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**LLCU 205 Assignment #2 - “There are not two Germanies”**

To analyze and understand Thomas Mann's quote "there are not two Germanies, a good one and a bad one, but only one, whose best turned into evil through devilish cunning" (Mann, pp. 317-18), we must first understand the historical context of the quote's source and the author's own changing socio-political views as a writer of German background. The quote is from the essay "Germany and the Germans" published in 1945, written by Thomas Mann just after the end of the second World War. Mann himself was a prominent and leading figure in Germany's modernist literary movement, but his stances towards his homeland (especially political ones) shifted significantly over his lifetime. During the first World War, he had supported the war effort and portrayed Western democracy in his writings as a shallow and conservative society. He soon felt the flaws in his views and came to support the Republicans instead, eventually emigrating to America to avoid political troubles. Many qualities of German culture that he once saw as assets were now perceived as sources of Germanic deficiencies. In this speech, Mann was trying to paint a picture of Germany as one cohesive entity with often contradictory and juxtaposing virtues and shortcomings, instead of two wholly separate entities for which only one side was to be blamed for all the atrocities.

In 1945, as the world reflected on the war after it ended, they were yet unable to fully understand its causation, especially in that it was started by Germany, a land flourishing of poetry, thinkers and philosophy, a nation that was keen on self-reflection deep thinking. For what was once a "teacher of the world" to be so bent on the naive determination of world domination, it was inconceivable. Mann addressed the complex issue of Germany's behaviour in his speech as a supporter of democratic values who was raised in the then undemocratic Germany. He was appropriately emotive when speaking of his Germany's strong points, but he was also critical of what he regarded as Germany's faults. With this speech Mann is able to shed some light on the motives behind Germany's atrocities for the rest of the world and, on a deeper level, begin a reassessment of Germany's culture especially for Germans themselves. Mann pointed out that Germany's 'barbaric spree' was traceable in Germany's history and arts, that is, Germany was not simply 'led' astray by an external force to start the two world wars, but the destructive culmination mainly came from within. His criticism can be viewed as twofold: first, that significant German historical events tantamounted to the inner enslavement and unnecessarily coarse rage of the German nation (Mann, pp. 311); and second, Germany's relish in Romanticism which caused Germany to become "inwards", a collective subconsciousness rooted in mysticism, reject rationalism, glorify the chthonic, and carries little intent on projecting itself as a substantive identity in the real world (Mann, pp. 315).

For the first argument, Mann cites Martin Luther as an example of Germany's failure to establish national liberalism, for his "antipolitical servility" which is "was not only responsible for the centuries-old, obsequious attitude of the Germans toward their princes and toward the power of the state...[b]ut it is also and chiefly typical in a monumental and defiant manner of the purely German sundering of the national impulse and the ideal of political liberty." (Mann, pp. 311). He stated Luther's influence as divisive rather than unifying of Germany's national identity, which delayed them from coming to terms with liberalism as France did. Another example of the failure would be Germany's failed Frankfurt Parliament in 1848, in which internal conflicts between Germany's kingdoms ended the chance for Germany to turn to liberalism, and part of the failure as Mann stated that Germany never had a successful revolution (Mann, pp. 312). This divisive nature of Germany was the breeding ground to push Germany into the extreme realm where Mann quotes it "unleashed an attack on liberty" (Mann, pp. 311), but Mann was arguing that this dual nature of Germany, as ridden with contradictions as it was, ultimately came from one wellspring of German culture, and not two internal forces at work. In Mann's view, this culmination was evident in German's adoration of Romanticism and ignoring of the more 'real' arts such as politics, which Mann states as an art that can never succumb to utmost indecency and inwardness (Mann, pp. 311) in opposition to his critique of Romanticism which celebrated it (Mann, pp. 315). And it is due to this lack of collectivism, of consistency and outward-ness, that Mann pinpoints as Germany's tragedy.

Mann sums it up by reinstating and emphasizing that the entirety of Germany is to take some level of responsibility for its crimes because it was a natural outcome that sprung from Germany's long history of dualism, which became the breeding ground for Germany's lack of core societal values and lack of leadership. Germany was not led astray by an external force, but by indulging and culminating in innate struggles. He sees the event as tragic, even if Germany is devoid of sympathy in the matter, but he nevertheless denies the need to blur the objective truth in the creation of a "good Germany" personification that opposes the "bad". Germany's brilliance and diminution go hand-in-hand, the result of a culture that was rooted in conflict. He does a little obligatory joke by comparing Faust with Germany, as the figure is carried off by the devil, similar to the divisive fate of Germany. However Faust's character does align with Germany's history, as Faust, while by no means evil, allows his desire for power to overcome all rationality and pays a price for it. Similarly there are no 'two Fausts', one good and one evil, but the figure of Faust is formed wholly from the virtues and burdens of a single person, both good and evil. This aligns with Germany's history and Mann's point. Mann extends on this further by stating: 'For that reason it is quite impossible for one born there simply to renounce the wicked, guilty Germany and to declare: "I am the good, the noble, the just Germany in the white robe; I leave it to you to exterminate the wicked one." Not a word of all that I have just told you about Germany or tried to indicate to you came out of alien, cool, objective knowledge, it is all within me, I have been through it all.' (Mann, pp. 318). Mann speaks from experience as someone who once supported the Nazis and then radically changed his stances, himself a figure reborn from conflict and opposition. Perhaps Mann was viewing Germany’s culture as something that embodied a character which he once saw in himself.

**Works Cited**

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