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Megalopolis versus Social Retardation: The Continuing Relevance of the Views of Spengler and Toynbee on the Variability of the Rate of Cultural Change

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I. Introduction

There is a consensus, displayed in the media every day, that some US regions are more advanced than others, and some more backward. New York and Boston are centers of Culture, the Ozarks and Alabama are backward. Why?

Both Spengler and Toynbee had strong beliefs on the variability of the rate of cultural development in various regions that they noted in their own time. This paper will discuss their views, which turn out to be roughly the same, although they reflect, respectively, the famous pessimism and optimism of the two authors. Thereafter, this paper will seek to show that the views of Spengler and Toynbee are spot-on and that they accurately reflect the situation extant in the United States today.¹

But before I attack this subject, I will note that I am describing a phenomenon—not necessarily endorsing either metropolitan progressivism nor rural conservatism. Obviously not all people who live in large cities are progressive nor all people in the

¹The analysis could be applied globally or to the entire West. However, the U.S. is the pre-eminent power of the declining West today, and the analysis fits the U.S. extremely well. Thus, the scope of this paper will be limited to applying the ideas of Spengler and Toynbee to the U.S. today, with, perhaps, a forgivable reference or two elsewhere.
suburbs or countryside conservative. This study is exploring a general tendency which is observable around the world—unequal development. Furthermore, not all “development” is good—no more than all traditions that conservatives want to save good either.

II. Spengler’s Megalopolitans

Oswald Spengler wrote *The Decline of the West* (the “Decline”) in what he considered the founding and most important country—or region—of the Western Culture, *i.e.*, Germany. When Spengler wrote the *Decline* during World War I, Germany had been overshadowed, first by France, and then Great Britain for 2-1/2 centuries, from the time of the Thirty Years War. This perspective (and his resentment of it) permeates Spengler’s philosophy throughout the *Decline* and his subsequent works.

Thus, Spengler looked at the decline of the West from the perspective of a German looking at “his” Culture, that had hardened into a “Civilization” through the doings of the French revolutionaries and their English adversaries, and the British development that changed everything: the Industrial Revolution. Germany was playing catch-up, and although Spengler believed that the West could not be rejuvenated, it would at least experience the glory of a world state, the “imperium mundi”, which Germany would establish. The West would then eventually decline into oblivion. Seen from this perspective, Spengler’s distaste for the great cities produced during the Civilizational stage and their Culture is logical, even predictable.

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2 See reference list below.


4 Spengler, Hour Introduction xvi; *Decline* Vol. 2 p. 109, p. 432; Farrenkopf, *Prophet* p. 54.
Spengler summarized “the problem of Civilization” as follows:

For every Culture has its own Civilization... The Civilization is the inevitable destiny of the Culture... Civilizations... are a conclusion, the thing-become succeeding the thing-becoming, death following life, rigidity following expansion, intellectual age and the stone-built, petrifying world-city following mother-earth and the spiritual childhood of the Doric and Gothic. They are an end, irrevocable, yet by inward necessity reached again and again...

...In a word, Greek soul—Roman intellect, and this antithesis is the differentia between Culture and Civilization... Pure Civilization, as a historical process, consists in a progressive exhaustion of forms that have become inorganic or dead.5

Spengler believed that the transition from Culture to Civilization took place in the Classical world in the fourth century B.C., and in the Western world in the 19th century A.D.6 Thus, according to Spengler, the West is now well advanced into its Civilization stage.

The defining component of the civilization stage is the “megalopolis” or “world-city.” Spengler’s translator, Charles Francis Atkinson, coined the term “megalopolitan,”7 to mean overgrown urban region, in translation of Spengler’s grossstädtisch. According to Spengler:

6 Spengler, Decline One-Vol. Ed. p. 25
From these periods onward the great intellectual decisions take place...in three or four world-cities that have absorbed into themselves the whole content of History, while the old wide landscape of the Culture, become merely provincial, serves only to feed the cities with what remains of its higher mankind. World-city and province—the two basic ideas of every Civilization—bring up a wholly new form-problem of History... In place of a world, there is a city, a point, in which the whole life of broad regions is collecting while the rest dries up.\(^8\)

Thus, the megalopolis sucks everything of value into itself, particularly all people of ability and education, thereby leaving its counterpart, the province, that encompasses the rest of the Civilization, a cultural backwater devoid of any vigor or growth. The city explodes into the megalopolis while the country becomes a vacuum, both culturally and in terms of population.

Spengler understood that not all megalopolitans necessarily move to the world-city. Some may live in the country, or return there from university, for example, but they are nevertheless thoroughly megalopolitan in spirit. Furthermore, the megalopolis controls public policy and opinion of the country.\(^9\)

Spengler's description of the megalopolis, the megalopolitans, and everything having to do with them is consistently negative:

In place of a type—true people, born of and grown on the soil, there is a new sort of nomad, cohering unstably in fluid masses, the parasitical city dweller, traditionless, utterly matter-of-fact, religionless, clever, unfruitful, deeply contemptuous of the countryman and

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especially that highest form of countryman, the country gentleman.

The world-city means cosmopolitanism in place of "home"...To the world-city belongs not a folk but a mob. Its uncomprehending hostility to all the traditions of the Culture (nobility, church, privileges, dynasties, convention in art and limits of knowledge in science), the keen and cold intelligence that confounds the wisdom of the peasant, the new-fashioned naturalism that in relation to all matters of sex and society goes back far to quite primitive instincts and conditions, the reappearance of the panem et circenses in the form of wage-disputes and sports stadia—all these things betoken the definite closing down of the Culture and the opening of a quite new phase of human existence—anti-provincial, late, futureless, but quite inevitable.10

Or again:

As the essence of every Culture is religion, so—and consequently—the essence of every Civilization is irreligion—the two words are synonymous. Megalopolis itself, as against the old Culture-towns—Alexandria as against Athens, Paris against Bruges, Berlin against Nuremburg—is irreligious down to the last detail, down to the look of the streets, the dry intelligence of the faces. And, correspondingly, the ethical sentiments belonging to the form-language of the megalopolis are irreligious and soulless also. Socialism is the Faustian [Western] world-feeling become irreligious; "Christianity" so called (and qualified even as "true Christianity") is always on the

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lips of the English Socialist, to whom it seems to be something in the nature of a “dogma-less morale.”

The megalopolitan in Spengler’s mind is traditionless because he loathes the traditions that produced him, i.e., the traditions of his Culture-cum-Civilization. He is religionless because he loathes the Culture’s religion that produced him, and which he has abandoned. He loathes the rural country and its provincials because the Culture produced them (and him); and in them he sees himself, or at least his forebears; and he also sees the cultural past to which he cannot return, even if he wanted to. In short, according to Spengler, the megalopolitan loathes himself.

Megalopolitan self-loathing is undoubtedly tied to, and is probably the result of, the malady that afflicts societies in the disintegration stage, which malady Toynbee referred to as “some kind of spiritual breakdown.” Rostovtzeff described the same disease of the spirit in Late Rome as follows:

The upper classes, with the exception of the senatorial houses whom the emperors persecuted and exterminated, led a quiet and easy life. Under the emperor’s guardianship they had no need to trouble themselves about the morrow... There was no one to struggle with and nothing to struggle for... What was there to seek for, when all was already found?...

In this atmosphere of indolent content-ment...Men grew selfish and fixed their hearts on idleness and amusement....


12 Somervell, Study Vol. 1 p. 259
Under the brilliant exterior of the Roman Empire we feel the failure of creative power and the distaste for it; we feel the weariness and indifference which undermined, not merely the Culture of the state, but also its political system, its military strength, and its economic progress. One symptom of this indifference is race suicide—the refusal to continue the species. The higher classes were recruited from without, not from within, and became extinct before they had time to hand down to following generations the heritage of Culture.¹³

Thus, he says, the *taedium vitae* of secure but seemingly pointless megalopolitan life leads to despair—depression¹⁴—which, if pop psychology can be forgiven, is nothing but anger turned against oneself; i.e., self-loathing. The depression produces an egocentric self-absorption that craves sensate enjoyment and material pleasure and refuses to reproduce. The depression, self-loathing, and self-absorption are by no means mutually exclusive: they are intricately connected.

Western megalopolitan self-loathing and egocentrism are borne out by polling data in at least two respects. The first is the disparity in birth rates. One interpretation is that one must loathe one’s Culture—oneself—to refuse to produce the next

¹³ Rostovtzeff, *Rome* pp. 322-323; see also pp. 254-7, 313. On the failure of and distaste for creative power, with regard to the West Spengler stated that: “The Faustian thought begins to be sick of machines. A weariness is spreading, a sort of pacifism of the battle with Nature... *The flight of the born leader from the Machine is beginning.*” Spengler, *Man and Technics*, p. 97 [Italics in original].

¹⁴ The chronic depression of the Western megalopoles is well-known and is demonstrated by the popularity of Prozac and other anti-depressants.
generation. (Of course this is just one interpretation; others are self-absorption, availability of contraception giving women some choice, or even, as in Rome, a drop in fertility environmentally caused—the lead in the wine and water.)

According to the analogy with Late Rome, however, the birth rate should be lower in the megalopoles than in the provinces. It is. Of the 15 states with the highest birth rates, 14 are outside the megalopoles, along with California, with its large and fertile immigrant population. Of the 15 states with the lowest birth rates, ten are megalopolitan.

The second indication of megalopolitan self-loathing and egocentrism might be found in the abortion rate. Aborting babies can be interpreted as the clearest form both of self-loathing and of the self-absorbed refusal to produce the next generation (but also in desperation and lack of housing, as in the USSR). It is also a particularly draconian form of birth control. In the USSR, for example, contraception was not available, whereas abortion was. In the United States, about 93% of abortions are performed essentially as a means of birth control. Predictably, of the 15 American states with the

15 www.statemaster.com [Table: Health Statistics > Birth Rate per 1000 (most recent) by state]
16 http://www.prolifelouisiana.org/why-women-have-abortions.html; citing Lawrence Finer, et al “Reasons U. S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives” Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Vol. 37 No. 3 (Sept. 2005) p.110. Finer, et al, do not specifically claim that birth control is the reason for 93% of abortions. Rather, Finer, et al, differentiate between “social reasons” (93%) and “hard reasons” (7%). The “social reasons” are all essentially reasons or motivations for birth control and include: feels unready for child/responsibility; feels she can’t afford child; has all the children she wants/other family responsibilities; relationship problems/single motherhood; feels she is not mature enough; interference with education/career plans; parent/partner wants abortion; and other (“other” reasons comprise less than 6.5%).
highest abortion rates, ten are megalopolitan. Of the 15 with the lowest abortion rates, 12 are non-megalopolitan.  

Obviously, there are many conscious reasons for practicing birth control, both in the megalopolis and in the province, which do not normally include depression, self-loathing, and ego-centrism. Presumably, no one consciously says, “I loathe myself, therefore I will practice birth control” (although depression undoubtedly plays a role in at least some abortions). The point here is that the lower birth rate and higher abortion rate in the megalopolis are consistent both with Spenglerian analysis and with what happened historically in Late Rome.

To people living in traditional areas, they see the more extreme forms of the arts as megalopolitan distaste for the general culture. They see the megalopolitan elites as promoting the most outrageous forms of “modern arts and culture,” and they complain that these elites see Western music, i.e., classical music, as old and decrepit; but jazz, blues, swing, rock and roll, funk, and rap are all wonderful, up to and including John Cage’s placing a bowl of strawberries on a piano and calling it music.

They complain that Western art—impressionism, expressionism, cubism, and so on, are all good in their turn, as art is deconstructed, up to splashing paint on canvas a la Jackson Pollock, Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s wrapping an island in fabric, and beyond: Andres Serrano’s “Piss Christ” (a

“hard reasons” are: mother’s health; child may have health problems; and rape or incest.

17 www.statemaster.com [Table: Health Statistics > Abortion Rate (most recent) by state]

18 The “composition” was called 4’ 33” because Cage would sit at the piano doing nothing for exactly four minutes and thirty-three seconds. See http://www.answers.com/topic/john-cage
photograph of a crucifix in Serrano’s urine), Chris Ofili’s elephant dung on the Virgin Mary, with the image surrounded by “cut-out rear views of buttocks with pussies peeping underneath”. Western architecture is spent; nihilistic Bauhaus is beautiful.

It will be noted that Spengler’s megalopolitans bear a striking resemblance to negative stereotypes of New York elite liberals; and indeed, Spengler identified the Western megalopoles as London, Paris, New York, and Berlin. (And, of course, some of this criticism is directed at the favorite whipping boy of the most radical conservatives, Jews.)

However, Spengler clearly anticipated that the Western megalopoles would continue to grow for at least a century after the writing of the Decline:

Even now the world-cities of the Western Civilization are far from having reached the peak of their development. I see, long after A.D. 2000, cities laid out for ten to twenty million inhabitants, spread over enormous areas of countryside, with buildings that will dwarf the biggest of today’s and notions of traffic and communications that we should regard as fantastic to the point of madness.

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19 Kunitz (1999)
20 Other examples could be used: according to Toynbee, Hellenic art, and in particular sculpture, was exhausted, and the Byzantines consciously abandoned its techniques in favor of their new style. Byzantine architects did the same and the Hagia Sophia was the result. Toynbee calls modern art “pseudo-Byzantine” and thinks the exact same movement is taking place, due to “some kind of spiritual breakdown in our Western Civilization”. Somervell, Study Vol. 1 p. 259-60.
21 Spengler, Decline One-Vol. Ed. p. 59, 185, 248
22 Spengler, Decline One-Vol. Ed. p. 249
Spengler’s foresight was uncannily accurate. Cities, buildings, traffic, and communications have all continued to grow at mind-boggling rates in the 73 years since Spengler’s death. Indeed, in 1972 John F. Fennelly updated Spengler:

In addition to the development of separate giant cities, we have witnessed the emergence of huge urbanized areas, stretching in some cases with scarcely a break for several hundred of miles. The most outstanding of these is the section along the Atlantic seaboard which extends all the way from Boston to Washington. Another is the area that centers around Chicago and runs from Milwaukee on the north through Gary, Indiana at the southern tip of Lake Michigan. The bay area of San Francisco and the great sprawling area of metropolitan Los Angeles present two more examples of the same phenomenon.23

Furthermore, through continued growth and the fantastic traffic and communications predicted by Spengler—i.e., Interstates, the Internet, cell phones, cable television, etc.—one can today extend the Washington to New York to Boston megalopolis westward and the Lake Michigan megalopolis eastward so that they just about touch, encompassing most of Ohio and Pennsylvania. One can also extend the California megalopolises not only to reach each other but also to encompass most of the coastal areas of that state northward through Portland to Seattle (and beyond the Canadian border to Vancouver).

Thus, the American megalopolises correspond well to the Democrat stronghold “blue” states, and the province is Republican red state “fly over” country. However, the recognition of this correspondence is not just an idle statement of the obvious and should not be taken as such.

23 Fennelly, Twilight p. 129
The blue state/red state contrast exists because the megalopolitan/provincial contrast exists. That is, while Spengler did not specifically predict which American states would vote Democratic and which vote Republican in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, he certainly did predict that megalopolises would expand, that the megalopolitans elites would be “progressives,” and that such megalopolitans would have nothing but disdain for the provincials.

In other words, to a Spenglerian the blue state/red state contrast is nothing but the specifically American version of the megalopolitan/provincial contrast that exists—indeed, that according to Spengler must come to exist—in every Civilization stage.

Again, as Spengler noted, one does not have to live in an inner city to be a megalopolitan. The California wine country may still be semi-rural, but it is nevertheless thoroughly megalopolitan in outlook and lifestyle. One can live in rural Mississippi and still be thoroughly megalopolitan in outlook. Indeed, megalopolitanism is a world-view, a way of life; and although it is springing forth from the overgrown urban centers such as New York and Los Angeles, it cannot and should not be misunderstood to be somehow limited to people living within the city limits of the great cities.

As urban sprawl increases, and the megalopolitans exit the cities proper to suburbs, smaller cities, and semi-rural areas, they nevertheless remain megalopolitan in outlook, and the formerly provincial areas are gobbled up by the megalopolis in the process.

This process was the comic premise of the popular CBS television series “Green Acres.” Try as he might, no matter how great his romantic enthusiasm, New York attorney

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24 Spengler disdained Romantics, which was part of his problem with the Nazis, and in turn, no doubt, of their problem with him:
Oliver Wendell Douglas (played by Eddie Albert) could not shed his megalopolitan persona to become a Hooterville provincial. His wife, of course, played by Eva Gabor, lacked his enthusiasm for country life: “New York is where I’d rather stay...Dah-ling, I love you but give me Park Avenue!” The Douglases remained megalopolitans even in the country. By the way, the plot is a very old one: the Roman senators and emperors loved to relax or even live on their villas in the country, but that did not make them any less megalopolitan.

“Green Acres” is only make-believe, but urban sprawl and the blurring of city and province are very real. One might ask whether the contrast between megalopolis and province has any meaning today. In this regard, Spengler claimed that the peasant (“yeoman”) class in England had ceased to exist and had never existed in the United States. Rather, in England and America: “[t]he ‘farmer’ is spiritually a suburban and in practice carries on his farming as an industry. Instead of villages, there are only fragments of megalopolis.”

Of course, the converse of “Green Acres” is CBS’s “The Beverly Hillbillies,” wherein the provincials—ostensibly from the South—strike it rich, immediately move to Los Angeles, and acquire a mansion complete with a “cement pond”. They are then protected and/or manipulated by their banker, all of which is eerily reminiscent of the draining of the countryside and the manipulation of the resulting proletarian urban mobs by socialist party bosses repeatedly predicted by Spengler.

“Romanticism is no sign of powerful instincts, but, on the contrary, of a weak, self-detesting intellect. They are all infantile, these Romantics; men who remain children for too long (or for ever), without the strength to criticize themselves...And like all Rationalists and Romantics, they are as sentimental as a street ditty.”


25 Of course, the converse of “Green Acres” is CBS’s “The Beverly Hillbillies,” wherein the provincials—ostensibly from the South—strike it rich, immediately move to Los Angeles, and acquire a mansion complete with a “cement pond”. They are then protected and/or manipulated by their banker, all of which is eerily reminiscent of the draining of the countryside and the manipulation of the resulting proletarian urban mobs by socialist party bosses repeatedly predicted by Spengler.

26 Spengler, Decline Vol. 2. p. 449 n. 4
is simply untrue, especially as applied to the United States outside the Northeast, the industrial Midwest, and the Pacific Coast. Spengler’s view conflicts fundamentally with Toynbee’s view of Appalachia, for example, as discussed below.

In fact, Spengler would have to admit that he was mistaken in this regard, because if American farmers are megalopolitans, then essentially the whole of the United States is megalopolitan, so why designate New York specifically as the American megalopolis? In other words, Spengler’s designation of New York as megalopolis pre-supposes that there are non-megalopolitan areas of the U.S., which again conflicts with the designation of farmers as megalopolitans.

It would therefore seem that the distinction between megalopolis and province is still relevant; but to see why, we must turn to Spengler’s successor, critic, and to an extent, student and fan: Arnold Joseph Toynbee.

III. Toynbee’s Social Retardation

In his A Study of History, Toynbee describes the phenomena of acceleration and retardation with regard to the variability of the rate of cultural change. Toynbee uses revolution as an example of acceleration, and he describes revolution as follows:

a social movement generated by an encounter between two communities which, though they may belong to the same society, happen at the moment to be in different stages of evolution—military, political, economic, intellectual, or spiritual, as the case may be—differing markedly enough to stimulate the more backward of the

27 See reference list below.
two parties deliberately to quicken his pace with the intention of catching up....

Thus, the classic example of an acceleration, according to Toynbee, is the French Revolution, in which the French sought to catch up to the British. 

On the other hand, revolutions have their antithesis "in the social enormities that are generated by a straggler's refusal to try to catch up with the progress of the main body" of the society. Enormities are good examples of retardation, and Toynbee's "classical" example of such a "willful" retardation is the retention of slavery in the American South until its forcible abolition in 1863, thirty years after it had been abolished in the British Empire.

Toynbee claims that the acceleration demanded of marchmen and barbarians when they enter a society "has its antithesis in the retardation that is apt to be the price of migrating, in the opposite direction, from the heart of a society towards its extremities." This contention says volumes regarding

28 Toynbee, *Study* Vol.9 p. 355
29 Toynbee, *Study* Vol.9 p. 355; Spengler, in contrast, thought the fall of the ancien regime marked the end of Faustian Culture and the onset of Civilization. *Decline* One-Vol. Ed. p. 83. Other examples of acceleration discussed by Toynbee are Petrine Russia and Ataturk's Turkey. *Study* Vol. 9 p. 358.
30 Toynbee, *Study* Vol.9 p. 362
31 Toynbee, *Study* Vol. 9 p. 362. Other retarded areas given as examples by Toynbee are seventeenth century Normandy, Ulster, England, and Holland, and twentieth century Quebec, Charleston, Transvaal, Peru, and Appalachia, which Toynbee reserves for special treatment, discussed below.
32 Toynbee, *Study* Vol. 9 p. 362
Toynbee’s megalopolitan worldview, but it is of dubious validity.

Virginia and South Carolina are no further from London and Paris than are New York and Massachusetts, but Virginia and South Carolina, according to Toynbee, became willfully retarded, while New York and Massachusetts (not to mention the West Coast) became the new epicenter of the West (i.e., a new megalopolis).

Another way of viewing regional variation is in terms of mimesis, or imitation. According to Toynbee, a healthy society is led by a creative minority that produces successive successful challenges to responses confronting the society. During these successful challenge-response cycles, the rest of the society follows the creative minority through the process of mimesis. In other words, the creative minority is successful, and everyone else is only too happy to follow: everyone else wants to be in the creative minority, and thus tries to imitate its manners, religion, clothing, etc.

When the creative minority’s responses are no longer successful, it uses force to get the rest of the culture to follow it and thus becomes the dominant minority. The rest of the society becomes the internal proletariat, and the barbarians outside the borders of the society become the external proletariat.

Thus, when a new social force is introduced, there are only three possible responses on the part of institutions: adjustments, revolutions, and enormities. First, if the institutions successfully change in response to new forces, an adjustment takes place. Second, if the act of mimesis is delayed, or to use Toynbee’s term, “retarded,” there is a revolution that is violent in proportion to the length of the delay. Third, if mimesis is not just delayed but frustrated

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33 See discussion Somervell, Study Vol. 1 pp. 279-83.
altogether, there is an enormity. All three responses can exist in different regions of the same society.

Toynbee’s prime example is once again slavery in the American South, an enormity that had to be forcibly eradicated by revolution imposed by the North. Furthermore, under Toynbee’s analysis the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s was another revolution forcibly imposed on a still retarded South. In fact, Toynbee specifically referred to the Civil War as “a shattering revolution, the devastating effects of which are still apparent today.”

Toynbee had virtually nothing good to say about the South. Given the South’s ongoing traditionalism, the KKK’s nativism, suspicion of immigrants, and an often poisonous conservatism, all of which undeniably exist in varying degrees, and all of which Toynbee, in his optimism for the possibilities of continuing cultural development, viewed negatively, there is little doubt that Toynbee would consider the South to be still socially retarded in relation to the American megalopoles.

Moreover, Toynbee held a special place of contempt for one particular type of Southerner—the Appalachian. Amazingly, the “apostle of meekness” believed that Appalachians have “been unmistakably and profoundly barbarized by being marooned in the Appalachian backwoods after serving a preliminary term of exile on ‘the Celtic Fringe’ of Europe.”

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34 Toynbee, Study Vol. 9 p. 362
35 Somervell, Study Vol. 1 p. 282
36 Geyl, Historicus in de Tijd, pp. 123-4; quoted in Mason, Toynbee’s Approach to World Politics, p. 131
37 Somervell, Study Vol. 1 p. 464-5. Spengler also opined that the Americans over time became more like American Indians; Decline One-Vol. Ed. p. 254
In other parts of the Study, Toynbee speculated that both Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan were Westernizing and losing their barbarian status, which we can only read today with amazement. Similarly, the Balkans and highland Scotland had already become civilized. Toynbee did not even tag the Indians of the Amazon or the headhunters of Borneo as barbarians (one might refer to these last groups as natives, but Toynbee teaches that the term “native” is dehumanizing).

Furthermore, when the first five volumes of the Study were published, Toynbee believed that “American Negroes,” sufficiently removed from their “barbarian” West African ancestors, might play in Western Civilization through their particular brand of Christianity the same role that Toynbee claims Semitic slaves played in Hellenic Civilization:

> It is possible that the Negro slave immigrants who have found Christianity in America may perform the greater miracle of raising the dead to life. With their childlike spiritual intuition and their genius for giving spontaneous aesthetic expression to emotional religious experience...It is thus perhaps, if at all, that Christianity may conceivably become the living faith of a dying Civilization for the second time.

Even in view of the Rev. Martin Luther King, more recently the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton, and even more recently the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, there is simply no indication whatsoever that “an American Negro Church,” as Toynbee called it, has revived anything, much less Christianity in Western Civilization. It is nevertheless interesting that Toynbee characterized Appalachians as barbarians, and clearly

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38 Somervell, *Study* Vol. 1 p. 418
39 Somervell, *Study* Vol. 1 p. 414, 416
40 Somervell, *Study* Vol. 2 pp. 227-31
41 Somervell, *Study* Vol. 1 p. 129
saw the South as backward, but looked to blacks with hope. Why?

The answer is devastatingly simple. Toynbee was a megalopolitan of the first order, an Oxford-educated academic born in London at the height of the power of the British Empire. He worked in the British Foreign Office in both World War I and World War II, and attended both the Paris and the Potsdam Peace Conferences as a British delegate. In short, Toynbee was a member of the dominant minority of the British Empire, the closest entity up to that point that the West had had to a universal state. Despite his conscious efforts not to, Toynbee looked at the world through the lens of a British megalopolitan.

Thus, Appalachians are barbarians because Westerners simply are not—not that backward, not that close to the northeastern American megalopolis. Appalachians are fellow Westerners, would-be competitors, and people who by all rights should “get with the program” and behave themselves. On the other hand, American blacks, Saudis, Afghans, “natives,” etc., are non-Westerners who have been mistreated by the West. They are victims of conquest and/or of Euro-centric bias and therefore are to be viewed and treated tenderly, with the hope—or in Toynbee’s case the expectation—that they will Westernize. This mentality is still the standard mindset of the Western megalopolitan.

Toynbee related acceleration to Herodianism, by which he meant the acceptance by one Culture of foreign influences

\footnote{The only other modern Westerners whom Toynbee deemed barbarians were the German Nazis and Italian Fascists. Somervell, Study Vol. 1 p. 419, Vol. 2 p. 140.}

\footnote{Sailer (2005)}
from an encroaching Culture. He related retardation to Zealotism, which is the opposite of Herodianism: Zealotism is the often fanatical refusal to accept any foreign Cultural influences. Toynbee correctly states that retardation is related to an orientation to the past:

> The violent acceleration in the tempo of cultural change that is generated by Futurism when it repudiates a social heritage has its antithesis in a comparably extreme retardation that is induced by Archaism when it surrenders itself to the spell of the Past.

Therein lies the key to understanding clearly the relation between the retarded American South, Midwest, and Mountain States on the one hand and the megalopolitan Northeast and Pacific Coast on the other today. The South, Midwest, and Mountain States still look to the Western past for their cultural norms. The megalopoles do not. Why?

The answer, says Toynbee, is the advanced state of the disintegration of the West. In the disintegration stage, retardation is a good thing, and acceleration is negative, because areas in accelerated rates of cultural change, *i.e.*, megalopoles, are accelerating to their own oblivion, while retarded areas are holding on to their Western heritage and refusing to slide down the slippery slope of disintegration. (Of course Toynbee ignores the badly needed changes in the social order of civil rights and civil liberties which were forced on the retarded areas by the optimistic megalopoles of the north, which Somervell notes.)

D.C. Somervell, who abridged *A Study of History*, clearly grasped the fact that in breakdowns and disintegrations retardation might be beneficial. Somervell inserted the

44 Toynbee, *Study* Vol. 9, pp. 362-3; Somervell, *Study* Vol. 2 p. 225
45 Toynbee, *Study* Vol. 9 p. 363
following sentence, which does not appear to have any counterpart in Toynbee’s original: “It is also obvious that, since change can be for the worse as well as for the better, acceleration is not necessarily good nor retardation necessarily bad.”

There does not appear to be any indication one way or the other that Toynbee agreed or disagreed, but in the Preface to both volumes of the Abridgement, Toynbee acknowledged that he had read and approved the Abridgement and that the work should be considered his as well as Somervell’s.

IV. Can It Be Good to Be Retarded?

Is there any way to determine whether the situation is one in which the retarded South, Midwest, and Mountain States are straggling behind the megalopolitan Northeast and Pacific Coast in reaching further heights of cultural development, or one in which the megalopolitan areas are already past their primes and are pulling the retarded areas toward disintegration?

Under Spengler’s analysis, the answer is obvious by definition. The megalopolis only comes into existence during the Civilization stage. It then drains the countryside—the retarded areas—of all vitality. Thus, to Spengler, by their very existence the megalopoles drag the retarded areas toward oblivion.

Toynbee, however, lays out specific indicators of disintegrating Cultures. First and foremost, as noted above, the creative minority becomes a dominant minority and imposes its will by force or fiat. As noted above, force was used by the megalopolitan North on the retarded South in the Civil War, during the Civil Rights era, and elements of force are still used today. In this regard, consider the various U. S. Supreme Court

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(and lower court) decisions that have been used to change the Culture in frustration of popular will.\textsuperscript{47}

Second, Toynbee notes that disintegrating Cultures display a syncretism of religion, by which he means the amalgamation of rites, cults, and faiths.\textsuperscript{48} Concurrently, the dominant minority turns away from its inherited religion to philosophy (much like Spengler's megalopolitans). Therefore, if our Western Culture is disintegrating, we should see increasing levels of ecumenism and agnosticism in the megalopoles, and lower levels in the retarded areas.

Indeed, one result of Vatican II was that the Catholic Church broke with the past and has become much more ecumenical.\textsuperscript{49} In the United States the Lutheran Church and the Episcopal Church have reached a “Concordat of Agreement”, thereby moving a long way down the road to merger, if not in fact merging.\textsuperscript{50} The megalopoles—especially the elites—are largely agnostic or atheistic, having traded religion for socialist, secular, progressive philosophy. The mainline Protestant churches now permit female and gay priests and ministers. Thus, the first state to accept gay marriage was Massachusetts (predictably, by judicial fiat), and the first openly gay Episcopal bishop was installed in New Hampshire in 2004.

\textsuperscript{47} e.g., \textit{Roe v. Wade}, 410 U.S. 113 (1973); \textit{Miranda v. Arizona}, 384 U.S. 436 (1966); the misinterpretation of the Commerce Clause and of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment in various cases, mainly from the New Deal on; severe limitations on the death penalty in various cases; and the overturning of Proposition 187 in California.

\textsuperscript{48} Somervell, \textit{Study} Vol. 1 p. 473 \textit{et seq.}

\textsuperscript{49} Stammer (1997)

\textsuperscript{50} Stammer (1997)
On the other hand, retarded areas such as the South are referred to as the “Bible Belt,” and the power of evangelical Christians living in the retarded areas is debated during every election. Some of the retarded even refuse to believe the theory of evolution, a position that is astonishing to the megalopolitans, for whom literal biblical interpretation is anathema indeed.

A 2008 Gallup poll\textsuperscript{51} bears out this analysis. Of the eleven most religious states in the U.S., all are retarded; nine were in the Confederacy (ten if one counts Kentucky; the 11\textsuperscript{th} is Oklahoma). Of the ten least religious states, eight are megalopolitan.

Third, Toynbee describes a “sense of promiscuity” in disintegrating civilizations. This sense of promiscuity does not only refer to matters of sexual promiscuity; it refers to the original meaning of promiscuity, \textit{i.e.}, confused or indiscriminate mixing. Thus, Toynbee’s sense of promiscuity means the indiscriminate mixing of the dominant minority with both the internal and external proletariats in manners and art (and religion). Toynbee refers to the resulting increased social influence of the internal proletariat as “proletarianization” and that of the external proletariat as “barbarization.”

For example, the coarseness of the language acceptable in public discourse has increased exponentially over the last 30 or so years. Today television is laced with profanity and soft pornography\textsuperscript{52} and is offensive in every respect. There are no more censors; virtually anything is acceptable. Obviously, this

\textsuperscript{51} Crabtree and Pelham (2009); Newport (2009)

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{e.g.}, two recent Carl’s Jr. commercials, one featuring a scantily clad Paris Hilton washing a car and the other another buxom model enjoying an overly juicy hamburger; Janet Jackson’s Super Bowl “wardrobe malfunction”; MTV; “The Girls Next Door”; “Desperate Housewives”; “Seinfeld”; “South Park”; “Manswers”; \textit{etc.}
decadence has affected and more and more continues to affect the entire U.S., not only the megalopoles; but in the South, children are still taught to say, “Yes, ma’am” and “Yes, sir,” and that gentlemen hold doors open for ladies, although this too seems to be in decline.

There is little doubt that megalopolitans are more accepting of promiscuity with non-Westerners than are the socially retarded. Although Toynbee would not have characterized it so, Southern opposition to desegregation was a very clear example of the rejection of Toynbee’s notions of proletarianization/barbarization; other examples are opposition to affirmative action and white flight. Toynbee should have seen and criticized this.

Along these lines, there are towns, principally—but not exclusively—in the South which have passed laws (and even more which have considered passing them) prohibiting the “urban” fashion of males’ wearing their pants slung low to expose their underwear. Such ordinances are dismissed as silly, if not racist, in the megalopoles. These statutes are clearly passed in rejection of proletarian influence, because the affected fashion originated in the prisons.  

Another example of regional disparity in promiscuity with non-Westerners is the issue of immigration, and in particular illegal immigration. The megalopoles (Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, for example) are home to huge immigrant populations, many of them illegal. According to the Census Bureau, of the 15 states with the highest percentage foreign-born populations, ten are megalopolitan. Of the 20 states with the lowest percentage foreign-born populations, 15 are retarded. In addition, the megalopoles often abjectly refuse to  

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53 Parker (2007)
54 United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), Ranking Tables (2003)
assist federal immigration law enforcement, to the dismay of the retarded areas, whose citizens tend to resent seeing their laws flouted.

Finally, Toynbee notes that disintegrating Cultures are characterized by a *lingua franca*, such as Latin, or in our case English, and that the price of success for the *lingua franca* is vulgarization. Spanglish and the short-lived attempt to recognize Ebonics as a language are prime examples of such vulgarization.

In the United States today, those opposed to the vulgarization of English (and to promiscuity in general) are apt to support adoption of English as the national language. Support for English as a national language is strong everywhere, but stronger among the retarded than among the megalopolitans. For example, according to EnglishFirst.org, 25 of the 28 states that have English as their official language are retarded, and only three are megalopolitan.\(^5\)

V. Conclusion

Thus, all of the indications from both Spenglerian and Toynbeean analyses are that Western Culture, in general and specifically in the United States, is in serious distress if not disintegration. This disintegration is more serious in the megalopoles than in retarded areas; put differently, the retardeds may be preserving their Western heritage while the megalopolitans are casting it off.

This preservation is not always good: in addition to the example of slavery, Louisiana and New Mexico were the last two states to ban cockfighting. Dogfighting has lingered in the

South longer than elsewhere, as in the recent conviction of Michael Vick, who should have known better). The retarded mindset seeks to preserve the West, warts and all, the bad along with the good. Nevertheless, the overriding point is that the socially retarded areas are also seeking to preserve some of the better elements the Western heritage.

In the end, Spengler’s claim that peasants no longer exist in the U.S. warrants further consideration. History, it seems, is on the side of the megalopolitans. As the Culture disintegrates, with modern communications and transit the influence of the megalopolis on the retarded areas continues to grow, like a wave cresting just before it rolls into the beach. Toynbee’s retardeds are increasingly coming under the spell of Spengler’s megalopolis as it inexorably expands into retarded areas.

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