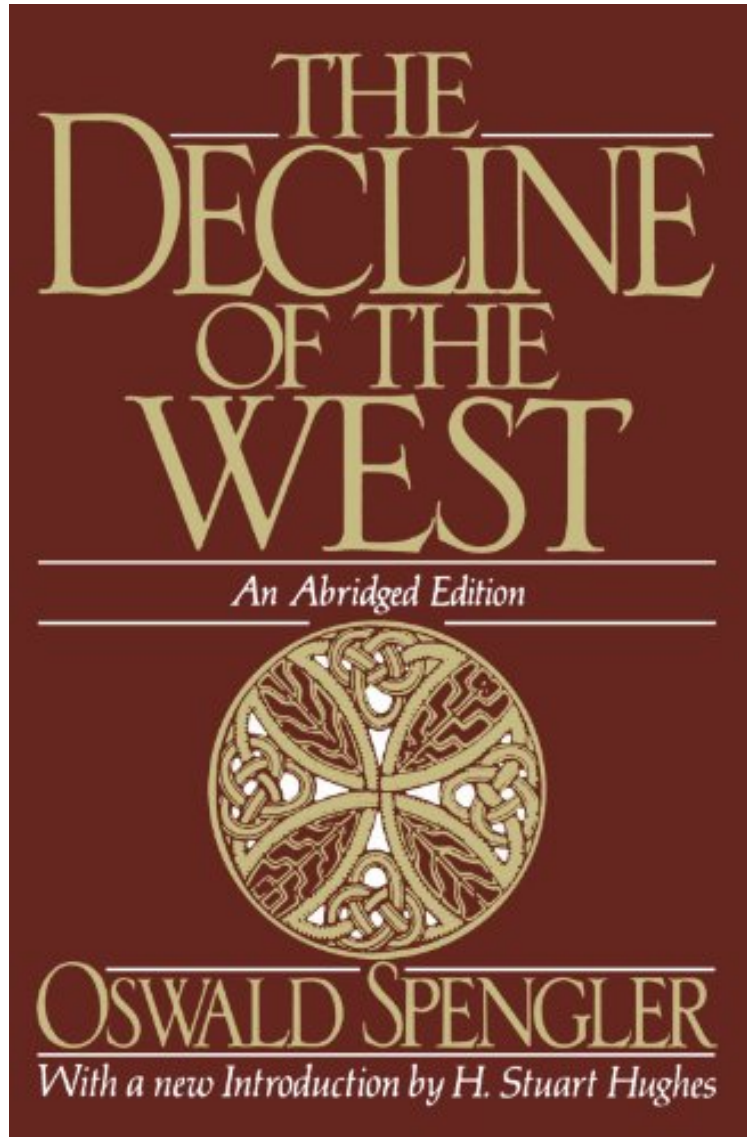


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## The Decline of the West (Oxford Paperbacks)

*Oswald Spengler*

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Since its first publication in two volumes between 1918-1923, *The Decline of the West* has ranked as one of the most widely read and most talked about books of our time. In all its various editions, it has sold nearly 100,000 copies. A twentieth-century Cassandra, Oswald Spengler thoroughly probed the origin and "fate" of our civilization, and the result can be (and has been) read as a prophesy of the Nazi regime. His challenging views have led to harsh criticism over the years, but the knowledge and eloquence that went into his sweeping study of Western culture have kept *The Decline of the West* alive. As the face of Germany and Europe as a whole continues to change each day, *The Decline of the West* cannot be ignored. The abridgment, prepared by the German scholar Helmut Werner, with the blessing of the Spengler estate, consists of selections from the original (translated into English by Charles Francis Atkinson) linked by explanatory passages which have been put into English by Arthur Helps. H. Stuart Hughes has written a new introduction for this edition. In this engrossing and highly controversial philosophy of history, Spengler describes how we have entered into a centuries-long "world-historical" phase comparable to late antiquity. Guided by the philosophies of Goethe and Nietzsche, he rejects linear progression, and instead presents a world view based on the cyclical rise and decline of civilizations. He argues that a culture blossoms from the soil of a definable landscape and dies when it has exhausted all of its possibilities. Despite Spengler's reputation today as an extreme pessimist, *The Decline of the West* remains essential reading for anyone interested in the history of civilization.

"This is a splendid edition. The introductory material is pointed and intriguing. The editing is superb. This volume is the best, and realistically, the only way to introduce Spengler to undergraduates."--Daniel P. Murphy, Hanover College  
"There is nothing in our contemporary literature quite like the experience of reading Oswald Spengler's classic *The Decline of the West*.... There is no matching his throwaway erudition, the sheer poetry of his symbols and images and the vaulting majesty of his thought.... Especially welcome for the brief but brilliantly incisive preface by America's best Spengler scholar, H. Stuart Hughes."--The Washington Times  
"An abridged edition of Spengler's classic is long overdue. It is one of the great masterpieces of German historical prose, and the translation conveys the beauty and eloquence of the original language. Its importance to today's student should be immediately grasped by anyone who appreciates the problem of decline and its relevance for contemporary American (and Western) society."--William Falcetano, Merrimack College  
"Often damned but still cited (the very title can turn a whole evening into a disputation), it is still a provocative and often dazzling book.... An exciting excursion through history."--Time  
"Apocalyptic in tone, it is a massive, somber interpretation of the cyclical rise and fall of civilizations, much in the spirit and tradition of historical analysis displayed by another twentieth-century prophet, Arnold J. Toynbee.... The contemporary reader will find much that is stimulating in Spengler's criticism of our age."--San Francisco Chronicle  
"What [Spengler] wrote was an epic poem.... The lesson to be learned from him is that writers too can be seismographs; the trembling of Spengler's themes signaled the coming of the Nazi earthquake."--New Statesman  
Language Notes: English (translation)  
Original Language: German  
From the Inside Flap  
Oswald Spengler was born in 1880 at Blankenburg, Germany. He studied mathematics, philosophy, and history at Munich and Berlin. Except for his doctor's thesis on Heraclitus, he published nothing before the first volume of *The Decline of the West*, which appeared when he was thirty-eight. The Agadir crisis of 1911 provided the immediate incentive for his exhaustive investigations of the background and origins of our civilization. He chose his main title in 1912, finished the first draft of "Form and Actuality" ("Gestalt und Wirklichkeit") two years later, and published the volume in 1918. The second, extensively revised edition, from which the present translation was made, appeared in 1923. The concluding volume, "Perspectives of World-History"

("Welthistorische Perspektiven"), was published in 1922. The Decline of the West was first published in this country in 1906 (Vol. I) and 1928 (Vol. II). For many years Spengler lived quietly in his home in Munich, thinking, writing, and pursuing his hobbies - the collecting of pictures and primitive weapons, listening to Beethoven quartets, reading the comedies of Shakespeare and Moliere, and taking occasional trips to the Harz Mountains and to Italy. He died suddenly of a heart attack in Munich three weeks before his fifty-sixth birthday.