

POLITICS

Alexander Ular



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Politics
A Study of the Ethnopsychological Conditions
of Social Organization
by Alexander Ular

Original German text first published 1906

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexander Ular was a German journalist, sinologist and writer, who today is best known for his German translation of the *Tao Te Ching*, but apart from the present text was also the author of several monographs on Russia and China and of two novels.

Surprisingly little can be found about his life — not more than that his real name was Alexander Ferdinand Uhlemann, that he was born in Bremen in 1876, that he lived in France for a time, that his political views could be described as anarcho-syndicalist, and that he died in Morocco in 1919.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

The German original of this text was published in 1906 under the title *Die Politik. Untersuchung über die völkerpsychologischen Bedingungen gesellschaftlicher Organisation* as the third volume of the series *Die Gesellschaft. Sammlung Sozialpsychologischer Monographien*, edited by the philosopher Martin Buber.

Alexander Ular's reflections on the relationship between religion, power and politics are still relevant today, perhaps even more so than at the time they were written — it is remarkable that Ular's text precedes Sigmund Freud's treatises *Totem and Taboo* and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* by many years. The optimism of the early 20th century that shows in them, when rapid technological and social progress promised freedom and prosperity, while war, at least in Europe, seemed increasingly unthinkable, has, however, proven to be deceptive, as has his idealized picture of China. In the 21st century we still live amidst dictatorships, wars and genocides, and have to realize how alarmingly relevant the mechanisms of power that Ular has analyzed still are.

ABOUT THIS TRANSLATION

This translation was collaboratively created by DeepL and me (DeepL wrote the first draft, and I have heavily revised it) — neither of us could have done this alone. Alexander Ular's prose is difficult to translate, with long convoluted sentences that read better in German than they do in English. A translation that took more liberty with the text and would split up all those multi-clause sentences might be easier to read, but for the sake of authenticity the present translation retains them. Also, please bear in mind that I am not a professional translator. I apologize for any inconveniences.

The footnotes are mine, as is the numbering of the chapters.

R.S.

POLITICS

For countless millennia, the Tibetan mountain giants have stretched their bare arms desolately toward the sky. Nothing protects them from the inexorable forces of the earth. Long ago, their armor of leaves and sand was torn from their bodies. Storms, cold, suffocation and the devastating plague of the human bacillus have gnawed away their forest-cloak. Every garment, every blanket, every thing that sustained them has fallen from their bodies in rags. The frost tears gaping wounds into their flesh. The dampness scrapes their skin. What is within them bleeds out. They weep from every pore. Their eyes become lakes. Torrential rivers gush from every crevice. Every spring, their mane of clouds dissolves in terrible thunderstorms, and their snow-beard drips in torrents down to the lowlands. And every drop carries a part of the giants' being down with it. They die slowly, very slowly. But the echo of their decay means infinite happiness and infinite misfortune, in wild alternation, for immeasurable lands.

For the rivers carry the fragments of the mountains to the plains and spread them there in ever thicker, ever more fertile layers across vast areas. And on this richest soil in the world, on the "yellow earth," in densest cultures, like the infusoria in the mud of the swamp, the tiny humans spring forth. They live off the fertile layer of earth; but they die when a new, even more fertile one spreads over their land. With immense diligence, they have regulated the flow of the mountains' fragments. High dikes protect them from the Yellow River, and they direct only as much of the life-giving silt onto their fields as is needed to compensate for the depletion of the earlier layers. But from time to

time, nothing can help them against the immense, ruinous influx of new blessings. The river, forced between the dikes, grows weary and allows what it carries with it to sink to the bottom. Its bed rises; its water level rises. Every year, humans raise and reinforce the dikes. But the pressure of the water grows stronger the higher the riverbed rises. Eventually, it lies higher than the land behind the dikes. Desperately, humans defend themselves against the looming danger. But the river cannot permanently bear the full weight of the masses of water and silt within its artificial bed. And then, with inexorable inevitability, the horror sets in. Once the beards of the mountain giants grow heavier with rain and their cloud-hair hangs down in thicker strands, the river swells to its final, mighty surge. Small cracks appear in the dams, and with a furious roar the river surges into them, tears them apart, hurls them down onto the plain. The immense mass of water crashes down upon the land, uproots trees, tears apart houses, drowns people and animals without hope of rescue, sacrifices hundreds of thousands of living beings, and finally spreads over thousands of miles turning into a desolate, stinking lake.

The sun pumps the moisture back up into the sky in toxic mists. The lake becomes a swamp. The swamp becomes new fertile land. Where tens of thousands just died, hundreds of thousands of industrious people swarm together. They dig new ditches, build new dikes, plant new trees, plow new fields, build new houses, and live a richer, easier life on the new ground than those destroyed by the onslaught of the fertilizing water. For the life-giving layer is thicker and more diverse. New and different salts permeate it; new and different fruits emerge from it.

... Until once again, humans, in thrall of their desire for that what exists, believing that precisely *this* layer, precisely *these* salts, precisely

these fruits are necessary for their happiness, rage against the unalterable course of the earth, constrain the river once more, raise the dikes, and hinder the natural cycle, the eternal shifting of the masses, only to ultimately perish, to their own detriment, but to the blessing of those who come after them, to perish again in the new, terrible onslaught of unconquerable forces.

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2

Politics is to the life of societies what the Yellow River flood is to the life of the “yellow earth” of East Asia. The mountains are the raw, imperfectly structured masses of natural human material. The lost forest is the shell of brutal power that holds them together. The water represents the dissolving, shifting instincts, tendencies, ideas and demands of the dull masses. The rising river is the growing onslaught of new peoples or ideas against old cultures. The cultural soil is the yellow loess. The dikes and ditches are the well-structured organizations of sedentary peoples. The flood is the collapse of their states. And the reconstruction is the birth of a new culture with richer material in blood and ideas.

No other definition, indeed almost no other analysis of politics is necessary if one regards it, which is healthier than absolutist Hegelianism, quite simply as *the activity of society for its self-preservation and expansion of power in its currently existing form*. Politics is a society’s struggle against forces that threaten to break through its framework. It is also a struggle against forces that seem weak enough that it is believed they can be drawn into this framework. But this amounts to the same thing; for a society the expansion of power is merely an increased safeguarding of the existing cultural framework. Skeptics will view politics even more simplistically, portraying it as the squabbling

of any organized group of people. People in whose minds physics represents vulgar superstition with dignity and failure will proclaim that politics is, in fact, the dynamics of culture. And the shameless fellows who do not believe in anything anymore, and who drown everything sacred in the mire of their cynicism under the pretext of truth and common sense, will find neither culture nor society in politics; they will smile at the “highest goods” of a people, which politics is supposed to preserve, as a feeble autosuggestion, will let their effrontery not even be exorcized by the grand magic formulas of state, nation, race, religion, people, prince and culture, will prove the non-existence to date of any truly self-governing society, and will in vile triumph make the free citizens of nation-states jump out of their skins with the — alas! — all too true cry of horror: “Never yet has politics been driven by societies, but only by authorities; public opinion has never guided societies, but only the oligarchy that concocts public opinion, whether it consists of princes, priests, demagogues, or praetorians; never yet has a people, a race, a religious community, or a nation sustained itself or grown through the free cooperation of its members, but only under the conscious or unconscious compulsion of individuals or the ideas of authority imposed upon the collective mind which hold society together.” In fact, it is somewhat vexing for all people, unless they happen to be an emperor, the Dalai Lama, or at least the president of a republic, to observe that societies have, to this day, proven themselves utterly incapable of effectively managing precisely those affairs that most directly concern their very existence.

Where are the Russians when the Tsar declares war on Japan, where are the Japanese when the Tenno and his feudal oligarchy turn Korea, a country the size of Italy, into a monstrous land speculation? What of the English when an oligarchy of brewers and screw

manufacturers conquers the Transvaal, and what of the Americans when their elected tsar, with his billionaire oligarchy, furiously floods the Filipinos and finally sells them back to Spanish monks? It is just as it was 3700 years ago, when Usirtasen¹ set his Egyptian redskins against the Nubian blackskins, yes, just as it was more than 5000 years ago when a great unknown person convinced some Chaldeans² that he was the son of the god Ilo, and thus cunningly compelled them to build for him the “Gate of Ilo,” that is Bab-Ilo, thereby creating a new great power to which they submitted with delight.

As far as history digs into the primordial sludge of human social development, it repeatedly brings to light the same thing. The “Patrie” and the “Vaterland” of citizens who believe themselves to be democratic are not only the same as the “Swiataya Russj” of the Muschik³ or the “Tien-hsia,” the “everything under the heavens,” of the Chinese peasant. It is, merely somewhat less anthropomorphic, somewhat more philosophized, somewhat more hypocritical, somewhat more Hegelian, nothing other than the already somewhat too abstract theocracy of the primordial Jew, nothing other than the power of the god Assur incarnated in the Great King, the Egyptian Ra, the eternal wombat brought to life in the Papuan chieftain, or the great rat that rules certain Indian tribes just as much as the “principle of a national empire.”

The entire difference lies merely in the more or less specific conception that the masses have of the guiding principle, and in the manner in which those who exploit this principle, such as the oligar-

¹ Sensusret III.

² By “Chaldea” Ular refers to Mesopotamia, where first the Sumerian culture, then the Akkadian, Babylonian and finally the Assyrian culture dominated. Babylon, however, emerged as a major power only in the early 2nd millennium BCE.

³ The “Holy Russia” of the Russian peasant serf.

chy, cause the vast majority of the people to take their power fraud at face value. For nothing is more indisputable than the unpleasant truism that no orderly society can exist without authority. Nothing is a more well-founded commonplace than that the purpose of politics is to regulate the relations between authority and the people on the one hand, and between the authorities of different peoples on the other. Now the modern Europeans like to ask whether authority should not naturally derive from the people themselves, and naturally answers that, in their view, it is at least the expression of the will of the people. All rulers can thank the Creator, in whom they may believe, that this monstrous error has taken firm root; otherwise, they would all have been hanging from the nearest lamppost long ago. The truth has rarely been said, and if so then entirely without intention. It appears naked in the famous words of a ruler: “Religion must be preserved for the people.”

For all political authority is, in fact, of religious origin and of a religious nature. It is, of course, irrelevant whether Robespierre prefers the cult of the “Supreme Being” or the Australians that of the wombat, whether the “idea of the state” or the “idea of the fatherland” dominates the minds of the masses and manifests as patriotism, or whether the Dalai Lama himself is a living god. Political authority has always been based — up to now, mind you — on Schleiermacher’s “ultimate” sense of dependency⁴ on a power that essentially only exists because one cannot or does not want to take a closer look at it. Had the Egyptians not felt “ultimately” dependent on their Khufu⁵, they would

⁴ According to the German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) the “feeling of ultimate dependency,” known to all human beings, is proof for the existence of God and the foundation of all religious sentiments.

⁵ Also known as Cheops.

have sent him to join his forefathers before having thirty thousand men, for decades on starvation wages, mindlessly build his useless pyramid as true beasts of burden. And if the “international proletariat,” instead of merely existing on paper, from country to country would not feel “ultimately” dependent on the concept of nationality, with all its countless traditions of a linguistic, cultural and even economic nature, things would certainly look quite different in Europe. Politics has, up to now, always been nothing but the reshaping of authority that cannot be explained rationally — albeit sometimes under the pretext of its abolition or at least its weakening. If this is true, then all politics is merely the struggle of religious power against everything that comes alive in the subjugated individuals when their faith in this power changes or is lost. Everything non-religious in the life of societies is economic. The religious binds; the economic loosens. The religious is intellectual weakness; the economic is dynamic strength. Consequently ... *Quod erit demonstrandum.*⁶

But such a theory is not only as gray as pyroxylin powder; it also smells just as revolutionary. It can shine silently from behind the jungle of political life in a more amiable form and in more vivid colors.

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3

The golden tree of political life is actually made of iron; and it is not green like the golden one, but red as blood. Not red from the blood that rises to the heads of furious parliamentarians, nor from that which working people symbolically sweat, but red from the blood of skulls that have been smashed in order to make new principles of authority, new religions, intelligible to them. However, anyone in our era who

⁶ Which will have to be proven.

attaches importance — a strange ambition — to be regarded as a modern man of culture, begins by cowardly denying to himself the most terrible reality of human history under the pretext of intellectual honor, and by reading his disbelief — his suggested feeling of no longer being “ultimately” dependent on anything inexplicable — into the political life of humanity. Nothing is more beautiful than this furious rebellion against reality, nothing more touching than the belief in the essential powerlessness of beliefs. Nor is anything more useful in an age when the practical politics of atavistic forms of authority must desperately defend itself with the weapon of “It has always been this way.” In “happy” states (that is in those where the oligarchy is happy), atheists are often so discredited that anyone who attributes any culture-creating qualities to religious nonsense at all tends to be regarded as insincere. It is therefore necessary to state that, while the magnificent role of faith in the life of societies is openly demonstrated here, this by no means constitutes a rehabilitation of religion. Atheism can go so far as to no longer discredit faith, but to accept it as a fact just as attentively as a turtle embryo. Those who invented historical materialism did not go that far. They reduced all politics to economic conditions and explained the aspirations of peoples and even their rulers as stemming from the drive for greater well-being. Mine and yours, rich and poor, are the essential forces which, in their view, not only regulate but also animate internal and external conditions. The economy, that is — apart from extremely rich forms of culture — the physical aspect of humanity dominates politics; it has created peoples, states and kings; it has brought about wars; it has given birth to faiths, knowledge, and art as fruits of luxury; and at all times and in all places it has driven people to storm against their own or against other

organized societies. True, they cried “Dieu le veut”⁷ at Clermont when savage hordes of Christian barbarians set out against the cultural forms of the East. But God was merely an unconscious pretext there; in reality, the poor Europeans wanted to plunder the rich Saracens. True, the early Christians fought against pagan Rome, but not because they had a “truer” faith, but because they were mere proletarians facing the billionaires of the imperial oligarchy. True, the Muslims conquered half the world, but not out of fanaticism, but because there were rich countries to exploit. It was the same with the Egyptians when they conquered the Libyan desert, with the Chinese when they annexed steppes and stone fields the size of Europe, with the Toltecs, the Huns, the Mongols, the Germans against Napoleon III, and did not even the other Napoleon, when he first commanded the army in Italy, inspire the demoralized troops in his famous appeal with the words: “You are poor, you are starving. I am leading you into the richest countries of Europe. Follow me and you will be rich!” And now, let us turn to the domestic politics of states! The French Revolution was the uprising of the poor Tiers-Etat, which was richer than the Cidevants.⁸ The Mongol dynasty in China was overthrown in a peasant revolt: the poor against the rich. Germany has become united for economic reasons and instincts; did not the Customs Union even precede this? The defensive war of the poor Germans against the rich French. The English constitution the result of the economic growth of the middle classes. The Assyrian one undoubtedly that of the economic powerlessness of all against the one son of the god Assur. And yet the subjects of the

⁷ “God wills it,” the rallying cry to the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont.

⁸ Tiers-Etat: the “third estate,” the commoners, after the clergy (the first estate) and the aristocracy (the second estate). Ci-devants: the “former ones,” the aristocrats who had lost their titles and estate after the revolution.

Assyrian theocrats were rich, and those of the medieval English kings desperately poor ... It does get admitted that here and there, in higher forms of culture, other elements than economic ones also seem to manifest themselves in politics; but these themselves stem only from economic ones. In primitive forms, though, the economic reigns freely and openly.

What a glorious illusion! Humans are, unfortunately, much more foolish. They suffer from the specific delusion — which animals must find quite comical — of worrying about all sorts of things that are none of their business, and of discrediting the most essential thing, the question of the stomach, to such an extent, in order to offer an excuse for themselves, that decent people would rather perish physically than break this ritual of contempt. Even in sophisticated Paris, there are still people who would rather collapse on the street from hunger than steal a plucked chicken from a shop window. And this is a question of the highest political order. It shows that humans possess non-economic instincts, much to their detriment, which retain the upper hand even under the most unfavorable conditions. But these are instilled! Yes, primitive humans also have mothers who instill something in them — and not just chewing, which they learn all by themselves, but precisely the non-economic aspects, above all maternal authority, which persists even when the child could, if necessary, already exist without the mother ...

The economic explanation of politics starts exactly at the wrong end. In reality, it is not that some non-economic elements appear in higher forms of culture: rather, it is precisely there that the economic will of the masses or the rulers first emerges in politics. And in primitive forms, the economic does not reign: on the contrary, it is entirely

absent there. In them, the religious alone reigns, drives, leads and animates.

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4

The political life of any people at any given time remains utterly incomprehensible unless the creative role of the religious in its various manifestations is clearly understood. Indeed, one cannot even properly describe politics other than by enumerating all the culture-promoting misdeeds that the religious has committed in the life of societies. And since these misdeeds against the common sense of erring humanity have always been roughly the same, it will come as no surprise that, despite all the daily chatter in the newspapers, there has been hardly anything new in politics for some seventy centuries. For the collapse of states, the decline of races and the destruction of nations matter only to those directly involved. Culture has always grown; humanity has become ever richer, both inwardly and outwardly. Without flooding, no loess.

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5

The politics of the great modern cultural nations — or rather, of their oligarchs — is so convoluted that one can only with limited success shine a light directly into the confusion of the things that occur within them. In any case, even the most superficial observation of their life raises the essential question of politics: How is it that nations hold together and act in this way, or allow themselves to be acted upon by individual members, as if they themselves were a unified organism?

In the life of modern nations, as in the Baroque style, everything is jumbled together that was still neatly separated in earlier, simpler social forms. And that is why anyone can pick out from the motives of

modern national life precisely that which best suits their personal temperament and degree of intellectual development, and set it up as the supreme principle.

Once there had been homogeneous tribes or races; racial sentiments still persist, and whoever can make them seem quite plausible to themselves not only believes that the nation to which they belong is their race, but he or she also acts on its behalf primarily out of racial sentiment.⁹ The French, who have a more or less ancient Roman profile and, moreover, possess a Latin language and a Latin social order, like to consider themselves the representatives of the “Latin race” and see France as the true heir to the Roman tribe that never existed, even though the Auvergnats, the Ligurians, the northeastern French and the Bretons are even more different from the Romans than the blond-haired Frisians are from the round-headed Bavarians. Germans who happen to be blond, long-headed and blessed with blue eyes see in their nation the organized Germanic race, and what is most comical is that black-haired, round-headed, brown-eyed descendants of some dubious *homo alpinus* cheerfully join in. There are even Italians who believe in the unity of their race. And many Americans shave carefully to suggest to themselves the beardlessness and chin type of the American Indians and thereby earn a kind of racial right to America! Racial sentiments still live and work everywhere. Let us content ourselves for now with the bare fact.

The language community has forged even stronger social bonds and has also remained much more vibrant. Nothing is more under-

⁹ Unfortunately it may still be necessary today to point out that molecular genetics has by now clearly demonstrated that human “races” do not exist. Alexander Ular’s text shows that already much earlier it was possible to recognize the concept of “race” as meaningless.

standable. For it is an economic power; it is something necessary not only for the enduring existence of society but also for the individual physical well-being of each of its members. From there it follows that the common language actually constitutes a negatively acting element of the soul of the nation. It holds the nation together only by separating each member from those of other nations. It hinders communication between peoples, often making it entirely impossible, leaving one group in ignorance of the other, and thus it prevents the emergence of that spiritual impulse which, despite all differences in origin and form, constitutes every organized group, every people, every state, every nation, every society: the sense of affiliation. Those whose intellectual development is mediocre and whose language skills are weak therefore like to attribute their national sentiment to the reassuring sense of a shared language. This tendency has at times become so widespread that not only uncultivated populaces lump people, nation and language into one pot, but even theoreticians, deluded by the notion that they can bind their beloved nations more effectively with two threads than with one, confuse language with race, and have simultaneously stamped existing peoples with immutable individuality based on the commonality of the physical (race) and the immaterial (language). The whole Aryan hoax is nothing but the consequence of such all-too-mediocre understanding. There is no Aryan race, but merely languages that are related to one another in a certain way. That an Armenian is supposed to be more closely related by race to a Swede than to a Chaldean is something only a deluded anti-Semite would still claim. And if the people of Lithuania, as Böhlingk¹⁰ claimed — more as a joke than as a fact, by the way — can

¹⁰ Otto von Böhlingk (1815–1904), German linguist, indologist and Sanskrit scholar.

almost understand Sanskrit, this proves nothing about the common ancestry of those who speak Indian and Latvian-Lithuanian languages; rather, it merely shows that languages, like any other custom, can pass from one people to another. The entire political life of humanity is misunderstood if this identity of race and language — long refuted by science — is accepted as truth, contrary to all reality. But this, of course, does not prevent the belief in this identity from appearing everywhere as a political motive, as a sense of national identity, and from often determining the actions of entire peoples just as successfully as foolishly.

“Who cannot be classified is regarded a Turanian.” The most diverse peoples have been stirred into a ridiculous hodgepodge, merely because they speak languages that, in their inflection and in their adherence to the law of least effort (vocal harmony), exhibit some mostly far-fetched similarities. There, the Chukchi meet the Hungarians, and the Yakuts meet the infamous Sumerians, the “pre-Semitic” bearers of Chaldean culture, whose language is not even properly known.¹¹ And one wonders pityingly why these “kindred” peoples have not created a great nation, a great state, or a great political system.

Certainly, there were once homogeneous language groups, just as homogeneous races have existed. Certainly, the sense of language has been just as powerful in the political history of humanity as the sense of race. Both continue to thrive. Mommsen wanted to smash the Czechs’ square skulls — and no one would speak of Czechs if, like the Prussian Slavs whose names end in “ow” or “itz” (Bülow von Dennewitz), they had properly learned German. And the Russification

¹¹ Today Sumerian cuneiform can be read, the Sumerian language is understood, and Sumerian culture and history have been studied. Sumerian is not related to any other known language.

of the Baltic provinces has always been measured by the expansion of the use of the Great Russian language. People who speak the same language readily imagine that they understand one another. A common language to them is a sign of national, and, if they are even more stupid, racial affiliation. If the American Negroes, who know only English, were not so horribly black, they would be treated not only morally as equal citizens of the United States, but as members of the so longingly wished for Yankee race. Where racial sentiment and linguistic sentiment do not stand in the most glaring contrast to one another, they reinforce each other to form a sense of national identity.

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6

But modern national consciousness encompasses many other elements as well. Above all, there is the “will not to forget,” which skeptics view as intellectual laziness, while well-meaning citizens regard it as a historical tradition. This is no longer a matter of clinging to the natural manifestations of a society, such as language and race, but rather of preserving the products of artificial, mostly violently imposed organization, not for the protection of ethnic institutions, but of state institutions. Where this peculiar inclination originates is, for the moment, irrelevant. Even if it has generally proved detrimental to the well-being of societies, it is nevertheless certain that it has always been at work, and today it is more powerful than ever. Let us therefore accept the fact of the historical sense of affiliation. For it is still present in the consciousness of all peoples.

Less conscious, apparently also less powerful, but fundamentally stronger and more essential than all others, is the religious element in political life, which manifests as a shared sense of dependence on a higher power and accordingly establishes, solely and exclusively, the

firm bond between the people and their leaders, without which neither political action nor any firm organization is possible. One may rightly overlook *that* kind of religious national sentiment that breaks out in *Te Deums* after a battle has been won or incites Christians against pagans and Protestants against Catholics. These are merely the crudest forms in which the religious element appears in political life. They are, however, also the forms from which the finer, the moral foundations of national existence have developed, for better or for worse — for the better through the internalized impersonal conception of the authority that guides the peoples, for the worse through the ever-cruder dumbing down of the masses, for whom the infallibility of the authority eventually becomes a dogma.

Finally, the economic instincts of the individuals or their professional groups mix themselves into the fricassee of modern national sentiment. And when this sentiment then becomes politically active, or passively fails to resist the political activity of the oligarchies, the people must consume all the other ingredients of their political meal at once. That is why it is so difficult to discern the recipe.

But one thing can be stated with certainty. Just as surely as the marinated pot roast tastes of beef, so certainly does every corner of the political kitchen smell of religion. Emperors, kings, tsars, Incas, Huangdis, Dalai Lamas, pharaohs, popes and all other sons of heaven, rulers by the grace of God, and even presidents of republics have not been brutal warlords or cunning gold barons, but have all been high priests. Coats of arms were religious emblems, feudal lords priests of fallen gods, laws divine revelation, customs ingrained rites. Wherever one can clearly trace the development of a society and its collective life, its politics, from the very beginning, one sees that nothing at all

contributes to its organization except religion, and the economic least of all.

If an Australian tribe even exists as such, it has subordinated its entire collective life in its characteristic form to a totem. Stupid animism! How can an entire group of people believe that their founder and lord is the wombat, and organize their entire existence around this, enshrining it in rites so that the dignity and power of the sacred animal are duly respected! But this is simply the way it is. The tribe would undoubtedly fall apart if its members were not bound together by common rules of life, those rules that arise from a sense of dependence on the higher power of the wombat. Everyone is related to the wombat; everyone is a child of God; everyone can only get ahead in life if they do not incur the sacred wrath of the marsupial; and to ward off this wrath, to strengthen the tribe's intimate bond with the totem, laws have been read into the will of the divine wombat, which manifest as rites, as rules of life, as social order, as morality, as politics. Nothing is more significant for the life of a tribe, a people, or a nation than the rites concerning "clean and unclean," that is, concerning what repulses and angers the divine wombat, or what pleases it and makes it friendly. For this "clean and unclean" concerns precisely that upon which the physical existence of the people depends first and foremost: the sustainment of the individuals and their reproduction. Everywhere the rules regarding what is to be eaten and what is to be avoided, and everywhere the laws of marriage, have been taboo laws; and all taboo laws, with all their consequences that defy all reason and every economic sense, even the most primitive, have emerged from deductions made beyond all reality. The prohibitions against eating certain things, touching certain objects and marrying certain women constitute the very hallmark of simple cultural forms. And what are these pro-

hibitions? How do they come about? Their object is sanctified! If it is something one encounters constantly, this “sanctity” soon turns into contempt, which grows all the stronger the more often one must be on guard against what has become taboo. And so the entire lives of the people are influenced and reshaped in the same way, both externally and internally; if they wish to live entirely morally, they do nothing at all but perform rites — that is, rules not dictated by economic necessity; and the rites, which in some way differ from those of all other tribes, distinguish them from those tribes, constitute their specific “national” character, and ultimately, through the constant, unchanging pressure on the soul, create a specific worldview, or, if you will, a specific culture. If a people is repulsed by the idea of having to eat, say, pigeons or hares or pigs, of marrying women of the same clan, or of having to watch helplessly as others submit to the rite of belly-cutting, then one has certainly discovered one or another characteristic of this people as such. One has uncovered a part of the foundations of its social order and thus shed light on a facet of its political life.

All of this is supposed to be contained in totemism! Is the divine wombat supposed to represent something essential in the political life of all times and peoples? But civilized peoples have surely moved beyond totemism! Moreover, scholars have demonstrated that all these taboo rules, which are said to form the basis of social order, are either of economic origin or a whimsical luxury, a primitive art, or a means of satisfying aesthetic needs. What does it prove if the Jews do not eat pork, the Russians do not eat pigeons or hares, and the self-respecting German does not eat horse meat? Admittedly, it must be acknowledged that even today the Jewish people, for example in their colonies in Abyssinia, are quite simply characterized as those who do not wish to eat pork. However, one can draw a parallel between the Australian

who refuses to eat his sacred wombat and the Jew who spurns the pig. But first of all, the wombat is sacred to the Australian, and the pig is repulsive to the Jew, just as the horse is to the Germanic peoples. Isn't that a difference? And secondly, even if this difference did not exist, aren't there far more plausible reasons for such dietary prohibitions than such childish superstitions about kinship with animals, about silly animism? The Jews lived in hot countries. There, fat is indigestible. Pork probably didn't agree with them, so they simply banned it. Opium is banned in Europe, too. And in Italy, all the pig slaughterhouses close in the summer. If the Russians don't want to eat hares, they probably couldn't tolerate them in the past. As for the dove, it is perhaps untouchable as a Christian symbol. And if civilized people do not marry their own sisters, and two brothers do not take one wife together, that is simply nothing more than decency, apart from the fact that incest is probably unhealthy and does nothing to preserve the race ... In any case, totemism or any other form of primitive religion no longer exists among civilized peoples, and thus has nothing to do with their political life.

So rants every modern person who claims to possess the common sense of the twentieth century. But they are wrong. Their social rituals have merely become more complicated, but everything simpler is still there. If you ask a Russian lady why she doesn't like to eat rabbit, you might hear the answer verbatim: "Yuck! When it's skinned, it looks just like a newborn baby!" No European would ever have had this thought. But — and this is the interesting part — this thought has already been touched upon and reshaped by non-Russian spheres of ideas: it has been "civilized." If you ask a Little Russian peasant the same question, the truth comes out: "God forbid! That would be as if I ate a human being." Exactly the same thing the wombat totemist says about his

marsupial. As for the pigeon with the Russians, they are likely aware of its Christian symbolic character; but is that a reason not to eat one? Catholics and Protestants are just as Christian and eat them. The reality is that the Russians do not spurn the pigeon because it symbolizes the Holy Spirit, but rather that they cite this symbol after the fact as an explanation for the fact that they do not want to eat a pigeon. Their aversion is not Christian; there isn't even a church rule about it; it is quite simply the ingrained, customary, moralized rite of a totemistic political order that has long since been thoroughly transformed.

The same applies to the Jewish pig. It was not banned by the Jerusalem health authorities because it could cause trichinosis, or because salted ham tastes bad in hot weather. In southern China, where it is just as hot, people eat suckling pigs — excellent ones, by the way — which are split lengthwise, each half flattened like a board, and roasted in the oven in their own fat. This highly recommended dish only doesn't agree with diners if, as it happens, they want more and more of it. The man who compiled the Books of Moses understood nothing at all about hygiene, nor about zoology. For in the list of forbidden roasts that this divine lawgiver included in his tablets of law — the fact itself already indicates how politics and religion are one — there appears a whole range of meats that no butcher in the world has ever offered for sale to the amazed citizen. In particular, there is mention of several species of four-legged birds that bear a striking resemblance to the wondrous symbols of Assyrian kingship that serve as gatekeepers of the Chaldean palaces, and feature a winged bull's body and a bearded human head atop a lions' legs. Whether these chimeras themselves are composites of several totems of particularly powerful Chaldean tribes and thus became a sign of supreme power —

similar to how in Egypt the snake or the vulture, as totems of victorious small states, became the coat of arms of the great kingdom — is irrelevant. But the fact that such symbolized animals were declared taboo at all proves that this was not about banning certain physical food, but rather about the fear of offending the powers residing within these animals. Moreover, in addition to the animals familiar to every Christian, this taboo law quite coincidentally includes all manner of birds of prey and other hardly appetizing dishes, which, strangely enough, appear countless times from Egypt to Chaldea as totems of various peoples. One can therefore calmly let the thunderbolts of the Bible-believers rain down upon oneself and view the Jewish list of forbidden foods as nothing less than a list of totems that at the time of its composition still held political significance and were more or less familiar, including the pig.

The horse, which was “sacred” to the Germanic peoples — that is, regarded as a totem — is still taboo today. If some people eat it anyway, one would like to remind the opponents of social reform that, if they wish to remain in power, religion must be preserved for the people — including that of the horse totem. For if this disappears, something of the political principle that, as we shall see, still prevails will also perish, namely a ritual that has become an irrational, moral instinct. Every disgust lost through consideration or necessity is one stone less in the wall of faith in authority. Anyone who, as a Germanic person, no longer feels disgust at eating horse meat has broken with an unconscious principle of authority that has “become second nature” and is all the more powerful for that very reason. They will free themselves from those that remain conscious — which they can also attack with logic — with far less effort. Psychologically speaking, and as silly as it may seem, horse meat eaters in Germany are budding socialists.

The English, who in many respects have held on to Germanic forms of authority more firmly than the Germans, are still so attached to the horse taboo that some newspapers were able to unleash an almost religious hatred against the Germans by portraying the consumption of horse meat as common in Germany, with due severity condemning the moral weakness of the Germans who would rather not suffer hunger but cast aside the “natural revulsion,” which is merely a millennia-old totemistic remnant.

Civilized peoples have moved beyond crude animism? They engage in national politics? Yes, if only the nations themselves and every single one of their traditional political institutions had not grown out of animistic soil and continued to grow there!

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7

The Australian tribe with its wombat religion, wombat customs, wombat law, wombat politics and wombat way of life can be found exactly after all, for example, in medieval Christianity with its absolute papacy — that is, in a political milieu that had considered itself, albeit wrongly, the most developed of its time.

Just substitute the word “Christian” for “wombat,” and you will see that, psychologically speaking, the progress is minimal. The Christian God of the Middle Ages is really nothing more than a totem that has grown to monstrous proportions and thus appears increasingly vague. The Christian is his child, just as the Australian is that of the wombat. Insofar as medieval Christianity felt a much stronger sense of belonging based on its religion than on its national organizations, its internal and external political life was governed by no other principles than those of the Australian tribe. And *that* this Christianity constituted *one* major political organization, or at least sought to do so, is proven by

the Crusades, the papal excommunications against emperors and kings, in short, the entire political history of that era. And what was specific to the Christian group was certainly not race, for dozens of them intermingled within it; nor was it language, for the language of the Church was not that of any Christian people; nor, even less, was it common economic interests. The sense of affiliation among all those who at times virtually formed a political unity of Christendom arose solely from the commonality of ritual, from the “ultimate dependence,” common to all, on a higher power that had a representative on earth in the Pope, who knew how to maintain a friendly relationship with this power. This shared sense of dependence manifested itself in the rules for a God-pleasing way of life that everyone followed. Christian life as a whole was ritual, with all its taboo laws, moral principles and ceremonies, which only for the slightest part had any practical value. And if the Christians under the Pope, so to speak, formed an international nation, their sole bond was the same essentially religious view of life, from baptism to absolution in death and beyond to hell and purgatory. And just as the life of each individual was religious, so too was that of society, both in its internal structure — the culture of the Middle Ages is totemistic — and in its measures for self-preservation: the internal and external politics of the Christian Middle Ages were founded on the preservation and expansion of the Christian rite. But did the Pope not engage in secular politics, just like every emperor, king, or sultan?

A tricky question! For the answer sheds light on the nature and driving forces of all politics that has ever come to pass. For if it is true that from the earliest times to the present day, and wherever groups of people have lived together continuously, no people has ever defended an affiliation, of whatever kind, of its own accord, but only under the

coercive leadership of ruling individuals or minorities; if it is true that, in fact, neither the domestic nor the foreign politics of any state to date has been the work of society itself, but rather that of monarchs or oligarchies, then the question of the nature and actions of monarchy and oligarchy must coincide with that of the nature and manifestations of politics. And so it is.

Although there have been numerous citizens in both the great modern nations and in many ancient states, large and small, who were well aware of their right to jointly govern the politics of their community, a viable, independent political organism in which this right would have been exercised in practice has never come into being. This is the most puzzling aspect of the political history of humanity. The vast majority of political organisms have been purely monarchical, despotic, and still are to a large extent. One can count on one's fingers those whose monarchical or oligarchical rule might be in doubt. Old Poland called itself a republic, yet it was a despotism, as much worse than a monarchy as its landowning nobility counted families. The situation was similar with Venice and the other Italian republics; the best of them saved themselves by becoming monarchies, as Florence did. It was just the same with Rome. From a monarchy, it fell into the oligarchy of the hereditary nobility, and from there, over time, into that of the moneyed nobility; and when, with the proletariat's conquest of all political rights, a democratic polity had become logically possible, the empire, after terrible upheavals between military dictatorship and mob rule, reverted to a monarchy. As for the Greek republics, with their small citizenry and vast slave class, it suffices to say that they were all pure oligarchies, and moreover with monarchical or dictatorial interludes that came desperately close to the pinnacles of their development. Carthage was, like Hamburg and Bremen, a financial oligarchy.

And what of the modern great powers? They have neither gained nor lost anything with the relatively new invention of the weakened monarchy or the even newer invention of the republic with a monarchical character. England is indeed a monarchy whose leader can be far less of a despot than the president of the French Republic or even the figurehead monarch of the United States; but the essential point lies not in the function but in the possibility of the continued existence of the monarch; this, that is the loyalty of the people, is, strange as it may seem, politically much more important, for it presupposes a certain national spirit that is characteristic of the monarchical order and that operates, even in the absence of an active monarch, as if the principle of governmental authority were embodied in an individual. In all states at least foreign politics is still conducted in a purely monarchical manner. And as for domestic politics, wherever the will of the ruler or rulers is not immediately decisive, as in Germany, France and Italy, the power of the splendid means of persuasion with which they can influence the people manifests itself with great success. The political world is and has been monarchical or oligarchical. How did this occur? How do the peoples put up with this? How do the peoples pursue this politics of renunciation, and the rulers that of coercion?

No, the medieval Pope did not, like his colleague in Lhasa, the Dalai Lama, pursue secular politics like emperors, kings and sultans. On the contrary, all rulers and all oligarchies have pursued papal politics; at first consciously; then, as it became a habit, like their subjects they forgot it, and the condition was passed down like other mental illnesses, when the religious character of the political organization had already dissolved into the fog of having become instinct. The papal type is the archetype of all political rulers; the type of the

religious community is the archetype of all politically organized human herds.

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8

How the priest becomes the pope, the pope the monarch, and the monarch a power-hungry man — that is the entire political history of states. How the believer forms herds of “God’s chosen ones,” from a child of God to a soldier of the pope, then a subject of the monarch, and finally a means and object of power for the ruling man — that is the entire political history of peoples. How exactly these two developments intersect is what politics itself, up to now, has always been. And since every subsequent stage of development encompasses all the earlier ones, or rather every new stage is in fact merely a thin, porous layer covering the old into which the old sucks itself firmly in order to hold onto it, it is neither sad nor surprising that politics has always remained the same in its goals and motives, and only takes on different hues due to the external, economic circumstances in which it operates.

All monarchs are popes, all states are inhabited by religious communities? The Russian tsar is still officially the Orthodox pope today, and his political power, insofar as it even still exists, rests on the religious subservience of the masses. Every European is convinced of this. But then, Russia is a backward state. In Germany and England, however, the situation is different. True, the Prussian and English kings are the supreme heads of the state church, but these are merely historical relics! The Chinese emperor may be called Tien-tse, Son of Heaven, but he has not even political, let alone religious power, so that even his secular title Huang Di, Lord of the Yellow (loess soil), has only traditional significance anymore! Indeed; but if nations, be they English, German, Chinese, or even American, exist at all, they do so

precisely because of their traditions, because of all that has accumulated over time in economic, spiritual and especially political life; and while the economic, spiritual and political institutions that currently exist do not constantly reveal their traditional roots, and the superficially thinking masses even continually invent new reasons for the excellence of the existing order, it is nonetheless true that these masses do not, through their thinking, create national life as it is, but rather, conversely, that national life — as it has formed itself independently of conscious will — entrenches itself within their thinking. All modern politics, whether driven by rulers or by peoples, is the expression of traditions that have become more or less unconscious, with the exception at best of the purely economic, but precisely for that reason no longer national, aspirations of individuals who have become aware of their misery. At first glance, these traditions may well appear quite different; some seem to be tied to race, others to language, still others to the so-called political order, and the strongest today to the specific culture of the nation, which represents nothing else than the more basic elements of a sense of affiliation merged into one. But all these traditions, most of which have been unearthed retrospectively after the strongest, the essential one, had grown weaker, are historically and psychologically one and the same: they are branches of the religious tradition. And if politics has indeed always operated with the instruments of monarchy, then politics is, in essence, merely a hypocritical religion.

For all monarchs have been high priests; and all peoples, all dominated societies (there are no others) have obeyed them out of a religious sense of dependency.

History and the development of language prove it. But must it really be proven? What does this have to do with our political life, with the future of our states, our empires, our nations, our cultures — the only things that interest us? Outwardly, nothing. But this future depends entirely on it inwardly; because the further time progresses, the more directly it depends on the psyche of the peoples, because this psyche, as it currently exists, is merely the superimposition of all past conceptions of life that had been of a religious nature. The everyday politics of our time belongs to a type that can only be understood thanks to the geology of its soil. Let us first understand this so that we may observe its actions with a cool head.

Titles of rulership are undoubtedly of some value in this regard, as they indicate the nature of sovereignty. Some, particularly Germanic ones such as king and duke, are certainly military titles; however, these naturally could only emerge once there were already established political organizations capable of waging war. They prove little. The same applies to rex. But what about Kaiser, Tsar and all other derivatives of Caesar? They are reminders of the Roman dictator. But what does Caesar mean? It was not a family name, but a nickname, like Cicero, “the pea man.” If it were related to *caesius*, it would mean “the blue-eyed one.” The family of Genghis Khan, on the other side of the world, bore this epithet, and this would prove — a matter which, as we shall see, would be of the utmost political significance — that the individual in question did not physically belong to the majority of the people he ruled. Or it has to do with *caedo*; and then it means the priest who slaughters the sacrificial animals. Of course, this says nothing about the nature of his rule; any more than Buonaparte says

anything about the principles of Napoleon's governing. But what is remarkable is that the title *kaisar* was already well known in the East during Caesar's time and denoted a mighty ruler. And that is certainly not insignificant for the success of the name. This Oriental kaisar is already found in the Avesta, the sacred book of the ancient Iranians. And the similarity to Caesar goes so far that some scholars have assumed that the Avesta, or at least the passage in question, was written only after Caesar, who thus appeared there as a hero. But the Bactrian kaisar did not come from Rome, but from Central Asia, where he is the hero of an ancient Sun myth; he is the Siegfried of the Tibetans, Kjegser, Kaiszer, or Gesser, and his name means "He Who Rebirthes Himself," spring. He was a god who went to war against the Snow King every year and thus saved humanity. *This* Kaisar is, in any case, a religious figure.

Other titles, such as Caliph al-Muslimin, Dalai Lama and Tien-tse, are just as clearly papal titles as that of the Jewish "Judge" or the Japanese Tenno, the Celestial One. But is it not highly characteristic that the Semitic sacrificial priest Kohen has lent his title to most Asian kings? Chaghan, Khan, countless princes have called and continue to call themselves by these names, all of whom, incidentally, also are of a papal political character. Only Genghis Khan, a pure politician who used religions as a means of power, treated all of them equally with courtesy and contempt, and was likely an atheist himself, allowed this title to be bestowed upon him without the corresponding office. And this solely to satisfy the religious needs of his countless subjects. Genghis Khan does not mean "the unshakable ruler," as some believe, but "Pope," for it is the Old Turkic translation of the Tibetan Gyamtso-Blama, which in Mongolian means Dalai Lama, and in English, "Priest vast as the ocean."

The great Mongol emperor with the papal title, who was horrifically vilified by his defeated enemies, is — just like the nation who barely existed at his birth and then became a world power, and just like his dynasty which was led by a few individuals of the highest caliber but perished after a brief period of glory — a marvelous embodiment of a political development that otherwise tends to take several centuries to reach completion. His politics are a veritable storm tide of power. His legislation and diplomacy are masterpieces created out of nothing. But the driving forces behind him and his people, the nature of his politics, are, in their purest form, almost symbolically, the very same that still hold all great powers together and expand them today.

For Genghis Khan is, in fact, the very incarnation of genuine, true, absolute imperialism, which outwardly acts for economic motives but in reality out of a pure instinct for power. And Genghis Khan's politics are all the more interesting in that he did not have at his disposal, like Mr. Joe Chamberlain, like Nicholas II in East Asia, like the American billionaire oligarchy, the vast resources of an organized state, and most of all not a nation that feels so united with its ruler, or, which beats everything, so firmly imagines that the ruler is their own organ, that the ruler's expanded power appears to them as the greater power of the people, and they need not to be incited, neither by coercion nor by seduction, to enthusiastically fight for world politics. Certainly, there is a vast difference between modern, for instance German, world politics and Mongolian world politics, at least regarding the means by which they operate. Nicholas II, although he, just like the great Mongol, wanted to conquer Manchuria and establish a foothold on the great ocean, is no Genghis Khan; and even the destruction of the Transvaal took place somewhat differently than the conquest of the Central Asian Muslim empires by the Mongols. But if one traces how,

in the tide of power of the Mongol dynasty, the economic factor is initially presented as the driving element until the religious principle of authority emerges alongside the organized state to support the vast political empire, how the empire subsequently disintegrates because this principle of authority was not firm enough to convince all subjects of their affiliation, and then the economic interests of all the amalgamated societies in a centrifugal impulse break through the framework of the sphere of power, then one can say, this is how it has gone with every world hegemony, and everything has already happened before. But what is prototypical in the epic of the Genghisids is the *formation* of a nation that was then to engage in world politics.

The family of the blue-eyed, from which Temüjin¹², the future ruler of the world, emerged, did, as their name testifies, certainly not belong to the race among whom they lived, for all Mongols have black eyes. (We shall see later what significance this racial difference holds.) They ruled only over a tiny Buryat tribe that grazed its horses on the banks of the Onon river. The family seems to have stood under the sign of the falcon. But one can disregard the origin of their rise to power within their tribe. What politics — and this is the important point — did Temüjin, or rather, in the beginning, his mother, a magnificent woman, follow in order to build a nation out of this tiny, powerless tribe? Did he simply want to own more horses? Did he act out of economic motives? All reports which we have from the beginning of his unheard-of life story, speak of the zeal with which his men stole horses and defended their spoils by force of arms. But if his people wanted horses, this does not say that he waged wars over horses. He wanted people, power. And he made his people compliant with his

¹² Genghis Khan's birth name.

plans for power, made them fight for his rule, by promising *them* economic benefits; *he* had no need of horses. But then came the miraculous. When, after long and turbulent battles, he ruled over four tribes instead of just one, it was no longer the permission to plunder that bound his subjects to him, but his personality. The masses no longer attributed their enrichment to themselves, but to the preter-human abilities of the Khan. Numerous tribes, entirely independent of him, wanted him as their overlord because, as an old chronicle says, “a leader is necessary, and the most powerful one brings the most happiness to the people.” From that moment on, there was a Mongolian people. Its members perhaps believed they would become economically happier. But in reality their happiness did not lie in greater riches, in an easier life — for these were not granted to them, but it lay in their sense of affiliation with that great human, in their enthusiasm for his endeavors. They followed him through thick and thin. Never without their great ruler would the Mongols have played a role in the life of humankind. Their long history teaches, after all, that they did not belong together. They only became an entity through the shared devotion to the power embodied in the Khan, in which everyone believed to have a share. And this sense of national identity was of a religious nature. Genghis Khan was not a priest of an existing religion. He was merely dynamically a human giant. This was also known to his people, but they could not be satisfied with it. A human could not unfold such a dimension of will and ability. They felt themselves as subjects, “utterly dependent”; were soft wax in his hands. To be able at all to come to terms with this reality, with the enormous work of this one person, they found no other solution than a religious explanation. They created a Genghis Khan religion: they invented a pious legend; Aluna, the ruler’s ancestor, had been impreg-

nated by a white sheen hanging down from the sky and condensing into a genie in human form; Genghis Khan became the the Son of Heaven, Son of the Sun, Son of Light. That explained it all! Nothing was more natural than that all people jointly acknowledged the power of the One Born of Light and found their happiness in their devotion to this super-human. Nor was anything more natural than the will of this Son of God to extend his power, like heaven itself, to the ends of the earth. Who followed him followed the super-human, upon whom all life and all human happiness depend ... Thus, and only thus — because the foundations of his power became a religious principle, while he himself rose from ruler to descendant of the life-giving Divine — did Genghis Khan forge a true nation from the motley chaos of hostile tribes, more tightly knit, more patriotic, more enthusiastic, more fanatical than the nation of the caliphs, let alone that of the popes or even the emperors of their and our time. And now he could act as if, as it had been with the Egyptian pharaohs, millennia of habitual acknowledgement of the papal character of the ruler had turned the people into a docile tool, a plaything, a piece of sports equipment for the One whose actions they identified with — the One whose spirit had, so to speak, entered every single subject to inspire them with the monarch's will. Genghis Khan was no longer a dictator or general, but a national emperor who had to embrace the people's cult, in order to transfer it to the ideals that had come to life within the nation. In more recent times, this was called the “divine right of kings.”¹³ And Genghis Khan — the man was truly ahead of his time — understood this. At the start of the first *national* war he waged, against the Naimans, when he had already reigned for twenty years, he performed

¹³ *Gottesgnadentum* in German.

for the first time — even the Chinese chronicle emphasizes this — the rite that his people had conceived for him in a dim intuition which gave his power its religious, its only true consecration. In the pale light of dawn he stepped out of his yurt made of precious white felt and, in the valley before the eyes of the countless people, unfastened his belt, laid his weapons on the ground, threw the belt over his left shoulder as a sign that his power did not derive from the use of weapons, and with dignity walked in solitude past the people up the western slope of the mountain to the summit. There he waited in silence. And as the sun, from which, as the people wanted, he was to receive his greatness and power as an inheritance, rose in the east, the shaken crowd in the valley saw the ruler alone, bathed in the golden light of heaven. Nine times — a sacred number in the traditional folk belief — the Great One bowed before the sun, greeted the ancestor, and listened to him. Then he descended to the people. He was the high priest of his nation. — No wonder he remained invincible from that time on! And yet, alongside his remarkable contemporary Frederick the Second, he was the most earthly man of his era. He knew that if the people were to live and die with enthusiasm for their ruler, increasing his power, which scarcely made them happier, religion must be preserved. When he had completed his magnificent conquests to the west and accomplished that incomprehensible strategic masterpiece — without a map, bringing three armies, separated by thousands of kilometers, together, on the same day at the same obscure location in Russia; when, after mysterious negotiations with Frederick II who, like him, was far too ahead of his time, he had interrupted his triumphal march against Hungary and endowed his vast empire, stretching from the Black Sea to the Yellow Sea, with political laws, he realized that his power among the subjugated peoples, just as among the core people of the empire, could

only be consolidated through his priestly authority. His papacy of the sun was no longer sufficient. Nestorian Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Confucians and Jews inhabited his lands by the millions. He had to be the high priest of every form of religion. With his North Asian shamans he practiced magic and consulted the oracle of the cracks in sheep shoulder blades thrown into the fire. On Sundays he went to Mass, received communion with wine, and debated with Christian priests. On the Sabbath he went to the Jewish school and presented himself as a khagan, as kohen. On Fridays he held a sort of selamlik and was as good a caliph as the Turk in Constantinople would later be. By preference he was a Buddhist; he held religious discussions with lamas, even summoned the Grand Lama of Ssatya, and, since he wanted to shift the core of his empire to Buddhist territory in northern China, he entertained the politically magnificent plan of elevating Buddhism to the status of a state religion; he had a Mongolian script invented based on the Tibetan one and made parts of the Kangyur accessible to his ancestral people. He, who probably believed in nothing but himself, understood the necessity of basing the co-existence of his subjects on religious foundations! He was not the bloodthirsty conqueror cursed by the writers of his vanquished enemies. Above all, like Napoleon, he was a statesman of the very highest order. His great code of laws, the Yassa, has unfortunately been lost. The few passages cited in foreign chronicles, however, already show that he was as great at organizing as he was at destroying. And must one not, in order to destroy, first organize one's means of power? If, as is almost certain, the domestic politics of his illustrious grandson Kublai was the application of the lost Yassa, then if we like it or not we must strip Genghis Khan of his mantle of terror and present him as one of the deepest political thinkers of all time. His colossal will and

his colossal spirit may then continue to live on even today in the felt tents of the Mongols and the stone huts of the Tibetans as attributes of a super-human, of a god.

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10

Is it even possible, through abstraction, to portray the becoming and essence of politics more poignantly than through the meteoric rise of this ruler, who — in an unheard-of miracle — forged a nation out of tribes that were not even sedentary, wielded it like a sword over the world, attained the greatest power ever possessed by a single individual, and, dying at the very height of his greatness, was able to say: “I have flooded the earth; nothing can happen anymore except through me.” For he gave an immense impetus to the life of humanity from China to Paris, from Kyiv to India, from Rome to Mecca. Without him, the Ottomans would not have come to Asia Minor; without him, Byzantium would not have fallen; without him, there would have been no Renaissance, no Reformation, no Russian tsarism, and perhaps, given the omnipotence of the Roman theocracy, America would not have been discovered. And he himself became great through the religious will of his first subjects ...

When that came to an end, his dynasty fell as well. It is no wonder that his vast empire still held together at the time of his death; for it was still expanding. Only states that are shrinking fall apart. For within them, belief in the transcendent unifying principle, which embodies omnipotence, has been fatally wounded; and upheavals lie ahead. Genghis Khan was, after all, God himself — or to many enemies the scourge of God or the devil, which amounts to the same thing. His successors had a harder time. They were not personally a credible religion. They had to identify with other, more established ones.

Kublai, who had inherited his grandfather's genius in an enhanced form but, under the influence of his education at the pinnacle of Chinese culture, no longer displayed his impetuous outbursts of will, drew this conclusion with the utmost clarity from the events that had unfolded following Genghis Khan's demise. The religious principle upon which the great ruler's power had rested had remained alien to the subjugated peoples. He had not lived long enough to bury the traditions of every individual under a new sense of affiliation. And this would have been all the more difficult because the subjugated peoples were ancient cultural nations, possessing not only religious but also linguistic, literary, moral — in short, cultural — traditions, whereas the victors had only just plucked their principle of affiliation from thin air. To the subjugated peoples, the power of the Mongol dynasty could appear only as military, not even as political. It had no spiritual foundation in them; therefore, it had to disintegrate along with its military superiority. The empire had already split. The heirs of Genghis Khan, who ruled in Persia, Russia and Turkestan, could maintain their rule only by following their peoples, that is, by relying on the old national foundations: they became national dynasties, or at least sought to become so; but ultimately disappeared because, despite all their flexibility, they failed to present themselves as united with the people through a national, religious idea. The empire collapsed because it could not establish a state religion. Kublai Khan had understood this. He was scarcely still a world ruler, but already more of a Chinese emperor. And with that, he encountered a new difficulty. For even back then, the Chinese had neither a state religion nor a true monarchy anymore. The national affiliation of the Chinese — who are politically at least a thousand years ahead of other civilized nations — had long since completed the transition from the principle

of dependency to the principle of cooperation, a transition that Europe is only now beginning to undertake. It had become economic and had retained the appearance of political, monarchical and religious affiliation only as a vague luxury. But to rule over China is, naturally, the dream of the greatest will to power. Kublai seems to have sensed very well that there was nothing for a true monarch to do in China. He was more than half Chinese himself, after all. But he had followed with the utmost attention the successful advance of a true religion into China. Tibetan Buddhism was making rapid progress. And the emperor was not Chinese enough to understand that this, like any other mystical worldview, would be perceived by his sophisticated subjects as an aesthetic accessory in their lives, without ever being able to develop organizational power. Moreover, he ruled over his ancestral people, the Mongols, who had all become fanatical Buddhists. There he could rightly conduct himself as a religious lord, for his grandfather had initiated the conversion. In any case, he saw a *Buddhist* empire as the only salvation for his *Chinese* imperial throne. And so, for decades of his magnificent reign, he worked to make Buddhism the state religion and himself the emperor of the Buddhists. The negotiations he conducted for this purpose with the high lamas of the most powerful Tibetan monasteries have come down to us. They reveal Kublai and these monks as conscious, overwhelmingly enlightened, pure politicians. The emperor became “Lord and Guardian of Religious Offerings”; the clergy was tasked with making the people loyal to the dynasty through religion. A political masterpiece, equally perfect in both psychological and technical terms, was planned. But when the aged emperor — the greatest China had ever known — held a final grand military parade as the Lord of Buddhism upon an elephant draped in gold and purple on the vast plain of the Dalai Nur, and at

that very hour learned that rebellion was brewing simultaneously in China and among a Turkic tribe, he realized that all was in vain. He descended from his four-legged throne as a broken old man and died shortly thereafter. The state religion itself had proven powerless. It was too new. It had no firm roots in the ancient folk superstitions of either the Mongols or the northern Chinese. And like it, the dynasty was not upheld by the bonds of an authority having become instinctive. Had the Mongols not become Buddhists, but instead had elevated Genghis Khan, after his departure, to the status of a religious founder, the dynasty might have endured. But this religion could not remain alive because it differed more profoundly from the old folk superstitions than Tibetan Buddhism did, which was steeped in all the ancient Asian animistic and magical remnants. And to this was added a circumstance that unexpectedly sheds light on the *how* of all politics. The Genghis Khan faith was neither old enough nor did it embody principles of authority capable of imposing upon the people the physical and economic organization that alone ensures the lasting survival of a nation. It could not make the Mongol nomads sedentary. Therefore, their nation disintegrated and the empire of their dynasts fragmented.

The decline of the Genghisids in China completes the picture. They found no religious ground on which they could have stood firm. Kublai's premonitions came true. The Chinese were not Buddhists. The Buddhist state religion hovered over a void. The clergy would have had to reshape the Chinese national soul in order to create subjects loyal to the dynasty. And since this was impossible, the ruler remained perhaps even more distant from the people than if he had simply sought to base his rule on the brutal power of the state apparatus without any spiritual principle. But he could not have done

this either, because what constitutes the Chinese nation is entirely independent of the organization of the state. The simple fact that the Genghisids truly wanted to be emperors, rather than merely serving as a traditional symbol of social order or as administrators of existing institutions adequate to the national consciousness, kept an abyss open between them and China. They sensed it, pushed the theory of the state religion to its extreme, turned the clergy into a fearsome oligarchy to which they ultimately subjected themselves, and incited the masses against the new tendencies that were undermining their political life. Enraged peasants drove the last heirs of the great Khan back into the desolate steppes of their origin.

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11

What took place here in rapid succession and amidst the upheaval of the entire existing political order within four generations encompasses, when it stretches over centuries or millennia, the life and death of all nations. Only the temporal and local circumstances under which their existences unfolded differ, and with them, naturally, the appearances of their political conduct. If even Genghis Khan, the political adventurer par excellence, who, outside all tradition and without an organized people, seemingly forged his empire through sheer brute force, had to erase his nation's birth defect with religious ideas, how much more so must these peoples not stuck in slower development have carried out their role as rulers, and their nation-building activities! But are not the local and temporal circumstances, and primarily the economic ones, even more important? Can one claim that the economic existence, economic activities, and economic politics are conditioned by religious principles, too? Did the Germanic peoples settle down after their migrations because they adopted Christianity, or just because they

had penetrated into richer lands? Did they form stable political organizations for reasons of a Christian worldview, or did they become Christians more readily because they had adopted a way of life that was economically compatible with it? The matter is all the more difficult to decide because Europeans still approach the analysis of all events related to Christianity with deep-seated, unconscious prejudices. Distance facilitates the construction of the correct perspective. And in Inner Asia, we have the clearest evidence that religion can make peoples sedentary, can forge nations out of wild tribes, and can do so without the coercion of preterhuman authorities embodied in human beings. Buddhism has performed this miracle in Tibet.

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12

The spread of Buddhism in Tibet had, in fact, fewer spiritual than political consequences. It had allowed itself to be permeated by the old animism with its magic and its doctrine of the transformation of spirits into arbitrary earthly forms. The Buddhist hierarchy of deities, the nature of which is irrelevant here, had added the characteristics of Tibetan demons to those brought from India and had thus become firmly intertwined with the national soul. With the introduction of writing, the world of ideas had indeed expanded; Gotama's morals had influenced customs, even though the primordial forms of the Tibetan social order, especially patriarchy and endogamy, the marriage of several relatives to the same woman, continued to exist in striking contrast to the moral system that had since reached the West through Christianity. But this did not yet transform the nomadic tribes into a state, let alone a nation. They only became so through the economic revolution brought about by the Buddhist Church.

From the very beginning, the true representatives of the religion

had been Indian monks. They were certainly far superior to the Tibetans in terms of their mental culture. Their belief in the beneficent power of ritual, however, was so strong that they even regarded as Buddhists those who embraced the new faith merely as a powerful means of defense against the old demons. But the ritual itself required economic conditions that did not exist in icy Tibet, the “Land of Snow.” It matters little whether the monks still regarded their form of asceticism, which Christianity was just beginning to imitate at the time, as a true means of salvation or merely as a ritual. In any case, the form of their life was the essence of their religion. And they had to maintain this way of life in Tibet. But while in India a warm climate and abundant fertility readily made possible for the believer the life of the monk, the hermit, the holy vagabond — the person who, over the soul, forgets the body — in the dreadful land into which they went they were immediately confronted with the grave question of their physical existence. In Tibet, the individual is lost; thinking, reading, introspection, everything that brings a person closer to Nirvana, is made possible only by shutting oneself off from hostile nature. To preserve their rites, the Indian monks had to isolate themselves in groups, locking themselves up in houses where their books, ritual objects, and contemplative mental work were protected from the ravages of the weather. These houses, these monasteries, were the first and only permanent dwellings amidst the fluctuating wanderings of the Tibetan nomads. The extraordinary nature of this sedentary life, which, of course, was only possible through the tribute of food, fuel and clothing provided by the nomads as payment for protection against evil forces, made the deepest impression on the Tibetans. Sedentary life seemed to be both a sign of holiness and of economic prosperity. The spiritual benefit of being closer to Nirvana seemed linked to the social benefit

of leading a peaceful existence. Not only those seeking the salvation of the soul had to strive to become monks, but also all who sought a carefree earthly life. And the society-shaping power of Buddhism was reflected in the founding of countless huge monasteries.

Thus permanent settlements emerged among the nomads. But a sedentary lifestyle is not only a necessary condition for lasting economic and spiritual culture; it is also, amidst nomadic peoples, the seed of political rule, when the wandering and the sedentary get interlinked through an unconsciously formed bond. And that was the case. This bond was not racial, for Indian monks had long been the leaders of the monasteries, and later Tibetans who had studied in India for a long time, and thus, from a racial standpoint, deserved suspicion. The bond lay solely in the religion, in the interweaving of demon magic with the higher principles and dogmas of Buddhism. In a land like Tibet, a permanent settlement of a group of people in the midst of cold, impassable, barren regions is virtually a fortress, whose inhabitants are protected against the climate with its destructive snowstorms, as well as against marauding, starving nomadic tribes. A monastery provided the nomads of the region, their patriarchal society and their local political structure with an extremely valuable sense of political security. In times of war, it became a refuge or a fortress. In times of peace, it was a meeting place where one could be certain not to miss one another, as might happen at the foot of this or that mountain, or at this or that river crossing, or to fall into the trap of a treacherous adversary. It was therefore the natural marketplace. The exceptional security it offered soon made it a storage place for goods, a repository of value. And eventually, the monastery became the merchants' lodging, the exchange point, the bank, the commercial center. Nothing was then more natural than the permanent settlement

of lay families near the monks, at the gates of the monasteries. All those who expected greater profit from trade than from the production of goods that nomads could provide, necessarily preferred to give up the dangerous, uncertain peddling from tribe to tribe, from country to country. They stayed at the monastery, or became monks themselves. Thus the monastery became the citadel or palace of a village or a town. The nomads settled down. Now the monasteries were always situated in the most favorable locations, on mountains overlooking sheltered valleys, by rivers and lakes, in places that dominated the least desolate land. The Indian monks and the Tibetan pilgrims returning from India brought with them the most basic knowledge of agriculture. And the “settled people” living around the monastery — even today, the fairy tales of the High Asian Mongols always conclude with the words: “and they were happy, *sat*, and grew fat” — embraced the new higher form of economic life with growing enthusiasm. The monasteries had turned primitive hordes into sedentary farmers.

And now the political character of this entire development, which had grown out of religious authority, came to light. The monasteries, which until then had had to live off the products of the nomads, became economically independent. They and the people that had settled around them produced everything necessary. And so the influence of the nomads and their princes declined in direct proportion to the growth of agriculture and, with it, the sedentary population. From the spiritual and economic upswing of the Tibetans cultivated by the monks it is easy to understand that veneration for the congregational institutions of the church behind them, and the religion hovering above it, rose to immeasurable heights. Religion had inextricably forged the spiritual bond, the chains of affiliation, between the people and the bearers of the Buddhist doctrine that had become so happily

fruitful. The monks had become the masters of the people. Their role remained purely political from that point on. Their members constituted a ruling caste. And since anyone could become a monk, it soon came to the point where every family had at least one member belonging to the congregation. The result was the emergence of gigantic monasteries that resembled large cities in appearance and organization and whose inhabitants numbered tens of thousands. The old monastic rules grew weaker. Celibacy was consciously cast aside. It had never been strictly observed anyway. The ancient endogamous customs lived on and were not frowned upon. The collective marriage of a woman to several male members of a family remained a common practice. And this, which often morphs into pure polyandry — in northwestern Tibet, a guest is still invited today to share the bed with the woman — turned out to be highly practical for the monastic social order. In this way, large monastic cities such as Kumbum, Urga, or Shigatse were able to exist with forty thousand monks and five thousand women, with the organization of family relations being facilitated by extremely simple rules regarding divorce and remarriage.

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13

Thus, the Tibetans had become a people organized under priestly authority. And no less typical, no less indicative of the religious character of the still commonly existing monarchical form of government and politics, is the development of priestly oligarchies into papacy, and that of the pope into a king. Tibet was not yet a state. The individual monasteries were as independent of each other as the European princes were in the Middle Ages. And indeed, the abbot of the monastery or the head of the congregation was a true prince who knew full well that the power of his position and that of his order rested

solely on faith or the observance of religious rules. That is why they all took the harshest possible measures against the revival of demon worship, which the leaders of the remaining nomadic tribes encouraged in order to preserve their former power or at least their independence against the monks. But these religious wars — and this has been the case with all of them — were waged by the masses, if not out of religious fanaticism then out of the fanaticism born of it, not for themselves but for the existing order. From the standpoint of the ruling monastic caste, however, they were pure power struggles. And here we find a new element of all politics: the will to power.

One must not see anything metaphysical in this, at least insofar as it occurs in individuals, in ruling individuals. On the contrary, it is quite simply the psychological accompaniment of physical, economical success in the broadest sense. It is in fact a return to the human from the mysterious compulsion of extra-human motives, a liberation from the yoke of the despotic idea that first drove them to power.

At first, the Tibetan monasteries and their leaders had not pursued power politics, but certainly religious politics. They had not devoted their energies to increasing their human power, but to expanding and consolidating the sphere of influence of the idea, of Buddhism, of which they were the bearers. They had acted, so to speak, merely as the embodiment or as the instrument of this idea. But once this idea firmly ruled over large masses of people, its actual bearers naturally became the masters of those masses, at first only through the idea. Then, however, insofar as they were earthly human beings with physical and economic needs, with needs for their *persons*, the personal, individual advantage of being masters naturally presented itself to them. And now the purpose of their activities as leaders, advisors and converters was no longer solely the rule of the preterhuman idea

that had led them to greatness, but alongside it, and soon above it, that purpose was their personal rule, their power. The foundations of this power among the masses, their sense of dependence, their submissiveness, could neither undergo a similar transformation nor suspect this transformation in the souls of the rulers. And so, alongside their concern for power, a wondrous, naive hypocrisy emerges in the rulers' actions, which are nothing but politics — one that, consciously or partly unconsciously, continually manifests itself in all societies that are no longer overtly religious, and especially in all power politics. For the rulers retain their power only by personally presenting themselves as inseparable from the principle that creates the political organization. Whether they, like perhaps the Tibetan oligarchs, truly believe that without them the principle would lose its power over the soul of the national, or whether they, as with some modern monarchs, use this divine right of kings only as a pretext anymore in front of the uncultivated masses to have themselves and the ruling idea, the national idea, recognized as inseparable: this has no influence whatsoever on actual political events. What is essential is only that the power of the rulers, if it is somehow to endure, rests on this identification among the people of the representative of the state-creating ideas with these ideas themselves. Everywhere where the ruler cannot identify with such a collective suggestion rooted in the people, he maintains his position only through brute force, if he possesses personal instruments of power, or not at all.

This was the case, for example, with the Roman soldier-emperors, in an empire where no spiritual concept binding the entire people together was alive at all, and which therefore could not form a unity; on what could they rely that would have allowed them to present themselves with equal strength to the Egyptians as Egyptian, to the

Greeks as Greek, to the Gauls as Celtic, and to others as Germanic, Iberian, Berber, or Chaldean rulers? The national idea of the Roman Empire? But this was limited to the Italians and, at most, to the inhabitants of the great capitals of Byzantium and Alexandria, who together actually constituted an oligarchy that pursued pure power politics under the guise of the imperial rule; the Roman Empire, or rather, the Roman monarchs, *had* to watch their power crumble because they had no inner bond that held them together with their subjects. True, these needed some kind of rulers, but they could only tolerate those who could somehow act as representatives of the sense of affiliation that lived within them. But by what means did the Greeks of Asia Minor belong together with the Gauls, or the Africans or Italians with the Pannonians? Neither through customs (derived from religion) or political ideas, nor through social principles that had become laws through long habitude, neither through language nor through economic culture, and least of all through pure religion, by which they would have perceived the emperor as the bearer of an omnipotence that hovered above them all, before which everyone would have remained a helpless slave in the shared sense of ultimate dependency. The most power-hungry emperors surely sensed that the tragedy of their intermittent authority, not to call it their pitiful powerlessness, stemmed from this source. Some accepted the inherent instability of their power and sought to maintain it day by day, place by place, through the sheer force of their personal henchmen, the international Praetorians, who mocked all service for the nation. Others sought to do as Genghis Khan succeeded in doing a thousand years later: they made themselves into gods; but Genghis Khan allowed himself to be elevated to the son of the all-governing supernatural

power by his enthusiastic people; those emperors imposed their divinity upon the laughing crowd.

And gods do not reveal themselves; they slowly bring themselves forth from the awestricken soul of the people. And such a new god arose from the soul of the masses, thirsting for supernatural rule, precisely because the Roman Empire, with its purely earthly power, had shattered all ancient religious systems in their political manifestations. There had been an Egyptian, a Greco-Egyptian, a Greco-Semitic, a Phoenician, Italic, Iberian, Gallic, even Germanic and Pontic culture: everything had been thrown into confusion, fragmented, piled in ruins upon one another: the Roman Empire, after all, ruled only over the ruins of ten or twenty cultures. And nothing but the emperor's personal power, floating in a void, grounded in none of them, international in the worst sense of the word, was to replace all of this. "To be the beloved of the people,"¹⁴ the petty-bourgeois versifier had, with these words, a flash of the deepest psychological wisdom; "to be the beloved of the people" is truly the sole foundation of monarchical power. But this love is not erotic, it is religious; it contains the sacred awe of the Australian before the wombat, of the Ket before the bear, of the ancient Jew before the Ark of the Covenant, of the Catholic before the monstrance; it has the mysticism of all religious trust; it has the naivety of all childlike devotion — and all religion, from the crude animism of the Yukaghir to the so-called free Christian, is founded on parental dignity; and when worthy members of a veterans' association shut someone up with the exclamation: "The Emperor must know better; that is what he is there for!" there lies in it that ultimateness of veneration, of dependence, of submission of the mind, that faith in the

¹⁴ A line from the imperial anthem of the German Empire, *Heil dir im Siegeskranz*.

symbol, that conviction of the reality of the embodiment of the collective will in a personality, which constitutes the essence of religious meaning, and also the essence of papal authority.

“Beloved of the people” in this sense is not something that a human being can become on his own; and even if he could — as Genghis Khan did through his people — this love would not be transferred either to his natural or, as in the case of Alexander, to his “sanctified” heirs. The “beloved” must first be an immortal god; only then can those become it who represent him on earth. When the Christian God emerged from the ruins of Roman cultural debris, became the “beloved of the peoples,” and bound all those he blessed into new common bonds, only then a human being could shape these affiliated people into a great, solid, organized society and become a Christian emperor. Rome was brought back to life in Constantinople by the Christian God. It was not the common Greek language, nor the shared heritage of Greek culture, which had clothed the peoples from Athens to Persia, from Byzantium to Heliopolis in the same brilliant veneer, that could have wrought this miracle; otherwise, Hadrian or Marcus Aurelius would have done so already. The Eastern Roman Empire was not Greek but Christian. The Greek Empire did not make Christianity the state religion; rather, the Christian state religion created the Byzantine Empire.

And then it continued, in ever unvaried change, as in Tibet, when the monastic orders became intoxicated with political power and conjured up the Tibetan papal kingship from the Buddhist faith. The monasteries fought against each another for power. Their rules of life differed, and sometimes even some of their dogmas. Their subjects were thus incited to fanaticism against one another. The greatest success in this struggle went to those whose laws were the most lenient.

Members and followers flocked to them in the greatest numbers. Their economic and military power thus grew the strongest. Actual wars between these small monastic states were, however, rare. Brute force achieved little. But isn't all conquest, at its core, conversion — conversion to another faith, another language, another custom, another worldview, another order? Conversion by fire and sword has never worked. It must be spiritual; economic or religious tendencies and interests must speak in its favor. Else, Prussia would have to deal with Poland, England with Ireland, and Russia with ten conquered enemies. In Tibet, it was precisely these interests that favored peaceful conquest. The weaker monasteries gradually aligned themselves with the more powerful ones, whose rules did not conflict too greatly with their own. This development, like any centripetal movement, proceeded with increasing acceleration. Over the course of three generations (in the twelfth century), four or five major monasteries gained hegemony over the Buddhists, and thus political authority in Tibet. The most powerful was located in the land of Lhasa and was called Sakya. Their hunger for power grew. They satisfied it through religious propaganda, which led to political rule. When Genghis Khan founded his empire, he had to reckon with their power. When Kublai Khan sought to preserve it, he had to conclude a concordat with the abbot of Lhasa.

But Tibet was still not a unified state. It had no pope yet, and this pope was not yet a king. A new faith was needed for that. The Tibetan Reformation, with its Luther Tsongkhapa, created it. Avalokiteśvara, “the Lord who looks down,” the form of God in the Buddhist manifold who guides earthly events, could appear on earth in human form to steer the fortunes of the only saving church. Naturally, he appeared in the guise of the head of the most powerful congregation. So strong was the crowd's need to perceive the existing authority as the

representation of the supernatural that the new dogma was received with enthusiasm everywhere. To the *divine* head of the church everyone had to submit. The church became papacy. And since it was already a political government, the Dalai Lama, the “Lama vast as the ocean,” became a true monarch.

There is no clearer example in history of the religious that step by step creates, dominates, and *becomes* politics. And this example certainly sheds light on an infinite number of mysteries in the political endeavors of all times and peoples.

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14

One should not, of course, generalize from one case to all. But the mere possibility, confirmed by a single case, that religion can develop into a political organization through all stages up to absolute monarchy is of the utmost psychological significance. And politics is, after all, driven solely by psychology. Otherwise, there would be no parliaments, no parties, no newspapers, not even teachers, and certainly no priests. Otherwise, there would never have been ruling castes of priests, neither in Egypt nor in India. In China, Confucius would never have existed. And schools would not exist even now. Has not education — that is, the spiritual indoctrination — always and everywhere been in the hands of supernatural authority? Not in the beginning, perhaps; there, faith was enough. But when God became the principle of the state, when his representative or son became pope and king, and his representatives became priests, and when they sought to maintain their personal positions of power and *understood* this, then the consolidation of the existing order was set about. Religion had to be preserved among the subjects; one could no longer rely on the political loyalty of the faithful. It is entirely irrelevant whether this priestly

education, this mental enslavement of the masses, indoctrinated them with the ultimate dependence on the god Assur and the Assyrian Great King, on Ammon and the Theban pharaoh, on the orthodox Christian God and the Tsar, on the Catholic pantheon and the Pope, on the Protestant God reduced to mere morality and the Prussian king, or on the God of the French patriotic ideal obfuscated to a tradition. In and of itself, all this remains the same. A power recognized as “higher” (not accepted rationally, but emotionally) places the people in the service of an idea which, in practical terms, is merely the expression of the will to power of the existing oligarchy. Whether the expansion of oligarchic power benefits the masses or contributes to the elevation of culture is another question to which there is no universally valid answer. (For instance, the conquest of Manchuria would have been of no benefit to the Russians, whereas that of Korea may prove exceedingly beneficial to the Japanese.) In any case, the dependency of the masses initially exclusively benefits the oligarchs. And if, less clearly developed than in Tibet, all oligarchs are priests; if, before the very latest era in Europe “corrupted” by pure science, all states drew their essential stability from the principle: “*cuius regio, eius religio*”¹⁵; if, at last, every state seeks to expand its power, then one arrives at a conclusion that appears indisputable both historically and psychologically: nation is religion.

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15

Certainly in modern cultural states such a religion can no longer be summarized in a fairy tale book of revelations. Rather, it is entirely independent of the still codifiable forms of dependence on pre-human authorities. It has nothing at all to do with belief in facts, but

¹⁵ “Whose realm, his religion” — the ruler determines the religion of his subjects.

only with the feeling of the ultimate necessity of the existing order. It is dependency turned into instinct. Nothing would be more ridiculous than to describe this religious basis of national existence, for example in England or Germany, as Christian. There is no Christian, but German politics. And there are people who despise Christian organizations and cults as true anachronisms, and who are more devout with regard to the national religion than general superintendents. For in this religion, all the feelings of dependency that have been alive throughout the ages in the same sphere are layered one upon another. All traditions, conscious or having become unconscious, reign here in a colorful jumble within the boundaries drawn by the education imposed by the existing authority. In this education everything that can secure the continued existence of the authority flows together; and everything that is capable of undermining the “national religion,” and most of all that on which the ruling authority is based, is excluded. All European states are historically and psychologically based upon the various forms of the Christian faith. That is why in their domestic politics they *must* govern ecclesiastically, and in their foreign politics must continue to invent psychological antagonisms among the subjects of various oligarchies, suggest these to the subjects, and that way keep them in a state of sufficient mistrust toward foreign peoples to make their own unity and affiliation stand out more sharply.

Indeed, this applies even more so to those who, it may seem, owe their very existence to the overthrow of the religious, papal and monarchical order. But, a psychological analysis of the French Revolution will bring to light something that has not yet become entirely clear to the great majority, namely, that the motives of the French people, despite all appearances, were thoroughly religious in nature, in their colossal struggle against the old order and against all of Europe, which

stood up for that old order. They fought for a new order based on new principles, and this society-building driving force was far more directly religious than the motives of the autocrats who took up arms against France in defense of the old order. The patriotism that enabled a people, disorganized by monarchical standards, not only to defend the new order but also to give expression to a new form of the will to power in fabulous campaigns of conquest was, at its core, nothing other than pride in the new faith, the faith in human rights, in immanent freedom and equality, in a new cultural ideal, in new principles of organization, in a new model of collective life, to which countless millions sacrificed their most obvious interests, and to which France itself sacrificed its most immediate economic aspirations.

And just there the distinctive nature of religious and economic motives showed itself in all clarity. It were indeed these that had had a corrosive effect on the old order; they had laid bare the conflicting economic interests of individuals, had created class antagonisms, and had branded the representative oligarchy as a “*delenda Carthago*.” No one in France would of their own free will have taken up arms to save the France of the Bourbons, that, though still powerful on the outside, had already been so rotten in its internal structure. No one would have stepped in to defend the undoubtedly extremely rich culture of the *ancien régime*. It is certain that minds like Racine, Boileau, or Watteau would not have been possible without this regime, and it is highly doubtful whether, within the system of human rights, Voltaire, Montesquieu, or even d’Alembert could have been born, the *Encyclopédie* been written, or Versailles been lived. But when the peasants’ cahiers brought economic issues to the forefront, when the impending state bankruptcy forced the convening of the Estates General, when the oligarchy renounced its privileges, and later when the most magnificent

economic upheavals seemed to sweep away the old order altogether, these were epiphenomena of the real revolution, not its causes.

While the disintegration of the old order was taking place in secret due to the economic conflicts of interest that had come to life, a new order had taken shape as an ideal in some minds, and this new gospel was not meant to accelerate the disintegration of the old, but rather to make any disintegration of the social organism impossible at all; it was a society-forming element that emerged here, and the most peculiar thing was, that the new principles arose straight from the old oligarchy; the “Enlightenment,” by which in any case the revolution was guided, was precisely the intellectual work of those for whom the economic questions did not exist at all; it did not originate from the illiterate masses who felt the economic pressure of the old order, but from the sophisticated *bon vivants* who actually stood *above* the state organization, and, just like the wealthy of the Roman decadence, should have abandoned the search for democratic principles all the sooner, since no stable order of social existence can be conceived in which their individual way of life, their unrestricted individual self-indulgence, would have been permissible.

Through the logical elaboration of new social principles, the “anarchy of the few,” which had created the Enlightenment, had to commit suicide. The fact that it did so can be explained solely by the temperament of the group. The religious motives had not died out, but remained in full force; only the *form* in which they had taken political shape had burst apart, because it could no longer accommodate their religious, their imperious content. The will toward authority, toward the principle, toward that which reigns equally over all individuals and fixes their mutual position, was so strong that the monarchy virtually had to appear as an order that lacked authority. Not that the masses

had become too knowledgeable to accept the despot's authority; on the contrary, this authority was not great enough. Economic hardships had nourished doubt in this authority among the people. But it was the ingenious Enlightenment, the aristocracy of the intellect, that found a higher authority, proved the possibility of its establishment, and made it appealing to the people. The Revolution was downright reactionary. It violently halted the progress in the disintegration of French society, discredited economic motives, elevated religious ones once again to exclusive dominion, replaced the despot's too-weak authority with the authority of something quite clearly non-human, a philosophical principle, and now with terrible exertion squeezed the old society into the new scheme.

All kinds of limbs and heads that did not fit had to be cut off. Had this new society not been set within the rigid framework of absolute authority, it would have been utterly incapable of engaging in politics, that is, of presenting itself as an entity to other peoples. Had the religious element, the principled aspect, the belief in what everyone was compelled to regard as self-evident truth (human rights, etc.) — in short, the ideal or the morality — not become fanaticism to the same degree and in the same sense as, say, in the early days of Islam or in early Christianity; had, on the contrary, the economic motives that had come to life among the people under Louis XV and XVI remained effective, then a class or group struggle might well have taken place, or rather a struggle of all against all, which would have made France just as easy a prey for its neighbors as Rome had been for the Germanic tribes; from which, however, a viable, authority-drunk *French* society would never have emerged again, but rather a completely different one, corresponding somewhat to 11th-century Italy, in which the *invaders*

represent the society-sustaining element, and the descendants of the old society the element of the *bon vivants*, if one may put it that way.

Even the so-called social upheaval is thus of a religious nature, *because* it is in fact a social construct, the subsumption of life under a supra-individual ruling principle.

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16

We have thus found the actual element of politics that forms states and nations, operating in the same forms throughout the ages. It is the religious. It makes groups of people dependent on something non-human. This is represented to the group by certain individual. These priests become political rulers as soon as their position shows them the advantages of personal power. They maintain this power by reinforcing faith (education), adapting to economic transformations, and pursuing power politics against other states, which brings their subjects only questionable benefits, but, since they identify with the ruler or the idea of the state, gives them the illusion of their own greater power.

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17

Any two-handed being worthy of the name “human” can find little that is pleasant in such an unbiased explanation of the nature of states and nations. For it portrays human groups as slaves; slaves first to a superstition, then to an organization that could only become strong through that superstition. A history of such bondage spanning millennia has associated not the herd instincts, but the instincts of dependence so firmly with the list of “natural” characteristics of the average person, that their logical byproduct appears virtually as an absolute truth. Man regards himself essentially as a member of the state, that is, as what the bitter Greek politely called *zoon politicon*,

but conceived as an animal that does *not* engage in politics, but *leaves* this to a few rulers. But is man a creature of the state? The state, the nation, is after all merely a *form*. Human beings are not that form, but are within it. And now, finally, the fundamental question of all politics arises. Is the human being there for the state, or is the state there for the human being? There is nothing philosophical about this problem. It is pitifully practical. For everything that takes place in a state, in a nation, everything that develops, reshapes, creates, or in any way constitutes cultural activity, has never been anything other than a more or less emphatic answer to this question. That the question has to be asked at all, already contains within itself the entire tragedy of human history.

For if one knows — as has been shown — that at the foundation of every established political order so far there have lain principles derived directly from religion or from religious superstition, then nothing more appalling can be imagined than that countless thousands of millions of people have revered as divine the suicidal idea that they are merely the raw material for filling social forms, and that their personal lives have to merge into that of the existing social organization. For in reality, they do not fill *social* forms, but the *power circles* of oligarchies; they do not obey the supernatural, but the all-too-human cunning of those who have become rulers by chance, who have turned from representatives of supernatural powers into representatives of their own power, from priests into power-hungry men, and who only are not torn apart in the furious onslaught of the deceived flock because *they* are men, but *those* are still *believers* who lie in the dust before the Higher. And the most dreadful thing is the millennia-long resistance, the eternal laziness of the believers, who, even though everything around them and within them is constantly changing, dare

not leave their place, do not want to climb the rungs from believer to human.

For millennia, the faithful herd has truly been nothing but filler for forms of government, or more accurately, a will-less object of power for ruling priest-oligarchies. And yet it, and each of its members, has led an independent life in other respects. Armies of anonymous Egyptian coolies could bleed themselves to death for decades on the most senseless of tasks, building pyramids for kings, could die pointlessly for the stinking corpse of a despot: they do not count in “history;” for history is made by rulers for the ruled, to educate them in subservience. But each of them ate, digested, loved, and owned a few possessions. Each of them apart from their existence as a subject had a personal life that should have been much closer to them than the other. And this personal life, with its sufferings and joys bound to the individual body, is what makes them human. It is — in the broadest sense — their economic life, to which their spiritual joys and struggles, their aesthetic pleasures, and their logical games belong just as much as their diligent digestion. And this economic life, these countless economic existences that proceed side by side and one after another, *independent* of the authority of the state, constitute the history and development of humanity, constitute *culture*. Culture and authority are enemies. For culture depends first and foremost on the economic. How this fits into the framework of a political, that is religious, order is, at first, of no consequence whatsoever. Indeed it is not even necessary to define the nature of culture to understand its relationship to the political order. Some maintain that high levels of culture can only be attained where oligarchies rule the masses autocratically, and they gleefully cite examples such as Athens, with its petty-bourgeois oligarchy, ruling over hundreds of thousands of slaves; they cite Egypt

and Assyria and rejoice over the millions of lives sacrificed uselessly, but for the sake of “culture,” to which we owe the vast ruins of the Nile and Euphrates valleys. Those who think even more superficially even claim that Chinese culture “stagnated” precisely when imperial power waned, the feudal organization faded away, and the Chinese, with a contemptuous shrug at all things state-related, finally knew how to organize their own lives under no authorities other than economic ones.

But if the so-called highest fruits of culture can only flourish on the manure of luxury, this by no means proves that an oligarchic social order is a prerequisite for culture. For the luxury of oligarchs has absolutely nothing to do with their principles of rule. Precisely when they possess or seek to gain power, and often primarily economic power, they are psychologically no longer the incarnation of the preter-human principle of authority, but have descended from their divine stature to the nature of entirely ordinary human beings, in whom the physical, the economic, and the instincts for improving one’s personal situation have come to life. The Assyrian Great King, son of Assur, son of the god who each time entered the queen’s womb to create a new ruler, was undoubtedly a theocrat in the strictest sense of the word; and he commanded over vast economic resources, essentially the sum of all the personal resources of his subjects. But insofar as he used these to create cultural monuments, he was no longer a divine ruler, but an entirely ordinary human being who acted just the same as all those who believed in him and lay prostrate before him did; only he was in a more favorable personal position, could do more harm and leave a greater legacy, without, however, the political order as such, at the head of which he stood, contributing in any way to the cultural result.

Monarchs have been great only as creators or transformers of the *forms* in which the masses of the people were forced to live together; they are great as artisans of their personal power and of the glory that thereby passes over to the people because, through faith, they feel a sense of affiliation with the ruler. But for the *matter*, for what is taking place within the nation, for the lives of the individuals and their circumstances — and nothing else is culture — they have accomplished absolutely nothing.

Hammurabi, it is said, was a great emperor because in a certain sense he created Chaldean culture. A vain but skillfully staged illusion. Hammurabi, who by all appearances was not even a Chaldean but perhaps an Elamite, could do nothing other than carry out on a larger scale, and *retroactively* incorporate into the state form, what the individual subjects had long since acquired as cultural assets quite independently of divine despotism. Did Hammurabi invent the canals? Certainly not; he merely saw that canals were useful to the Chaldean people, and thanks to his personal power he was able to have them dug on a larger scale, not to elevate the culture of the masses, but because, given his divine status, the enrichment of each of his subjects meant an increase in his personal power. Did Hammurabi invent the Chaldean calendar, or the computation of compound interest, or the bank money-order? Nothing is more absurd than to assume such a thing. All this cultural heritage had existed long before him, at a time when his empire had not yet existed at all. None of these things had any connection whatsoever with his theocratic, political power.

Indeed, one may go even further. The fact that he did not even belong to a Chaldean dynasty that with the same god had been passed

down for millennia, and that, as his defensive wars prove, his title of Great King did not even seem to have remained entirely uncontested, suggests motives in his “cultural activity” which, alas! to this very day constitute the very essence of the questionable nature of social politics in all well-ordered states. Theocracy needs no canals, no calendar, no checks and no mathematics, but every single physical, economic human being concerned with the favorable organization of his own life required all these *inventions*. He needed them *practically*, just as he needed theocracy *religiously*. But the ruler *practically* needed theocracy and had to keep the masses *religiously* dependent!

And now imagine that the religious principle of rule has lost its power, that the ruler no longer appears to the people as endowed with preterhuman authority to the extent that would please his instincts for power. With Hammurabi, a foreigner, this was probably the case. When he realizes this, he will undoubtedly seek to strengthen the bonds that bind the masses to him. And he does this by adding to the fading religious, traditional, atavistic and psychological affiliation between the people and the ruler another one, one that is no longer suited to chain to him the people as a unit, but rather every single individual of the people: in one word, an economic one. He regards everything that individuals among the people have achieved for themselves and that enhances their individual happiness as necessarily belonging to the existing political order, identifies the power of the ruler with progress, presents himself as its protector and promoter, enacts laws that *retroactively* sanction the existing cultural level, and goes so far as to use his political power to surpass, not in quality but in quantity, everything that had previously been achieved by the people, to generalize it, to present it as an outgrowth of the politically ruling principle, and thus to cunningly make culture appear as the result of politics.

That is why Hammurabi built canals, why calendar rules are found in the cuneiform archives of the Chaldean kings, and why the faithful subjects of modern monarchs or nationalist ideologies have not yet been able to break the habit of attributing the successive advances of civilization not only to the rulers themselves, but also to the political order that encompassed them, not just in a chronological sense, but in a causal one. And this illusion is — the lords of political systems may thank their god — very difficult to destroy. The “*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*”¹⁶ prevails everywhere. If for millennia it has been possible to attribute economic and cultural progress — for religious progress does not exist — to religious rulers, it must take at least centuries before this fabricated but by the ruling castes undeniably needed connection is thoroughly destroyed among the peoples. Since for this very purpose the religious oligarchies have been able to make use for themselves not only the power of faith, but also the economic powers that developed independently of them, and above all those that exert the most direct influence on the spiritual state of the masses, precisely because outwardly they appear less economic than spiritual: above all language and writing, and with them education or, which is the same thing, the false interpretation of what has happened, that serves the rulers.

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19

The story of writing and all its political significance has unfolded exactly as it did with Hammurabi’s canals. Their invention and use had desperately little to do with the religious or political order. In the beginning, they were perhaps just as subversive as newspapers still are today in Russia and Turkey. But the rulers, the priests, recognized their

¹⁶ “Afterwards, therefore because,” the erroneous assumption of causality.

soul-influencing qualities, seized upon them, and developed them all the more easily because their role as rulers left them time for this graphic pastime. As soon as the religious rulers sensed that the essential foundation of their personal position was the masses' now unconscious sense of dependency, that is, tradition, writing and everything that could be done with it had to become one of their most important areas of activity. For without writing, there is no tradition. And it is highly characteristic that at all times the rulers have behaved toward writing just as conservatively and reactionarily as they have toward every new evident stage of economic development. They have always sought to keep writing as complicated and cumbersome as possible, indeed often sought to prohibit it entirely for anyone other than priests, in order to hinder economic progress that might serve to strengthen the individual awareness of their subjects. Writing was sanctified because otherwise it would have become revolutionary. All the more clearly in its development one observes the unalterable, irreconcilable opposition between culture and state politics. Is it not remarkable that the three ancient scripts we know, ancient Chinese, ancient Chaldean cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphs, even in their earliest forms already possess something independent of all that is religious?

In Egypt there were rocks, in Chaldea only clay, in China at best tree barks. In Egypt one could chisel and paint and at the same time work for eternity, thus endowing every written word with an immense traditional influence.

In Chaldea one could only scratch into clay with spatulas and fire it; every stroke naturally became wedge-shaped; the characters had no fixed form; the writing tablets were not monumental; they could be lost or broken: the script itself, for which the old models could no longer

serve, changed rapidly, becoming simpler not only out of laziness on the part of the priestly scribes, but because no immutable standard of ancient times remained; thus cuneiform became easier to understand and easier to execute. It could no longer remain the prerogative of the rulers; it spread among the people and became a primary means of economic progress, creating, next to the originally emotional traditions of religious-political *dependency* entirely new and different traditions of *self-reliance*, which soon translated into fixed customs of every kind, independent of state authority. What did it have to do with the theocratic order when individual subjects concluded current-account contracts among themselves, others calculated solar eclipses, and still others noted down all manner of rules for the manufacture of this or that object? Absolutely nothing. But all of this, over time, had to bring to the subject's awareness the realization that all that had arisen independently of the state order was actually closer to them than the state order itself. And from that point on, the eternal political conflict between economic instincts and religious atavisms has been alive within them. *In all civilized nations this conflict dominates the political thinking of the masses.* Without writing it can never arise, or only in the most vague impulses.

In Chaldea, this conflict arose relatively early because writing had become the common property of the educated. In Egypt it never really appeared as long as the Egyptian state could exist without foreign aid, that is, on the basis of Egyptian principles of authority, and this was due to the archaic character of writing, to the possibility of dragging it on unchanged, cumbersome and decorative for millennia, to keep its use so time-consuming that only idlers could employ it, to protect it as a monopoly of the ruling caste against any profanation by subjects, and thus to successfully counter the formation of traditions outside

the theocratic order. Not that no economic progress were made; the technical achievements of the Egyptians were just as clearly delivered not by kings but by anonymous subjects, as in Chaldea. But in Egypt, the ruling caste was able to successfully appropriate these achievements for itself and, for a long time, prevent the emergence of an independent economic tradition among the people, *because* rock art could only very slowly, as writing on papyrus, become the common property of the castes that actually constitute the fabric of the national life.

In China, the conflict between the economic sphere, which drives the erosion of authority, and the religious sphere which upholds the existing order, had to come to light much more quickly, because a popular tradition, a tradition of living, could be established there even more easily than in Chaldea. For writing, which alone brings forth a culture through the *recording and retaining of the mundane*, while it hinders all cultural development by upholding the preterhuman state principle that must unalterably be followed, in China very rapidly developed into a form in which it became useful for all practical purposes. It transitioned from tree bark to the ideal material of paper; from cumbersome ideography it grew into a genuine, exceedingly ingenious script. The material it utilized was easily destroyed and deteriorated rapidly. And while for history — a mere pastime of European idlers — this was most unfortunate, for the Chinese it probably was a fundamental cause of their incomparable political development. Religious traditions could not be maintained in a fixed form for long, nor could state traditions. There were no ancient documents. Everything was mere talk. All the religious and metaphysical humbug of authority — pure monarchy, the notion of divine right, patriotism, everything that is tradition derived from religious sources and that still today despotically rules the so-called civilized

world under the smiling gaze of the Chinese — had perished along with the feudal order around the time of Lao-tse and Confucius. What could survive was only the mundane, everything that connects human beings as human beings with other human beings, and not as members of a herd with preterhuman powers that impose a political order of coercion represented by individual humans. Thus, religion became mere morality, that is *economic* morality, while the political order became economic association. Not that no religious phenomena continued to exist among the Chinese; on the contrary, they have multiplied enormously. But they are individual. There is no religious power among the Chinese that could have bestowed upon them something like one of our fine states. The sense of dependency that holds the Chinese together is not that of a higher power, a state principle, or an unquestioned existing order, but quite simply the feeling of each individual's dependence on all others. The "sense of affiliation" among the Chinese, precisely because of its ephemeral nature and the mutability of the foundations on which it once rested, has gained exactly what European politics, in order to preserve its popes, absolutely does not want to gain: freedom from the irrational. Its components are only those that in Europe appear *after* the religious, the "state idea": a sense of race, a sense of language or rather of writing, and, above all, something that Europe still completely lacks: a sense of culture, as it develops from the commonality of economic customs and economic victories. For Europe has no sense of culture, or west of the Russians there would be no states, but rather *one* great cultural group in which the differences from region to region, in language, race, character and conviction, would scarcely be greater than within the one great Chinese nation.

But if these differences in China are as great as in Europe, how does the nation hold together at all? Can one imagine peoples more diverse in their so-called national character than the lively, small-statured southern Chinese and the huge, phlegmatic people of Shaanxi, the calm, good-natured, life-loving tribes of the eastern provinces, the sharp-tongued, energetic Hakka in Fujian, and the stubborn, individualistic western Chinese from Gansu and Sichuan? No Cantonese can understand Beijing dialect, no Shanghainese the Hakka language. What could be more different than the atheistic philosophy of Confucius, Taoism, mutilated into crude magic, and Buddhism, steeped in countless ancient demonic beliefs? And yet the Chinese nation exists more firmly and with greater certainty of the future, after an immense past, than any of our modern European nations. For a thousand years, it has swallowed and digested five foreign peoples. For seven centuries, it has hosted non-Chinese dynasties on its imperial throne, maintained as a sort of aesthetic habit, through three times as many generations. It can be conquered, dismembered, divided, subjugated, or abolished by decree — and yet every time it lives on. It is not a unified race, it is not a religious community, it does not even have common political traditions, it cares little for its political history, and even less for its political future. Everything that in Europe constitutes the coexistence of the masses, politics, it has rejected. Indeed, even the common script, as wonderful as it is, with its ability to be read and written in almost any language, is not essential, for not everyone writes, and the real exchange of thoughts, feelings and desires always takes place orally. What holds China together is something entirely different: it is the *commonality of economic forms*, the commonality of the daily routine,

over which no principle of authority in the world can exert influence anymore. It is, at the deepest level of the Chinese soul, that what on the surface of the elegant international European caste the commonality of the starched shirt, the tailcoat and the top hat is.

Only — and here we arrive at the final and most important link in the chain of political life — does this commonality in China encompass *all* economic groups within the nation, whereas in Europe the survival of old, purely religious principles of authority divides the people into hostile castes. The conflict between economic, individual instincts and religious, state-upholding instincts has been resolved in China in favor of the former. In Europe it is only now, in our time, reaching its climax.

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21

The religious binds; the economic releases. The state compels; culture liberates. The power of the few can make states great; but cultures become great only when states perish. Governments are always reactionary because they seek authority; people are always revolutionary — when they seek culture. That is the whole secret of politics.

Every cultural progress, even the smallest one, breaks through the framework of the existing state order. Strong, powerful states must therefore be veritable obstacles to cultural development. This seems so obvious to the Chinese and so blasphemous to Europeans — for the politically organized nation is, after all, a god — that it is well worth taking a closer look at the conflict between the state and the person of culture, and thereby specifically at the kind of politics that Europeans are pursuing in our era.

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22

The objection, the principle by which the parallel development of state

and a culture is most easily and successfully defended against the claim of their antagonism, is that in history cultural zeniths have indeed been reached only in large, powerful states. This principle reconciles the liberated individual and economic instincts of the individual subjects with the necessity of obedience to the state. It lies at the root of all modern state politics. It is the last desperate means of persuasion with which millennia-old authorities seek to ward off the consequences, pernicious to them, of the mental liberation of individuals from blind faith. It is also the final excuse for the dynamic weakness of those who have experienced this liberation but do not dare to overturn the traditional laws of social order, which have become almost instinctive over many generations. And yet this principle, however sincerely it is meant by some who are only half-free, is false.

Who can deny that we know of not a single form of culture that was created *in*, let alone *by*, large states? What do we see at the origin of any higher culture? Absolute decentralization. Weak little states without a fixed hierarchy of dependencies. And nothing is psychologically less miraculous. For culture is not made, but makes itself. It is not the political framework in which a people lives that can create it, but only the interaction of the individuals whom it encompasses. And the more poorly it encompasses them, the less the individuals are put in the service of an order, a government, an authority, the more freely without resistance they can live out their personal desires aimed at their own satisfaction, the richer the cultural potentials slumbering within them can develop, and the more fruitful is the influence of an individual favored with exceptional talents on their companions.

Has ever a Lower Egyptian ropaitu or tribal priest enacted a law commanding the invention of pots? In ancient China, did the head of

the “Plum” tribe (to which Li-Hungtschang belonged)¹⁷ decree that rice cultivation should be established? No. Not everything cultural is of *collective* origin (for someone had to make the first pot), its origin is *anonymous*; it has nothing to do with the rules of life sanctioned by the state order. Were this not the case, there would still be no pendulum clocks today, no steam engines, not even an America for Europeans. For the state order of the Middle Ages, papal rule, and the Christian social principle with its worldview imposed on the subjects did not permit any of this. The entire modern culture was created *against* Christianity by people in whom faith, that ultimate dependency, had grown weak. And the stronger such an authoritarian order is, the more powerful therefore its representatives, the oligarchs, can assert themselves, will not everything that can undermine the principles of this power (not directly, but only through its psychological impulses) be crushed with all the greater success? *That* is why great states are always hostile to culture.

Did Egyptian culture grow alongside the Egyptian Empire and the power of the great kings? Only those can believe this who measure the greatness of a culture not by the richness of human inner life, but by the length, breadth and weight of surviving monuments. The “great house” (this is what Pa-ro means, as similarly does Mika-do), the preterhuman power personified in the king, formed a principle of national unity when Egyptian culture was essentially established. Even before the so-called First Dynasty, a rich technical culture already flourished among the clans of the Nile Delta under a totemistic order that had not yet evolved into a political power system of priests. And if that culture was able to develop somewhat further (until the Fourth

¹⁷ It is unclear to what Ular is here referring to.

Dynasty), it was because, after the clans were united into a state, the cultures of all were intermingled. But then it was over. The initiative of all individuals was sacrificed to the authority so that it might continue undisturbed. The ropaites, the totem bearers, simply became feudal lords; the king set himself above them, and the kings' totems were set above theirs. And then, for nearly two thousand years, culturally there was nothing new.

It was the same in Chaldea. In the tiny lands of Sippar, Ur, Lassam and Ajade,¹⁸ a highly developed culture flourished, a wonderful diversity of life. And when they were forced into the yoke of large states, everything came to a standstill, because anything new could have shattered the psychological foundation of the power of the great king, the immutable, rigid principle of the existing order. The common person most of all became a subject, a tool of power, an instrument of the oligarchy. The oligarchy then naturally appropriated the existing cultural forms for itself. But it could not develop them further, only analyze them, refine them, shatter them into useless fragments, until nothing remained of them but isolated aspects particularly pleasing to idlers. For culture became the privilege of idlers; and if idleness, according to Nietzsche, is the beginning of all philosophy, in any case it is the end of all culture.

Closer to home, we observe the same in ancient Greece. And one cannot understand how powerful rulers, insofar as they are still secure in their power, can allow their subjects, inasmuch as they value culture, to be introduced to Greek history at all. The papacy and the Christian Middle Ages rightly saw in the Greek the spirit of revolution against all fixed authorities. For Greece was culturally great as long as it was

¹⁸ This refers to Sumerian city-states of the 3rd millennium BCE.

politically fragmented, as long as, better still, no fixed order could prevail in any tiny local state, as long as it bled to death in wars that were essentially wars of culture, of principles, and thus revolutionary wars, but in any case civil wars. Certainly, Athens, Sparta, Corinth and other groups, sometimes politically strong, sometimes ruined, were in truth oligarchies. But precisely because their power was locally limited and its duration uncertain, because there was no bond of ultimate, religious, unconditional dependence between them and the masses but only the ephemeral bond of political and economic rule, they could not halt the marvelous development of Greek life; on the contrary, they had to sustain themselves through constant adaptation to it. Only the weak adapt. The almighty tsar prefers to crush all attempts at further culture. With Alexander, in Greece the tsarist era began. The diversity of life came to an end. Everything was subjected to the great kingdom. One became a subject of an empire: one was no longer an Athenian. And from that moment on, as is well known, Greek culture was finished. It remained as it just was.

Should one refer to Nietzsche and his analysis of modern German culture, how everything great that has seen the light of day in Germany came to light during the era of political fragmentation, how the depth and inner vitality of German life came to a halt with the founding of the great empire and gave way to the coercion of the imperial idea, to the coercion to act for the power of the empire, which in any case benefits only a minority and has forced the life of the people into increasingly uniform channels? And uniformity of action is an amputation of culture, which, like a tree, must grow unchecked in countless branches, twigs, leaves, flowers and fruits to be beautiful, rich and vast.

But German culture is not at an end: it has become "Germanism." We shall see whether this can mean anything politically. Greek culture,

after all, did not come to an end when Alexander forced it into his empire and scattered parts of it across the entire Orient in his wild triumphal march. It lived on in Asia, experienced a magnificent renaissance in Egypt and even in the Roman Empire, and ultimately filled the framework of the Byzantine Empire for centuries to come. Certainly. But that was no longer Greek culture, but a different one, of which it may have been the father, but of which numerous others were certainly the mothers.

And this simple observation suffices to finally impartially answer the two great political questions of our time: what is national power politics supposed to be, and what social politics?

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23

No matter how jealously entrenched oligarchies may desire and enforce the continuation of an order subservient to them, the personal and economic tendencies of the subjects that are independent of them continue to live and operate, sometimes feebly, but sometimes with elemental force. And sooner or later one of the following three eventualities occurs — of which two are consequences of external, and the third the result of internal politics.

In the first two cases, one can assume that domestic politics is reduced to simple administrative activity, in such a way that the entire population is one with the ruling state order. Foreign politics is always power politics, world politics — only that the world is larger or smaller depending on the circumstances. If this foreign politics is unsuccessful, the authoritarian order is disrupted by a foreign power. If it is successful, it disrupts another. If this takes place without entirely modern complications — and for the sake of clarity we must limit ourselves to antiquity, since there are now no distinct European cultural forms

anymore at all — then either one state conquers the other, or it is conquered by the other. And then something peculiar occurs. While the result is not the same for both political orders, it is essentially the same for both peoples. Conquering or being conquered is always a process of intermingling. For not only a new order arrives, but its bearers come along with it, who at the same time are the bearers of all the culture that lives within the conquering framework. And now begins a mutual interpenetration, fertilization and enrichment of culture in some way for *both* peoples. It is just like the Yellow River flood. If it is prevented, the soil does not become richer; its fruits deteriorate, and eventually everything stagnates. If it comes, the living generation falls victim to it, but later generations cultivate new, more beautiful and more diverse fruits on soil saturated with new salts. There are, if one may say so, two kinds of fertilization for peoples: either they flood another and penetrate it, or they allow themselves to be flooded and absorb the new into themselves. The result is essentially the same. The different method depends on the temperament and on the internal stability of the contending political orders.

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24

But is such a mixture necessary at all? Is it not a calamity? Do not the vanquished perish in it? And in most cases, in a certain sense, do not the victors perish as well, especially when they penetrate into older, relatively more developed cultures? Yuzh, Naimans, Chitans, Liaos, Manchus and many other victorious peoples have vanished in China. Italy should have been a Germanic country since the fall of Rome. France almost since the same time. And yet the defeated Chinese, Italians and even the English Celts have risen again with a higher culture, not to mention France. The truth is that the mixing of peoples,

not to say races, their clash, their mutual interpenetration, is the indispensable prerequisite for the development of culture. Upheaval — not merely of the state order, this is only a means to an end here — is as necessary to peoples as it is to agricultural soil, turned by the plow.

And that is precisely why all the highest cultures have been achieved in weak states. *How* this intermingling takes place is a matter of the temperament of those involved. But it is necessary. Without the Greek local wars, which jumbled up the blond Dorians and the dark Ionians, Greek culture would have been pultry. In Egypt, culture first reached its essential phases in the ever-changing conditions of the ancient clans; then twenty centuries later, when the empire fell apart with the Tenth Dynasty and for nearly a thousand years the Twelve Lands operated side by side and against one another; further with the invasion and centuries-long rule of the Arab Hyksos, after which — not only by chance — exactly the same political development took place as in Russia following the liberation from Mongol rule (destruction of the feudal order; its transformation into a court nobility; imperial taxes and finances; standing armies; pure, god-like autocracy, and with it plain power politics involving conquests, but without any significant cultural progress); later, Egypt only came back to life when first the Libyans with Shoshenq in the north and then the Ethiopians with Shabaka in the south turned everything upside down; then came the Assyrians and brought parts of their culture into the country; and all of this was possible only through the decline of religious faith in the Great King, the awakening of the individual, economic, independent desires of the masses, and the revolution of those who preferred to call upon Shoshenq for help rather than continue living under the pharaonic state order; with Psamtik Greek culture penetrated Egypt; he relied on the Greeks to destroy the remnants of the old pharaonic armies; the

Persians intervened; eventually everything fell to Alexander; and after him, and when all kinds of Roman elements were finally added, that wonderfully rich culture flourished, which, apart from our machines, was the most beautiful that has ever existed. But upon how many layers of mud from violent floods was it rooted!

How complicated such an analysis becomes if one were to apply it to France, for example, or even to Germany! It has recently been proven that almost all the great men of the Italian Renaissance were of Germanic origin, and it has been sought to infer from this the superior cultural capacity of the Germanic peoples. But why, then, did the Renaissance not arise in Germany, where there were far more of them? Was not the very condition for it the interaction of diversity? Why do we know of no pure race, no people that remained unmixed, no state that remained permanently stable, in which what we call high forms of culture has emerged? And why have exactly the most mixed, the French, the English and after them the Germans, come the farthest? And what will not have been achieved in America in a hundred years? Why, in a word, is the highest culture found where the worst foreign politics was once pursued? Because culture and national politics are unrelated poles.

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But the Chinese! First of all, they too are mixed. If we were to mix all European peoples together, we would end up with a “nation” roughly equivalent to what the Chinese are in terms of “purity.” And besides, as already noted, the Chinese know no national politics in our sense. They know only *economic* organization.

And this brings us to the third type of upheaval in the political order that was mentioned: that which arises from the domestic politics

of stable states. It occurs when the aforementioned principle of power politics loses its force, according to which cultural heights have in fact been attained only in large, powerful states, and accordingly, in the interest of culture, in their own interest, individual subjects or citizens are to subordinate their liberated economic and individual instincts to the needs of the state power, declared as national but always oligarchic. That this principle is the work of those concerned about their originally religious, outwardly political, but essentially economic power is, of course, beyond doubt. The only question is whether it can truly keep the ideas of economic freedom that have come to life in check. This is, in and of itself, obviously possible only if it can truly be demonstrated to the masses *that* their culture must necessarily perish with the prevailing order. And this is plausible only if a people with an advanced culture finds itself facing crude barbarians at the borders of the state order in which it lives. This was conceivable in the case of the ancient Greeks and Chinese, and they therefore waged national wars of defense that were truly beneficial to culture in general, and in which everyone participated with desperation and enthusiasm. Such a thing no longer exists in Europe. It is more ingenious when oligarchs seek to seduce the people into cultural wars under the pretext that the economic and cultural development of every individual is to be enhanced by a fortunate attack on a higher culture. But this is only possible if the religious affiliation between rulers and the people, based on faith in authority, remains highly effective alongside the independent economic tendencies that have awoken in the individuals. Many in France, England and elsewhere believe that this is somewhat the case in Germany. But this, too, should reasonably no longer be possible in Europe. The conflict in the souls of the subordinate individuals between the old “ultimate dependency” and the new ambition of the

individuals for themselves has become too acute. One can still count on the belief in the preservation of the state, in the necessity of the state, in the nation — in short, on patriotism — but, if one may say so, only indirectly, in that it no longer relates to those in power but to the existence of cultural traditions.

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But after everything that has been discussed in this study, all the elements of modern European politics are only too understandable. There is, in essence, no other culture left in Europe than — the European one. The fact that, with some knowledge of the language, all Europeans feel at home in any civilized state, provided they shed their specific religious and national prejudices, proves this conclusively. As soon as a European ceases to engage in politics — foreign policy, that is — they are no longer German, French, or English, but rather — European. And if, within the state to which they belong, they pursue domestic policy not in the interest of the existing oligarchy but in the interest of their own culture, then in a certain sense they are an enemy of their fatherland, because they also are Europeans. Because the cultural interests of Europeans are, in fact, the same everywhere; they are, if one may confound state and nation, international. What separates the various states from one another are first the remnants of atavistic religious dependency sublimated into national traditions; and second the economic and power interests of the rulers. In contrast, the interests, and thus the cultural interests freed from religion, of all Europeans who are not belonging to the oligarchy are identical. And a most remarkable thing is that even the opposing national interests of those in power become common interests as soon as the very existence of all oligarchies is called into question everywhere in the same way.

If one disregards religion, which is gradually perishing as it did 2,000 years ago in China, there remains in Europe only *one* internal politics, *one* international power struggle. For across all borders, within the unity of the European cultural group the same opponents, no longer defined by religion but having become earthly human beings, are facing one another: the international proletariat and the international economic oligarchy.

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Once it had been that way in China. And there was no violent social revolution there because the oligarchy no longer had any human resources at its disposal. The “ultimate dependency” had vanished. No one fought for the authority of others anymore. And the result was that magnificent economic organization, which, with its gigantic co-operatives, formed a society that is immortal in the truest sense of the word, into which one may work their way in, but from which one cannot disengage again. And since then, China has had no need to wage wars of conquest or defense. It leaves this atavistic sport to the foreigners who imagine they can dominate it. Nor does it engage in politics anymore. And yet it grows ever more powerful.

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28

But this is because at the highest level, not of technical but of social culture, humans fight for humans and not for the phantasmagoria of absolute principles. As long as humans fancy themselves as incarnations, they engage in world politics. If they conceive of themselves as humans and nothing but humans, then world *politics* becomes world *dealings*. Then the Yellow River of foreign cultures will no longer break through national dikes, drown peoples, and let new splendor rise

from ruins. Instead it will seep, divided into countless gentle streams, quietly over the fertile fields; its heavy waters embracing every root; and slowly, steadily, effortlessly, welcomed with joy, it will create new fertile soil and growing happiness.

Foreign politics is a struggle between preterhuman forms of domination. Domestic politics is a struggle between the preterhuman principles of domination and humanity. Cultural politics is everything that destroys domination and frees autonomous individuals from the constraints of tradition.