

Max Horkheimer, selections from *Dawn / Dämmerung* (1926-31)

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man's tongue. When, as he reads on, it turns out that the sentence merely states that that person spoke the German tongue, the reader may feel temporarily reassured. But his anticipatory instinct will prove correct in other cases, on a later page.

**Buddhism:** From a certain point of view, the earliest form of Buddhism appears as a particularly virile position. It directs that possessions which cannot be preserved through one's own efforts be scorned. Everything falls into this category: life, health, wealth, even the self.

**The Little Man and the Philosophy of Freedom:** In socialism, freedom is to become a reality. But because the present system is called "free" and considered liberal, it is not terribly clear what this may mean. Yet anyone who keeps his eyes open and has a little money in his pocket actually has ample occasion to familiarize himself with this concept. He may, for example, ask an acquaintance for a job in his firm. That has nothing to do with philosophy. But his acquaintance knits his brow and says that that is objectively impossible. Business is bad, he says, and he's even been obliged to let many employees go. The man should not be angry with him, for it is not within his power, his freedom doesn't extend that far.

The businessman is subject to laws which neither he nor anyone else nor any power with such a mandate created with purpose and deliberation. They are laws which the big capitalists and perhaps he himself skillfully make use of but whose existence must be accepted as a fact. Boom, bust, inflation, wars and even the qualities of things and human beings the present society demands are a function of such laws, of the anonymous social reality, just as the rotation of the earth expresses the laws of dead nature. No single individual can do anything about them.

Bourgeois thought views this reality as superhuman. It fetishizes the social process. It speaks of fate and either calls it blind, or attempts a mystical interpretation. It deplores the meaninglessness of the whole, or submits to the inscrutability of God's ways. But in actuality, all those phenomena which are either experienced as accidental or given a mystical interpretation depend on men and the way

they arrange their social existence. They can therefore also be changed. If men consciously took their life in society in hand and replaced the struggle of capitalist enterprises by a classless and planned economy, the effects the process of production has on human beings and their relationships could also be understood and regulated. What today appears as a fact of nature in the private and business dealings of individuals are the effects of social life as a whole. They are human, not divine products.

Because these effects of life in society are present but not conscious, willed or controlled, and are the results of an equal number of individual wills that grasp neither their dependence nor their power, the limitation on individual freedom in our time is immeasurably greater than would be necessary, given the available means. When the businessman whom his acquaintance asks for a job refuses because conditions don't permit it, he thinks he is referring to something purely objective and totally autonomous—reality itself. Since everyone else, including the petitioner, feels the same because the reality they themselves created through their social activity appears as something alien by which they must abide, it follows that there are many agents but no conscious and therefore free subjects of social conditions. Men must submit to conditions they themselves constantly create as to something alien and overwhelmingly powerful.

Insight is not enough, of course, to change this state of affairs. For the error is not that people do not recognize the subject but that the subject does not exist. Everything therefore depends on creating the free subject that consciously shapes social life. And this subject is nothing other than the rationally organized socialist society which regulates its own existence. In the society as it now is, there are many individual subjects whose freedom is severely limited because they are unconscious of what they do, but there is no being that creates reality, no coherent ground. Religion and metaphysics claim that such a ground exists. In so doing, they try to keep men from creating it through their own efforts. Of course, the present lack of freedom does not apply equally to all. An element of freedom exists when the product is consonant with the interest of the producer. All those who work and even those who don't, have a share in the creation of contemporary reality, but the degree of that consonance varies con-

siderably. Those for whom it is high seem responsible for reality in a sense. They speak of "our" reality, as if they were royalty, and rightly so. For although they did not themselves create the world, one cannot but suspect that they would have made it exactly as it is. It suits them perfectly that the production and preservation of reality in our society proceed blindly. They have every reason to approve of the product of this blind process and therefore support all legends concerning its origin. But for the little man who is turned down when he asks for a job because objective conditions make it impossible, it is most important that their origin be brought to the light of day so that they do not continue being unfavorable to him. Not only his own lack of freedom but that of others as well spells his doom. His interest lies in the Marxist clarification of the concept of freedom.

**An Old Story:** There once was a rich young man. He was so charming and captivating that everyone liked him. And he was charming not only with his equals but especially with subordinates. When he came to his father's place of business, he chatted delightfully with the employees, and whenever he went shopping, his witty talk put the sales people in good spirits for the rest of the day. His moral sensibility was evident in everything he did. He got engaged to a poor girl, and sympathized with poor artists and intellectuals.

Then his father went bankrupt. There was no change whatever in the exquisite qualities of our prince. When he made his small purchases, he chatted as charmingly as he always had, he kept up his connections with artists, and adored his fiancée. But lo and behold, the sales people became annoyed with him because he took up their time, the artists discovered his lack of any sort of productivity, and even the poor girl found him incompetent and insipid, and finally ran off.

This is an old story and would not be worth repeating if it weren't always misunderstood. For it isn't the prince that remained the same, it isn't the others that changed—that would be the customary and superficial interpretation. It is the others that remained the same while the father's bankruptcy gave the character of our prince an entirely different meaning. A person may suddenly seem stupid, and nothing more need have changed than his bank account.

Our story would become even more pointed and disquieting if the rest of the world had known for some time that the father's business wasn't doing well and only the young man had no inkling of it. In that case, our talented prince would have become a dodo, yet nothing in his consciousness would have altered. That's how dependent we really are.

**The Disinterested Striving for Truth:** If we wish to test the statement that there is such a thing as pure, disinterested striving for truth, that we have a drive to knowledge which is independent of all other instincts, the following thought experiment should be made: one should abstract from one's love for others, one's thirst for recognition up to and including its most sublime manifestations, one should radically destroy in thought the possibility of any and every kind of desire and thus of any pain or joy, one should imagine a total lack of interest in the fate of society and all its members so that not only no love or hatred, fear or vanity, but not even the tiniest spark of compassion, let alone solidarity, remain. One should, in other words, play the role of the dead that appears as a ghost (although with the difference that one is not only impotent like a ghost but also without any tie to past or present so that one would not even have reason to haunt anyone or anything, and one will discover that under the conditions of the thought experiment, there sets in a disquieting indifference to any sort of knowledge whatever. The world looks as the female body does to the old man whose drives are dead. The claim that there is a disinterested striving for truth and its complement, the lie that there are personalities that are somehow above and beyond society, is a philosophical delusion which has been made ideologically effective. Originally, the bourgeois doctrine of the pure striving for truth may have been proclaimed as the opposite of thought in the service of religious ends. Nowadays, capitalist professors deny that any emotion enters their work. They don't want anyone to find out that they pursue wisdom for the sake of their career.

Although there is no disinterested striving for truth, there is such a thing as thinking for thinking's sake, a ritualized thinking which has lost its purpose, namely as a means to improve people's lives. It should not be confused with the pleasure that lies in the activity of thinking

determination to attain it. The ruling class in Germany could hardly have wished for anything better than that the strata it ruined would constitute its own vanguard and aspire not even to the sparse pay but to sacrifice, or at least to devotion and discipline.

True heroism is unmindful of its own interests but passionately concerned with a socially significant value. The heroic world view, on the other hand, is ready to sacrifice its own life, but takes that life as its most important theme. The economic interests on whose behalf its adherents are to give up their lives must not enter their consciousness, of course. Instead, their passionate consciousness must fasten directly on sacrifice, which means on blood and murder. The imagination ignores the fact that the person doing the imagining is himself at stake. It wallows in cruelty without regard to persons. In actual practice, the devotees of the religion of sacrifice usually think more of killing than of being killed. They seem to wish to purchase their right to the former by their readiness for the latter, and certainly place no great value on such subtle distinctions. Future research that enjoys a greater freedom from prejudice than is current today may discover that there were times when the power Christianity had over the souls of men also derived from its connection with martyrdom and wounds, and that the stakes of the Inquisition were as closely tied to the worship of the cross as are the pistols of the rightists to their idealist doctrine.

**Everyone Must Die:** Everyone must die, of course, but not everyone dies in the same way. I won't even mention the fact that the rich can prolong their life in countless ways which are not available to the poor, or that the skill of eminent surgeons is a function of their fee. I shall simply talk about dying itself.

I admit that the more or less painful causes of death are distributed relatively evenly. But it is also true that varying degrees of attention in treatment and care make a difference even where the disease is the same. But that is the least of it. Just one observation suffices to cast doubt on the whole ideology of the impartiality of death. Let it be published everywhere that the survivors of those who die of whatever cause within the next fourteen days will be decently clothed and fed for the rest of their life. If that were done, global suicide rates would

not only leap upward but a respectable number of individuals, men and women, would commit these suicides with a calm that would honor any stoic. And now consider whether the death of a millionaire is the same as that of a proletarian. Dying is the final part of life. During that time, the poor man knows that his family will be chastised when he dies. A female worker has both her feet smashed. A minute after this calamity, she wails, "Now I can no longer work, my poor husband, my poor children, now I am useless." She does not think of herself. A lady who has fallen off her horse or been in an automobile accident faces different perspectives on her sick bed, and the large number of her friends need not worry about the loss of her usefulness but only that of her personality.

I don't know what comes *after* death, but what happens before it takes place in capitalist class society.

**A Discussion About Revolution:** The real bourgeois has the capacity to look at all things objectively, and in post-war Germany, that even extends to revolution. Once he begins to reflect objectively about it or, rather, its political preparation, it seems like any other activity within the context of social reality and is judged accordingly. Because in capitalist production the entrepreneur thinks less about the use value of his products than about ingenious manufacturing and selling techniques, he is less interested in the content than the execution when he makes an objective judgment about any social activity whatever. In present-day Germany, people therefore blame the revolutionary party more for its inadequate performance than for its goal which has been felt to have some chance since the end of the war. What is stigmatized is the incompetence of its leaders. Of course, it is not only these formal elements of bourgeois thought but much more concrete causes that are responsible for this. Not just among those with leftist leanings, but in the psyche of large counter-revolutionary segments which condemn its leadership when proletarian action has failed, the psychologist will recognize a secret guilt feeling because they did not participate, and the unconscious fury that it all came to nothing. What also plays a part is the infamous belief in success as a divine judgment, which has deep roots in European life. As long as it is not victorious, the revolution is no good.

The inadequacies of revolutionary leadership can indeed be a misfortune. But however incompetently the political struggle against the inhumanity of present conditions may be led, the fact remains that that is the form which the will to a better order can take at this historical juncture, and that is how many millions of the suppressed and tormented all over the world understand it. Any inadequacy of the leadership therefore does not negate the fact that it is the head of the struggle. Someone closely associated with a revolutionary party, a person whose theoretical and active involvement with it is beyond all doubt, may perhaps also fruitfully criticize the leadership from the outside for a time.

But a proletarian party cannot be made the object of contemplative criticism, for every one of its mistakes is due to the fact that the effective participation of more qualified people did not prevent it from committing them. Whether or not the contemplative critic would have strengthened such elements in the party by his own activity cannot be determined by his later statements about its actions, for it can never be decided whether his view would have seemed plausible to the masses in the situation at hand, or whether his theoretical superiority was matched by the required organizational talents, whether his policy, in other words, was possible at all, or not. It will be objected that the leaders monopolize power in the party, that the party apparatus makes it impossible for the single individual to prevail, and that consequently any attempt by reasonable people is doomed from the very start. As if any political will throughout history had not always encountered similar obstacles when it tried to assert itself! Today, it may be the intellectual before whom they pile up. But who other than those who overcome practically whatever defects there are can prove that, all things considered, such problems are really the least significant? Bourgeois criticism of the proletarian struggle is a logical impossibility.

Bourgeois modes of thought are adapted to the economic system that gave rise to them. But prevailing patterns of thought do not apply to the political movement which attempts to put a better society in the place of the present one, for the power of the economic laws of capitalism affects it only through multiple mediations, and indirectly. Under capitalism, automatic adjustments occur when an

enterprise is badly managed. The judgment that management is incompetent is confirmed when the business goes bankrupt, and its economic function is then taken over by others that perform better. There is thus an objective criterion which is independent of any critic, and which evaluates how social activities are being carried out. For wherever in the capitalist system a certain kind of work can be utilized, there will also be people who do it in a way that corresponds to the state of the productive forces. Any gap caused by failure is closed immediately. But this kind of replaceability does not apply in the case of proletarian leaders. Somehow or other, those that are killed or put out of action are replaced from the rank and file, but usually such replacements aren't up to par, for the enemy knows how to eliminate whom it considers dangerous. The world in which the proletarian élite grows up is not academies but struggles in factories and unions, punishments, dirty dispute within and outside the parties, prison sentences and illegality. Students don't rush in here with the eagerness with which they crowd into the lecture halls and laboratories of the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary career is not a series of banquets and a string of honorific titles, nor does it hold the promise of interesting research or professors' salaries. It is a passage toward the unknown, with misery, disgrace, ungratefulness and prison as its way stations. Only an almost superhuman belief illumines it, and merely talented people therefore choose it only rarely.

NOTE: At times such as the present, revolutionary belief may not really be compatible with great clearheadedness about the realities. Perhaps those qualities indispensable for leading a proletarian party are now to be found precisely among those whose character is not the best. Does the "higher level" of the bourgeois critics, their more acute moral sensibility, not in part result from the fact that they keep away from the real political fight? If keeping away became the general maxim, would this not spell the death sentence of liberty? Do the better educated have any good reason to damn those who are actually involved in this struggle?

**Animism:** Man discovers that he produces his movements by autonomous impulses. Already at the very beginning of his history, he transfers this experience not just to the movements of other living

This is true of positive law. But the concept of justice epitomizes the demands of the suppressed at any given moment, and it is therefore as changeable as those demands themselves. Its essence today ultimately calls for the elimination of classes and therefore also the abolition of the law as set forth above. With the advent of justice, the law disappears.

**Love and Stupidity:** The pleasure the animal trainer takes in the affection of a lion may sometimes be attenuated by the realization that the stupidity of the beast has a good deal to do with it. Because a heightened consciousness of its power would destroy the tie, the animal's present tenderness isn't worth much. The more reason the trainer has to think highly of his art, the less he need feel flattered by the affection of the lion. We don't like it when we are loved from a lack of intelligence. The pride many fine ladies and gentlemen take in the loyalty of their servants, or the Junker in their workers', caricatures the confidence we feel because we know we are genuinely loved.

**Indications:** The moral character of a person can be infallibly inferred from his answers to certain questions. Such questions vary with each era and usually with each social class, and do not always concern matters of the same moment. What an official in certain parts of the Roman Empire during the first few centuries of our era said when asked if he was a Christian was certainly such a key. In the Germany of 1917, the mere question about the quality of the potato bread was equally revelatory. In 1930, the attitude toward Russia casts light on people's thinking. It is extremely difficult to say what conditions are like there. I do not claim to know where the country is going; there is undoubtedly much misery. But those among the educated who don't even perceive a hint of the effort being made there, adopt a cavalier attitude and dismiss the need to reflect, are pathetic comrades. Their company is unprofitable. The senseless injustice of the imperialist world can certainly not be explained by technological inadequacy. Anyone who has the eyes to see will view events in Russia as the continuing painful attempt to overcome this terrible social injustice. At the very least, he will ask with a throbbing heart whether it is still under way. If appearances were to be against it, he would cling to his hope like the cancer patient to the question-

able report that a cure for his illness may have been found.

When Kant received the first news about the French Revolution, he is said to have changed the direction of his customary stroll from then on. The philosophers of our time also scent the dawn of a new day, though it is not for mankind but for the horrible spirit realm of their metaphysics.

**On the Question of Birth:** Who has not at some time considered the moral question whether or not it may be a good thing to have children, and who did not answer: "It all depends." "It all depends" means that a wealthy woman's child will some day employ others. In the case of the poor woman, it will be someone who can't even get work. So poor people should be careful, the Malthusian philosopher concludes. But this thought goes astray. Instead of keeping millions of unwanted out of the world, they should be permitted to fit it out. Of course, as long as the work the rich won't give may also not be performed by the poor, they have to stay away. The world is the house of the ruling class. They don't let in the carpenters who want to make it bigger and brighter. It follows that their property rights are outdated.

*Note:* It might appear contradictory that during the last hundred years, it was usually precisely those who claimed that mankind could not be more justly and more adequately provided for that urged the poor to restrict sexual intercourse, that recommended *moral* prevention, i.e., asceticism, but bitterly fought birth prevention techniques and abortion. But there is only a contradiction here if it is man's well-being that really counts. Those loyal servants of capital see only the need to preserve existing conditions, however, and recognize instinctively that pleasure for its own sake, pleasure without justification and excuse and without a moral or religious rationalization is a still greater danger to this obstructive society than even an increase in the army of the unemployed.

**Socialism and Resentment:** Those who look down on the motives that tend toward the realization of freedom and justice, and confuse and discourage the persons inspired by them, have remarkable success.

In discussions concerning the possibility of socialism, the well-

informed opponent often tells his partner, an enthusiastic supporter of socialism, that he should first examine how things really are. He would then come to the conclusion that under socialism, the worker would be no better off than he is today. Certainly the civilized worker in this generation would probably be much worse off than he is, he would never get anything but beans to eat. Perhaps the superior opponent will illustrate his opinion by telling the infamous joke about the Baron Rothschild who gave the socialist a coin and told him: "Be satisfied with this, that's much more than you would get if everything were divided up."

If the younger partner to the discussion has some Marxist training, he will point out that socialists aren't interested in distribution but in the socialization and restructuring of the process of production. Perhaps he will also give a theoretical exposition. But he may say that distribution would at least bring justice, and if he does, he is lost. For now he has revealed the vulgarity of his views, a thinking laden with resentment. So what he really wants, he will be told, is not material improvement! He only wants those who are reasonably well off today not to have *more* than he does. His arguments merely serve to mask his hatred. It's all right to eat nothing but beans all one's life, provided the others don't have steak! The young socialist will be embarrassed by this reproach and accept it silently; perhaps he will defend himself. He is confused. He cannot deal with the general contempt of the will to freedom and justice when it is called resentment.

But the harmless steak which this forbidden attitude begrudges others is a symbol of the power over men, of independence riding on misery's back. The danger, the suffering, the constraint, the narrowness, the insecurity, the convergence of these negative elements of life on the exploited class is today a result of the convergence of the positive elements on the absurdly small number of the free. In school-books, the bourgeoisie tells of the idealism of heroes who prefer death to slavery, but vis-à-vis socialism, it is materialistic enough to counter the impulse to shake off the yoke, to eliminate inequality, by pointing out that material improvement is improbable. Love of freedom is cultivated only in the mendacious form of nationalist chauvinism. It is true that the Versailles Treaty causes unnecessary suffering, but in Germany it is most vociferously indicted by those who remorselessly

preserve the capitalist property relations that make it possible. This order where the children of the proletariat are condemned to die of starvation, and members of the board to banquets, does indeed arouse resentment.

**The Urbanity of Language:** The very nature of language is to create ties, to establish community, to be urbane. To give verbal expression to an animosity is the first step toward surmounting it. It becomes possible to discuss causes, to consider mitigating factors. Through its universality, language seems to make the motive for the animosity a problem for all. It questions its justification.

In post-war Germany, the translation of Marxism into the academic idiom was a step toward breaking the will of the workers to fight capitalism. As the qualified intellectual representatives of mankind, the professors took up the problem. Of course, this translation was only one step, for since there are much more realistic causes for the fatigue and impotence of the worker, this mediating literature is no longer needed, and those translators will be rejected just as the mediators in the political arena are. The concept of ideology illustrates the function of translation with particular clarity. One can hardly say that Marx discussed it in great detail. He used it as a kind of subterranean explosive device against the mendacious structures of official science. It was the distilled expression of his contempt for the deliberate or half-deliberate, instinctive or considered, paid or unpaid obfuscation of the exploitation on which the capitalist system rests. Now they have given it a pretty formulation. It has become the relativity of knowledge, the historicity of theories in the humanities, and other things. It has lost its dangerousness.

But the light of language is indispensable in the struggle of the oppressed themselves. They have reasons for bringing the secrets of this society to the light of day, to give them the most comprehensible, the most banal formulation possible. They must not stop expressing the contradictions of this order in public language. The spreading of darkness has always been a technique of the right. Language must therefore be prevented from creating the illusion of a community that does not exist in class society. It has to be used as a means in the struggle for a united world. Already today, the words of the

at stake. Because the guilty party suffers financially, both partners have to look for proofs against each other, relatives and acquaintances are dragged in or involve themselves, all kinds of ugliness are brought out into the open, it's hell. What's more, the two may have to go on living under one roof until they are divorced, the children are there, scenes become a daily occurrence. Not infrequently, they can't go to court because poverty makes an acceptable solution impossible. Then life has simply been ruined.

B: How loosely you talk. You know yourself what sort of marital tragedies occur in rich families. Frequently, they end in suicide. And it isn't true that their dirty linen is not washed in public. Sometimes, the whole town, but always their circle discusses such affairs. The rich suffer exactly like the poor. It is precisely in such cases that it becomes apparent how little economic factors have to do with the inner life. You obviously don't have any idea how much psychological misery there is among those envied people. Because their quarrels take place behind locked doors, or are less noisy, you assume they don't occur. You see things much too simply.

A: Of course the rich have to suffer (they certainly have more antidotes). That's a general truth, and I didn't contest it. I simply wanted to point out that in the majority of cases, it is poverty that makes marital conflict a torture while the wealthy can settle it in ways not open to the poor. Because you can't deny that, you generalize. The moment one points to one of the untold blessings money brings, you and your like try to obscure it though it is as clear as day. In this particular case, you don't want to admit that economics affect even the most sacrosanct psychic regions but that's how it is. Your millionaires may moan because of their marital difficulties but while it might not be possible to free nine-tenth of my indigents from theirs, it would certainly be a consolation to them if they could trade places with the rich. Besides, there is one thing you should have noticed long ago: I do not accuse pleasure. The shamefulness of this order is not that some are better off but that many are poor although everyone could have all he needs. What judges it is not that there are wealthy people but that in spite of what could now be done, the poor continue to be with us. The public consciousness must therefore be poisoned by lies; this order cannot last.

**Progress:** The munitions manufacturer, his politician and his general say: "There will be wars as long as the world exists. There is no such thing as progress." To begin with, this is a case where the wish is father to the thought. Besides, this belief must also be maintained among the masses. This is quite understandable—it's perfectly straightforward brainwashing. But the literary servants of these people have the additional insolence of looking impartial, like men aware of all the theoretical difficulties, when they raise this question: "What does progress really mean? Progress can only be measured by how close we come to the realization of some particular and relatively accidental value. To look at history from such a point of view would mean to turn something relative into an absolute, to hypostatize something subjective, in short to carry narrowness and oneness into science." Because they are furious with the socialist struggle for a better world which derives its hope from the results of earlier struggles, particularly from the revolutions of recent centuries, they go about fabricating their so-called philosophy of history. As if it weren't perfectly obvious what progress the socialists mean, what progress the reactionaries resist, both theoretically and in practice. It is the improvement of material existence through a more purposeful restructuring of human conditions. It can be said emphatically that this improvement means more for most people than the implementation of a relatively accidental value, whether they know it or not. To them, it is the most important thing on earth. It may be true that history stagnates or regresses for long periods in this regard and during the last hundred years, the obfuscation of that fact may often have served to mislead the masses ideologically, but talk about progress is clear and justified nonetheless. For those in control to maintain that progress is being made under their rule has long been a lie, and even their *littérateurs* are dissociating themselves from that claim. It is obvious that they would really prefer to abandon the concept to preserve their rule. For like other bourgeois illusions such as freedom and equality, it no longer functions as an ideological defense but as a criticism of existing conditions, as the encouragement to change them, and that is the result of the dialectics of history.

It should also be said that today, not only the more immediate goal of providing mankind with basic necessities, but also the realization



of all so-called cultural and ideal values depends on this progress in a materialist sense, i.e., on a socialist reorganization of society. That social progress *need not necessarily* occur is true; that it cannot take place is a crude lie; that it would be onesided to judge the history of mankind by its ability to offer its members a tolerable level of existence is just philosophical chatter.

NOTE: Social progress is always a historical task but no mystic necessity. It is quite understandable that Marxism should explain the theory of society as the theory of reality. The masses suffer from the outdated form of society and expect everything from its rational organization. They do not really appreciate that from the perspective of eternity, their misery is just one fact among many, and that to view the world from that perspective is no more than that, a perspective. Just as the individual assumes that the world revolves around him, that his death and its end coincide, so the exploitation and the misery of the masses is, for them, misery as such, and history revolves around the improvement of their lot. But history does not have to go along unless it is compelled to.

**The Idealism of the Revolutionary:** The view that Marxism merely advocates the stilling of hunger and thirst and the satisfaction of the sexual drive cannot be refuted by the statement that it is surely much finer, nobler, more profound and inward than that. For rebellion, solidarity, self-denial are just as "materialistic" as hunger. The struggle for the improvement of the fate of mankind includes egoism and altruism, hunger and love as natural links in causal chains. Of course, materialist theory can offer no logical proof that life should be surrendered. It inculcates heroism neither with the Bible nor the cane, it does not replace solidarity or the insight into the necessity of revolution by a "practical philosophy" or a reasoned argument in favor of sacrifice. It is the opposite of every such "idealist" morality. It frees of illusions, un.masks reality and explains what happens. It offers no logical reasons for "higher" values, but it certainly advances none against someone's risking his life to help implement the "lower" ones, that is, a materially bearable existence for all. "Idealism" begins at precisely the point where such conduct is not satisfied with a natural explanation for itself but looks to the crutch of "objective"

values, "absolute" duties and other idealistic reassurance and "sanctification," i.e., where the restructuring of society is made dependent on metaphysics rather than on human beings.

**Horror Stories:** When a good citizen hears these days (around 1930) that a person motivated by pure intentions is seized, tortured and killed by a barbarous soldiery in his own country or anywhere else in the world, he usually does not become indignant but will express the suspicion that this piece of news is probably exaggerated. If the information that such events occur all the time and with terrible regularity is irrefutably precise, that they are an integral part of the system in its present phase, and if he knows that there is a connection between imperialist global policy and the penitentiaries in Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Poland or the terror in the colonies, he will burst into passionate fury. But that fury will not be directed against the originators and perpetrators of these inhuman acts but against those that bring them out into the open. Where, for the sake of naked profit, all those that stand for humanity and spirit in a country are murdered, entire social classes are kept in fear and despair, nations are ignominiously enslaved and even wiped out, the bourgeois layman turns into a critical historian of painstaking precision. The modern antipathy to determining the precise facts notwithstanding, he demands scrupulous accuracy in problems of knowledge; in contrast to the pervasive divinization of intuition, he proclaims that the precise determination of details is the very essence of research. Confronted with bloodshed, he suspects a one-sided history or reports that are partial to the persecuted and hostile to the perpetrators. But it is not the perpetrators of the horrors he has in mind but the comrades, the party, the ideas of the victims of those horrors, and ultimately those victims themselves. For this simple, harmless, normal, sober, well-turned-out and charming man with whom you are talking is only frightened by the bloodshed of civil wars when it is not part of the organized terror of his own class; he is credulous only when anger against the proletariat has to be inflamed; he becomes a human being only when tears are to be shed for a Czar or a Russian upper class for which the World War was a bad speculation. The guileless individual in this world is necessarily in league with the henchmen. And

The association rests on both the ideational smokescreen and the very real observation and recognition of the class structure. Because the less well-off individual usually derives some practical benefit from it or, more precisely, because he expects such benefit, he ordinarily suppresses the clear recognition of the difference, first within the relationship, and then more generally. His consciousness adapts itself to his acts. Because people like to act according to their beliefs, they usually wind up believing what they would like to act in accordance with. The petit bourgeois who cultivate such relationships, particularly intellectuals, usually do in fact have a consciousness that is ideologically abnormally confused. They not only suffer from the illusion of their class that all is harmony but from a personal thick-headedness as well, however gifted they may otherwise be. In the end, the results of repression also affect the rest of their thinking. They begin by exaggerating the good qualities of their upper class friends. Have you ever run into a person with good connections who did not tell you "how nice" and "how intelligent" those ladies and gentlemen are? "How exploitative" they are is something he does not recognize. Associations have their effect on consciousness. The more intimate and sincere they are, the weightier those effects become.

**Archimedes and Modern Metaphysics:** Because he was interested in his science, Archimedes forgot that people were being slaughtered all around him, and so he perished. Because they are interested in their science, today's philosophers forget that people are being murdered all around them. They call reports of such occurrences horror stories. But they run no risk, for it is not the enemy troops but their own which have the upper hand.

Like Archimedes' figures, their systems are machines devised for the defense of their fellow citizens. But in contrast to the Greek scientist, they sail under false colors. He did not claim that his catapults would benefit friend and enemy alike. But modern metaphysics believes that its cause is that of mankind.

**Change of Thought:** Among Marxist thinkers, the avowal of moral motives, particularly compassion which is the secret mainspring of their thought and action, is looked down upon, not only because they are ashamed of it but also because it has been their experience that

such a confession usually becomes a substitute for practice. Consciously or not, they assume that the moral impulse either manifests itself in actions or in words. That is the reason they mistrust the latter.

But that exposes them to the same sort of danger as their observation that what the real world is all about is material things. When it is emphasized that there are needs and qualities other than hunger and power, they point to sober reality where everything turns on the satisfaction of the most primitive needs. In so doing, they tend to transform the bitterness in that comment into an apology. Under such circumstances, the assertion that in today's reality the ideal merely serves as ideological camouflage for a bad materialistic practice easily turns into the realism of certain journalists and reporters: "Don't bother us with culture. We know that that's a hoax." They are perfectly at home with and reconciled to that state of affairs.

**All or Nothing:** Be mistrustful of the person who says that unless everyone is helped, it's no use. That is the fundamental lie of those who actually do not want to help and hide behind a theory to excuse their failure to do their duty in a concrete case. They rationalize their inhumanity. There is a resemblance between them and the devout: both preserve their good conscience by pleading "higher" considerations when they abandon you to your helplessness.

**Skepsis and Morality:** Socialism does not "follow" from the economic laws discovered by Marx. It is true that there are many scientific predictions which have a high degree of probability. That the sun will rise tomorrow would be one example. They are the result of an enormous amount of experience. But who is going to believe that this applies to the prediction that socialism will come?

Socialism is a better, more effective form of society whose elements are present in capitalism in a certain sense. In capitalism, there are "tendencies" that make for change in the system. But the empirical knowledge which would support our belief that these tendencies will really prevail is quite limited. If a bridge spanning an abyss had been constructed according to principles deriving from data no more precise than those that lead us to expect the advent of socialism, people using it would court extreme danger.

Although it is correct, this consideration can not only count on the approval of all the well-meaning bourgeois friends of socialism but will also be countenanced by its enemies. One may be an adherent of Marx, provided one has the necessary degree of skepticism. But approval and tolerance stop the moment we amplify the bridge image and say that taking the risk of crossing that bridge might determine whether the overwhelmingly larger measure of injustice, the withering of human capacities, the lies, the senseless degradation, in short the unnecessary material and spiritual suffering is to disappear, or not. One has to fight for socialism, in other words. The hedged approbation of Marxist theory, its respectful integration in the history of philosophy, is something the bourgeoisie likes to see. The correlate of this contemplative treatment of Marxism in real life is the accommodation to things as they are. To say that socialism does not "follow" from Marxist theory even though socialism is desirable, and to add nothing further, is to scientifically and morally justify capitalism. It is an expression of social skepticism.

But when it is said that Marx and Engels did not "prove" socialism, not pessimism but the commitment to practice which theory needs, will follow. Marx unveiled the law of the dominant inhuman order, and pointed to the levers that must be used to create a more human one.

What the transition from one part of a system to another is for the bourgeois scholar, a "problem" like so many others, something to which "justice can be done" on a few sympathetic pages in a textbook, i.e., the resolution of the question whether class society continues or is successfully replaced by socialism, is something that will decide if mankind progresses or perishes in barbarism. The position a person takes here not only determines the relationship of his life to that of mankind but also the degree of his morality. A philosophical system, an ethic, a moral teaching which merely treats our outdated, progress-inhibiting property relations, the existence of a class society and the need to transcend it as "part of a larger picture" rather than identifying itself with that need is the opposite of morality, for the form morality has taken in our time is the implementation of socialism. By their skeptical treatment of it, the scholars serve the prevailing social order. Those professors and literati who find encouragement, recognition and honors in the world as it is certainly would

concur in the "moral" condemnation of robbery. But they calmly look on the legal rape of countless children, women and men in capitalist societies and even more in their colonies, and ingest their share of the loot. They support the system in their civilized books and journals where they use "scientific" language to discuss all sorts of problems—the teachings concerning a socialist society among others—and then pass on with a skeptical comment to the business at hand.

It is well known that the bourgeoisie can "discuss" anything. That is part of its strength. Generally speaking, it grants freedom of thought. Only where thought takes on a form which directly leads to practice, where it becomes "unscientific" in the academic sphere, things stop being cozy. Mere skepticism essentially means that theory remains just that. The opposite of such skepticism is neither optimism nor dogma but proletarian practice. Should socialism be improbable, it will require an all the more desperate determination to make it come true. What stands in its way is not the technical difficulty of its implementation but the apparatus of domination of the ruling class.

But if skepticism is bad, certainty is no better. The illusion that the advent of the socialist order is of the same order of necessity as natural events is hardly less of a danger to correct action than is skeptical disbelief. If Marx did not prove socialism, he did show that capitalism harbors developmental tendencies which make it possible. Those interested in it know at what points they must attack. The socialist order of society is not prevented by world history; it is historically possible. But it will not be realized by a logic that is immanent in history but by men trained in theory and determined to make things better. Otherwise, it will not be realized at all.

**Heroic World View:** There is no world view which more ingeniously accommodates the objectives of the ruling class than the "heroic." The young members of the petite bourgeoisie have little to gain for themselves but must defend everything on behalf of the trusts. The fight against individualism, the belief that the individual must sacrifice himself so that the totality may live fits in perfectly with the current situation. In contrast to the real hero, this generation is not filled with enthusiasm for a clear goal, but it is enthusiastic in its