

BYZANTINE CULTURE-CIVILIZATION

The Byzantine culture-civilization, as all other flowers of the human tree, is not an individual unique as its greatest admirers tend to describe it, nor is it a subordinate part of another culture group as its detractors belittle it; it is among the many in One. It is a complete example of the culture-civilization phenomenon, and as such its history, unfortunately too little studied, should be interpreted. In history we see the human race in action, and partly from this action we deduce the absolute nature of our world and its absolute truths and laws. A correct interpretation of Byzantine history according to these absolute truths demonstrates its nature and significance, and in the course of the examination of so important a culture-civilization new truths may be induced which would be valuable additions to our knowledge of the absolute truths of our world.

In examining and interpreting Byzantine or other history this age of encyclopaedic knowledge has, because of its very scientific nature, not doubted for an instant the absoluteness in Byzantine history or other history of the absolute laws of being, - that is, those physical scientific laws of gravity, of velocity, of rigidity, of cohesion, etcetera.

The absolute law as applied to the realm of doing, of which history gives the facts from which these laws are

induced, and the absolute law as applied to the realm of knowing, which the instinct of the race tends to intuit, and which art reflects, are seldom considered in the interpretation of a culture-civilization (those phenomena which comprise history) and never hitherto in interpretations of Byzantine history. Hence arises the apparent lack of significance which history presents and particularly Byzantine history.

The wide acceptance of the absolute laws of being (scientific facts as permanent truths) has been of small advantage in increasing the significance of history inasmuch as these facts deal with the world as unconnected with man's ethical imagination.

There are, significantly I believe, two realms of man's real activity, doing and knowing. Aside from metaphysical implications the more important one of these branches is doing. This is so by definition according to the two chief axioms of the absolute nature of the world: the only force is physical force; reality and perfection are identical. (Indeed knowing is only possible by a creature who has the physical force to know - nor can an unreal being create perfect thoughts - unless of course he be some metaphysical wrath possessing that nothingness which is the absence of anything different from itself.)

"Precept without concept is blind, but concept without precept is meaningless." Thus it is in the realms of absolute human truth. The realm of doing without that

of knowing is indeed ^{blind} meaningless, and an interpretation of history divorced from the ethical achievements of the civilization (and, of course, their reflection in art) is blind, as has been the interpretation of most history and particularly of Byzantine history. This is obvious. But how equally true is the fact of the complete meaninglessness of the realm of knowledge without that of the realm of doing, and how impossible the existence of thinkers who do not exist!

Thus putting the realm of doing first, yet clearly realizing its blindness without the realm of knowing, I would interpret the Byzantine culture-civilization in the light of ^{the} absolute truths of these realms. [The laws of the realm of being are so widely accepted as true by this age as to need no exposition, - and the laws of the supernatural world (- the pair of the world of being) are so scorned as imaginary as to be unacceptable.]

Referring to the two above mentioned axioms: (the only force is physical force; perfection and reality are identical) I would first offer them as true by definition, - but more satisfactorily true by empirical induction to which we ultimately refer the proof of the truth of all absolute human laws of doing. The Culture-civilizations, running their inevitable course, illustrate these two axioms, from which in a discussion of Byzantine history, other truths will be deduced as well as the truths to be induced from the discussion of this history and its

references to other histories. Similarly I likewise hope to offer in logical order by induction from art (the mirror of the ethical imagination) and by reconstruction of the personages of Byzantine history whose natures are grand in their ability to intuit these truths, some of the more conspicuous points marking for us the limit of these absolute truths of knowing, of which I feel Sophocles in the Antigone was referring to as the "Unwritten laws of Heaven." (Not a metaphysical heaven, however, but as absolute one whose reality lies in its existence in the minds of men of strong race in a period of culture.)

Byzantine ~~culture~~-civilization is often said to extend from 330-1461 (or '53). This is not true. Two distinct culture-civilizations have existed. The first from 330 to the Iconoclastic Controversy. The second from that time to the present day. These cultures have in common with many cultures that neither was native to the participants. Another of their more unusual characteristics is the fact that they were influenced by two cultures. Indeed the two cultures!

How easy and obvious it seems to divide human culture-civilizations into two groups: oriental and occidental; to divide art (the mirror or the ^{realm of becoming} spirit) into ideal and factual; to divide governments (the mirror of the realm of doing) into those not exhibiting and those demonstrating political metamorphoses. One is perhaps tempted to

continue metaphysically to deny the mystery of the holy Three and substitute for it Two which truly is something and nothing, up and down, back and front, etcetera. This division of civilizations or the metaphysical division, however, is perhaps beside the point and need have no significance and no more bearing on the nature of culture civilizations than does our artificial division of time B.C. and A.D. Certainly there is no empirical reason to consider the facility of dividing culture-civilization into one, two, or three etc. parts *as significant.*

Inasmuch as the keynotes of the Byzantine culture civilization were those philosophies of doing and knowing which have often been called the keynotes of all cultures, - the civilizations of Greece and India, some of the differences and the nature of these cultures might be examined. (Here let me clearly state that a culture-civilization is by no necessity connected with another ^{by} influence, time, location, or similarity. A culture-civilization is the result of a voluntary sacrifice of a race or part of a race of its very life blood and existence in an instinctive attempt to approach in some way a perfection whose nature is intuited by its ethical imagination. Indeed this very definition is mythologically recognized by all religions in which an element of divine self-immolation appears as it does in all religions arising in the period of civilization.

There are two types of religion: 1) the religion of strength, i.e. as illustrated by that of the Rig Veda, of

earliest Teutons, of the earliest Doric invaders of Greece. The tenet of this religion is: "The only force is physical force." It is the type of religion prevalent among a people early in a culture-civilization. 2) The religion of resignation, romanticism, mysticism, at times the religion whose axiom might well be, "I have no physical force;" at others the religion which mythologically recognizes the nature of a human culture civilization. The first type religion often changes into the second type, i.e. the Rig Veda to the Upanishads, the early Doric beliefs to the orgiastic orphic and other late pagan cults. The second type religion likewise often changes to the first type, i.e. the Christianity of the early centuries to that of the crusaders and the Jesuits. The Buddhism of the fifth century B.C. to that of the fifth century A.D. and Harsha. (Both types of religion may also undergo a second metamorphosis and return to their former nature). I state here this thesis regarding religions because 1) they are inextricably bound up with the nature of Indian and Greek culture; 2) the Byzantine empire exhibits these interesting types of religious metamorphoses.)

The culture-civilizations of the orient vary less from one to the other when occurring in the same location, yet occur in faster succession; this is because each is created by a vertical revolution. For in each epoch only a small part of the race creates the culture and much of the blood of the same race remains which continues over a long period to arise and create new epochs of a less divergent nature.

than are these civilization epochs in the Occident. (This is important in reference to Byzantium, because the change from the first "Byzantium" civilization to the second was in great part brought about by a vertical revolution.)

Furthermore, there is in the orient a general absence of the political metamorphosis such as is continually occurring in the Western epochs (Plato's system of political morphology is a remarkably accurate and practical picture of this political change exhibited by Western culture-civilizations). In Byzantium^{ra} history we find no political metamorphosis, and here the civilization stands forth gloriously as an Oriental one, freed from the trammels and exertions of such changes, - freed in soul so as to allow the spirit to concern itself with the pure idea rather than the fact.

And here again is another of the differences of Eastern and Occidental culture-civilizations, - the dominance in the East of the idea, in the West of the fact (on the one hand Hosios Loukas, on the other Daphni: on the one side the Cretan school which had rather stifle to die, on the other the Macedonian school and its eager ready prostitution to eighteenth century Italy). Byzantium is here torn between East and West and in this struggle, in which East was more often victorious, some of the fine landmarks of the culture survive.

Closely connected with this discussion is the question of convention and realism in art, for conventional art is the art of the idea as realistic art is that of the fact. Here we find the East generally alligned with convention

and the West with naturalness. To make this clear we must define the types of conventionality which will in turn perhaps suggest the existence of various realisms distinguishing those of Leonardo, Zola, and the Hudson River painters. There are four types of conventionality in art: 1) the type arising from technical inability (this includes not only the unnatural types but those of early conventions therein associated such as: in early art a form is discovered; in the mind of the artist this form contains perfection, - for in all primitive minds the true identity of perfection and reality is immediately appreciated, - therefore, for the preservation of this form through artistic scruples, and perhaps often through religious ones, this form is made again and again, - perhaps there is no alternative reality or perfection, thinks the artist, no other potential form but only chaos; another of these conventions I class under the general head of technical inability is that of the "verbal motor" in art. This theory of the "verbal motor" as the genius of oral poetry, and indeed of a great deal of later poetry, as well as of many orators, as developed by the French Conservatory of Music and Professor Milman Parry, I would apply to other arts, and particularly sculpture and painting; for here again do we find the forms and conventions and techniques dominating the sense, as in the poetry of Homer do we not find the words create the meaning. As oral poetry in great part is created out of ^{phrases} ~~poetry~~ rather than abstract ideas of the artists, so in early art the work is created out of and according to fixed traditional forms. Thus

have I outlined two subdivisions of that great group of conventional art included under the general phrase technical inability. 2) Next we find the convention of a crystalized and moribund tradition. Both of the Byzantine culture-civilizations have by some stupid authors as Woltman and Woermann in their "History of Painting" been lumped together as merely the desiccated, spiritless art of the dead life of Greece and Rome. Periods in which this type of convention in art is conspicuous are those in which the participants and admirers are so foolish as to pretend than an art can in reality exist without a physical force or body to support its soul, periods in which a realm of knowing has reality when the realm of doing is no more. Such periods as that from 1461 to the present day during which the Byzantine civilization with little physical force remaining has attempted mainly to drag out a meaningless existence. The past three hundred years of Byzantine art reflect with few exceptions the convention of decadence. 3 and 4) There are, however, two other sources of convention in art. And splendid is their flower! If Hegel rails against symbolic art, it is the first two types he justly scorns. The third and fourth conventions far transcend romantic art for they would impart the spirit of the tears of Mallarmé to the technical perfections of the Pantanassia.

These two sources of convention are respectively intellectuality and self-imposed limitations. The latter of these symbolically, it would appear to me, combines a hate

and a love of matter, - the hate of the world from which one closes oneself in a tiny perfumed garden, the love of the world which is so small an area is yet perfect and enough. This movement in art, furthermore, symbolizes the reality of the many in one, and the true unity of the nature of the universe which is clearly and fully explained by each particle of this living world. And in art it is matter in which the spirit must breathe. And again this self imposed limitation allows the technical perfection to be more nearly approached by the fanatical love and interest in the thing in itself in which the artist or the school is concentrated. Indeed a fanaticism, - in all great periods of art a fanaticism is necessary, so is the soul absorbed in its own self. Great periods of art are intolerant of other periods. It is only at the end before death when passions are cooled that true judgment is worthy of its name.

I return now to the former of these virtuous springs of convention: intellectuality. This comprises those works of art where each line or form or color and the nature of the composition itself is created to express an intellectual idea (or the interpretation of a spiritual concept). This convention cares little to copy this world, but all its elements translate the idea into lines or colors and into the work of art. The idea may, furthermore, be of another world, imaginary or metaphysical, and the work of art cares not to introduce it into this world but insofar as its

existence in physical form necessitates the use of matter. This is indeed the nature of all art at its original conception in the mind of the artist, and at this moment the work of art is complete and perfect. "The esse of beauty is percipi." Here it has been perceived by the mind of the artist. But often it is so faintly intuited that little of the original concept remains when a complete work of art which in its process of creation has been diluted and generally inundated by those supreme design forms, nature and the body of man. And against this dilution and dissolution the conversions of intellectuality and self-limitation would protect the soul of art that it may be transferred in some of its purity to these shining shores of light where the eyes of man may behold its glory in physical form.

I have entered upon this discussion of convention in art because - although attributing no virtue to the number four or two - I would illustrate how its pair, Western Realism, might be analyzed and considered; how these other antitheses of East and West might be analyzed; but chiefly, because in a study of Byzantine art the nature of conventions must be understood and appreciated; for concerning the origin and nature of convention in Byzantine art and social life there has been much confusion leading at times to a complete misunderstanding of Byzantine history as one of the great culture-civilizations, leading to a confusion between the two distinct Byzantine epochs, leading to a mis-

understanding of the aim of oriental art and its convention with a consequent blindness to the holy spirit of the best in Byzantine art itself. To approach Byzantine or any other oriental art, furthermore, this distinction in types of convention must be borne in mind because the great majority of Byzantine and oriental art is at least affected by convention. The great masterpieces of Byzantium, influenced by the latter two conventions, self-limitation and intellectuality, are clearly distinguished from art influenced by the conventions of inability or decadence, and are indeed in my mind to be exalted to the highest place in art as the purest expression of the Hegelian Idea.

Passing from the above generalizations concerning the cultural influences struggling for domination in Byzantine art and history, leaving the details and exquisite nuance to appear in logical development, and the connection of the above introductory remarks to assume coherent unity as the life of the Byzantine culture-civilization is reviewed, I would turn more directly to an interpretation of the factual history of these epochs, the embroidery of which in the light of extant Byzantine artistic monuments, is to be the central aim of the main body of this essay, this introduction to which appears, I hope, as a suggestive framework on which to discuss and arrange in the absolute order of their spiritual nature, these mirrors of the realm of knowing, always so active in Byzantium, which are indeed the only remaining portions of its two great culture-civilizations.

(In reference to this realm of knowledge and oriental culture-civilizations as contrasted with Western ones, I should like to state a proposition I believe of importance, and to it append various statements. In the idea-dominated East, the realm of knowledge has been held in such great respect that not only have men continually preached and acted in such a way as to take from their lives the realm of being or life for the purpose of attaining some higher knowledge whose existence only the slenderest of ontological proofs might posit, and whose sweetness might only be imagined through analogy, but also the culture-civilizations of the Orient have often been formed and criticised from within on the basis of how good and how wise a life their participants might lead. Yet it was not the quantity of wise men that was sought but the quality. (And here in all its implications lies another great severance between the West, polytheistic by nature, and the East, with eyes fixed on a neuter monism.) And this likewise is another significance of the Iconoclastic Controversy, which was at heart both a turning away from Hellenistic naturalism and monastic didacticism, and also from the wild polytheistic pagan spirit of the west, which yet survives in the Roman Church to the monism and metaphysical interpretation of the East, perhaps influenced by that flower of flowers, the Mahayana development, the Roman Catholicism of Asia. It was likewise realized that physical force depended never on quantity but quality. Perhaps it is this basic belief which accounts

for the ever autocratic nature of Eastern cultures and the vertical revolutions by which new ones are introduced.

Furthermore, I find closely connected with this doctrine of quality the general Eastern agreement to that absolute human truth, that the pure existence of a thought or an art in a human soul or mind gives it an eternal reality, that the giving of this creation to the world is the munificent gesture of a Bodhisattva but is in no way connected with the greatness of the concept nor of the virtue or importance of its existence. As a result not only is a Gmesthus Plethon produced, a Cesar Bardas nourished and a Machiavelli raised to the lofty position of a Kautyilia, but there is given to the world holy prophets, that list of philosophers - not Luthers with vulgar ravening mouths nor Savonarola of Firenze, poor little monk, but all the great prophets of all the great religions and beliefs of the East, those mythological intuitions into the nature of the world itself.

The following brief outline of the Byzantine culture-civilizations due to its sharp outlines and compactness must not be accepted as incorrect through lack of understanding. After the statement of this theory, ^{analogies} ~~analysis~~ may be considered, but purely for the sake of illustration, not for proof. Then more convincingly perhaps, with continued attention, its whole great double-headed body may emerge. Of this might I adorn the least portion by an attempt, and this attempt that I plan is the true work of this writing, an attempt to describe, clarify, interpret, and locate ^{in their true and significant order} certain extant works of these

culture-civilizations.

In 330 A.D. Constantine imported to Byzantium, the seat of an ineffectual and decadent Hellenism, washed by the waves of the Bosphorus with an apparently almost as moribund Seleucid culture, a worn out Graeco-Roman civilization, impregnated already with several oriental odours and particularly that of Christianity. This was no culture, I insist, indeed no civilization, though the dry bones of a very fine one which might naturally have been expected to disintegrate. And during the next hundred and fifty years this is apparently what occurred.

But astonishingly enough, thanks to the autocratic nature of these bones, engendering the germs of a vertical revolution, thanks to the virility of even a worn out Hellenism, thanks also to several historical accidents and perhaps still more to geographical location, but most of all probably to the wonderful chameleon-like nature of Christianity, always ready to adapt itself to the exhausted fellahin population of Egypt, or the invading tribes of the northeast, driven by the Huns and seeking shelter where they might, new blood was given these bones, new strength and new stamina animate an apparently dead culture and after a sleep this old Roman civilization brought so hopefully to the Bosphorus by Constantine blossoms forth under Justinian into the first great Byzantine culture-civilization.

Apparently a culture-civilization, but in the full sense of this word not so. It was a civilization imposed

upon a small group of new race whose own blood had not participated in the creation of the civilization, but had accepted it without passing through the period of culture. (This was unfortunate for the early Byzantine civilization: the two results were; an art neither new nor rich, an art through which the stamina of new blood and virility did not show, the qualities which are the soul of art; and a short life for the epoch. The result was however very fortunate for us inasmuch as we are interested in the preservation of ancient remains, literary and artistic, because this period of culture, whose existence would have been necessary for the creation of a great culture-civilization would probably have in its early stages destroyed much of the dead civilization on whose ruins it would presumably have arisen. With continued good fortune for us the very nature of the civilization which did arise was of an oriental autocratic stamp preserving for us for a thousand years longer through the process of vertical revolution and another culture-civilization the splendid old remains of Greece and Rome which it had deigned to preserve and adopt.)

The Iconoclastic Controversy now marks the end of the post-Justinian civilization which was never an altogether successful one, but one always straining to adapt an old culture form to a new race and whose art is marked by a splendid but never completely satisfactory attempt to adapt the greater spiritual force of Christianity to an art of the past, through the use of symbols and monkish didacticism

on one hand, and on the other ^{had through the utilization of} ~~had to adapt to~~ the grotesque and technically imperfect, over-ripe Hellenistic art of the period. Architecture, however, as Hegel correctly insists, being a symbolic art, was most successfully used by this period as a means of self-expression; St. Sophia is the intuition par excellence of the first brief Byzantine civilization. And indeed by its very civilized nature, with all the encyclopaedic tendencies implied, we find the great codification of laws, but at the same time we likewise see the closing of the schools of Athens: a civilization fears an over-active intellect, which having once created it, would continue to drive it whither, - to an unknown end.

And now, at the close of the Iconoclastic Controversy, a new culture-civilization, alive with the new blood and race of the many partially absorbed invaders of Byzantium from 400-900, yet, due to the vertical revolution by which this new epoch had been ushered in (and indeed here we have one of the most perfect examples of this type of revolution, other examples of which will later be given for analogy's sake) preserving a stable order of social and political concept, an era bold with a transformed religion, a Christianity as ready to adapt itself to the exploits of strength of the Macedonian Emperors as to the mystical intuitions of the mosaicists of Hosios Loukas, the dawn of a new culture-civilization appears in quick succession on the fading sunset colors of the Justinian era. Interestingly enough, furthermore, this great Byzantine culture-civilization is perfectly arrayed factually as an illustration of

of the natural evolution of a semi-oriental culture-civilization,- indeed almost by dynasties; ^{for} imperfectly do the Macedonian Emperors coincide with the period of culture, the Comneni with the apex of the development and the Paleologues with the civilization.

Even are the Macedonian exploits, those of Chandragupta; even the wealth of the Comneni, 300-250 of the Maurya Empire; the period of the Paleologas not so far from Ashoka; and the independent appearance of Epirus, Trebizond, Nicea, Mistra, Monemvasia not far from the break up of the Maurya Empire. Indeed this is no exact analogy but it is one of several I would offer purely for illustration never for proof,- to illustrate eventually with clarity the inevitable certain rhythm of Byzantium, and then examine and adorn it with black, coral and green amber and unknown new perfumes which blow through its history in frightening murderous gales to be appeased and justified by Cesar Bardos, at once a Maecenas, an Aristotle, and a Horace, standing unperturbed as his nephew Michael III the Drunkard dozes in streams of wine.

Another analogy: Babur and Akbar to the Macedonians; Jahangir and Shah Johan to the Comneni, Aurungzeb to the Paleologues.

Further, one is tempted to seek the parallel of the Delhi Sultanate, interrupted as was Byzantium History by an accident unrelated to the evolution of the epoch, and affecting it remarkably little. In one case the incursion of the Mongols in 1290, in the other the Frankish invasions and the

Latin Empire of 1204. And so with other dynasties, not only of the Orient, par excellence India, the navel of the world and light of Asia, but so with Chinese dynasties many analogies can be drawn.

It appears to me, however, that despite its greater Western color, a valuable analogy is to be found in Greece, where a double-headed culture-civilization had before flourished.

In short, for my chief illustrative analogy I would draw a comparison between the history of Greece from 1800 B.C. to 330 A.D. and the history of the Byzantine culture-civilizations between 330 A.D. - 1900; finding similarities in the nature of the racial and spiritual movements; pairing the importation of Minoan Culture to the Peloponnesos to the importation of the Roman civilization to Constantinople by Constantine; pairing the acceptance of this Minoan culture and its adoption by people of new blood, i.e. the Achaeans, to the first Byzantine epoch of the sixth century A.D.; matching Agamemnon to Justinian, the tomb of Atreus to St. Sophia; comparing the Greek dark ages from 1100 B.C. to 700 B.C., the geometric period and the incursion of new blood to the revolution, vertical though it was, and the complete spiritual change of the Byzantine Empire during the Iconoclastic Controversy; comparing, bold though it be to match a Western Culture-civilization, torn and carried forth on waves of political change to the autocratic rigidity of an Eastern one, but nevertheless continuing this comparison

bearing in mind the implied differences of East and West, the early Hellenic Period of flower 700-475 B.C. with the Macedonian Period; 475-375 B.C. with the Commenine Dynasty; 375-146 B.C. with that of the Paleologues and the dissolution of the physical power of the Byzantine epoch; 146 B.C. to 330 A.D. Greece from which for the sake of clear analogy we should subtract all the sympathetic aid of Rome, to the moribund civilization of Byzantium from the fall of Constantinople to the present day.

For the purpose of introduction thus do I briefly suggest the general interpretation of the evolution of the second and the greater of the Byzantine culture-civilizations. Inasmuch as in art alone is the epoch preserved in any physical form, I would touch here upon the great difference in the art of the first and second eras. In the second era, the true monistic Christianity of the Eastern Church had been purged of the two inherited pagan doctrines of the earlier church: polytheism, mindfulness of this world; two conspicuous characteristics of the Roman Catholic Church today. Furthermore as intimated by the above discussion of religious metamorphoses Christianity had for the ruling class passed from a religion of resignation to one of ^{strength} ~~thought~~, yet preserving its old mystical trappings. Indeed it had surpassed itself in the eyes of true mystics, artists and philosophers, and assumed that position above ^{strength} ~~form~~ and weakness, indeed that Nirvana of religions, attained only occasionally by beliefs which end in becoming eternal and unchangeable

intuitions of a spiritual world made real by art. For the soul of Byzantine art was not delight, edification, Apolline beauties, nor was it a portrayal of this or another world by means of monkish symbols, nor yet again did it with Greek naturalism attempt to bring down and portray as occurring in this world supernatural events. But by the use of those transcendental conventions, arising from self limitation and intellectuality, it would interpret the nature of the spiritual world in mosaic, stone and fresco. Contrary to the mistaken belief of most modern commentators the Iconoclastic Movement had succeeded in banishing idols, pictures, symbols, and images from the Church and from Religion. The art of the Second Byzantine epoch did not portray, did not symbolize, created no images, but it performed that best duty of art as defined by St. John Damascene, inasmuch as it interpreted ^{in a sense} a more universally understood one, the spiritual essence of the mystical kingdom of God.

And now with the words of the prince of philosopher-historians, Al-Badaoni: , "Glory unto God the most compassionate, the most merciful," I would temporarily conclude an introduction whose faults of composition tend to obscure its nature of truth. Particularly might confusion and misunderstanding arise, I fear, from the very general nature of the composition which appears on the surface to assume the nature of a Spenglerian abstraction of history. This confusion will, I hope, disappear in the main body of the essay as I proceed to examine microscopically the

in a sense from some other words, and

periods of Byzantine History. The evil germ of historical abstraction, according to which history is forced to an interpretation according to a preconceived theory, is a blight which destroys many historical interpretations which would depart from the absolute realm of human truth. This wicked tendency, this romantic view, which indeed at times seems almost dominant in historical studies is a Greek inheritance; as often indeed as it is found in Western cultures, so seldom is it found in Eastern ones or in Eastern historical works. Its proponents look for justification to Thucydides as one of the earliest genuises of romanticism, mythological knowledge and ruin, all the while scorning Herodotus who, misunderstood as a teller of microscopic history (and the aim of microscopic history is to place the ultimate importance on the ~~art~~^{act} rather than its abstract causes and effects to which so often indeed the untrammelled mind of the romantic historian is apt to attach divine or other instrumentality or intention. (Spinoza was not the first to scotch the theory of divine purpose which has ever been the popular perversion of the true teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas but this fallacy is unfailing in its recurrence in serious books from earliest times to the present day as are all its sorry host of kindred errors)) has become a literary curiosity from which an innumerable number of erudite after-dinner stories are to be mined. But the Greek genius which despite its naturalistic realistic tendencies (and I wish to emphasize the nature of realism which is but romanticism on all fours) ever sought balance in all things and

followed Herodotus with a host of lesser men of the same stamp, Xenophon, Theophrastus, Lucian, Herodian and their Roman brothers, Suetonius, and holy to mention Tacitus. History writing by nature, however, and particularly in the West, has naturally enough been coincident with the civilized periods in which genius, shackled to the miserable wheel of romanticism, triumphantly has perverted the nature and interpretation of history to the dullest of scholarly bores or the silly enthusiasm of a Gibbon or a Grote. The ^{works} value of history ^{written} writing in the East, on the other hand, ^{fewer} slenderer by far though ~~it is~~ ^{they be, have} ~~has~~ due to the rigidity of the autocratic civilization during which ~~it was~~ ^{they were} written, preserved some of the natural intelligence of culture, and within a short period ^{appeared} ~~are~~ the works of Ferishta, Al-Badaoni, and Abul Fazl. So much for this exhortation against confusions of Spenglerian attributions.

I have, incidentally attempted in this introduction to follow the best tradition of Byzantine scholarship, which appears to consist in fine writing but I could not be utterly faithful to this tradition inasmuch as quite contrary to Dalton, Byron, Diehl, and Perilla, I find I have something to say and indeed something of importance. In reference to and as a brief explanation of my frequent and unusual usage of the expression "absolute nature of the world," or "absolute truth," an expression of which, alas, in a world of blind relativistic and romantic scholarship little real understanding can or is likely to appear (a world, in

short, for whom words are but words and no longer even a portion of form as a real thing) I would offer the following quotation as an intimation of this absolute empirical inductive human truth, which is at once the *lex natura* and the unwritten law of Heaven:

"And he answered me: 'There is no god but this mirror that thou seest, for this is the Mirror of Wisdom. And it reflecteth all things save only the face of him who looketh into it. This it reflecteth not, so that he who looketh into it may be wise. Many other mirrors are there, but they are mirrors of Opinion. This only is the Mirror of Wisdom. And they who possess this mirror know everything, nor is there anything hidden from them. And they who possess it not have not Wisdom. Therefore is it the God and we worship it.' And I looked into the mirror, and it was even as he had said to me.

"And I did a strange thing, but what I did matters not, for in a valley that is but a day's journey from this place have I hidden the Mirror of Wisdom"