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THE FALLACY OF THE
GERMAN
STATE PHILOSOPHY

BY

DR. GEORGE W. CRILE



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THE FALLACY OF THE GERMAN
STATE PHILOSOPHY

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THE FALLACY
OF THE
GERMAN STATE
PHILOSOPHY

BY
GEORGE W. CRILE



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To
SIR BERKELEY MOYNIHAN

THE FALLACY OF THE GERMAN STATE PHILOSOPHY

We are in war, but war is only a part of what we are in; we are in a revolution of the moral, social, educational, and political systems of the great human race. War is the expression of but one phase of this fateful revolution. If we are to survive and remain free, we must accurately value our own creed and the creed of our enemy, to the end that we may strengthen the foundation and augment the superstructure of our civilization.

Our enemy is guided by a definite and a published philosophy. We must therefore establish and publish our own philosophy. We must examine the validity of the principles for which we are contending, as well as of those against which we are contending. We must know the truth—are we right, or is our enemy right? Is there a flaw in the premises of the German State philosophy?

Through the schools and through the universities the ideas of the German philosophers, of Nietzsche and of Treitschke, in particular, have created a state of mind peculiar to Germany. This state of mind, in which religious elements are combined with biologic con-

cepts, is the result, in part, of the implantation of the seeds of Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, in the struggle for existence, upon the intensely religious German mind.

The German adaptation of Darwin's conception may be expressed as follows: In nature the strongest and the most clever species of animal is best adapted for existence, hence that species survives and its competitors perish. German philosophy assumes that, among the peoples of the earth, the Germans, collectively and individually, are the strongest and the most clever. They conclude, therefore, that the German people are the fittest to survive; and that they, therefore, have the right to exercise their

higher survival qualities. In the exercise of this right they conclude that they are entitled to take from other nations, by methods of peace or of war, their land, their wealth, their very existence itself, since this is the logical right of the fittest animal engaged in the struggle for survival. The German State philosophy not only assumes the right but holds it as a duty to thus extend dominion by force over other people. Comparing the migrated German individual with individuals of other stock, we hold that the efficiency of the German State is not the result of any superiority of the German stock to the Anglo-Saxon or to the Latin stock, but that it is due to the establishment of an organi-

zation in which, by a type of collective effort, the individual, to a greater degree than is true of the individual in any other State, has given up his initiative—his will—to the State, which has been governed by an able and an honest ruling class. In other words, Germany has established what she calls a *kultur*, by means of which a superior State has been created out of good average human beings. Therefore, when the Germans speak of their rights as those of the fittest, they refer to their State rather than to the individuals of that State.

For the purpose of our argument, let us accept the German premise that, at this period of history, the German State is the

most highly efficient—in agriculture, in manufacture, in learning, in art, in science, and in war. Now, if in the last analysis might does give right, do the inexorable laws of evolution apply to human beings as they apply to lower animals and plants? Is force right?

Nothing but force gives the wolf the right to the life of the sheep; nothing but force gives the sheep the right to the grass; nothing but force gives the grass the right to the soil. On the basis of evolution alone, what gives man the right to take the milk from the cow or the wool from the sheep? What gives man the right to enslave animals; to kill millions of animals without their consent—not for their good, but for the

good of man? What gives man the right to occupy the earth so completely to the disadvantage of many other worthy animals? Force and the ability to use that force to the advantage of man—that is, the exercise of man's qualities of fitness—man's adaptability. What gave our forefathers the right to dispossess the American Indian of a continent, not for the good of the Indians, but for the good of our ancestors; not at the request nor with the consent of the Indian, but by the exercise, on the part of our ancestors, of greater fitness to survive? Within the period of history we have seen weaker races yield to stronger, fitter races. There is evidence that this occurred even

more strikingly in prehistoric ages.

Does it, then, follow that the German State is justified in exercising its superior fitness for survival against its less fit neighbouring States? The German premise is this—Germany has established the fittest State for survival; Germany, therefore, has the right to exercise her survival faculties.

If this premise can be proved, then Germany is right; and this premise will be proved to be either true or false. It will be proved, not by theoretic considerations, but by the verdict of the present struggle. If the German wins permanently, then his premise becomes an established fact, and the German philosophers are right. The German supremacy would

then be established, just as one species of plants or animals establishes its supremacy over another species when it migrates into the territory of the other. Evolution has always declared the victor to be right, and the present status of the numerous plants and animals that now occupy the earth is right, because of the exercise of their superior fitness to survive.

In the German premise, might is synonymous with fitness to survive. It is the fittest that survives, and it is true in nature that, in most instances, the fittest are mightiest. This is true of most plants, of most trees; it is true of most animals. But it is equally true that some of the mightiest animals have proved less fit in the

struggle than their competitors with other qualities. Even among the lower animals might does not always win.

The German philosopher, however, may say that intellectual might is as important as muscular might. This is true, and if Germany loses the present struggle it will not be because of a lack of physical or intellectual force or for want of coöperation or sacrifice on the part of her people, but for another reason equally potent and based on the same biologic principle.

Let us recall the qualities that have enabled man to struggle successfully with other competing species. Compared with the animals over whom he has estab-

lished his supremacy, man is not so strong, he is not so fleet, he is not so prolific, he is not so well equipped with means of defence or with means of offence. Compared with certain of these animals he is inferior in muscular power, in the sense of smell, of hearing, of sight, of touch, and in his means of protection against cold and heat and rain. He is less protected against disease and he is shorter-lived. Man has no protecting carapace. He has no repellent odour. He has no sharp claws and no powerful teeth. He climbs a tree awkwardly. He is timid in water. In each of his several physical qualities he is outclassed by many animals.

If survival depended only upon

physical might, a band of powerful gorillas would prevail over any band of men, just as the keen senses, the powerful limbs, the prowess of the lion have made him the ruler over less powerfully equipped animals.

As the fierce struggles during the evolution of animals progressed, man rose rapidly through the development of his master organ of strategy—the brain—and the evolution of his hands. In his brain was found the efficient substitute for teeth and claws, for fleetness and for keen senses.

In time, the caveman, the bushman, and the tribe developed.

Up to this point there is no flaw in the German logic, for, up to this point the mightiest family

and the mightiest tribe were right.

These primitive ancestors, however, were able to dominate but a limited environment; they barely held their own against many competing animals. In time certain momentous developments in the vast history of man occurred, viz.: the discovery and control of fire, the cultivation of useful plants, the domestication of animals, the manufacture of simple tools. With these advances there developed an increasingly rapid control over the forces of nature and the human race began to multiply more rapidly. Instead of running away or fighting with his muscles, man learned more and more how to circumvent his enemies. One after another, useful additions were

made to man's reactions, which, in turn, were augmented by his children.

As the means of controlling the forces of nature increased in number and as handicrafts and machinery became more numerous and more nearly complete, as the work of man became more specialized and his needs more complex, he became increasingly dependent upon his fellows. Gradually there developed the most dominating of all the adaptations of man—the community adaptation—community behaviour. The primary community reaction is coöperation through the division of labour with the exchange of the products of labour. This was the origin of justice. There could arise no code

of laws among naked fruit-eating natives. With the railways and the telegraph, with the unfolding of physics and chemistry, with discovery and invention, man became increasingly dependent upon his fellow-man, and the principles of justice and of mutual dependence became correspondingly intensified.

Thus it came to pass that those people were fittest who became the most completely adapted to gregarious life, viz.: those who were most truthful and honest, just and diligent.

Primitive individualistic reaction, nevertheless, as against community reaction, still appeared; in fact, it appears frequently even now. This is the origin of selfish-

ness, of stealing, of killing, etc. The community punished the individualistic — the selfish reactions through coöperation, just as the community secures a living through coöperation.

As an adaptation against the strong individualistic selfish reactions, religions have been evolved. The great success of the teachings of Christ, of Buddha, of Mohammed, of all religious leaders, is due to the fact that fairness and honesty and justice are the foundations of community prosperity. Religions aim to develop altruism in their adherents—their duty to the race as well as to themselves. The greater the extent to which a people react to the good of the race the fitter are they to survive.

If an individual unjustly takes through stealth or by force what belongs to his neighbour, if he slays his neighbour, a protective reaction is awakened in the community against that individual. He is isolated from his fellows. He may even be killed for the general good, because he is unfitted for the community stage of evolution. But he is fitted for the life of the lower animals, the life of primitive man.

The individual who is most fair and just, most useful to his race—that individual is most fitted to survive. The successful dominance of the earth by man is due to the fact that, through experience, through religion, through training by parents and fellow-

men, the majority of human beings strive to make the race better and to strengthen the bonds of social cohesion, or at least they do not strive to destroy social cohesion.

If nations are only multiples of individuals, if what is true of the individual is true of the nation, then we may find in this a possible flaw in the premises of the German State philosophy. If the same standard is applied to the State as to the individual, then Germany is less fit to survive than many other nations, because she has returned to the individualism of the lower animals and primitive man, reacting among the nations as the individual robber and the individual murderer reacts within a nation. Therefore, she awakens

a protective reaction in other nations. Other nations must deal with her as a nation as they deal with individual robbers and murderers.

This individualistic German reaction interferes with the progress of the human race just as the robber and the murderer interfere with local progress within the State. The individual is punished so that his neighbour may live. Unfit Germany must be punished so that the human race may live; that, through altruism, it may maintain and increase its fitness to occupy the earth.

Now that Germany has put its State philosophy in the crucible, she finds that the world is against her. The nations are opposed to

Germany for the same reason that the individuals of a community are opposed to a robber and a murderer. Germany is attempting to impose upon the world by force an altruism, for herself alone, based on force, against an altruism, for the entire human race, based on simple justice. These two contradictory principles are contending for survival. If Germany achieves her aim—that is, if Germany conquers the world—then Germany's philosophy of force will be imposed upon the world. The men, the women, and the children of the world will then be governed by the State philosophy that one nation should prosper by the labour of the people of another nation;

they will be governed by the belief that this State, highly adapted to conquer others by force, should exercise that force to the advantage of themselves alone. They are the wolves—we the sheep.

If the German philosophy should prevail, and, after the world had become deluged in blood, broken, and impoverished, we should awake to find ourselves a part of such a State, what would happen?

First, there would be no alien peoples, hence there would be no States left to plunder. Germany's Kultur would then be obliged to earn its own living. Her State philosophy would then meet its first fallacy.

Again, when Germany had imposed her will upon the world,

when she had achieved her super-Armageddon, when she had crushed to earth all opposition, then she would find herself without foes, without rivals. Without dangerous rivals the people of the State do not give up their will to the State. A military autocracy can be achieved only in the face of danger. Should Germany conquer all her enemies, she would no less completely conquer the source of her own autocratic power. She would then be in the position of a cancer that had killed the body on which it fed. In what state, then, would the world find itself? To what previous cycle of history would this correspond? Force is not the source of State power that can endure; it is raised only to fall.

Even if Germany should conquer the world by force, even then she would not have proved her philosophy to be right, for the complete control of the individual of the State is made possible only by the presence of powerful neighbours or of neighbours who are feared by all the people of a State. In order to secure safety the individual gives himself to the State. It is only a normally weaker State that fears its neighbours; therefore, a Kultur such as the German Kultur can arise only in a State weaker in resources and in numbers of inhabitants than its rivals. The lesser State then strives for its permanent safety by destroying and by conquering its neighbour. When attacked by the highly

organized State, the larger but inefficiently organized State is then subjected to the same stimulus to development. The unorganized people then become stronger. The Kultur State can grow no stronger; hence, sooner or later, there will tend to be a balance of power established in favour of the larger State.

We must conclude, therefore, that the German philosophers have been reasoning from false premises. This conclusion is supported not only by the tenets of religion and biology, but by history and by an examination of the sources of national strength—the fitness of other nations. History tells us that attempts to rule by force as against justice have always failed, either

by awakening the self-protective reactions in many contemporary powerful nations, or when a people have been brutalized into submission by the degeneration of both the conqueror and the conquered. It will follow that whether the German State wins or loses this war, it stands to lose ultimately.

The ephemeral success of State power based on the supreme right of the State contrasted with the lasting success of moral power based on the rights of the individual, as exemplified by the long reign of religions and of moral codes, is one of the outstanding facts of history. The greatest source of power is that which comes spontaneously and

justly from the individual; that which requires a minimum of State power for its mobilization. The least source of power is that which is compelled by the State, because from the power of the individual must be subtracted the effort of the State to extract that power. The net result, therefore, is less under coercion than under voluntary performance.

Viewed in this light, one may readily understand why the State philosophy of Germany has failed as a colonizer and why, with their opposing individualistic philosophy, the liberal powers succeed as colonizers. Formal submission may be compelled, but the seeds of discord grow in the damp shade of hate.

A short cycle of success with maximum unhappiness may be achieved by a State through the exercise of sheer force. The longer cycles of success with the maximum of happiness have been and probably will be secured by a State through the philosophy of the individual as expressed by religion and by moral codes. If the Allies fail in the history of to-day they will succeed in the history of to-morrow. If Germany succeeds in the history of to-day, Germany will fail in the history of to-morrow. Rather than share the common fate of passing through a stunting cycle of disintegration following a present German success, it were better that we all now perish gloriously on the battlefield.

In spite of the fallacy of the German philosophers, they have, nevertheless, established in the German people action patterns of such surpassing strength that the organized intelligence of the German people is our greatest menace. In fact, the present war is a contest of ideas rather than of men. In its broadest sense, it is the practical application of physics, chemistry, and biology in a mass struggle for the existence of nations.

The battle itself is the applied science of killing; survival is the result of knowledge supplied by a nation. Therefore it would appear that those who plan methods of destruction through the use of physical and chemical forces will

profit by the viewpoint of those who have special knowledge of the effects of those forces on man and other animals, viz.: men with an expert working knowledge of physics, chemistry, and biology.

Research and medicine and biology should not be limited to saving and repairing the wreckage, but should be directed also toward methods of killing the enemy. To accomplish these ends a cohesion of scientific talents is essential. It is because Germany has so long commandeered the talents of her universities and the intellect of her nation and provided the best intellects of her nation with every facility and a forced draft to produce ideas that the menace of Germany is her organized intelligence.

If we expect to win we too must meet discovery with discovery; we too must meet loss with greater sacrifice; we too must concentrate our business talent, our engineering talent, our medical talent—all our talents on our intellectual battle line. Our universities and our laboratories must become our first-line trenches. Our universities must constitute the foundation of our national defense—our schools must become the exponents of our creed of liberty.



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