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# FOREWORD

Up to the present the journal of the Institute of Social Research has been published, three times a year, in Paris, by the *Librairie Félix Alcan.* The articles and reviews for both the third section of the 1939 volume and the first section of the 1940 volume are in the hands of the French printers who, in May, were still promising us that the journal would be published as usual. But because of what has happened since then, we must now assume that neither the *Librairie Félix Alcan* nor the printers—the *Presses Universitaires de France*—will be in a position to fulfil their promise in the near future.

We have, consequently, decided to publish the third section of the 1939 volume in America. In any case, most of the contributors made this country their new home some years ago. We did not previously publish the journal in America largely because for the last eight years most of our readers have been Europeans. As most of the contributions were printed in German, the journal fulfilled its own special purpose; philosophic and scientific traditions which could no longer be pursued in Germany were continued here in their native language. The actual language in which articles are published is not without influence on the contents of the thought. Both our Institute and the publishers hoped, therefore, to help science by enabling authors to write in their own tongue. But this consideration must now be secondary to our desire to devote our work—even in its external form—to American social life.

Philosophy, art and science have lost their home in most of Europe. England is now fighting desperately against the domination of the totalitarian states. America, especially the United States, is the only continent in which the continuation of scientific life is possible. Within the framework of this country's democratic institutions, culture still enjoys the freedom without which, we believe, it is unable to exist. In publishing our journal in its new form we wish to give this belief its concrete expression.

MAX HORKHEIMER.

New York City, July, 1940.

# The Social Function of Philosophy.

By Max Horkheimer.

When the words physics, chemistry, medicine, or history are mentioned in a conversation, the participants usually have something very definite in mind. Should any difference of opinion arise, we could consult an encyclopaedia or accepted textbook or turn to one or more outstanding specialists in the field in question. The definition of any one of these sciences derives immediately from its place in present day society. Though these sciences may make the greatest advances in the future, though it is even conceivable that several of them, physics and chemistry for example, may some day be merged, no one is really interested in defining these concepts in any other way than by reference to the scientific activities now being carried on under such headings.

It is different with philosophy. Suppose we ask a professor of philosophy what philosophy is. If we are lucky and happen to find a specialist who is not averse to definitions in general, he will give us one. If we then adopt this definition, we should probably soon discover that it is by no means the universally accepted meaning of the word. We might then appeal to other authorities, and pore over textbooks, modern and old. The confusion would only increase. Many thinkers, accepting Plato and Kant as their authorities, regard philosophy as an exact science in its own right, with its own field and subject matter. In our epoch this conception is chiefly represented by the late Edmund Husserl. Other thinkers, like Ernst Mach, conceive philosophy as the critical elaboration and synthesis of the special sciences into a unified whole. Bertrand Russell, too, holds that the task of philosophy is "that of logical analysis, followed by logical synthesis."[1]) He thus fully agrees with L. T. Hobhouse, who declares that "Philosophy . . . has a synthesis of the sciences as its goal."[2]) This conception goes back to Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, for whom philosophy constituted the total system of human knowl-

[1]) Bertrand Russell, Logical atomism, in: *Contemporary British Philosophy*, ed. by J. H. Muirhead, I, 1925, p. 379.

[2]) L. T. Hobhouse, The philosophy of development, in: *Contemporary British Philosophy*, ed. by J. H. Muirhead, I, 1925, p. 152.

edge. Philosophy, therefore, is an independent science for some, a subsidiary or auxiliary discipline for others.

If most writers of philosophical works agree on the scientific character of philosophy, a few, but by no means the worst, have emphatically denied it. For the German poet Schiller, whose philosophical essays have had an influence perhaps even more profound than his dramas, the purpose of philosophy was to bring aesthetic order into our thoughts and actions. Beauty was the criterion of its results. Other poets, like Hölderlin and Novalis, held a similar position, and even pure philosophers, Schelling for instance, came very close to it in some of their formulations. Henri Bergson, at any rate, insists that philosophy is closely related to art, and is not a science.

As if the different views on the general character of philosophy were not enough, we also find the most diverse notions about its content and its methods. There are still some thinkers who hold that philosophy is concerned exclusively with the highest concepts and laws of Being, and ultimately with the cognition of God. This is true of the Aristotelian and Neo-Thomist schools. Then there is the related view that philosophy deals with the so-called *a priori*. Alexander describes philosophy as "the experiential or empirical study of the non-empirical or *a priori*, and of such questions as arise out of the relation of the empirical to the *a priori*" (space, time and deity).[1]) Others, who derive from the English sensualists and the German school of Fries and Apelt, conceive of it as the science of inner experience. According to logical empiricists like Carnap, philosophy is concerned essentially with scientific language; according to the school of Windelband and Rickert (another school with many American followers), it deals with universal values, above all with truth, beauty, goodness, and holiness.

Finally, everyone knows that there is no agreement in method. The neo-Kantians all believe that the procedure of philosophy must consist in the analysis of concepts and their reduction to the ultimate elements of cognition. Bergson and Max Scheler consider intuition (*"Wesensschau, Wesenserschauung"*) to be the decisive philosophical act. The phenomenological method of Husserl and Heidegger is flatly opposed to the empirio-criticism of Mach and Avenarius. The logistic of Bertrand Russell, Whitehead, and their followers, is the avowed enemy of the dialectic of Hegel. The kind of philosophizing one prefers depends, according to William James, on one's character and experience.

[1]) S. Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, vol. I, 1920, p. 4.

These definitions have been mentioned in order to indicate that the situation in philosophy is not the same as in other intellectual pursuits. No matter how many points of dispute there may be in those fields, at least the general line of their intellectual work is universally recognized. The prominent representatives more or less agree on subject matter and methods. In philosophy, however, refutation of one school by another usually involves complete rejection, the negation of the substance of its work as fundamentally false. This attitude is not shared by all schools, of course. A dialectical philosophy, for example, in keeping with its principles, will tend to extract the relative truths of the individual points of view and introduce them in its own comprehensive theory. Other philosophical doctrines, such as modern positivism, have less elastic principles, and they simply exclude from the realm of knowledge a very large part of the philosophical literature, especially the great systems of the past. In short, it cannot be taken for granted that anyone who uses the term "philosophy" shares with his audience more than a few very vague conceptions.

The individual sciences apply themselves to problems which must be treated because they arise out of the life process of present day society. Both the individual problems and their allotment to specific disciplines derive, in the last analysis, from the needs of mankind in its past and present forms of organization. This does not mean that every single scientific investigation satisfies some urgent need. Many scientific undertakings produced results that mankind could easily do without. Science is no exception to that misapplication of energy which we observe in every sphere of cultural life. The development of branches of science which have only a dubious practical value for the immediate present is, however, part of that expenditure of human labor which is one of the necessary conditions of scientific and technological progress. We should remember that certain branches of mathematics, which appeared to be mere playthings at first, later turned out to be extraordinarily useful. Thus, though there are scientific undertakings which can lead to no immediate use, all of them have some potential applicability within the given social reality, remote and vague as it may be. By its very nature, the work of the scientist is capable of enriching life in its present form. His fields of activity are therefore largely marked out for him, and the attempts to alter the boundaries between the several domains of science, to develop new disciplines, as well as continuously to differentiate and integrate them, are always guided by social need, whether consciously or not. This need is also operative, though indirectly, in the laboratories and lecture halls of the university, not to men-

tion the chemical laboratories and statistical departments of large industrial enterprises and in the hospitals.

Philosophy has no such guide. Naturally, many desires play upon it; it is expected to find solutions for problems which the sciences either do not deal with or treat unsatisfactorily. But the practice of social life offers no criterion for philosophy; philosophy can point to no successes. Insofar as individual philosophers occasionally do offer something in this respect, it is a matter of services which are not specifically philosophical. We have, for example, the mathematical discoveries of Descartes and Leibniz, the psychological researches of Hume, the physical theories of Ernst Mach, and so forth. The opponents of philosophy also say that insofar as it has value, it is not philosophy but positive science. Everything else in philosophical systems is mere talk, they claim, occasionally stimulating, but usually boring and always useless. Philosophers, on the other hand, show a certain obstinate disregard for the verdict of the outside world. Ever since the trial of Socrates, it has been clear that they have a strained relationship with reality as it is, and especially with the community in which they live. The tension sometimes takes the form of open persecution; at other times merely failure to understand their language. They must live in hiding, physically or intellectually. Scientists, too, have come into conflict with the societies of their time. But here we must resume the distinction between the philosophical and the scientific elements of which we have already spoken, and reverse the picture, because the reasons for the persecution usually lay in the philosophical views of these thinkers, not in their scientific theories. Galileo's bitter persecutors among the Jesuits admitted that he would have been free to publish his heliocentric theory if he had placed it in the proper philosophical and theological context. Albertus Magnus himself discussed the heliocentric theory in his *Summa*, and he was never attacked for it. Furthermore, the conflict between scientists and society, at least in modern times, is not concerned with fundamentals but only with individual doctrines, not tolerated by this or that authority in one country at one time, tolerated and even celebrated in some other country at the same time or soon afterwards.

The opposition of philosophy to reality arises from its principles. Philosophy insists that the actions and aims of man must not be the product of blind necessity. Neither the concepts of science nor the form of social life, neither the prevailing way of thinking nor the prevailing mores should be accepted by custom and practised uncritically. Philosophy has set itself against mere tradition and resignation in the decisive problems of existence, and it has shouldered

the unpleasant task of throwing the light of consciousness even upon those human relations and modes of reaction which have become so deeply rooted that they seem natural, immutable, and eternal. One could reply that the sciences, too, and particularly their inventions and technological changes, save mankind from the deep-worn grooves of habit. When we compare present day life with that thirty, fifty, or a hundred years ago, we cannot truthfully accept the notion that the sciences have not disturbed human habits and customs. Not only industry and transportation, but even art, has been rationalized. A single illustration will suffice. In former years a playwright would work out his individual conception of human problems in the seclusion of his personal life. When his work finally reached the public, he thereby exposed his world of ideas to conflict with the existing world and thus contributed to the development of his own mind and of the social mind as well. But today both the production and reception of works of art on the screen and the radio have been completely rationalized. Movies are not prepared in a quiet studio; a whole staff of experts is engaged. And from the outset the goal is not harmony with some idea, but harmony with the current views of the public, with the general taste, carefully examined and calculated beforehand by these experts. If, sometimes, the pattern of an artistic product does not harmonize with public opinion, the fault usually does not lie in an intrinsic disagreement, but in an incorrect estimate by the producers of the reaction of public and press. This much is certain: no sphere of industry, either material or intellectual, is ever in a state of complete stability; customs have no time in which to settle down. The foundations of present day society are constantly shifting through the intervention of science. There is hardly an activity in business or in government which thought is not constantly engaged in simplifying and improving.

But if we probe a little deeper, we discover that despite all these manifestations, man's way of thinking and acting is not progressing as much as one might be led to believe. On the contrary, the principles now underlying the actions of men, at least in a large portion of the world, are certainly more mechanical than in other periods when they were grounded in living consciousness and conviction. Technological progress has helped make it even easier to cement old illusions more firmly, and to introduce new ones into the minds of men without interference from reason. It is the very diffusion and industrialization of cultural institutions which cause significant factors of intellectual growth to decline and even disappear, because of shallowness of content, dullness of the intellectual organs, and elimination of some of man's individualistic creative powers. In

recent decades, this dual aspect of the triumphal procession of science and technology has been repeatedly noted by both romantic and progressive thinkers. The French writer Paul Valéry has recently formulated the situation with particular cogency. He relates how he was taken to the theater as a child to see a fantasy in which a young man was pursued by an evil spirit who used every sort of devilish device to frighten him and make him do his bidding. When he lay in bed at night, the evil spirit surrounded him with hellish fiends and flames; suddenly his room would become an ocean and the bedspread a sail. No sooner did one ghost disappear, than a new one arrived. After a while these horrors ceased to affect the little boy, and finally, when a new one began, he exclaimed: Voilà les bêtises qui recommencent! (Here comes some more of that nonsense!) Some day, Valéry concludes, mankind might react in the same way to the discoveries of science and the marvels of technology.

Not all philosophers, and we least of all, share Paul Valéry's pessimistic conception of scientific progress. But it is true that neither the achievements of science by themselves, nor the advance in industrial method, are immediately identical with the real progress of mankind. It is obvious that man may be materially, emotionally, and intellectually impoverished at decisive points despite the progress of science and industry. Science and technology are only elements in an existing social totality, and it is quite possible that, despite all their achievements, other factors, even the totality itself, could be moving backwards, that man could become increasingly stunted and unhappy, that the individual could be ruined and nations headed toward disaster. We are fortunate that we live in a country which has done away with national boundaries and war situations over half a continent. But in Europe, while the means of communication became more rapid and complete, while distances decreased, while the habits of life became more and more alike, tariff walls grew higher and higher, nations feverishly piled up armaments, and both foreign relations and internal political conditions approached and eventually arrived at a state of war. This antagonistic situation asserts itself in other parts of the world, too, and who knows whether, and for how long, the remainder of the world will be able to protect itself against the consequences in all their intensity. Rationalism in details can readily go with a general irrationalism. Actions of individuals, correctly regarded as reasonable and useful in daily life, may spell waste and even destruction for society. That is why in periods like ours, we must remember that the best will to create something useful may result in its opposite, simply because it is blind to what lies beyond the limits of its scientific specialty or pro-

fession, because it focuses on what is nearest at hand and misconstrues its true nature, for the latter can be revealed only in the larger context. In the New Testament, "They know not what they do" refers only to evildoers. If these words are not to apply to all mankind, thought must be not merely confined within the special sciences and to the practical learning of the professions, thought which investigates the material and intellectual presuppositions that are usually taken for granted, thought which impregnates with human purpose those relationships of daily life that are almost blindly created and maintained.

When it was said that the tension between philosophy and reality is fundamental, unlike the occasional difficulties against which science must struggle in social life, this referred to the tendency embodied in philosophy, not to put an end to thought, and to exercise particular control over all those factors of life which are generally held to be fixed, unconquerable forces or eternal laws. This was precisely the issue in the trial of Socrates. Against the demand for submission to the customs protected by the gods and unquestioning adaptation to the traditional forms of life, Socrates asserted the principle that man should know what he does, and shape his own destiny. His god dwells within him, that is to say, in his own reason and will. Today the conflicts in philosophy no longer appear as struggles over gods, but the situation of the world is no less critical. We should indeed be accepting the present situation if we were to maintain that reason and reality have been reconciled, and that man's autonomy was assured within this society. The original function of philosophy is still very relevant.

It may not be incorrect to suppose that these are the reasons why discussions within philosophy, and even discussions about the concept of philosophy, are so much more radical and unconciliatory than discussions in the sciences. Unlike any other pursuit, philosophy does not have a field of action marked out for it within the given order. This order of life, with its hierarchy of values, is itself a problem for philosophy. While science is still able to refer to given data which point the way for it, philosophy must fall back upon itself, upon its own theoretical activity. The determination of its object falls within its own program much more than is the case with the special sciences, even today when the latter are so deeply engrossed with problems of theory and methodology. Our analysis also gives us an insight into the reason why philosophy has received so much more attention in European life than in America. The geographical expansion and historical development have made it possible for certain social conflicts, which have flared up repeatedly and

sharply in Europe because of the existing relationships, to decline in significance in this continent under the strain of opening up the country and of performing the daily tasks. The basic problems of societal life found a temporary practical solution, and so the tensions which give rise to theoretical thought in specific historical situations, never became so important. In this country, theoretical thought usually lags far behind the determination and accumulation of facts. Whether that kind of activity still satisfies the demands which are justly made upon knowledge in this country too, is a problem which we do not have the time to discuss now.

It is true that the definitions of many modern authors, some of which have already been cited, hardly reveal that character of philosophy which distinguishes it from all the special sciences. Many philosophers throw envious glances at their colleagues in other faculties who are much better off because they have a well marked field of work, whose fruitfulness for society cannot be questioned. These authors struggle to "sell" philosophy as a particular kind of science, or at least, to prove that it is very useful for the special sciences. Presented in this way, philosophy is no longer the critic, but the servant of science and the social forms in general. Such an attitude is a confession that thought which transcends the prevailing forms of scientific activity, and thus transcends the horizon of contemporary society, is impossible. Thought should rather be content to accept the tasks set for it by the ever renewed needs of government and industry, and to deal with these tasks in the form in which they are received. The extent to which the form and content of these tasks are the correct ones for mankind at the present historical moment, the question whether the social organization in which they arise is still suitable for mankind—such problems are neither scientific nor philosophical in the eyes of those humble philosophers; they are matters for personal decision, for subjective evaluation by the individual who has surrendered to his taste and temper. The only philosophical position which can be recognized in such a conception is the negative doctrine that there really is no philosophy, that systematic thought must retire at the decisive moments of life, in short, philosophical skepticism and nihilism.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to distinguish the conception of the social function of philosophy presented here from another view, best represented in several branches of modern sociology, which identifies philosophy with one general social function, namely ideology.[1]) This view maintains that philosophical thought, or more

[1]) Cf. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, London 1937.

correctly, thought as such, is merely the expression of a specific social situation. Every social group—the German Junkers, for example—develops a conceptual apparatus, certain methods of thought and a specific style of thought adapted to its social position. For centuries the life of the Junkers has been associated with a specific order of succession; their relationship to the princely dynasty upon which they were dependent and to their own servants had patriarchal features. Consequently, they tended to base their whole thought on the forms of the organic, the ordered succession of generations, on biological growth. Everything appeared under the aspect of the organism and natural ties. The liberal bourgeoisie, on the other hand, whose happiness and unhappiness depend upon business success, whose experience has taught them that everything must be reduced to the common denominator of money, have developed a more abstract, more mechanistic way of thinking. Not hierarchical but levelling tendencies are characteristic of their intellectual style, of their philosophy. The same approach applies to other groups, past and present. With the philosophy of Descartes, for example, we must ask whether his notions corresponded to the aristocratic and Jesuit groups of the court, or to the noblesse de robe, or to the lower bourgeoisie and the masses. Every pattern of thought, every philosophical or other cultural work, belongs to a specific social group, with which it originates and with whose existence it is bound up. Every pattern of thought is "ideology."

There can be no doubt that there is some truth in this attitude. Many ideas prevalent today are revealed to be mere illusions when we consider them from the point of view of their social basis. But it is not enough merely to correlate these ideas with some one social group, as that sociological school does. We must penetrate deeper and develop them out of the decisive historical process from which the social groups themselves are to be explained. Let us take an example. In Descartes' philosophy, mechanistic thinking, particularly mathematics, plays an important part. We can even say that this whole philosophy is the universalization of mathematical thought. Of course, we can now try to find some group in society whose character is correlative with this viewpoint, and we shall probably find some such definite group in the society of Descartes' time. But a more complicated, yet more adequate, approach is to study the productive system of those days and to show how a member of the rising middle class, by force of his very activity in commerce and manufacture, was induced to make precise calculations if he wished to preserve and increase his power in the newly developed competitive market, and the same holds true of his agents, so to speak, in science and

technology whose inventions and other scientific work played so large a part in the constant struggle between individuals, cities, and nations in the modern era. For all these subjects, the given approach to the world was its consideration in mathematical terms. Because this class, through the development of society, became characteristic of the whole of society, that approach was widely diffused far beyond the middle class itself. Sociology is not sufficient. We must have a comprehensive theory of history if we wish to avoid serious errors. Otherwise we run the risk of relating important philosophical theories to accidental, or at any rate, not decisive groups, and of misconstruing the significance of the specific group in the whole of society, and, therefore, of misconstruing the culture pattern in question. But this is not the chief objection. The stereotyped application of the concept of ideology to every pattern of thought is, in the last analysis, based on the notion that there is no philosophical truth, in fact no truth at all for humanity, and that all thought is *seinsgebunden* (situationally determined). In its methods and results it belongs only to a specific stratum of mankind and is valid only for this stratum. The attitude to be taken to philosophical ideas does not comprise objective testing and practical application, but a more or less complicated correlation to a social group. And the claims of philosophy are thus satisfied. We easily recognize that this tendency, the final consequence of which is the resolution of philosophy into a special science, into sociology, merely repeats the skeptical view which we have already criticized. It is not calculated to explain the social function of philosophy, but rather to perform one itself, namely, to discourage thought from its practical tendency of pointing to the future.

The real social function of philosophy lies in its criticism of what is prevalent. That does not mean superficial fault-finding with individual ideas or conditions, as though a philosopher were a crank. Nor does it mean that the philosopher complains about this or that isolated condition and suggests remedies. The chief aim of such criticism is to prevent mankind from losing itself in those ideas and activities which the existing organization of society instills into its members. Man must be made to see the relationship between his activities and what is achieved thereby, between his particular existence and the general life of society, between his everyday projects and the great ideas which he acknowledges. Philosophy exposes the contradiction in which man is entangled insofar as he must attach himself to isolated ideas and concepts in everyday life. My point can easily be seen from the following. The aim of western philosophy in its first complete form, in Plato, was to cancel and negate one-sided-

ness in a more comprehensive system of thought, in a system more flexible and better adapted to reality. In the course of some of the dialogues, the teacher demonstrates how his interlocutor is inevitably involved in contradictions if he maintains his position too one-sidedly. The teacher shows that it is necessary to advance from this one idea to another, for each idea receives its proper meaning only within the whole system of ideas. Consider, for example, the discussion of the nature of courage in the *Laches*. When the interlocutor clings to his definition that courage means not running away from the battlefield, he is made to realize that in certain situations, such behavior would not be a virtue but foolhardiness, as when the whole army is retreating and a single individual attempts to win the battle all by himself. The same applies to the idea of *Sophrosyne*, inadequately translated as temperance or moderation. *Sophrosyne* is certainly a virtue, but it becomes dubious if it is made the sole end of action and is not grounded in knowledge of all the other virtues. *Sophrosyne* is conceivable only as a moment of correct conduct within the whole. Nor is the case less true for justice. Good will, the will to be just, is a beautiful thing. But this subjective striving is not enough. The title of justice does not accrue to actions which were good in intention but failed in execution. This applies to private life as well as to State activity. Every measure, regardless of the good intentions of its author, may become harmful unless it is based on comprehensive knowledge and is appropriate for the situation. *Summum jus*, says Hegel in a similar context, may become *summa injuria*. We may recall the comparison drawn in the *Gorgias*. The trades of the baker, the cook, and the tailor are in themselves very useful. But they may lead to injury unless hygienic considerations determine their place in the lives of the individual and of mankind. Harbors, shipyards, fortifications, and taxes are good in the same sense. But if the happiness of the community is forgotten, these factors of security and prosperity become instruments of destruction.

Thus, in Europe, in the last decades before the outbreak of the present war, we find the chaotic growth of individual elements of social life: giant economic enterprises, crushing taxes, an enormous increase in armies and armaments, coercive discipline, one-sided cultivation of the natural sciences, and so on. Instead of rational organization of domestic and international relations, there was the rapid spread of certain portions of civilization at the expense of the whole. One stood against the other, and mankind as a whole was destroyed thereby. Plato's demand that the state should be ruled by philosophers does not mean that these rulers should be selected from among the authors of textbooks on logic. In business life, the *Fachgeist*, the

spirit of the specialist, knows only profit, in military life power, and even in science only success in a special discipline. When this spirit is left unchecked, it typifies an anarchic state of society. For Plato, philosophy meant the tendency to bring and maintain the various energies and branches of knowledge in a unity which would transform these partially destructive elements into productive ones in the fullest sense. This is the meaning of his demand that the philosophers should rule. It means lack of faith in the prevailing popular thought. Unlike the latter, reason never loses itself in a single idea, though that idea might be the correct one at any given moment. Reason exists in the whole system of ideas, in the progression from one idea to another, so that every idea is understood and applied in its true meaning, that is to say, in its meaning within the whole of knowledge. Only such thought is rational thought.

This dialectical conception has been applied to the concrete problems of life by the great philosophers; indeed, the rational organization of human existence is the real goal of their philosophies. Dialectical clarification and refinement of the conceptual world which we meet in daily and scientific life, education of the individual for right thinking and acting, has as its goal the realization of the good, and, during the flourishing periods of philosophy at least, that meant the rational organization of human society. Though Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, regards the self-contemplation of the mind, theoretical activity, as the greatest happiness, he expressly states that this happiness is possible only on a specific material basis, that is, under certain social and economic conditions. Plato and Aristotle did not believe with Antisthenes and the Cynics that reason could forever continue to develop in people who literally led a dog's life, nor that wisdom could go hand in hand with misery. An equitable state of affairs was for them the necessary condition for the unfolding of man's intellectual powers, and this idea lies at the basis of all of Western humanism.

Anyone who studies modern philosophy, not merely in the standard compendia, but through his own historical researches, will perceive the social problem to be a very decisive motive. I need only mention Hobbes and Spinoza. The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Spinoza was the only major work which he published during his lifetime. With other thinkers, Leibniz and Kant for instance, a more penetrating analysis reveals the existence of social and historical categories in the foundations of the most abstract chapters of their works, their metaphysical and transcendental doctrines. Without those categories, it is impossible to understand or solve their problems. A basic analysis of the content of purely theoretical philo-

sophical doctrines is therefore one of the most interesting tasks of modern research in the history of philosophy. But this task has little in common with the superficial correlation to which reference has already been made. The historian of art or literature has corresponding tasks.

Despite the important part played in philosophy by the examination of social problems, expressed or unexpressed, conscious or unconscious, let us again emphasize that the social function of philosophy is not to be found just there, but rather in the development of critical and dialectical thought. Philosophy is the methodical and steadfast attempt to bring reason into the world. Its precarious and controversial position results from this. Philosophy is inconvenient, obstinate, and with all that, of no immediate use—in fact it is a source of annoyance. Philosophy lacks criteria and compelling proofs. Investigation of facts is strenuous, too, but one at least knows what to go by. Man is naturally quite reluctant to occupy himself with the confusion and entanglements of his private and public life: he feels insecure and on dangerous ground. In our present division of labor, those problems are assigned to the philosopher or theologian. Or, man consoles himself with the thought that the discords are merely transient and that fundamentally everything is all right. In the past century of European history, it has been shown conclusively that, despite a semblance of security, man has not been able to arrange his life in accordance with his conceptions of humanity. There is a gulf between the ideas by which men judge themselves and the world on the one hand, and the social reality which they reproduce through their actions on the other hand. Because of this circumstance, all their conceptions and judgments are two-sided and falsified. Now man sees himself heading for disaster or already engulfed in it, and in many countries he is so paralyzed by approaching barbarism that he is almost completely unable to react and protect himself. He is the rabbit before the hungry stoat. There are times perhaps when one can get along without theory, but this deficiency lowers man and renders him helpless against force. The fact that theory may rise into the rarified atmosphere of a hollow and bloodless idealism or sink into tiresome and empty phrasemongering, does not mean that these forms are its true forms. As far as tedium and banality are concerned, philosophy often finds its match in the so-called investigation of facts. Today, at any event, the whole historical dynamic has placed philosophy in the center of social actuality, and social actuality in the center of philosophy.

Attention should be drawn to a particularly important change which has taken place along these lines since classical antiquity.

Plato held that Eros enables the sage to know the ideas. He linked knowledge with a moral or psychological state, Eros, which in principle may exist at every historical moment. For this reason, his proposed State appeared to him as an eternal ideal of reason, not bound up with any historical condition. The dialogue on the *Laws*, then, was a compromise, accepted as a preliminary step which did not affect the eternal ideal. Plato's State is an Utopia, like those projected at the beginning of the modern era and even in our own days. But Utopia is no longer the proper philosophic form for dealing with the problem of society. It has been recognized that the contradictions in thought cannot be resolved by purely theoretical reflection. That requires an historical development beyond which we cannot leap in thought. Knowledge is bound up not only with psychological and moral conditions, but also with social conditions. The enunciation and description of perfect political and social forms out of pure ideas is neither meaningful nor adequate.

Utopia as the crown of philosophical systems is therefore replaced by a scientific description of concrete relationships and tendencies, which can lead to an improvement of human life. This change has the most far-reaching consequences for the structure and meaning of philosophical theory. Modern philosophy shares with the ancients their high opinion of the potentialities of the human race, their optimism over man's potential achievements. The proposition that man is by nature incapable of living a good life or of achieving the highest levels of social organization, has been rejected by the greatest thinkers. Let us recall Kant's famous remarks about Plato's Utopia: "The Platonic Republic has been supposed to be a striking example of purely imaginary perfection. It has become a byword, as something that could exist in the brain of an idle thinker only, and Bruckner thinks it ridiculous that Plato could have said that no prince could ever govern well, unless he participated in the ideas. We should do better, however, to follow up this thought and endeavour (where that excellent philosopher leaves us without his guidance) to place it in a clearer light by our own efforts, rather than to throw it aside as useless, under the miserable and very dangerous pretext of its impracticability . . . For nothing can be more mischievous and more unworthy a philosopher than the vulgar appeal to what is called adverse experience, which possibly might never have existed, if at the proper time institutions had been framed according to those ideas, and not according to crude concepts, which, because they were derived from experience only, have marred all good intentions."[1])

[1]) I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by F. Max Müller. New York 1920, pp. 257-258.

Since Plato, philosophy has never deserted the true idealism that it is possible to introduce reason among individuals and among nations. It has only discarded the *false* idealism that it is sufficient to set up the picture of perfection with no regard for the way in which it is to be attained. In modern times, loyalty to the highest ideas has been linked, in a world opposed to them, with the sober desire to know how these ideas can be realized on earth.

Before concluding, let us return once more to a misunderstanding which has already been mentioned. In philosophy, unlike business and politics, criticism does not mean the condemnation of a thing, grumbling about some measure or other, or mere negation and repudiation. Under certain conditions, criticism may actually take this destructive turn; there are examples in the Hellenistic age. By criticism, we mean that intellectual, and eventually practical, effort which is not satisfied to accept the prevailing ideas, actions, and social conditions unthinkingly and from mere habit; effort which aims to coordinate the individual sides of social life with each other and with the general ideas and aims of the epoch, to deduce them genetically, to distinguish the appearance from the essence, to examine the foundations of things, in short, really to know them. Hegel, the philosopher to whom we are most indebted in many respects, was so far removed from any querulous repudiation of specific conditions, that the King of Prussia called him to Berlin to inculcate the students with the proper loyalty and to immunize them against political opposition. Hegel did his best in that direction, and declared the Prussian state to be the embodiment of the divine Idea on earth. But thought is a peculiar factor. To justify the Prussian state, Hegel had to teach man to overcome the onesidedness and limitations of ordinary human understanding and to see the interrelationship between all conceptual and real relations. Further, he had to teach man to construe human history in its complex and contradictory structure, to search out the ideas of freedom and justice in the lives of nations, to know how nations perish when their principle proves inadequate and the time is ripe for new social forms. The fact that Hegel thus had to train his students in theoretical thought, had highly equivocal consequences for the Prussian state. In the long run, Hegel's work did more serious harm to that reactionary institution than all the use the latter could derive from his formal glorification. Reason is a poor ally of reaction. A little less than ten years after Hegel's death (his chair remained unoccupied that long), the King appointed a successor to fight the "dragon's teeth of Hegelian pantheism," and the "arrogance and fanaticism of his school."

We cannot say that, in the history of philosophy, the thinkers who had the most progressive effect were those who found most to criticize or who were always on hand with so-called practical programs. Things are not that simple. A philosophical doctrine has many sides, and each side may have the most diverse historical effects. Only in exceptional historical periods, such as the French Enlightenment, does philosophy itself become politics. In that period, the word philosophy did not call to mind logic and epistemology so much as attacks on the Church hierarchy and on an inhuman judicial system. The removal of certain preconceptions was virtually equivalent to opening the gates of the new world. Tradition and faith were two of the most powerful bulwarks of the old regime, and the philosophical attacks constituted an immediate historical action. Today, however, it is not a matter of eliminating a creed, for in the totalitarian states, where the noisiest appeal is made to heroism and a lofty *Weltanschauung*, neither faith nor *Weltanschauung* rule, but only dull indifference and the apathy of the individual towards destiny and to what comes from above. Today our task is rather to ensure that, in the future, the capacity for theory and for action which derives from theory will never again disappear, even in some coming period of peace when the daily routine may tend to allow the whole problem to be forgotten once more. Our task is continually to struggle, lest mankind becomes completely disheartened by the frightful happenings of the present, lest man's belief in a worthy, peaceful and happy direction of society perishes from the earth.