engulf the entire world in a great deluge of Dark Age Modernity. Initially, even the most progressively-nihilistic of Modernist commentators could not help but acknowledge the uniquely monumental historical significance of this great deluge, naming it the “Great War”—the greatest war in recorded history. It was only later that it was “downgraded” to the status of “World War I”, i.e. merely the first in a series of multiple “world wars”. Any comparison with its successor, “World War II”, however, tends to obscure the truly pivotal significance of the Great War. The Great