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## THE POISON OF IMPORTED CIVILIZATION

Any "civilization" which is received from the outside may easily be fatal to the recipient. For "civilization," as distinguished from culture, is a blending of mechanized techniques, of artificial stimulants, of luxuries — all of which are, as it were, distilled from the life of a people. Injected into another social organism, this distillation is always poisonous, and in large doses is fatal. For example, alcohol is a luxury which appeared among civilizations of the white race; they suffer from its use but are able to stand it. But when it was taken to Africa and the South Seas it blotted out whole races.

The Roman influence was the alcohol of the German Visigoths, a decadent people who came stumbling down across space and time until they reached Spain, the farthest corner of Europe, where they found rest. The Franks, on the other hand, burst into the gentle land of the Gauls intact, and flooded it with the irresistible torrent of their vitality.

There are people who, when they hear of vitality, picture a human figure covered with enormous muscles, capable of eating a bear whole and washing it down with a keg of wine. To them, vitality is synonymous with brutality. I hope my readers understand that I mean by vitality simply that power of creation which is life itself. Vitality is the power which a healthy cell has of begetting another cell, and vitality is likewise the secret force which creates a great historic power. Vitality, or the power of organic creation, takes a different form in every species and kind of living thing. — *Jose Ortega y Gasset in Invertebrate Spain.*