

THE EVOLUTION OF GERMAN THOUGHT.¹

BY EMILE BOUTROUX.

IT is a cruel fate to be reduced to talking and philosophizing whilst the destinies of France are being decided on the battlefield. Where, at such a time, are we to obtain the detachment necessary for correct analysis and for the right choice of word or phrase? Still, perhaps the repugnance we feel is misplaced, for the war now being waged is something more than the clashing of material forces. The France of the Crusades, of Joan of Arc and of the Revolution, faithful to her past, is fighting for ideas, for the higher interests of mankind. The armies of the Republic are struggling for justice, the right of nations, the civilization of antiquity and Christianity, against a power which recognizes no right but force and claims to impose its laws and culture on the whole world.

The close union of action and thought, valor and reflection, is a dominant characteristic of the mental state of our soldiers. We all notice it. The young men whose studies I have the honor to direct, who but a few months ago were wholly devoted to scientific or literary research, now forward to me, during a halt between battles, letters in which they philosophize, after the fashion of Plato's characters, on the connection between infantry and artillery, on trench war in general. Let us also reflect, and consider the moral aspects of the events taking place. Thus shall we maintain a true fellowship of ideas and feelings, as we ardently wish, with our dear brothers in the field.

German thought: how indispensable it is that we should know and understand it well if we would faithfully interpret the facts of this war, its causes, the way in which our enemies are conducting it and the results at which we must aim! The task is no easy one, for opinions on the question are strangely divergent.

Because of the extraordinary methods pursued from the out-

¹ Authorized translation by Fred Rothwell.

set by our enemies: scorn for treaties, conventions and laws, massacre of women and children, regulated and useless incendiarism, systematic destruction, unreasoning bombardment of the sanctuaries of religion and science, of art and national life, some have attributed it all to a sudden fit of madness or of collective insanity. How could the Germany of Goethe and Beethoven, except as the result of a pathological aberration, delight in cruelty and barbarism?

Deeper inquiry was made into the history of German thought, and we were amazed to find that, long before the war, German writings and actions showed tendencies quite in conformity with the excesses of to-day. For some time past, German philosophers and historians have been teaching the cult of force. German thinkers deified the Prussian state and the German nation, considering other nations as destined by Providence itself to be dominated by Germany.

Going farther and farther back into the past, certain minds imagined that the germs of this pride and brutality were to be found even in the most ancient representatives of German mentality, and they came to this conclusion: Germany has not changed; it has always been, in tendency if not in actuality, just as we see it to-day. Where we regarded it as different, it was simply prevented by circumstances from manifesting its true character.

The Germans themselves also declare they have not changed. They affirm that they are still the idealists, the apostles of duty, the devotees of art, science and metaphysics, the privileged guardians of high culture symbolized by the illustrious names of their thinkers and artists. "We shall carry through this war," exclaimed the official representatives of German science and art, addressing themselves to the whole world in October, 1914, "to the very end, as the war of a people of culture, to whom the heritage of a Goethe, a Beethoven, a Kant is as sacred as their home and country." And if it seems to us that the genius of Goethe, in order to win the world's admiration, has not needed the support of Prussian militarism, or again that the way in which the Germans are now carrying on war is more worthy of the Huns than of a civilized nation, then such judgment simply proves that we cannot understand German thought, and that our bad faith is on a level with our ignorance and imbecility.

Even in these days of trial, unique in our history, as we listen to the wounded and the refugees telling us of the horrors they have witnessed, and remember the bombardment of cathedrals and unfortified towns, let us not forget, in this attempt to define German

thought, that France is the country of Descartes, the philosopher who taught us that everything great and progressive in civilization, even all the virtues, are illusory unless based on inviolable respect for truth.

I.

Let us take a general view and try to reveal the main aspects of German thought in modern times.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the general character of German life is particularism, a parcelling out, an absence of national soul. The treaty of Westphalia was an effect as well as a cause. So persistent was this character that Goethe, in that luminous and far-seeing vision of the German soul concealed beneath the pleasant idyll of Hermann and Dorothea, shows us, at the beginning of the wars of the Revolution, the inhabitants of a small town on the right bank of the Rhine, bringing succor and help to the fugitives without ever reflecting whether there existed any other bond between themselves and these unhappy beings, than that which unites together all human beings. "How deserted the town is!" says the inn-keeper of the Golden Lion to his wife. "How everybody has rushed out to watch the fugitives pass by! What will not curiosity do!" (*Was die Neugierde nicht tut!*) The inhabitants of each town, content with their local occupations, attached to their own customs, disposed to suffice unto themselves and regard the inhabitants of neighboring towns as strangers, know no other fatherland than their own district.

Still this narrow life is far from being the only life offered us by Germany at this period. By a remarkable contrast, along with a restricted external life there is found an inner life of strange amplitude and profundity. The connection is not easy to grasp between these two existences, the one visible, the other invisible; they seem to be two personalities coexisting in one and the same consciousness.

Such is the religious life of a Luther, so intense and ardent, but whose characteristic is a veritable breach of continuity between omnipotent faith and works, wholly ineffective from the point of view of salvation. In the artistic, philosophic and poetic order, great minds, admired even at the present time by the whole world, create original works, the common feature of which is perhaps the effort to grasp and reveal the divine, primal and infinite source of things.

Wo fass' ich dich, unendliche Natur? "Where can I lay hold on thee, infinite nature?" exclaims Goethe's Faust, stifling in prison,

all filled with dust-covered pamphlets and shutting out the light of heaven, in which scholasticism has buried him.

Goethe discerns the ideal hidden away beneath the real, and sees the real gradually mould itself upon this ideal the more it comes under the influence of divine love:

"Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan."

"Self-devoting love, the eternal feminine, draws us away to the heights." Thus ends the tragedy of Faust, the German Titan.

"All artistic creation," said Beethoven, "comes from God, and relates to man only in so far as it witnesses to the action of the divine within him."

The trend of the German mind during this period is the sense of the dependence of the finite on the infinite. Man is capable of transcending himself by submitting to the influence of absolute being. The German word *Hingebung* well expresses this state of mind.

During this same period the Germans investigate and adopt, without thinking it possible for them to forfeit anything thereby, what they regard as good in the ideas of other peoples. "There was a time," writes Kant, "when I imagined that science, of itself alone, could sum up the whole of human dignity, and I despised an unscientific people. Rousseau led me back into the right track. The prestige of science faded away; I am learning to honor humanity worthily and I should regard myself as more useless than the meanest artisan, did I not henceforth use such knowledge as I possess in reestablishing the rights of mankind." Such a sentiment does not stand alone; at that time German thinkers willingly accepted suggestions (*Anregungen*) that came from other countries.

The German soul was still divided in this way between two separate worlds: the world of phenomena, as Kant calls it—a shapeless, inert mass; and the world of noumena, a transcendent domain of the spiritual and the ideal, when there took place those great events of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, the Revolution and the Empire.

The extreme depression in which Germany found itself after Jena, effected a powerful reaction in certain minds which professed admiration for the Prussian state. The famous "Speeches to the German Nation" which Fichte delivered before the University of Berlin during the winter of 1807-1808, when the capital was still occupied by the French, are the most remarkable expression of this

reaction. Luther had said: "What matters it if they take everything from us, property and honor, children and women; these things will not benefit them. The Empire must remain ours." Fichte introduces the revelation which is to turn this prediction into a reality. The thing he announces is that the supreme principle of creation and unity which the German mind sought in some transcendental world without, really dwells within itself, that the absolute self, the source of all activity, thought and being in the universe, is none other than the German self, the German genius, the *Deutschheit*, the kingdom of God within you. The character of the German tongue which alone is pure, primitive and living, as compared with the Latin tongues, made up of dead residua, is the sign and warrant of the quality of a primitive people, the first-born of God, *Urvolk*. Germany, compared with other nations, is spirit, life and good struggling against matter, death and evil. Let Germany but attain to self-knowledge and she will rise and overcome the world. The first thing is to understand that "for the time being, the combat of arms is over, and the combat of principles, morals and characters is beginning." It is a moral reform that is to bring about the resurrection of Germany. The revolution that is to be effected comprises two phases: (1) the German people must recover possession of itself, i. e., become aware of the primitive and autonomous power of creation which constitutes its essence; (2) it must spread German thought throughout the world; the self, in some way, must absorb the not-self, and thus effect a complete transformation of the human race, which, from being terrestrial and material, will become German, free and divine.

Such is Fichte's teaching. It aroused in the German soul the loftiest ambitions for independence and action, though it supplied few indications as to the concrete ends to pursue and the means to employ in realizing these ends. These gaps were filled, from the theoretical point of view, by Hegel, the principle of whose philosophy was the radical identity of the rational and the real, the ideal and the positive.

Spirit, to Hegel, is not only an invisible, supernatural power; it has created for itself a world within this world of ours and attains to supreme realization in a certain force, both material and spiritual, which is none other than what is called the state. The state is the highest of all realities; above it in the world of existence there is nothing. Its function is to organize liberty, i. e., to abolish individual wills and transform them into one common will, which, through its mass and unity of direction, will be capable of making

itself inevitable. The state, supreme intermediary between the world and God, spirit moulding into force, is the divine instrument for the realization of the ideal.

But how will this immanent God account for his concrete destinies and the precise ends toward which he must tend? Hegel answers this question by his philosophy of history. History, he teaches, is not the recital of events that have marked out the lives of human beings; it is a reality which exists *per se*, the work wrought in the world by universal spirit, destroying those creations of the human free will of which it disapproves and maintaining and causing to triumph those of which it approves. *Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*. "The world's history is the world's tribunal." The victors and the powerful of this world are the elect of God. Hegel, having lost his fortune during the war of the Empire, summed up his impressions regarding this period in the words: *Ich habe die Weltseele reiten sehen*, "I have seen the soul of the world ride past," referring to Napoleon.

Thus there is no obscurity regarding the moral value of the various existing institutions and the divers ends in view. That state is the noblest and the strongest, that policy the loftiest which acquires empire.

Imbued with these theories, which became increasingly positive and definite, the Germans, after Leipsic, after Waterloo, and after the treaties of 1815, were anything but satisfied. The genius of history in the year 9 B. C., by making Hermann victorious over the three legions of Varus, had inspired in all of German race the idea of eternal vengeance on Roman insolence.

Germany became more and more conscious that its material power was out of all proportion to its spiritual greatness and aspirations. The admiration which the world professed for its philosophers, poets and musicians, the widespread influence of its thought in the nineteenth century, was now but a vain delusion; it must have visible force and power, dominion over land and sea. This mental condition was expressed by Heine in the following four lines which were speedily in every one's mouth, and which, in a country where maxims possess great influence, still further increased the desire for vengeance and conquest:

"Franzosen und Russen gehört das Land,
Das Meer gehört den Britten;
Wir aber besitzen im Luftreich des Traums
Die Herrschaft unbestritten."

"The French and the Russians possess the land, the sea belongs

to the English. But we Germans in the aerial realm of dreamland hold undisputed sway."

Now, whilst German ambitions thus became more and more urgent and precise, especially as regards the situation regained by France, it came about that three successful campaigns, those of 1864, 1866 and 1870, suddenly and as it were miraculously raised Germany to the very front rank among the military and political powers of the world. What influence was this to have on German thought?

After the reconstruction of the German empire, or rather the creation of a unified empire, armed more powerfully than ever before against its neighbors, Germany was not content to exist for itself alone, and it speedily transformed Fichte's thought along the lines of the change that had taken place within itself. To realize in all its fulness and plenitude the idea of Germanism, to regenerate the world by bringing it to pass that the divine will should be done amongst the nations as it was in the elect people; such was German thought. No longer, however, as with Fichte, was it a question of substituting a strife of principles and morals for armed combat: actual events, as well as theory, had shown that force alone is a potency effectual toward realization; consequently it is by force that Germany must Germanize and recreate the world.

More than this: Leibniz and Kant admitted that different nations, differing in genius, had a like right to existence. The cobbler philosopher, Jacob Boehme, had long ago told men that God delights to hear each bird of the forest praise him in its own particular melody.

Now a victorious Germany, on the contrary, will regard German thought as exclusive of all other thought. To find room for Germanism, nowadays, means the destruction of that which, along the lines in which other nations think, appears incapable of being brought within the limits of German thought.

To determine these limits would involve the attempt to trace the main lines of that German culture in whose name Germany is now waging war.

The first object of German culture is force. The ideal without the real is but a misty vapor, moral beauty apart from power is but deception. Germany must acquire force, so that it may unhindered unfold all its possibilities and impose on the world its culture, the superiority of which the various nations, in their ignorance and conceit, cannot of themselves recognize.

Besides, force, *per se*, is a fine and noble thing, which the weak

depreciate only because they are afraid of it and cannot enroll it on their own side.

Force is superiority according to nature: this is a supreme and inviolable law. Force is the principle of everything that exists in reality and not simply in the abstract. It is the basis of all laws and contracts, and these become nothing when it is no longer there to sanction them.

Force is the basis of German culture. It is vain, declares the famous manifesto of the ninety-three "intellectuals," to claim that, in resisting our militarism, you respect our culture. "Without German militarism, German culture would long ago have disappeared from the face of the earth."

The second object of German culture is organization, without which there is no effective force. Organization is essentially German. The other nations believe in the efficacy of the solitary effort of a man of genius, or in the duty incumbent on the community to respect the dignity of each of its members. German organization, starting with the idea of the All, sees in each man a *Teilmensch*, a partial man; and, rigorously applying the principle of the division of labor, restricts each worker to the special task assigned to him. From man it eliminates humanity, which it regards as the wheelwork of a machine.

Hence education is something essentially external. It is training and not education in the real meaning of the word, *Drill*, not *Erziehung*. It teaches men to act as anonymous parts of ever greater masses. The bond between individuals, which, according to the Greeks and Romans, was reason, regarded as the common essence of all men (*ratio vinculum societatis*) is here purely external; it is the coordination of various functions with a view to the realization of a given end.

Organization, thus understood, is the means of obtaining force; it is also, in itself, according to German thought, the highest form of being. Thus it is Germany's mission, after having organized itself by German ideas, to organize the whole world along similar lines. The kingdom of God on earth is the world organized in German fashion by German force.

The third element of German culture is science. This comprises all those methods which, by the appropriation of the forces of nature, multiply the force of man *ad infinitum*. Since 1870, applied science has been considerably developed in Germany. Technical institutes have now superseded the universities in public esteem.

Science, however, as a whole, constitutes that title of honor which Germany specially values. German science is self-sufficient; it is the source upon which all other science draws.

Besides, German science has characteristics of its own. German workers in the physical sciences aim at coordinating the results obtained by workers all over the world. It is their mission to organize scientific research, as they do everything else, to state problems, classify results and deduce conclusions. Science, in its strict meaning, is German science.

The physical sciences have their counterpart in the historical sciences, whose object it is to set each human event in the place which belongs to it in the whole. This task, also, can be perfectly accomplished only by Germany. It alone indeed can strip the individual of his own distinctive value, to identify him with the all of which he forms a part. Itself is the great All, the realization of which is the end of this universe.

Such then are the characteristics of German historical science. Learned specialists, under the direction of a competent master, first collect documents, criticise texts and develop their meaning. Then the German genius effects a synthesis, i. e., sets forth each fact in the history of the progress of Germanism, this history being regarded as that of humanity. That the historian's attention may not be diverted to unimportant facts the Kaiser recommends him to adopt the lobster method, *Krebsgang*, i. e., to proceed backward, taking the present function of the Hohenzollerns in the world, the culminating fact of history, and going on to those facts which, even as far back as the creation of the world, have prepared and announced that phenomenon.

Force, organization, science: these are the three principles of German culture. The more they develop the nobler a life do they make possible for the German people and for the world.

After 1870, material life in Germany became transformed to an extraordinary degree. The simple, modest habits of past generations were followed by an effort to live the most modern and luxurious life, to procure the maximum of wealth and enjoyment.

The arts date back to the forms most purely German or even to the pre-classic forms of a hoary antiquity which, in their primitive colossal character, are evidently indebted to the genius of Germany. Why then pretend to be sorry at the fact that masterpieces of French and Flemish art have been ruined, to no purpose, by German shells? To restore—and more than restore—their original beauty, they only need to be restored or rebuilt by German artists.

And lastly the *chef-d'œuvre* of German culture, that which really, according to the Kaiser's definition, makes it a culture, and not simply an external polish, such as is found in the Latins, is the moral formation of man, the total abolition of the idea of right and its substitution by the sane, virile and religious idea of duty. The German is a man who obeys. He regards the whole of moral life as consisting in obedience to authority. From the German point of view, whosoever obeys his superior is free from reproach, and this is so right up to the emperor, who, as William the Second said in 1897, "is responsible to the Creator alone, without this awful responsibility ever being, in the slightest degree, shared either by ministers, assemblies or people."

Every order given by a chief, or by a functionary however inferior, emanates from the emperor, i. e., from God. Hence we see how absurd it was to use the word "atrocious" to designate the conduct of German soldiers in the present war, as the Allies have had the audacity to do. German soldiers are disciplined above all else, consequently their acts could never be branded as atrocious; they are deeds of war; the emperor alone is responsible for them, and that before God alone.

II.

We have endeavored to reveal some of the main traits of German thought during the three periods of the modern history of Germany. Let us now see what answer we can give to the question which every one is asking: "What connection is there between the Germany of the present and the Germany of the past?"

We cannot say that Germany has not changed. It is contrary to fact either to claim, as the Germans do, that Germany remains faithful to the idealism of Kant, Beethoven and Goethe, or to identify the Germany of these thinkers and artists with the vandalism which present-day Germany glories in exhibiting.

There can be no doubt of it; Germany *has* changed. Ever since 1870 any one who has observed German life has seen this very clearly. Before that date, and especially before 1864, it was possible for a Frenchman to reside in Germany without his national dignity being assailed; after 1870 this was not so.

The periods 1806-1815 and 1864-1871 are clear demarcations of the new tendencies of German thought. The Germany to which Fichte appealed in 1807 still regarded itself as a nation amongst nations. Fichte taught that it was the "type" nation, the primitive race, the only one free from corruption, and whose mission it was

to rule and regenerate the universe. What else can we see but a veritable moral revolution in the claim that Germany henceforth set up that it will suffice unto itself, whereas formerly it quietly submitted to foreign influence or divine inspiration?

Fichte's speeches marked the advent of a spiritual Germanism; the wars of unification, as the Germans now call the three wars of 1864-1870, establish the transformation of this spiritual Germanism into a material Germanism. Whilst attending the classes at the University of Heidelberg in 1869 I found a radical divergence in thought on this matter. *Einheit durch Freiheit*, "unity through liberty," was the formula of Bluntschli, the professor of international law. This meant that Germany, above all else, was to maintain itself free and attain to unification in a federative sense, not in a spirit of hostility toward its neighbors. The other formula: *Freiheit durch Einheit*, "liberty through unity," was upheld by the historian Treitschke. It meant that Germany was to aim, above all else, at unity pure and simple, a unity imposed by force and which also gives force, to obtain which it must fling itself into the arms of Prussia, and this latter country would realize this unity through war with France.

The program of Bluntschli tended to the continued independent status of Germany, that of Treitschke to its abdication into the hands of Prussia. The war of 1870 ended in the definite conquest of Germany by Prussia and the indefinite postponement of liberty in favor of unity and force.

That the transition from each of these phases to the next was not necessary and inevitable, that, from the one to the other, Germany effected a veritable change, is proved by the part which certain external causes played in this development.

Circumstances assuredly played at first a considerable part in the evolution that came about. Jena and Sedan are not two logical stages in the inner development of German thought. The influence of these two events was certainly decisive. Jena determined in Germany a reaction, of which, left to itself, it was incapable. Sedan made it definitely impossible for Germany to recover its independence.

Certain men, too, by the might of their personality, contributed to the evolution of German thought. Fichte electrified his listeners in 1807-1808 by his energetic will even more than by his learned deductions. Bismarck plunged his nation and king into war, giving this war historical significance by the way in which he provoked it and the object he had in view. Treitschke, a converted theorist of

Prussian absolutism, was an orator of amazing passion and violence, as I verified for myself when I heard him in the large Aula of Heidelberg university in 1869. Napoleon, above all, became a mythical hero substituted for the real man, a genius too big for the little nation to which he thought he belonged, the bearer of the idea and of the very soul of the world, as Hegel said. Just as the French were the custodians of Latin thought, so the German people is the true heir and executor of the thought of Napoleon, the genius who, directly or indirectly, created German unity and dictated to Europe its task, that of driving back the barbarians of the East and ruining the merchants of the West. The soul of Napoleon is the soul of the German people: his star goes in front of the German armies and is to lead them to victory.

In a word Germany is now largely the product of an external phenomenon, i. e., of education. Ever since Fichte education has been employed most methodically and energetically in moulding the human consciousness as well as the human body. Instruction of every kind, religion and history, grammar and geography, dancing and gymnastics, must contribute mainly in forming Germans who speak and act, almost by reflex action, along the lines of an increase of German might. The examples given in grammar books inculcate scorn of the "hereditary foe." By playing with colors and the orthography of names, atlases annex countries which ought to belong to Germany. Historical treatises, in conformity with Fichte's theory, set forth the Latins as being Germans corrupted by an admixture of Roman blood. Philosophers still speak, in stereotyped fashion, of internal development, of the awakening of thought and personality. In fact, however, instruction is essentially a mechanical training: it aims at making men serviceable (*brauchbar*), by establishing the principle that the first end to pursue is to create an enormous war-machine in which minds and arms unhesitatingly obey the word of command.

By instruction, collective action, books, speeches, songs, personal influence, attempts are made in Germany to inculcate certain doctrines; it would seem that clear-cut formulas and speeches are more effective in this land than in any other. It is amazing to find exactly identical theories in the words and writings of Germans of every rank and locality.

We have seen that the change apparent in German thought since the seventeenth century is not apparent and superficial, but real and profound. The Germany of to-day is quite a different Germany from that of Leibniz and Kant, of Goethe and Beethoven.

Does this mean that there is no connection between the two, and that the contingent character of this development implies a complete breach of continuity?

A profound analysis of Germany's intellectual and moral past proves that this is not so, but that, on the contrary, very characteristic germs of the mental state now manifest existed in the past. The phase of thought that has come about has not been a metamorphosis, the substitution, for a given being, of an entirely new one; it has consisted in the increasingly exclusive unfolding of certain parts of the German character which, in the past, were tempered by others. What was in the background has passed to the front, or even thrust back all the rest to such an extent that it now appears to exist alone. It is like some characteristic which, present in a child and attracting but little attention because it is of secondary importance, becomes exaggerated in the man under the influence of circumstances and the will and finally controls the entire nature.

It is assuredly strange that Germany has passed from worship of God to worship of itself. Scholars however have discovered in the German character as it has revealed itself from the beginning, such a substratum of arrogance as we find few examples of in history. The Germans have a rare propensity to identify their own interest with that of the universe, and their point of view with that of God. Hence that narrow and insolent dogmatism which they themselves regard as an important trait in their character. "Do not forget," we read in a collection of poems intended for the German soldiers of 1914, "to put into practice that famous saying: *Nur Lumpen sind bescheiden*, (Only louts are modest)."

Not only in the German character generally, but also in the teachings of philosophers, is to be discovered a singular tendency to put the self, the German self, in the place of God.

German philosophy, along with Kant and Fichte, tends to include those things which our simple good sense considers as existing apart from ourselves as imaginary processes unconsciously performed by our intellectual powers. The external world, says Kant, is an object constructed for himself by the subject, that he may become conscious of himself by contrasting himself with it. And Fichte adds that the self creates this object as a whole without borrowing anything from an external world which does not exist. When at Heidelberg in 1869, attending Zeller's lectures, I was amazed to hear the professor once begin with the words: "To-day we will construct God."

Is it any wonder that the mind which attributes to itself the

power to construct God should come to regard itself as God? and since Fichte, after Jena, saw his transcendental deduction culminate in the conception of the German genius as a foundation of the absolute self, is it not logical that this philosopher came to identify Germanism with divine Providence?

Thus the present deification of Germanism is connected with the history and philosophy of Germany. It may seem a more difficult matter to discover in the idealistic Germany of the past the mother of the realistic, materialistic and brutal Germany of the present.

And yet it may be remarked that in German thought the idea of power, force, war, destruction and evil has always held an important place. In vain did the old German god Wotan cause the death of Ymir, the ice giant; in vain perished the giants of old, drowned in the blood of Ymir; one of them escaped death and from him was born a new race of giants to fight the gods. On the other hand, it is with the various parts of the wicked giant Ymir's body that Wotan and his brothers built up the world. The powers of evil did not cease to haunt forests and deserted spots. The *erl-king*, hiding in belts of clouds and in dry leaves, snatches children from their fathers' arms.

Moreover let us not forget that the Prussians, the master nation, were not brought into Christianity until the end of the thirteenth century, by Teutonic knights who succeeded in reducing them only after fifty years of warfare. It is not to be wondered at if the pagan element tends to assert itself and sometimes represents the God of the Christ in a form that would be more suitable to the Moloch of the Phenicians.

It would seem as though the teachings of the philosophers form a counterpart to these popular beliefs. In them we find evil occupying quite another place from that it holds in Greek teachings.

This line of thought starts with the principle, indisputable in itself, that to will the realization of an end is to will the means without which this realization is impossible. In the application of this principle, however, the Germans tended to admit that none but mechanical means, those forces which as a whole constitute matter, are efficacious, and that there is no effective potency in idea as such, in good will, in justice or in love. Aristotle's god was intelligence and goodness. Apart from himself was material force which, in a wholly spiritual way, he permeated with desire and thought. The principle of being, on the other hand, according to Jacob Boehme, the old "Teuton philosopher," has for its basis non-

being, night, endless desire, invading force, contradiction, pain and evil. According to the fundamental law of being, he says, nothing can be realized except by being set over against its opposite; light can be born only from darkness. God can come forth only from the devil. *Die Finsterniss, die sich das Licht gebar*, "Darkness, the mother of light," said Mephistopheles.

The optimist Leibniz himself said that good can be realized only by acknowledging the power of evil. Kant shows us that thought is incapable of being stated unless it be set over against a material object. And whilst he seeks for the means of leading men toward a perpetual peace, the first means that he recommends is war. "Away with the Arcadian life beloved of sensitive souls," he wrote in 1784. "Thanks be to nature for those instincts of discord and malevolent vanity, of the insatiable desire after wealth and rule with which she has endowed men. But for these instincts the nobler mind of humanity would eternally slumber. Man wills concord and harmony, but nature knows better what is good for him; she wills discord."

By applying in this way the principle of the conditions of realization, we are led to state the famous maxim: *Macht geht vor Recht*, i. e., all right is illusory, a pure metaphysical entity, vain material for harangues and recriminations, unless based on a force capable of compelling it. To speak of right when one is devoid of force, is impudently and criminally to challenge the one who possesses force. To those who indulge in such bluster, the Germans address the following rebuke: A policy of force devoid of force is mischievous nonsense, (*Eine Machtpolitik ohne Macht ist ein frevelhafter Unsinn*).

The final step consisted in transforming the means into an end, in saying not only: force precedes right, but even: force itself is right.

This line of progress in philosophy has been prepared by the famous doctrine of preestablished harmony, according to which, throughout the universe, the visible is the faithful symbol of the invisible. Here force is not only a condition, but an external sign, a practical substitute for right.

Then, accustomed to regard things from the standpoint of the absolute, and convinced that, in the essence of things, force is the first and fundamental principle, German thought has come to deify force *qua* force, to transform it from a means into an end, an essential end, in which all others are included.

Thus practical materialism no less than the apotheosis of Ger-

manism which at present characterizes German thought shows itself as the development of certain germs which preexisted both in the German mind and in the teachings of German philosophers.

Perhaps one of the deepest inner causes of the trend of German thought is to be found in a remarkable trait which seems rooted in the tendency to disparage feeling and attach value to intellect and will alone.

This is an unfamiliar aspect of German mentality, for in many of us the very name of Germany still calls up ideas of romanticism and sentimentality. Present-day Germans affirm that sentimentality, in Germany, has never been more than a passing malady, an infection resulting from inoculation with the Celto-Latin virus. It seems impossible that Frenchmen should so far despise the popular *Lieder* of Germany, the music of a Weber, a Schubert or a Schumann. Still it appears in conformity with the general history of German thought to maintain that feeling or sentiment, wherever found, is in Germany essentially individual and has no part to play in fulfilling the destinies of the universe, or even of human societies. The horror as regards feeling affected by such champions of Prussian thought as Frederick II and Bismarck, is proverbial. Feeling, said Bismarck, is to cold reason what weeds are to corn; it must be rooted up and burnt. The essential character of the Prussian state is to be, exclusively and despotically, an intelligence and a force, to the exclusion of all moral feeling similar to that existing in the individual. Not that the state knows nothing of ethics and is incapable of virtue. On the contrary it is the very *chef-d'œuvre* of ethics. Its mission however is to be strong, to recognize nothing but force. Its virtue consists in carrying out its mission in all loyalty. The more the state, like the individual, is what it ought to be, the more moral it is.

Not only in Prussian politicians, but in German philosophers in general, is there noticed a tendency to intellectualism, or to radical voluntarism, or else to a union of these two doctrines. The philosophy of Leibniz, whose main idea is to substitute harmony for unity as the principle of things, gives a wholly intellectual meaning to this harmony; it is the correspondence by virtue of which the various beings of nature, as they are complementary to one another, realize the greatest amount of existence it is possible to conceive without contradiction. Kant's system culminated in a theory of science and in one of ethics, from both of which feeling was excluded. And if this philosopher seems to reinstate feeling as the necessary link between science and ethics, in his *Critique of the*

Judgment, it is but to fling it onto the Procrustean bed of his categories and there reduce it to concepts and abstractions. If Fichte admires the philosophy of Rousseau it is only on condition that feeling be replaced by will. As for German mysticism, this is an intellectual intuition of the Absolute or a taking possession of the generating power of things, far more than a communion of persons bound together by love. Both the romantics and the German philosophers of "feeling" retain the spirit of abstraction and system which marks the preponderance of understanding over sensibility. And what the youthful generations of Germany seek in Frederick Nietzsche is more specially the religion of brute force, which looks upon goodness as cowardice and hypocrisy, and tolerates the existence of the humble only in so far as they can play the part of good slaves.

Suppose, in a nation, that intelligence and will alone are regarded as noble and effectual, feeling being relegated to the individual conscience; and you can readily imagine that a frame of mind similar to that of present-day Germany will be developed therein.

In the domain of idea and reasoning, the habit of sophistry will be created. Indeed if you remove feeling which, joined with intelligence and will, produces good sense, judgment, honesty, justice and humanity, then intelligence and will, in a soul thus mutilated, will be no more than a machine, a sum-total of forces ready to place themselves at the service of any cause without distinction. The will, in such a conception of life, takes itself as an end, and wills simply in order to will. Science claims to have supplied a peremptory demonstration because, from the mass of facts it has piled up, it has drawn those that proceed to some particular well-defined object. This will, however, in spite of the efforts of dialectics, does not find in itself a law which transcends it. And this intelligence, to which the object is indifferent, will be able to deduce from the facts, if the will dictates, the contrary of what itself had successfully demonstrated. To discover truth, said Pascal, we must unite the mathematical to the intuitive mind. Now the latter consists of feeling as well as of intellect.

In practice, the elimination of feeling leads to the unrestricted profession of that immoral maxim: the end justifies the means. From this point of view, all that is required of the means is that they be calculated to realize the end. It is not our business to inquire whether the means used are, *per se*, cruel, treacherous, inhuman, shameful or monstrous; all these appreciations emanate from feeling and so are valueless to an intellect which professes to

repudiate feeling. Indeed it may happen that the most blamable means may be capable of producing advantageous and even good results.

And moreover what, by this system, is an end that is qualified as good? When ends, like means, depend only on intellect and will, to the exclusion of feeling, then the end best justified is force, absolute and despotic domination, devoid of all admixture of sensibility and humanity. And the final word of culture is the synthesis of power and science, the result of the combination of intellect and will alone.

In a world ruled by such culture there are only systems of forces; persons have disappeared. Individuals and nations no longer possess any dignity or right in themselves; to interest oneself in their existence and liberty would be to yield to feeling, to take account of purely subjective tendencies and desires. Intellect and will take cognizance of nothing but the whole, the sole unity to which power belongs; they consider the parts only in so far as these are identified with the whole.

And the condition of the perfect organization of the world is that there should exist a master-people, *ein Herrenvolk*, which, through its omnipotence, will terrorize or subdue inferior nations and compel them to carry out, in the universal task, the part which itself has imposed on them.

If the comparisons here established between the present and the past of Germany are correct, then we need not labor under any illusion as to the relatively new and contingent element in the conduct of contemporary Germany. This development has not been a destined one, its germs were preexistent in the German mind. External conditions have caused Germany to fall over on the side to which it was leaning. Inclinations which, held in check by others, might have remained pure tendencies and been simply expressed as literary, artistic and philosophical works, once they were allowed free play have become great and destructive forces of moral order and of human civilization.

An attentive study of Germany's past shows that there is nothing in explanations which regard the present madness as other than the sudden and fleeting reaction of a stricken organism against the enemies that threaten its existence. Germany is pleased to pose as a victim. As a matter of fact, war is its element. "The German empire is wholly based on war," wrote General von Bernhardt in 1911. The *pax germana* is nothing but an artful war, ever ready to change into open warfare. For it is Germany's policy to be al-

ways on bad terms with its neighbors, to be constantly contriving pretexts for picking a quarrel with and afterward crushing them.

Let us then beware of regarding the present war as but a crisis, an accident, or of thinking that, with the signing of a treaty, we may abandon ourselves to the sweet delights of an unalterable peace. We have been duly warned that the Germans regard a treaty as but a scrap of paper; and the entire past, of which this war is the conclusion, will not have reverted to a state of nonentity because a few signatures have been exchanged.

And so when the war is over, for months and years, for centuries even, we must be watchful and ready for action.

Of this we are fully capable. The Germans had spread the rumor—it seemed at times as though they had made us believe it ourselves—that we were an amiable though frivolous (*leichtfertig*) nation, fickle and noisy children, incapable of being earnest and persevering. Both our army and our youth are now showing, in very simple fashion, that if we are possessed of the ardor and generosity commonly attributed to us, we are also not lacking in constancy, in calm and firm courage, in steady and indefatigable determination.

Moreover the nation has realized, frankly and without any effort, by means of a patriotism as high-minded as it is warm-hearted, that affectionate, harmonious understanding, that open and hearty collaboration in the common task, which is the promise and the pledge of success in all human endeavors. What weight have differences of opinion, of positions or interests, to men who have been fighting together side by side, each one sacrificing himself for his comrades, without respect of birth or rank, *à la française*?

Our army and our youth are now setting us an example of the loftiest virtues, human as well as military, virtues which will be necessary for us in the near future, just as, in the present, they are the promise of victory. All honor to our sons; let us try to show ourselves like them!

EDITORIAL COMMENTS.

Though the contents of the January number of *The Open Court* had been decided upon, I determined at once to change my plans upon receipt of word from Mr. Jourdain in England that he had procured a good translation, by Mr. Fred Rothwell, of Prof. Emile Boutroux's article on "The Evolution of German Thought," which is printed in the current issue. I feel that I ought to publish

my answer to Messrs. Paul Hyacinthe Loyson of Paris, Charles T. Gorham of London, and C. Marsh Beadnell of the British Royal Navy, as soon as possible, but I am exceedingly anxious to let my adversaries have every advantage, and I would deem it wrong to use my editorial privileges to press my views into the foreground. Therefore I prefer to let the article by M. Boutroux take precedence over my answer to my critics, which can wait for the February number. My readers will profit by making the acquaintance of one of the best and most scholarly of French thinkers, a man whom I was fortunate enough to meet personally in Heidelberg several years ago at a philosophical congress which took place in that beautiful old university town on the Neckar.

Professor Boutroux is the head of the Thiers Foundation in Paris, the nature and purpose of which were discussed in *The Open Court* of May, 1912. This institution is devoted to the development of promising young men during the period of transition from youth to manhood; by offering a home to postgraduate students, and facilities for carrying on their favorite lines of research before they enter practical life. Professor Boutroux, however, was interesting to me not only on account of the prominent position he holds in the academic circles of his country, but also and mainly because of his personal accomplishments. While American members of the congress who took an active part in the proceedings addressed the audience (which was predominantly German) in their own native English, Professor Boutroux, who is a native Frenchman, spoke a pure and idiomatic German, remarkably clear and perfect in pronunciation and also admirable in diction. I know quite a number of Frenchmen who speak good German, but I know too that they are exceptions, for it is more difficult for a Frenchman to learn German than for a German to learn French. It is almost as difficult for French people to learn German as it is for English people to learn French,—not quite so difficult, however, for the latter feat seems to lie well-nigh in the domain of impossibilities.

Professor Boutroux however is well versed not alone in German language and literature, he is also familiar with German philosophy, perhaps better than many Germans to the manner born; and when an opportunity presented itself of acquiring an article by him on "German Thought" I was delighted and would have gone far for the privilege of acquainting myself with his views on the subject and presenting them to the readers of *The Open Court*.

M. Boutroux is sufficiently acquainted with German thought to know its ideal tendencies, its humanitarian basis and cosmopolitan

outlook, but is it possible that he should judge of it quite impartially and fairly when the two nations, Germany and his own dear France, are at war, when Germany has been accused of barbaric atrocities and treacherous politics? Scarcely!

Not only does Professor Boutroux know Germany; but Germany also knows Professor Boutroux. Shortly before the war he had been invited to deliver a lecture at the University of Berlin, where he spoke on May 16, 1914, on the subject of "German Thought and French Thought." His lecture has been translated into English and has just appeared in the *Educational Review* of December, 1915.

The present article of Professor Boutroux is written after almost a year of war, and though the author is affected by this crisis in his country's history, we cannot but acknowledge that he has made an honest endeavor to be fair.

To Professor Boutroux the Germany of to-day is the nation that opposes might against right, that believes in brutal force and violence and takes delight in destroying treasures of art and butchering women and children. The germs of this brutality he sees in the mind of the old Teutons; only in former days the idealism of poets and thinkers had a better chance to develop, while in modern Germany the dominant and militant Prussia took the lead and thus impressed the new spirit of barbarism upon the whole people. Indeed, Professor Boutroux reminds us that the Prussians, the "master nation" as he calls them, "were not brought into Christianity until the end of the thirteenth century by Teutonic knights who succeeded in reducing them only after fifty years of warfare. It is not to be wondered at if the pagan element tends to assert itself and sometimes represents the God of the Christ in a form that would be more suitable to the Moloch of the Phenicians."

This is a queer statement for a scholar of M. Boutroux's prominence. The Prussians whom the Teutonic knights subdued in the thirteenth century were Slavs, not Germans; they were the Masures in whose country Hindenburg has lately won the battle of Tannenberg over the Russians. They were still pagans in the thirteenth century, but exercised no influence on German thought. I grant however that German paganism maintained itself in German Christianity; that Christ assumed some features of Thor, the son of Wodan; and that this pagan character of German Christianity did not a little to prepare the Reformation which found a better soil in the Germanic countries than among the Latin nations. The Prince Elector of Brandenburg assumed the title of King of Prussia

only because Prussia did not belong to the German empire. In Prussia he was an independent sovereign, in Germany he was a vassal of the emperor, and so the state of Brandenburg changed its name to Prussia and a large part of the inhabitants of northern Germany to-day call themselves Prussians without thereby becoming the descendants of the Masures, who were pagans as late as the thirteenth century and have belonged to the German empire only since 1871.

I will not enter here into details or attempt to refute Professor Boutroux's belief in the atrocities and other barbarities of the Germans. That has been done again and again, including the allegation about the destruction of the library of Louvain and of the cathedral of Rheims. The Germans have not proved half as barbarous as the British marines, nor even as the French, but misrepresentation is part of the methods of warfare among the Allies. I regret that a scholar of Professor Boutroux's prominence uncritically accepts these fabrications, which for a while will hurt the German cause but will in the long run discredit their inventors.

I do not think that a German philosopher or a German statesman has ever claimed that "might is right," but I know that Germany has found out by experience that "right devoid of might" is an illusion. When the French took Heidelberg and wantonly destroyed Heidelberg castle by blasting its towers and burning its artistic halls there was certainly no more right on the French side than when they took Strasburg and Metz. If they possessed any right it was the right of the wolf who devoured the lamb. German philosophy found out that right without might is as useless as the right of the lamb in the jaws of the wolf, and having suffered so much by its lamblike and mightless right, it was highly desirable to impress upon the German mind the absolute necessity and indispensability of might.

Germans are by nature sentimental; they are inclined to follow the impulses of feeling; but experience has taught them to subordinate feeling to intelligence.

It is also true that German philosophy has emphasized that right and duty belong together. The French, in their Revolution, stood upon the rights of man, while Kant, the representative German thinker, insists first on man's duty. The truth is that right presupposes duty and that duty involves right. But it is wise to insist on duty first, and frivolous to clamor for rights or privileges without remembering that they involve responsibilities and can only be acquired by faithful attendance to duty.

The German people have learned this truth and follow it better than any other nationality, but duty has not for that reason been identified in Germany with unthinking slavish obedience. On the contrary, even in the Prussian army the request is made that acts of obedience must not be carried out in slavish or literal submission to a command, but in intelligent comprehension of the sense and purpose of the command and with due consideration of changed conditions.

It is a rather strange idea to make of Napoleon "the soul of the German people" because he was "the genius who directly or indirectly created German unity." Napoleon did it indirectly by teaching them that right without might is an empty dream; but I will add that the Germans, in developing this indispensable element, might, have never forgotten and have never ceased to teach that might, in order to justify itself, needs the foundation of right. Napoleon represents might, and his might was ruthless force, but he could not maintain himself because he disregarded right, and the end was a collapse of his might.

Napoleon has found more justice and more appreciative judges in Germany than in any other country, not even France excepted, but even his most enthusiastic admirers in Germany have never identified the soul of Napoleon with that of Germany.

There is a minor point in Professor Boutroux's exposition which has really nothing to do with the question of German thought and its implications in the present historical crisis. It is the reference to the Kaiser's suggestion to change the traditional method of education which has been criticised as a *Krebsgang* or retrograde movement.

In the German gymnasium, Latin is taught first and the modern languages later on. Latin thus serves as the basis for instruction, later, in French, Italian and Spanish, and it is frequently the case that Germans are acquainted with Latin but do not know French. Their education in this respect is an unpractical one. So the Kaiser thought it would be better to teach schoolboys first the living tongues and then the old dead language from which they have developed. Philologists, who think that the traditional method is preferable, objected to this reversal in their educational methods and denounced it as reactionary and unpractical. Fair or unfair, the name *Krebsgang* is a slogan which was largely responsible for the defeat of the Kaiser's proposal.

In conclusion I will say that Boutroux's prophecy that "a victorious Germany will regard German thought as exclusive of all

other thought," seems to me unfair and underrates German intelligence. Professor Boutroux must know that one reason for German preeminence consists in the cosmopolitan character of the German mind. The German people have always been possessed of an ambition to understand other peoples, to acquire their spiritual accomplishments, to translate their literary treasures, and to enrich their own souls by the products of other civilizations. If the Germans, after their victory over the Allies, acted as prophesied by Professor Boutroux they would indeed ruin her prospect for future progress and enter upon a period of decay.

Let us hope that for the greatest good of humanity her *neutrality* will not ossify so soon, but on the contrary will rejuvenate with new tasks and wider fields of activity. Even her former enemies would be benefited thereby. But, otherwise, they would suffer as Greece suffered through the decay of Rome after her conquest by that country.

I believe in Germany. My British and French critics condemn Germany. Our opinions, however, are mere subjective judgments which decide nothing. The God of history weighs the nations in the balance and gives victory to those which he finds worthy. When the final decision has been pronounced we shall know better how and why one of the two parties was found wanting.