

**PHILOSOPHICAL  
CURRENTS OF THE  
PRESENT DAY; VOL.  
III; PP. 395-623**

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Philosophical currents of the present day; Vol. III; pp. 395-623 by Ludwig Stein & Shishirkumar Maitra

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**LUDWIG STEIN & SHISHIRKUMAR MAITRA**

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**PHILOSOPHICAL CURRENTS**  
**OF THE**  
**PRESENT DAY**

BY

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### Author's Preface to the Third Volume

When the "Philosophical Currents of the Present Day" appeared, I was Ordinary Professor of Philosophy and Sociology in Bern. Then the translator of the book wrote to me in Bern that he was engaged in bringing out an English edition of my work and he sent me some samples of his translation. Then followed my migration to Berlin, where I undertook the charge of the political magazine, "Nord und Sud" and worked as the political editor of the "Vossische Zeitung." When the world-war broke out in 1914, I had to choose between returning to my native land Switzerland and conducting from there the "Archiv für Philosophie" which had already appeared from Berlin, and remaining in Berlin as a neutral and watching the world-war from the side of Germany. As a philosopher and a sociologist, I have never repented for a moment my decision to remain in Berlin. As a thinker who with Spinoza is in the habit of looking at all events, even the most powerful, from the standpoint of the eternal (*sub specie aeternitatis*), I have learnt incomparably more from history as personally experienced than from history as written.

When the world-war came to an end, I received from Dr. Shishirkumar Maitra of Calcutta the first two volumes of his translation of my "Philosophical Currents of the Present Day" which appeared to me and my colleagues in Berlin somewhat like Noah's dove with the green leaf after the Flood. The philosophers who have to reflect upon space and time and who in consequence, have to incline to the relativity-theory of Einstein, showed themselves even during the war as over-temporal and over-spatial, that is, as true neutrals. I preserved my neutrality during the war in Berlin and Shishirkumar Maitra his in Calcutta. Philosophy is and will always

remain the queen of all the sciences, for this reason that it can hold its breath for thousands of years.

As in the winter of 1923-24, at the invitation of the great American Universities, I had to deliver lectures on philosophy and sociology at about twenty American Universities, I found the two volumes of my friend's translation very handy. I have made much use of his translation and propose to do this again in my book, "Evolutionary Optimism" which contains my lectures delivered in America. I am extremely grateful to my English translator for this, that he has made the first attempt to make my philosophy accessible to the English-speaking world. While in America, I regretted very much that this third volume of my "Philosophical Currents of the Present Day" had not appeared, for as the chapter on Authority which forms the key-stone of my philosophy and which is contained in this volume, was not present before me in an English form, I had to work out an altogether new translation myself for the sake of my lecture on Authority before the New York University, which appeared in the July number of the leading American magazine, "Contemporary Review." It is my bounden duty to express my heartiest thanks publicly to the translator of this work, because he had the courage to take up, in the midst of the war, the work of a Swiss written in German.

And so in concluding my introductory remarks for the third volume of my book, I wish to express the same thought which I expressed in the introduction to the fourth edition of my "Social Question in the Light of Philosophy," which was dedicated to Lord D'Abernon, the English ambassador in Berlin: "Between the first edition of this work and the present lies the world-war with its revolutionary sequelæ. Then, it was a very risky thing to try to estimate the essence of the social question from a German chair. To-day, after the revolution, it is going against the popular current to judge the dominant socialism so dispassionately and critically as



was done in this book a generation ago with regard to capitalism." As, however, in the entire course of my scientific life, I have never joined any political party and have vindicated my right as a philosopher and a sociologist to think and act according to my own laws, so I have throughout my life never turned to the right or to the left. I have tried to give as much measure of objective truth in my handling of the social question as it is in my power and knowledge to give. For this reason I have given a comparative-historical basis to my sociology and employed the biological method of a Comte or Spencer only here and there as a support for my sociological structure.

The unsettling, nay, revolutionary events of the post-war years have not shaken me from the standpoint of social optimism represented by me in this book. Obstacles and zigzag paths are inevitable in history. The upward path which is represented by my social optimism, in opposition to the views of Oswald Spengler, is not a straight line; it rather moves spirally, according to the motto of Leibniz, the philosopher of optimism: *Inclinata resurget*. The spiral bends only to rise higher.

BERLIN :

December 8, 1924.

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LUDWIG STEIN.



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