

Christopher Dawson on Spengler, Toynbee, Eliot and the notion of Culture

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Abstract. This paper is an approach to the context in which Dawson's work originated as well as to the main critiques of the works by Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee and Thomas S. Eliot, with whom he differed on how to address the study of culture. The contrasts between Dawson and the views of these authors are significant and help to refine the concept of culture Dawson used in his philosophy. The paper highlights both Dawson's perspective and what separates or brings him closer to these authors. Conclusions are drawn about the elements Dawson took from each one of them.

Keywords: Christopher Dawson, Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Thomas S. Eliot, culture

INTRODUCTION

Few historians are capable of distinguishing amongst the diverse manifestations of a period what is permanent from what is transitory. Those who manage to do so are able to because they have been partially conscious of the entire picture. This seems to be the case of Christopher Dawson and for this reason his historic assessment is worth re-examining (Sparkes, 1997: 93-94).

Amongst Dawson's sources of intellectual training are Aristotle's *Politics*, Troeltsch and Weber's historicism and Le Play's sociologism, though he was specifically influenced by *Apologia pro vita sua* by Newman and *De civitate Dei* by Augustine of Hippo (Birzer, 2007). His interest for Newman increased after going to some conferences in Oxford given by Wilfrid Ward (Pearce, 2006: 73); while Augustine of Hippo was of a great influence on his manner of conceiving the dynamics of history (Antúnez, 2006: 6). Nonetheless, in this paper I will not explore any of these influences but will concentrate instead on his relationship with his equals.

Recognized by his colleagues as academically innovative because of his interdisciplinary approach to history and identified by Elliot as one of the most influential intellectuals in Great Britain (Schwartz, 1999), Dawson shows some common focal points with the thinking of authors like Ratzinger.¹ His ideas, however, have not been made known and in many facets have been forgotten.² In this paper, I will examine the concept of culture transversally,³ with respect to criticisms and commentaries made by Dawson of the most representative authors of his time who studied culture: Spengler, Toynbee and Eliot.

THE LIVES OF CIVILIZATIONS ACCORDING TO OSWALD SPENGLER

Spengler in *The Decline of the West* differentiates between a philosophy of History in the classic sense, and a new historic philosophy which he attempts to create. Within the first he distinguishes two phases. The first phase is typical of the Greek or Indian thinkers and assumes a cyclical conception of time, which implies a lack of appreciation and meaning for the concept of time and History. The second phase, typical of the modern European, is determined by a linear concept of time and a notion of reality which is based on that specific sense of time and history. Yet, according to Spengler, this sense has to be correctly expressed for two reasons. Firstly, because modern metaphysics conceives of the world as a closed system which is founded on the principle of causality; and, secondly, because the historian focuses too much on the facts, events, and details than on the informative spirit, so the capacity of giving meaning to specific circumstances is easily forgotten.

The two phases of the philosophy of Classical history would be prior to the new historic philosophy which Spengler attempts to create. This new philosophy would be a synthesis in the Hegelian sense, of the two previous phases, where world history should be understood as a *second cosmos*. The first natural cosmos would be the kingdom of those second causes which cannot be explained by historic evolution. The second cosmos, on the other hand, would be governed by a unifying principle, giving History an organic form – and unity to all time periods and cultures – and could be understood intuitively. This, according to Spengler, makes nature an important focal point to be studied along with the experiment and the law involved. History, on the other hand, needs

to be focused upon with the help of intuition and symbols, using an artist's perception in order to capture the *individual style*.

The unifying principle or *individual style* of each culture has an organic interdependence amongst all the different expressions of a particular culture. So there is no one human activity that solely drives the cultural soul. Thus, the sum of these activities or events is not valid outside the domain of that particular culture.

This approach, according to Dawson, leads to a fundamental philosophical relativism:

There are no eternal truths. Each philosophy is an expression of its own age, and only of its own age, and there are no two ages which possess the same philosophical intentions. (Spengler, 1926: vol. 1, 41)

Thus, the historian should study independently the biography of every great culture, according to their own laws of development, without subordinating past to present or interpreting other cultures from the canons of their own culture (Dawson, 1929: 33-36).

Yet, according to Spengler, one can find some common features to all cultures, typical of the *biography* of a civilization, which can be summarized as follows:

(1) Civilizations are born from a *space-mother* and do not die from intrinsic causes without fulfilling a “thousand year biological law” inherent to all cultures.⁴

(2) This inherent law permits speaking of *contemporaneity* between the same phases or stages of different cultures at different times. That is, a similar process can be seen in the biography of each culture.

(3) This process has four phases or stages which Spengler describes as *contemporary* to one another:

(a) Cultures are born in the *spring* from an unprecedented mythology.

(b) During the *summer*, as a result of the critical spirit, the characteristic philosophy of a culture appears, as well as its fundamental essence.

(c) In the *fall*, the phase of enlightenment, which radicalizes the rationalist critique of values and traditional beliefs, takes place: rationalism and individualism grow, social cohesion decreases, and culture is expressed in great philosophical systems.

(d) With *winter*, culture becomes a skeptical and materialistic civilization.

At the root of this whole cycle is the life of a particular people in a particular geographical region. With the death of their culture, these people lose their location and create a new rootless, cosmopolitan population, which in turn creates new civilizations that evolve into a process of spiritual awakening, from the unconscious towards ever more advanced degrees of consciousness.

This process, which occurs in all cultures, is not a superficial parallelism but an organic identity. So when one understands the underlying idea – unifying principle or individual style – of a culture, one can guess the course of its development and its stage dates.⁵

For Spengler civilizations exist – as many as cultures in their final period – but not *civilization* because the canons and achievements of each culture are only valid within their own limits and, beyond it, they lack any significance whatsoever.

From this last statement, Dawson concludes that in Spengler's philosophy of History the concept of progress does not fit. Certainly, there is an evolution but it is blind movement without the essential ethical significance of the classical concept of progress. Under these conditions, History would be governed by fate and causality and cultures would lack ethics and rationality: each culture would be "a fixed organism, which ends in itself" (Dawson, 1956: 380).

On the other hand, for Spengler, the roots of historical reality would not start from reason but from *blood*, and culture would be the product of racial development, without dependence on any reason or tradition that transcends the limits of a people's experience. Each culture would be a world hermetically sealed to outside influence (Dawson, 1929: 39).

Dawson strives to draw some profitable conclusions from this approach. Firstly, he does share with Spengler, a belief in the organic life of a civilization and the existence of a cyclical movement of history that determines the main phases of peoples' lives. The difference between the two authors is that Spengler, by not admitting cultural exchange and cooperation of people, oversimplifies. His approach prevents him from referring to more than a people when he tries to explain the circumstances of a particular civilization.

According to Dawson, it cannot be denied that the influence of specific technology, the spread of new forms of thought, or the influence of some men, transcends cultural and racial boundaries. Such historical data permits, by applying the principle of causality, the rational

analysis and interpretation of the history and cultures that Spengler does not accept. While Spengler argues that each life-cycle of a civilization is explained with the life-cycle of a people, Dawson believes that our civilization is the work of several people and covers several life-cycles that are necessarily parallel (Dawson, 1956: 384-387).

Therefore, to study a culture, the life-cycles of the people involved need to be known, the laws of cultural exchange need to be understood, and the causes of the growth and decline of the great syncretic cultures, which seem to govern the destiny of peoples, need to be studied.

Another difference from the German philosopher is that, for Dawson, the last period of a culture – Spengler’s *civilization* – is not governed by *fossilization* and death; instead it is a crucial time when civilization is more receptive, more open to outside influence. This ultimately means its people become mainly inheritors of a culture.

With an *anti-intellectual relativism*⁶ approach – as Dawson called Spengler’s philosophy of History –, the network of cultural influences between peoples would be something external, unreal and lacking in vitality. Culture would be a physical and subconscious process of life, only to be interpreted instinctively. This would lead to denying the existence of relations between peoples; and historical unity would dissolve into an unintelligible plurality of cultural processes, isolated and sterile (Dawson, 1929: 44-45).

For Dawson, however,

a culture is neither a purely physical process nor an Ideal construction. It is a living whole [starting] from its roots in the soil and in the simple, instinctive life of the shepherd, the fisherman, and husbandman, up to its flowering in the highest achievements of the artist and the philosopher; just as the individual combines in the substantial unity of his personality the animal life of nutrition and reproduction with the higher activities of reason and intellect. It is impossible to disregard the importance of a material and non-rational element in history. Every culture rests on a foundation of geographical environment and racial inheritance, which conditions its highest activities. The change of culture is not simply a change of thought; it is above all a change of life. (...) [And] though culture is essentially conditioned by material factors, these are not all. A culture receives its form from a rational or spiritual element which transcends the limits of racial and geographical conditions. Religion and science do not die [along] with the culture of which they formed part. They are handed on from people to people, and assist as a creative force in the formation of new cultural organisms. (Dawson, 1929: 45-46)⁷

In summary, we have seen that the essence of Spengler's thinking is the relationship between a plurality of cultures or civilizations – which are only the objective of historical science – and the application of biological perspectives to his study: his thought can be defined as *cultural biologism*. By its autonomous vitality or non-transcendent cultural independence, the spirit of a culture itself seems trapped. There is no universal history to be continued, but instead a cultural relativism that only leads to social fatalism is found.

Thus, on the one hand, three weak points can be detected in Spengler's thinking. The first one lies in starting from a biological and deterministic assumption which is not derived from the interpretation of cultural facts, dogmatically anticipating the results; the second one is denying any intercultural intrinsic relationship; and the third one is forcing reality to the point of not admitting the existence of a historical continuity which transcends the millennial duration of civilizations.

On the other hand, Dawson acknowledges, along with Spengler, the existence of an initial historical movement modeled by the process of life of a people in touch with a defined environment and which includes a second movement that relates various people with one another as a consequence of cultural exchange and political, intellectual, and religious synthesis. The presence of both movements allows to understand the general evolution of History and the presence of real progress and integration: civilizations are “not closed worlds without meaning for one another, but progressive stages in the life of humanity” (Dawson, 1956: 389).

In addition, for Dawson, Spengler's philosophy of History contradicts itself because if the individual cannot

transcend the limits of the culture to which he belongs (...) [Then, Spengler] breaks his own law by a titanic attempt to look at all the cultures of the world from outside and to discover the universal law which governs their rise and fall and the whole evolution of their life cycles. (Dawson, 1956: 392)⁸

These differences, according to Antunez, express

the anthropological depth which distances Dawson from Spengler at its root. Each one reflects two views of man, society and peoples that are categorically opposed. One concludes with the affirmation of culture, civilization and World History, while the other one does so with the seclusion of the first to race, the fossilization of the second and the impossibility of the third. (Antúnez, 2006: 29-30)

ARNOLD TOYNBEE AND THE STUDY OF HISTORY

Arnold Joseph Toynbee published his major work, *A Study of History*, in twelve volumes. In it, through the comparative study of the birth, development, and disappearance of the twenty one civilizations which he contemplates, he concludes that the historical process is due to the changes introduced by the leadership of certain minorities that are especially creative. When the capacity of these minorities to modernize their societies and to solve new moral and religious challenges deteriorates, their civilization collapses because of a nationalism and militarism pursued by elites, who have become corrupt. The failure of a civilization is due to an inability to respond to new moral and religious challenges rather than to physical or environmental challenges⁹.

Civilizations are born when a group of human beings gives an unpredictably effective response to an environmental challenge because this response is not determined by circumstances, but only induced by them. Then, these human beings grow in their struggle against adversity, and decline when they create a state of well-being. They are like a living entity that must renew itself or perish while it responds to a physical or human challenge, be it external or internal. This generates a cyclical process which progresses throughout history. In this chronological progress, according to Toynbee, there are four stages: *primitive societies, primary civilizations, secondary civilizations and higher religions*.

For Toynbee, as well as Spengler, the protagonists of history are civilizations, not political or ethnic groups. That is why this is a main concern in the study of civilizations and the study of modern European states. However, compared to the deterministic view of Spengler, Toynbee thinks that civilizations can arise from one another: he does not support determinism or the fact that civilizations will necessarily die, instead he believes that they can survive if they are able to adapt to successive changes. Toynbee also rejects the racist theory that attributes the origin of civilizations to anthropological reasons, while recognizing the influence of geographical environment. For Toynbee human affairs “are consequences of individual freedom and therefore are (...) under the sign of ambivalence” (Antúnez, 2006: 32).

Dawson detects a certain inconsistency in the arguments put forward in *A Study of History*. Our author disputes the philosophical theory of

equivalence of civilizations, initially sustained by Toynbee, while accepts that

every civilization is an intelligible field of study which deserves to be studied for its own sake as a whole and not merely on account of the contributions it may have made to some other civilization. (Dawson, 1956: 392)

That is to say, this English historian defends the possibility of an appropriate study of civilizations.

On the other hand, Dawson detects a change of approach in this philosopher. In the sixth volume of his work, Toynbee moves from a cyclical (and equivalent) view of civilizations to a progressive one, in accordance with the four stages already outlined (primitive societies, primary civilizations, secondary civilizations and higher religions). These stages move upwards, and extend to a future time when humanity reaches a stage in which it will be grouped into a world empire provided with a universal religion.

What is this progress due to? According to Toynbee the history of Religion appears to be unitary and progressive by contrast with the multiplicity and repetitiveness of the histories of civilizations (Toynbee, 1934-1961: vol. 7, 425-426). In *higher religions*, there is a qualitative principle of *spiritual universality* which places civilizations above religions and accommodates a process of spiritual evolution as conceived by Hegel and other idealists. This evolution – or *spiritual universalization* – assumes that civilization exists to serve religion and not vice versa.

Dawson agreed with this latter thesis, but understood it in a different way. A civilization that accepts the truths of a religion should not become a *church*, as Toynbee sustains, but every religion has to strive to transform the civilization in which it lives, according to its ethical values and spiritual designs (Dawson, 1956: 393-396).

Furthermore Dawson rejects as arbitrary both the classification and selection of civilizations and religions that Toynbee makes, along with his attempt to unify the four superior religions into one. At this point, it seems that Toynbee yields to the temptation of forcing evidence to fit theory. Our author displays a number of reasons – which I cannot dwell upon in this paper – to show that the *religious syncretism*¹⁰ advocated by Toynbee is not possible and therefore the thesis of theological equivalence of religions lacks solid reasoning as well as the thesis of philosophical equivalence of civilizations.

Continuing in this line of thinking, Dawson shows two reasons which may have propelled Toynbee's study of history:

[The purpose of finding] a synoptic vision of the whole course of human civilization, and (...) the Hebraic prophetic mission to justify the ways of God to man and to find a religious solution to the riddle of history and the problems of modern civilization. (Dawson, 1956: 400)

Both motivations correspond to the two major deviations that may occur in a philosopher of history. Correcting them is necessary to enlarge the frame of vision and to reduce the fragmentation of historical and cultural knowledge. This knowledge, uneven and partial, needs to expand its horizons with the help of the sciences, such as archeology, and the study of other cultures, such as Oriental ones.

The concept of civilization

Now, I will try to clarify, briefly, what Dawson means by civilization, as his approach is different from Toynbee's and Spengler's. These authors establish a clear difference between civilizations and primitive societies: civilizations would be equivalent to one another, like societies, but the latter ones would exist before humanity.¹¹ Dawson, however, considers that since there are human beings involved, all societies belong to the historical world of civilizations, because they have a language, a culture, a religion and an art. Does this mean that, for Dawson, a primitive society is a civilization? Or, if there is any difference at all, what is the key feature that differentiates them?

According to this English historian, both civilizations and primitive societies are cultural because they are based on an original process of a people's cultural creative power. But civilization tends to become a *super culture* (i.e., an extensive area of social communication which dominates and absorbs other cultures less advanced or powerful, grouping them into an international and intercultural society). Thus, higher civilizations typically represent a merger of two or more independent cultural traditions, where one predominates but without marginalizing the remaining ones into a secondary role.

In contrast to Toynbee, Dawson argues that the essential basis for the study of history "must be, not just a comparative study of the higher civilizations, but a study of their constituent cultures" (Dawson, 1956:

402). So the proper method for the historical study of civilizations would be the one used by social anthropologists and not the synoptic method of the philosophers of history.

Yet the study undertaken by Toynbee gives a vision of a reduction of history to theology and a reorientation of the principle of philosophical equivalence of civilizations to “principle of the theological equivalence of the higher religions” (Dawson, 1956: 396). Thus, Dawson’s fundamental critique is that Toynbee’s work “is too telescopic and (...) a true science of human cultures must be based on a more microscopic technique of anthropological and historical research” (Dawson, 1956: 403-404), not to dissolve cultural differences within civilizations. Civilization should be broader than culture because it is a community or concatenation of cultures. As for example, Western civilization is common to cultures such as German or French.

T. S. ELIOT AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURE

Thomas Stearns Eliot and Christopher Dawson were soul mates, who respected and admired one another, but the confidential nature of both represented an obstacle for such a personal relationship to consolidate into a genuine friendship. Their relationship belonged more to the intellectual than the social order.¹²

Dawson’s influence on the thinking of Eliot focuses primarily on the role religion plays in society. In fact, several essays of Dawson were useful to Eliot, particularly *Beyond Politics* (Fazio, 2008: 263-266). But in this paper I will circumvent this aspect to address Dawson’s critique of the essay *Note Towards a Definition of Culture* because T. S. Eliot does not enter into the debate as a philosopher or historian of cultures but as a defender of the term culture against those who use it for partisan purposes.

In Dawson’s article, published in *The Month* (march 1949) entitled *T. S. Eliot and the meaning of culture*, the term *culture* is defined in two ways: in a classical and humanistic sense as the harmonious development of human nature by the cultivation of the mind; and in a modern and sociological sense as “a way of life common to a particular people and based on a social tradition which is embodied in its institutions, its literature and its art” (Dawson, 1956: 104) or as the principle of social unity and continuity. Both authors deal with the second meaning.

Eliot considers, with particular scrutiny, the main elements of culture: family, region and religion. Specifically, he focuses on the problem of social tradition, neglecting, in Dawson's opinion, the social function of the family. According to Eliot, social class has the mission of preserving and passing on traditions, which are the lifeblood of the group culture. At the same time, he defends class structure and gradation of cultural levels to preserve man's spiritual freedom, which runs the risk of being subordinated by the modern social order.

Dawson opposes this view and argues that, given this difficulty,

religion, not social differentiation, is the real safeguard of spiritual freedom, since it alone brings man into relation with a higher order of reality than the world of politics or even of culture, and establishes the human soul on eternal foundations. This, however, does not mean that religion is alien or indifferent to culture. (Dawson, 1956: 107)

Eliot is an advocate of the unity of religion and culture. For him, culture is the embodiment of religion: both are different aspects of the same ideal, and both form a common life viewed from different angles or referring to different purposes. He is convinced that religion and culture are inseparable and that the traditional concept of relationship between religion and culture, as two different realities, is unacceptable and fundamentally wrong. He even stated:

If a culture is the way of life of a whole people, then a Christian people, which seeks to be wholly Christian and Christian all the time, must inevitably aspire to the identification of religion and culture. (Dawson, 1956: 107)

Meanwhile, Dawson believes that the Christian concept of religion is inseparable from the concept of relationship between religion and culture. He does not advocate identification between religion and culture, but argues that there is some distinction between them and, therefore, some relationship. This is because higher religions – especially Christianity – have some spiritual claims which, by their very nature, carry a kind of dualism and prevent full identification between religion and culture. As Dawson states “the relationship of religion and culture is simply the social corollary of the relationship between *Faith* and *Life*” (Dawson, 1956: 108).

With the above statement, it is understood that some requirements of a spiritual type, which belong to religion, cannot be reflected by culture,

as spiritual faith is irreducible to mere life expressions. Hence, a certain duality is deduced and an impossible identification between religion and culture: there is an incomplete overlap because religion transcends religious culture.

With this approach and from historical studies, Dawson stresses conversion to Christianity modifies some aspects of the peoples' and individuals' way of life, but does not eliminate a lifestyle to be replaced *ex novo* by a Christian culture. According to him:

[R]eligion is the great creative force in culture and almost every historic culture has been inspired and informed by some great religion. Nevertheless Religion and Culture remain essentially distinct from one another in idea, and the more religious a religion is the more does it tend to assert its *otherness* and its transcendence of the limits of culture. (Dawson, 1956: 108)¹³

Eliot's poetic works, according to Dawson, would be a clear example of how a Christian view of reality enriches and perfects the inner life of contemporary culture. What Eliott achieved in poetry could be transferred to all areas of society. However, there will always be a certain dualism between cultural order, part of the order of nature, and the principle of faith, which transcends natural order to find its center outside man's world.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this paper I have presented some critiques Dawson makes of some relevant authors of his time in the field of philosophy of history and culture, comparing those authors and pointing out in each case what Dawson accepts, qualifies, or rejects. For now and to conclude this paper, I will summarize what Dawson critiques tell us about the notion of culture.

First, from Dawson's critique of Spengler it follows that there is a historical unity and a cultural interrelationship among people. This involves a certain causality, evolution, or progress of cultures, which are a change of life. Both the unity of each culture and their intercultural relationship allow for an intelligibility or rationality of cultures and therefore the possibility and necessity of a deeper study which goes beyond the mere description of facts.

This study refers to the organic life of civilization, as a historical process-cycle which has its phases and can be understood. In this process there are two movements: one determined by the life of a given people in contact with a specific environment, and the other, common to many people, which is a synthesis and cultural exchange.

Second, in his critique of Toynbee the historical method is applied to examine historic cultures, and also how to study those cultures. Each one is understandable and deserves to be analyzed for what it is worth and not for the contributions it has made to other cultures. This does not mean that all cultures are equal: Dawson denies cultural relativism.

At the same time, and to counter this detailed study of each culture, Dawson asserts the necessity of broadening horizons and reducing the fragmentation of cultural knowledge, with the help of sciences such as archeology, anthropology or sociology and the study of cultures coming from other epochs or geographies. This allows to discover the existence of civilizations, understood as a community or concatenation of cultures.

Finally, from his critique of Eliot, Dawson defines culture as a way of life common to a particular people and based on a social tradition which is embodied in its institutions, its literature and its art, or, as the principle of social unity and continuity (Dawson, 1949). In turn, he appreciates the importance of family in culture and the relationship between religion and culture. This *relationship* is the social corollary of the relationship between faith and life in individuals. Religion and culture are two distinct traditions that relate to one another, but never identifying between themselves. There will always be a kind of dualism between the cultural order, which is part of the natural order, and the principle of faith, which transcends this order. Culture is a way of life that exists without us having chosen it and depends on external circumstances of location, work and language, as well as social institutions. In this background, religion is the great creative force of culture because it is open to transcendence.

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Notes

¹ Robert Staudt (2013: 32) states: "Benedict does not make any explicit reference to Dawson in his writings. Nevertheless, Dawson's thought provides compelling depth to Benedict's account of culture and religion, and furthermore climaxes in a theme very dear to Benedict: the spiritual renewal of Western civilization."

² According to Glenn Olsen (2010: 16), "[Dawson's] educational proposals, which involved a quite different curriculum, largely fell on the deaf ears of those who were fairly content with the received curriculum. Thus, though to the present interest in Dawson's thought continues, and some schools such as the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul continue to experiment with and reflect on his ideas, and his books remain in print, and he is one of those thinkers that journals such as *Communio* persistently try to keep alive, one cannot say his ideas have had widespread influence."

³ Rubén Herce (2013) provides a longitudinal analysis of Dawson's concept of culture, by extracting the central elements of his viewpoint.

⁴ Spengler does not question this birth and duration. He despises the search for causes and simply notes the fact. In addition, the concept of *space-mother*, essential to the thinking of Spengler, follows a non-reasoned concept.

⁵ This analysis applied to Western culture leads Spengler to prophesize the advent of "Western civilization," which must be preserved as practical socialism for the German people.

⁶ Antúnez (2006: 24, footnote 7) affirmed that, according to Dawson (*Progress and Religion*, chapter II), in Spengler's work there are numerous and visible contacts with the romantic view of history, with Fichte's collective soul and with Hegel's social philosophy.

⁷ Emphasis added.

⁸ A summary of the critique of Toynbee can be read in "Toynbee's Study of History: The Place of Civilizations in History," *International Affairs*, vol. 31 (1955); collected in Dawson (1956: 390-404).

⁹ Antúnez (2006: 22), comparing Toynbee with Spengler, states: "The biologist's vision of the German philosopher—who placed determinism of blood and race, with particular regard to the German race, at the center of their analysis— contrasts with the voluntarist vision of Arnold Toynbee who makes a difference between material-technical progress and what he defines as spiritualization, which rests on the strength of the creative minorities and their unique and exceptional personality".

¹⁰ Antúnez (2006: 36, footnote 22) states that Jacques Maritain criticizes Toynbee's religious syncretism in *Pour une philosophie de l'histoire*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959: 178-184, "as it was written by Dawson".

¹¹ Toynbee (1934-1961: vol. 1, 173): "The existence of primitive society is a condition which the evolution of Man out of Sub-Man presupposes"; and Spengler (1926: vol. 1, 153): "A civilization is born at the moment when, out of the psychic conditions of a perpetually raw Humanity, a mighty soul awakes and is itself: a form out of the formless, a bounded transitory existence out of the boundless and the persistent".

¹² Letter from Christina Scott to Joseph Pearce on February 24, 1997. Collected in Pearce (2006: 339-340).

¹³ On *otherness* see Antúnez, *Filosofía de la Historia*, pp. 118-119 and footnote 83: "The clarity and emphasis with which Dawson addresses this *otherness*, as he puts it, shows his admiration for certain expressions of culture, in particular Christian culture – specifically the Middle Ages, whose main constituent force is Christianity (issue addressed in his books *Medieval Essays*, *Medieval Religion* and *Understanding Europe*) – not to be confused with a reductionism that identifies a particular religion with a certain culture, almost exclusively. Moreover, Dawson himself manages to clarify that when religion's vital organs fail – mystics, prophets, etc. – it becomes secular; religion is absorbed by the cultural tradition into an identity and eventually becomes just a form of social activity and perhaps even a maidservant, or accomplice to the powers of this world".

