

The Destruction of Reason, by G. Lukacs

- a. People / Organizations: <https://dn720004.ca.archive.org/0/items/lukacs/Lukacs%2C%20Georg/Destruction%20of%20Reason%2C%20The/Luka%CC%81cs%2C%20Georg%20-%20Destruction%20of%20Reason%20%28Humanities%2C%201981%29.pdf>
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- b. Quotes:
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- c. General Notes:
 - Preface: On Irrationalism as an International Phenomenon in the Imperialist Period (pg. 3)
 - "[W]ithin this narrower subject-range we are not offering a detailed, comprehensive and would-be complete history of irrationalism, but will simply be elaborating its chief line of development and analysing its most important, most typical stages and representatives. We intend to focus attention on this chief line as the most significant and influential kind of reactionary answer to the great topical problems of the past century and a half" (pg. 3)
 - "The history of philosophy, like that of art and literature, is never simply a history of philosophical ideas or even personalities, as its bourgeois historians think. **Problems, and the directions in which they may be resolved, are posed in philosophy by the evolution of forces of production, by social developments and the development of class struggles.** Only the observation of these primary motive forces can serve as a basis for tracing the decisive, fundamental lines of any philosophy" (pg. 3)
 - "...the so-called humanistic attitude is not a step forward but a step backwards..." (pg. 4)
 - "It is just the road leading away from social life and back again which lends philosophical ideas their real breadth and determines their profundity, even in the narrowly philosophical sense. How far individual thinkers are aware of their position in this respect, of their socio-historical function, is entirely secondary. In philosophy as outside of it, votes are cast not for attitudes but for deeds - for the objectified expression of ideas and for its historically necessary influence. In this sense, every thinker is responsible to history for the objective substance of his philosophizing" (pg. 4)
 - "The primary issues, above all with regard to the selection of material, are social genesis and function" (pg. 5)
 - "**It is one of this book's basic theses that there is no such thing as an 'innocent' philosophy.** Such a thing has never existed, and especially not in relation to our stated problem. This is so in precisely the philosophical sense: **to side either with or against reason decides at the same time the character of a philosophy as such and its role in social developments.** Reason itself can never be something politically neutral, suspended above social developments. It always mirrors the concrete rationality - or irrationality - of a social situation and evolving trend, sums it up conceptually and thereby promotes or inhibits it" (pg. 5)
 - "The apologetic virus was spreading from the question's core to the periphery: **arbitrariness, contradictions, unsubstantiated and sophistic arguments, etc., characterized the later irrationalist philosophies** more and more acutely. **A lowering of the philosophical level is therefore a distinguishing mark of the development of irrationalism.**" (pg. 8)
 - "For what ultimately determines an ideologist's philosophical level is the depth to which he fathoms the questions of his day, his ability to raise these to the peak of philosophical abstraction, and the extent to which the standpoint derived from his class base allows him to explore these questions in their full depth and breadth" (pg. 9)
 - "We shall attempt in this book to demonstrate in detail that **at no stage does the development of irrationalism evince an 'immanent' character, as though, that is to say, one proposition or answer could give rise to another, driven by the inner dialectic of the philosophical train of thought.** We mean to show, on the contrary, that the various stages of irrationalism came about as reactionary answers to problems to do with the class struggle. Thus the content, form, method, tone, etc., of its reaction to progress in society are dictated not by an intrinsic, inner dialectic of this kind, but rather by the adversary, by the fighting conditions imposed on the reactionary bourgeoisie. This must be borne in mind as the basic principle of the development of irrationalism." (pg. 9-10)
 - "But that does not mean that irrationalism --within the social framework we have defined - has no ideal unity behind it; just the opposite. It follows from its very nature that the problems of content and methodology it raises are closely linked and reveal a striking unity (and a narrow one). **The disparagement of understanding and reason, an uncritical glorification of intuition, an aristocratic epistemology, the rejection of socio-historical progress, the creating of myths and so on are motives we can find in virtually any irrationalist.**" (pg. 10)
 - "If, therefore, we are seeking a proper understanding of the development of German irrationalist philosophy, **we must always bear in mind the following related factors:** the dependence of irrationalism's development on the crucial class struggles in Germany and throughout the world, which naturally implies the denial of an 'immanent' development; the uniformity of the contents and methods, along with a continual narrowing of the scope for real philosophical development, which is bound to encourage a heightening of apologetic and demagogic tendencies; and finally as a sequel to this, a necessary, constant and rapid decline in the philosophical level. Only now can we understand how **Hitler contrived a demagogic popularization of all the intellectual motives of entrenched philosophical reaction, the ideological and political 'crowning' of the development of irrationalism**" (pg. 11)
 - "...one of irrationalism's most important tasks is to provide men with a philosophical 'comfort', the semblance of total freedom, the illusion of personal autonomy, moral and intellectual superiority - while maintaining an attitude that continually links them with the reactionary bourgeoisie in their real dealings and renders them absolutely subservient to it" (pg. 22-23)
 - "What [Bergson and James] had in common was **the rejection of objective reality and its rational observability, the reduction of perception to a merely technical utility, and their recourse to an intuitive apprehension of true reality which they decreed to be irrational in essence**" (pg. 24)
 - "**Irrationalist intuition, along with the insubstantial myth it creates**, stands quite apart from concrete social reality and **is no more than a delirious leap into nothingness.**" (pg. 31)
 - "**Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is still the 'classic' land of irrationalism....**" (pg. 33)
 - Chapter 1 - On Some Characteristics of Germany's Historical Development (pg. 37)
 - "In becoming the battleground and victim of the conflicting interests of the major European powers, Germany went to the wall economically and culturally as well as politically. This general decay was manifested not only in the universal impoverishment and ravaging of the country, in the backward development of both agricultural and industrial production, and the regression of once flourishing towns, etc., but also in the cultural physiognomy of the whole German people. It took no part in the great economic and cultural upsurge of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; its masses, including the mass of the emergent bourgeois intelligentsia, lagged far behind the development of the major civilized countries. The reasons were primarily material ones." (pg. 41)
 - "**But the backwardness was beginning to be generally sensed, a national feeling was awakening, and the longing for national unity was constantly growing**, although there was no chance of political associations with specific programmes on this basis, even on a local scale." (pg. 42)
 - "**Germany's political fragmentation was matched by her ideological disunion.** The leading progressive thinkers of the age, notably Goethe and Hegel, sympathized with a Napoleonic unification of Germany and a liquidation carried out from France of the relics of feudalism. In accordance with the problematical inner nature of this view, the concept of the nation dwindled in these thinkers to a mere cultural idea, as is best seen in the *Phenomenology of Mind.*" (pg. 44-45)

- "There was, then, a profound disunion within the spiritual and political leadership of the German people and a very widespread ideological confusion with regard to the aims and methods of the campaign for national unity. Yet, in spite of it all, **national unity became the object demanded by a large mass movement** embracing important sectors of the German people during this period - for the first time since the Peasants' War. **Thereupon the issue of national unity became** (as Lenin first clearly formulated it) **the central question of the German bourgeois revolution.**" (pg. 45-46)
 - "The struggle for national unity did indeed govern the whole political and ideological development of nineteenth-century Germany." (pg. 46)
 - "The most important factor of all is the average German's underdog mentality..." (pg. 59)
- "For a long time Germany was simply a backward country both economically and socially, although in the intellectual sphere she was growing into the equal partner and indeed in some areas the spiritual leader of the bourgeois world. **This situation engendered an ideology paving the way for democratic revolution in Germany** (German writers and thinkers from Lessing to Heine, from Kant to Hegel and Feuerbach). Certainly there was already arising at that time - in the Romantic movement and its offshoots - an idealization of German backwardness which, in order to defend this position, **was forced to interpret the course of events in a radically irrationalist way** and to contest the idea of progress as an allegedly shallow, dim and misleading conception" (pg. 62)
 - "**Irrationalism and a hostility to progress therefore go together.** In this very togetherness they formed an effective ideological defence of the social and political backwardness of a Germany rapidly developing in the capitalist sphere. And it is at once clear that the 'philosophical' hypotheses we have outlined of the German reading of history exerted a crucial influence on that fabrication of historical legends which we mentioned earlier." (pg. 64)
- "Our concern in these introductory studies is therefore briefly to outline the socio-ideological features which made possible in Germany this disgracefully swift and even more disgracefully long-term triumph of fascism." (pg. 77)
- "Everything that had been said on irrational pessimism from Nietzsche and Dilthey to Heidegger and Jaspers on lecture platforms and in intellectuals' salons and cafes, Hitler and Rosenberg transferred to the streets." (pg. 85)
 - "**The question of whether, at a given time, there reigns a climate of sound and sober criticism or a climate of superstition, faith in miracles and irrationalist credulity in specific sections of society is not a matter of intellectual standards but of the condition of society.** Obviously ideologies which have previously exerted an influence will play a considerable part by reinforcing or weakening the tendency towards criticism or credulity. But do not let us forget that the efficacy or inefficacy of an intellectual tendency likewise enters books from reality, and not vice versa" (pg. 88)
- "**The factor common to such ages of social folly, of superstition and a faith in miracles taken to extremes, is that they were always periods of the decline of an old social order and a culture implanted for centuries, and at the same time epochs of fresh birth pangs.** In the German crisis years, this general uncertainty of capitalist life saw a heightening which marked a change-over into a qualitatively new and special state of affairs, and the change-over caused this susceptibility to folly to spread on an unprecedented mass scale. This susceptibility fascism exploited in the most ruthless manner possible." (pg. 89)
 - "...fascist demagogic and tyranny was only the ultimate culmination of a long process which initially had an 'innocent' look (innocent in a strictly or more generally philosophical sense): the destruction of reason" (pg. 89)
 - "The beginnings of this process may be found in the feudal counter-reformist, reactionary-romantic struggle against the French Revolution, and as we have noted it reached its peak in the imperialist age of capitalism. This process was by no means merely restricted to Germany. Its origins, its Hitlerian manifestation, and its survival in the present age all have international roots from the socio-economic standpoint, and irrationalist philosophy is therefore likewise in evidence internationally" (pg. 89)
 - "This is even less the case if we consider that a whole series of **important elements in the 'classical' irrationalism of the Hitler period (agnosticism, relativism, nihilism, proneness to myth-making, uncritical thinking, credulity, faith in miracles, racial prejudices, racial hatred, etc., etc.)** also play an undiminished, sometimes even stronger part in the philosophical propaganda of the 'Cold War'" (pg. 90-91)
- Chapter 2 - The Founding of Irrationalism in the Period Between Two Revolutions (1789-1848) (pg. 95)
 - "what comes about is **an unprincipled eclectic mish-mash, a totally arbitrary selection of famous or not-so-famous names without definite criteria for the choice**" (pg. 95)
 - "If human thought detects in these limitations a problem to be solved and, as Hegel aptly states, 'the beginning and sign of rationality', i.e., of a higher knowledge, then the encounter with them can become the starting-point for the further development of thinking, for dialectics. **Irrationalism**, on the other hand - we are briefly summarizing in advance what we shall set out in concrete detail later - **stops at precisely this point, absolutizes the problem, hardens the limitations of perception governed by understanding into perceptual limitations as a whole, and indeed mysticizes into a 'supra-rational' answer the problem thus rendered artificially insoluble. The equating of understanding and perception of the limits of understanding with perceptual limitations as a whole, the introduction of 'supra-rationality' (intuition, etc.) when it is possible and necessary to proceed to a rational perception - these are the most universal hallmarks of philosophical irrationalism.**" (pg. 97-98)
 - "**Since objective reality is fundamentally richer, more diverse and more intricate than the best developed concepts of our thinking can ever be, clashes of the kind we have depicted between thinking and Being are inevitable.** And so in times when the objective development of society and the consequent discovery of new natural phenomena proceed apace, great possibilities emerge for irrationalism to convert this advance into a retrograde movement with the help of mysticizing." (pg. 99)
 - "**Hegel's dialectic, in its attempt to comprehend the problems now raised from the historical angle as well, was the highest stage in bourgeois philosophy, its most energetic attempt to master the difficulties intellectually:** to create a method which could guarantee such an approximation (the fullest so far) of thought, the intellectual reflection of reality, to that reality itself." (pg. 99)
 - "**Now irrationalism begins with this** (necessary, irrevocable, but always relative) **discrepancy between the intellectual reflection and the objective original.** The source of the discrepancy lies in the fact that the tasks directly presented to thought in a given instance, as long as they are still tasks, still unresolved problems, appear in a form which at first gives the impression that thought, the forming of concepts, **breaks down in the face of reality, that the reality confronting thought represents an area beyond reason** (the rationality of the category system of the conceptual method used so far). As we have seen, Hegel analysed this situation correctly. His dialectic of phenomenon and essence, existence and law, and above all his dialectic of the concepts of understanding (Verstandesbegriffe), the determinants of reflection, and the bridge from understanding to reason indicate quite distinctly the real road to a resolution of these difficulties" (pg. 99-100)
 - "...the choice between ratio and irratio is never an 'immanent' philosophical question. It is not chiefly intellectual or philosophical considerations which decide a thinker's choice between the new and the old, but class situation and class allegiance" (pg. 100)
 - ◆ "Only the class character of their stance can illuminate such 'enigmas'" (pg. 100)
 - "**Internally as well, philosophers are always tied - consciously or unconsciously, deliberately or involuntarily - with their society, a specific class in it, and the forward or backward-oriented endeavours of that class.** **This foundation (and its historical destiny) nurtures, defines, forms and guides precisely what is really personal and original about their philosophy.** Even where, at first glance, an individual stance going to the point of isolation from one's own class seems to predominate, this stance has the most intimate of links with the class situation and the vicissitudes of the class struggle." (pg. 102)

- ◆ "The more genuine and significant a thinker is, the more he will be a child of his time, his country and his class. For every fruitful and really philosophical proposition - however strong the effort to place it sub specie aeternitatis - is concrete ; i.e., in content and form it is determined by the social, scientific, artistic, etc., exigencies and strivings of its age and itself contains (always within the concrete tendencies operating here) a real tendency to go forward or back, towards the new or the old. Whether and how far the philosopher concerned is aware of this connection is a secondary problem." (pg. 102)
- "Irrationalism is merely a form of reaction (reaction in the double sense of the secondary and the retrograde) to the dialectical development of human thought. Its history therefore hinges on that development of science and philosophy, and it reacts to the new questions they pose by designating the mere problem as an answer and declaring the allegedly fundamental insolubility of the problem to be a higher form of comprehension. This styling of the declared insolubility as an answer, along with the claim that this evasion and side-stepping of the answer, this flight from it, contains a positive solution and 'true' achievement of reality is irrationalism's decisive hallmark" (pg. 105)
 - "...every major crisis in philosophical thinking as a socially conditioned struggle between burgeoning and decaying forces produces tendencies to which we might apply the term 'irrationalism'" (pg. 105)
- "Now what constitutes the specific quality of modern irrationalism? It is chiefly the fact that it arose on the basis of capitalist production and its specific class struggles - first the progressive battle for power against feudalism and absolute monarchy waged by the bourgeois class, and later the bourgeoisie's reactionary defensive struggles against the proletariat. Throughout this book we will show in concrete terms the decisive changes which the various stages of those class struggles wrought in the development of irrationalism in both form and content, determining equally the propositions and the solutions, and we will show how they altered its physiognomy." (pg. 105-106)
- "Modern irrationalism springs from the major socio-economic, political and philosophical crisis occurring at the turn of the nineteenth-twentieth century. The decisive event sparking off the main elements in the crisis was naturally the French Revolution" (pg. 129)
 - "[N]ow there began an attempt to interpret the pre-human and socio-human world as a uniform historical process. 'Spirit', the idealist central figure in this process, was at the same time viewed as a result of the process" (pg. 132)
 - "Schelling was, objectively - as we shall see later on - the direct forerunner of Kierkegaard's view of dialectics, or rather, of Kierkegaard's repudiation of dialectics as a means of knowing reality" (pg. 146)
 - ◆ "...Schelling's ambiguity lay in the fact that, on the one hand, he attempted to 'purge' the 'organon' of philosophy of all conceptual elements, all traces of reflection and understanding, while on the other, he wanted to lay down this area as one of knowledge" (pg. 156)
- "The construction used by Schelling here was - with, to be sure, important modifications - the universal schema of irrationalism: rational philosophy, or so-called negative philosophy, was likewise a means of knowledge, indeed an indispensable one in its total context ; only it was not the sole knowledge possible, as philosophy from Descartes to Hegel would have it, and on no account the one capable of grasping true reality. This was the general irrationalist line after Schopenhauer: an agnosticist epistemology rejects all assertions of the perceptibility of objective reality, to which both philosophical materialism and objective idealism laid claim, and grants access to this sphere only to irrationalist intuition. Two facts indicate that the later Schelling's position was more than a little confused epistemologically." (pg. 174)
 - "Schelling's demagogic consists in the fact that according to his needs, he sometimes produces pseudo-scientific arguments against dialectics while in other instances, he cites the irrationalist 'grounds' of theology against scientific thinking as a whole" (pg. 177)
 - "Essentially Schellingian existence was an abyss of nothingness, again laying grandiloquent claims to a higher, divine rationality." (pg. 186)
 - "...Schelling became a precursor of the later irrationalism. For it was an essential part of this irrationalism that intuition, as the 'organon' for grasping true reality, inflated its own experiential nature and hence experienced time into the essence of this reality." (pg. 190)
- "Schelling was an objective, Schopenhauer a subjective idealist." (pg. 221)
 - "...Schopenhauer went much further than the English empiricists in dethroning reason..." (pg. 231)
 - "...Schopenhauer's rigorous irrationalism grew out of his reduction of Kant's inconstancies to Berkeley's solipsism" (pg. 231)
 - ◆ "...With Schopenhauer, on the contrary, there is no mediation at all between appearance and essence, between phenomenon and thing-in-itself; they are two worlds radically divided from each other. Whereas, for Hegel, the inward and the external continually interact, a metaphysical abyss separates them for Schopenhauer." (pg. 232)
 - "...Schopenhauer was, as we have already shown, an important forerunner and pioneer of the imperialist age's agnosticism and irrationalism" (pg. 233)
- Chapter 3 - Nietzsche as Founder of Irrationalism in the Imperialist Period (pg. 309)
 - "It is of the essence of bourgeois thinking that it cannot manage without illusions" (pg. 395)
 - "The epistemological appeal to adopt the most extreme irrationalism, to deny completely all knowability of the world and all reason, coupled with a moral appeal to all the bestial and barbaric instincts, is an - unconscious - admission of this position. Nietzsche's uncommon gift is manifest in his ability to project, on the threshold of the imperialist period, a counter-myth that could exert such influence for decades. Viewed in this light, his aphoristic mode of expression appears the form adequate to the sociohistorical situation. The inner rottenness, hollowness and mendacity of the whole system wrapped itself in this motley and formally disconnected ragbag of ideas." (pg. 395)
- Chapter 4 - Vitalism in Imperialist Germany (pg. 403)
 - "Vitalism or *Lebensphilosophie* was the dominant ideology of the whole imperialist period in Germany." (pg. 408)
 - "the essence of vitalism lies in a conversion of agnosticism into mysticism, of subjective idealism into the pseudo-objectivity of myth." (pg. 414)
 - "The so-called philosophy of fascism based itself primarily on racial theory, above all in the form developed by Houston Chamberlain, although in so doing, to be sure, it made some use of vitalism's findings. But for a 'philosophy' with so little foundation or coherence, so profoundly unscientific and coarsely dilettantish to become prevalent, what were needed were a specific philosophical mood, a disintegration of confidence in understanding and reason, the destruction of human faith in progress, and credulity towards irrationalism, myth and mysticism. And vitalism created just this philosophical mood" (pg. 416)
 - "As a result of the (unconscious) identification of life and experience, we obtain that equivocation between (apparent) objectivity and (real) subjectivity which is the essence of vitalistic pseudo-objectivity" (pg. 420)
 - "Hopeless situations call for desperate remedies. And as always in the history of philosophy when a remedy is sought and, it is believed, found in a *salto mortale*, the real epistemological and methodological preconditions of the 'solution' escaped examination. Its adherents overlooked the crassest methodological quid pro quo because the need for a 'solution' was so strong that it obscured all possible doubts." (pg. 426-427)
 - "what Heidegger termed phenomenology and ontology was in reality no more than an abstractly mythicizing, anthropological description of human existence ; in his concrete phenomenological descriptions, however, it unexpectedly turned into an - often grippingly interesting - description of intellectual philistinism during the crisis of the imperialist period. Heidegger himself admitted this to a certain degree." (pg. 498)
 - "Heidegger's descriptions are related to the spiritual conditions prompted by the crisis of post-war imperialistic capitalism." (pg. 500)
 - "Heidegger and Jaspers carried the most extreme individualistic, petty-bourgeois-cum-aristocratic relativism and irrationalism to their farthest logical limits" (pg. 521)
 - "Hitler himself was far too uneducated and cynically lacking in convictions to see in any philosophy something more than an instantly effective means

of agitation. But it is patent that even his views were formed under the influence of the same destructive and parasitical imperialistic trends which gave rise to vitalism among the intellectual 'elite'." (pg. 537)

- Chapter 5 - Neo-Hegelianism (pg. 547)

- "As we know, Hegel always strongly repudiated Kant's subjective idealism, and in particular its denial of the perceptibility of the 'thing-in-itself'. The knowability of it was a salient point in his dialectical epistemology, for this implied the dialectical relativity of phenomenon and essence, of the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. If the properties of things (their phenomenal modes) have been perceived, then so have the things themselves, and the in-themselves become for-us, and under certain conditions for-themselves. Leaving aside this process of concrete perception leading from phenomenon to essence, the thing in itself, according to Hegel, was an empty and meaningless abstraction. The imperialist revivers of Hegel were far from even considering this criticism of Kant, let alone adopting it. They continued to abide by a modified neo-Kantian standpoint suited to the conditions of the imperialistic era, i.e., they went on mechanically dividing phenomenon from essence and did not admit of the existence and perceptibility of objective reality" (pg. 551)
 - "neo-Hegelianism, which in its subjective aims often resembled an effort to resist the despotism of irrationalist vitalism, led into the main tidal waters of the imperialist destruction of reason. The renewing of Hegel signifies nothing more, here, than an attempt by moderate reactionary sectors of the German bourgeoisie to reach a compromise with the reactionary extremists." (pg. 576)
 - "The reactionaries were moving towards the total destruction of reason; compromise, concessions counted for little in their eyes: they demanded all or nothing. Through its concessions to vitalistic irrationalism, neo-Hegelianism managed only to disarm mentally a part of the intelligentsia that would have perhaps resisted the fascist takeover of thought more strongly had it not had such an 'ideological prop'." (pg. 578)

- Chapter 6 - German Sociology in the Imperialist Period (pg. 585)

- "Culture, after all, encompasses all the activities through which man overcomes in nature, in society and in himself the original personal characteristics bestowed by nature. (For instance, we rightly speak of the cultivation of work, of human behaviour, and so on.) Civilization, on the other hand, is a comprehensive, periodizing expression of man's history after his emergence from barbarity; it embraces culture, but along with it the whole of man's life in society" (pg. 596)
- "Confused though these studies are, and despite the inevitable meagreness and eclecticism of their intellectual results, we must not underestimate the importance of such essays of a sociology of leadership in creating a mental climate favourable to the acceptance of the Nazi mystique of the Führer. A methodological foundation was now achieved inasmuch as the whole problem-complex was made the necessarily irrational object of subjective experiences. Lacking such a climate, the fascist theory of the Führer could never have gained credence among the intelligentsia. The experiential, irrationalist character of the choice of leader in the Hitler movement was only a facade for the corruption and tyranny which characterized this movement, and it had its own very clear-cut, rational principles of selection" (pg. 631)

- Chapter 7 - Social Darwinism, Racial Theory and Fascism (pg. 667)

- "In this book we have devoted attention to the ideological or, more strictly, the philosophical side of this development. Seen from such a viewpoint, 1945 signifies primarily this: when irrationalism, the dogmatic and total destruction of reason became a major country's official world-view, and when that country went to war with its social and ideological adversary, the socialist Soviet Union, it sustained a crushing defeat. And the defeat was as total as the war had been. Hitlerism cannot be resurrected in that form in which it evolved. Nobody disputes that the imperialist forces which produced it are also operative today - even to a greater degree. (We shall discuss in our epilogue the fundamental difference in the situation notwithstanding all the continuously operative, socio-economically parallel tendencies.) At this juncture, having portrayed the passage of German irrationalism from theory into practice, and the inevitable collapse of this diabolical world-historical climax to a philosophical orientation, it only remains for us to comment on that point which this whole book undertook to demonstrate. It is that both the climax and its collapse were, historically, equally necessary, although not of course in a fatalistic sense. Just as Hitler came to political and military grief not through individual - and hence avoidable - errors of judgement, so irrationalism as a world-outlook received a corresponding practical form in Hitlerism, and it perished in a similarly appropriate form. In revealing the nihilistic cynicism of Hitler and his henchmen and in showing that they did not themselves believe in the doctrine they demagogically proclaimed - thereby translating it into practice - our studies do not refute these facts of the matter; on the contrary they confirm them. For it is just here that we find the perfect expression of that dialectical unity of cynical nihilism and speculative, uncritical credulity and frivolous superstition which every irrationalism contains implicitly and which simply acquired a matching figure in Hitler. We underestimate the historical significance of the German destiny (embracing that of the destiny of irrational philosophy) if, in assessing Hitler, we put the accent solely on his low intellectual and moral standards. In itself, to be sure, such an assessment is correct. But it was again historical necessity which caused the lowering of standards. It is a steep descent from Schelling and Schopenhauer - via Nietzsche, Dilthey, Spengler, etc. to Hitler and Rosenberg. But in its very steepness, it sufficiently expresses the character of irrationalism and the necessity of its development" (pg. 751-752)
- "Throughout this book we have tried to show that the stance adopted towards reason, the bias towards affirming or denying it and the acknowledgement or dismissal of its effectualness reached from life into philosophy, and not from philosophy into life. Reason is denied or its impotence is declared (Scheler) as soon as reality itself, the life led by the thinker evinces no movement forward into a future worth affirming, no prospect of a future surpassing the present. Behind all anti-rational attitudes, therefore - objectively, in the process of the socio-historical development itself, and subjectively, in the position of the individual concerned - there lies the question of whether one sides with decline and decay or with the new and emerging." (pg. 753)
- "With the best will in the world, the reactionary irrationalist traditions of more than a century cannot be overcome in a matter of days or months. But there is no other possible way to recovery. That reason which has been lost or destroyed can only be located in reality itself and can only be restored in interaction with it. And in order to attain to reality, the break is essential" (pg. 757)

- Epilogue: On Post-War Irrationalism (pg. 765)

- "In our studies so far we have attempted to portray, in its chief elements, the course of irrationalism's development from the feudal-reactionary ideological backlash against the French Revolution to Hitlerism and its inevitable demise." (pg. 765)
- "The mass of those capable of being led astray, of the cowardly and easily intimidated, the weak and passive spirits, of minds poisoned spiritually and morally, is still exceptionally large. The situation as a whole, however, has altered radically. Before the Second World War Hitler unfurled on the streets the flag of irrationalism and the destruction of reason. Today, reason is descending from the lecture platform, workshop or laboratory on to the streets to plead its cause before the masses, and in the vanguard of the masses" (pg. 846)

- d. Further Readings:

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