

HUMAN ACTION

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PART ONE

Chapter III. Economics and the Revolt Against Reason

1. The Revolt Against Reason

It is true that some philosophers were ready to overrate the power of human reason. They believed that man can discover by ratiocination the final causes of cosmic events, the inherent ends the prime mover aims at in creating the universe and determining the course of its evolution. They expatiated on the "Absolute" as if it were their pocket watch. They did not shrink from announcing eternal absolute values and from establishing moral codes unconditionally binding on all men.

Then there was the long line of utopian authors. They drafted schemes for an earthly paradise in which pure reason alone should rule. They failed to realize that what they called absolute reason and manifest truth was the fancy of their own minds. They blithely arrogated to themselves infallibility and often advocated intolerance, the violent oppression of all dissenters and heretics. They aimed at dictatorship either for themselves or for men who would accurately put their plans into execution. There was, in their opinion, no other salvation for suffering mankind.

There was Hegel. He was a profound thinker and his writings are a treasury of stimulating ideas. But he was laboring under the delusion that *Geist*, the Absolute, revealed itself through his words. There was nothing in the universe that was hidden to Hegel. It was a pity that his language was so ambiguous that it could be interpreted in various ways. The right-wing Hegelians interpreted it as an endorsement of the Prussian system of autocratic government and of the dogmas of the Prussian Church. The Left-wing Hegelians read out of it atheism, intransigent revolutionary radicalism, and anarchistic doctrines.

There was Auguste Comte. He knew precisely what the future had in store for mankind. And, of course, he considered himself as the supreme legislator. For example, he regarded certain astronomical studies as useless and wanted to prohibit them. He planned to substitute a new religion for Christianity, and selected a lady who in this new church was destined to replace the Virgin. Comte can be excused, as he was insane in the full sense which pathology attaches to this term. But what about his followers?

Many more facts of this kind could be mentioned. But they are no argument against reason, rationalism, and rationality. These dreams have nothing at all to do with the question of whether or not reason is the right and only instrument available for man in his endeavors to attain as much knowledge as is accessible to him. The honest and conscientious truth-seekers have never pretended that reason and scientific research can answer all questions. They were fully aware of the limitations imposed upon the

human mind. They cannot be taxed with responsibility for the crudities of the philosophy of Haeckel and the simplism of the various materialist schools.

The rationalist philosophers themselves were always intent upon showing the boundaries both of aprioristic theory and of empirical research¹. The first representative of British political economy, David Hume, the Utilitarians, and the American Pragmatists are certainly not guilty of having exaggerated the power of man to attain truth. It would be more justifiable to blame the philosophy of the last two hundred years for too much agnosticism and skepticism than for overconfidence in what could be achieved by the human mind.

The revolt against reason, the characteristic mental attitude of our age, was not caused by a lack of modesty, caution, and self-examination on the part of the philosophers. Neither was it due to failures in the evolution of modern natural science. The amazing achievements of technology and therapeutics speak a language which nobody can ignore. It is hopeless to attack modern science, whether from the angle of intuitionism and mysticism, or from any other point of view. The revolt against reason was directed against another target. It did not aim at the natural sciences, but at economics. The attack against the natural sciences was only the logically necessary outcome of the attack against economics. It was impermissible to dethrone reason in one field only and not to question it in other branches of knowledge also.

The great upheaval was born out of the historical situation existing in the middle of the nineteenth century. The economists had entirely demolished the fantastic delusions of the socialist utopians. The deficiencies of the classical system prevented them from comprehending why every socialist plan must be unrealizable; but they knew enough to demonstrate the futility of all socialist schemes produced up to their time. The communist ideas were done for. The socialists were absolutely unable to raise any objection to the devastating criticism of their schemes and to advance any argument in their favor. It seemed as if socialism was dead forever.

Only one way could lead the socialists out of this impasse. They could attack logic and reason and substitute mystical intuition for ratiocination. It was the historical role of Karl Marx to propose this solution. On the basis of Hegel's dialectic mysticism, he blithely arrogated to himself the ability to predict the future. Hegel pretended to know that Geist, in creating the universe, wanted to bring about the Prussian monarchy of Frederick William III. But Marx was better informed about Geist's plans. He knew that the final cause of historical evolution was the establishment of the socialist millennium. Socialism is bound to come "with the inexorability of a law of nature." And as, according to Hegel, every later stage of history is a higher and better stage, there cannot be any doubt that socialism, the final and ultimate stage of mankind's evolution, will be perfect from any point of view. It is consequently useless to discuss the details of the operation of a socialist commonwealth. History, in due time, will arrange everything for the best. It does not need the advice of mortal men.

There was still the main obstacle to overcome: the devastating criticism of the economists. Marx had a solution at hand. Human reason, he asserted, is constitutionally unfitted to find truth. The logical structure of mind is different with

¹ Cf., for instance, Louis Rougier, *Les Paralogismes du rationalisme* (Paris, 1920).

various social classes. There is no such thing as a universally valid logic. What mind produces can never be anything but "ideology," that is, in the Marxian terminology, a set of ideas disguising the selfish interests of the thinker's own social class. Hence, the "bourgeois" mind of the economists is utterly incapable of producing more than an apology for capitalism. The teachings of "bourgeois" science, an offshoot of "bourgeois" logic, are of no avail for the proletarians, the rising class destined to abolish all classes and to convert the earth into a Garden of Eden.

But, of course, the logic of the proletarians is not merely a class logic. "The ideas of proletarian logic are not party ideas, but emanations of logic pure and simple."² Moreover, by virtue of a special privilege, the logic of certain elect bourgeois is not tainted with the original sin of being bourgeois. Karl Marx, the son of a well-to-do lawyer, married to the daughter of a Prussian noble, and his collaborator Frederick Engels, a wealthy textile manufacturer, never doubted that they themselves were above the law and, notwithstanding their bourgeois background, were endowed with the power to discover absolute truth.

It is the task of history to describe the historical conditions which made such a crude doctrine popular. Economics has another task. It must analyze both Marxian polylogism and the other brands of polylogism formed after its pattern, and expose their fallacies and contradictions.

2. The Logical Aspect of Polylogism

Marxian polylogism asserts that the logical structure of the mind is different with the members of various social classes. Racial polylogism differs from Marxian polylogism only in so far as it ascribes to each race a peculiar logical structure of mind and maintains that all members of a definite race, no matter what their class affiliation may be, are endowed with this peculiar logical structure.

There is no need to enter here into a critique of the concepts *social class* and *race* as applied by these doctrines. It is not necessary to ask the Marxians when and how a proletarian who succeeds in joining the ranks of the bourgeoisie changes his proletarian mind into a bourgeois mind. It is superfluous to ask the racists to explain what kind of logic is peculiar to people who are not of pure racial stock. There are much more serious objections to be raised.

Neither the Marxians nor the racists nor the supporters of any other brand of polylogism ever went further than to declare that the logical structure of mind is different with various classes, races, or nations. They never ventured to demonstrate precisely in what the logic of the proletarians differs from the logic of the bourgeois, or in what the logic of the Aryans differs from the logic of the non-Aryans, or the logic of the Germans from the logic of the French or the British. In the eyes of the Marxians the Ricardian theory of comparative cost is spurious because Ricardo was a bourgeois. The German racists condemn the same theory because Ricardo was a Jew, and the German nationalists because he was an Englishman. Some German professors advanced all these three arguments together against the validity of Ricardo's

² Cf. Joseph Dietzgen *Briefe über Logik, speziell demokratisch-proletarische Logik* (2nd ed. Stuttgart, 1903), p. 112.

teachings. However, it is not enough to reject a theory wholesale by unmasking the background of its author. What is wanted is first to expound a system of logic different from that applied by the criticized author. Then it would be necessary to examine the contested theory point by point and to show where in its reasoning inferences are made which--although correct from the point of view of its author's logic--are invalid from the point of view of the proletarian, Aryan, or German logic. And finally, it should be explained what kind of conclusions the replacement of the author's vicious inferences by the correct inferences of the critic's own logic must lead to. As everybody knows, this never has been and never can be attempted by anybody.

Then there is the fact that there is disagreement concerning essential problems among people belonging to the same class, race, or nation. Unfortunately there are, say the Nazis, Germans who do not think in a correct German way. But if a German does not always necessarily think as he should, but may think in the manner of a man equipped with a non-German logic, who is to decide which German's ideas are truly German and which un-German? Says the late Professor Franz Oppenheimer; "The individual errs often in looking after his interests; a class never errs in the long run."³ This would suggest the infallibility of a majority vote. However, the Nazis rejected decision by majority vote as manifestly un-German. The Marxians pay lip service to the democratic principle of majority vote.⁴ But whenever it comes to a test they favor minority rule, provided it is the rule of their own party. Let us remember how Lenin dispersed by force the Constituent Assembly elected, under the auspices of his own government, by adult franchise, because only about one-fifth of its members were Bolshevik.

A consistent supporter of polylogism would have to maintain that ideas are correct because their author is a member of the right class, nation, or race. But consistency is not one of their virtues. Thus the Marxians are prepared to assign the epithet "proletarian thinker" to everybody whose doctrines they approve. All the others they disparage either as foes of their class or as social traitors. Hitler was even frank enough to admit that the only method available for him to sift the true Germans from the mongrels and the aliens was to enunciate a genuinely German program and to see who were ready to support it.⁵ A dark-haired man whose bodily features by no means fitted the prototype of the fair-haired Aryan master race, arrogated to himself the gift of discovering the only doctrine adequate to the German mind and of expelling from the ranks of the Germans all those who did not accept this doctrine whatever their bodily characteristics might be. No further proof is needed of the insincerity of the whole doctrine.

3. The Praxeological Aspect of Polylogism

An ideology in the Marxian sense of this term is a doctrine which, although erroneous from the point of view of the correct logic of the proletarians, is beneficial to the selfish interests of the class which has developed it. An ideology is objectively vicious, but it furthers the interests of the thinker's class precisely on account of its

³ Cf. Franz Oppenheimer, *System der Soziologie* (Jena, 1926), II. 559.

⁴ It must be emphasized that the case for democracy is not based on the assumption that majorities are always right, still less that they are infallible. Cf. below, pp. 149-151.

⁵ Cf. his speech on the Party Convention in Nuremberg, September 3, 1933 (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, September 4, 1933, p. 2).

viciousness. Many Marxians believe that they have proved this tenet by stressing the point that people do not thirst for knowledge only for its own sake. The aim of the scientist is to pave the way for successful action. Theories are always developed with a view to practical application. There are no such things as pure science and the disinterested search for truth.

For the sake of argument we may admit that every effort to attain truth is motivated by considerations of its practical utilization for the attainment of some end. But this does not answer the question why an "ideological"--i.e., a false--theory should render better service than a correct one. The fact that the practical application of a theory results in the outcome predicted on the basis of this theory is universally considered a confirmation of its correctness. It is paradoxical to assert that a vicious theory is from any point of view more useful than a correct one.

Men use firearms. In order to improve these weapons they developed the science of ballistics. But, of course, precisely because they were eager to hunt game and to kill one another, a correct ballistics. A merely "ideological" ballistics would not have been of any use.

For the Marxians the view that scientists labor for knowledge alone is nothing but an "arrogant pretense" of the scientists. Thus they declare that Maxwell was led to his theory of electromagnetic waves by the craving of business for wireless telegraphs.⁶ It is of no relevance for the problem of ideology whether this is true or not. The question is whether the alleged fact that nineteenth-century industrialism considered telegraphy without wires "the philosopher's stone and the elixir of youth"⁷ impelled Maxwell to formulate a correct theory or an ideological superstructure of the selfish class interests of the bourgeoisie. There is no doubt that bacteriological research was instigated not only by the desire to fight contagious diseases, but also by the desire of the producers of wine and of cheese to improve their methods of production. But the result obtained was certainly not "ideological" in the Marxian sense.

What induced Marx to invent his ideology-doctrine was the wish to sap the prestige of economics. He was fully aware of his impotence to refute the objections raised by the economists to the practicability of the socialist schemes. In fact he was so fascinated by the theoretical system of British classical economics that he firmly believed in its impregnability. He either never learned about the doubts that the classical theory of value raised in the minds of judicious scholars, or, if he ever heard of them, he did not comprehend their weight. His own economic ideas are hardly more than a garbled version of Ricardianism. When Jevons and Menger inaugurated a new era of economic thought, his career as an author of economic writings had already come to an end; The first volume of *Das Kapital* had already been published several years previously. Marx's only reaction to the marginal theory of value was that he postponed the publication of the later volumes of his main treatise. They were made accessible to the public only after his death.

In developing the ideology-doctrine Marx exclusively aims at economics and the social philosophy of Utilitarianism. His only intention was to destroy the reputation of

⁶ Cf. Lancelot Hogben, *Science for the Citizen* (New York, 1938), pp. 726-728.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 726.

economic teachings which he was unable to refute by means of logic and ratiocination. He gave to his doctrine the form of a universal law valid for the whole historical age of social classes because a statement which is applicable only to one individual historical event could not be considered as a law. For the same reasons he did not restrict its validity to economic thought only, but included every branch of knowledge.

The service which bourgeois economics rendered to the bourgeoisie was in Marx's eyes twofold. It aided them first in their fight against feudalism and royal despotism and then later again in their fight against the rising proletarian class. It provided a rational and moral justification for capitalist exploitation. It was, if we want to use a notion developed after Marx's death, a rationalization of the claims of the capitalists.⁸ The capitalists, in their subconsciousness ashamed of the mean greed motivating their own conduct and anxious to avoid social disapproval, encouraged their sycophants, the economists, to proclaim doctrines which could rehabilitate them in public opinion.

Now, recourse to the notion of rationalization provides a psychological description of the incentives which impelled a man or a group of men to formulate a theorem or a whole theory. But it does not predicate anything about the validity or invalidity of the theory advanced. If it is proved that the theory concerned is untenable, the notion of rationalization is a psychological interpretation of the causes which made their authors liable to error. But if we are not in a position to find any fault in the theory advanced, no appeal to the concept of rationalization can possibly explode its validity. If it were true that the economists had in their subconsciousness no design other than that of justifying the unfair claims of the capitalists, their theories could nevertheless be quite correct. There is no means to expose a faulty theory other than to refute it by discursive reasoning and to substitute a better theory for it. In dealing with the theorem of Pythagoras or with the theory of comparative cost, we are not interested in the psychological factors that impelled Pythagoras and Ricardo to construct these theorems, although these things may be important for the historian and the biographer. For science the only relevant question is whether or not these theorems can stand the test of rational examination. The social or racial background of their authors is beside the point.

It is a fact that people in the pursuit of their selfish interests try to use doctrines more or less universally accepted by public opinion. Moreover, they are eager to invent and to propagate doctrines which they could possibly use for furthering their own interests. But this does not explain why such doctrines, favoring the interests of a minority and contrary to the interests of the rest of the people, are endorsed by public opinion. No matter whether such "ideological" doctrines are the product of a "false consciousness," forcing a man to think unwittingly in a manner that serves the interests of his class, or whether they are the product of a purposeful distortion of truth, they must encounter the ideologies of other classes and try to supplant them. Then a rivalry between antagonistic ideologies emerges. The Marxians explain victory and defeat in such conflicts as an outcome of the interference of historical providence. Geist, the mythical prime mover, operates according to a definite plan. He leads

⁸ Although the term rationalization is new, the thing itself was known long ago; Cr., for instance, the words of Benjamin Franklin: "So convenient a thing it is to be a *reasonable creature*, since it enables one to find or make a reason for every thing one has a mind to do." (*Autobiography*, ed. New York, 11944, p. 41.)

mankind through various preliminary stages to the final bliss of socialism. Every stage is the product of a certain state of technology; all its other characteristics are the necessary ideological superstructure of this technological state. Geist causes man to bring about in due time the technological ideas adequate to the stage in which he lives, and to realize them. All the rest is an outgrowth of the state of technology. The hand-mill made feudal society; the steam-mill made capitalism.⁹ Human will and reason play only an ancillary role in these changes. The inexorable law of historical development forces men-independently of their wills-to think and to behave according to the patterns corresponding to the material basis of their age. Men fool themselves in believing that they are free to choose between various ideas and between what they call truth and error. They themselves do not think; it is historical providence that manifests itself in their thoughts.

This is a purely mystical doctrine. The only proof given in its support is the recourse of Hegelian dialectics. Capitalistic private property is the first negation of individual private property. It begets, with the inexorability of a law of nature, its own negation, namely common ownership of the means of production.¹⁰ However, a mystical doctrine based on intuition does not lose its mysticism by referring to another no less mystical doctrine. This makeshift by no means answers the question why a thinker must necessarily develop an ideology in accordance with the interests of his class. For the sake of argument we may admit that man's thoughts must result in doctrines beneficial to his interests. But are a man's interests necessarily identical with those of his whole class? Marx himself had to admit that the organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves.¹¹ It is an undeniable fact that there prevails an irreconcilable conflict of interests between those workers who are employed at union wage rates and those who remain unemployed because the enforcement of union rates prevents the demand for and the supply of labor from finding the appropriate price for meeting. It is no less true that the interests of the workers of the comparatively overpopulated countries and those of the comparatively underpopulated countries are antagonistic with regard to migration barriers. The statement that the interests of all proletarians uniformly require the substitution of socialism for capitalism is an arbitrary postulate of Marx and the other socialists. It cannot be proved by the mere assertion that the socialist idea is the emanation of proletarian thought and therefore certainly beneficial to the interests of the proletariat as such.

A popular interpretation of the vicissitudes of British foreign trade policies, based on the ideas of Sismondi, Frederick List, Marx, and the German Historical School, runs this way: In the second part of the eighteenth century and in the greater part of the nineteenth century the class interests of the British bourgeoisie required a free trade policy. Therefore British political economy elaborated a free trade doctrine, and the British manufacturers organized a popular movement which finally succeeded in abolishing protective tariffs. Then later conditions changed. The British bourgeoisie could no longer stand the competition of foreign manufacturing and badly needed

⁹ "Le moulin a bras vous donnera la soci  t   avec le souzerain; le moulin a vapeur, la soci  t   avec le capitaliste industriel." Marx, *Mis  re de la philosophie* (Paris and Brussels, 1847), p. 100.

¹⁰ , *Das Kapital* (7th ed. Hamburg, 1914), I, 728-729.

¹¹ *The Communist Manifesto*, I.

protective tariffs. Consequently the economists substituted a theory of protection for the antiquated free trade ideology, and Great Britain returned to protectionism.

The first error in this interpretation is that it considers the "bourgeoisie" as a homogeneous class composed of members whose interests are identical. A businessman is always under the necessity of adjusting the conduct of his business to the institutional conditions of his country. In the long run he is, in his capacity as entrepreneur and capitalist, neither favored nor injured by tariffs or the absence of tariffs. He will turn to the production of those commodities which under the given state of affairs he can most profitably produce. What may hurt or further his short-run interests are only *changes* in the institutional setting. But such changes do not affect the various branches of business and the various enterprises in the same way and to the same extent. A measure that benefits one branch or enterprise may be detrimental to other branches or enterprises. What counts for a businessman is only a limited number of customs items. And with regard to these items the interests of various branches and firms are mostly antagonistic.

The interests of every branch or firm can be favored by all kinds of privileges granted to it by the government. But if privileges are granted to the same extent also to the other branches and firms, every businessman loses--not only in his capacity as consumer, but also in his capacity as buyer of raw materials, half-finished products, machines and other equipment--on the one hand as much as he profits on the other. Selfish group interests may impel a man to ask for protection for his own branch or firm. They can never motivate him to ask for universal protection for all branches or firms if he is not sure to be protected to a greater extent than the other industries or enterprises.

Neither were the British manufacturers from the point of view of their class concerns more interested in the abolition of the Corn Laws than other British citizens. The landowners were opposed to the repeal of these laws because a lowering of the prices for agricultural products reduced the rent of land. A special class interest of the manufacturers can only be construed on the basis of the long since discarded iron law of wages and the no less untenable doctrine that profits are an outcome of the exploitation of the workers.

Within a world organized on the basis of the division of labor, every change must in one way or another affect the short-run interests of many groups. It is therefore always easy to expose every doctrine supporting an alteration of existing conditions as an "ideological" disguise of the selfish interests of a special group of people. The main occupation of many present-day authors is such unmasking. Marx did not invent this procedure. It was known long before him. Its most curious manifestation was the attempts of some eighteenth-century writers to explain religious creeds as a fraudulent deception on the part of the priests eager to gain power and wealth both for themselves and for their allies, the exploiters. The Marxians endorsed this statement in labeling religion "opium for the masses."¹² It never occurred to the supporters of such teachings that where there are selfish interests pro there must necessarily be

¹² The meaning that contemporary Marxism attaches to this phrase, viz., that the religious drug has been purposely administered to the people, may have been the meaning of Marx too. But it was not implied in the passage in which--in 1843--Marx coined this phrase. Df., R.P. Case, *Religion in Russia* (New York, 1946), pp. 67-69.

selfish interests contra too. It is by no means a satisfactory explanation of any event that it favored a special class. The question to be answered is why the rest of the population whose interests it injured did not succeed in frustrating the endeavors of those favored by it.

Every firm and every branch of business is in the short run interested in increased sales of its products. In the long run, however, there prevails a tendency toward an equalization of returns in the various branches of production. If demand for the products of a branch increases and raises profits, more capital flows into it and the competition of the new enterprises cuts down the profits. Returns are by no means higher in the sale of socially detrimental articles than in the sale of socially beneficial articles. If a certain branch of business is outlawed and those engaged in it risk prosecution, penalties, and imprisonment, gross profits must be high enough to compensate for the risks involved. But this does not interfere with the height of net returns.

The rich, the owners of the already operating plants, have no particular class interest in the maintenance of free competition. They are opposed to confiscation and expropriation of their fortunes, but their vested interests are rather in favor of measures preventing newcomers from challenging their position. Those fighting for free enterprise and free competition do not defend the interests of those rich today. They want a free hand left to unknown men who will be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow and whose ingenuity will make the life of coming generations more agreeable. They want the way left open to further economic improvements. They are the spokesmen of material progress.

The nineteenth-century success of free trade ideas was effected by the theories of classical economics. The prestige of these ideas was so great that those whose selfish class interests they hurt could not hinder their endorsements by public opinion and their realization by legislative measures. It is ideas that make history, and not history that makes ideas.

It is useless to argue with mystics and seers. They base their assertions on intuition and are not prepared to submit them to rational examination. The Marxians pretend that what their inner voice proclaims is history's self-revelation. If other people do not hear this voice, it is only a proof that they are not chosen. It is insolence that those groping in darkness dare to contradict the inspired ones. Decency should impel them to creep into a corner and keep silent.

However, science cannot abstain from thinking although it is obvious that it will never succeed in convincing those who dispute the supremacy of reason. Science must emphasize that the appeal to intuition cannot settle the question which of several antagonistic doctrines is the right one and which are wrong. It is an undeniable fact that Marxism is not the only doctrine advanced in our time. There are other "ideologies" besides Marxism. The Marxians assert that the application of these other doctrines would hurt the interests of the many. But the supporters of these doctrines say precisely the same with regard to Marxism.

Of course, the Marxians consider a doctrine vicious if its author's background is not proletarian. But who is proletarian? Doctor Marx, the manufacturer and "exploiter"

Engels, and Lenin, the scion of the Russian gentry, were certainly not of proletarian background. But Hitler and Mussolini were genuine proletarians and spent their youth in poverty. The conflict of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks or that between Stalin and Trotsky cannot be presented as class conflicts. They were conflicts between various sects of fanatics who called one another traitors.

The essence of Marxian philosophy is this: We are right because we are the spokesmen of the rising proletarian class. Discursive reasoning cannot invalidate our teachings, for they are inspired by the supreme power that determines the destiny of mankind. Our adversaries are wrong because they lack the intuition that guides our minds. It is, of course, not their fault that on account of their class affiliation they are not equipped with the genuine proletarian logic and are blinded by ideologies. The unfathomable decrees of history that have elected us have doomed them. The future is ours.

4. Racial Polylogism

Marxian polylogism is an abortive makeshift to salvage the untenable doctrines of socialism. Its attempt to substitute intuition for ratiocination appeals to popular superstitions. But it is precisely this attitude that places Marxian polylogism and its offshoot, the so-called "sociology of knowledge," in irreconcilable antagonism to science and reason.

It is different with the polylogism of the racists. This brand of polylogism is in agreement with fashionable, although mistaken, tendencies in present-day empiricism. It is an established fact that mankind is divided into various races. The races differ in bodily features. Materialist philosophers assert that thoughts are a secretion of the brain as bile is a secretion of the gall-bladder. It would be inconsistent for them to reject beforehand the hypothesis that the thought-secretion of the various races may differ in essential qualities. The fact that anatomy has not succeeded up to now in discovering anatomical differences in the brain cells of various races cannot invalidate the doctrine that the logical structure of mind is different with different races. It does not exclude the assumption that later research may discover such anatomical peculiarities.

Some ethnologists tell us that it is a mistake to speak of higher and lower civilizations and of an alleged backwardness of alien races. The civilizations of various races are different from the Western civilization of the peoples of Caucasian stock, but they are not inferior. Every race has its peculiar mentality. It is faulty to apply to the civilization of any of them yardsticks abstracted from the achievements of other races. Westerners call the civilization of China an arrested civilization and that of the inhabitants of New Guinea primitive barbarism. But the Chinese and the natives of New Guinea despise our civilization no less than we despise theirs. Such estimates are judgments of value and hence arbitrary. Those other races have a different structure of mind. Their civilizations are adequate to their mind as our civilization is adequate to our mind. We are incapable of comprehending that what we call backwardness does not appear such to them. It is, from the point of view of their logic, a better method of coming to a satisfactory arrangement with given natural conditions of life than is our progressivism.

These ethnologists are right in emphasizing that it is not the task of a historian--and the ethnologist too is a historian--to express value judgments. But they are utterly mistaken in contending that these other races have been guided in their activities by motives other than those which have actuated the white race. The Asiatics and the Africans no less than the peoples of European descent have been eager to struggle successfully for survival and to use reason as the foremost weapon in these endeavors. They have sought to get rid of the beasts of prey and of disease, to prevent famines and to raise the productivity of labor. There can be no doubt that in the pursuit of these aims they have been less successful than the whites. The proof is that they are eager to profit from all achievements of the West. Those ethnologists would be right, if Mongols or Africans, tormented by a painful disease, were to renounce the aid of a European doctor because their mentality or their world view led them to believe that it is better to suffer than to be relieved of pain. Mahatma Gandhi disavowed his whole philosophy when he entered a modern hospital to be treated for appendicitis.

The North American Indians lacked the ingenuity to invent the wheel. The inhabitants of the Alps were not keen enough to construct skis which would have rendered their hard life much more agreeable. Such shortcomings were not due to a mentality different from those of the races which had long since used wheels and skis; they were failures, even when judged from the point of view of the Indians and the Alpine mountaineers.

However, these considerations refer only to the motives determining concrete actions, not to the only relevant problem of whether or not there exists between various races a difference in the logical structure of mind. It is precisely this that the racists assert.¹³

We may refer to what has been said in the preceding chapters about the fundamental issues of the logical structure of mind and the categorial principles of thought and action. Some additional observations will suffice to give the finishing stroke to racial polylogism and to any other brand of polylogism.

The categories of human thought and action are neither arbitrary products of the human mind nor conventions. They are not outside of the universe and of the course of cosmic events. They are biological facts and have a definite function in life and reality. They are instruments in man's struggle for existence and in his endeavors to adjust himself as much as possible to the real state of the universe and to remove uneasiness as much as it is in his power to do so. They are therefore appropriate to the structure of the external world and reflect properties of the world and of reality. They work, and are in this sense true and valid.

It is consequently incorrect to assert that aprioristic insight and pure reasoning do not convey any information about reality and the structure of the universe. The fundamental logical relations and the categories of thought and action are the ultimate source of all human knowledge. They are adequate to the structure of reality, they reveal this structure to the human mind and, in this sense, they are for man basic ontological facts.¹⁴ We do not know what a superhuman intellect may think and comprehend. For man every cognition is conditioned by the logical structure of his

¹³ Cf. L.G. Tirala, *Rasse, Geist und Seele* (Munich, 1935), pp. 190 ff.

¹⁴ Cf. Morris R. Cohen, *Reason and Nature* (New York, 1931), pp. 202-205; *A Preface to Logi* (New York, 1944), pp. 42-44, 54-56, 92, 180-187.

mind and implied in this structure. It is precisely the satisfactory results of the empirical sciences and their practical application that evidence this truth. Within the orbit in which human action is able to attain ends aimed at there is no room left for agnosticism.

If there had been races which had developed a different logical structure of the mind, they would have failed in the use of reason as an aid in the struggle for existence. The only means for survival that could have protected them against extermination would have been their instinctive reactions. Natural selection would have eliminated those specimens of such races that tried to employ reasoning for the direction of their behavior. Those individuals alone would have survived that relied upon instincts only. This means that only those would have had a chance to survive that did not rise above the mental level of animals.

The scholars of the West have amassed an enormous amount of material concerning the high civilizations of China and India and the primitive civilizations of the Asiatic, American, Australian, and African aborigines. It is safe to say that all that is worth knowing about the ideas of these races is known. But never has any supporter of polylogism tried to use these data for a description of the allegedly different logic of these peoples and civilizations.

5. Polylogism and Understanding

Some supporters of the tenets of Marxism and racism interpret the epistemological teachings of their parties in a peculiar way. They are ready to admit that the logical structure of mind is uniform for all races, nations, and classes. Marxism or racism, they assert, never intended to deny this undeniable fact. What they really wanted to say was that historical understanding, aesthetic empathy, and value judgments are conditioned by a man's background. It is obvious that this interpretation cannot be supported on the basis of the writings of the champions of polylogism. However, it must be analyzed as a doctrine of its own.

There is no need to emphasize again that a man's value judgments and his choice of ends reflect his inborn bodily features and all the vicissitudes of his life.¹⁵ But it is a far cry from the acknowledgment of this fact to the belief that racial inheritance or class affiliation ultimately determines judgments of value and the choice of ends. The fundamental discrepancies in world view and patterns of behavior do not correspond to differences in race, nationality, or class affiliation.

There is hardly any greater divergence in value judgments than that between ascetics and those eager to enjoy life lightheartedly. An unbridgeable gulf separates devout monks and nuns from the rest of mankind. But there have been people dedicated to the monkish ideals among all races, nations, classes, and castes. Some of them were sons and daughters of kings and wealthy noblemen, others were beggars. St. Francis, Santa Clara, and their ardent followers were natives of Italy, whose other inhabitants cannot be described as weary of temporal things. Puritanism was Anglo-Saxon, but so was the lasciviousness of the British under the Tudors, the Stuarts, and the Hanoverians. The nineteenth century's outstanding champion of asceticism was Count

¹⁵ Cf. above, pp. 46-47.

Leo Tolstoy, a wealthy member of the profligate Russian aristocracy. Tolstoy saw the pith of the philosophy he attacked embodied in Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata, a masterpiece of the son of extremely poor parents.

It is the same with aesthetic values. All races and nations have had both classic and romantic art. With all their ardent propaganda the Marxians have not succeeded in bringing about a specifically proletarian art or literature. The "proletarian" writers, painters, and musicians have not created new styles and have not established new aesthetic values. What characterizes them is solely their tendency to call everything they detest "bourgeois" and everything they like "proletarian."

Historical understanding both of the historian and of the acting man always reflects the personality of its author.¹⁶ But if the historian and the politician are imbued with the desire for truth, they will never let themselves be deluded by party bias, provided they are efficient and not inept. It is immaterial whether a historian or a politician considers the interference of a certain factor beneficial or detrimental. He cannot derive any advantage from underrating or overrating the relevance of one of the operating factors. Only clumsy would-be historians believe that they can serve their cause by distortion.

This is no less true of the statesman's understanding. What use could a champion of Protestantism derive from misunderstanding the tremendous power and prestige of Catholicism, or a liberal from misunderstanding the relevance of socialist ideas? In order to succeed a politician must see things as they are; whoever indulges in wishful thinking will certainly fail. Judgments of relevance differ from judgments of value in that they aim at the appraisal of a state of affairs not dependent on the author's arbitrariness. They are colored by their author's personality and can therefore never be unanimously agreed upon by all people. But here again we must raise the question: What advantage could a race or class derive from an "ideological" distortion of understanding?

As has already been pointed out, the serious discrepancies to be found in historical studies are an outcome of differences in the field of the nonhistorical sciences and not in various modes of understanding.

Today many historians and writers are imbued with the Marxian dogma that the realization of the socialist plans is both unavoidable and the supreme good, and that the labor movement is entrusted with the historical mission of accomplishing this task by a violent overthrow of the capitalistic system. Starting from this tenet, they take it as a matter of course that the parties of the "Left," the elect, in the pursuit of their policies, should resort to acts of violence and to murder. A revolution cannot be consummated by peaceful methods. It is not worthwhile to dwell upon such trifles as the butchering of the four daughters of the last Tsar, of Leon Trotsky, of tens of thousands of Russian bourgeois and so on. "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs"; why explicitly mention the eggs broken? But, of course, it is different if one of those assailed ventures to defend himself or even to strike back. Few only mention the acts of sabotage, destruction, and violence committed by strikers. But all

¹⁶ Cf. above, pp. 57-58.

authors enlarge upon the attempts of the companies to protect their property and the lives of their employees and their customers against such onslaughts.

Such discrepancies are due neither to judgments of value nor to differences in understanding. They are the outcome of antagonistic theories of economic and historical evolution. If the coming of socialism is unavoidable and can be achieved only by revolutionary methods, murders committed by the "progressives" are minor incidents of no significance. But the self-defense and counterattacks of the "reactionaries" which can possibly delay the final victory of socialism are of the greatest importance. They are remarkable events, while the revolutionary acts are simply routine.

6. The Case for Reason

Judicious rationalists do not pretend that human reason can ever make man omniscient. They are fully aware of the fact that, however knowledge may increase, there will always remain things ultimately given and not liable to any further elucidation. But, they say, as far as man is able to attain cognition, he must rely upon reason. The ultimate given is the irrational. The knowable is, as far as it is known already, necessarily rational. There is neither an irrational mode of cognition nor a science of irrationality.

With regard to unsolved problems, various hypotheses are permissible provided they do not contradict logic and the uncontested data of experience. But these are hypotheses only.

We do not know what causes the inborn differences in human abilities. Science is at a loss to explain why Newton and Mozart were full of creative genius and why most people are not. But it is by all means an unsatisfactory answer to say that a genius owes his greatness to his ancestry or to his race. The question is precisely why such a man differs from his brothers and from the other members of his race.

It is a little bit less faulty to attribute the great achievements of the white race to racial superiority. Yet this is no more than vague hypothesis which is at variance with the fact that the early foundations of civilization were laid by peoples of other races. We cannot know whether or not at a later date other races will supplant Western civilization.

However, such a hypothesis must be appraised on its own merits. It must not be condemned beforehand because the racists base on it their postulate that there is an irreconcilable conflict between various racial groups and that the superior races must enslave the inferior ones. Ricardo's law of association has long since discarded this mistaken interpretation of the inequality of men.¹⁷ It is nonsensical to fight the racial hypothesis by negating obvious facts. It is vain to deny that up to now certain races have contributed nothing or very little to the development of civilization and can, in this sense, be called inferior.

¹⁷ See below, pp. 158-163

If somebody were eager to distill at any cost a grain of truth out of the Marxian teachings, he could say that emotions influence a man's reasoning very much. Nobody ever ventured to deny this obvious fact, and Marxism cannot be credited with its discovery. But it is without any significance for epistemology. There are many sources both of success and of error. It is the task of psychology to enumerate and to classify them.

Envy is a widespread frailty. It is certain that many intellectuals envy the higher income of prosperous businessmen and that these feelings drive them toward socialism. They believe that the authorities of a socialist commonwealth would pay them higher salaries than those that they earn under capitalism. But to prove the existence of this envy does not relieve science of the duty of making the most careful examination of the socialist doctrines. Scientists are bound to deal with every doctrine as if its supporters were inspired by nothing else than the thirst for knowledge. The various brands of polylogism substitute for a purely theoretical examination of opposite doctrines the unmasking of the background and the motives of their authors. Such a procedure is incompatible with the first principles of ratiocination.

It is a poor makeshift to dispose of a theory by referring to its historical background, to the "spirit" of its time, to the material conditions of the country of its origin, and to any personal qualities of its authors. A theory is subject to the tribunal of reason only. The yardstick to be applied is always the yardstick of reason. A theory is either correct or incorrect. It may happen that the present state of our knowledge does not allow a decision with regard to its correctness or incorrectness. But a theory can never be valid for a bourgeois or an American if it is invalid for a proletarian or a Chinese.

If the Marxians and the racist were right, it would be impossible to explain why those in power are anxious to suppress dissenting theories and to persecute their supporters. The very fact that there are intolerant governments and political parties intent upon outlawing and exterminating dissenters, is a proof of the excellence of reason. It is not a conclusive proof of a doctrine's correctness that its adversaries use the police, the hangman, and violent mobs to fight it. But it is a proof of the fact that those taking recourse to violent oppression are in their subconsciousness convinced of the untenability of their own doctrines.

It is impossible to demonstrate the validity of the a priori foundations of logic and praxeology without referring to these foundations themselves. Reason is an ultimate given and cannot be analyzed or questioned by itself. The very existence of human reason is a nonrational fact. The only statement that can be predicated with regard to reason is that it is the mark that distinguishes man from animals and has brought about everything that is specifically human.

To those pretending that man would be happier if he were to renounce the use of reason and try to let himself be guided by intuition and instincts only, no other answer can be given than an analysis of the achievements of human society. In describing the genesis and working of social cooperation, economics provides all the information required for an ultimate decision between reason and unreason. If man reconsiders freeing himself from the supremacy of reason, he must know what he will have to forsake.