

THE HISTORICAL THOUGHT OF ERNST VON LASAULX

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The student of modern history may be acquainted with the name of Ernst von Lasaulx through references which two well-known historians have made to him in their writings. In Jacob Burckhardt's lectures on *Force and Freedom*,¹ which have acquired wide renown in recent years, the historian of Basle refers to Lasaulx more often than to any other single writer on history. Indeed, the reader today sometimes receives the impression that Burckhardt gave his lectures in a conversation in which Lasaulx, the now forgotten holder of a chair of history at the University of Munich, was a silent partner who was addressed time and again, although the speaker usually voiced dissent.

In his formative years in Munich, Lord Acton, some of whose works seem due for a renaissance today, had been a student of Lasaulx. Acton more than once mentions his one-time professor. Probably the most important reference occurs in Acton's discussion of Buckle's philosophy of history, when Acton blamed this English philosopher for not having consulted the only three books "which, during the last ten years, have really advanced the study of philosophy of history." After drawing attention to Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Races* and to a work of Vollgraff that is completely forgotten today, Acton continues: the third book is "the work of the most eloquent and accomplished philosopher in Germany and passes in review, in 168 pages, all the great questions which constitute the philosophy of history. The wisest sayings of the ancients, and the latest discoveries of the moderns, are brought together with incomparable taste and learning; since Schlegel, so brilliant a work has not appeared on the same field."² In these words does Lord Acton introduce the reader to Lasaulx' *Philosophie der Geschichte*.³

¹ References in this article are made to the edition: New York, 1943, with an introduction by James Hastings Nichols. On Burckhardt's attitude toward Lasaulx, cf. Karl Joël, *Jacob Burckhardt als Geschichtsphilosoph* (Basel, 1918), p. 54 ff.

² In *Historical Essays and Studies* (London, 1907), p. 330 f.; first published in *The Rambler*, 1858.

³ The complete title reads: *Neuer Versuch einer alien, auf die Wahrheit der Tatsachen*

Another time Lord Acton drew attention to this philosopher of history when contrasting him with Döllinger, Acton's teacher and Lasaulx' colleague in Munich:

Ernst von Lasaulx, a man of rich and noble intellect, was lecturing next door [to Döllinger] on the philosophy and religion of Greece, and everybody heard about his indistinct mixture of dates and authorities, and the spell which his unchastened idealism cast over the students. Lasaulx, who brilliantly carried on the tradition of Creuzer, who had tasted of the mythology of Schelling, who was son-in-law to Baader and nephew to Görres, wrote a volume on the fall of Hellenism which he brought in manuscript and read to Döllinger at a sitting. The effect on the dissenting mind of the hearer was a warning; and there is reason to date from those two hours in 1853 a more severe use of materials and a stricter notion of the influence which the end of an inquiry may lawfully exert on the pursuit of it. *Heidentum und Judentum* [by Döllinger], which came out in 1857, gave Lasaulx his revenge. It is the most positive and self-denying of histories, and owes nothing to the fancy.⁴

In Continental Europe some parallels have been drawn between basic aspects of Lasaulx' and Spengler's philosophy of history,⁵ and recently attention has been called to a similarity with Toynbee's.⁶ While such parallels exist, a fundamental difference that is characteristic of Lasaulx' historical approach is of much importance.

Historical writing has been correctly considered one of Germany's main contributions to the intellectual history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet it would seem as if the merits of the critical school centering in the northern and eastern parts and stressing certain aspects of the work of Niebuhr have been overemphasized, while the trends represented by the historians living in the western and southern sections have been allowed to fall into oblivion.⁷ And one

gegründeten Philosophie der Geschichte. It was published in Munich, 1856. References in this article (as: *Philosophie*) are made to the new edition, Vienna, 1952, with an Introduction by Eugen Thurner.

⁴ *History of Freedom and Other Essays* (London, 1922): "Döllinger's Historical Work," p. 405 (first published in *English Historical Review*, 1890). There is one more reference in a letter of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone, February 16, 1881; cf. *Letters to Mary Gladstone*, ed. H. Paul (London, 1904), p. 73.

⁵ E.g., Heinz Horn, "Die Geschichtsphilosophie Ernst von Lasaulx," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Kulturphilosophie*, III/1 (Tübingen, 1936), 100 f.

⁶ Thurner, *op. cit.*, p. 57 ff.

⁷ The most broad-minded work on German historiography, *sc.*, Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, *Geist und Geschichte vom deutschen Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart* (2 vols.; Munich,

wonders whether German historiography might not have reached still more commanding heights if such impulses as those embodied in Görres, Friedrich Schlegel, and Schelling—impulses which were alive also in Ranke, though less emphasis was placed on them, impulses for which Hegel's philosophy of history offered some analogies but provided no adequate substitute—had continued to be influential and the historical thought at the Spree had suffered itself to be enriched by that of the Rhine and the Isar. It was, however, such influences that shaped the mind of Lasaulx in his formative years.

I

Ernst Peter von Lasaulx, born in Koblenz in the Rhineland in 1805,⁸ first studied ancient classic history and mythology with Niebuhr and Welcker, and German literature with Schlegel, at the University of Bonn for four years (1824–28) and then went to Munich, where the university under the auspices of King Ludwig was developing into a southern counterpart of the one at Berlin. There, as Lasaulx was to put it in his Latin *Vita* which he published in the volume of Studies in Classic Antiquity, “cognovi Schellingium, Goerresium, Baaderum quorum ab ore pendens devoravi scholas celeberrimas de aetatibus mundi,⁹ de philosophia mythologica, de historia universali, de altiori dogmatum contemplatione.” Not only did Lasaulx attend those courses; he was also admitted to the intimate society of the great men. The twenty months that he spent studying in Munich (1828–30) remained the

1950–51), surveys Lasaulx in I, 180 f. Fueter and Thompson in their well-known volumes on historiography do not mention Lasaulx; the reference by Gooch, *History and Historians in the XIXth Century* (London, 1920), p. 554, is an exaggerating excerpt from Acton's quoted passage in “Döllinger's Historical Work.”—The criticism made in the text may also be raised against my *Growth of German Historicism* (Baltimore, 1945).

⁸ The biography of Lasaulx from which all later discussion of his work takes its start is Remigius Stölzle, *Ernst von Lasaulx: Ein Lebensbild* (Münster, 1904).

⁹ Schelling's *Die Weltalter*, of which only a fragment was published posthumously in *Sämliche Werke* (Stuttgart, 1861), I/8. Lasaulx attended the course to which Schelling's son refers thus in his Introductory Remark: “Was Schelling später in München im Jahre 1827 als System der Weltalter vortrug [from 1827–32, according to Wolfe Bolman's Introduction, p. 68], war nicht mehr nach dem ursprünglichen Plan gearbeitet” (*ibid.*, p. vi). The fragment has been translated and published with an introduction and notes by Frederick de Wolfe Bolman, Jr., *The Ages of the World* (New York, 1942). The original versions of the fragment, dating from 1811 and 1813, have been published by Manfred Schröter, *Die Weltalter: Fragmente* (Munich, 1946).

climax of his intellectual life.¹⁰ An extensive traveling period, during which he visited Austria and Italy and then went to Greece and Jerusalem, concluded his formative years.

A chair at the University of Würzburg, exchanged in 1844 for one in Munich, brought the typical career of a German scholar. The revolutionary year of 1848 provided Lasaulx with the opportunity to participate in the professors' Parliament of Frankfurt as a strong-voiced member of the conservative minority.

The historico-philosophical publications of Lasaulx extend over a period of twenty-five years. They start in 1835 with an inquiry into the concept of death in classic antiquity, in which the ominous reference is made to Socrates as the "verus typus Christi," and at their end stands a meditation on the philosophy of Roman history in 1860, the year before the author's death.¹¹ In 1838 Lasaulx published a passionate pamphlet in defense of the Archbishop of Cologne, who, in the course of the controversy on mixed marriages, had been jailed by the government of Berlin. In the volume of collected studies Lasaulx allowed some speeches to reappear which he had given in the Frankfurt Parliament and later in the Bavarian Diet. For the rest, his twenty-two publications deal with the history and philosophy of the classic world; and the concluding sentence of Schelling's Introduction to the *Ages of the World* could be used as the motto for them: "We cannot be narrators but only explorers. . . ."¹² Only once did Lasaulx set out to be a narrator; it was when he attempted to retell the "saga of universal history" (*die Mår der Weltgeschichte*).

It is, however, not the familiar aspect of classic antiquity and humanism as it developed from the vision of Winckelmann and Goethe that we face in the inquiries and monographs of Lasaulx. He follows the path, little trod in those years, which led from the *Symbolik* of Creuzer and the mythological inquiries of Welcker, whose spell he had

¹⁰ "Non solum audiui viros illustres de mysteriis vitae disputantes, verum etiam familiari ipsorum dignatus sum consuetudine. Viginti illic degebam menses quibus laetissimum vitae meae tempus continetur." Görres gave his course on "Universal History" at Munich in 1827, 1829, 1835-40; cf. J. J. Görres, *Weltgeschichte*, ed. M. A. Strodl (Munich, 1880), p. 100.

¹¹ *De mortis dominatu in veteres commentatio theologica-philosophica* (Munich, 1835); *Zur Philosophie der Römischen Geschichte* (Munich, 1860).

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

felt in Bonn, to the mysterious explorations and presentations that Bachofen made with sombre grandiosity on the sepulchral world of the ancients, a problem that had been brought to general attention through the discovery of the necropolis of Southern Etruria in 1827. Reference has been made to this trend as the Romantization of classic antiquity, bearing in mind a predilection of this group of intellectuals for the "night-aspect" of life. It was on art that the classic studies of Winckelmann and Goethe had centered; by Creuzer, Welcker, and Schelling this preeminence was assigned to religion. It is significant—one feels tempted to say it is correct—that Lasaulx' publications open with the inquiry on *De mortis dominatu in veteres*, and that this is followed by such problems as the meaning of the Oedipus and Prometheus myths, the prayers of the ancients, the cursing in antiquity, the theological foundation of the philosophical systems, the life and death of Socrates. To criticize these writings for attempting rather to collect the material for the topics involved than to evaluate the sources in a critical and cautious way would be justifiable. Yet, due to the situation that existed around the middle of the nineteenth century, the task of collecting the tools for opening vistas not thought of before was peremptory; and, bearing in mind what was done in later years in overstressing the critical approach, one may well recall the motto Bachofen used for the second series of his *Antiquarische Briefe*: "True criticism lies in understanding" ("die wahre Kritik liegt im Verständnis"). And we may appreciate the passionate endeavor to collect sources for problems hitherto overlooked in ancient life as evidence supporting another saying of Schelling's Introduction to the *Ages of the World*: "If the ancient era, whose image he wishes to sketch for us, does not dawn again within the historian, then he will never truly, never plastically, never vitally represent it. What would all history be if an inner meaning did not come to its aid?"¹⁸

The turning to the night-aspect of Greek and Roman life held a special implication. It meant not only the awareness of the Greeks having been subjected to severe suffering—as Boeckh in Berlin had known, and Burckhardt and Nietzsche were to repeat with increasing emphasis; it meant not only that one began to see the classic world

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

in its relation with the "magna mater," with Asia, so that at the very time when the world was offered the not specially illustrious spectacle of "Bavarian Greece" with a Wittelsbach prince ascending the throne in Athens in 1832, some men came to ask whether that nation in the time of its ancient glory had not been a part rather of the great inexhaustible continent than of peninsular Europe. Still, to Burckhardt Hellenic life and Hellenic culture were the paradigm of an autonomous development; Lasaulx in his youth was already more broadsighted in this respect and perceived—and inquired into—connections running from ancient Greece to the South and the East, to Egypt and Asia. In doing so, he followed the directions to which Görres had already pointed with his *History of Asiatic Myths*. Such a turn soon brought as a consequence the question of the relations of the classic age with Christianity. As a matter of fact, it was this question that had promoted the turn: Count Fritz Stolberg had maintained in 1788, and once again in 1791–92, the thesis of the insufficiency of the pagan gods in the face of death.¹⁴ This contrasting of Greek and Roman pagan religion with the Christian teaching was repeated and elaborated, and may have reached a climax, in Döllinger's *Heidentum und Judentum* in 1857. Yet another approach was possible too: Would a scholar go astray if he were to stress similarities, analogies existing in these two great philosophies, if he labored to see in classic antiquity a prodromus, a world-historical prelude to Christianity? This was the path Lasaulx chose to follow, and one is reminded of what Görres, his teacher, is reported to have said to Döllinger, his colleague: "I always see analogies and you always see differences."¹⁵

More than personal inclination dictated this choice. To Lasaulx history was one great unit. He fully accepted the statement of Schelling: "We divine an organism, deeply rooted in time and extending into the last detail."¹⁶ The concept of the organism as it had been formulated

¹⁴ The story of this turn in the approach to classic antiquity has been told twice: once by Alfred Bäumler in his powerful introduction to J. J. Bachofen, *Der Mythos von Orient und Occident* (Munich, 1936), centering on the "Dionysian" aspect (cf. reference to Lasaulx, p. ccxxx); the second time by Walter Rehm, *Götterstille und Göttertrauer: Aufsätze zur deutsch-antiken Begegnung* (Bern, 1951), with more emphasis, it seems to us, on the "Apollinian" aspect; cf. p. 140 f. (cf. reference to Lasaulx, p. 158 f.). On Welcker's mythological studies, cf. R. Kekulé, *Leben Friedrich G. Welcker's* (Leipzig, 1880), p. 340 ff.

¹⁵ Acton, *History of Freedom*, p. 386.

after a long and tormented history in the last of Kant's *Critiques* in 1790,¹⁷ with the constant relations between the whole and its parts, was applied to history by Görres and Schelling and led to the exploration of the world of symbols and of the symbolic values of events. It was consistent and necessary that from here access was gained into the realm of mythology, a realm to which the two great initiators, Görres and Schelling, had already pointed. These, then, were some aspects of the world in which Ernst von Lasaulx breathed and wrote, and which he never left.

Again, by Görres and Schelling the importance of religion in the sphere of history had been not discovered—Vico had been one great forerunner in this respect—but stressed with an emphasis rarely equalled and never surpassed. Religion was the foundation, religion was the core of history. A hint of such an approach may be found in the works of Hegel and Rānke, but with these writers it meant largely that the political implications of religious systems would be explored. To Görres and Schelling such an attitude included the investigation of the fundamentals of the human soul; it involved the descent into the sepulchral world within man, into the sphere of the subconscious.

Two more Schellingian concepts continued to hold Lasaulx' historical thought in their grasp. As Prof. Voegelin writes in his great manuscript on the "History of Political Thought":

History [to Schelling] has a double meaning: it is, first, the actual course of natural and human events in the universe; and this course of events becomes history in the second meaning if it is understood by man as a meaningful unfolding of the universe. When the soul gives meaning to the stream, it discovers the stream and meaning in itself. In this sense, the soul is knowledge and history is a science of the soul. . . . [But] we do not know the meaning of history as a whole; the future is still open. An objective history as a science which could view the course of events as a completed past is impossible. "We cannot be narrators, but only explorers."¹⁸

¹⁶ *Die Weltalter*, ed. Schröter, p. 14.

¹⁷ Cf. Erich Voegelin, *Die Rassenidee in der Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin, 1933), p. 111. For Görres, cf. Alois Dempf, *Görres spricht zu unserer Zeit* (Freiburg, 1936).

¹⁸ From the chapter on Schelling in the manuscript of Prof. Voegelin's "History of Political Thought." I had the privilege, for which I am most grateful, of being permitted to read the finished chapters. The first volume of the work, to be published by The Macmillan Company, is to appear soon. *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago University Press, 1952) has received due acclaim; however, the full breadth and depth of Prof. Voegelin's

To the question, "How can we understand?", Schelling answers:

There is a light in the darkness. According to the old and almost outworn saying, man is the world on a small scale. Thus the processes of human life from the utmost depth to the highest consummation must be in accordance with the processes of universal life. It is certain: anybody who could write the history of his own life from the ground, would at the same time have concentrated the history of the universe in a brief synopsis.¹⁹

Thus, on a limited, fragmentary scale man can explore the core of history; their very essence is identical. (Are we here facing a reflection of the *Divine Sparklet* in which Master Eckhart believed, that German medieval mystic whom both Schelling and Lasaulx held in veneration?) But it is evident that cautious Burckhardt would strike here a dissenting note which marks the basic difference between his and Lasaulx' approach to history. While the criticism of the historian of Basle is formulated in the discussion of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, it disposes also of much of the fundament on which Lasaulx built. Right at the beginning of the lectures to which reference has been made earlier, Burckhardt states: "We shall . . . not lay any claim to historical principles . . . we shall confine ourselves to observation. . . . We are not privy to the purposes of eternal wisdom; they are beyond our ken. This bold assumption of a world plan leads to fallacies because it starts out from false premises."²⁰

Yet Lasaulx, while mindful of the teaching of Schelling that it is an "unruly element" that lies at the depth of all nature and history, that "all that comes into being can do so only in restlessness and discontent,"²¹ sees in history, as in all life, procession ("Fortschreitung").²² At this point, in addition to Schelling's influence, Lasaulx submitted to still another influence: the medieval vision of the realm of the Holy Spirit, of which he apparently knew in the degenerated form of the so-called "Evangelium aeternum" which Gerardus of Borgo San Donnino had given to the original concept of the Abbot of Flora.²³ Lasaulx

presentation, and the overpowering wealth of material of which he disposes, will come out fully only in the "History of Political Thought."

¹⁹ *Weltalter*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, I/8, 207; I am using Prof. Voegelin's translation.

²⁰ *Force and Freedom*, p. 81.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 322.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 261.

²³ Cf. Lasaulx, *Philosophie*, p. 172, note 21. On Joachim's philosophy of history, cf. Eric Voegelin, *New Science*, p. 150 ff.; Karl Löwith, *The Meaning of History* (Chicago, 1949), p. 145 ff., and Appendix I, "Modern Transfigurations of Joachim," p. 208 ff. (no

gave this approach a characteristic formulation in one of his early writings. In his study on the "Atoning Sacrifices of the Ancients," written in 1841, he says: "The whole past is in its very nature only a prototype, as it were an anticipation of the future which is its aim. The histories of the nations are the members of the one organism of humanity and have but one life; they form a progressive line in which the last part reassumes in itself all those which preceded it."²⁴ This concept of historical mankind as forming one great organism may be regarded as a secularization of the Mystical Body already on the verge of being transformed into Comte's humanity as the *grand être*. On the other hand, it had been already used by Görres: "the pattern of organic life influenced all the thought of this generation"; one of the most significant essays of Görres bears the title, "The Growth of History" ("Das Wachstum der Geschichte").²⁵ An increase of the "organic" concept may be observed today within the historical work of Arnold Toynbee, who explicitly says in his last publication that "every historic culture-pattern is an organic whole,"²⁶ while the concept of biological organism as stressed and overstressed by Brooks Adams and Oswald Spengler is absent from the mind of the British historian, as it was alien to the intellectual world of Schelling, Görres, and their followers.

Continuing to quote from the essay of 1841, we may follow Lasaulx in making the next move toward his historical principles: "All history is in the last analysis a history of religion; thus Christianity as the universal religion of the world has absorbed all prior national religions in so far as they contained truth. There is hardly one truth expressed in Christianity that according to its substance could not be found in the pre-Christian era."²⁷

reference is made there to Lasaulx). For the relation between the Abbot of Flora and his followers, cf. F. Ehrle, "Über das Evangelium aeternum und die Kommission zu Anagni," *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte*, I (1885), 57-70. Schelling became acquainted with Joachim through Neander's Church History; cf. *Werke*, II/8, 298, note. In a letter of April 21, 1857, Lasaulx wrote that he had been familiar with the concept of the Age of the Holy Spirit since 1829; cf. R. Stölzle, "Zu L.'s Geschichtsphilosophie," *Historisches Jahrbuch*, XXVII, 92.

²⁴ "Die Sühnopfer der Griechen und Römer," in *Studien des classischen Altertums* (Regensburg, 1854), p. 233.

²⁵ Alois Dempf, *op. cit.*, pp. 37, 83.

²⁶ *The World and the West* (New York, 1953), p. 74 f.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 233 f.

We must remember that Lasaulx fought valiantly for the rights of the Catholic Church before, during, and after 1848, well knowing that in doing so—especially in his early career—he did not endear himself to the government of Berlin, from which otherwise he may well have expected a university appointment; he considered himself a faithful son of the Church. Yet, while among his closest friends were Görres and also prelates like Jodok Stülz, the Abbot of St. Florian, we may perceive alive in him to some extent the whole of the Munich intellectual atmosphere of the forties, including the mystical Baader, an atmosphere which made them, in their strong emphasis on the study of the German mystics of the Middle Ages, move toward pantheism and emanatism. Such influences did not prevent Lasaulx from concluding the address he gave as rector of the University of Munich with the exhortation to the students always to remain faithful and loyal to the religion of their fathers.²⁸ Possibly there is a point in the remark of Lord Acton, who deplored in Lasaulx a lack “of humble piety which is remarkably rare among intellectual Germans,” though there is evidence that the other reproach the British historian raised against his former professor in Munich as being devoid of any fervor of prayer, is not substantiated.²⁹

II

It was the particular position of Lasaulx that, while he certainly was instrumental in depriving classic antiquity of that halo with which the neo-humanism of the late eighteenth century adorned it, he was enamoured of this period to such an extent that he refused to think of it as not having contained—in *nuce* at least—whatever was valuable in human history; thus, every age would look at it as to its arch-type. The first of these attitudes had driven Lasaulx to refer to Socrates as the “*verus typus Christi*.” The second made him conceive of post-classic history as a repetition of the “arch-type”; it became the basis for his cyclic theory in history to be developed later. The concepts of the historical cycles were familiar to Lasaulx through his reading of the ancients, more specifically through the study of the political

²⁸ *Über die theologische Grundlage aller philosophischen Systeme* (Munich, 1856), p. 27.

²⁹ Lord Acton, *Letters to Mary Gladstone*, p. 73. Cf. the remark on prayer in Lasaulx, “Gebete der Griechen und Römer” (1841), in *Studien*, p. 137 ff.

thought of Plato and Aristotle,³⁰ and the German professor was neither the first nor the last who erected a cyclic theory meant to cover all of history on a structure for which the classic nations had provided the scaffolding. Roman history clearly gave the pattern for Vico's "ricorso," and Brooks Adams' insistence on the necessity of a civilization to be renewed through the influx of new barbarian blood echoes the experience of the collapsing Roman Empire; similarly, critics of the *Study of History* are fond of pointing out that Toynbee derived his basic plan concerning the course of the history of civilizations from that of classic antiquity with which he is supposed to be most familiar, and that he then applied it to all the other ones he was able to discuss without shrinking from using violence in cases that would not conform to the pattern by themselves.

It was an ambitious task upon which Lasaulx set forth when he took upon himself to retell to his generation an old philosophy of history. When Ranke at the age of thirty-one was working on his second book, he wrote to his brother: "You know how long I have endeavoured to find revealed the saga of universal history (*die Mär der Weltgeschichte*), that continuity, sequence of events and of developments in which the human species has been involved and which are to be considered as the real content, as *the center and the essence of history*."³¹ And he repeated a few months later: "To me, the greatest charm is in looking for . . . the emergence of the idea of universal history. This is truly the most beautiful and remarkable story that ever happened." He realized that only fragments are known to us; yet he remained confident: "We do know much; other aspects may be restored; perhaps the whole may be grasped in its full truth"; and a few months later he gave expression to his hope of finding "in thousands of dissonances a sublime harmony."³²

Similarities and differences in the attitudes are clear. Forging through thousands of fragments and dissonances, Ranke set out to reach the sublime final harmony, led on his way by the perpetual starry light of a number of guiding convictions and concepts. Compared with such an attitude, Vico, Adams, Lasaulx, and Spengler, and even Toynbee

³⁰ See the references given in *Philosophie*, p. 130, note 130.

³¹ Cf. my *Growth of German Historicism*, p. 61.

³² Cf. Leopold von Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. H. P. Fuchs (Hamburg, 1949), pp. 102, 104, 110.

in spite of his herculean labors, looked for a short cut. No attempt shall be made in this study to pronounce on who was more successful or whose failure was less. But the restraint, the resignation Burckhardt imposed on himself may be referred to here. The historian of Basle was not given to the hope of reaching the bliss of contemplating such great harmony, but he thought himself rewarded enough by being allowed to look on, to watch the historical process; and in the famous concluding sentence of his lectures he praised the fortune of a man endowed with such a vision and permitted to "spend his life in the quest of that knowledge."³³

Again the motto of Bachofen comes to our mind: "True criticism lies in understanding," and it may be appropriate to recall it in a case in which, like that of Lasaulx, it is easy to point to insufficiencies, shortcomings, and errors generously spread over the surface of his work. From Schelling and such predecessors as Joachim and Gerardus, Lasaulx had received the concept of mankind forming a great whole and moving forward. This attitude conveyed a basic optimism to the historian's outlook even, as it were, against his will at certain crucial moments of his nation's history. Such an optimism is absent from the work of thinkers like Vico, Gobineau, Spengler, and Adams, to whom mankind as such does not form a historic unit. Equally in the wake of Schelling and the Heidelberg Romantics, Lasaulx included the early, the mainly religious ages in his concept of history, in contrast to Ranke who, while aware of the importance of these aspects for the development of mankind,³⁴ did not conceive of these periods as providing the historian with those "thousands of fragments" out of which he was confident of building up the structure of the great historical harmony; he resigned himself to refrain from inquiring into the secret of the primeval world.

In the dedicatory letter to a friend with which Lasaulx prefaced his volume of *Studies on Classic Antiquity*, he wrote:

A man who seriously would thread the path [of ancient history] and would relive in his mind what he observes, would perceive in Greek and Roman history not this alone, but also the development of the national life as such. While watching how things grew up and how they were interconnected with each other, the

³³ *Force and Freedom*, p. 370.

³⁴ Stressed correctly by Bäumler, *op. cit.*, clvi ff.

past that we usually consider as something alien to us, closed in itself, would appear to be a part of our own existence, a moment in the development of that whole of which we ourselves form a part.³⁵

While the conception of history as a great interconnected unfolding of which our age is a part, may be considered as the historical attitude embodied at its fullest in Schelling, Ranke, primarily concerned with political history—albeit he conceived of it as surrounded by a concrete spiritual environment—referred to the historical periods as being each of them equally immediate to God. The intellectual historians of the Schelling following centered on the uninterrupted continuity of historical flowing. The special emphasis given in Lasaulx' dedicatory letter to the meaning of ancient history within this development is partly the author's own contribution. It implies as well the concept of the classic nations as the prototype of subsequent histories—the "verus typus"—as that of cyclic recurrence. In the classic nations a historic organic whole runs its full course in all the spheres open to human activity, among which religion holds its preeminent position—"all history finally is religious history"³⁶—and of which art and politics are further manifestations. Given this preeminence of classic history and of religious history, and in accordance with the trust that all of history is interconnected, it became almost imperative for Lasaulx to see in classic ancient religion more than a part of merely national history. "All knowledge of foreign life would be worthless if we would not learn through it better to understand our own."³⁷ If Döllinger in the wake of many others was to insist on the preparatory task the Jews performed in clearing the way for Christianity, Lasaulx, at the same time and in the same city, assigned this part to the classic nations.³⁸ Thus he wrote, after having referred to the teaching of St. Justin, "that oldest Christian apologist whose writings are kept," for a similar atti-

³⁵ *Studien*, p. iv.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, "Sühnopfer," p. 233. A stiffening of the accent may be noted if we compare relatively early writings like "Über den Sinn der Oedipus-Sage," in *Studien*, p. 373, with Lasaulx' last publications, e.g., *Des Sokrates Leben, Lehre und Tod nach den Zeugnissen der Alten* (Munich, 1857), p. 82, note 251.

³⁷ *Studien*, p. v.

³⁸ "... wie der Ersehnte aller Völker sich im Heidentum wie im Judentum offenbart hat, dieses im Einzelnen nachzuweisen, ist eine Aufgabe der christlichen Religionsphilosophie" ("Prometheus, die Sage und ihr Sinn" [1843-44], *ibid.*, p. 317).

tude³⁹: "I say that no personality of the Old Testament was such a perfect prefiguration (an 'anticipation') of Christ as the Greek Socrates and that equally I have no doubt that the best in Christian philosophy is much closer to Hellenism than to Judaism."⁴⁰ It will come as no surprise that the Congregation of the Index in Rome put this writing on the list of *Librorum prohibitorum*. When the verdict was published in October 1861, an additional line made it known that the author "ante mortem laudabiliter se subiecit iudicio ecclesiae."⁴¹

With more moderation Lasaulx had expressed his ideas on the importance of the study of Greek and Roman intellectual life, already in 1846 insisting on a connection between Greek-Roman and Jewish-Christian religious attitudes. "Not only the Jews, but the pagans too are to be considered as preparing Christianity. . . . If the Logos is the mediator between God and the world ever since the foundation of the

³⁹ *Des Sokrates etc.*, p. 122. For the teaching of St. Justin, cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, I (Utrecht, 1950), 207 f. Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, II (Westminster, 1952), 17 f., summarizes Justin's theory in these words: "Justin made no clear distinction between theology and philosophy in the strict sense; there is one wisdom, one 'philosophy' which is revealed fully in and through Christ, but for which the best elements in pagan philosophy, especially in Platonism, were a preparation. In so far as the pagan philosophers divined the truth, they did so only in the power of the *logos*: Christ, however, is the Logos itself, incarnate. This view of Greek philosophy and of its relation to Christianity was of considerable influence on later writers." On the teaching of Clement of Alexandria, who followed Justin's treatment of the Greek philosophers, cf. *ibid.*, p. 26 f. Lasaulx was not the last to take such an approach to Socrates. A. Toynbee, *Study of History*, VI, 486 ff. (Annex, "The Life and Death of Socrates"), enumerates eighteen points—most of these already listed by Lasaulx—as supporting "the hypothesis that the story of one historical hero may have influenced the story of another." The attitudes of the two historians are in no way identical: Lasaulx contented himself reporting parallelisms occurring in the lives of Socrates and Jesus, without discussing the hypothesis characteristic of the modern historian raised in the atmosphere of criticism of the sources, that the story of one historical hero may have influenced the story of another historical hero at a later date; *ibid.*, p. 487. Both, Lasaulx and Toynbee, confine themselves to a parallel between Socrates and the human nature of Jesus; cf. Toynbee's concluding remarks, "The Economy of Truth," *op. cit.*, p. 534 ff., in which he discusses the meaning of "the gradualness of revelation."

⁴⁰ *Des Sokrates etc.*, pp. 120, 122. In a speech in the Bavarian Diet on June 2, 1851, on behalf of the emancipation of the Jews, Lasaulx, after having paid tribute to the friends he had made among them, stressed the difference of their ways of life in general, and while expressing his wish that all barriers in civil life be removed, spoke against granting the Jews equality of political status; cf. *Studien*, p. 549.

⁴¹ Stölzle, *op. cit.*, p. 278. In the *Philosophie*, also put on the Index, Lasaulx referred to Socrates as Christ's "Vorläufer in Athen"; *ibid.*, p. 157.

world and man has been created in His image, then everything truly human is also Christian and the Church, in appropriating it, has but taken to herself her property, the truth, that had been divided among the nations."⁴² In the next year he surveyed the course of Greek and Roman history and paralleled it with that of the German nation. In both cases Lasaulx applied the concept of organic development and took the forms of government as specially significant symptoms. He thought that, if Aristotle had had a chance to view the German conditions in the forties, the Greek philosopher might have conceived of them as being an oligarchy at the moment when the demos was preparing for assault.⁴³ "No discussion is needed to point out the future lying in wait for us." An analogous diagnosis would be reached if we looked at the moral conditions. "While the virtues held to be characteristic of the Germans have not disappeared altogether, they have certainly become rarer and specifically so among the educated classes; likewise the power of the Christian dogmas has decreased. A growth of a merely historicist approach can be observed in theology as well as in philosophy." And, with words bearing out their Platonic origin, Lasaulx concludes: "It remains for us to hope that the author of the cosmos will bring healing to the sickness and derangement in the course of the world and restore the original order; herein lies his most consummate art."⁴⁴ A program of cyclic approach towards history is hereby announced, and this attitude unfolds fully in what is considered to be the main writing of Lasaulx, his *Essay on a Philosophy of History*.

III

Among the premises which he considers necessary in order to erect this philosophy Lasaulx lists the interrelationship of all life. "Were there not in the innermost part of every man something kindred to everything human, to everything earthly and everything celestial, an atom of everything, even of the divine creative power, we never could experience and perceive God and this world of which we are a

⁴² *Über das Studium der griechischen und römischen Altertümer* (Munich, 1846), p. 9 f. Lasaulx may have been stiffened into his late formulations through Döllinger's attempt in *Heidentum und Judentum* (1857) to disregard classic antiquity altogether.

⁴³ Cf. *Über den Entwicklungsgang des griechischen und des römischen und den gegenwärtigen Zustand des deutschen Lebens* (Munich, 1847), p. 25.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25 ff.

part. For everyone can understand and love only what is homogeneous to him."⁴⁵ Further, a plurality of God-created organisms co-exist, of which the universe embraces all the others. For the purposes of the historian, mankind may be considered as the largest unit forming, as it were, a huge human organism which will unfold until all human potentialities are actualized. Within this course the single national and individual organisms run their histories, governed by the same basic laws. Therefore on the national level it is possible to reach conclusions from the destinies of those whose histories have been completed, for what is in store for those who are still on their way.⁴⁶ "Life does not die; its forms only change and new ones grow out of those that have died." For the forces underlying the histories of the nations Lasaulx is indeed close to a biological basis: "If a great nation does not any longer carry with itself a certain amount of unconsumed natural forces, its doom has come. It then can be rejuvenated only by an overflowing of barbarians."⁴⁷ This is exactly the concept of a racial cycle on which Brooks Adams was to build his structure of universal history;⁴⁸ and we remember Nietzsche's cry: "Where are the barbarians of the future?"

Recalling a famous saying of Hegel's *Philosophy of Law* on the age in which true philosophy is born, Lasaulx states: "Only when the day of the national life verges toward evening, a philosophy of history becomes possible." Such an attitude seems more deterministic than that of Toynbee, at least as far as the historical situation of the present is concerned.⁴⁹ While the parallelisms with Gobineau and Spengler are obvious, one should note that no biological materialism is involved in Lasaulx' philosophy, which explicitly repudiates the basic tenet of Gobineau on racial purity.⁵⁰ Even more important than this is his

⁴⁵ *Philosophie*, p. 65 f.

⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 63, 66, 74. It is characteristic that a task similar to that Lasaulx assigns to the history of mankind is given by Burckhardt to the history of the nations: "Nations have definite qualities to bring to light without which the world would be incomplete" ("The Great Men of History," *Force and Freedom*, p. 333). This sentence gives approximately the high-water mark for the extent to which Burckhardt ventured to speculate on the essence of history.

⁴⁷ *Philosophie*, p. 121 f.

⁴⁸ References to Brooks Adams in this article concern his *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (New York, 1943), with an Introduction by Charles A. Beard.

⁴⁹ Cf. "Does History Repeat Itself?", in *Civilization on Trial* (New York, 1948).

⁵⁰ Cf. *Philosophie*, p. 158.

conviction that, independent of the fate of the single nation or civilization, the unfolding of mankind continues unabatedly. Brooks Adams too, taking the concept of the racial organism as the genesis of his cyclic philosophy of history, is far apart from Lasaulx, while the objection raised by Burckhardt points to a questioning of whether the historian may attempt to reach out into the future: "Foreknowledge of the future is not only undesirable, it is probably beyond our power as well."⁵¹

In harmony with the attitude of German Romanticism Lasaulx also assigns the character of an organism of its own to the great spheres of human activity such as language, religion, art, and sciences, and—again provoking the dissent of Burckhardt—refers to the spirit of an age as the cause and not the consequence of the ideas held.⁵²

Much in agreement with Vico—to whom, however, he refers only once in order to mention disagreement on a minor point—Lasaulx insists on the historical precedence of action over reflection, and the sentences in which he discusses the character of the ages when systems of moral philosophies were written, almost echo the famous dictum of the Neapolitan thinker on the *barbarie della riflessione*: "Where—so we read in the *Philosophie*—much talking and philosophizing about virtue is going on, there it will be practiced least. . . . At the very time when the Romans endured serfdom patiently, declamations on tyrannicide were the regular topic of rhetoric."⁵³ The philosopher-historian at Munich was neither the first nor the last to whom the flowering of the sciences was the privilege and the sign of the old age of a nation, and Lasaulx would not have been the close associate of German Romanticism, he would not have felt the influence of much of what was best in German Romanticism, had he not assigned prominence to the discussion of language. "Let us first consider the relation of language to the reasoning mind of man: language is inseparably connected with the innermost recesses of human nature; language is self-active and knows a necessary growth rather than being artificially created by man; words take form from the depth of the human mind in a way comparable to the process of crystallization that goes on in minerals."⁵⁴ To Lasaulx the most interesting aspect of philology is semantics, a

⁵¹ *Force and Freedom*, p. 90.

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 268; *Philosophie*, p. 76.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92 ff., with references to Plato, Pliny, Humboldt, and Friedrich Schlegel.

truly historical science through which the character of the nations in history may be grasped better than in any other way; for language is the most immediate expression of the national spirit, and language too is ruled by the laws of organisms. The effect of these laws is that such masterworks of language which need full maturity from an intellectual aspect appear only after the youthful growth of a nation has reached its end, parallel to the process that we may witness in sciences and philosophy within the realm of national history.

In the *Philosophie*, racial organisms also appear based on the three groups mentioned in the Old Testament. Much of the process of universal history, Lasaulx assumes, can be traced to the antagonism between the Japhetides and the Semites, and as "we Germans" belong to the first group, it is quite natural that their individuality is in closer harmony with ours than that of the more alien Semitic nations.⁵⁵

In the wake of such medieval thinkers as Hugh of St. Victor and Otto of Freising,⁵⁶ Lasaulx accepts the theory of history moving from east to west. In the years following the publication of the *Philosophie*, this theory was to be transformed by Bachofen into the theory that the struggle between the Orient and the Occident forms the central theme of universal history. In one place in this work the concept of Burckhardt's colleague in Basle is already foreshadowed. The accentuation Lasaulx gives to the necessity and the healing effect of the crises and the great struggles in history appears here reminiscent not only of a similar evaluation of the work of antagonistic forces in Ranke but also of a like evaluation in Burckhardt.⁵⁷ To Hegel the great struggles had been and were hailed as the very turning points of universal history: with him—and this was one of those aspects that separated the philosopher of Berlin from the Romantic School—development had become strife.⁵⁸ Both aspects, the insistence on the necessity of struggle in history and the belief in silent organic unfolding, are equally

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 104 ff.

⁵⁶ Cf. Richard Schwarz, "Ost und West in der religiösen und politischen Prophetie," *Wissenschaft und Weltbild*, April, 1953, p. 113 ff.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Philosophie*, p. 113; for Ranke, *Growth of German Historicism*, p. 52; for Burckhardt, *Force*, "The Crises of History," p. 289 ff.: "In praise of crises we might first say that passion is the mother of great things"; cf. also "The Great Men of History," p. 325: "In crises the old and new culminate together in the great men. . . ."

⁵⁸ Cf. *Growth*, p. 44.

present in Lasaulx' presentation. As examples of the first great struggles he lists the Trojan War, Marathon, Alexander's expedition, the Punic Wars, the Crusades—he could have taken them from Hegel.

These examples are exactly what we might expect in the middle nineteenth century from a man raised in the classic studies. But not only does Lasaulx add the British triumphs in India and China; he makes one more step that carries the historian further than the present age: "Further, the future of Europe will probably be dependent on a similar struggle between nations, on a war between the armies of the Orient and the Occident that will end with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in Europe and will bring about a new political order of our continent."⁵⁹ Lasaulx seeks and collects references from Genesis to Horatius to support the well-known saying that war, the antagonism of divergent forces, is the cause of all growth, the father of all things. Reminiscent of Vico and in full contrast to the political thought of the Enlightenment, he insisted that not the normal and the tame, but the abnormal and wild aspects stand everywhere at the beginning of a new order.⁶⁰ But Lasaulx did not shrink from siding with the victors and accepting the verdict of success, quite unlike Burckhardt, who conceived of the possibility of the defeat of the noble "as a grave danger" in history,⁶¹ and even more unlike Gobineau, to whom the noble cause was doomed. Yet he could feel safe in the company of Hegel and Ranke; Nietzsche's cry, "Demosthenes is great without success," was to resound but eighteen years later.

It is to be expected that Lasaulx would place emphasis on the part of religion in history. Foreshadowing twentieth-century research done by such scholars as Wilhelm Koppers and Wilhelm Schmidt,⁶² he assigns no mean place to the religious beliefs held by mankind in its earliest stages. "All religions agree as to the perception and adoration of a universal divine mind and will superior to the mind and will of individual man."⁶³ And in a surprising parallelism with Toynbee, the professor at Munich perceives the birth of religions occurring when a

⁵⁹ *Philosophie*, p. 116. In 1856, the year in which the *Philosophie* was published, the Congress of Paris that brought the Crimean War to an end convened.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Philosophie*, p. 156 f., note 5.

⁶¹ "On Fortune and Misfortune in History," *op. cit.*, p. 361.

⁶² Cf. Wilhelm Koppers, *Der Urmensch und sein Weltbild* (Vienna [1950]).

⁶³ *Philosophie*, p. 125.

civilization comes to an end and a new one arises from the ruins. As all a nation possesses is acquired only to a small extent by itself, but to a large extent is a legacy from those who have preceded it, so also the religions of the nations are a sacred inheritance. "All ages in which the power of religious faith prevails . . . are splendid and fruitful for both contemporary and coming generations; all ages characterized by lack of faith are barren and doomed."⁶⁴

As for the basic trend underlying political history, Lasaulx accepts the Hegelian concept of a development toward liberty, but he applies to it the modification that that freedom for which the Christian-German spirit is searching has not yet found its full realization.⁶⁵ It is well known that to the philosopher of Berlin everything essential in the political sphere had been accomplished and that, too, if viewed from there, the bird of Minerva could begin its flight. When surveying in this connection the unavoidable cycle in the course of the forms of government, Lasaulx' reflections on the necessity and the positive aspects of revolutionary crises call to mind those considerations which Burckhardt in "The Crises of History" wrote "in praise of crises."⁶⁶

The same laws of organic life connected with a trend of development toward liberty which were characteristic of the other spheres and especially so of political history, Lasaulx sees at work in the arts and philosophy as well: he insists that all of them in their development show evidence of obeying the same historical laws.⁶⁷ This is the scheme he perceives: from sacred architecture as the starting point to sculpture, painting, music, poetry, and finally to philosophy; all may best be studied in the religious sphere and all six are finally united in the Christian religious services of his own age. Philosophy, in which man's activity reaches culmination, affords the best evidence that it develops according to its own rules, so that the individual thinker is but its instrument⁶⁸—again the reader is reminded of a similar though not

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126 f.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 129.

⁶⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 289 ff. No reference to Lasaulx is made in these pages.

⁶⁷ Lasaulx' aesthetic theory has been discussed, though hardly in a completely satisfactory way according to our point of view, by Heinz Horn, "Die Aesthetik Ernst von Lasaulx's," *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, XXXI (1937), 244-71.

⁶⁸ Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 133 f., 137.

identical saying of Hegel insisting that an historical event "is not bound to one individual."

From here Lasaulx proceeds to a discussion of the great men in history—a discussion with which Hegel would not have agreed and one that is much more in harmony with tenets which Burckhardt devoted to this topic.⁶⁹ Like Burckhardt, the author of the *Philosophie* sees as the basic characteristics of the great men that they appear "just at the right time," at the junction of two periods, men who seem to be born "out from the very heart of mankind." It is in them and through them that a whole nation is rejuvenated, reborn, Lasaulx asserts, and one is reminded of what thinkers of the Later Middle Ages hoped for from the appearance of the *Dux e Babylone*, the *Rex novus*, the *Messo di Dio*, the *Principe*. Referring to Carlyle, the Bavarian professor speaks of the great men as manifestations of potentialities of their nations which were not actualized before.⁷⁰ Lasaulx feels entitled to the statement that in ancient and modern times all the great states were founded by great individuals. "All new ideas must first be embodied in men before they can be realized in history; everything great in the life of a nation must be stimulated and activated by great men. Their lives have been correctly considered as a divine revelation."⁷¹ It is through them that a diseased order was restored. As examples of such men Lasaulx adds to Moses and Christ the names of Orpheus, Zoroaster, Buddha, and Mahomet. Then he surveys the sequence of those heroes whose accomplishments were in the fields of arts, sciences, and philosophy. Certainly the author of the *Philosophie* is far from having the grasp of individual portrayal and characterization for which Ranke and Burckhardt stand as accomplished masters; yet, if we compare his survey with parallel attempts of the Enlightenment historiography, of Turgot, Voltaire, Condorcet, or even of Barante, we see the step which carried Lasaulx definitely beyond the reach of those thinkers.

"Just as the majority of plants, animals and men die in their youth and only few of them reach a full development, so do also the larger

⁶⁹ The paragraphs in which the author of the *Philosophie* indulges in speculation on the organic essence of the great men would not have met with Burckhardt's approval.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Philosophie*, p. 141.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

part of national units." Lasaulx assumes that a fully undisturbed life of a man would carry approximately to a hundred years and that the life span of "a great people not disturbed in its development would be twentyfold," that is, two thousand years, of which half would cover its flowering period, the time of its forming an independent state. "So long lasted the greatest of the Asiatic Empires, that of Babylonia-Assyria . . . 1240 years; so long, the greatest European Empire, Ancient Rome . . . from 754 B.C. to 476 A.D., 1230 years; so long, the neo-Roman-Byzantine Empire . . . from 330 to 1453, covering 1123 years; and so long, too, lasted the Holy Roman Empire from Charlemagne to Francis II, 800-1806, one thousand six years."⁷² Hitler's vision of an Empire of a Thousand Years derives from the concept of German Romantics.⁷³ It is to "an inner energy" that Lasaulx attributed the doing and the undoing of the development of the nations. This concept is certainly lacking in clarity and precision, but it still may be compared to the *élan vital* on which growth and decay rests in the *Study* of Toynbee. When the inner energy has been spent, "life decays and its forms disintegrate from the outside, because inside the power of growth (*Triebkraft*) has come to an end." This stage is reached when the interest for metaphysics, that most characteristic intellectual product of a nation, has come to an end. "Then the national organism, functioning only in order to satisfy material needs and deprived of its soul, collapses."⁷⁴ The pages in which Lasaulx depicts the ages of decay, when the "so-called educated people" and "learned superstition" prevail, would possibly deserve reading even today. "Against the death of the nations just as against the death of individuals no remedy exists if no charitable hand takes them away while still in the period of youth or manhood. And what could one expect from the arts and sciences after the core of life has been corrupted?"⁷⁵ What could one expect from such productions since, as Lasaulx assumes, in a worthwhile work of science something of the very character of its author always shines through.

Lasaulx' last question arises: At which stage has Europe arrived today? More specifically, where is Germany today? That Mosaism

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 154 f.

⁷³ As far as my knowledge goes, no evidence exists that Hitler was aware of such a connection.

⁷⁴ *Philosophie*, p. 159.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

and Buddhism have already overstepped their zenith, seems unquestionable to him. How powerful, he asks, are the Christian convictions still? He asks the question and then continues: "Equally in the political sphere the vitality of the Romano-Germanic nations has diminished." Lasaulx admits that we see the evils of our age quite correctly and we discuss them in a most learned way; but this provides no remedy. The very longing for the bygone past of a nation and the endeavor to bring it back to life once more, are to him signs of the coming of the end. He who will consider the symptoms of our age can hardly help sensing an approaching catastrophe.⁷⁶ But this crisis will not be the last word of Europe; Lasaulx expresses hope for the coming of a political savior, that hope which had swept through so many centuries. Human history, human development may go on. The concept of the approaching predominance of the Slavic nations to which the philosopher had clearly given expression in his political speeches, is only alluded to in the *Philosophie*. In a speech in the Bavarian Diet Lasaulx, in harmony with his philosophy of history, reached this conclusion from the observation that, while the power of faith was in decline with the Germans, it was in full vigor with the Slavic nations.⁷⁷ Such a vision, however, was no monopoly of the historian at Munich. This belief in a future Slavic hegemony had been given expression in the name of the Polish nation by the poet Mickiewicz—many more names could be added, and not the least in this list would be the Spanish political thinker Donoso Cortes and the Austrian poet Franz Grillparzer.

Reaching the conclusion of the *Philosophie der Geschichte*, Lasaulx relies on his concept of organic development of mankind, according to which the leadership in history alternates among the nations, and finally refers to "those profound thinkers of the Middle Ages" who perceived the great tripartite rhythm ruling over universal history: the age of the Father according to the Old Testament, the age of the

⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 166. The structure of this sentence in Lasaulx' original version reminds us of the famous concluding period in Burckhardt's "On Fortune and Misfortune" (*op. cit.*, p. 369 f.).

⁷⁷ Cf. "Die deutsche Frage in der bayerischen Kammer der Abgeordneten," in *Studien*, p. 535 ff. (November 2, 1849); "Die deutsche Frage nochmals in der bayerischen Kammer," *ibid.*, p. 540 ff. (June 11, 1850).

Son according to the New Testament, and that of the Holy Ghost based on the Gospel of a coming realm.

It has been evident from the beginning—though it has not been pointed out at every single instance in this study—that with Lasaulx the gifts for collecting sources to which little attention had been given before, and of combining them according to aspects then new, prevailed over the powers of critical discussion and evaluation. Though both attitudes are equally indispensable to the work of the historian, usually the approaches form along one or the other line. The influences of training and inclination cooperated in shaping the attitude as evidenced in the *Philosophie*. The rich mind of its author was not endowed with consistency either; he was given too much to varying influences coming to him from his wide reading, from his personal experiences, and from contemporary political life.

The basis on which Lasaulx thought he could erect his building of universal history was incredibly small. Yet he had sunk its foundations deeper than his contemporaries and some of those who came after him. Not the smallest part of Burckhardt's greatness as an historical thinker rested on the fact that he disciplined himself, that he knew of the necessity to resign. Lasaulx did not, and could not, in a way typical of the German intellectual of the Frankfort Parliament times.

Equally evident are the many shortcomings and errors running all through his work. And yet, when all this has been taken into consideration and the fact has been added that the organistic approach marred to a considerable degree the possibility of understanding historical life in the limits set to the human mind, that an exaggerated trust in analogies likewise traceable to Romantic influences (witness parallel exaggerations occurring with Görres) led Lasaulx into the realm of Gnosticism, there still remains the impressive impact of a courageous and sincere undertaking to reach, to envisage a history lying behind and underlying all the different national histories. And Lasaulx ranges with all the rest of those who have undertaken a similar task and who have—so it seems to us—all equally failed. They have failed: Joachim of Flora, Vico, Guizot, Hegel, Gobineau, Ranke, Brooks Adams, Spengler, and possibly Toynbee too. Still, it was not an ignoble failure; these names will still be ranked among those whom mankind may remember gratefully, and their task will be taken up again, however

little hope remains that it may be accomplished successfully, however big the temptation may loom to forget about the limitations, both individual and general. It is one of the noble and one of the most tempting tasks of mankind to look out for and to tell "die Mär der Weltgeschichte," "the saga of universal history," "the essence of history."

While the censures leveled against Lasaulx came not undeserved, he may have found solace in the quotation a great Pope used when one of his cherished political plans proved unrealizable in his days: "In magnis et voluisse sat est."