
READINGS IN SOCIAL THEORY

The Classic Tradition to Post-Modernism

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Karl Mannheim: Sociology of Knowledge and the Role of Intellectuals

INTRODUCTION

Karl Mannheim was born on March 27, 1893, in Budapest, of Jewish middle-class parents. Attending the *Gymnasium*, Mannheim was heavily influenced by the thriving intellectual community around him. Along with many Jewish intellectuals, Mannheim developed a critical and insightful worldview because of his marginal status. Mannheim studied with Georg Simmel in Berlin during 1912–1913. He was a member of the Society for Social Science, a group of predominantly Jewish intellectuals who met regularly to discuss the ideas of major European and American thinkers. Later Mannheim came under the influence of a brilliant young Hungarian intellectual, Georg Lukacs, a literary critic with strong interests in the theory of aesthetics, when he joined a small group of idealistic intellectuals called the Free School for the Humanities. His views were generally considered leftist, although Mannheim was not a political activist, preferring to engage in a critique of the culture of capitalism.

After the October Revolution of 1918, Mannheim taught at the University of Budapest under his mentor Lukacs, who was an active

member of the Communist Party. However, the Hungarian communist government collapsed a year later, and Mannheim was forced to flee from Hungary to Germany, as an anti-communist backlash threatened anyone associated with the party. While in Germany, he was influenced by the blossoming academic atmosphere: he attended lectures by the philosopher Martin Heidegger, studied with Alfred Weber, and was influenced by the Neo-Kantians and by Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology.

In 1927, Mannheim became a professor of economics and sociology at the University of Frankfurt, where he taught until he was forced to flee from the Nazis to England in 1933. In the six years he spent at Frankfurt, he produced most of his best-known works, including *Ideology and Utopia*. Mannheim's intellectual interests shifted as he moved from Germany to England. Whereas the earlier focus of his work was the sociology of knowledge, during the war years he became an engaged intellectual concerned with the future of democracy and the role to be played by intellectuals in the future.

Mannheim developed his early work within the context of the sociology of knowledge, an idea first generated from within Marxist thought concerning the relationship of ideas to their historical context. Marx wrote that the ruling ideas in a society were the ideas of the ruling class. What Marx was interested in unearthing was the ideological function that ideas may serve when they are considered true. In this instance Marx is calling attention to the "false consciousness" of the proletariat in believing those ideas about liberty and property that clearly benefit their exploiters, the bourgeoisie. Marx also spoke of "true consciousness" as the condition of the proletariat when it comprehends its objective condition under capitalism and recognizes how its earlier beliefs have mystified that reality.

Mannheim conceived of knowledge as historically determined, tied to both time and circumstance. "Ideology" was the term he employed to characterize the ideas which support the status quo, and "utopia" was that complex of ideas that favored change. The important point here is that, for Mannheim, both sets of ideas advance historical interests and in that sense both have equivalent standing. The utopian ideas do not have any more truth simply because they argue for change. Mannheim's position is clearly in opposition to that of Marx, who saw in the "true consciousness" the potential for revolutionary *praxis* that would establish a new truth in the world through the transformation of social reality.

For Marx, the idea of emancipation is a universally valid idea and is absolutely true because it speaks directly to what constitutes being human. Mannheim saw emancipatory ideas as those which benefit the proletariat, just as the bourgeois ideas about liberty and property benefit the ruling class. He refused to assert that one was true and the other not. The sociologist of knowledge cannot, he claimed, make a scientific judgment about these matters. What is possible is the careful examination of the circumstances, the context, and the interests that

will be, or have been, served by a complex of ideas. In short, Mannheim accepted Marx's sociology of knowledge without its emancipatory *praxis*.

In elaborating his basic thesis, Mannheim argued that ideas, facts, and events had to be understood contextually, that is, in the relation to the dominant historical forces and trends. There are no eternal or universal truths but only truth claims that always reflect a particular social interest or perspective. Marxism is best seen as an idea system like all others, that is, an idea complex that is relative to time, place, and interest. In formulating the problem in this manner, Mannheim was grafting Weber's views on value relevance and perspectives onto Marx's sociology of knowledge, claiming that the only truth we can establish is relational, i.e., between ideas and their historical and social location.

Mannheim designated a special role for the intellectual, whom he viewed as unattached. By virtue of their training, intellectuals are uniquely suited to be critical of all perspectives and are thus less likely to be special pleaders for a particular class or party. The free-floating intellectual can see a variety of perspectives, engage in holistic analysis, entertain general ideas, and be critical and reflective.

Mannheim furthered his original formulations when he claimed that entire categories of thought are relative to time and place. It is not enough to deconstruct ideologies: one must further examine the concepts and methods that encompass a worldview. For example, although one can point to Marxism's historical relativity, one can go further to penetrate the Marxist worldview, its assumptions about human nature, the evolution of history, its vision of freedom.

Mannheim's writings on social reconstruction, completed during his exile in England, seem particularly salient given the course of events in contemporary society. In place of an unattached intelligentsia, Mannheim now

called for intellectuals committed to the principles of democracy, social justice, equality, and harmony. The intellectual strata must play an active political role in influencing the political elites and educating a population for the preservation of democracy. Social change had to be planned in order to avoid the chaos and violence that could erupt from any shocks to the system, such as depression or inflation.

Fresh from the experiences of World War II, Mannheim sought to avoid the consequences of mass politics so evident in the Nazi regime. To this end he called for the use of social techniques of manipulation and propaganda to

advance a democratic ideology, to develop a new collective conscience, and to secure a world of harmony and stability.

In reading the extracts below, the following questions should be kept in mind: If all knowledge is situated and relational, is there any way to get at the truth of things? Are intellectuals really as free from interests as Mannheim depicts them? What kinds of interests do you think intellectuals project into the political arena? Is there any relationship between the relativity of perspectives and the democratic process?

Karl Mannheim: The Prospects of Scientific Politics

The Relationship between Social Theory and Political Practice

WHY IS THERE NO SCIENCE OF POLITICS?

The emergence and disappearance of problems on our intellectual horizon are governed by a principle of which we are not yet fully aware. Even the rise and disappearance of whole systems of knowledge may ultimately be reduced to certain factors and thus become explicable. There have already been attempts in the history of art to discover why and in what periods such plastic arts as sculpture, relief-modelling or other arts arise and become the dominant art-form of a period. In the same manner the sociology of knowledge should seek to investigate the conditions under which problems and disciplines come into being and pass away. The sociologist in the long run must be able to do better than to attribute the emergence and solution of problems to the mere existence of certain talented individuals. The existence of and the complex interrelationship between the problems of a given time and place must be viewed and understood against the background of the structure of the society in which they occur, although this may not always give us an understanding of every detail. The isolated thinker may have the impression that his crucial ideas occurred to him personally, independent of his social setting. It is easy for one living in a provincial and circumscribed social world to think that the events which touch him are isolated facts for which fate alone is responsible. Sociology, however, cannot be content with understanding immediate problems and events emerging from this

myopic perspective which obscures every significant relationship. These seemingly isolated and discrete facts must be comprehended in the ever-present but constantly changing configurations of experience in which they actually are lived. Only in such a context do they acquire meaning. If the sociology of knowledge should have any measure of success in this type of analysis, many problems which hitherto, as regards their origins at least, have been unsolved, would be cleared up. Such a development would also enable us to see why sociology and economics are of such recent birth and why they advanced in one country and were retarded and beset by so many obstacles in others. Likewise it will be possible to solve a problem which has always gone unanswered: namely why we have not yet witnessed the development of a science of politics. In a world which is permeated by a rationalistic ethos, as is our own, this fact represents a striking anomaly.

There is scarcely a sphere of life about which we do not have some scientific knowledge as well as recognized methods of communicating this knowledge. Is it conceivable then, that the sphere of human activity on the mastery of which our fate rests is so unyielding that scientific research cannot force it to give up its secrets? The disquieting and puzzling features of this problem cannot be disregarded. The question must have already occurred to many whether this is merely a temporary condition, to be overcome at a later date, or whether we have reached, in this sphere, the outermost limit of knowledge which can never be transcended?

It may be said in favour of the former possibility that the social sciences are still in their infancy. It would be possible to conclude that the immaturity of the more fundamental social sciences explains the retardation of this "applied" science. If this were so, it would be only a question of time until this backwardness were overcome, and further research might be expected to yield a control over society comparable to that which we now have over the physical world.

Source From Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: HBJ, 1955). Reprinted by permission Routledge in Canada.

The opposite point of view finds support in the vague feeling that political behaviour is qualitatively different from any other type of human experience, and that the obstacles in the way of its rational understanding are much more insurmountable than is the case in other realms of knowledge. Hence, it is assumed that all attempts to subject these phenomena to scientific analysis are foredoomed to failure because of the peculiar nature of the phenomena to be analysed.

Even a correct statement of the problem would be an achievement of value. To become aware of our ignorance would bring considerable relief since we would then know why actual knowledge and communication are not possible in this case. Hence the first task is a precise definition of the problem which is—What do we mean when we ask: Is a science of politics possible?

There are certain aspects of politics which are immediately intelligible and communicable. An experienced and trained political leader should know the history of his own country, as well as the history of the countries immediately connected with his own and constituting the surrounding political world. Consequently, at the least, a knowledge of history and the relevant statistical data are useful for his own political conduct. Furthermore, the political leader should know something about the political institutions of the countries with which he is concerned. It is essential that his training be not only juristic but also include a knowledge of the social relations which underlie the institutional structure and through which it functions. He must likewise be abreast of the political ideas which mould the tradition in which he lives. Similarly he cannot afford to be ignorant of the political ideas of his opponents. There are still further though less immediate questions, which in our own times have undergone continual elaboration, namely the technique for manipulating crowds without which it is impossible to get on in mass-democracies. History, statistics,

political theory, sociology, history of ideas, and social psychology, among many other disciplines, represent fields of knowledge important to the political leader. Were we interested in setting up a curriculum for the education of the political leader, the above studies would no doubt have to be included. The disciplines mentioned above, however, offer no more than practical knowledge which, if one happens to be a political leader, might be of use. But even all of these disciplines added together do not produce a science of politics. At best they may serve as auxiliary disciplines to such a science. If we understood by politics merely the sum of all those bits of practical knowledge which are useful for political conduct, then there would be no question about the fact that a science of politics in this sense existed, and that this science could be taught. The only pedagogical problem would consist, then, in selecting from the infinite store of existing facts those most relevant for the purposes of political conduct.

However, it is probably evident from this somewhat exaggerated statement that the questions "Under what conditions is a science of politics possible and how may it be taught?" do not refer to the above-mentioned body of practical information. In what then does the problem consist?

The disciplines which were listed above are structurally related only in so far as they deal with society and the state as if they were the final products of past history. Political conduct, however, is concerned with the state and society in so far as they are still in the process of becoming. Political conduct is confronted with a process in which every moment creates a unique situation and seeks to disentangle out of this ever-flowing stream of forces something of enduring character. The question then is: "Is there a science of this becoming, a science of creative activity?"

The first stage in the delineation of the problem is thus attained. What (in the realm of the social) is the significance of this contrast

between what has already become and what is in the process of becoming?

The Austrian sociologist and statesman Albert Schäffle¹ pointed out that at any moment of socio-political life two aspects are discernible—first, a series of social events which have acquired a set pattern and recur regularly; and, second, those events which are still in the process of becoming, in which, in individual cases, decisions have to be made that give rise to new and unique situations. The first he called the “routine affairs of state,” *laufendes Staatsleben*; the second “politics.” The meaning of this distinction will be clarified by a few illustrations. When, in the accustomed life of an official, current business is disposed of in accordance with existing rules and regulations, we are, according to Schäffle, in the realm of “administration” rather than of “politics.” Administration is the domain where we can see exemplified what Schäffle means by “routine affairs of state.” Wherever each new case may be taken care of in a prescribed manner, we are faced not with politics but with the settled and recurrent side of social life. Schäffle uses an illuminating expression from the field of administration itself to give point to his distinction. For such cases as can be settled by merely consulting an established rule, i.e., according to precedent, the German word *Schimmel*,² which is derived from the Latin *simile* is used, signifying that the case in hand is to be disposed of in a manner *similar* to precedents that already exist. We are in the realm of politics when envoys to foreign countries conclude treaties which were never made before; when parliamentary representatives carry through new measures of taxation; when an election campaign is waged; when certain opposition groups prepare a revolt or organize strikes—or when these are suppressed.

¹Cf. A. Schäffle, “Über den wissenschaftlichen Begriff der Politik,” *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, vol. 53 (1897).

²The German word *Schimmel* means “mould.” [Translator’s note.]

It must be admitted that the boundary between these two classes is in reality rather flexible. For instance, the cumulative effect of a gradual shift of administrative procedure in a long series of concrete cases may actually give rise to a new principle. Or, to take a reverse instance, something as unique as a new social movement may be deeply permeated with “stereotyped” and routinized elements. Nevertheless the contrast between the “routine affairs of state” and “politics” offers a certain polarity which may serve as a fruitful point of departure. If the dichotomy is conceived more theoretically, we may say: Every social process may be divided into a rationalized sphere consisting of settled and routinized procedures in dealing with situations that recur in an orderly fashion, and the “irrational” by which it is surrounded.³ We are, therefore, distinguishing between the “rationalized” structure of society and the “irrational” matrix. A further observation presents itself at this point. The chief characteristic of modern culture is the

³For the sake of precision, the following remark should be added: The expression “settled routinized elements” is to be regarded figuratively. Even the most formalized and ossified features of society are not to be regarded as things held in store in an attic, to be taken out when needed for use. Laws, regulations, and established customs only have an existence in that living experiences constantly call them *into being*. This settledness signifies merely that social life, while constantly renewing itself, conforms to rules and formal processes already inherent in it and this constantly generates itself anew in a recurrent manner. Similarly, the use of the expression “rationalized sphere” must be taken in the broader sense. It may mean either a theoretical, rational approach, as in the case of a technique which is rationally calculated and determined; or it may be used in the sense of “rationalization” in which a sequence of events follows a regular, expected (probable) course, as is the case with convention, usage, or custom, where the sequence of events is not fully understood, but in its structure seems to have a certain settled character. Max Weber’s use of the term “stereotype” as the broader class might be used here, and two sub-classes of the stereotyping tendency then distinguished, (a) traditionalism, (b) rationalism. Inasmuch as this distinction is not relevant for our present purpose, we will use the concept “rationalized structure” in the more comprehensive sense in which Max Weber uses the general notion of stereotyping.

tendency to include as much as possible in the realm of the rational and to bring it under administrative control—and, on the other hand, to reduce the “irrational” element to the vanishing point.

A simple illustration will clarify the meaning of this assertion. The traveller of 150 years ago was exposed to a thousand accidents. Today everything proceeds according to schedule. Fare is exactly calculated and a whole series of administrative measures have made travel into a rationally controlled enterprise. The perception of the distinction between the rationalized scheme and the irrational setting in which it operates provides the possibility for a definition of the concept “conduct.”

The action of a petty official who disposes of a file of documents in the prescribed manner, or of a judge who finds that a case falls under the provisions of a certain paragraph in the law and disposes of it accordingly, or finally of a factory worker who produces a screw by following the prescribed technique, would not fall under our definition of “conduct.” Nor for that matter would the action of a technician who, in achieving a given end, combined certain general laws of nature. All these modes of behaviour would be considered as merely “reproductive” because they are executed in a rational framework, according to a definite prescription entailing no personal decision whatsoever. Conduct, in the sense in which we use it, does not begin until we reach the area where rationalization has not yet penetrated, and where we are forced to make decisions in situations which have as yet not been subjected to regulation. It is in such situations that the whole problem of the relations between theory and practice arises. Concerning this problem, on the basis of the analyses thus far made, we may even at this stage venture a few further remarks.

There is no question that we do have some knowledge concerning that part of social life in which everything and life itself has already been rationalized and ordered. Here the conflict between theory and practice does not become

an issue because, as a matter of fact, the mere treatment of an individual case by subjecting it to a generally existing law can hardly be designated as political practice. Rationalized as our life may seem to have become, all the rationalizations that have taken place so far are merely partial since the most important realms of our social life are even now anchored in the irrational. Our economic life, although extensively rationalized on the technical side, and in some limited connections calculable, does not, as a whole, constitute a planned economy. In spite of all tendencies towards trustification and organization, free competition still plays a decisive role. Our social structure is built along class lines, which means that not objective tests but irrational forces of social competition and struggle decide the place and function of the individual in society. Dominance in national and international life is achieved through struggle, in itself irrational, in which chance plays an important part. These irrational forces in society form that sphere of social life which is unorganized and unrationalized, and in which conduct and politics become necessary. The two main sources of irrationalism in the social structure (uncontrolled competition and domination by force) constitute the realm of social life which is still unorganized and where politics becomes necessary. Around these two centres there accumulate those other more profound irrational elements, which we usually call emotions. Viewed from the sociological standpoint there is a connection between the extent of the unorganized realm of society where uncontrolled competition and domination by force prevail, and the social integration of emotional reactions.

The problem then must be stated: What knowledge do we have or is it possible concerning this realm of social life and of the type of conduct which occurs in it?⁴ But now our

⁴It is necessary here to repeat that the concept of the “political” as used in conjunction with the correlative concepts, rationalized structure, and irrational field, represents

original problem has been stated in the most highly developed form in which it seems to lend itself to clarification. Having determined where the realm of the political truly begins, and where conduct in a true sense is possible, we can indicate the difficulties existing in the relationship between theory and practice.

The great difficulties which confront scientific knowledge in this realm arise from the fact that we are not dealing here with rigid, objective entities but with tendencies and strivings in a constant state of flux. A further difficulty is that the constellation of the interacting forces changes continuously. Wherever the same forces, each unchanging in character, interact, and their interaction, too, follows a regular course, it is possible to formulate general laws. This is not quite so easy where new forces are incessantly entering the system and forming unforeseen combinations. Still another difficulty is that the observer himself does not stand outside the realm of the irrational, but is a participant in the conflict of forces. This participation inevitably binds him to a partisan view through his evaluations and interests. Furthermore, and most important, is the fact that not only is the political theorist a participant in the conflict because of his values, and interests, but the particular manner in which the problem presents itself to him, his most general mode of thought including even his categories, are bound up with general political and social undercurrents. So true is this that, in the realm of political and social thinking, we must, in my judgment, recognize actual differences in styles of thought—differences that extend even into the realm of logic itself.

only one of many possible concepts of the "political." While particularly suited for the comprehension of certain relationships, it must not be regarded as absolutely the only one. For an opposite notion of the "political" cf. C. Schmitt, "Der Begriff des Politischen," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, vol. 58 (1928).

In this, doubtless, lies the greatest obstacle to a science of politics. For according to ordinary expectations a science of conduct would be possible only when the fundamental structure of thought is independent of the different forms of conduct being studied. Even though the observer be a participant in the struggle, the basis of his thinking, i.e., his observational apparatus and his method of settling intellectual differences, must be above the conflict. A problem cannot be solved by obscuring its difficulties, but only by stating them as sharply and as pronouncedly as possible. Hence it is our task definitely to establish the thesis that in politics the statement of a problem and the logical techniques involved vary with the political position of the observer.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF KNOWLEDGE

We shall now make an effort to show by means of a concrete example that political-historical thinking assumes various forms, in accordance with different political currents. In order not to go too far afield, we shall concentrate primarily on the relationship between theory and practice. We shall see that even this most general and fundamental problem of a science of political conduct is differently conceived by the different historical-political parties.

This may be easily seen by a survey of the various political and social currents of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As the most important representative ideal-types, we cite the following:

1. Bureaucratic conservatism.
2. Conservative historicism.
3. Liberal-democratic bourgeois thought.
4. The socialist-communist conception.
5. Fascism.

The mode of thought of bureaucratic conservatism will be considered first. The fundamental tendency of all bureaucratic thought is to

turn all problems of politics into problems of administration. As a result, the majority of books on politics in the history of German political science are *de facto* treatises on administration. If we consider the role that bureaucracy has always played, especially in the Prussian state, and to what extent the intelligentsia was largely an intelligentsia drawn from the bureaucracy, this one-sidedness of the history of political science in Germany becomes easily intelligible.

The attempt to hide all problems of politics under the cover of administration may be explained by the fact that the sphere of activity of the official exists only within the limits of laws already formulated. Hence the genesis or the development of law falls outside the scope of his activity. As a result of his socially limited horizon, the functionary fails to see that behind every law that has been made there lie the socially fashioned interests and the *Weltanschauungen* of a specific social group. He takes it for granted that the specific order prescribed by the concrete law is equivalent to order in general. He does not understand that every rationalized order is only one of many forms in which socially conflicting irrational forces are reconciled.

The administrative, legalistic mind has its own peculiar type of rationality. When faced with the play of hitherto unharnessed forces, as, for example, the eruption of collective energies in a revolution, it can conceive of them only as momentary disturbances. It is, therefore, no wonder that in every revolution the bureaucracy tries to find a remedy by means of arbitrary decrees rather than to meet the political situation on its own grounds. It regards revolution as an untoward event within an otherwise ordered system and not as the living expression of fundamental social forces on which the existence, the preservation, and the development of society depends. The juristic administrative mentality constructs only closed static systems of thought, and is always faced with the paradoxical task of having to incorporate into its system new laws,

which arise out of the unsystematized interaction of living forces as if they were only a further elaboration of the original system.

A typical example of the military-bureaucratic mentality is every type of the "stab in the back" legend, *Dolchstoßlegende*, which interprets a revolutionary outbreak as nothing but a serious interference with its own neatly planned strategy. The exclusive concern of the military bureaucrat is military action and, if that proceeds according to plan, then all the rest of life is in order too. This mentality is reminiscent of the joke about the specialist in the medical world, who is reputed to have said: "The operation was a splendid success. Unfortunately, the patient died."

Every bureaucracy, therefore, in accord with the peculiar emphasis on its own position, tends to generalize its own experience and to overlook the fact that the realm of administration and of smoothly functioning order represents only a part of the total political reality. Bureaucratic thought does not deny the possibility of a science of politics, but regards it as identical with the science of administration. Thus irrational factors are overlooked, and when these nevertheless force themselves to the fore, they are treated as "routine matters of state." A classic expression of this standpoint is contained in a saying which originated in these circles: "A good administration is better than the best constitution."⁵

In addition to bureaucratic conservatism, which ruled Germany and especially Prussia to a very great extent, there was a second type of conservatism which developed parallel to it and which may be called historical conservatism. It was peculiar to the social group of the nobility and the bourgeois strata among the intellectuals who were the intellectual and actual rulers of the country, but between whom

⁵Obituary of Böhlau by the jurist Bekker. *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung*, Germanist. Abtlg., vol. viii, p. vi ff.

and the bureaucratic conservatives there always existed a certain amount of tension. This mode of thought bore the stamp of the German universities, and especially of the dominant group of historians. Even today, this mentality still finds its support largely in these circles.

Historical conservatism is characterized by the fact that it is aware of that irrational realm in the life of the state which cannot be managed by administration. It recognizes that there is an unorganized and incalculable realm which is the proper sphere of politics. Indeed it focuses its attention almost exclusively on the impulsive, irrational factors which furnish the real basis for the further development of state and society. It regards these forces as entirely beyond comprehension and infers that, as such, human reason is impotent to understand or to control them. Here only a traditionally inherited instinct, "silently working" spiritual forces, the "folk spirit," *Volksgeist*, drawing their strength out of the depths of the unconscious, can be of aid in moulding the future.

This attitude was already stated at the end of the eighteenth century by Burke, who served as the model for most of the German conservatives, in the following impressive words: "The science of constructing a commonwealth of renovating it or reforming it, is like every other experimental science, not to be taught *a priori*. Nor is it a short experience that can instruct us in that practical science."⁶ The sociological roots of this thesis are immediately evident. It expressed the ideology of the dominant nobility in England and in Germany, and it served to legitimize their claims to leadership in the state. The *je ne sais quoi* element in politics, which can be acquired only through long experience, and which reveals itself as a rule only to those who for many generations have shared in political leadership, is intended to justify government by an aristocratic class. This

makes clear the manner in which the social interests of a given group make the members of that group sensitive to certain aspects of social life to which those in another position do not respond. Whereas the bureaucracy is blinded to the political aspect of a situation by reason of its administrative preconceptions, from the very beginning the nobility is perfectly at home in this sphere. Right from the start, the latter have their eyes on the arena where intra- and inter-state spheres of power collide with one another. In this sphere, petty textbook wisdom deserts us and solutions to problems cannot be mechanically deduced from premises. Hence it is not individual intelligence which decides issues. Rather is every event the resultant of actual political forces.

The historical conservative theory, which is essentially the expression of a feudal tradition⁷ become self-conscious, is primarily concerned with problems which transcend the sphere of administration. The sphere is regarded as a completely irrational one which cannot be fabricated by mechanical methods but which grows of its own accord. This outlook relates everything to the decisive dichotomy between "construction according to calculated plan" and "allowing things to grow."⁸ For the political leader it is not sufficient to possess merely the correct knowledge and the mastery of certain laws and norms. In addition to these he must possess that inborn instinct, sharpened through long experience, which leads him to the right answer.

Two types of irrationalism have joined to produce this irrational way of thinking: on the one hand, precapitalistic, traditionalistic irrationalism (which regards legal thinking, for instance, as a way of sensing something and not as mechanical calculation), and, on the other

⁶Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, edited by F. G. Selby (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 67.

⁷Cf. "Das konservative Denken," *loc. cit.*, pp. 89, 105, 133 ff.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 472, n. 129.

hand, romantic irrationalism. A mode of thought is thus created which conceives of history as the reign of pre- and super-rational forces. Even Ranke, the most eminent representative of the historical school, spoke from this intellectual outlook when he defined the relations of theory and practice.⁹ Politics is not, according to him, an independent science that can be taught. The statesman may indeed study history profitably, but not in order to derive from it rules of conduct, but rather because it serves to sharpen his political instinct. This mode of thought may be designated as the ideology of political groups which have traditionally occupied a dominant position but which have rarely participated in the administrative bureaucracy.

If the two solutions thus far presented are contrasted, it will become clear that the bureaucrat tends to conceal the political sphere while the historicist sees it all the more sharply and exclusively as irrational even though he singles out for emphasis the traditional factors in historical events and in the acting subjects. At this stage we come to the chief adversary of this theory which, as has been pointed out, arose originally out of aristocratic feudal mentality, namely, the liberal-democratic bourgeoisie and its theories.¹⁰ The rise of the bourgeoisie was attended by an extreme intellectualism. Intellectualism, as it is used in this connection, refers to a mode of thought which either does not see the elements in life and in thought which are based on will, interest, emotion, and *Weltanschauung*—or, if it does recognize their existence, treats them as though they were equivalent to

the intellect and believes that they may be mastered by and subordinated to reason. This bourgeois intellectualism expressly demanded a scientific politics, and actually proceeded to found such a discipline. Just as the bourgeoisie found the first institutions into which the political struggle could be canalized (first parliament and the electoral system, and later the League of Nations), so it also created a systematic place for the new discipline of politics. The organizational anomaly of bourgeois society appears also in its social theory. The bourgeois attempt at a thoroughgoing rationalization of the world is forced nevertheless to halt when it reaches certain phenomena. By sanctioning free competition and the class struggle, it even creates a new irrational sphere. Likewise in this type of thought, the irrational residue in reality remains undissolved. Furthermore, just as parliament is a formal organization, a formal rationalization of the political conflict but not a solution of it, so bourgeois theory attains merely an apparent, formal intellectualization of the inherently irrational elements.

The bourgeois mind is, of course, aware of this new irrational realm, but it is intellectualistic in so far as it attempts solely through thought, discussion, and organization to master, as if they were already rationalized, the power and other irrational relationships that dominate here. Thus, *inter alia*, it was believed that political action could without difficulty be scientifically defined. The science in question was assumed to fall into three parts:

First—the theory of ends, i.e., the theory of the ideal State.

Second—the theory of the positive State.

Third—"politics," i.e., the description of the manner in which the existing State is transformed into a perfect State.

As an illustration of this type of thought we may refer to the structure of Fichte's "Closed Commercial State" which in this sense has been

⁹Cf. Ranke, *Das politische Gespräch* (1836), ed. by Rothacker (Halle a.d., Saale, 1925), pp. 21 ff. Also other essays on the same theme: "Reflexionen" (1832), "Vom Einfluss der Theorie," "Über die Verwandtschaft und den Unterschied der Historie und der Politik."

¹⁰For the sake of simplicity we do not distinguish liberalism from democracy, although historically and socially they are quite different.

very acutely analysed by Heinrich Rickert,¹¹ who himself, however, completely accepts this position. There is then a science of ends and a science of means. The most striking fact about it is the complete separation between theory and practice, of the intellectual sphere from the emotional sphere. Modern intellectualism is characterized by its tendency not to tolerate emotionally determined and evaluative thinking. When, nevertheless, this type of thought is encountered (and all political thought is set essentially in an irrational context) the attempt is made so to construe the phenomena that the evaluative elements will appear separable, and that there will remain at least a residue of pure theory. In this the question is not even raised whether the emotional element may not under certain circumstances be so intertwined with the rational as to involve even the categorical structure itself and to make the required isolation of the evaluative elements *de facto* unrealizable. Bourgeois intellectualism, however, does not worry over these difficulties. With undaunted optimism, it strives to conquer a sphere completely purged of irrationalism.

As regards ends, this theory teaches that there is one right set of ends of political conduct which, in so far as it has not already been found, may be arrived at by discussion. Thus the original conception of parliamentarism was, as Carl Schmitt has so clearly shown, that of a debating society in which truth is sought by theoretical methods.¹² We know all too well and can understand sociologically wherein the self-deception in this mode of thought lay. Today we recognize that behind every theory there are collective forces expressive of group-purposes, -power, and -interests. Parliamentary

discussions are thus far from being theoretical in the sense that they may ultimately arrive at the objective truth: they are concerned with very real issues to be decided in the clash of interests. It was left for the socialist movement which arose subsequently as the opponent of the bourgeoisie to elaborate specifically this aspect of the debate about real issues.

In our treatment of socialist theory we are not for the time being differentiating between socialism and communism, for we are here concerned not so much with the plethora of historical phenomena as with the tendencies which cluster around the opposite poles that essentially determine modern thought. In the struggle with its bourgeois opponent, Marxism discovered anew that in historical and political matters there can be no "pure theory." It sees that behind every theory there lie collective points of view. The phenomenon of collective thinking, which proceeds according to interests and social and existential situations, Marx spoke of as ideology.

In this case, as so often in political struggles, an important discovery was made, which, once it became known, had to be followed up to its final conclusion. This was the more so since this discovery contained the heart of the problem of political thought in general. The concept ideology serves to point out the problem, but the problem is thereby by no means solved or cleared up.¹³ A thoroughgoing clarification is attainable only by getting rid of the one-sidedness inherent in the original conception. First of all, therefore, it will be necessary for our purpose to make two corrections. To begin with, it

¹¹Cf. Heinrich Rickert, "Über idealistische Politik als Wissenschaft. Ein Beitrag zur Problemgeschichte der Staatsphilosophie," *Die Akademie*, Heft 4, Erlangen.

¹²Cf. Carl Schmitt, *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1926).

¹³For what follows Part II should be referred to for further discussion of the problem, of which only the essentials will be repeated here. The concept of total, general, and non-evaluative ideology, as described earlier, is the one used in the present context. Part IV will deal with the evaluative conceptions of ideology and utopia. Henceforth the concept to be used will be determined by the immediate purposes of the investigation.

could easily be shown that those who think in socialist and communist terms discern the ideological element only in the thinking of their opponents while regarding their own thought as entirely free from any taint of ideology. As sociologists there is no reason why we should not apply to Marxism the perceptions which it itself has produced, and point out from case to case its ideological character. Moreover, it should be explained that the concept "ideology" is being used here not as a negative value-judgment, in the sense of insinuating a conscious political lie, but is intended to designate the outlook inevitably associated with a given historical and social situation, and the *Weltanschauung* and style of thought bound up with it. This meaning of the term, which bears more closely on the history of thought, must be sharply differentiated from the other meaning. Of course, we do not deny that in other connections it may also serve to reveal conscious political lies.

Through this procedure nothing that has a positive value for scientific research in the notion of ideology has been discarded. The great revelation it affords is that every form of historical and political thought is essentially conditioned by the life situation of the thinker and his groups. It is our task to disentangle this insight from its one-sided political encrustation, and to elaborate in a systematic manner the thesis that how one looks at history and how one construes a total situation from given facts, depends on the position one occupies within society. In every historical and political contribution it is possible to determine from what vantage point the objects were observed. However, the fact that our thinking is determined by our social position is not necessarily a source of error. On the contrary, it is often the path to political insight. The significant element in the conception of ideology, in our opinion, is the discovery that political thought is integrally bound up with social life. This is the essential meaning of the oft-quoted sentence, "It is not

the consciousness of men that determines their existence but, on the contrary, their social existence which determines their consciousness."¹⁴

But closely related to this is another important feature of Marxist thought, namely a new conception of the relationship between theory and practice. Whereas the bourgeois theorist devoted a special chapter to setting forth his ends, and whereas this always proceeded from a normative conception of society, one of the most significant steps Marx took was to attack the utopian element in socialism. From the beginning he refused to lay down an exhaustive set of objectives. There is no norm to be achieved that is detachable from the process itself: "Communism for us is not a condition that is to be established nor an ideal to which reality must adjust itself. We call communism the actual movement which abolishes present conditions. The conditions under which this movement proceeds result from those now existing."¹⁵

If today we ask a communist, with a Leninist training, what the future society will actually be like, he will answer that the question is an undialectical one, since the future itself will be decided in the practical dialectical process of becoming. But what is this practical dialectical process?

It signifies that we cannot calculate *a priori* what a thing should be like and what it will be like. We can influence only the general trend of the process of becoming. The ever-present concrete problem for us can only be the next step ahead. It is not the task of political thought to set up an absolute scheme of what should be. Theory, even including communist theory, is a function of the process of becoming. The dialectical relationship between theory and practice

¹⁴Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, tr. by N. I. Stone (Chicago, 1913), pp. 11–12.

¹⁵Cf. *Marx-Engels Archiv*, ed. by D. Ryazanov (Frankfurt a.M.), vol. i, p. 252.

consists in the fact that, first of all, theory arising out of a definitely social impulse clarifies the situation. And in the process of clarification reality undergoes a change. We thereby enter a new situation out of which a new theory emerges. The process is, then, as follows: (1) Theory is a function of reality; (2) This theory leads to a certain kind of action; (3) Action changes the reality, or in case of failure, forces us to a revision of the previous theory. The change in the actual situation brought about by the act gives rise to a new theory.¹⁶

This view of the relationship between theory and practice bears the imprint of an advanced stage in the discussion of the problem. One notes that it was preceded by the one-sidedness of an extreme intellectualism and a complete irrationalism, and that it had to circumvent all the dangers which were already revealed in bourgeois and conservative thought and experience. The advantages of this solution lie in the fact that it has assimilated the previous formulation of the problem, and in its awareness of the fact that in the realm of politics the usual run of thought is unable to accomplish anything. On the other hand, this outlook is too thoroughly motivated by the desire for knowledge to fall into a complete irrationalism like conservatism. The result of the conflict between the two currents of thought is a very flexible conception of theory. A basic lesson derived from political experience which was most impressively formulated by Napoleon in the maxim, "*On s'en-*

gage, puis on voit,"¹⁷ here finds its methodological sanction.¹⁸ Indeed, political thought cannot be carried on by speculating about it from the outside. Rather thought becomes illuminated when a concrete situation is penetrated, not merely through acting and doing, but also through the thinking which must go with them.

Socialist-communist theory is then a synthesis of intuitionism and a determined desire to comprehend phenomena in an extremely rational way. Intuitionism is present in this theory because it denies the possibility of exact calculations of events in advance of their happening. The rationalist tendency enters because it aims to fit into a rational scheme whatever novelty comes to view at any moment. At no time is it permissible to act without theory, but the theory that arises in the course of action will be on a different level from the theory that went before.¹⁹ It is especially revolutions that create a

¹⁷Indeed both Lenin and Lukács, as representatives of the dialectical approach, find justification in this Napoleonic maxim.

¹⁸"Revolutionary theory is the generalization of the experiences of the labour movement in all countries. It naturally loses its very essence if it is not connected with revolutionary practice, just as practice gropes in the dark if its path is not illumined by revolutionary theory. But theory can become the greatest force in the labour movement if it is indissolubly bound up with revolutionary practice, for it alone can give to the movement confidence, guidance, strength, and understanding of the inner relations between events and it alone can help practice to clarify the process and direction of class movements in the present and near future." (Joseph Stalin, *Foundations of Leninism*, rev. ed., New York and London, 1932, pp. 26-7.)

¹⁹Revolution, particularly, creates the situation propitious to significant knowledge: "History in general, the history of revolutions in particular, has always been richer, more varied, and variform, more vital and 'cunning' than is conceived of by the best parties, by the most conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes. This is natural, for the best vanguards express the consciousness, will, passions, and fancies of but tens of thousands, whereas the revolution is effected at the moment of the exceptional exaltation and exertion of all the human faculties—consciousness, will, passion, phantasy, of tens of millions, spurred on by the bitterest class war." (N. Lenin, "*Left*" *Communism: an Infantile Disorder*, published by the Toiler, n.d. pp. 76-7, also New York and London, 1934.)

¹⁶"When the proletariat by means of the class struggle changes its position in society and thereby the whole social structure, in taking cognizance of the changed social situation, i.e. of itself, it finds itself face to face not merely with a new object of understanding, but also changes its position as a knowing subject. The theory serves to bring the proletariat to a consciousness of its social position, i.e. it enables it to envisage itself—simultaneously both as an object and a subject in the social process." (Georg Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, Berlin, 1923.)

"This consciousness in turn becomes the motive force of new activity, since theory becomes a material force once it seizes the masses." (Marx-Engels, *Nachlass*, i, p. 392.)

more valuable type of knowledge. This constitutes the synthesis which men are likely to make when they live in the midst of irrationality and recognize it as such, but do not despair of the attempt to interpret it rationally. Marxist thought is akin to conservative thought in that it does not deny the existence of an irrational sphere and does not try to conceal it as the bureaucratic mentality does, or treat it in a purely intellectual fashion as if it were rational, as liberal-democratic thinkers do. It is distinguished from conservative thought, however, in that it conceives of this relative irrationality as potentially comprehensible through new methods of rationalization.²⁰ For even in this type of thought, the sphere of the irrational is not entirely irrational, arbitrary, or incomprehensible. It is true that there are no statically fixed and definite laws to which this creative process conforms, nor are there any exactly recurring sequences of events, but at the same time only a limited number of situations can occur even here. And this after all is the decisive consideration. Even when new elements in historical development emerge they do not constitute merely a chain of unexpected events; the political sphere itself is permeated by tendencies which, even though they are subject to change, through their very presence do nevertheless determine to a large extent the various possibilities.

It is interesting to observe that from this point of view revolution appears not as an intensification of the passions resident in men nor as mere irrationality. This passion is valuable only because it makes possible the fusion of the accumulated rationality tested out experimentally in the individual experiences of millions.

²⁰Thus, fate, chance, everything sudden and unexpected, and the religious view which arises therefrom, are conceived of as functions of the degree in which our understanding of history has not yet reached the stage or rationality.

"Fear of the blind forces of capitalism, blind because they cannot be foreseen by the masses of the people, forces which at every step in the lives of the proletariat and the small traders threaten to bring and do bring 'sudden,'

Therefore, the first task of Marxism is the analysis and rationalization of all those tendencies which influence the character of the situation. Marxist theory has elaborated these structural tendencies in a threefold direction. First, it points out that the political sphere in a given society is based on and is always characterized by the state of productive relations prevailing at the time.²¹ The productive relations are not regarded statically as a continually recurring economic cycle, but, dynamically, as a structural interrelationship which is itself constantly changing through time.

Secondly, it sees that changes in this economic factor are most closely connected with transformations in class relations, which involves at the same time a shift in the kinds of power and an ever-varying distribution of power.

But, thirdly, it recognizes that it is possible to understand the inner structure of the system of ideas dominating men at any period and to determine theoretically the direction of any change or modification in this structure.

Still more important is the fact that these three structural patterns are not considered independently of one another. It is precisely their reciprocal relations which are made to constitute a single group of problems. The ideological structure does not change independently of the class structure, and the class structure does not change independently of the

'unexpected,' 'accidental' disaster and ruin, converting them into beggars, paupers, or prostitutes, and condemn them to starvation; these are the roots of modern religion, which the materialist, if he desires to remain a materialist, must recognize. No educational books will obliterate religion from the minds of those condemned to the hard labour of capitalism, until they themselves learn to fight in a united, organized, systematic, conscious manner the roots of religion, the domination of capital in all its forms." (*Selections from Lenin—The Bolshevik Party in Action, 1904–1914*, ii. From the essay, "The Workers' Party and Religion," New York, pp. 274–5.)

²¹"The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life." (Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, tr. by N. I. Stone, Chicago, 1913, p. 11.)

economic structure. And it is precisely the interconnection and intertwining of this threefold formulation of the problem, the economic, the social, and the ideological, that gives to Marxist ideas their singularly penetrating quality. Only this synthetic power enables it to formulate ever anew the problem of the structural totality of society, not only for the past but also for the future. The paradox lies in the fact that Marxism recognizes relative irrationality and never loses sight of it. But unlike the historical school it does not content itself with a mere acceptance of the irrational. Instead it tries to eliminate as much of it as possible by a new effort at rationalization.

Here again the sociologist is confronted with the question of the general historical-social form of existence and the particular situation from which the mode of thought peculiar to Marxism arose. How can we explain its singular character which consists in combining an extreme irrationalism with an extreme rationalism in such a manner that out of this fusion there arises a new kind of "dialectical" rationality?

Considered sociologically, this is the theory of an ascendent class which is not concerned with momentary successes, and which therefore will not resort to a "putsch" as a means for seizing power, but which, because of its inherent revolutionary tendencies, must always be sensitive and alert to unpredictable constellations in the situation. Every theory which arises out of a class position and is based not on unstable masses but on organized historical groups must of necessity have a long-range view. Consequently, it requires a thoroughly rationalized view of history on the basis of which it will be possible at any moment to ask ourselves where we are now and at what stage of development does our movement find itself.²²

²²"Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement." (Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* New York and London, 1931.)

Groups of pre-capitalistic origin, in which the communal element prevails, may be held together by traditions or by common sentiments alone. In such a group, theoretical reflection is of entirely secondary importance. On the other hand, in groups which are not welded together primarily by such organic bonds of community life, but which merely occupy similar positions in the social-economic system, rigorous theorizing is a prerequisite of cohesion. Viewed sociologically this extreme need for theory is the expression of a class society in which persons must be held together not by local proximity but by similar circumstances of life in an extensive social sphere. Sentimental ties are effective only within a limited spatial area, while a theoretical *Weltanschauung* has a unifying power over great distances. Hence a rationalized conception of history serves as a socially unifying factor for groups dispersed in space, and at the same time furnishes continuity to generations which continuously grow up into similar social conditions. In the formation of classes, a similar position in the social order and a unifying theory are of primary importance. Emotional ties which subsequently spring up are only a reflection of the already existing situation and are always more or less regulated by theory. Despite this extreme rationalizing tendency, which is implicit in the proletarian class position, the limits of the rationality of this class are defined by its oppositional and, particularly, by its allotted revolutionary position.

Revolutionary purpose prevents rationality from becoming absolute. Even though in modern times the tendency toward rationalization proceeds on such an extensive scale that revolts,²³ which originally were only irrational outbursts, are organized on this plane after a

²³"The armed uprising is a special form of the political struggle. It has developmental laws of its own and these must be learned. Karl Marx expressed this with extraordinary vividness when he wrote that the revolt is just as much an art as war" (Lenin, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Wien, 1925, p. 448.)

bureaucratic fashion, still there must remain somewhere in our conception of history and our scheme of life a place for the essential irrationality which goes with revolution.

Revolution means that somewhere there is an anticipation of and an intent to provoke a breach in the rationalized structure of society. It necessitates, therefore, a watchfulness for the favourable moment in which the attack must be risked. If the whole social and political sphere were conceived of as thoroughly rationalized, it would imply that we would no longer have to be on the lookout for such a breach. The moment, however, is nothing more than that irrational element in the "here and now," which every theory, by virtue of its generalizing tendency, obscures. But since, so long as one needs and wants revolution, one cannot allow this favourable moment, during which the breach occurs, to pass, there develops a gap in the theoretical picture which indicates that the irrational element is valued for what it really is—is valued essentially in its irrationality.

All this dialectical thinking begins by rationalizing what seemed to the historical-conservative groups totally irrational; it does not, however, go so far in its rationalizing tendency as to yield a totally static picture of what is in process of becoming.

This element of the irrational is embodied in the concept of dialectical transformation. The dominant tendencies in the political sphere are not here construed as mathematically calculable combinations of forces, but rather as capable, at a certain point, of sudden transformation when thrown out of the orbit of their original tendencies. Naturally, this transformation is never subject to prediction; on the contrary, it always depends on the revolutionary act of the proletariat. Thus intellectualism is by no means deemed legitimate in all situations. Quite on the contrary, there appear to be two occasions in which the intuition necessary to comprehend the situation is aroused. First, it always remains incalculable and is left for political intuition to

ascertain when the situation is ripe for revolutionary transformation and, second, historical events are never so exactly determinable in advance that it is superfluous to invoke action to change them.

Marxist thought appears as the attempt to rationalize the irrational. The correctness of this analysis is vouched for by the fact that to the extent that Marxian proletarian groups rise to power, they shake off the dialectical elements of their theory and begin to think in the generalizing methods of liberalism and democracy, which seek to arrive at universal laws, whilst those who, because of their position, still have to resort to revolution, cling to the dialectical element (Leninism).

Dialectical thinking is in fact rationalistic but it culminates in irrationalism. It is constantly striving to answer two questions:—first, what is our position in the social process at the moment? second, what is the demand of the moment? Action is never guided simply by impulse but by a sociological understanding of history. Nevertheless it is not to be assumed that irrational impulses can be entirely eliminated by a logical analysis of the situation and of momentary occurrences. Only through acting in the situation do we address questions to it, and the answer we derive is always in the form of the success or failure of the action. Theory is not torn from its essential connection with action, and action is the clarifying medium in which all theory is tested and develops.

The positive contribution of this theory is that out of its own concrete social experience it shows more and more convincingly that political thought is essentially different from other forms of theorizing. This dialectical mode of thought is further significant in that it has incorporated within itself the problems of both bourgeois rationalism and the irrationalism of historicism.

From irrationalism it has derived the insight that the historical-political sphere is not composed of a number of lifeless objects and that

therefore a method which merely seeks laws must fail. Furthermore this method is fully cognizant of the completely dynamic character of the tendencies that dominate the political realm and, since it is conscious of the connection between political thinking and living experience, it will not tolerate an artificial separation of theory and practice. From rationalism, on the other hand, it has taken over the inclination to view rationally even situations which have previously defied rational interpretation.

As a fifth claimant to a place among modern currents of thought we should mention fascism, which first emerged in our own epoch. Fascism has its own conception of the relations of theory and practice. It is, on the whole, activist and irrational. It couples itself, by preference, with the irrationalist philosophies and political theories of the most modern period. It is especially Bergson, Sorel, and Pareto who, after suitable modification of course, have been incorporated into its *Weltanschauung*. At the very heart of its theory and its practice lies the apotheosis of direct action, the belief in the decisive *deed*, and in the significance attributed to the initiative of a leading *élite*. The essence of politics is to recognize and to grapple with the demands of the hour. Not programmes are important, but unconditional subordination to a leader.²⁴ History is made neither by the masses, nor by ideas, nor by "silently working" forces, but by the *élites* who from time to time assert themselves.²⁵ This is a complete irrationalism but characteristically enough not the kind of irrationalism known to

the conservatives, not the irrational which is at the same time the superrational, not the folk spirit (*Volksgeist*), not silently working forces, not the mystical belief in the creativeness of long stretches of time, but the irrationalism of the deed which negates even interpretation of history. "To be youthful means being able to forget. We Italians are, of course, proud of our history, but we do not need to make it the conscious guide of our actions—it lives in us as part of our biological make-up."²⁶

A special study would be necessary to ascertain the different meanings of the various conceptions of history. It would be easy to show that the diverse intellectual and social currents have different conceptions of history. The conception of history contained in Brodrero's statement is not comparable either to the conservative, the liberal-democratic, or the socialistic conceptions. All these theories, otherwise so antagonistic, share the assumption that there is a definite and ascertainable structure in history within which, so to speak, each event has its proper position. Not everything is possible

²⁶From a statement by Brodrero at the Fourth International Congress for Intellectual Co-operation, Heidelberg, October, 1927.

It is rather difficult to organize fascist ideas into a coherent doctrine. Apart from the fact that it is still undeveloped, fascism itself lays no particular weight upon an integrally knit theory. Its programme changes constantly, depending on the class to which it addresses itself. In this case, more than in most others, it is essential to separate mere propaganda from the real attitude, in order to gain an understanding of its essential character. This seems to lie in its absolute irrationalism and its activism, which explain also the vacillating and volatile theoretical character of fascist theory. Such institutional ideas as the corporative state, professional organizations, etc., are deliberately omitted from our presentation. Our task is to analyse the attitude towards the problem of theory and practice and the view of history which results therefrom. For this reason, we will find it necessary from time to time to give some attention to the theoretical forerunners of this conception, namely Bergson, Sorel, and Pareto. In the history of fascism, two periods may be distinguished, each of which has had distinct ideological repercussions. This first phase, about two years in length, during which fascism was a mere movement, was marked by the infiltration of activist-intuitive elements into its

²⁴Mussolini: "Our programme is quite simple; we wish to rule over Italy. People are always asking us about our programme. There are too many already. Italy's salvation does not depend on programmes but on men and strong wills." (Mussolini, *Reden.*, ed. by H. Meyer, Leipzig, 1928, p. 105. Cf. also pp. 134 ff.)

²⁵Mussolini (*loc. cit.*, p. 13): "You know that I am no worshipper of the new god, the masses. At any rate, history proves that social changes have always been first brought about by minorities, by a mere handful of men."

in every situation.²⁷ This framework which is constantly changing and revolving must be capable of comprehension. Certain experiences, actions, modes of thought, etc., are possible only in certain places and in certain epochs. Reference to history and the study of history or of society are valuable because orientation to them can and must become a determining factor in conduct and in political activity.

However different the picture which conservatives, liberals, and socialists have derived from history, they all agree that history is made up of a set of intelligible interrelations. At first it was believed that it revealed the plan of divine providence, later that it showed the higher purpose of a dynamically and pantheistically conceived spirit. These were only metaphysical gropings towards an extremely fruitful hypothesis for which history was not merely a heterogeneous succession of events in time, but a coherent interaction of the most significant factors. The understanding of the inner structure of history was sought in order to derive therefrom a measuring-rod for one's own conduct.

While the liberals and socialists continued to believe that the historical structure was completely capable of rationalization the former insisting that its development was progressively unilinear, and the latter viewing it as a dialecti-

cal movement, the conservatives sought to understand the structure of the totality of historical development intuitively by a morphological approach. Different as these points of view were in method and content, they all understood political activity as proceeding on an historical background, and they all agreed that in our own epoch, it becomes necessary to orient oneself to the total situation in which one happens to be placed, if political aims are to be realized. This idea of history as an intelligible scheme disappears in the face of the irrationality of the fascist apotheosis of the deed. To a certain degree this was already the case with its syndicalist forerunner, Sorel,²⁸ who had already denied the idea of evolution in a similar sense. The conservatives, the liberals, the socialists were one in assuming that in history it can be shown that there is an interrelationship between events and configurations through which everything, by virtue of its position, acquires significance. Not every event could possibly happen in every situation. Fascism regards every interpretation of history as a mere fictive construction destined to disappear before the deed of the moment as it breaks through the temporal pattern of history.²⁹

That we are dealing here with a theory which holds that history is meaningless is not changed by the fact that in fascist ideology, especially

intellectual-spiritual outlook. This was the period during which syndicalist theories found entrance to fascism. The first "fasci" were syndicalist and Mussolini at that time was said to be a disciple of Sorel. In the second phase, beginning in November, 1921, fascism becomes stabilized and takes a decisive turn towards the right. In this period nationalistic ideas come to the fore. For a discussion of the manner in which its theory became transformed, in accordance with the changing class basis, and especially the transformations since high finance and large-scale industry allied themselves to it, cf. E. v. Beckerath, *Wesen und Werden des fascistischen Staates* (Berlin, 1927).

²⁷In contrast to this, Mussolini said: "For my own part I have no great confidence in these ideals [i.e. pacifism]. Nonetheless, I do not exclude them. I never exclude anything. Anything is possible, even the most impossible and most senseless" (*loc. cit.*, p. 74).

²⁸As regards Mussolini's relations with Sorel: Sorel knew him before 1914 and, indeed in 1912, is reported to have said the following concerning him: "Mussolini is no ordinary Socialist. Take my word, some day you will see him at the head of a sacred battalion, saluting the Italian flag. He is an Italian in the style of the fifteenth century—a veritable *condottiere*. One does not know him yet, but he is the only man active enough to be capable of curing the weakness of the government." Quoted from Gaëtan Pirou, *Georges Sorel (1847–1922)*, Paris (Marcel Rivière), 1927, p. 53. Cf. also the review by Ernst Posse in *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, vol. 13, pp. 431 ff.

²⁹Cf. the essay by H. O. Ziegler, "Ideologienlehre" in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 1927, vol. 57, pp. 657 ff. This author undertakes from the point of view of Pareto, Sorel, etc., to demolish the "myth of history." He denies that history contains any ascertainable coherence

since its turn to the right, there are found the ideas of the "national war" and the ideology of the "Roman Empire." Apart from the fact that these ideas were, from the very first, consciously experienced as myths, i.e., as fictions, it should be understood that historically oriented thought and activity do not mean the romantic idealization of some past epoch or event, but consist rather in the awareness of one's place in the historical process which has a clearly articulated structure. It is this clear articulation of the structure which makes one's own participation in the process intelligible.

The intellectual value of all political and historical knowledge *qua* knowledge, disappears in the face of this purely intuitional approach, which appreciates only its ideological and mythological aspect. Thought is significant here only in so far as it exposes the illusory character of these fruitless theories of history and unmask them as self-deceptions. For this activist intuitionism, thought only clears the way for the pure deed free from illusions. The superior person, the leader, knows that all political and historical ideas are myths. He himself is entirely emancipated from them, but he values them—and this is the obverse side of his attitude—because they are "derivations" (in Pareto's sense) which stimulate enthusiastic feelings and set in motion irrational "residues" in men, and are the only forces that lead to political activity.³⁰ This is a translation into practice of what Sorel and Pareto³¹ formulated in their

and points out various contemporary currents of thought which also affirm this unhistorical approach. Mussolini expressed the same thought in political-rhetorical form: "We are not hysterical women fearfully awaiting what the future will bring. We are not waiting for the destiny and revelation of history" (*loc. cit.*, p. 129) and further—"We do not believe that history repeats itself, that it follows a prescribed route."

³⁰Cf. G. Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence* (Paris, 1921), chap. 4, pp. 167 ff.

³¹A concise statement of Pareto's sociological views may be found in Bousquet's *Précis de sociologie d'après Vilfredo Pareto* (Paris, 1925).

theories of the myth and which resulted in their theory of the role of the *élites* and advance guards.

The profound scepticism towards science and especially cultural sciences which arises from the intuitional approach is not difficult to understand. Whereas Marxism placed an almost religious faith in science, Pareto saw in it only a formal social mechanics. In fascism we see the sober scepticism of this representative of the late bourgeois epoch combined with the self-confidence of a movement still in its youth. Pareto's scepticism towards the knowable is maintained intact, but is supplemented by a faith in the deed as such and in its own vitality.³²

When everything which is peculiarly historical is treated as inaccessible to science, all that remains for scientific research is the exploration of that most general stratum of regularities which are the same for all men and for all times. Apart from social mechanics, social psychology alone is recognized. The knowledge of social psychology is of value to the leaders purely as a technique for manipulating the masses. This primitive deep-lying stratum of man's psyche is alike in all men whether we deal with the men of today, or of ancient Rome, or of the Renaissance.

We find here that this intuitionism has suddenly fused with the quest of the contemporary bourgeoisie for general laws. The result was the gradual elimination from positivism, as represented by Comte for instance, of all traces of a philosophy of history in order to build a generalizing sociology. On the other hand, the beginnings of the conception of ideology which marks the theory of useful myths may be traced

³²Mussolini, in one of his speeches, said: "We have created a myth. This myth is a faith, a noble enthusiasm. It does not have to be a reality, it is an impulse and a hope, belief, and courage. Our myth is the nation, the great nation which we wish to make into a concrete reality." (Quoted from Carl Schmitt, *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus*, p. 89.)

largely to Marxism. There are, nevertheless, upon closer examination essential differences.

Marxism, too, raises the issue of ideology in the sense of the "tissue of lies," the "mystifications," the "fictions" which it seeks to expose. It does not, however, bring every attempt at an interpretation of history into this category but only those to which it is in opposition. Not every type of thought is labelled "ideology." Only social strata who have need for disguises and who, from their historical and social situation will not and cannot perceive the true interrelations as they actually exist, necessarily fall victims to these deceptive experiences. But every idea, even a correct one, through the very fact that it can be conceived, appears to be related to a certain historical-social situation. The fact that all thought is related to a certain historical-social situation does not, however, rob it of all possibility of attaining the truth. The intuitional approach on the other hand, which so repeatedly asserts itself in fascist theory, conceives of knowledge and rationalizability as somewhat uncertain and of ideas as of altogether secondary significance.³³ Only a limited knowledge about history or politics is possible—namely that which is contained in the social mechanics and social psychology referred to above.

For fascism, the Marxian idea of history as a structural integration of economic and social forces in the final analysis is also merely a myth. Just as the character of the historical process is, in the course of time, disintegrated, so the class conception of society is rejected too. There is no proletariat—there are only proletariats.³⁴ It is characteristic of this type of thought and this mode of life that history dissolves itself into a number of transitory situations in which two factors are decisive; on the one hand, the *élan* of

the great leader and of the vanguard of *élites* and on the other the mastery of the only type of knowledge which it is believed possible to obtain concerning the psychology of the masses and the technique of their manipulation. Politics is then possible as a science only in a limited sense—in so far, namely, as it clears the way for action.

It does this in a twofold manner: first, by destroying all the illusions which make us see history as a process; and, secondly, by reckoning with and observing the mass-mind, especially its power-impulses and their functioning. Now to a great extent this mass psyche does, in fact, follow timeless laws because it itself stands outside the course of historical development. By way of contrast, the historical character of the social psyche is perceptible only to groups and persons occupying a definite position in the historical social structure.

In the final analysis, this theory of politics has its roots in Machiavelli, who already laid down its fundamental tenets. The idea of *virtù* anticipates the *élan* of the great leader. A disillusioning realism which destroys all idols, and constant recourse to a technique for the psychic manipulation of the deeply despised masses, are also to be found in his writings, even though they may differ in detail from the fascist conceptions. Finally, the tendency to deny that there is a plan in history and the espousal of the theory of direct intervention of the deed are likewise anticipated. Even the bourgeoisie has often made room in its theory for this doctrine concerning political technique and placed it, as Stahl quite rightly saw, alongside the idea of natural law, which served a normative function,³⁵ without, however, connecting the two. The more bourgeois ideals and the corresponding view of history were in part realized and in part disintegrated by disillusionment

³³"Temperaments divide men more than ideas." Mussolini, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³⁴Cf. E. v. Beckerath, *op. cit.*, p. 142. Also Mussolini, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

³⁵Cf. F. J. Stahl, *Die Philosophie des Rechts*, vol. i, 4th ed., book 4, chap. 1, "Die neuere Politik."

through the accession to power of the bourgeoisie, the more this rational calculation, without any consideration for the historical setting of facts, was recognized as the only form of political knowledge. In the most recent period, this totally detached political technique became associated with activism and intuitionism which denied the intelligibility of history. It became the ideology of those groups who prefer a direct, explosive collision with history to a gradual evolutionary change. This attitude takes many forms—appearing first in the anarchism of Bakunin and Proudhon, then in the Sorelien syndicalism, and finally in the fascism of Mussolini.³⁶

From a sociological point of view this is the ideology of “putschist” groups led by intellectuals who are outsiders to the liberal-bourgeois and socialist stratum of leaders, and who hope to seize power by exploiting the crises which constantly beset modern society in its period of transformation. This period of transformation, whether it leads to socialism or to a capitalistically planned economy, is characterized by the fact that it offers intermittent opportunities for the use of putschist tactics. In the degree that it contains within itself the irrational factors of modern social and economic life, it attracts the explosive irrational elements in the modern mind.

The correctness of the interpretation of this ideology as the expression of a certain social stratum is proved by the fact that historical interpretations made from this point of view are oriented towards the irrational sphere referred to above. Being psychologically and socially situated at a point from which they can discern only the unordered and unrationalized in the development of society, the structural development and the integrated framework of society remain completely hidden from their view.

It is almost possible to establish a sociological correlation between the *type of thinking* that appeals to organic or organized groups and a consistently systematic interpretation of history. On the other hand, a deep affinity exists between socially uprooted and loosely integrated groups and an a-historical intuitionism. The more organized and organic groups are exposed to disintegration, the more they tend to lose the sense for the consistently ordered conception of history, and the more sensitive they become to the imponderable and the fortuitous. As spontaneously organized putschist groups become more stable they also become more hospitable to long-range views of history and to an ordered view of society. Although historical complications often enter into the process, this scheme should be kept in mind because it delineates tendencies and offers fruitful hypotheses. A class or similar organic group never sees history as made up of transitory disconnected incidents; this is possible only for spontaneous groups which arise within them. Even the unhistorical moment of which activism conceives and which it hopes to seize upon is actually torn out of its wider historical context. The concept of practice in this mode of thought is likewise an *integral* part of the putschist technique, while socially more integrated groups, even when in opposition to the existing order, conceive of action as a continuous movement towards the realization of their ends.³⁷

The contrast between the *élan* of great leaders and *élites* on the one hand and the blind herd on the other reveals the marks of an ideology characteristic of intellectuals who are more intent on providing justifications for

³⁶Cf. Schmitt, *Parlamentarismus*, ch. 4.

³⁷Mussolini himself speaks convincingly concerning the change which the putschist undergoes after attaining power. “It is incredible how a roving, free-lance soldier can change when he becomes a deputy or a town official. He acquires another face. He begins to appreciate that municipal budgets must be studied, and cannot be stormed.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 166.)

themselves than on winning support from the outside. It is a counter-ideology to the pretensions of a leadership which conceives itself to be an organ expressing the interests of broad social strata. This is exemplified by the stratum of conservative leaders who regarded themselves as the organ of the "people,"³⁸ by the liberals who conceived of themselves as the embodiment of the spirit of the age (*Zeitgeist*), and by the socialists and communists who think of themselves as the agents of a class-conscious proletariat.

From this difference in methods of self-justification, it is possible to see that groups operating with the leader-mass dichotomy are ascendant *élites* which are still socially unattached, so to speak, and have yet to create a social position for themselves. They are not primarily interested in overthrowing, reforming, or preserving the social structure—their chief concern is to supplant the existing dominant *élites* by others. It is no accident that the one group regards history as a circulation of *élites*, while for the others, it is a transformation of the historical-social structure. Each gets to see primarily only that aspect of the social and historical totality towards which it is oriented by its purpose.

In the process of transformation of modern society, there are, as has already been mentioned, periods during which the mechanisms which have been devised by the bourgeoisie for carrying on the class struggle (e.g., parliamentarism) prove insufficient. There are periods when the evolutionary course fails for the time being and crises become acute. Class relations and class stratification become strained and distorted. The class-consciousness of the conflicting groups becomes confused. In such periods

it is easy for transitory formations to emerge, and the mass comes into existence, individuals having lost or forgotten their class orientations. At such moments a dictatorship becomes possible. The fascist view of history and its intuitional approach which serves as a preparation for immediate action have changed what is no more than a partial situation into a total view of society.

With the restoration of equilibrium following the crisis, the organized, historical-social forces again become effective. Even if the *élite* which has come to the top in the crisis is able to adjust itself well to the new situation, the dynamic forces of social life nevertheless reassert themselves in the old way. It is not that the social structure has changed, but rather that there has been a reshuffling—a shift in personnel among the various social classes within the frame of the social process which continues to evolve. An example of such a dictatorship has, with certain modifications, already been witnessed in modern history in the case of Napoleon. Historically this signified nothing more than the rise of certain *élites*. Sociologically it was an indication of the triumph of the ascendant bourgeoisie which knew how to exploit Napoleonic imperialism for its own purposes.

It may be that those elements of the mind which have not as yet been rationalized become crystallized ever anew in a more stable social structure. It may be, too, that the position which underlies this irrationalistic philosophy is inadequate to comprehend the broad trends of historical and social development. None the less the existence of these short-lived explosions directs attention to the irrational depths which have not as yet been comprehended and which are incomprehensible by ordinary historical methods. That which has not yet been rationalized here joins with the non-historical and with those elements in life which cannot be reduced to historical categories. We are given a glimpse of a realm which up to the present appears to have remained unchanging. It includes the blind

³⁸Savigny in this sense created the fiction for evolutionary conservatism that the jurists occupied a special status as the representatives of the folk spirit. (*Vom Beruf unserer Zeit zur Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft*, Freiburg, 1892, p. 7.)

biological instincts which in their eternal sameness underlie every historical event. These forces can be mastered externally by a technique, but can never reach the level of meaning and can never be internally understood. Besides this sub-historical biological element a spiritual, transcendental element is also to be found in this sphere. It is of this element which is not fully embodied in history, and which, as something unhistorical and alien to our thought, eludes understanding, that the mystics spoke. Although the fascists do not mention it, it must nevertheless rank as the other great challenge to the historical rationalism.

All that has become intelligible, understandable, rationalized, organized, structuralized, artistically, and otherwise formed, and consequently everything historical seems in fact to lie between these two extreme poles. If we attempt to view the interrelations of phenomena from this middle ground, we never get to see what lies above and below history. If, on the other hand, we stand at either of these irrational, extreme poles, we completely lose sight of historical reality in its concreteness.

The attractions of the fascist treatment of the problem of the relations between theory and practice lie in its designation of all thought as illusion. Political thought may be of value in arousing enthusiasm for action, but as a means for scientific comprehension of the field of "politics" which involves the prognostication of the future it is useless. It seems nothing less than remarkable that man, living in the blinding glare of the irrational, is still able to command from instance to instance the empirical knowledge necessary to carry on his everyday life. Sorel once remarked apropos of this: "We know that the social myths do not prevent men from being able to take advantage of all the observations made in the course of everyday life, nor do they interfere with their execution of their regular tasks." In a footnote he added: "It has often been noted that American and English sectarians, whose religious exaltation is

sustained by apocalyptic myths, are none the less in many cases very practical people."³⁹ Thus man can act despite the fact that he thinks.

It has often been insisted that even Leninism contains a tinge of fascism. But it would be misleading to overlook the differences in emphasizing the similarities. The common element in the two views is confined merely to the activity of aggressive minorities. Only because Leninism was originally the theory of a minority uncompromisingly determined to seize power by revolutionary means did the theory of the significance of leading groups and of their decisive energy come to the fore. But this theory never took flight into a complete irrationalism. The Bolshevik group was only an active minority within a class movement of an increasingly self-conscious proletariat so that the irrational activist aspects of its doctrines were constantly supported by the assumption of the rational intelligibility of the historical process.

The a-historical spirit of fascism can be derived in part from the spirit of a bourgeoisie already in power. A class which has already risen in the social scale tends to conceive of history in terms of unrelated, isolated events. Historical events appear as a process only as long as the class which views these events still expects something from it. Only such expectations can give rise to utopias on the one hand, and concepts of process on the other. Success in the class struggle, however, does away with the utopian element, and forces long-range views into the background the better to devote its powers to its immediate tasks. The consequence is that in place of a view of the whole which formerly took account of tendencies and total structures, there appears a picture of the world composed of mere immediate events and discrete facts. The idea of a "process" and of the structural intelligibility of history becomes a mere myth.

³⁹Sorel, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

Fascism finds itself serenely able to take over this bourgeois repudiation of history as a structure and process without any inconvenience, since fascism itself is the exponent of bourgeois groups. It accordingly has no intention of replacing the present social order by another, but only of substituting one ruling group for another within the existing class arrangements.⁴⁰ The chances for a fascist victory as well as for the justification of its historical theory depend upon the arrival of junctures in which a crisis so profoundly disorganizes the capitalist-bourgeois order, that the more evolutionary means of carrying on the conflict of interests no longer suffice. At moments like these, the chances for power are with him who knows how to utilize the moment with the necessary energy by stimulating active minorities to attack, thus seizing power.

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THE SOCIOLOGICAL PROBLEM OF THE "INTELLIGENTSIA"

The second difficulty arising at the present stage of the problem is this: How are we to conceive of the social and political bearers of whatever synthesis there is? What political interest will undertake the problem of synthesis as its task and who will strive to realize it in society?

Just as at an earlier period we should have slipped back into a static intellectualism if instead of aiming at a dynamic relative synthesis we had leaped into a super-temporal absolute one, similarly here we are in danger of losing sight of the hitherto constantly emphasized interest-bound nature of political thought and of assuming that the synthesis will come from

a source outside the political arena. If it be once granted that political thought is always bound up with a position in the social order, it is only consistent to suppose that the tendency towards a total synthesis must be embodied in the will of some social group.

And indeed a glance at the history of political thought shows that the exponents of synthesis have always represented definite social strata, mainly classes who feel threatened from above and below and who, out of social necessity, seek a middle way out. But this search for a compromise from the very beginning assumes both a static as well as dynamic form. The social position of the group with which the carriers of the synthesis are affiliated determines largely which of these two alternatives is to be emphasized.

The static form of mediation of the extremes was attempted first by the victorious bourgeoisie, especially in the period of the bourgeois monarchy in France, where it was expressed in the principle of the *juste milieu*. This catch-phrase, however, is rather a caricature of a true synthesis than a solution of it, which can only be a dynamic one. For that reason it may serve to show what errors a solution must avoid.

A true synthesis is not an arithmetic average of all the diverse aspirations of the existing groups in society. If it were such, it would tend merely to stabilize the *status quo* to the advantage of those who have just acceded to power and who wish to protect their gains from the attacks of the "right" as well as the "left." On the contrary, a valid synthesis must be based on a political position which will constitute a progressive development in the sense that it will retain and utilize much of the accumulated cultural acquisitions and social energies of the previous epoch. At the same time the new order must permeate the broadest ranges of social life, must take natural root in society in order to bring its transforming power into play. This position calls for a peculiar alertness towards

⁴⁰As regards Mussolini's attitude towards capitalism: "... the real history of capitalism will now begin. Capitalism is not just a system of oppression—on the contrary it represents the choice of the fittest, equal opportunities for the most gifted, a more developed sense of individual responsibility," *op. cit.*, p. 96.

the historical reality of the present. The spatial "here" and the temporal "now" in every situation must be considered in the historical and social sense and must always be kept in mind in order to determine from case to case what is no longer necessary and what is not yet possible.

Such an experimental outlook, unceasingly sensitive to the dynamic nature of society and to its wholeness, is not likely to be developed by a class occupying a middle position but only by a relatively classless stratum which is not too firmly situated in the social order. The study of history with reference to this question will yield a rather pregnant suggestion.

This unanchored, *relatively* classless stratum is, to use Alfred Weber's terminology, the "socially unattached intelligentsia" (*freischwebende Intelligenz*). It is impossible in this connection to give even the sketchiest outline of the difficult sociological problem raised by the existence of the intellectual. But the problems we are considering could not be adequately formulated, much less solved, without touching upon certain phases of the position of the intellectuals. A sociology which is oriented only with reference to social-economic classes will never adequately understand this phenomenon. According to this theory, the intellectuals constitute either a class or at least an appendage to a class. Thus it might describe correctly certain determinants and components of this unattached social body, but never the essential quality of the whole. It is, of course, true that a large body of our intellectuals come from *rentier* strata, whose income is derived directly or indirectly from rents and interest on investments. But for that matter certain groups of the officials and the so-called liberal professions are also members of the intelligentsia. A closer examination, however, of the social basis of these strata will show them to be less clearly identified with one class than those who participate more directly in the economic process.

If this sociological cross-section is completed by an historical view, further heterogeneity

among the intellectuals will be disclosed. Changes in class relationships at different times affect some of these groups favourably, others unfavourably. Consequently it cannot be maintained that they are homogeneously determined. Although they are too differentiated to be regarded as a single class, there is, however, one unifying sociological bond between all groups of intellectuals, namely, education, which binds them together in a striking way. Participation in a common educational heritage progressively tends to suppress differences of birth, status, profession, and wealth, and to unite the individual educated people on the basis of the education they have received.

In my opinion nothing could be more wrong than to misinterpret this view and maintain that the class and status ties of the individual disappear completely by virtue of this. It is, however, peculiarly characteristic of this new basis of association that it preserves the multiplicity of the component elements in all their variety by creating a homogeneous medium within which the conflicting parties can measure their strength. Modern education from its inception is a living struggle, a replica, on a small scale of the conflicting purposes and tendencies which rage in society at large. Accordingly the educated man, as concerns his intellectual horizon, is determined in a variety of ways. This acquired educational heritage subjects him to the influence of opposing tendencies in social reality, while the person who is not oriented toward the whole through his education, but rather participates directly in the social process of production, merely tends to absorb the *Weltanschauung* of that particular group and to act exclusively under the influence of the conditions imposed by his immediate social situation.

One of the most impressive facts about modern life is that in it, unlike preceding cultures, intellectual activity is not carried on exclusively by a socially rigidly defined class, such as a priesthood, but rather by a social stratum which is to a large degree unattached to any social

class and which is recruited from an increasingly inclusive area of social life. This sociological fact determines essentially the uniqueness of the modern mind, which is characteristically not based upon the authority of a priesthood, which is not closed and finished, but which is rather dynamic, elastic, in a constant state of flux, and perpetually confronted by new problems. Even humanism was already largely the expression of such a more or less socially emancipated stratum, and where the nobility became the bearer of culture it broke through the fixedness of a class-bound mentality in many respects. But not until we come to the period of bourgeois ascendancy does the level of cultural life become increasingly detached from a given class.

The modern bourgeoisie had from the beginning a twofold social root—on the one hand the owners of capital, on the other those individuals whose only capital consisted in their education. It was common therefore to speak of the propertied and educated class, the educated element being, however, by no means ideologically in agreement with the property-owning element.⁴¹

There arises, then, in the midst of this society, which is being deeply divided by class cleavages, a stratum, which a sociology oriented solely in terms of class probably can only slightly comprehend. Nevertheless, the specific social position of this stratum can be quite adequately characterized. Although situated between classes it does not form a middle class. Not, of course, that it is suspended in a vacuum into which social interests do not penetrate; on the contrary, it subsumes in itself all those inter-

ests with which social life is permeated. With the increase in the number and variety of the classes and strata from which the individual groups of intellectuals are recruited, there comes greater multiformity and contrast in the tendencies operating on the intellectual level which ties them to one another. The individual, then, more or less takes a part in the mass of mutually conflicting tendencies.

While those who participate directly in the process of production—the worker and the entrepreneur—being bound to a particular class and mode of life, have their outlooks and activities directly and exclusively determined by their specific social situations, the intellectuals, besides undoubtedly bearing the imprint of their specific class affinity, are also determined in their outlook by this intellectual medium which contains all those contradictory points of view. This social situation always provided the potential energy which enabled the more outstanding intellectuals to develop the social sensibility that was essential for becoming attuned to the dynamically conflicting forces. Every point of view was examined constantly as to its relevance to the present situation. Furthermore, precisely through the cultural attachments of this group, there was achieved such an intimate grasp of the total situation, that the tendency towards a dynamic synthesis constantly reappeared, despite the temporary distortions with which we have yet to deal.

Hitherto, the negative side of the “unattachedness” of the intellectuals, their social instability, and the predominantly deliberate character of their mentality has been emphasized almost exclusively. It was especially the politically extreme groups who, demanding a definite declaration of sympathies, branded this as “characterlessness.” It remains to be asked, however, whether in the political sphere, a decision in favour of a dynamic mediation may not be just as much a decision as the ruthless espousal of yesterday’s theories of the one-sided emphasis on tomorrow’s.

⁴¹Cf. Fr. Brüggemann, “Der Kampf um die bürgerliche Welt- und Lebensanschauung in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, iii (Halle, 1925), pp. 94 ff. This affords a good treatment of the periodic recrudescence of the supra-bourgeois element in the bourgeois literary circles of the eighteenth century.

There are two courses of action which the unattached intellectuals have actually taken as ways out of this middle-of-the-road position: first, what amounts to a largely voluntary affiliation with one or the other of the various antagonistic classes; second, scrutiny of their own social moorings and the quest for the fulfilment of their mission as the predestined advocate of the intellectual interests of the whole.

As regards the first way out, unattached intellectuals are to be found in the course of history in all camps. Thus they always furnished the theorists for the conservatives who themselves because of their own social stability could only with difficulty be brought to theoretical self-consciousness. They likewise furnished the theorists for the proletariat which, because of its social conditions, lacked the prerequisites for the acquisition of the knowledge necessary for modern political conflict. Their affiliation with the liberal bourgeoisie has already been discussed.

This ability to attach themselves to classes to which they originally did not belong, was possible for intellectuals because they could adapt themselves to any viewpoint and because they and they alone were in a position to choose their affiliation, while those who were immediately bound by class affiliations were only in rare exceptions able to transcend the boundaries of their class outlook. This voluntary decision to join in the political struggles of a certain class did indeed unite them with the particular class during the struggle, but it did not free them from the distrust of the original members of that class. This distrust is only a symptom of the sociological fact that the assimilability of intellectuals into an outside class is limited by the psychic and social characteristics of their own. Sociologically this peculiarity of belonging to the intelligentsia accounts for the fact that a proletarian who becomes an intellectual is likely to change his social personality. A detailed case-study of the path taken by the

intellectual confronted by this distrust would not be in place here. We wish merely to point out that the fanaticism of radicalized intellectuals should be understood in this light. It bespeaks a psychic compensation for the lack of a more fundamental integration into a class and the necessity of overcoming their own distrust as well as that of others.

One could of course condemn the path taken by individual intellectuals and their endless wavering, but our sole concern here is to explain this behaviour by means of the position of intellectuals in the whole social structure. Such social dereliction and transgression may be regarded as no more than a negative misuse of a peculiar social position. The individual, instead of focussing his energies on the positive potentialities of the situation, falls victim to the temptations potential in the situation. Nothing would be more incorrect than to base one's judgment of the function of a social stratum on the apostatic behaviour of some of its members and to fail to see that the frequent "lack of conviction" of the intellectuals is merely the reverse side of the fact that they alone are in a position to have intellectual convictions. In the long run, history can be viewed as a series of trial and error experiments in which even the failings of men have a tentative value and in the course of which the intellectuals were those who through their homelessness in our society were the most exposed to failure. The repeated attempts to identify themselves with, as well as the continual rebuffs received from, other classes must lead eventually to a clearer conception on the part of the intellectuals of the meaning and the value of their own position in the social order.

The first way, then, out of the predicament of the intellectuals, namely, the direct affiliation with classes and parties, shows a tendency, even though it is unconscious, towards a dynamic synthesis. It was usually the class in need of intellectual development which received their support. It was primarily the

conflict of intellectuals which transformed the conflict of interests into a conflict of ideas. This attempt to lift the conflict of interests to a spiritual plane has two aspects: on the one hand it meant the empty glorification of naked interests by means of the tissues of lies spun by apologists; on the other hand, in a more positive sense, it meant the infusion of certain intellectual demands into practical politics. In return for their collaboration with parties and classes, the intellectuals were able to leave this imprint upon them. If they had no other achievement to their credit, this alone would have been a significant accomplishment. Their function is to penetrate into the ranks of the conflicting parties in order to compel them to accept their demands. This activity, viewed historically, has amply shown wherein the sociological peculiarity and the mission of this unattached social stratum lie.

The second way out of the dilemma of the intellectuals consists precisely in becoming aware of their own social position and the mission implicit in it. When this is achieved, political affiliation or opposition will be decided on the basis of a conscious orientation in society and in accordance with the demands of the intellectual life.

One of the basic tendencies in the contemporary world is the gradual awakening of class-consciousness in all classes. If this is so, it follows that even the intellectuals will arrive at a consciousness—though not a class-consciousness—of their own general social position and the problems and opportunities it involves. This attempt to comprehend the sociological phenomenon of the intellectuals, and the attempt, on the basis of this, to take an attitude towards politics have traditions of their own quite as much as has the tendency to become assimilated into other parties.

We are not concerned here with examining the possibilities of a politics exclusively suited to intellectuals. Such an examination would probably show that the intellectuals in the present

period could not become independently politically active. In an epoch like our own, where class interests and positions are becoming more sharply defined and derive their force and direction from mass action, political conduct which seeks other means of support would scarcely be possible. This does not imply, however, that their particular position prevents them from achieving things which are of indispensable significance for the whole social process. Most important among these would be the discovery of the position from which a total perspective would be possible. Thus they might play the part of watchmen in what otherwise would be a pitch-black night. It is questionable whether it is desirable to throw overboard all of the opportunities which arise out of their peculiar situation.

A group whose class position is more or less definitely fixed already has its political viewpoint decided for it. Where this is not so, as with the intellectuals, there is a wider area of choice and a corresponding need for total orientation and synthesis. This latter tendency which arises out of the position of the intellectuals exists even though the relation between the various groups does not lead to the formation of an integrated party. Similarly, the intellectuals are still able to arrive at a total orientation even when they have joined a party. Should the capacity to acquire a broader point of view be considered merely as a liability? Does it not rather present a mission? Only he who really has the choice has an interest in seeing the whole of the social and political structure. Only in that period of time and that stage of investigation which is dedicated to deliberation is the sociological and logical locus of the development of a synthetic perspective to be sought. The formation of a decision is truly possible only under conditions of freedom based on the possibility of choice which continues to exist even after the decision has been made. We owe the possibility of mutual inter-penetration and understanding of existent currents of thought to the presence of such a relatively

unattached middle stratum which is open to the constant influx of individuals from the most diverse social classes and groups with all possible points of view. Only under such conditions can the incessantly fresh and broadening synthesis, to which we have referred, arise.

Even Romanticism, because of its social position, had already included in its programme the demand for a broad, dynamic mediation (*dynamische Vermittlung*) of conflicting points of view. In the nature of the case, this demand led to a conservative perspective. The generation that followed Romanticism, however, supplanted this conservative view with a revolutionary one as being in accord with the needs of the time. The essential thing in this connection is that only in this line of development did there persist the attempt to make this mediation a living one, and to connect political decisions with a prior total orientation. Today more than ever it is expected of such a dynamic middle group that it will strive to create a forum outside the party schools in which the perspective of and the interest in the whole is safeguarded.

It is precisely to these latent tendencies that we owe our present realization that all political interest and knowledge are necessarily partisan and particular. It is only today, when we have become aware of all the currents and are able to understand the whole process by which political interests and *Weltanschauungen* come into being in the light of a sociologically intelligible process, that we see the possibility of politics as science. Since it is likely, in accord with the spirit of the age, that more and more party schools will arise, it is all the more desirable that an actual forum be established whether it be in the universities or in specialized higher institutions of learning, which shall serve the pursuit of this advanced form of political science. If the party schools address themselves exclusively to those whose political decisions have been made in advance by parties, this mode of study will appeal to those whose decision remains yet to be made. Nothing is more

desirable than that those intellectuals who have a background of pronounced class interests should, especially in their youth, assimilate this point of view and conception of the whole.

Even in such a school it is not to be assumed that the teachers should be partyless. It is not the object of such a school to avoid arriving at political decisions. But there is a profound difference between a teacher who, after careful deliberation, addresses his students, whose minds are not yet made up, from a point of view which has been attained by careful thinking leading to a comprehension of the total situation and a teacher who is exclusively concerned with inculcating a party outlook already firmly established.

A political sociology which aims not at inculcating a decision but prepares the way for arriving at decisions will be able to understand relationships in the political realm which have scarcely even been noticed before. Such a discipline will be especially valuable in illuminating the nature of socially bound interests. It will uncover the determining factors underlying these class judgments, disclosing thereby the manner in which collective forces are bound up with class interests, of which everyone who deals with politics must take account. Relationships like the following will be clarified: Given such and such interests, in a given juncture of events, there will follow such and such a type of thinking and such and such a view of the total social process. However, what these specific sets of interest will be depends on the specific set of traditions which, in turn, depends on the structural determinants of the social situation. Only he who is able to formulate the problem in such a manner is in a position to transmit to others a survey of the structure of the political scene, and to aid them in getting a relatively complete conception of the whole. This direction in research will give a better insight into the nature of historical and political thought and will demonstrate more clearly the relationships that always exist between conceptions of

history and political points of view. Those with this approach, however, are too sophisticated politically to believe that political decisions themselves are teachable or that they can, while they are still prevailing, be arbitrarily suspended. To summarize: whatever your interests, they are your interests as a political person, but the fact that you have this or that set of interests implies also that you must do this or that to realize them, and that you must know the specific position you occupy in the whole social process.⁴²

While we believe that interests and purposes cannot be taught, the investigation and communication, however, of the structural relationship between judgment and point of view, between the social process and the development of interest, is possible. Those who demand of politics as a science that it teach norms and ends should consider that this demand implies actually the denial of the reality of politics. The only thing that we can

demand of politics as a science is that it see reality with the eyes of acting human beings, and that it teach men, in action, to understand even their opponents in the light of their actual motives and their position in the historical-social situation. Political sociology in this sense must be conscious of its function as the fullest possible synthesis of the tendencies of an epoch. It must teach what alone is teachable, namely, structural relationships: the judgments themselves cannot be taught but we can become more or less adequately aware of them and we can interpret them.

⁴²Max Weber formulated the problems of political sociology somewhat similarly, although he started from entirely different premises. His desire for impartiality in politics represents the old democratic tradition. Although his solution suffers from the assumption of the separability of theory and evaluation, his demand for the creation of a common point of departure for political analysis is a goal worthy of the greatest efforts.